

## **Community Notions of Honour Concerning Honour Killings of Women and Girls**

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# Reconceptualising the community notion of honour in relation to "honour killings" of women and girls

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- ▶ Prime Minister agreed with Nusrat Ghani MP that so-called **“honour-based” violence** should be re-categorised as an act of terror in the UK (2016).

- ▶ **Consequences**

- ▶ Politically charged topic

			(Source: HRCP)
India (5 states)	HK	2016 – 77 2015 – 251 2014 – 28 2010 – 900 (3 states)	(Source: Time of India)

- ▶ **Laws have been tightened**
  - implementation is questionable

News > UK > Crime

**Muslim girl 'who had throat slit in honour killing' thanked god for 'everything' days before her death**

Celine Dookhran, who was 'kidnapped, raped and murdered' in suspected honour killing, posted thankful tweet shortly before she died

# Current academic theorisation

Is "honour killing" part of Pakistani/Asian/South Asian/Middle Eastern culture?

Is "honour killing" an Islamic/Muslim culture/tradition?

Is "honour killing" clash of two cultures?

► Theorisation mainly in two camps:

- Cultural relativism
  - Values are cultural specific
- Post-structuralism
  - *Difference* (us vs them, west vs east, developed vs underdeveloped etc.)
  - Reduces HK to a 'cultural practice' that puts burden on individual behaviour rather patriarchal system, in which it is rooted.

# Existing explanations

- ▶ Three main features:
  - 'honour' related violence and killings are the products of certain 'cultures' – labelled as honour based cultures.
  - these cultures are mainly non-western, distant, static and insular.
  - the culture behind the HBV & killings is characterised – as a fixed and homogenous entity.

# Research question:

What is the community notion of honour and how it is implicated in 'honour killings' of women and girls in Pakistan and within the Pakistani community in the UK?

# Methods and participants

## Methods

- ▶ Informal conversations
- ▶ In-depth interviews
- ▶ Focus groups
- ▶ Observations
- ▶ Archives

## Participants

- ▶ Male (n=50)
- ▶ Female (n= 35)
- ▶ Events (n=4)
- ▶ Archives (Since 1757,  
South Asia in general  
India and Pakistan in  
particular)

# Honour: Definition

## Honour

is a **social asset** (highly valued & fiercely protected)

of

**social standing**

to an individual/family

### Reference network (RN)

a group/set of individuals who matter to people when they make choices/decisions

within their

**reference network**

### Main features of RN

- Mainly consists of kith and kin
- Distance doesn't matter
- Members don't have equal importance or influence

# Honour

Greek – tîmê  
Urdu/Hindi/Sindhi –  
**Ghairat/izzat**  
Arabic – Sharaf  
Turkish – namus  
Italian – onore

- It exists in many societies.
- It varies from region to region and class to class.
- Its meanings and structures are particular to a given reference network (community and/or culture).
- It functions in relation to a reference network (community/group).

# "Honour Killing"

- ▶ "Honour killing" is a social norm to maintain and protect the valuable social asset (honour).

## Social Norm

A rule of behaviour such that individuals prefer to conform to it on conditions that believe that:

- (a) most people in their RN conform to it (empirical expectations), and
- (b) that most people in their RN believe they ought to conform to it (normative expectations)

# Thanks for listening

## Comments and Questions