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**Exploratory Research into the Intersection of Forced Marriage, Intimate Partner Violence, and Sexual Violence**

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## **Abstract**

This exploratory study aimed to broaden the literature on forced marriage to examine forced marriage in the United States context. The study focused on the nature and scope of forced marriage in the context of the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, as well as the adequacy of service provider and criminal and civil justice system stakeholder responses to forced marriage. Based on 7,791 valid responses to an Urban Institute survey administered through Google Consumer Survey, we estimated a sample prevalence rate of forced marriage in the U.S. at 11.2%. We then conducted analyses of interviews with 24 people who experienced forced marriage or knew someone who did and 15 service providers and other stakeholders. Through this, we explored both the intersection between forced marriage and violence and abuse as well as services needed and received by those who have experience forced marriage.

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## Introduction

The Urban Institute, in collaboration with Tahirih Justice Center, sought to examine forced marriages in the United States via an exploratory study of the victimization experiences of those subjected to and threatened with forced marriage. One attempt to define forced marriage (FM) has come from the government of the United Kingdom (UK), which has characterized FM as a “marriage without the consent of one or both parties and where duress is a factor” (Crown Prosecution Services, UK 2010). Other agencies have expanded upon this definition by further clarifying situations in which consent may not be granted, including when the victim is not of legal age to marry; when the victim is subject to a disability or other incapacity; and when the victim is subject to elements of force, fraud, or coercion (Tahirih, 2011b). Notably, FM differs from, but is often conflated with, the practice of arranged marriages, where families may participate in the matchmaking process but both partners voluntarily enter the marriage (United States Department of State, 2005).

The study also sought to begin to understand elements at the intersection of forced marriage with intimate partner and sexual violence, such as: how perpetrators threaten and actually force victims into marriages; the elements of force, fraud, or coercion in the tactics used to carry out victimization; other case demographics and dynamics (e.g., overseas marriages versus those in the United States); factors that put individuals at risk of FM or that trigger or elevate their risk of related abuses; help-seeking behavior; the role of social, cultural, and religious norms in FM; and the ability (or lack thereof) of service providers, school officials, and government agencies with protection mandates (law enforcement, child protection, and social workers) to screen for, and respond to, potential and reported cases of FM. This exploratory research was guided by six primary research questions: (1) What is the nature and prevalence of FM and the intersection of intimate partner violence (IPV), sexual violence, and other forms of victimization? (2) What are the factors that put young women at risk of FM? (3) What is the role of social, cultural, and religious norms surrounding FM? (4) What are the help-seeking behaviors of young women and men who have been threatened with and/or subjected to FM? (5) How are service providers and education officials responding to potential and confirmed FM cases? (6) How are justice system (civil and criminal) stakeholders responding to potential and confirmed FM cases? This report summarizes the methods and basic findings of our research.

### *A Review of the Literature*

Empirical literature on the practice of FM in the United States is limited when it comes to understanding its prevalence and service providers’ response to the problem. The majority of what is known about forced marriage stems from international research generated in England, Wales, Northern Ireland, and Canada. This research has typically relied upon survivors who sought help from government or social service

agencies. While vital for understanding service provision needs and providing insight into the nature of FM, it is unable to account for those victims who have not sought help.

### Forced Marriage in the United States

The most comprehensive understanding of FM in the United States comes from a national survey administered by the Tahirih Justice Center (2011b) to approximately 500 professionals, including legal and social service providers, law enforcement, staff from child protective services, and other professionals who may have been in contact with a victim of FM. In the two years preceding the survey, these respondents reported encountering a combined number of up to 3,000 cases of known and suspected FM.

Other studies have since attempted to examine FM in the United States, however they have been conducted with limited purposive samples of students and professional service providers (Sri & Raja, 2013; Marcus, 2015; Sauti Yetu Center for African Women and Families, 2012). Marcus (2015) conducted interviews with 100 City University of New York students from only Middle Eastern, North African, and South Asian migrant families and found intra-familial conflict over marital choice within this population, suggesting FM may be an issue for these groups. The Sauti Yetu Center for African Women and Families (2012), through focus groups and semi-structured interviews with 30 young African women living in New York City, found that 28 of the participants reported feeling pressure to marry before turning 18 (2012). Sri & Raja (2013) surveyed 524 South Asian students, domestic violence professionals, and refugee service providers after administering voluntary and mandatory training on forced marriage. Findings suggested FM was a concern among these respondents; the survey identified 52 cases of suspected and confirmed FMs.

### Characteristics of Forced Marriage and its Intersection with Other Forms of Violence

Recently, a growing number of studies have recognized that FM occurs among a range of diverse communities, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, or religion (Khanum, 2008; Kazimirski et al., 2009; Chantler et al., 2008; Tahirih, 2011b). Common risk factors for FM have been identified as: family members trying to control behavior and sexual orientation; peer and family pressure; cultural norms that normalize FM; family links to FM; honor; individuals assisting claims of residence and citizenship; and reducing stigma of disability (Forced Marriage Unit, 2013; Rauf 2013; Alanen, 2012; Women Living Under Muslim Laws, 2013; Gangoli et al., 2006). Particular attention has been paid to age as a risk factor (Samad and Eade, 2002) and how restricted educational and economic opportunities increase peoples' risk for experiencing FM (Sabbe, 2013; Alanen, 2012; USAID, 2015).

Some attention also has been paid to the intersection of forced marriage and other forms of gender-based violence. Research has found a correlation between intimate partner violence and FM (Khanun, 2008), suggesting that individuals who are subjected to or threatened with FM may be exposed to other abuses, including physical abuse, sexual abuse, psychological and emotional abuse, isolation and

imprisonment, kidnapping, and murder (Brandon and Hafez, 2008). Less attention has been paid to emotional abuse and psychological coercion; however, recent studies suggest this is a common characteristic of FM (Sri & Raja, 2013; Marcus, 2015).

### Forced Marriage and Service Provision

Research suggests that there are a number of barriers FM victims face when attempting to access services. First, victims may fear shame or violent reprisals from those who imposed the marriage (Samad and Eade, 2002; Robbers, 2008; Kazimirski, 2009). Victims also may fear criminalizing or harming family members. A lack of specialized services that focus on and provide culturally competent services to victims of FM is an additional barrier (Kazimirski, 2009). Among those agencies who do provide services for victims of FM, concerns include a lack of appropriate training around cultural sensitivity and the international dynamic of cases; lack of awareness of FM; the unmet need for a multi-agency response to the issue; and the concerns of conceptualizing FM as purely cultural or as a form of gender-based violence (Chantler, 2012; FM Unit, 2013). More information is needed to shed light on the service provision landscape for FM in the United States.

### Background of the Current Study

In 2014, we began a National Institute of Justice-funded study to examine the intersection of forced marriage, intimate partner violence, and sexual violence in the United States. The study was originally funded to focus on the experiences of individuals within the South Asian community located in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, due to prior literature suggesting heightened prevalence of FM in South Asian communities. During the study, however, the scope was expanded to include individuals of any background living anywhere in the United States. In addition to expanding the study population and sites, participant outreach procedures and data collection procedures were revised multiple times throughout the study in response to challenges encountered in the initial study design.

The study ultimately employed a mixed-methods approach, using both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. Data collection activities over the course of the study included: in-depth interviews with people who knew of, experienced, or were threatened with FM; in-depth interviews with stakeholders; short informational screening calls with stakeholders; a short, nationally-fielded Google survey about FM experiences; and an in-depth online survey<sup>1</sup> about FM experiences. Below are two

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<sup>1</sup> In the second year of the project, Urban worked with project partner Tahirih Justice Center to identify service providers who work with FM clients who might have been willing to participate in an online survey. Twenty-nine service providers were contacted, 14 were screened, and 9 were willing to contact former clients to ask them to participate in the online survey. Only five participants completed the survey. All five were female, between 20 and 50 years old, and lived in Illinois. Because of the very small sample size, we



sections focused on the two primary data collection activities: (1) the in-depth interviews with people who knew of, experienced, or were threatened with FM and (2) the Google survey. Each section provides the methods, results, and brief discussions for each of the two data collection efforts.

### Defining Forced Marriage

There is no agreed upon definition for forced marriage in the U.S. As a result, we worked in collaboration with our project partner, the Tahirih Justice Center, and our Advisory Board<sup>2</sup> to develop a definition of forced marriage to be used throughout the duration of the project. We sought to provide context to the official definition in the U.K.— a “marriage without the consent of one or both parties and where duress is a factor” (Crown Prosecution Services, UK, 2010)—to provide additional information on when consent can and cannot be granted in a marriage situation. The definition we collectively agreed upon was: “a marriage when people did not feel like they had a real choice around 1) when they wanted to get married; 2) who they married; or 3) when they got married, or they felt they could not express what they really wanted without negative consequences.” Embedded within our definition was an understanding that individuals under the age of 18 cannot give consent to marry, and while we did not interview anyone under 18 for the study, we considered respondents 18 and over who experienced a marriage when they were under 18 to qualify for the study. We did not define forced marriage as a form of violence against women, since prior research demonstrates that marriage can be forced upon both men and women (Khanum 2008; Chantler et al. 2008; Tahirih 2011b), and our target research population consisted of both men and women.

In creating this definition, we took care to distinguish forced marriage from arranged marriage—a practice in which families may participate in the matchmaking process but both partners voluntarily enter the marriage (United States Department of State, 2005). Due to the common misconceptions regarding forced marriage and arranged marriage, some respondents called into the research project hotline to describe arranged marriages that did not qualify as forced marriages. In response to this, we carefully phone-screened each respondent prior to scheduling an interview to ensure their marriage experience included elements of the above definition.

## In-Depth Qualitative Interviews

### *Design*

The original study design aimed to use respondent-driven sampling (RDS) to recruit and interview a sample of approximately 300 South Asian-identified individuals in the DC metro area who were threatened with,

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could not analyze the data from the online surveys using statistical analysis, and we did not include the surveys in our study.

<sup>2</sup> Our advisory board consisted of 12 academics, advocates and providers who have studied and/or assisted victims of forced marriage in the US and abroad.

experienced, or knew somebody who experienced, forced marriage (FM), as well as relevant stakeholders, including victim service providers, criminal justice stakeholders, and religious leaders, with experience working with FM clients.

Though attempted, it became clear through the low number of respondents identified using RDS that the target sample size would not be met with this method alone. We speculate that we had trouble recruiting individuals to participate due to the reported isolation that many victims of FM face and the unlikelihood that victims speak to others in their network about abuse and FM due to fear of reprisal and other personal consequences. As a result, other participant outreach methods were used. We posted fliers at various physical locations in the catchment area, including colleges and universities, restaurants, specialty shops, public libraries, Starbucks, mosques, temples, gurdwaras, and two Pakistani festivals. The team also conducted email outreach to dozens of cricket clubs in the Washington Cricket League and dozens of South Asian-related student organizations at nearby colleges and universities. Later in the study, we used online advertising to reach more people, electronically displaying the opportunity to participate in an interview, first in the form of Google AdWords, and then using Facebook Ads. These additional outreach methods did not work sufficiently to recruit a large enough sample, so we also decided to expand the study population (and thus interviews) to include individuals ages 18 and over of any background (not just South Asian).

To supplement the knowledge gained from those who knew of or had directly experienced forced marriage situations, we conducted interviews with stakeholders to learn more about the identification of and response to forced marriage cases. We conducted outreach (email and phone calls) to criminal justice stakeholders and service providers, including: legal services, social services, refugee and immigrant services, domestic violence services, shelters, child and family services, South Asian professional associations, South Asian women's groups, law enforcement, court personnel, and school counselors.

### ***Interview Protocol Development and Procedures***

Three interview protocols—one for respondents who had experienced or had been threatened with FM, one for respondents who knew someone who had experienced FM, and one for stakeholders— were developed in conjunction with the Tahirih Justice Center and with input and advice from an Advisory Board (see Appendix C for an example protocol). Interviews took place either in person or over the phone and lasted approximately 60 to 90 minutes. Audio was recorded when consent was given to do so, otherwise notes were taken. At the conclusion of the interview, respondents were given \$30 (either cash or as a mailed Visa gift card) as a token of appreciation for their time.

### ***Sample***

We conducted interviews with a total of 24 respondents who knew someone who had experienced or who had themselves experienced a FM situation and 15 interviews with relevant stakeholders. Eleven interviewees had been threatened with or experienced FM themselves, while 13 knew somebody who had been in this situation. Because the original study design was only open to people of South Asian descent/background, 79% of the respondent sample identified as being from a South Asian country or of South Asian heritage. Once the study was broadened, people from different backgrounds participated. Of the sample, 75% of those interviewed were women and most (58%) were under 30 years old at the time of the FM. Twenty-seven of the 42 stakeholders contacted had not encountered FM. Fifteen organizations that had encountered cases of FM were interviewed, including eleven victim service providers, three school counselors, and one religious leader.

### ***Measures***

The main topics explored in all protocols were: background information; forced marriage context; forced marriage experience; intersection of forced marriage, intimate partner violence, and sexual violence; victim services; the impact of forced marriage; and recommendations for policy and practice. After data collection activities concluded, we created a qualitative coding scheme using the initial research questions and interview protocols, ultimately coding themes under seven categories: defining forced marriage; presence of pressure/coercion/threats leading to forced marriage; characteristics of forced marriage experience; intersection of forced marriage, intimate partner violence, and sexual violence; impact of forced marriage; victim services; and recommendations. Additional themes were coded under a service provider-specific category. To ensure the accuracy of the coding process, the research team agreed upon definitions for each code being used, and transcripts were coded a second time with an inter-coder reliability of .88 for those who experienced FM or knew someone who did and an inter-coder reliability of .89 for stakeholders.

### ***Forced Marriage Victimization Characteristics and Experiences***

The following section includes findings that best contextualize the experiences of those who were forced into a marriage or threatened with a forced marriage. The section includes the perspectives of those who experienced FM or knew someone who faced FM and service providers, school officials, and religious leaders who work with and serve victims of forced marriage.

#### **Presence of Pressure, Coercion and Threats Leading to Forced Marriage**

When asked to describe what happened leading up to the marriage, interviewees cited a number of different pressures, threats, and coercive behaviors exhibited by family members, the community, and

others to try and force them to comply. These behaviors included: familial, cultural, immigration, and religious pressures; pressure around the increasing age of the victims; families' refusal to accept the victims' partner choice; and, a fear of the victims; and 'westernization'. According to the respondents, the most frequent form of pressure came from the victims' family members. This familial pressure ranged from weekly, and, in some cases, daily, gentle reminders that the person needed to start focusing on getting married to more extreme threats that a parent or grandparent would commit suicide if the individual would not go through with the marriage.

She makes me feel like I don't understand how important the situation is. She also makes me say—she also says, "You know what's going on at home. You know how sick your dad is. You know how your brother isn't acting correctly, how he's not behaving, he's not going to school, he's doing drugs, and you're putting more stress on me. Why do you need to put more stress on me?" (EX 3)<sup>3</sup>

I got a chance to talk to my girlfriend, last girlfriend, and after that meeting, she said that my parents are going to look for some other guy. After that, I had a chance to meet her secretly when her parents were out at a shopping mall, so she told me I'm sorry, I have no other choice. My mom says if I'm not going to marry this guy, she's going to commit suicide, so I have no other choice. I don't want to lose my mom. (EX5)

If an individual had legal immigration status in the U.S., whether it was citizenship, a green card, or a visa that provided a direct path to citizenship, family sometimes also put pressure on a child to marry a relative or someone prominent in the community in order to provide them with similar immigration status.

What actually just happened is that I'm apparently engaged in Pakistan. What happened was the family [in which] one of my sister's is married, their son, he wants to come to the U.S., and I'm his way. Somehow, he got a signal that my sister had said yes, and he went and told everybody and the whole family and all the generations. (EX2)

As described in the first quote below, duty to uphold religious teachings was used to pressure a person to agree to a marriage. However, as the second quote describes, in many cases the marriage was more of a cultural expectation, as opposed to a religious one, but family members used religion to guilt the person into marrying the person the family chose.

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<sup>3</sup> Throughout the report, "EX" is used to refer to respondents who personally experienced or were threatened with a forced marriage. "KS" refers to respondents who knew someone who experienced or was threatened with a forced marriage. "ST" is used to refer to stakeholder respondents.

Often religion is thrown in there to give it more weight. Not only are you going to be upsetting your parents, but you're also going to be displeasing God. That's really—for people who are religious, that's really a big deal. Nobody wants to take that risk...That manipulative use of religion. (ST 8)

Yeah. I think for the most part, it's cultural, and in order to convince me of it, my parents try to make it more religious because they say, "You have to follow it because it's part of the religion." The way they present it to me is, "We aren't doing our job under God's eyes if we don't get you married. This is our responsibility. If you don't do it, we get in trouble from God." Sure, yeah, it's part of your responsibility to ensure that I have a good future. (EX3)

In many cultures, there is an expectation that a person, particularly a woman, will marry by a certain age. As that person started to approach that designated age, not only did they experience pressure from the family but also from the community.

Let's just say that if you are even a day above 26, and if you're a woman in India, then—and if you're unmarried, then hell is gonna just come down on you. The expectation for a woman who's in her late 20s, let alone early 30s, to get married is so immense. (EX4)

For individuals who were either born in the U.S. to immigrant parents, or came to the U.S. when they were young and grew up in America, Western influence plays a significant role in shaping their ideas on marriage and choice. As the following service provider explains, for some parents, just the fear of their child becoming “westernized” was cause enough for them to push their child to get married young.

The second child was sort of the wild one of the family. She was the most Americanized. She definitely had complained about not wanting to be married and she felt the pressure that the rest of the family had expectations for her that she did not want. She felt like “if I start acting out too much, then they're gonna move ahead the wedding date just to get me fixed.” She had a boy that she preferred, that—so she wanted to marry who she wanted to marry. This man had sent in a marriage proposal which was turned down because she was already promised to somebody else. She had tried her best to convince them to choose the man she wanted and they refused. I don't know that she was as worried about the implication of wanting this other man, but she was worried that if she acted out too much she would—they would move up the date just to get her back in line. (ST 1)

## Characteristics of Forced Marriage Experiences, Including the Intersection with Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Violence

Once the engagement was set in motion, often due to one of the tactics described in the previous section, some of the interviewees described warning signs of abuse, based on either the behavior of the person to whom they were engaged or the future in-laws, and wished they had taken better heed. In the case of the following FM survivor, this included being pressured to have sex prior to the marriage ceremony.

Oh, we don't date—even dating before marriage is not considered that good. You are supposed to be a virgin when you get married, but because we were engaged, and he promised me that he's marrying me—it was a big engagement—formally engaged. He forced me to have sex with him, and it happened. I didn't like it, but I had to give in because it was in the gentle forcing. I was very, I still am in a way—all these controlling people take control of my life, and I just give in because I don't know how to say no. I didn't know how to say no. (EX1)

Other respondents did not recall any warning signs prior to the marriage; however, some described experiencing a number of threats and abuses after they were married. As the next series of quotes illustrates, these abuses and threats included emotional, psychological, and physical abuse; sexual violence; and forced labor. Perpetrators were often the spouse and, in many cases, the victim's in-laws.

Once, he told me he was gonna go to the kitchen and get a knife, and he started describing to me what he was gonna do with the knife. One time, he told me he was gonna put his fingers around my neck and squeeze until I couldn't breathe anymore, and he was gonna watch. He was gonna watch until I took my last breath. He would describe in really graphic detail. (EX9)

His parents abused her. His parents actually beat her, cuz she wasn't happy. She was telling them, "This guy doesn't love me. I'm not happy." They actually beat her. (ST 8)

There were a couple of times where he pushed her down on the bed, she ran to her room, closed the door. There were some other times where he was taking pictures of her with his cell phone, trying to hide it. She just started feeling increasingly uncomfortable and was convinced that if left alone again, he would try and take it further and rape her. (ST 1)

...and they got married two or three weeks later. Then pretty much instantly, basically that day when they got home, they were like, "You're gonna be our slave. You're not leaving." Then the husband was like, "I don't want to have anything to do with you." Didn't even consummate the

marriage. They kept her trapped in the house and beat her. She did all the cooking, cleaning, all of that. Wouldn't let her leave. No contact with family. Like I said, pretty much immediately. (ST 3)

### Impact of Forced Marriage

For the individuals who were able to escape their forced marriage situation, both the short-term and long-term impacts of the abuses they suffered manifested in different ways. This also applied to individuals who were not married yet but were experiencing a whole host of pressures from their family and community to marry. Some respondents spoke of suicide and losing the will to live.

Apart from that, I feel like I've had a really big impact—it's had a really big impact on my mental health as well. Since I started college, I've been having suicidal thoughts, and I've been having thoughts of things that I just can't handle while doing school at the same time. It's really discouraging that you're just waiting for me to end school so that this can happen. It also put me into the hospital back in June. (EX 3)

One respondent described the mental anguish their friend experienced prior to the marriage, and how nobody cared to do anything about the friend's mental state.

By the time they decided, "Okay, you're gonna get married right now," she started throwing up, losing weight, and all that. By the end of the three weeks, she had actually lost about five to ten pounds. Yeah, she was very—she had, pretty much, a nervous breakdown, but it didn't matter. Nobody cared. (KS4)

Others stated that they no longer trusted anyone, and had trouble functioning in society.

Then she had to go through therapy. She had to become normal. She had a therapy of close to three and a half months. She used to be a really gregarious person. She used to really social. She talked to everybody. Post that, when she sees a male, the opposite gender, she's scared. She says, "No." She's very reluctant. Even if she's gotta go to the grocery stores to get something, she's scared about it. She's always feeling insecure that somebody will harm her. (KS5)

The long-term effect that respondents reported most related to their life goals and ambitions. For many individuals, higher education was a huge part of their identity and the key to their independence. They felt that if they had the ability to go to college, they would be able to financially support themselves and have a fulfilling career. However, the forced marriage experience, or even the threat of a forced

marriage, prevented many of the individuals from going to college, or, in some cases, from completing their education, due to the effects of PTSD, depression, and anxiety.

What happened was I ended up not continuing my education and then I ended up getting pregnant. I had my first daughter when I was 20. So then basically, my life took a totally different trajectory than what it would've taken because had I not gotten married at that time. (EX8)

The impact has been pretty great. Not great as in wonderful, but there's a big impact on me because I feel like it's been affecting my studies for a long time. I had to take—one semester, I had to withdraw from an entire semester. This past semester, I had to completely withdraw from all of my classes because of this issue. I wasn't able to take my course load because this was on my mind the whole time. Another semester, there was an issue of domestic violence at my house, and I wasn't able to do any of my classes, which is why I'm graduating a year late. (EX3)

Many of the respondents felt that they did not have anyone they could turn to for help or advice since they felt ashamed or that a friend, counselor, or teacher would not understand what they were going through. One young man described how in his culture, men are not supposed to show emotion or vulnerability, thus making it even more difficult to seek help.

There's also that masculinity embedded with empathy and emotion. From what I have experienced—I can speak from personal experience—empathy, crying, emotionally being vulnerable and being sensitive is seen as weakness in a lot of Indian culture systems that I have been part of. It's like, you're a man. Roll up your sleeves. Buck up. Even my mom, when I cried, she was like, "Stop crying. You're a man. You're not supposed to cry." It's like it didn't compute for her. (EX4)

### ***Stakeholder Responses to Forced Marriage***

Stakeholders' exposure to FM varied; only one stakeholder had a FM-specific branch of their professional work. The other fourteen served a diverse array of clients, such as domestic violence survivors, children, homeless youth, and immigrants. Respondents' exposure to FM clients varied widely—from stakeholders who had only ever worked on one FM case to stakeholders who had worked on over thirty.

The stakeholders interviewed collectively provided a range of services in their work, including: case management; safety planning; legal assistance; domestic violence resources; immigration assistance; therapy; religious-based services; English classes; and technical assistance and training. According to respondents, services most often used by FM clients included: case management and financial assistance;



legal assistance (primarily immigration and divorce); name changes and relocation assistance; housing assistance; and safety planning. Themes for service provider responses to forced marriage are described below.

### Types of Clients Served

Due to changes in the project methodology, it is difficult to draw conclusions about the characteristics of stakeholders' forced marriage clients. Because initial stakeholder outreach was conducted only to service providers in the D.C. metropolitan region who worked with South Asian clients, Urban spoke to more stakeholders with direct experience working with South Asian clients than any other group and any findings should be taken cautiously.

Despite this, stakeholders reported some diversity in client characteristics. While most providers worked with South Asian clients, others reported working with clients from The Philippines, Sudan, Egypt, Iran, and Ethiopia. One organization with substantial experience providing FM services (to about 40 direct cases) described how client characteristics had more to do with the organization's relationships with other stakeholders than the prevalence of forced marriage in certain places:

**Interviewer:** Can you walk us through the typical case characteristics you see?

**Interviewee:** In terms of countries, we do see cases from all over the world. There are some countries that we see—there are some countries where we have relationships with embassies and so we know the consular officer there and they refer directly to us, but I don't think that that is necessarily representative of more forced marriage happening in certain parts of the world. (ST 14)

Respondents also described serving clients of all ages and genders. Some said they worked with more women, but conceded that was likely due to the fact the bulk of their services were designed to respond to victims of gender-based violence.

### Screening and Identifying Forced Marriage Clients

Service providers differed in their methods for screening and identifying FM clients. Only one organization had an explicit screening tool to screen for FM and the others typically identified cases after clients sought other services related to other identified forms of abuse, such as domestic violence.

A lot of times the issue of forced marriage isn't the presenting problem. People aren't necessarily coming in or calling because they're being forced to marry somebody. They are coming in because

of depression or anxiety. Then as the story unfolds, a lot of that maybe traced back to how they ended up getting married in the first place. (ST 8)

This was a common theme across service providers; few service providers had clients that self-identified as having experienced a “forced marriage” and few had clients that sought out services directly related to FM. Service providers felt this made it difficult to determine whether clients needed assistance related to a FM, and some felt they were so unfamiliar with the concept that they could only identify FM in clients who felt comfortable speaking about it. One public school counselor spoke to this issue, remarking:

Because they are these familial issues, or the way that things are dealt with. If students aren’t disclosing, then we don’t know that that is a struggle or that it exists...I mean, it’s great when you have those students who are able to advocate and speak up for themselves when they’re in these situations. Then we can respond to help, but it’s a very hard situation for us to identify without that disclosure. (ST 10)

As discussed above, many service providers felt they might have been missing clients in need of assistance due to their inability to recognize FM among those who feel uncomfortable speaking about their experience.

### Challenges in Forced Marriage Service Provision

Stakeholders described challenges at every point in the service provision process, from making initial contact with FM clients to assisting them to safely leave the situation if that is their expressed preference and receive the support services needed. Primary challenges that arose across all interviews were: 1) clients’ lack of awareness of FM services; 2) barriers clients face in reaching out to access services; 3) a lack of culturally competent services; and 4) the need for increased resources and training to deliver appropriate services to FM clients.

The most common theme across all interviews was that potential FM clients were largely unaware that FM services exist. Many stakeholders and potential clients spoke to the need for increased awareness and outreach, with remarks such as:

Honestly, they don’t know about these agencies that exist. They don’t know about these people who actually come and help you out with these kind of situations, and they also are scared. They don’t want these kind of—they would think their parents would go to jail. They don’t want repercussions for their family. They wanna just get away clean. (KS7)

Respondents described how even if people were made aware of FM services, they then face additional barriers in accessing them. These barriers include, but are not limited to: fears of retribution, fears of harming family members or being isolated from their family, and fears of immigration ramifications. Stakeholders added that these fears may have been magnified for those who have had negative contact with institutions, immigration officials, or the criminal justice system or for those that came from cultures that emphasize family unity:

Nobody is going to cut their parents off. And be okay with it. I don't actually think in any culture people are really whole when they cut off their families, but it is more acceptable in American culture. It is not okay. (ST 8)

Another primary challenge identified was a lack of culturally competent services for FM clients. Several stakeholders remarked that clients may have been hesitant to use services because they believed service providers would treat them differently or judge them for practices related to their race, ethnicity, or religion. Many stakeholders discussed the need for culturally competent services to mitigate this fear and provide assistance that understands peoples' backgrounds and values. One school counselor spoke to this as she discussed students not coming forward to seek help about unwanted marriages:

I think that was actually a big barrier and is a big barrier as to why these students might not be as open about it because they know that in American culture that's not appropriate to be marrying a cousin, and they're embarrassed. (ST 9)

Others felt this fear is influenced by current political circumstances and discrimination:

I suspect, given the political climate of what's happening with the Muslim world in general that I don't know that people coming from Muslim countries would be given the same deference as this lady who was coming from Guatemala. (ST 7)

Beyond the need for increased awareness around FM services and for reducing the barriers potential clients face in accessing services, stakeholders identified a number of challenges related to delivering services themselves. Some of these challenges included the need for: more training on how to involve family members in the healing process<sup>4</sup>; more culturally competent services to refer out to if they are not offered in-house; more resources to help clients under 18; more programs for economic

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<sup>4</sup> It is crucial to involve a well-established community based organization with authentic buy-in and legitimacy to intervene on a family level.

empowerment and increased education; and more services for people who are experiencing emotional pressures, not just physical force. Stakeholders felt safety-planning and emergency case management was helpful for some people but not needed for others in situations where the force was less physical.

Across the board, most stakeholders did not feel like they had received enough training or had the proper tools at their disposal to adequately deliver services related to FM. While findings must be taken cautiously due to the limited nature of the sample, they suggest the need for increased training, tools, and resources to ensure potential clients are knowledgeable of available services and feel comfortable seeking assistance.

### *Implications of Qualitative Results*

Three recommendations emerged from the interviews with those who experienced or were threatened with a FM, those who knew someone who was, and stakeholders. They include raising awareness regarding FM within the community, in schools, and among service providers; increasing access to counseling, both individual and family, in addition to group counseling sessions; and, offering trainings to providers who may encounter individuals who are threatened with or in a FM, including school officials.

#### Raising Awareness

I am from the community myself, not that I'm that involved, but even within my family I started thinking about maybe we need to be speaking more about what this looks like. What are our childrens' needs? How do we give them more of a say and letting go of the community and cultural pressure? (ST 4)

#### Counseling

Definitely someone just to talk to and if you have [access to] a counselor or a psychologist or whoever because they know how to interpret people's feelings better, but having a group as well. AA's for alcoholics, but having a support group is honestly the greatest thing you could do. You can hold events. You can have confidential meetings, like hey if you wanna come talk to me. I've been through this. When you have that personal experience, the person's more likely to trust you and they know where to go from there, rather than someone just telling you it'll be okay. They're trying to be nice and understanding. I get it, but they don't understand the situation completely. (EX6)

#### Trainings

Cultural trainings, cultural humility, cultural understanding, and not to use this fear that we don't wanna make a mistake because we don't wanna get sued because we overstepped someone's

culture and someone’s understanding because at the end of the day, it’s still a child who you are mandated to protect. (ST 15)

## Google Survey

### *Design and Procedure*

We created a short survey to broaden our understanding of the nature and scope of forced marriage (FM). The goal of this effort was to supplement the limited information we learned about FM in the D.C. metropolitan region (from qualitative interviews) with a basic understanding of the nature and scope of forced marriage more broadly. The survey was administered anonymously via Google Consumer Survey to a sample of men and women (18 years and older) of all backgrounds across the country.

Although we did not directly offer financial incentives in exchange for the survey, Google Consumer Survey requests survey completion in exchange for online activity behind a pay wall. Participants would see the survey on their screen online (before reading a news article, for instance). Upon opening the survey, participants were informed of the nature of the study, including that the study was an Urban Institute survey funded by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) about marriage and choice, and asked if they would like to participate. If an individual consented, they would be taken to the second screening question, which determined whether they had ever experienced FM or been threatened with FM (the term “forced marriage” was not used, but was described as “a marriage or engagement that 1) you did not choose whether, when, or whom you married; or 2) you could not say ‘no’ without bad things happening.”) If they answered in the affirmative, participants were presented the rest of the questions on the Google survey.

In addition to data drawn from questions in the survey instrument, we used metadata inferred through Google Analytics,<sup>5</sup> which were distributed across seven data dimensions, including: (1) age; (2) gender; (3) urban density; (4) income; (5) parental status; (6) geography; and (7) publisher category. These data were pulled from users’ online experiences upon agreeing to a waiver of consent requested by the research team. All data obtained were anonymous, represented by a unique ID, and did not contain any identifying information about the respondent.

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<sup>5</sup> In addition to survey question responses, Google collected and reported data about the individuals who opted to participate in the Google Consumer Survey, otherwise known as “metadata.” These data—which, for our survey, included information on age, gender, urban density, income, parental status, geography, publisher category, and response time for each question—are used to summarize basic, demographic information about survey respondents, without needing to include those questions in the survey instrument. For the analyses in this technical report, we used Google Analytics’ data on age, gender, urban density, income, and publisher category, to identify differences between respondents who reported experiencing forced marriage and those who did not.

## *Measures*

The survey was developed in collaboration with the Tahirih Justice Center. Due to character constraints and Google requirements, which limited the sensitivity of the kinds of questions that could be asked, the survey was brief (ten questions). The questions asked whether individuals had a choice in their marriage experience, the reasons behind the FM, whether they experienced emotional or physical violence before, during, or after their experience, what services they used (including justice system responses), and basic demographic questions.

## *Sample*

We used Google Consumer Survey to field the survey on FM in order to reach a national pool of respondents. The survey was fielded through five different platforms, described in Table 1 (in appendix A), where participants were incentivized to complete the survey in exchange for online activity behind a pay wall, such as accessing a news article or using a mobile application. Most respondents (72.1 percent) were presented the survey when accessing an online news article, while cell phones and other mobile devices were the least common media (4.7 percent) through which respondents accessed the survey. The rate of responses to the survey was 37.9 percent, well within the rates in which general population surveys tend to fall (between 20 and 40 percent; Dillman et al., 2009; Hamilton, 2003). Among the 21,034 individuals sampled and contacted by Google to participate in the survey, 7,979 (37.9 percent) volunteered to participate, among which 7,952 (99.7 percent) were considered valid responses.<sup>6</sup> Finally, of all valid responses, 6,625 (83.3 percent) had sufficient gender data and had not skipped the survey question addressing forced marriage; thus, these data were used in our analytic sample. Table 2 (in Appendix A) shows differences between those who volunteered to participate in the survey and those who refused by gender, age, income, and geographic type. A higher percentage of respondents were women than non-respondents; and a higher percentage of respondents were over the age of 45 than non-respondents. The proportion of our sample that earned an income below \$49,000 was greater among respondents than among non-respondents; those who earned between \$50,000 and \$99,000 were represented more among non-respondents than respondents; and those who earned above \$100,000 were represented more among respondents than non-respondents. By geographic type, those in rural communities were more likely to participate than not, whereas those in urban and suburban neighborhood showed the opposite pattern.

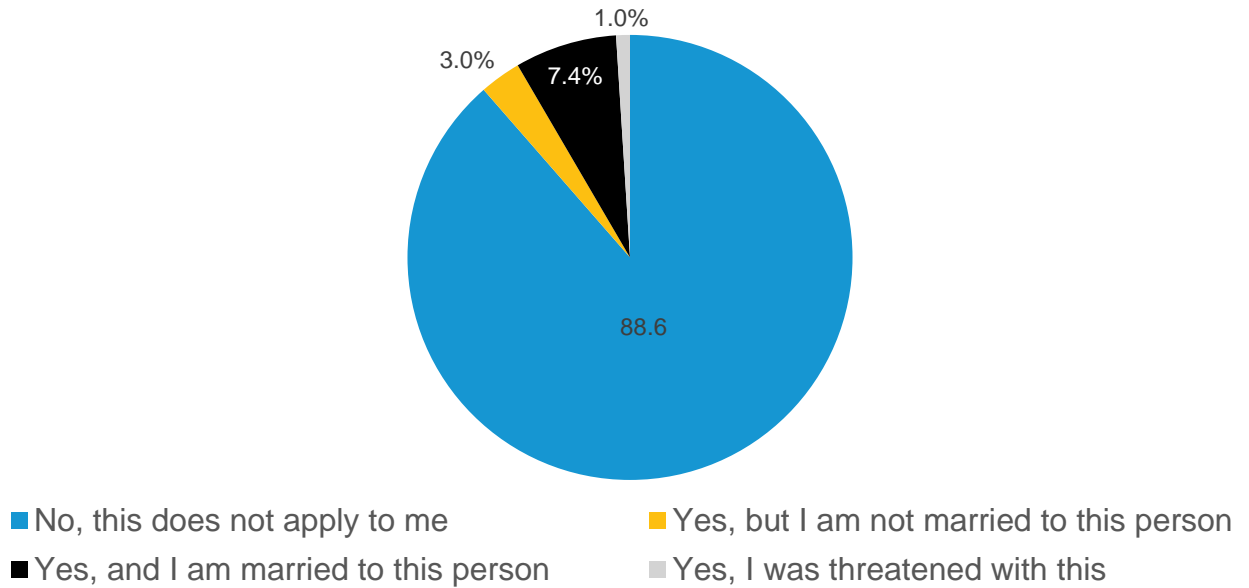
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<sup>6</sup> We excluded from our analysis responses (N=27) in which four or more race categories *and* four or more religion categories were selected in ways that made it clear the respondent was not answering the survey with integrity, as well as open ended responses that did not address the survey question.

### *A Sample Estimate of Forced Marriage in the United States*

Figure 1 shows that among those who participated in the survey, reported whether they were in a forced marriage, and for whom gender information was available, 88.6 percent reported that they had not faced or experienced forced marriage; 3.0 percent reported that they had faced or experienced forced marriage, but were no longer married to that person; 7.4 percent indicated that they had, and were married to that person; and 1.0 percent reported being threatened with forced marriage.

## Figure 1. Estimate of Forced Marriage in the Survey



**Source:** Urban Institute Survey on Forced Marriage in the United States  
**Note:** N = 6,625

URBAN INSTITUTE

### *Distinctive Characteristics of Individuals Who Have Experienced Forced Marriage*

Table 3 (in appendix A) documents statistically significant differences between men and women who indicated whether they are, have been in, faced, or have never experienced a FM. Among the share of female respondents in this sample, 9.2 percent indicated having experienced a FM—whether currently or previously—and 13.6 percent of males reported the same. The difference between genders stems from those respondents who indicated that they experienced a FM and they are still married to that person (5.4 percent of all females and 9.4 percent of all males). Rates of those who were threatened with a FM are identical for both genders (1.0 percent) and of those who faced FM and are not currently married to the person are close (2.9 percent of females and 3.2 percent of males).

Table 4 (in appendix A) examines the proportion of this sample that experienced FM by age, income, and geographic type, after combining the three types of yes categories for forced marriage (I am not married to this person, I am married to this person, and I was threatened with this). No statistically

significant differences between those who did and did not experience forced marriage were found for income or geographic type. However, a small, but statistically significant, difference was found for age. Among those who had experienced a forced marriage, there was a slightly higher percentage of respondents between 35-54, and a corresponding lower percentage of the other age categories, compared to respondents who had not experienced a forced marriage.

### *Implications of Survey Results*

The survey shows that, among this sample, proportionally more male than female respondents reported experiencing or being faced with FM and were still married to that person (5.4 percent of all females and 9.4 percent of all males). Though this is a small difference between groups, we did not expect that proportionally more males than females would report this type of experience and therefore these findings should be interpreted with caution for several reasons. First, just over one-third of those who responded to the online survey actually completed it. Because the final sample that completed the survey differed significantly from the full sample invited to participate by age, income, and geographic type, it is possible that sampling bias was introduced by non-response. Thus, the differences between those who had and had not experienced FM that we report in Table 4 may not represent all sampled individuals who were victims of FM. More specifically, our survey may have overlooked individuals below the age of 44, among whom, research indicates, FM is more common (McFarlane et al. 2016; Bristol Safeguarding Children Board 2011); those with incomes between \$50,000 and \$99,999; and those who live in urban and suburban neighborhoods, which make up a majority (80.7 percent) of the total U.S. population (American Community Survey 2015).

Second, we posit that we may not have been able to reach some victims of FM, particularly those who experience coercion and control, and may have reached some respondents who defined choice in marriage more broadly than we intended. Victims of forced marriage, particularly female victims, may be reluctant to take such general population surveys on “marriage and choice” fearing that their responses might be revealed to their partners and/or perpetrators. Moreover, those experiencing isolation, another common feature of FM, may have been prevented from participating in the survey. Those in FMs may not have the ability to freely access the internet, and therefore may not have been invited to participate in the survey. On the other hand, because this was a first attempt to measure FM in a survey such as this, without the ability to pilot test items with a random sample, it is not clear if the survey respondents interpreted the measure as it was intended. Though we worded our screener questions based on specific definitions of experiences, some respondents may have included relationships they had that we would not have included based on our operational definition of FM. It is clear from a few of our qualitative interviews that some individuals defined their experiences as forced, though we would not because they did not meet the project team’s collectively agreed upon definition of forced marriage. Instead we would categorize



what they described as either unhealthy (or even abusive) relationships and/or relationships that they ultimately regretted entering into.

Further, our findings for this survey may be analogous to those found in the adult intimate partner violence (IPV) literature in that particular types of victims are difficult to identify and include in national sampling strategies. Research on FM has found that most FM survivors are females, and the practice is often viewed as an extension of gender-based violence, finding a strong correlation with IPV (Khaunun, 2008). Johnson (1995) argues that samples of the general population accurately identify only some forms of IPV. These surveys are particularly prone to bias toward situational couple violence—the most common form of IPV characterized by physical violence that is sometimes reciprocal between partners but does not include coercive control. These surveys under-sample victims of intimate terrorism, which is a form of IPV that includes the presence of coercive control, where a partner attempts to exert control over their partners using a wide array of control tactics (psychological manipulation, financial control, isolation from family and friends, etc.), as well as physical violence (Johnson, 2005). Intimate terrorism is less represented in general sample surveys (11 percent), as compared to surveys including court samples (68 percent) or shelter samples (79 percent). Johnson argues that intimate terrorists and their victims are significantly less likely to be represented in such surveys than those who experience situational couple violence, because they risk potential exposure and continued violence. Further, Johnson’s studies show that victims of intimate terrorism are primarily female and perpetrators of it are primarily male.

## **Dissemination and Close-out Activities**

The project team will present findings at the Annual Meeting of the American Society of Criminology in November, 2017. Prior to the end of the grant period, the research team will upload de-identified data collected during the study along with code and documentation used to produce analyses to the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data, in accordance with NIJ requirements. Additionally, the project team will submit at least one journal article for publication prior to the end of the grant period on September 30, 2017. This may include findings discussed in this technical summary along with additional findings that are specific to foci of the article(s).

## Appendix A

Publisher Category	Percent Represented
Arts & Entertainment	6.2%
Mobile	0.1%
Mobile App	4.6%
News	72.1%
Other	17.0%

Table 2. Percent and Number of Participation by Age, Income, and Geographic Type <sup>1</sup>			
	Participated in the Survey (N)	Did Not Participate in the Survey (N)	Total (N) <sup>2</sup>
<b>Gender<sup>3</sup></b>			
Female	50.7 (3,436)	50.4 (5,311)	50.5 (8,747)
Male	49.3 (3,341)	49.6 (5,223)	49.5 (8,574)
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,777</b>	<b>10,544</b>	<b>17,321</b>
<b>Age<sup>4</sup></b>			
18-24	12.0 (770)	15.0 (1,471)	13.8 (2,241)
25-34	17.6 (1,134)	19.0 (1,870)	18.5 (3,004)
35-44	16.0 (1,031)	17.2 (1,688)	16.7 (2,719)
45-54	18.6 (1,198)	16.9 (1,661)	17.6 (2,859)
55-64	19.4 (1,248)	17.6 (1,726)	18.3 (2,974)
65+	16.5 (1,063)	14.4 (1,417)	15.2 (2,480)
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,444</b>	<b>9,833</b>	<b>16,277</b>
<b>Income<sup>5</sup></b>			
\$0-\$49,999	67.0 (5,239)	66.4 (8,573)	66.6 (13,812)
\$50,000-\$99,999	31.6 (2,475)	32.6 (4,211)	32.2 (6,686)
\$100,000-\$149,999	1.1 (89)	1.0 (124)	1.0 (213)
\$150,000+	0.2 (19)	0 (5)	0.1 (24)
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,822</b>	<b>12,913</b>	<b>20,735</b>
<b>Geographic Type<sup>6</sup></b>			
Rural	22.2 (1,714)	20.3 (2,565)	21.0 (4,279)
Urban	29.8 (2,303)	30.7 (3,885)	30.4 (6,188)
Suburban	48.1 (3,717)	49.0 (6,196)	48.6 (9,913)
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,734</b>	<b>12,646</b>	<b>20,380</b>

<sup>1</sup> The information for age, income, and geographic type was provided by Google analytics and not by self-report. The information on gender combined data from both the survey and Google Analytics.

<sup>2</sup> N's for each demographic variable reflect totals for non-missing values. Among those who participated in the survey, the number of missing values for gender was 1,264, age was 1,508, for income was 130, and for geographic type was 218. Among those who did not participate, the number of missing values for gender was 2,521, for age was 3,222, for income was 142, and for geographic type was 409.

<sup>3</sup> X<sup>2</sup> = 61.4; p < .05; <sup>4</sup> X<sup>2</sup> = 57.6; p < .05; <sup>5</sup> X<sup>2</sup> = 20.7; p < .05; <sup>6</sup> X<sup>2</sup> = 10.3; p < .05

Table 3. Percent and Number of Respondents in Forced Marriages by Gender <sup>1</sup>			
	Female (N)	Male (N)	Total <sup>2</sup> (N)
No, this does not apply to me	90.6 (3061)	86.0 (2812)	88.6 (5873)
Yes, but I am not married to this person	2.9 (97)	3.2 (104)	3.0 (201)
Yes, and I am married to this person	5.4 (181)	9.4 (307)	7.4 (488)
Yes, I was threatened with this	1.0 (32)	1.0 (31)	1.0 (63)
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,371</b>	<b>3,254</b>	<b>6,625</b>

<sup>1</sup>  $\chi^2 = 44.9; p < .05$

<sup>2</sup> This analysis eliminated 1234 respondents for whom a gender category was not known.

**Table 4. Percent and Number of Respondents in Forced Marriage by Age, Income, and Geographic Type<sup>1</sup>**

	<b>Has Experienced Forced Marriage (N)</b>	<b>Has Not Experienced Forced Marriage (N)</b>	<b>Total (N)<sup>2</sup></b>
<b>Age<sup>3</sup></b>			
<b>18-24</b>	10.9 (70)	12.2 (692)	12.1 (762)
<b>25-34</b>	17.3 (111)	17.8 (1,009)	17.7 (1,120)
<b>35-44</b>	19 (122)	15.8 (897)	16.1 (1,019)
<b>45-54</b>	21.7 (139)	18.3 (1,040)	18.6 (1,179)
<b>55-64</b>	16.5 (106)	19.7 (1,116)	19.3 (1,222)
<b>65+</b>	14.5 (93)	16.3 (927)	16.1 (1,020)
<b>Total</b>	<b>641</b>	<b>5,683</b>	<b>6,322</b>
<b>Income<sup>4</sup></b>			
<b>\$0-\$49,999</b>	67.0 (499)	66.4 (3,824)	66.5 (4,323)
<b>\$50,000-\$99,999</b>	31.3 (233)	32.2 (1,853)	32.1 (2,086)
<b>\$100,000-\$149,999</b>	1.6 (12)	1.1 (66)	1.2 (78)
<b>\$150,000+</b>	0.1 (1)	0.3 (17)	0.3 (18)
<b>Total</b>	<b>745</b>	<b>5,760</b>	<b>6,505</b>
<b>Geographic Type<sup>5</sup></b>			
<b>Rural</b>	19.5 (144)	22.1 (1,261)	21.8 (1,405)
<b>Urban</b>	31.3 (231)	29.8 (1,702)	30.0 (1,933)
<b>Suburban</b>	49.3 (364)	48.1 (2,743)	48.2 (3,107)
<b>Total</b>	<b>739</b>	<b>5,706</b>	<b>6,445</b>

<sup>1</sup>The information for age, income, and geographic type was provided by Google analytics and not by self-report.

<sup>2</sup> N's for each demographic variable reflect totals for non-missing values. The number of missing values for age was 1,520, for income was 130, and for geographic type was 218.

<sup>4</sup>  $\chi^2 = 12.2; p < .05$

<sup>5</sup>  $\chi^2 = 2.2; p > .05$

<sup>6</sup>  $\chi^2 = 2.7; p > .05$

## Appendix B

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## Appendix C

### Forced Marriage Interview Protocol

*Thank you for agreeing to speak with us. We would like to review again the marriage scenarios we described earlier. These scenarios include whether you or someone you know did not feel you/they had a choice in whether you/they got married, who you/they married, and when you/they married; and/or felt there would be negative consequences if you/they did not agree to marry when and whom your/their family or community desired or there would be negative consequences if you/they wished to leave a marriage). We are calling these scenarios “forced marriage.”*

1. Do any of these situations apply to you or have they applied to you in the past? Do you know someone who experienced a forced marriage or was threatened with a forced marriage?

[IF FM SITUATION/S CURRENTLY APPLIES TO R OR HAS APPLIED TO R IN THE PAST, CONTINUE TO SECTION I]

[IF R HAS NEVER BEEN THREATENED WITH OR EXPERIENCED FM, BUT KNOWS SOMEONE WHO HAS, USE THE APPROPRIATE PROTOCOL]

#### SECTION I: Background Information

Thank you. Before we discuss the circumstances surrounding your marriage or threatened marriage, we would like to learn more about your background.

2. What city and state do you live in?
3. How old are you?
4. What gender do you identify as?
5. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
6. How would you describe your family’s background (national origin or ethnicity)?
  - a. If R answers South Asian, probe for additional details (e.g., Afghani, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Bhutanese, Indian, Nepali, Sri Lankan, Other)
7. Where/in what country were you born?
  - a. Is this where you grew up?
8. [If not born in the US], how many years have you been living in the US?
9. [If not born in the US], did you live in any other countries prior to moving from your birth country to the US?
10. [If not born in the US], What event brought you to the US?
11. Can you describe what life was like growing up? [Probe for the following:]
  - a. Parental Income/Parental Education
  - b. R’s education
  - c. Family life (including navigating across cultures)
12. What language did you speak at home growing up?
13. What languages do you currently speak?
14. Where/in what country were your parents born?
15. Where/in what country do your parents currently live?
16. How did your parents meet and marry?
17. Did your parents have a choice of whether, when, and whom they married?
  - a. *Probe:* In what ways did your parents have choices or the ability to give input regarding getting married.
18. What is your religious affiliation if any?
19. What is your parent’s religious affiliation, if any?



20. How many siblings do you have (both living and deceased)?  
[If no siblings, go to Q25]
21. What are the genders of your siblings?
22. What birth order are you? (e.g. eldest, youngest, middle)
23. Are any of your siblings married or have any of your siblings been married?
  - a. *Probe (if yes)*: Did your siblings have a choice about whether, when and whom they married?
24. What is your current marital status? [Probe for the following]
  - a. Never Married
  - b. Currently married and living with spouse
  - c. Currently married but not living with spouse
  - d. Legally separated
  - e. Widowed
  - f. Divorced
  - g. Marriage annulled
  - h. Other (e.g., living with in-laws; divorced legally but not religiously)
25. Have you been married or engaged to be married more than once?
26. Do you identify as LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender)?
27. Do you have any children?
  - a. *If yes*, how many children do you have?
  - b. What (is/are) the ages and genders of your child/children?
28. Please describe your current living situation?
  - a. Who is R currently living with (children, relatives, spouse, in-laws, etc)
  - b. Number of children in the household
  - c. Total number of people in the household
29. What is your current immigration status? [Probe for the following]
  - a. US citizen
  - b. Dual citizen (What countries: \_\_\_\_\_)
  - c. Legal Permanent Resident (“Green Card holder”)
  - d. Refugee/Asylee
  - e. Other Humanitarian Visa (T, U, SIJS, Other)
  - f. Employment Based Visa
  - g. Education Based Visa
  - h. Some other immigration status
  - i. No Status/Refuse/Don’t Know

## SECTION II: FM CONTEXT

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### ***[IF NEVER MARRIED]***

Earlier you mentioned that some of the forced marriage scenarios we discussed applied to you at some point in the past. I’d like to ask you some questions about that situation **[SKIP TO SECTION V: THREATS OF FORCED MARRIAGE]**

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### ***[IF CURRENTLY MARRIED]***

Earlier you mentioned that some of the forced marriage scenarios we discussed applied to you at some point in the past. Did these situations occur during the marriage to your current husband/wife?

*[IF YES]* Thank you. I’d like to ask you some questions regarding your current marriage. **[PROCEED TO SECTION III: EXPERIENCED FM]**

*[IF NO]* Thank you. In situations where these scenarios applied, did you marry your partner in the end?

*[IF YES]* I’d like to ask you a few questions about the situation **[PROCEED TO SECTION III: EXPERIENCED FM. ADJUST QUESTIONS ACCORDINGLY]**

*[IF NO]* I’d like to ask you a few questions about that situation. **[SKIP TO SECTION IV: THREATS OF FORCED MARRIAGE]**

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***[IF CURRENTLY WIDOWED/SEPARATED/DIVORCED]***

Earlier you mentioned that some of the forced marriage scenarios we discussed applied to you at some point in the past. Did these situations occur with your former partner?

[IF YES] Thank you. I'd like to ask you some questions regarding that marriage. **[PROCEED TO SECTION III: EXPERIENCED FM. ADJUST QUESTIONS ACCORDINGLY]**

[IF NO] Thank you. In situations where these scenarios applied, did you marry your partner in the end?

[IF YES] I'd like to ask you a few questions about that situation **[PROCEED TO SECTION III. ADJUST QUESTIONS ACCORDINGLY]**

[IF NO] I'd like to ask you a few questions about that situation. **[SKIP TO SECTION V: THREATS FORCED MARRIAGE]**

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**SECTION III: EXPERIENCED FM**

30. How long have you been/were you married?
31. How would you describe your (current/former) partner? [Probe for the following]
  - a. *Probe:* Can you tell me what your husband/wife's current age is? If not, can you approximate if they are older or younger than you and by about how many years?
  - b. *Probe:* Has your former or current husband/wife been diagnosed with any kind of disability?
  - c. *Probe:* Would you mind sharing with me whether or not your husband/wife identified as LGBTQ?"
32. Did someone you know introduce you to your partner with the intention that you would marry him/her?
  - a. [If YES], Who introduced you to your partner?
33. How long did you know your partner before you got married?
34. Did you have a chance to meet your partner before you were married? If yes, how long after you met your partner did the wedding take place?
35. Were you allowed time to reflect about the decision to get married?
36. How much input and how much were you involved in the decision to get married?
  - a. Who else was involved in the decision? What role did they play?
  - b. What were the main reasons that they wanted you to get married?
37. How old were you and your partner when you got married?
38. Can you tell me about your marriage ceremony? [probe for the following]
  - a. Was there a distinct religious ceremony separate from a civil/legal proceeding?
  - b. Where did the marriage ceremony or ceremonies take place (country(ies))?
39. Were you living in (country above) when you got married?
  - a. [IF NO], did you feel you had a choice about moving to (country) to get married?
  - b. [IF NO], did you travel to (country) just to get married?
40. Did you want to get married?
41. Did you get married to the person you wanted?
42. Do you believe you had a choice or wanted to have a choice in deciding whom to marry?
  - a. [IF NO], what did you feel would have happened if you said no?
43. Did you feel you had a choice about when you got married?
  - a. [IF NO], Why not?
44. Do you believe your spouse or potential spouse had a choice about the marriage?
  - a. [IF NO] Why not?
  - b. What behaviors did you observe or experience from your spouse or potential spouse as a result of their lack of choice (e.g. abuse, abandonment, infidelity, depression, substance abuse etc.)
45. How did your spouse act during the different stages of the marriage arrangement and the marriage?

46. Did you experience any coercion, threats, violence or threats of violence before the marriage took place or during the marriage ceremony (either by your family, community or intended spouse)? [Probe for the following]
- i. Emotional Blackmail [e.g., Someone threatened harm to self/others, told R that his/her reputation or family's reputation would be ruined]
  - ii. Isolation [e.g., R was threatened with being an outcast or family limited contact (or threatened to limit contact) with others]
  - iii. Deprivation [e.g. R was deprived food, medical care, housing, or financial support]
  - iv. False Accusations [e.g., family reported R as missing or falsely accused R of a crime]
  - v. Deception [e.g. R was tricked or deceived into travel overseas for marriage or to attend a marriage ceremony they did not have knowledge of; R's marriage certificate was forged; or R was married without knowledge or without understanding the nature or consequences of a ceremony in which they participated]
  - vi. Force [e.g., R was kidnapped and forced to travel abroad, physically restrained, or drugged]
  - vii. Threats & Violence [e.g., R was threatened with or a victim of physical violence; members of R's family were threatened or victims of physical violence, someone else including a significant other that family did not approve of and or their family was threatened with violence]
47. Did you feel any community pressure around whom, when and whether you got married?
- a. Probe for cultural/family traditions surrounding marriage
  - b. Probe for cultural norms surrounding family roles (e.g., duties of a son; duties of a daughter)
  - c. Probe for cultural norms surrounding gender roles (e.g., female/male) and if there are any unique ways where gender roles may differ from other cultures
  - d. Probe for cultural norms surrounding fatalism (i.e., it's my destiny)
  - e. Probe about the concept of honor, stability, and reputation of the family
  - f. Probe cultural norms that stigmatize single or divorced women
  - g. Probe cultural norms surrounding loyalty to the community, family, and the patriarch of the household, especially as related to individuals coming forward and reporting violence.
  - h. Probe concern about assimilation or losing/rejected family's cultural identity
48. What role, if any, do you believe religious expectations played in the actions of [REFER TO INDIVIDUALS REFERENCED IN THE PREVIOUS QUESTION] during this time?
- a. Probe for religious expectations surrounding relationships (e.g., being a daughter/son; wife/husband; sibling; and so forth)
  - b. Probe for religious expectations surrounding gender roles
  - c. Probe if your partner/family has tried to use religion to justify violence and abuse (i.e., "God-ordained" wife beating)
  - d. Using religion to state that Western rules and laws are different than religious norms.
  - e. Religious threats (e.g., individual will go to hell; God will be angry for the disobedience; marriage is sanctioned by God; excommunication from the religious community; refusal to grant a religious divorce)
  - f. Probe: What role or contact, if any, did the clergy (e.g., Imam/Chaplain, priest) play in the forced marriage? *For example, not asking for the consent of the daughter/son; not reviewing and ensuring whether the marriage they religiously ordained was consensual; advocating or pressuring the individual to go forward with the forced marriage or presiding over a marriage ceremony they knew to be forced.*
49. Before you got married, did you try to do anything to avoid getting married? (e.g., run away, feign illness).

- a. [IF YES] what were the consequences you feared?
- b. What were the actual consequences?
- c. *Probe (only if the person left/escaped):* Can you describe how you escaped? (e.g. how long did you wait to escape?, where did you go?)
- d. [If NO] Why not? (What would have made it possible for you to escape?)

**SECTION IV: INTERSECTION OF FM, IPV and SV**

As part of this study, we are particularly interested in learning more about individuals’ experiences of violence in their homes and in their lives in general. By violence, I mean any use of force such as being hit, slapped, kicked or grabbed to being beaten, sexually assaulted, or shot. We are also interested in whether you’ve ever been threatened, felt unsafe with [INSERT PARTNER/FORMER PARTNERS NAME], or felt you had to do things you didn’t want to do.

- 50. Did you experience any threats of violence after you were married to your partner?
  - a. [IF YES], By whom?
  - b. [IF YES], How often did [INSERT PERSON FROM ABOVE] threaten you with violence
- 51. Did you experience any physical, emotional or sexual violence after your marriage?
  - a. [IF YES], By whom?
  - b. [IF YES], How often did you experience [TYPE OF VIOLENCE] from [INSERT PERSON FROM ABOVE]
- 52. Has your partner or anyone else ever forced you to trade sex with others for shelter, money, drugs, or anything else (e.g., to pay off a smuggling debt)?
- 53. Has your partner or anyone else ever forced you to do work for him/her or someone else, such as cleaning a family member’s house?
  - a. [IF YES], Please describe. (probe: felt couldn’t refuse, not paid or paid less than minimum wage, pay went to partner or another person other than R)
- 54. How common were threats of violence in your household and community growing up? (Please describe)
- 55. How common were acts of violence in your household and community growing up? (Please describe)
- 56. [IF CURRENTLY MARRIED] Since you’ve been married, have you wanted to leave the marriage?
  - a. [IF YES], why haven’t you been able? What do you feel would happened if you tried to leave the marriage?
  - b. What resources or support would be helpful?

**SECTION V. THREATENED WITH FM, BUT NEVER MARRIED**

- 57. How did you meet your suggested spouse?
  - a. Did someone introduce you two? Who?
  - b. Did you have an opportunity to communicate or meet the individual?
- 58. [If met via family] Did you want to have input in deciding who to marry or did you fully trust your family to select your partner?
- 59. Can you describe your potential spouse? [Probe for the following:]
  - a. Age and age gap
  - b. Gender
  - c. Disability
- 60. Did partner want/consent to marry R?
  - a. Relationship to R (e.g., cousin, family friend, brother of an in-law)
  - b. Citizenship/immigration status of potential spouse/residence of potential spouse
- 61. Did you discuss the topic of marriage with your family? How did they bring up the topic of marriage?
- 62. Did you feel anyone forced or coerced you to get married?

- a. [IF YES] Who?
63. What were the main reasons that they wanted you to get married?
64. Was there a specific event, argument or behavior that triggered your family's desire to have you get married? (for example, dating or "Americanized" behavior)
65. If you did want to have a choice do you feel you were able to express your preferences in deciding whether, when, and whom to marry?
66. Were you allowed time to reflect about the decision to get married?
67. How much input and how much were you involved in the decision to get married?
68. Did you want to get married?
69. Did you feel you could say no or disagree with anything you did not like/you did not feel comfortable with?
  - a. [IF NO], what did you feel would have happened if you said no?
70. Were marriage arrangements made?
  - a. If yes, what type (civil, religious) and where? (US or another country)
  - b. If yes, how old were you when the arrangement for marriage was made?
  - c. If yes, did you feel you had a choice regarding the marriage arrangement?
    - i. [IF NO], Why not?
71. Can you describe what life was like for you during the time before the marriage was supposed to take place? (probe for positive and negative experiences)
72. Did you experience any coercion, threats, violence or threats of violence before the marriage was supposed to take place (either by your family, community or intended spouse)? [Probe for the following]
  - i. Emotional Blackmail [e.g., Someone threatened harm to self/others, told R that his/her reputation or family's reputation would be ruined]
  - ii. Isolation [e.g., R was threatened with being an outcast or family limited contact (or threatened to limit contact) with others]
  - iii. Deprivation [e.g, R was deprived food, medical care, housing, or financial support]
  - iv. False Accusations [e.g., family reported R as missing or falsely accused R of a crime]
  - v. Deception [e.g. R was tricked or deceived into travel overseas for marriage or to attend a marriage ceremony they did not have knowledge of; R's marriage certificate was forged; or R was married without knowledge or without understanding the nature or consequences of a ceremony in which they participated]
  - vi. Force [e.g., R was kidnapped and forced to travel abroad, physically restrained, or drugged]
  - vii. Threats & Violence [e.g., R was threatened with or a victim of physical violence; members of R's family were threatened or victims of physical violence, someone else including a significant other that family did not approve of and or their family was threatened with violence]
73. Did you feel any community pressure around whom, when and whether you got married?
  - a. Probe for cultural/family traditions surrounding marriage
  - b. Probe for cultural norms surrounding family roles (e.g., duties of a son; duties of a daughter)
  - c. Probe for cultural norms surrounding gender roles (e.g., female/male) and if there are any unique ways where gender roles may differ from other cultures
  - d. Probe for cultural norms surrounding fatalism (i.e., it's my destiny)
  - e. Probe about the concept of honor, stability, and reputation of the family
  - f. Probe cultural norms that stigmatize single or divorced women
  - g. Probe cultural norms surrounding loyalty to the community, family, and the patriarch of the household, especially as related to individuals coming forward and reporting violence.

- h. Probe concern about assimilation or losing/rejected family's cultural identity
74. What role, if any, do you believe religious expectations played in the actions of [REFER TO INDIVIDUALS REFERENCED IN THE PREVIOUS QUESTION] during this time?
- a. Probe for religious expectations surrounding relationships (e.g., being a daughter/son; wife/husband; sibling; and so forth)
  - b. Probe for religious expectations surrounding gender roles
  - c. Probe if your partner/family has tried to use religion to justify violence and abuse (i.e., "God-ordained" wife beating)
  - d. Using religion to state that Western rules and laws are different than religious norms.
  - e. Religious threats (e.g., individual will go to hell; God will be angry for the disobedience; marriage is sanctioned by God; excommunication from the religious community; refusal to grant a religious divorce)
  - f. Probe: What role or contact, if any, did the clergy (e.g., Imam/Chaplain, priest) play in the forced marriage? *For example, not asking for the consent of the daughter/son; not reviewing and ensuring whether the marriage they religiously ordained was consensual; advocating or pressuring the individual to go forward with the forced marriage or presiding over a marriage ceremony they knew to be forced.*
75. How did you avoid getting married? (e.g., run away, feign illness, negotiated to put it off until after some event – college graduation for example)

#### **SECTION VI: VICTIM SERVICES**

76. Did you try to seek out any help from anyone when you (were threatened with forced marriage/experienced forced marriage) (e.g., formal systems or community/religious/family)?
77. What kind of help were you looking for? When did you seek help relative to understanding that you were going to be forced to marry?
- a. [IF YES], who was it and what was the response (DR note: Probe for victim blaming)
    - i. [IF CONTACTED LAW ENFORCEMENT], what did you ask for and what happened?
      - i. How did the police respond?
      - ii. How did the police treat you?
      - iii. Were you or your spouse/potential spouse arrested? Were others arrested?
  - b. [IF NO], would you mind sharing the reasons why you didn't seek help (e.g., probe for cultural, religious, social reasons)
    - i. Lack of familiarity about resources/options for help
    - ii. Fear of violence/reprisal
    - iii. Reputation
    - iv. Burdening the family/Discouraged by Family or Friends
    - v. Hope that the family will change their mind/not ready to take action
    - vi. Didn't think anyone could help
    - vii. Need for children to have a good father
    - viii. Financial insecurity
    - ix. Not wanting to be seen as a victim that could come with future trauma, shaming, or blame
    - x. A sense of individual denial about the situation
    - xi. Fear that it would mean severing ties with the family
    - xii. Fear of authorities generally
    - xiii. Fear of immigration consequences (e.g. family members deported)
    - xiv. Fear of criminal consequences (e.g. family members jailed)
    - xv. I thought I could handle this myself

78. Thinking back to when you first got married/were threatened with forced marriage, what type of resources or support do you believe could have helped you resist the marriage?
79. What resources or support would you recommend to help others facing a forced marriage or trying to leave a forced marriage?
80. Have you received any services as a result of the situations we previously discussed?
  - a. [IF YES], Who provided the services?
  - b. [IF YES] What type of services did you receive?
  - c. [IF,YES] How helpful were the services?
81. What is the most helpful response you received from an individual or an organization?
82. What type of services/resources would have been most helpful for you?
  - a. law enforcement support (probe further what type of services)
  - b. Victim services agencies (probe for the following)
  - c. Access to housing/shelter
  - d. Orders of protection
  - e. Legal Support
  - f. Federal/local state government assistance
  - g. Child Protection Services involvement
  - h. Mediation with family
  - i. Counseling
  - j. Employment
  - k. Relocation and Resettlement
  - l. Immigration services
  - m. Community/Family interventions
    - o Intervention from Clergy
    - o Intervention from community elders
    - o Lack of pressure from community/peers
83. Do you think having a criminal law (which would result in someone potentially being arrested and placed in jail/prison) against forced marriage would be helpful? (probe: why or why not?)
84. If there was a civil protection order that you could get from a judge to order your family to stop forcing you to get married would you have wanted to use it? (The civil order would not result in someone being arrested, unless they violated it). (probe: why or why not)

**SECTION VII: IMPACT OF FM**

86. What has been the impact of being (threatened/forced) into a marriage? [Probe for the following]
  - a. Depression
  - b. Helplessness
  - c. Shame
  - d. Self-Harm
  - e. Attempted Suicide
  - f. Alcohol and substance abuse
  - g. Inability to work or pursue school
  - h. Poor work/academic record
  - i. Excessive absence from work
  - j. Excessive absence from school
  - k. Future abusive relationships
  - l. Other (please explain)
  
87. What kind of challenges have you faced in seeking help to either escape the forced marriage or cope with the forced marriage? [Probe for the following]
  - a. Lack of Service agencies that understand this issue and my needs

- b. Concern for fate of siblings and others in the family
  - c. Lack of online confident support group
  - d. Social isolation
  - e. Feelings of loneliness and loss
  - f. Lack of outside support system (all family and community members in coordination or pressured to comply with family wishes)
  - g. Lack of options due to the fact that I was a minor at the time that the situation was taking place
88. What are your recommendations for improving responses to individuals that are threatened with forced marriage or have experienced forced marriage?
89. How common do you think forced marriage is in the community you identify with?
90. Approximately how many people do you know who've been threatened with or experienced a forced marriage?
91. Do you think there is anything that can/should be done within your community to address forced marriage?
89. Is there anything else you would like to add about the topic of forced marriage and how to address and prevent it?
- [PROCEED TO SECTION VIII ONLY IF R INDICATED THAT S/HE KNEW SOMEONE WHO WAS THREATENED WITH OR EXPERIENCED FM IN Q1]

**SECTION VIII: KNOW SOMEONE WHO EXPERIENCED FM**

*Earlier you indicated that you knew someone who was threatened with or experienced some of the forced marriage scenarios we discussed. I'd like to ask you a few questions about that person/s. Is that ok?*

90. How many people do you know who've experienced these types of situations?
91. In thinking about the person you know the best, is that pattern similar or different from the other people/situations you know.
92. What is your relationship to them?
93. Can you describe a little bit about them? (e.g., gender, ethnicity, living situation, etc.)
94. Can you tell us a little bit more about their experience? [probe for the following]
- a. Age of both individuals at marriage/during threats (if never married)
  - b. Consent of both partners
  - c. Role of others in FM/threats of FM
    - i. Emotional Blackmail [e.g., Someone threatened harm to self/others, told R that his/her reputation or family's reputation would be ruined]
    - ii. Isolation [e.g., R was threatened with being an outcast or family limited contact (or threatened to limit contact) with others]
    - iii. Deprivation [e.g. R was deprived food, medical care, housing, or financial support]
    - iv. False Accusations [e.g., family reported R as missing or falsely accused R of a crime]
    - v. Deception [e.g. R was tricked or deceived into travel overseas for marriage or to attend a marriage ceremony they did not have knowledge of; R's marriage certificate was forged; or R was married without knowledge or without understanding the nature or consequences of a ceremony in which they participated]
    - vi. Force [e.g., R was kidnapped and forced to travel abroad, physically restrained, or drugged]
    - vii. Threats & Violence [e.g., R was threatened with or a victim of physical violence; members of R's family were threatened or victims of physical violence, someone else including a significant other that family did not approve of and or their family was threatened with violence]
95. What impact has the FM had on [INSERT INDIVIDUAL NAME/S within the specific incidents mentioned above]



96. How did you learn about their situation?
  - a. Did you try to assist them? If yes, how? If no, why not?
  - b. What did they need in terms of support and help?
  - c. What did they need that they were not able to get? Can you describe these barriers/challenges?
  - d. What types of services/resources do you think should have been available to help assist them/yourself?
97. Has [INSERT INDIVIDUAL NAME/] sought help from anyone else?
  - a. [IF YES] Where/from whom?
  - b. [IF NO] Why not?
98. Is there anything else you'd like to discuss about this situation?