Children Australia
Volume 38 | Number 4 | pp. 162–170 | © The Authors 2013 | doi 10.1017/cha.2013.31

Post-secondary Education Responses to Forced Marriage and Gendered Abuse Against Students

Renate Klein
London Metropolitan University England

This article examines post-secondary education responses to intimate partner violence and forced marriage. Harmful practices that disproportionately affect women and girls, such as sexual assault, domestic violence, and forced marriage, are particularly prevalent for women aged 16 to 25. This is also the age bracket during which attendance at college or university peaks. Post-secondary education therefore constitutes a potentially significant institutional context for intervention. To what extent universities are prepared or willing to take on this responsibility is a topic that is receiving increasing international attention. This article reports on recent findings from the UK and discusses them in an international and cultural framework. Cultural stereotyping in relation to gendered violence has rightly been criticised. However, as this article will argue, there are aspects of culture that are often glossed over in research and policy, yet are important for an understanding of how people and institutions think about and react to gendered abuse. The case of university responses to intimate partner violence and forced marriage illuminates these issues.

■ **Keywords:** Violence against women, forced marriage, gendered abuse, post-secondary education, institutional responses, informal third parties

This article will address the role of post-secondary education (PSE) institutions in responding to gendered abuse against students, in particular sexual harassment, rape, domestic violence and forced marriage. While at present there seems to be widespread, indeed near global agreement, that more should be done about such abuses, it remains difficult to adequately address these multi-faceted and often highly contentious issues. In many ways, despite significant progress over the past decades, intervention, in particular intervention in the sense of major structural and cultural changes, is still at early stages.

PSE institutions are understood here to include any universities or colleges following secondary education. Their role as a context for abuse and intervention has received comparatively little attention despite mounting evidence from several countries that female students experience significant amounts of abuse while at university (see Sloane & Fitzpatrick, 2011, for Australia; NUS, 2010, for United Kingdom; Fisher, Cullen & Turner, 2000, for USA; Feltes, Balloni, Czapska, Bodelon, & Stenning, 2012, for a European multi-country study). These studies have focused on a range of abuses including sexual harassment (for young women at university a near ubiquitous experience), sexual assault and rape, and domestic violence. Much less evidence is available with regard to forced marriage, although this article will address recent research (Freeman & Klein, 2012). Some of this abuse is perpetrated on university premises, quite a lot of it is perpetrated by other students (most of them male), and some is perpetrated by (mostly male) professors and other university staff. Finally, to some extent the structural and cultural conditions at a university may actually promote gendered abuse (probably in somewhat culturally-specific patterns) by creating conditions conducive to perpetration and impunity (Phipps & Young, 2012; Sanday, 1990). Thus, it has become increasingly clear that universities are social, cultural and institutional contexts where perpetration of gendered abuse occurs at significant rates. It is less clear to what extent universities as institutions can successfully interfere in or prevent such abuses.

In the community, two cornerstones of intervention in sexual assault and domestic violence have been specialist services (such as rape crisis centres and domestic violence

ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE: Renate Klein, 98 Lindsey Road, Newburgh ME, 04444 USA
Email: renate.klein@londonmet.ac.uk

projects) and criminal justice measures (recent efforts in several countries suggest that the recent response to forced marriage is following a similar path; Australia criminalised forced marriage in March 2013, Simmons & Burn, 2013; the United Kingdom is planning criminalisation in 2013[1]). While both approaches are important, an exclusive focus on them leaves out large swathes of society where significant change still needs to happen in order to intervene more effectively in gendered abuse. These include the informal networks of victims and perpetrators (including their families; Klein, 2012), and institutional contexts in which victims and perpetrators spend significant amounts of time, among them schools, universities, workplaces, and institutional homes.

The remainder of this article will examine universities as contexts for intervention in gendered abuse. The next sections summarise research from different countries on gendered abuse of students. This includes quantitative surveys that have estimated the prevalence of sexual harassment, sexual assault and domestic violence against female students. In addition, findings from recent qualitative research in the United Kingdom are presented, which focused on university responses to these same abuses but also included forced marriage. Based on this evidence conclusions are then drawn within a conceptual framework that emphasises human development as a gendered cultural experience, and individual students' lives as personal trajectories shaped by gendered and cultural circumstances. In this perspective a number of challenges become visible regarding the question of how to engage with young people at university – be they victims, perpetrators, or third parties – about gendered abuse. The paper concludes with a discussion of universities' ability to meet these challenges and, as institutions, intervene successfully in gendered abuse.

Prevalence of gendered abuse against female students

Most of the empirical data that will be reported or referenced in this paper refer to harmful practices that were perpetrated primarily by men against women, but the term gendered abuse is also meant to be broader than that. Some students experience sexual or domestic violence from a homosexual partner. While most victims of forced marriage are young women, some are homosexual men and some are male or female adults with disabilities; multiple perpetrators may be involved, including female relatives. Some cases of gendered abuse involve physical violence, whereas in others exploitation of rank or emotional vulnerability may dominate. The expression gendered abuse is used here as shorthand to retain semantic reminders of the significance of gender and of the fact that many cases do not involve physical violence (terminology in this field continues to be debated; Wilcox, 2006; Wright & Hearn, 2013).

[1] https://www.gov.uk/government/news/forced-marriage-to-become-criminal-offence

In 2011, the National Union of Students Australia published a survey of Australian students' experiences of sexual harassment, sexual and physical violence (Sloane & Fitzpatrick, 2011). The survey, delivered online, elicited responses from over 1,500 female students. In terms of sexual harassment, 86% of respondents reported experiencing sexual comments and noises, 35% experienced unwanted touching, and 25% unwanted "physical contact of a sexual nature" (p. 11). Seventeen per cent of respondents experienced "stalker-like or obsessive behavior" (p. 11). Nine per cent of respondents had experienced physical violence. With regard to sexual violence it is not entirely clear whether the numbers quoted in the report refer to all respondents or to a subset of those who answered the sexual assault questions. Twelve per cent experienced rape, and 67% reported unwanted sexual experiences of any kind (which may have included rape or attempted rape). Finally, of the respondents who experienced any of the above, 3% reported the incident to university authorities, and 2% reported to police.

The Australian survey had been modelled on a British survey published a year before. In 2010 the National Union of Students (NUS) in the United Kingdom had released the first country-wide study of women students' experiences of abuse (NUS, 2010). In the British survey 68% of respondents reported experiences of sexual harassment on campus during their time as a student; 16% reported unwanted kissing, touching or molesting, and 12% reported having been stalked. Moreover, 14% reported having experienced a serious physical or sexual assault while a student at university; and over 10% were a victim of serious physical violence. Of the women who were seriously sexually assaulted only 10% reported the assault to the police and only 4% reported it to their university.

In the United States, the first surveys of rape on campus emerged in the 1980s (Koss, Gidycz, & Wisniewski, 1987). A more recent, nationally representative telephone survey of 4,446 women attending 2- or 4-year PSE institutions revealed that over the past seven months (almost the length of an academic year) 2.8% of respondents had experienced an attempted or completed rape (Fisher et al., 2000). Because some women were victimised more than once, the rate of incidents was higher (35.3 per 1,000 female students) than the rate of victimised individuals (27.7 per 1,000 female students). Figures for other forms of victimisation tended to be higher still. For instance, 13.1% of female students experienced stalking, and the rate of stalking incidents (which could have affected the same individual more than once) was 156.5 per 1,000 female students.

When comparing these findings, note that, aside from other differences in methodology, in the US survey the reference period was shorter (past seven months) than in the British survey (while at university) and possibly also than in the Australian survey. Fisher et al. (2000), while cautioning about extrapolating their data over longer time periods, suggest that over an average US college career (four to five years) 20% to 25% of female students may experience

rape or attempted rape. Even without extrapolating over a longer time period, the data from (Fisher et al., 2000) suggest that in a single academic year alone there may be 35 rapes per 1,000 female students. Extrapolating this figure to larger campuses, there may be approximately 350 rapes per 10,000 female students in a single academic year.

This figure is much higher than the number of rapes on US college campuses that are officially reported to police or campus authorities. Fisher, Daigle, Cullen, & Turner (2003) found that only 2% of female students who experience sexual violence reported the incident to police, and only 4% reported to campus authorities. These low rates of reporting to authorities are consistent with the findings in the British and Australian surveys quoted above, and consistent with other research suggesting that official reports of sexual (and domestic) violence underestimate actual victimisation rates by large margins (Klein, 2012). There are different reasons for not reporting to authorities. The victim (or third party) may not think that the incident warrants reporting or may not trust the authorities. Lack of trust has many facets and includes fearing that authorities may not believe what is reported, blame the victim, fail to act, or act in a way that does more harm than good (Fisher et al., 2003).

However, underreporting to authorities should not be confused with lack of disclosure, and the fact that the authorities know little about actual victimisation should not be read as though hardly anybody knew anything. Quite to the contrary, a great many people know of incidents of sexual and domestic abuse but these people are typically friends, family members or co-workers in the victim's (and perpetrator's) social networks (Klein, 2012). Fisher et al. (2003) found that although fewer than 5% of victims reported sexual victimisation to authorities (police or campus administrators), 70% told somebody in their social networks (mostly friends). Similarly, in an analysis of survey data from four British universities, Stenning, Mitra-Kahn, & Dunby (2012) found that between 40% and 70% of students who had experienced sexual harassment, sexual violence or stalking disclosed the experience to an informal third party (mostly friends), whereas only between 5% and 12% reported to university authorities and between 2% and 11% reported to police. In a reanalysis of data from the National Survey on Violence against Women in the US, Kaukinen & DeMaris (2009) found that 27% of women (in the general community, not just on campus) reported an assault to police, whereas 73% asked family, friends or neighbours for help. Smith, Coleman, Eder, & Hall (2011) found similar differences between formal reporting and informal disclosure in the 2009–2010 British Crime Survey. In the US, Ahrens, Campbell, Ternier-Thames, Wasco, & Sefl (2007) found that among rape survivors who disclosed the rape, 75% told informal third parties first, and only 15% told a formal third party first (police, doctor, therapist).

Although the exact numbers vary from study to study, and from country to country, there is remarkable consistency in the overall pattern that only a minority of incidents is ever reported to law enforcement (and campus authorities). In contrast, many more incidents (although not all) are known to friends, family members or other informal third parties. They can come to such knowledge through significantly different pathways, which in turn are likely to impact their responses. In many cases, informal third parties may know of an incident because the victim told them; because they witnessed the incident (many children witness abuse against their mothers, Edleson, Mbilinyi, Beeman, & Hagemeister, 2003; Mullender, Hague, Imam, Kelly, Malos, & Regan, 2002), because the perpetrator told them, or because, as in some cases of forced marriage, they played a role in perpetration (Sen, 2005). Thus, informal third parties with knowledge of abuse against somebody in their midst are positioned to victim or perpetrator (or both) in specific ways. These social and interpersonal configurations are also relations of unequal power and influence in family, neighbourhood and institutional contexts and thus are likely to shape third-party responses to both victim and perpetrator, including inaction and looking the other way.

In terms of finding support, there is evidence that only a small number of victims ever access specialist services such as rape crisis centres or domestic violence projects; when they do, they tend to be highly satisfied with the support received, but only few get to this point (Klein, 2012). Thus, the formal systems responsible for apprehending perpetrators and the specialist services sector best equipped to provide appropriate support to victims are also the ones who know the least about the full extent of crimes committed and victimisations experienced. Instead, it is informal third parties, whose capacity to effectively confront perpetrators and support victims is not well understood, and may vary considerably, who are most aware of actual victimisation.

The limited reach of the criminal justice system is one reason why criminalisation as a societal strategy to address harmful practices remains controversial. In some cases criminalisation may offer useful legal recourse. However, the criminal justice system, as a whole, is limited in what it can do, which has been documented and critically discussed in particular with regard to sexual violence (Corrigan, 2013; Kelly, Lovett, & Regan, 2005; Lovett & Kelly, 2009). Approaches that appear to be "tough on crime" may appeal to our sense of justice but their implementation is often ineffective and problematic, in particular for minority groups. With regard to the criminalisation of forced marriage in Australia, Simmons & Burn (2013) caution that although there have been a few cases in which victims used the new legislation successfully, criminalisation has several drawbacks (compared to civil legal measures and community education): it is reactive, requires a high burden of proof and expects young people to testify against their parents and family members.

In sum, the empirical evidence suggests that gendered abuse against female students is widespread, only a small minority of victims report incidents to police, and informal social networks are much better informed about abuse

than formal authorities. Research has also shown that few victims reach specialist service providers and that criminal justice measures have limited effectiveness. For a PSE institution this creates a tricky situation. It is extremely likely that gendered abuse, in particular sexual harassment of female students, but other patterns as well, is an issue on its campus. It is also extremely likely that hardly any of this abuse will come to the attention of campus authorities in the form of formal reports. And it is very likely that the community-based systems set up to support victims and apprehend perpetrators will be able to do so only in a few cases. In the majority of cases victims will deal with the abuse, for better or worse, on their own, including at the cost of failing academically or having to leave the university. PSE institutions have an opportunity to become proactive in addressing this issue or they can choose to leave it up to the victimised student to cope and let the perpetrator be.

Which course PSE institutions take in this situation is likely to depend on a number of factors including the legal frameworks that govern the responsibilities of PSE institutions vis-à-vis their students, the outlook of institutional leadership on issues of gender and gendered abuse (including the way in which institutional leadership interprets its legal responsibilities), and concerns about reputation in an increasingly competitive PSE market. For instance, in the United States, the legal framework specifies a web of responsibilities and obligations with regard to gender discrimination (Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972[2]), crime reporting (Clery Act and amendments[3]), and privacy of student education records (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act[4]). In Britain, universities fall within the public sector equality duty (section 149 Equality Act, 2010), which requires them to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation, and enhance equality of opportunity.

Obviously, at least in my opinion, the moral imperative is for universities to proactively address gendered abuse, and to make this an institutional priority. In the United States, many institutions claim to do so and many have benefited from generous federal funding to strengthen campus responses (Violence Against Women Act of 1994 and subsequent reauthorisations[5]) so that prevention activities abound (Karjane, Fisher, & Cullen, 2006; Moynihan, Banyard, Arnold, Eckstein, & Stapleton, 2011). Nonetheless, progress is uneven and accomplishments can easily be unravelled. Compared with North America, the issue of violence against female students in Britain has received less sustained attention, but this may be changing (Phipps & Smith, 2012). However, still very little is known about how British universities respond to gendered abuse.

[2] http://www.dol.gov/oasam/regs/statutes/titleix.htm
[3] http://www.securityoncampus.org/summary-jeanne-clery-act
[4] http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html
[5] http://www.ovw.usdoj.gov/legislation.htm

British university responses to gendered abuse and forced marriage

Forced marriage has been defined as marriage in which one or both partners did not have the "ability to freely and fully consent to marriage" (Forced Marriage Unit, 2010; Gill & Anitha, 2011; Simmons & Burn, 2013). The ability to freely and fully consent may be undermined by numerous factors including psychological pressure, a strong sense of filial duty, family loyalty, fear of deportation, fear of harm, overt threats, coercion, actual physical violence, or mental disability. Issues of consent and how best to support victims are often associated with entering into an unwanted marriage, but are as relevant in terms of getting out of one (Chantler, Gangoli, & Hester, 2009).

Forced marriage should not be confused with arranged marriage in which family members introduce prospective spouses who have the ability to freely and fully give or refuse consent. However, the terms arranged marriage and forced marriage are often used in confusing ways or interchangeably, and the interactions and pressures within families may be such that forced marriages appear arranged. For instance, Mogensen (2013) reports that young people may say they did not outright object to their marriage because they knew that objecting would not have been an option, and therefore conclude in their own minds that the marriage was arranged, not forced. Furthermore, as in a recent case in Ireland, the family dynamics may be so confusing or obscure that the victim may be unaware that a marriage ceremony had already taken place (High Court, 2011 No. 2031P, 18 June 2013). Thus, while on paper forced marriage and arranged marriage can be distinguished clearly, in practice this may not always be the case. However, this should not lead third parties to conclude that "when in doubt, assume it was arranged" but rather "when in doubt, assume that the family relationships and pressures are complex and the person affected may need very careful and considerate support".

We included forced marriage in our recent research on university responses to gendered abuse because the majority of victims of forced marriage are in the traditional age bracket for attendance at PSE institutions. The National Centre for Social Research (NCSR) estimated that in 2008 there were between 5,000 and 8,000 cases of forced marriage in the United Kingdom, of which 96% involved female victims and 4% male victims. Of these cases, 26% concerned victims 16 to 17 years old, 40% concerned victims 18 to 23 years old, and 20% concerned victims 24 and older, which means again that the majority of victims were at traditional PSE age (Kazimirski, Keogh, Kumari et al., 2009). In 2011, the Forced Marriage Unit (FMU), a joint initiative of the British Foreign & Commonwealth Office and Home Office, gave advice or support on 1,468 cases related to forced marriage. Sixty-three per cent of victims were between 16 and 25 years old (78% of victims were female; 22% were male).[6] In 2012, the FMU gave advice or support on 1,485

[6] Statistics obtained from the FMU website

cases (82% involving female victims, 18% involving male victims). While the youngest victim was 2 years old and the oldest 71 years, in nearly three quarters of cases (71%) the victims fell into the traditional age bracket for PSE (16 to 25 years old).[7] The FMU also noted an increase in the number of cases over holiday periods suggesting that while classes are in session students are somewhat protected. If that was the case, then time at university would be an important opportunity to seek help and PSE institutions should be all the more prepared.

The findings from our pilot research at two British universities are reported in detail in Freeman and Klein (2012). This research attempted to shed more light on how problems related to forced marriage and gendered abuse present to university staff such as counsellors, faith representatives and lecturers, and how institutions respond. The goal was to identify ways in which university responses may be strengthened.

The findings are based on interviews with university front line staff – counsellors, advisors, personal tutors, lecturers and faith representatives – and middle management. In addition, local police officers and specialist services providers in the community were interviewed about cases involving students. Interviews with front-line and teaching staff focused on how problems related to forced marriage and gendered abuse present, and how staff responses may be enhanced, including internal procedures and referrals to specialist services. Interviews with middle managers focused on institutional policies and commitments. Interviews with police officers and staff at specialist services providers focused on working relationships with PSE institutions, referral practices, and ways to integrate universities into multi-agency systems. Interviews were undertaken face-to-face and over the phone. Each interview followed a semi-structured questionnaire (see Freeman & Klein, 2012, for details).

Pathways to disclosure

With regard to sexual assault against adults Ullman (2010), in the United States, argued that disclosure is not necessarily a discrete event but often a drawn-out process during which information about what happened may be shared in hints and suggestions as well as in detailed stories. Our interviewees reported similar dynamics in which the problems students brought up first, or for which they had been referred, included missing classes, falling behind academically, and having financial difficulty. With regard to forced marriage, too, red flags in academic contexts include poor academic performance, sudden changes in attendance, and requests for absence from classes (Forced Marriage Unit, 2010). Once students felt they could trust the staff member, information about victimisation would begin to "eke out". This cautious approach does not mean students do not want to talk about abuse but rather that trust is essential; directly asking about abuse may then open the door for a conversation about it. In terms of how students access support, staff members reported a mix of routes including, students approaching them directly, referrals (from other student services staff, personal tutors, teaching staff, or other students), chance encounters on campus, and following outreach events.

Visibility and complexity of problems

In the pilot research we found that individual front line staff saw up to 15 cases per year of violence against female students. Most of these cases were domestic violence from a husband or boyfriend, but other cases were sexual assaults, and abuse from the student's relatives. Cases of forced marriage appeared to be almost invisible to university staff even though, over the period of one year, specialist service providers in the community had worked with about three students threatened by forced marriage.

Many of the problems that students did reveal were complex, involving multiple traumas, and often set within life stories of struggle, vulnerability and hardship: trying to leave a domestically abusive relationship while providing for a child; exploitation by relatives on whom a student depended economically; psychological abuse from the father combined with physical abuse from the brother; ostracism from parents because the student had had an abortion; struggling where parents held conservative faith perspectives; a husband initiating or escalating abuse to interfere with the student's academic career; chronic injuries and illness sustained from abuse from father; a history of abuse as a child; experience of multiple abusive relationships (family members and intimate partners); ongoing litigation that may interfere with provision of support; fear of deportation when separating from an abusive husband; physical violence in the context of forced marriage; split loyalties toward family/husband; mental health problems as symptoms of exploitation and abuse.

Considering the base rates of abusive experiences among young women as estimated in victimisation surveys, the cases that staff members at universities see are almost certainly only the tip of the iceberg (Freeman & Klein, 2012). Nonetheless, according to the British NUS survey those few students who did seek support from the university said they were satisfied with what they received. This speaks to the importance and quality of frontline student services. Given the seriousness of the abuses (and crimes) concerned, more light needs to be shed on how institutions achieve quality services and how high-quality services can be sustained in the long term.

Specialist services provision at PSE institutions

Our findings so far suggest that PSE institutions rarely have a consistent approach to training frontline student staff on

[7] https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/141823/Stats_2012.pdf

issues of gendered abuse and forced marriage. On the whole, the sector's approach appears to be piecemeal; responding is left to the initiative of individual staff members. All frontline staff in our pilot research felt they had generic listening and support skills. A few said they had had training on specific mental health issues or on rape crisis support. What seemed to work well were teams in which at least one staff member had specialist violence against women expertise and with whom the other staff members could consult or refer students to. Similarly, staff members who had been in their posts long enough to establish working relationships with specialist services providers in the community, were assets in such teams. However, when staff members work alone and lack specialist training, the gap in expertise may be filled with problematic assumptions. Four types of assumptions stood out in our research.

Problematic assumptions

First, assumptions about how problems will present themselves. Some of the interviewees stated that forced marriage was not an issue because they had never had a student come to them who said 'I am forced into marriage'. Considering how difficult and risky it may be to raise concerns about forced marriage with outsiders like university staff members, it is unrealistic to assume that the issue would present so clearly or that students would frame their concerns in language a staff member might expect to hear (Freeman, Klein, & Mburu, 2013). It is more likely that the problem would present indirectly, if at all, perhaps through academic difficulty or absence from classes, or that students might refer obliquely to relationship or family problems.

Assumptions about resources

Second, assumptions about which resources are available in the community. All of the interviewees were aware that resources for victims of gendered abuse existed in the United Kingdom. However, specialist services are unevenly distributed an not available in every community (Coy, Kelly, & Foord, 2007).

Assumptions about responses

Third, assumptions about how to respond to the disclosure of abuse. Mindless comments about what the student should have done can be hurtful and victim-blaming. Furthermore, staff members may not be in a position to gauge risk from violent perpetrators. Support for victims of gendered abuse may require considerable specialised expertise, including knowledge of abusive dynamics, of the disclosure process, as well as cultural knowledge of the life circumstances of victims. Some perpetrators may be extremely dangerous, which requires proper safety planning, including awareness that people close to the victim may expose her to danger.

Assumptions about relationships

Fourth, assumptions about the relationships between students and their parents and about how young people might approach problems with their parents or family members. Many counselling approaches are based on the assumption that talking things over helps. However, in cases of forced marriage it may be fruitless for the student to talk things over with her (or his) parents, and involving an outsider may make things even worse. Moreover, outsiders may underestimate the risk of serious harm to the student. The FMU, among others, warn that in cases of forced marriage or violence in the name of honour, well-meant efforts to include a student's family may endanger her.[8] In such cases the FMU advises strongly against family counselling, mediation or arbitration (Forced Marriage Unit, 2010). In the United Kingdom, guidance for professionals in the education and health care sectors has warned specifically against attempts to resolve cases of forced marriage through family counselling or mediation. Forced marriage "should not be viewed as a 'generational or culture clash' that can be solved by mediation. Mediation, reconciliation and family counselling as a response to forced marriage can be extremely dangerous . . . There have been cases of women being murdered whilst mediation was being undertaken". (Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2007). In a similar vein, Khanum (2008) warned of a 'collusion culture' between social services agencies and local community leaders from the same or similar background as victims who may collude with the victim's parents (p. 55).

Unwarranted assumptions about family relationships are also problematic in other cases of gendered abuse. For example, if a student who has been raped on campus asks university officials not to tell her parents about this, they should honour her request and neither assume that parents ought to know or that parents will support their child through the aftermath of a rape. The student may have good reason not to tell her parents.

Based on fieldwork in Denmark, Mogensen (2013) described the difficulty Danish authorities had to grasp the interpersonal and cultural significance and ramifications of cases in which young women were threatened by forced marriage or crimes in the name of honour. In particular, it seemed difficult for authorities to understand what options, agency, and freedom of choice a young woman in such circumstances might have. They seemed to assume either that she would have no agency at all and treat her like a small child or that she would be like a young woman from a different cultural and family context and underestimate the constraints and dangers she was facing.

In the PSE sector the recognition that students have cultural backgrounds tends to enter into institutional discourses mostly in relation to "other" students (from abroad or from minorities) and then in relation to the educational benefits of having a multi-cultural student body. However, such diversity poses challenges for the students who need to cope with host country or majority society, and for university employees who work directly with students.

[8] http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/when-things-go-wrong/forced-marriage/info-for-professionals

"Culture fest" type activities that celebrate food and music from around the globe often gloss over complicated questions of gender and culture.

Student lives as gendered, cultural experiences

The social networks of students and their relationships with friends, family members, other students, and university staff are shaped by gender and culture. In a cultural perspective, the issue of preconceived notions about children, parents, gender and families comes into clearer relief. Culture is understood here as the interplay of the interpersonal and social practices that make up daily life and daily interactions. As such, culture is an expression of power relations, including gendered power relations, and is political and historical as these relations are contested over time.

There have been extensive critiques of the view that cultures are static and ahistorical, homogeneous within and distinctly different from each other, along with critiques of a cultural essentialism that assumes people, and women outside the global north in particular, are a passive product of their cultures (Narayan, 1997). Critical scholarship has emphasised cultures as heterogeneous, gendered and contested within, dynamic and changing over the course of history, and merging and blending to different degrees (Abu-Lughood, 1993). Within research on hybrid cultural identities studies of young Muslim women, for instance, have shown how living in multiple cultural contexts requires active strategies of negotiating gendered (and often also racialised) expectations, constraints and stereotypes (Dwyer, 2000; Mishra & Shirazi, 2010). However, in policy and practice, it has remained difficult to address cultural differences, which are often set within complicated majority/minority relations and legacies of colonialism and racism, and it has been especially difficult to address violence against women in these contexts (Gill & Anitha, 2011). For instance, in current British policy debates about violence against women the notion of culture is controversial because "culture" has been used to justify harmful practices against women and refrain from intervention (Gill & Mitra-Kahn, 2009).

Yet, at the same time, scholars and activists from minority groups and indigenous cultures have argued for a better understanding of cultural identities and emphasised the importance of culturally relevant and sensitive policies and services (Dasgupta, 2007; Deer, 2004; Gillum, 2009). In this regard, two other aspects often associated with the notion of culture deserve attention. One aspect concerns collective and holistic connotations of culture as widely shared and integrated worldviews and practices. Indeed in contemporary debates on gendered abuse this collective and holistic aspect of culture is implied in the expression "rape culture" for patterns of attitudes and practices that are sufficiently widespread and interlinked to form misogynist contexts in which rape is possible and the rapist may enjoy impunity (Buchwald, Fletcher & Roth, 2005). The second aspect concerns the profound marks that cultural upbringing and exposure can leave on the body, not only in commonly visible traits like accents but in sensory experience and physiology, which in turn influence healing and response to trauma (Csordas, 2002; Deer, 2004; McCabe, 2008). These marks may not be accessible to conscious awareness unless they become visible in deliberate reflection or cultural comparison.

Cultures differ in terms of women and men's freedom of movement and their respective rights and responsibilities within relationships, families and communities. These differences are themselves the result of historical and political processes and cultural gender arrangements can transform over time. Thus, cultural gender arrangements are neither fixed but nor are they trivial, and intervening successfully in such arrangements on behalf of victims of gendered abuse may require considerable skill. The life circumstances of students are further influenced by the legal, political, and social factors that intersect to create different campus cultures. For university staff members who wish to help students affected by gendered abuse and forced marriage it is important to understand the life circumstances of a student and to be aware of their own assumptions and pre-conceived notions.

Challenges to university intervention in gendered abuse

The empirical evidence discussed above suggests the following: gendered abuse against (mostly female) students is widespread; university authorities will be unaware of most of it but the informal networks of victims and perpetrators will be aware. Occasionally, students do approach university staff and if they do, they often receive good service. This good service seems largely the result of individual staff member motivation and initiative, and less often the result of systematic institutional policy.

Disclosure dynamics are such that it is unlikely that students will present problems in terms that match staff members' expectations of how the problem would present or in instantly recognisable language and directness. Instead, students may test the waters first, present with academic problems, or say nothing. Asking students about abuse directly may help. If students do not trust the staff member, they may dodge the question, but if they are trusting, then this can open the conversation. It is particularly unlikely (not impossible, but unlikely) that a student affected by forced marriage will say so outright to a university representative as the student may be conflicted about the meaning of "forced', hesitant to take action in defiance of parental or family expectations, and afraid of the repercussions of revealing the problem to somebody outside the family.

Assumptions that, in general, talking things through is suited for solving problems, including problems between students and their parents, are problematic (Anderson & Brownlie, 2011). Not all students want their

parents involved, not all parents are supportive and in cases of forced marriage talking things through between child and parents or family members, especially with an outsider involved, may be a particularly bad course of action.

There is anecdotal evidence from the British FMU that PSE institutions may serve as a sanctuary of sorts. A student who earns an advanced degree may bring prestige to her (or his) family, so that families may be reluctant to disrupt studies (and may be supporting their child's studies on the condition that she or he marry a partner of the family's choosing). In such cases the university or college context may be one of the few (or the only) opportunities a student has to seek support. PSE institutions need to be better prepared for this eventuality.

Elsewhere we made detailed recommendations for how PSE institutions could develop a comprehensive approach to gendered abuse and forced marriage (Freeman & Klein, 2012). Central to such an approach is an integrated strategy of ongoing specialist staff training combined with a systematic public awareness campaign that makes support services on campus and in the community highly visible and signals university awareness (Cohen & Swift, 1999). This strategy needs to be underpinned by a commitment at the top level of management to include intervention in gendered abuse among the essential non-academic tasks (like building and fire safety) PSE institutions have to take on to create safe learning environments. This commitment needs to go beyond slogans and provide specific institutional language and guidance for making changes to basic operating procedures like staff training and institutional policy (Klein, 2013). As part of a concerted approach, PSE institutions also should become integrated into multi-agency working with community-based entities.

Finally, PSE institutions may be concerned that raising the issue of gendered abuse and forced marriage will make the institution look unsafe or racist. It is unclear whether there is any empirical evidence to justify such fears. A good public relations campaign should be able to explain that the institution is not unsafe, but rather proactive in the face of widespread social problems. It is to be hoped that the more these issues are openly discussed within the PSE sector, the more obvious it will become that a well thought-out and sustained proactive strategy will reflect positively on an institution, whereas the absence of such a strategy will increasingly look like denial and incompetence.

References

Abu-Lughod, L. (1993). *Writing Women's Worlds: Bedouin stories.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Ahrens, C.E., Campbell, R.M., Ternier-Thames, N.K., Wasco, S.M., & Sefl, T. (2007). Deciding whom to tell: Expectations and outcomes or rape survivors' first disclosures. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, *31*, 38–49.

Anderson, S., & Brownlie, J. (2011). Build it and they will come? Understanding public views of 'emotions talk' and the talking therapies. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, *39*(1), 53–66.

Chantler, K., Gangoli, G., & Hester, M. (2009). Forced marriage in the UK: Religious, cultural, economic or state violence? *Critical Social Policy*, *29*(4), 587–612.

Cohen, L., & Swift, S. (1999). The spectrum of prevention: Developing a comprehensive approach to injury prevention. *Injury Prevention*, *5*, 203–207. Also available through http://www.preventioninstitute.org/index.php?option=com_jlibrary&view=article&id=105&Itemid=127.

Corrigan, R. (2013). *Up Against a Wall: Rape reform and the failure of success.* New York: New York University Press.

Coy, M., Kelly, L., & Foord, J. (2007). Map of gaps: The postcode lottery of violence against women support services in Britain. End Violence against Women Coalition/Equality & Human Right Commission, UK.

Csordas, T. J. (2002). *Body/Meaning/Healing.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Dasgupta, S. D. (2007, ed.). *Body Evidence: Intimate violence against South Asian women in America.* New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University.

Deer, S. (2004). Toward an indigenous jurisprudence of rape. *Kansas Journal of Law and Public Policy*, *14*, 121–154.

Dwyer, C. (2000). Negotiating diasporic identities: Young British South Asian Muslim women. *Women's Studies International Forum*, *23*(4), 475–486.

Edleson, J. L., Mbilinyi, L. F., Beeman, S. K., & Hagemeister, A. K. (2003). How children are involved in adult domestic violence: Results from a four-city telephone survey. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *18*, 18–32.

Feltes, T., Balloni, A., Czapska, J., Bodelon, E., & Stenning, P. (2012). Gender-based violence, stalking and fear of crime. Final report to European Commission, Directorate General Justice, Freedom and Security, Project JLS/2007/ISEC/415.

Fisher, B. S., Cullen, F. T., & Turner, M.G. (2000). The sexual victimization of college women. Research report. U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Fisher, B. S., Daigle, L. E., Cullen, F. T., & Turner, M. G. (2003). Reporting sexual victimization to the police and others: Results from a national-level study of college women. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, *30*, 6–38.

Forced Marriage Unit (2010). *The Right to Choose: Multi-agency statutory guidance for dealing with forced marriage* (2nd edn.). Forced Marriage Unit, HM Government.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office (2007). *Dealing with Cases of Forced Marriage: Practice guidance for health professionals* (2007). Foreign & Commonwealth Office London, Home Office, National Health Service.

Freeman, M., & Klein, R. C. A. (2012). University responses to forced marriage and violence against women in the UK: Report on a pilot study. *International Family Law*, September *2012*, 285–299.

Freeman, M., Klein, R., & Mburu, J. (2013). Powerpoint on interim findings on university responses to forced marriage and violence against women project, 2013, funded by The Forced Marriage Unit. Available from the author.

Gill, A., & Anitha, S. (2011). *Forced Marriage: Introducing a social justice and human rights perspective.* London: Zed Books.

Gill, A. K., & Mitra-Kahn, T. (2009). Moving toward a 'multiculturalism without culture': Constructing a victim-friendly human rights approach to forced marriage in the UK. In R. K. Thiara (Editor). *Violence Against Women in South Asian Communities: Issues for policy and practice* (pp. 128–155). London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Gillum, T. L. (2009). Improving services to African American survivors of IPV: From the voices of recipients of culturally specific services. *Violence Against Women, 15,* 57–80.

Karjane, H. M., Fisher, B. S., & Cullen, F. T. (2006). Sexual assault on campus: What colleges and universities are doing about it. Office of Justice Programs. U.S. Department of Justice.

Kaukinen, C., & DeMaris, A. (2009). Sexual assault and current mental health: The role of help-seeking and police response. *Violence Against Women, 15,* 1331–1357.

Kazimirski, A., Keogh, P., & Kumari, V. et al. (2009). Forced marriage: Prevalence and service response. National Centre for Social Research.

Kelly, L., Lovett, J., & Regan, L. (2005). A gap or a chasm? Attrition in reported rape cases. Home Office Research Study 293. Home Office, United Kingdom.

Khanum, N. (2008). *Forced Marriage, Family Cohesion and Community Engagement.* London: Equality in Diversity.

Klein, R. (2012). *Responding to Intimate Violence Against Women: The role of informal networks.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Klein, R. (2013). Language for institutional change: Notes from US higher education. In R. Klein (ed.), *Framing Sexual and Domestic Violence Through Language* (pp. 163–178). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Koss, M. P., Gidycz, C. A., & Wisniewski, N. (1987). The scope or rape: Incidence and prevalence of sexual aggression and victimization in a national sample of higher education students. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 55,* 162–170.

Lovett, J., & Kelly, L. (2009). Different systems, similar outcomes? Tracking attrition in reported rape cases in eleven European countries. European briefing. Daphne-Programme, European Commission.

McCabe, G. (2008). Mind, body, emotions and spirit: Reaching to the ancestors for healing. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly, 21*(2), 143–152.

Mishra, S., & Shirazi, F. (2010). Hybrid identities: American Muslim women speak. *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography, 17*(2), 191–209.

Mogensen, B. (2013). Dangerous words – How euphemisms may imperil women's lives. In R. Klein (ed.), *Framing Sexual and Domestic Violence Through Language* (pp. 135–161). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Moynihan, M. M., Banyard, V. L., Arnold, J. S., Eckstein, R. P., & Stapleton, J. G. (2011). Sisterhood may be powerful for reducing sexual and intimate partner violence: An evaluation of the Bringing in the Bystander in-person program with sorority members. *Violence Against Women, 17*(6), 703–719.

Mullender, A., Hague, G., Imam, U., Kelly, L., Malos, E., & Regan, L. (2002). *Children's Perspectives on Domestic Violence.* London: Sage.

Narayan, U. (1997). *Dislocating Cultures: Identities, traditions, and third world feminism.* New York: Routledge.

National Union of Students (2010). *Hidden Marks: A study of women students' experiences of harassment, stalking, violence and sexual assault.* National Union of Students.

Phipps, A. & Smith, G. (2012). Violence against women students in the UK: Time to take action. *Gender and Education, 24*(2), 1–17.

Phipps, A., & Young, I. (2012). That's what she said: Women students' experience of 'lad culture' in higher education. Report to the National Union of Students, UK.

Sanday, P. R. (1990). *Fraternity Gang Rape: Sex, brotherhood, and privilege on campus.* New York: New York University Press.

Sen, P. (2005). 'Crimes of honour', value and meaning. In L. Welchman, & S. Hossain (Eds.), 'Honour': Crimes, paradigms, and violence against women (pp. 42–63). London: Zed Books.

Simmons, F., & Burn, J. (2013). Without consent: Forced marriage in Australia. *Melbourne University Law Review, 36,* 970–1008.

Sloane, C., & Fitzpatrick, K. (2011). *Talk About it Survey.* National Union of Students (Australia).

Smith, K., Coleman, K., Eder, S., & Hall, P. (2011). Homicides, firearm offences, and intimate violence 2009/10-Supplementary volume 2 to Crime in England and Wales. Home Office Statistical Bulletin, 01/2011.

Stenning, P., Mitra-Kahn, T., & Dunby, C. (2012). Gender-based violence, stalking and fear of crime. Country report United Kingdom. European Commission, EU-Project 2009–2011 JLS/2007/ISEC/415.

Ullman, S. E. (2010). *Talking About Sexual Assault: Society's response to survivors.* Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Wilcox, P. (2006). *Surviving Domestic Violence: Gender, poverty and agency.* Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave-Macmillan.

Wright, C., & Hearn, J. (2013). Neutralising gendered violence: Subsuming men's violence against women into gender-neutral language. In R. Klein (ed.), *Framing Sexual and Domestic Violence Through Language* (pp. 21–40). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.