

## Chapter six

### **Female perpetration of honour-based abuse**

The role of female perpetration transpires to be a prevalent theme in this study. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the nature and extent of abuse effected by women, more specifically mothers, mothers-in-law and sisters. The study categorises the dimensions of abuse into six broad themes which explore the use of violence; violence used due to pregnancy; the application of ‘hard’ psychological abuse (e.g. surveillance, threats and false imprisonment); the use of ‘soft’ psychological abuse (e.g. manipulating victims through emotion and feigned friendship, thereby facilitating the abuse); women who ostracise victims and finally women who condone offending by turning a ‘blind eye’ to the infliction of violence. Middle sections briefly explore factors which adversely impact child victims, notably the relationship between HBA and forced marriage and the key trigger precipitating the abuse which is ‘westernisation’. The chapter evaluates the contrasting positions as to whether women represent peripheral figures acting against other women due to duress and patriarchal oppression, or whether women are complicit and willing perpetrators of abuse. Extracts highlight that the perspective adopted influences police decision making around crime recording and further investigation. The bond between mothers and daughters is explored in latter sections, in terms of how love and loyalty by daughters can impede law enforcement’s recognition of female perpetration. Final sections rationalise why officers under-record cases of female perpetration. The chapter concludes by considering the wider public protection implications as to whether women, particularly mothers, are capable of safeguarding child victims of HBA.

#### **Exploring female perpetration**

Until relatively recently (Aplin, 2017; Bates, 2018) there has been a distinct absence of research around the functions and manifest behaviours exhibited by female perpetrators of HBA. The notion of women being involved in policing the behaviours of other women and their participation in physical violence or murder is not an iterative theme in traditional domestic abuse settings (Sen, 2005; Rew *et al.*, 2013; Roberts, 2014). Yet, interestingly as Bates identifies, women are statistically more involved in HBA perpetration (14%) in

comparison to traditional forms of domestic abuse (8%) (CPS, 2017 as cited in Bates, 2018). Moreover, a substantial body of academic literature argues that HBA perpetrators are predominantly male (Chesler, 2010; Welden, 2010; Belfrage *et al.*, 2012; Eisner and Ghuneim, 2013) involving fathers, brothers and uncles (Jafri, 2009; Gill, 2013; Gill and Brah, 2014). Such research implicitly, but arguably erroneously, accepts it is “usually men who carry out the violence” (Gill and Brah, 2014:75) despite evidence of the willing involvement of mothers in high profile UK honour killings (Rukhsana Naz, 1999, Shafiea Ahmed, 2003) with the latter fully explored by Gill (2014).

### **Which females perpetrate honour abuse?**

Of the 100 HBA investigations, 76% (76/100) illustrate varying levels of involvement by women in honour abuse, which is unexpected (chart 6.1). This empirical finding is supported by Bates who also analysed police data and found that 50% (81/162) of cases involved female perpetrators in either a primary or secondary role (2018).

#### **Chart 6.1: Which females perpetrate honour abuse?**

[Chart 6.1 inserted about here]

Overwhelmingly, the largest proportion of female perpetrators in these findings are mothers, who act either independently or in concert with male perpetrators (largely with sons and brothers) in 48% (37/76) of all cases involving women. Mothers perpetrate with husbands in 8% of cases (6/76) and aunts (3/76) and daughters (3/76) in 4% of cases respectively (Aplin, 2017). Therefore, mothers cumulatively offend against daughters across the range of behaviours in 64% (49/76) of all female perpetration incidents, appearing to play a fundamental role in female perpetration. The highest proportion of female offenders after mothers is sisters, representing nine of the 76 cases (12%). However, sisters also act in concert with mothers and thus cumulatively offend in 16% of cases (12/76). Other female perpetrators are sisters-in-law (6/76) (8%), mothers-in-law (5/76) (6.5%) and stepmothers (2/76) (2%). To a lesser extent, there are negligible levels of abuse from multiple women, a female friend, a community member, a female cousin and an aunt, all offending once which aggregates to 6.5% (5/76) (Aplin, 2017).

### **Officer perspectives of female perpetration**

The only question posed to officers within this topic was “what role, if any, do women play in the perpetration of honour violence?” Their responses provide a variable picture concerning abuse by women. In line with the incident findings, several police officers centralise the role played by *mothers*, rather than discuss roles played by other women. Almost half of the officers (7/15) (47%)<sup>i</sup> acknowledge that women play a “large” (police officer g) indeed “massive” role (police officer a, c, d) in HBA perpetration (chart 6.2).

#### **Chart 6.2: Police perspectives: The role of women in HBA**

[Chart 6.2 inserted about here]

Two police officers go further in suggesting that women are the “driving force” behind HBA (police officer f and h), with another officer stating that the abuse is “just as bad from the women” (police officer b):

Females can be quite domineering as well in incidents of that type of nature- maybe rare but they are there (police officer g)

I think they’re just as bad [women], yes, because I suppose if that’s how they’ve lived and they’ve never really had any problems, then they just expect you to do the same (police officer b)

I think mums have a very, very big part to play in it and I think -much as there are issues around strength and isolation with Asian females-I think that they do still have quite control, a matriarchal control on households. And I do think they’re the key to ending any form of honour-based violence (police officer h)

You’ve got the ones where they can be the main perpetrator and have a lot more control in the family- because it’s all to do with reputation isn’t it (police officer g)

Yet paradoxically, despite being specialist experts in HBA, a third of officers (5/15) (33%) had never investigated a female perpetrator (police officers e, i, p, n and o). However, there is some acceptance that female perpetration exists:

The victims that I have dealt with have mainly been women, and the offenders have been men, but I would hate to say that-that’s it- because there must be cases contrary to that – there must be (police officer o)

I've never dealt with any [cases] where the female has been highlighted as being a perpetrator of it, but I suppose there's been massive news cases, Shafiea Ahmed ..//..mum was quite heavily involved in that (police officer p)

Despite having had no experience of dealing with female perpetrators, one officer opined that women play a “peripheral” function, condoning offending behaviour rather than perpetrating abuse directly (police officer e). Another officer had only experienced abuse by mothers-in-law (police officer j) (1/15) (7%). Two officers concur there is an element of “wilful blindness” (police officer f) with mothers “turning a blind eye” (police officer e) to behaviours, yet still possessing a full awareness of the abuse. Conversely, one officer explores emotional blackmail in women luring female victims back to the family home (police officer m). Therefore, there is a very mixed picture concerning abuse by women, with officers fluctuating in perspectives as to whether women were peripheral or integral to HBA.

### **No involvement by females**

A quarter of all incidents (24/100) highlight no involvement by women (chart 6.3). Of these, 50% (12/24) indicate clear evidence of no involvement<sup>ii</sup>. However, a further 29% of cases (7/24)<sup>iii</sup> show evidence of offending behaviour but insufficient investigation by police officers to ascertain who the perpetrators were.

### **Chart 6.3: No involvement by females in HBA**

[Chart 6.3 inserted about here]

In 3% of incident cases (3/100) there is evidence that mothers who do not keep daughters in line are equally placed at risk (cases 54, 69 and 70), and the latter two cases involve pregnant victims. In one of these cases, the brother threatened to kill his sister because he perceived her as ‘too westernised’. The father had suffered a stroke leaving him severely disabled and thus the son took on the mantle as head of the family. Intelligence showed that several years earlier the male perpetrator had cut chunks of his sister’s hair off with scissors whilst she slept in her bed. He was arrested and given a restraining order. He was now making threats to kill his own mother due to his ideological beliefs that women are

beneath him, stating “If I see you; I am going to slash your throat good and proper- did you hear that? Good and proper” (case 54).

There is scant evidence showing genuine support and protection by female relatives towards victims. Support is apparent in only one interview, with a mother exhibiting ‘relief’ when a FMPO was implemented so her daughter could be more effectively protected (police officer f). Similarly, there is only one case in the incident data (1/24) (4%) of a mother protecting her child (chart 6.3). The mother ousted her Bangladeshi husband from the family home when she discovered he had tried to obtain a dowry by selling his daughter into marriage for \$10,000. The father had initially reported his daughter had been ‘kidnapped’ by several males, one an alleged “illegal immigrant”. However, it transpired that maternal uncles had protectively rescued the victim from her own father (case 63). The only outlier (1/24) (4%) involved a mother who, against the wishes of her immediate family, had gone to Pakistan to pursue a relationship with a new lover and in doing so abandoned her four children, an issue of child neglect (case 80).

### **Dimensions of female abuse**

Categorising the specific roles performed by women proved to be problematic, since 83% (83/100) of HBA incidents in this study are inflicted by multiple perpetrators, each performing varying and overlapping functions; highlighting the collective nature of the crime as a group activity. Equally, quantitatively ‘counting’ behaviours is a crude tool, failing to capture the complexities of each situation. For example, although case 24 is categorised under ‘soft’ deceptive psychological abuse by the aunt, it also includes ‘hard’ elements of threats and false imprisonment. Each themed category is explored qualitatively. Bates too recognises limitations in researching HBA, notably in the 162 police data cases she examined they did not routinely expose *which* of the parents inflicted the abuse. It was only in nineteen cases that the functions women performed were clearly delineated (2018). The quantitative charts in this study aid in providing an overview and supplement the qualitative data. Yet moreover ‘counting’ is beneficial in highlighting the centrality of *mothers* in perpetrating HBA. Similarly, the greatest volumes of perpetrating females in Bates’s study transpired to be mothers (42/81) accounting for 52% of cases, nearly double that of mothers-in-law (28%) (2018).

Findings from both data sets highlight a clustering of behaviours that are delineated into

six key classifications (chart 6.4), consisting of physical violence; Mothers induce daughters to abort babies or assault victims whilst pregnant in order to forcibly terminate a pregnancy; ‘hard’ psychological abuse consists of intrusive surveillance, dark threats, verbal derision, false imprisonment and emotional blackmail; ‘soft’ psychological abuse involves women who “manipulate the situation” (police officer m) in order to gently persuade victims back home using emotive language, tears and/or deception; women also offer support but then ostracise victims due to the pressure placed on them by patriarchs. Finally, women passively and complicity condone the violence inflicted by others, mainly by sons.

#### **Chart 6.4: Dimensions of female abuse: Types of behaviours**

[Chart 6.4 inserted about here]

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#### **Mothers use violence**

Direct violence by women is uncommon across the whole findings, representing 18.5% (14/76) of all female behaviours. This resonates with Bates’s contemporary study, which proffers that physical violence is significantly less likely in cases involving female perpetrators (2018). However, crucially in this study, it is *mothers* who inflict 71.5% (10/14)<sup>iv</sup> of the direct acts of violence against daughters (Aplin, 2017). Daughters were attacked by mothers (and other females) in a variety of ways, consisting of having their hair pulled (case 39, 93) or in some cases cut off (police officer m, case 54); being slapped (61, 72, 20); being “hit” and punched (cases 26,13,39 and 93) and kicked (case 93). Mothers also used household objects to assault daughters with, such as a Hoover pipe (case 20), the metal frame of a bed (case 93), mothers threw “chairs and shoes” (case 17) or slapped children on the head with slippers (case 84) (Aplin, 2017):

Her mum has thrown shoes and chairs at the victim in the past, in the family home (DASH<sup>v</sup> case 17)

Mums who have dishd out, in their eyes, chastisement over [for instance] - the daughters walked home from school with a lad and they've been seen in public; they've been assaulted as a result of that by

mum; the type of clothes they've worn; being found with a mobile phone - assaults for [that]; to actually being removed- they are at the airport with Mum and not Dad- Dad may already be abroad (police officer m)

In another case a 14-year-old child was tied to a chair and systematically assaulted, having her hair cut off by both mother and grandmother because she had been missing from home (MFH) and was found in the park. The intention was to:

Stop her becoming wayward, they thought that she was going to get a boyfriend, she was going to drop out of further education; she was generally becoming more westernised, shall we say, than they wanted her to be...She had been the victim of assaults and false imprisonments, shackled to chairs, and things like that-having her hair cut off-to make her less attractive and less likely to go out (police officer m)

(Aplin, 2017)

Sometimes, there is no real 'justification' for the infliction of violence by mothers. A 12-year-old Bangladeshi child divulged to officers that her mother punched her five times and pulled her hair because she "wouldn't pick something up off the bedroom floor because she [the victim] was tired" (case 39). In another case a vulnerable victim with learning difficulties was "slapped" by her mother "for not listening" (case 61). Mothers not only use violence but condone the cruelty and ill-treatment of the 'perceived' transgressor by bullying and encouraging others to injure the victim. One officer recounted a case where the child was chatting to a boy on Facebook: her sister found out and assaulted her, then her mum assaulted her, and then her brother hit her (police officer k). Similarly, a mother not only slapped her 16-year-old daughter in the face but hit her on the arm with a Hoover pipe. She then encouraged her son to hit her with a ruler, which he did. This occurred because the victim left the house without permission. Consequently, she was forcibly locked in the house pending a report back to the child's father (case 20) (Aplin, 2017). In another extract, a 14-year-old victim attested that the mother had locked herself in a bedroom in order to monitor her daughter's Facebook pages. A fight ensued whereby the mother jumped on top of the child and started to bang the victim's head against the metal frame of the bed. In an attempt to stop the violence, the child 'bit' her mother on the hand. During the attack, the younger sister contributed by pulling the victim's hair. Later that day the younger sibling came into the kitchen and began to tease her sister with food, to which the mother said "let her starve" (case 93).

These extracts illustrate isolated acts of violence, but moreover expose evidence of relentless bullying by the wider collective, with relatives colluding and encouraging each other to perform violent acts on perceived transgressors (Aplin, 2017). Such relentless bullying appears reminiscent of Gill's evaluation of the Shafiea Ahmed case, in which the mother physically attacked the daughter 'countless times' for "the most trifling reasons" (Gill, 2014:185). The mother psychologically tormented her about an intended forced marriage in Pakistan; she locked her daughter in a bedroom for two days without food, only letting her out to use the toilet. Both parents financially abused the victim, stealing £1000 from her part time work account. On the night of the murder, it was the mother who searched the victim's bags, accusing her of 'hiding' her earnings and pushed her on the settee, encouraging her husband to kill by saying in Punjabi "just finish it here" (Gill, 2014:186). Testimony of the daughter, Alesha Ahmed, exposes the mother as a willing participant and co-conspirator. Yet, despite this the defence team unsuccessfully sought to present the mother, Farzana Ahmed, as a secondary victim, unable to defend and protect her children due to the violence she feared from her husband. As to whether women are willing agents or secondary victims acting under duress is worthy of consideration and shall be fully evaluated toward the close of the chapter.

### **Violence by other women**

Isolated episodes of violence by other women was apparent, for instance, sisters-in-law 'joined in' with husbands in trying to "rag [the victim] round with her head scarf and tried to strangle her with it." Having lent her brothers £7000 for their start up business, in the eyes of the family, the female victim had emasculated the brothers who had 'lost face' because of the sister's financial independence (case 59). Violence from stepmothers largely replicates behaviours by mothers-in-law towards daughters in terms of exhibiting stifling and over controlling behaviours, false imprisonment and assault. One teenage victim heard the stepmother on the phone planning her own marriage, as the police incident report states:

(Victim) came to England when she was 11-years-old after her mother died in Bangladesh. Since she was around 15-years her father and stepmother have been very strict with her and she is often punished for wearing western clothes and being disobedient. This punishment consists of being hit with a stick which has on occasions left marks on her. Also she is locked in her bedroom. Her bedroom [door] has a thick bolt lock on the inside and outside. She states her brothers have also



been hit, but that this is lawful chastisement and not as often or to the extent as she receives. She states that this is the case as she is female and not the biological daughter of her step mum. She also states her brothers are only locked out of their bedroom, not in it like her, in order to stop them messing their room up (case 34)

It is interesting that the victim attributes the behaviour of the stepmother to her non-biological status rather than to her gender.

### **Mothers use violence due to pregnancy**

Of the 100 cases of honour abuse 10% revealed that pregnancy outside marriage<sup>vi</sup> was a key trigger precipitating HBA, which was an unexpected finding. The cases predominantly revolve around mainly young Asian females ‘defying’ families by having illicit relationships with disapproved-of-men and becoming pregnant. The perceived remedy for dishonouring the family is that victims are “forced to have an abortion,” involving close liaison with community and family to ensure “the desired result was achieved” (case 83). The role of women, and in particular mothers, in precipitating this course of action should not be underestimated. Findings showed that in the five pregnancy cases where violence was used, two cases illustrated the violence was from mothers (case 95, 87). In the third case, it was unclear which relative perpetrated the crime (case 100). In a further two linked cases, there appeared to be significant levels of psychological abuse from women precipitating an abortion (linked cases 65, 67) (Aplin, 2017). In the first case, unveiling the pregnancy was entirely engineered by the sister-in-law, who transported the unaware victim and her boyfriend to the parents’ address. On realising the deception, the boyfriend took the first train back home, leaving his girlfriend at the mercy of her mother, who on hearing news of the 5-month pregnancy, hit and kicked her to the stomach “knowing full well she was pregnant”. The mother set about verbally demeaning her as:

Dirty, no longer part of the family, they all wished she was dead, they hope she dies, they hope her child is born disabled and that she is going to be kicked out of the family home with only the clothes she was wearing (case 95)

In a second almost identical case, a mother slapped her pregnant daughter twice in the hip, rather than the stomach, because the victim had taken evasive action by moving out of the

way. The victim firmly believed the “mother was trying to hit her in the stomach to cause harm to her unborn baby” (case 87). Mothers in these two cases appear to act with an almost unnatural abhorrence towards their daughters, inflicting violence that constitutes nothing less than an attempt to induce an abortion (Aplin, 2017). The third case was entirely extraordinary by comparison, whereby a fast pregnancy after an arranged marriage in Pakistan led family members to doubt the paternity of the unborn child. This resulted in persons (unnamed in the police report) whilst in Pakistan trying to “give her medicine to kill the child” (case 100). The victim, still pregnant, fled to the UK only to be treated as a pariah by her own family who were pressured into refusing her sanctuary. The lack of probing or recording by the frontline officer meant that no one was implicated in the crime and it is uncertain whether the perpetrator was her own family or the in-laws (case 100).

The concern around believing that mothers unequivocally protect their offspring has adverse consequences for victims. This is particularly apparent when observing the responses by public bodies, who appear to accept this assumption. In one case (linked cases 65 and 67) the police were warned by the boyfriend that the family may:

Either throw her [the pregnant victim] down the stairs or force her to have an abortion and say that she consented (case 65)

The victim also confirmed to the attendant officer:

If she did have an abortion, it would be because her family had made her (case 65) (Aplin, 2017)

Yet the attendant officer took no proactive steps to safeguard her. Akin to narratives presented in chapter three, the perpetrating family successfully demonised the boyfriend to officers, and conversely suggested that they were acting in the victim’s ‘best interests.’ Ten days later in a separate police report, the boyfriend again alerts police that the victim needs help escaping the family home. She is locked in the home by her mother and sister and the property is secured behind an electric gate. Consequently, the police have trouble effecting entry. The victim is no longer pregnant and discloses to the officers that she had a “miscarriage” six days after police attendance where she was “taken to a (named) private clinic.” This is not further probed by police officers. Although foul play and assault regarding the victim cannot be confirmed, it is suggested this is indicative of a victim having been psychologically ‘worn down’ into aborting a baby. This tends to be corroborated by the victim’s account in the officer write-up:

She will get married without her friends or family present if that's the way it has to be. I've asked what the rush is and she told me it's because in Islam you're not supposed to have sexual relations with anyone and aren't really meant to live or be together. By them having sex and being together they commit sins every day. By being pregnant it was a sin and she doesn't want to sin anymore (case 67)

(Aplin, 2017)

There may be a clear rationale behind women, and mothers in particular, putting a stop to unplanned pregnancies. In one case a seven-month pregnant 16-year-old was pre-warned by her mother of a plan that she would be killed by a third party at the instigation of her father and brother. The younger brother alerted his mother that the father was on route to Pakistan to kill her (his wife) too, and as a result 'Osman warnings'<sup>vii</sup> were issued by the police, reflecting a threat to life for both the mother and pregnant daughter (linked case 69, 70). Extant literature supports the view that the woman's family of origin (as well as the victim) can be blamed or tainted by the perceived dishonourable behaviour of the victim (Elden, 2011; Haj-Yahia, 2011; Chesler and Bloom, 2012). In collectivist society's women who fail to keep others 'in line' can end up being "tarred with the same brush" (Van Eck, 2003 as cited in Cooney, 2014:417).

In summary, of the five cases of violence/drugging and pressure toward pregnant women, there was direct violence by mothers in two cases. Conversely, there was no evidence across both data sets of any intentional violence by men toward pregnant women with intent to kill the foetus<sup>viii</sup>. In the five remaining pregnancy cases one girl gave birth and the child was immediately placed in local authority care. She became pregnant again soon after and, like her sister, remains at risk of sexual exploitation (cases 69 and 70); one pregnant female was sent to Pakistan after being given a veiled threat that her father will "give her what she deserves" (case 5). In a further two cases, pregnant victims returned to the risk situation, hoping to be supported by their mother (case 83 and 89). The pregnancy theme was only alluded to by two officers within the interviews. However, narratives were equally poignant and centralised on the role of mothers:

You get pregnant, if you get pregnant in those communities –we talked about that example where Mum's 'kicked the shit' out of her daughter – excuse my language – that's how it is. I am 52 now and I do not know one Asian girl in my whole surroundings, cousins, families, friends, who has got pregnant [out of marriage] because that would be the worst thing you could do – even worse than having a cig (cigarette) or going out with a boy from the wrong culture (police officer a)

(Aplin, 2017)

Another officer dealt with a particularly harrowing case in which a Sikh girl became pregnant to her Muslim boyfriend:

She were lay in the road, she was unconscious and she had-it was quite horrific actually, I remember it now, she had quite a lot of injuries. She had the imprint of a ceremonial sword on her back that had been *burnt* onto her back...//... But mum seemed to be very much the driving force behind that - and I think mums have a very, very big part to play in it and I think, much as there are issues around strength and isolation with Asian females, I think that they do still have-quite control, a matriarchal control on households (police officer h)

As a result of the attack, the victim lost her unborn child and was so badly injured that she was left permanently physically disabled. The police were unable to prove that relatives inflicted the extensive injuries. Despite this, the investigating officer believes in her “heart of hearts” that the family who ironically still ‘care’ for her are the perpetrators. Consequently, she considers that women are “the key to ending any form of honour-based violence” (police officer h) (Aplin, 2017).

These pregnancy cases illustrate that firstly, like ‘traditional’ domestic abuse, there is an increased risk of harm to women during pregnancy. Secondly such “miscarriages” need to be examined through a new lens, as discussion and action around forced abortions appeared to be largely instigated through women. Thirdly, although undoubtedly men play a key role in HBA perpetration, findings revealed that there was no evidence of violence by men towards daughters due to pregnancy, only by mothers. Such findings challenge the stereotypical notion that men are perpetrators and mothers are secondary ‘victims’ that are nurturing and supportive of daughters. The reality is much more complex.

### **‘Hard’ psychological abuse**

Analysis and comparison of the incident data illustrates that victims are often exposed to many of the six dimensions of abuse. However, psychological abuse is overwhelmingly the cogent thread interwoven throughout a significant proportion of narratives; with ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ psychological abuse inflicted by women across 66% (50/76) of the sample.

As chart 6.4 indicates, the largest proportion of ‘hard’ psychological abuse is overwhelmingly inflicted by *mothers* (70% 21/30 of cases; mothers in conjunction with aunts and sisters were involved in 6.5% of cases (2/30) of cases; mothers-in-law in 16.5% (5/30) of cases; and a stepmother and sister in one case each (7% 2/30). Psychological abuse is extremely debilitating for victims (Aplin, 2017). ‘Hard’ psychological control is categorised here as direct threats, verbal abuse, false imprisonment (albeit this is a ‘crime’ in itself), intrusive surveillance, and labour servitude/forms of slavery. It predominantly involves ‘policing’ and surveillance behaviours (n=41), imprisoning victims so they feel like “prisoner(s) in her own home” (case 28); prohibiting and punishing victims for wearing make-up or wearing westernised clothes; searching victims’ bags; predominantly confiscating items such as bank cards, bus passes, passports, mobile phones, or alternatively ‘monitoring’ I Pads and phone calls; prohibiting access to social media sites, such as Facebook. Such measures result in children hiding their phone or sometimes possessing two phones (case 84, 89 and 94). Several honour incidents in the research were ‘discovered’ and ‘reported back on’ due to intensified “spying” by women e.g. finding abortion leaflets in the daughter’s bag (case 89) or the sister-in-law finding folic acid tablets (case 65 and 67). These policing behaviours intensify considerably when a daughter or son (case 77) is found to be in an ‘inappropriate’ relationship (n= 43).

### **Westernisation: A key trigger for child victims of HBA**

Although the main trigger in the incident data is parents discovering the daughter may be sexually active (24%), victims being perceived as too “westernised” (17/100) is the second highest trigger (see chart 3.4). Yet compared with adult victims, ‘westernisation’ is the *most* dominant trigger for child cases, constituting 50% (11/22)<sup>ix</sup> of all child cases (see chart 6.5). Behaving as ‘too westernised’ constitutes girls behaving in a supposed un-Islamic manner which dishonours the family. It includes behaviours such as wearing make-up and ‘western’ clothing; using social media (e.g. Facebook) in order to contact boys; having a secret mobile phone; being ‘disobedient’ and unruly; failing to wear a headscarf; associating with people ‘outside’ the culture; staying out late; drinking alcohol; going missing from home (MFH).

### **Chart 6.5: Triggers for HBA in child cases**

[Chart 6.5 inserted about here]

The westernisation theme is apparent across both data sets. The extracts illustrate stifling and “extreme levels” (case 17) of control by women on a routine and daily basis, involving false imprisonment of juveniles by mothers, and to a lesser extent siblings and aunts. It is important for professionals to recognise that the theme of westernisation is related to the suspicion that girls, through their behaviours are not adhering to culture norms, are getting boyfriends and might become sexually active. Indeed, this finding is apparent in Bates’s study, where the key triggers for abuse were rejecting a marriage, choosing a love choice boyfriend over the family’s choice or for leading a “westernised lifestyle”. In that study three Asian girls were subject of HBA because they were dating white boys (2018:8). This research supports the view that forced marriage is deemed as the family remedy for wayward and non-compliant girls and young adults. Furthermore, this fear of westernisation tends to support Cattle’s (Institute of Community Cohesion, 2001) assessment that such communities self-segregate in order to resist unwholesome polluting western influences. Over-controlling behaviours and westernisation were key interlinked themes:

Mother and brother considered her “unruly and that they cannot control her or the outward influences affecting her”... she needs to be married off soon as preferably before college due to her unholiness... Unhappy with her being educated and to minimise her outside influences and reduce her time at school they request that she comes home for lunch. Mother has also taken her mobile phone off her... Her Mother has stated that (relatives) will break her legs, making it look like she has fallen down the stairs<sup>x</sup> and this will reduce the amount of time she spends out of the address (case 22)

They won't allow her to become westernised. She said that it is one rule for her and one rule for the rest of her family... Her mum checks up on her to an abnormal level whenever she leaves the house...to extreme levels. She is being over-controlled by her over-bearing mother so just stays in her bedroom when she is at home (case 17)

In another case an Indian mother, described as “quite controlling of late, doing more snooping,” had found an abortion leaflet whilst rifling her daughter’s bag (case 89)

(Aplin, 2017)

It is particularly concerning that professionals did not identify the cues that children were at risk, arguably because statutory services perceived these as trivial issues (girls possessing cigarettes, condoms, mobile phones, talking to boys, being late home etc).

The role of mothers as the central intelligence repository, policing such behaviours within the family, should not be overlooked. In one case the siblings discovered that their sister had sneaked her boyfriend in her room, so they locked her in the house pending their mother's arrival (case 10). Mothers sometimes use the power of the patriarch as a means of wielding control over child victims, threatening them with "just wait and see what he (father) thinks about it" (case 20). Mothers communicate father's threats to the victim, possibly as a means of influencing daughters into making particular decisions, with one father allegedly saying through the communication of the mother "If she's at the home when I get back and still pregnant- I'll kill her" (case 87). In another case it was only after spending eighteen months in care that one victim discloses that it was her mother who generated and sustained the "psychological warfare" (police officer d) she had suffered:

Mum is the biggest offender in this victim's eyes...Dad is saying "Look, whatever the girl wants. If she wants to come home, if she wants to go to college. We want her to do well"... "Yes, my mum just basically controlled everything I did, everywhere I went, what I wore, what my room looked like. She suspected I had a boyfriend, so - my restriction to freedom. There were arguments at home. My dad wasn't really that bothered... but it was *mum* (police officer d) (Aplin, 2017)

Children are often threatened with harsh ultimatums that daughters will be "dead to them" (case 53, 95, 96) that they will be "thrown out" (case 11) or "cut off" (case 33, 77, 93) if they fail to comply with a marriage or refuse to stop a relationship with a boyfriend. Findings suggest that mothers can be equally as pecuniary as men in considering the financial implications of marriage. One mother wanted to send her daughter to Libya for a forced marriage, as she was unhappy about her being in a relationship with a black man. The mother bartered with the love choice boyfriend, telling him he would "need to pay \$10,000 (sic) for the wedding to go ahead" (case 27). In other cases, denying children the funds to attend university (case 48) or "medical school" (case 66) are used as leverage to ensure that victims' comply with family wishes. Pre-marriage victims are also denied access to their siblings if they do not return home (case 33) or marry (case 35). Mothers are particularly effective in communicating particularly harsh commentary, with several stating that if they did not marry they would "be killed"<sup>xi</sup>:

Mother told victim: “I’ll just get you married to one of your cousins. If anything happens I’ll just hope you die and if you don’t die I will just kill you myself and there will be a funeral for you” (case 64)  
My mum said a long time ago women used to have babies, find out it’s a girl and kill them after being born. She said that’s what should have happened to me. She said she didn’t care about me and she wanted me dead because of all the stress I gave her (case 96)  
(Aplin, 2017)

Such narratives wrought on children by mothers leads one to reconsider portrayals of mothers as passive secondary victims within the family dynamic.

### **HBA and its relationship to marriage**

Although this study concerns HBA and not forced marriage, the interrelationship between these two facets is self-evident across the qualitative findings. A quantitative examination was undertaken across the 100 cases of HBA and marriage was a feature within 64% of cases (64/100) (including consummation of marriage). What is notable in chart 6.6 is that victimisation against pre-marriage juveniles and young adults is far more widespread than *post* marriage abuse. Moreover, the qualitative data illustrates that pre-marriage offending also appears to be more high risk compared to post marriage abuse. This supports Swedish research by Belfrage *et al.*, (2012) in that of the eight cases classed as being of lethally high risk, 75% of victims were daughters rather than estranged wives.

### **Chart 6.6: HBA and its relationship to marriage**

[Chart 6.6 inserted about here]

### **The wrath of the mother-in-law**

Abusive behaviours by mothers-in-law predominantly involve the policing of the daughter-in-law, domestic servitude and false imprisonment in ‘post’ marriage abuse (also Bates, 2018). The nature of offending is essentially hard psychological abuse, manifested in verbal belittling and personal insults that the daughter-in-law “cannot cook, she can’t walk, she smells” (case 30) to derision about her “poor background”. In the eyes of the victim, nothing is “good enough” (case 47) she will “never have a future and is a ‘nobody’” (case 9). Such bullying and derision are reminiscent of Ballard’s view that women are resourceful in their use of language to belittle and mock, creating spaces in order to construct “internal



hierarchies” (Ballard, 2002:3). In stark contrast to the abuse by mothers, mothers-in-law are keen to progress the pregnancy and derides the victim for *failing* to get pregnant, giving iron and folic acid to the daughter-in-law in order to increase the chances of conception (case 30). Mothers-in-law also resort to tactics of emotional blackmail in order to more effectively control and force compliance from daughters-in-law. A threat to post marriage victims is that of “sending her back to Pakistan” (cases 47, 30, police officer j) arranging a replacement wife and removing her children (cases 47, 40 and 92). Women constantly live under the threat that they will be ‘sent back’ to the shame of their families. Such tactics and are wholly consistent with Thiara’s domestic abuse research (2013).

Certainly, the findings around the violence of the mother in prior sections lie in stark contrast to Bates’s analysis of nineteen cases, in which it was instead *mothers-in-law* who applied direct violence such as slapping, pushing and beating (2018). However, direct violence by mothers-in-law (and other women) was barely discernible in this research. In one case a daughter-in-law divulged to police that she had been sexually abused by her Romanian father-in-law. Due to the shame the allegation wrought on the family, the victim was hit in the face by the mother-in-law, who forcibly bundled her into a car to transport her to a local solicitor in order to force her to retract the complaint (police officer b). Controlling and oppressive behaviours by mothers-in-law centre on policing and surveillance activities, such as preventing employment and prohibiting access to finances (case 9). Women are controlled in so far as they are told what to eat and what to wear (case 47) and are often not allowed out of the house unaccompanied (cases 4, 30, 47). Victims feel isolated and possess poor English language skills. Victim language is reflective of confinement and they describe to officers as being “treated like a slave” (cases 47, 40) or a “prisoner in her own home” (cases 28, 40, 4).

Further surveillance behaviours involve mothers-in-law intercepting mail from abroad and they monitor, as well as curtail, phone calls from the mother of daughters-in-law. In one case the victim was only permitted to speak to her mother ‘publicly’ using the speaker phone, and only after the mother had conversed with the mother-in-law (case 91). In one instance a victim agreed to an arranged marriage in order to escape from the controlling sphere of the stepmother, only to be subjected to a similar confinement from her new mother-in-law, experiencing labour servitude, false imprisonment and the confiscation of bank cards (case 4). This is reminiscent of the serial victimisation evident in high risk

domestic abuse cases. Marriage, in effect, becomes a tool to suppress female autonomy (Payton, 2011) as well as appearing to be a source of cheap labour. The daughter-in-law is derided for poor housekeeping and is made to clean the house daily, cook and even massage the mother-in-law's feet (case 30). In another case because a daughter had fled the address (due to HBA), the son was obligated to take on a wife so that she could "do the housework" for his mother (case 96).

It is worthy of note that such vigilant surveillance and chaperoning is perceived by the family as supportive protection and guardianship (Payton, 2011) and, in turn, is successfully advanced to professionals as such. Yet Payton reminds us that this is essentially about self-interest in protecting the market value of family assets. Women are treated as commodities and part of a 'transaction' with the daughter-in-law a symbolic representation of the "family brand" (2011:69). The family must protect their investment. The current research confirms the relative power that older matriarchs have over the 'weak' daughter-in-law, who lies at the bottom of the pecking order and is constantly at the beck and call of mothers-in-law (Ballard, 1982:19). Older women play an important role in controlling younger women (Yuval-Davies, 1998; Rew *et al.*, 2013) and it is only after the birth of children, particularly sons, that the social capital of the daughter-in-law is increased (Ballard, 1982; Rew *et al.*, 2013; Durbas, 2015). Having suffered the trials and tribulations of first being a daughter and then being a daughter-in-law, it appears that mothers-in-law are loath to sacrifice their now dominant position. They therefore have a "vested interest" in perpetuating coercive and controlling practices over the daughters-in-law (Rew *et al.*, 2013:147).

As explored, multiple perpetration is rife within the findings (83%) and husbands often condone the abuse inflicted by their own mothers, who also encourage sons to keep their wives 'in line' (cases 2, 47, 30). Ironically, in Gill's (2004) UK HBA study the husband was identified as the main perpetrator. Yet, in half of the eighteen cases sampled, it transpired that mothers-in-law were also involved in perpetrating abuse. This lends weight to the view that female perpetration causes significant "discomfort to feminists" as it erodes ideas of feminist solidarity (Rew *et al.*, 2013:148), which may explain why such a thorny issue has been scantily documented within academia. Condoning abuse by the husband is evident across both data sets:

She constantly is reminded of the fact she comes from a poor background in Pakistan and she should thank them for what they give her...The family even dictate whether she can go to the shops to buy some milk for her baby. Often the family tell her of sending her back to Pakistan alone, taking her child from her. The only gripe victim has of her husband is that he stands and watches the family abuse her. He does not challenge them (case 47)

“My husband sides with his mum; mother-in-law treats me like a slave, I’ve got to do everything for the mother-in-law. Husband goes out to work, father-in-law goes out to work, I’m stuck at home all day with mother-in-law”... I’ve not known a sister, I’ve not known a mother [perpetrator] - it’s the mother-in-law. Again, massively under reported though isn’t it? (police officer j)

“They won’t let me out of their sight”...mother-in-law used to beat her... husband used to stand back and watch... Husband had never laid a finger to her. What mother-in-law says ‘goes’... The mother-in-law has this major status in the family ...that was beating, mother-in-law beater. So it was very much mother-in-law who wouldn’t let her out of the house (police officer j)

In a further extract the victim was pregnant, financially independent and working full time in a well-paid job and paying for all the family holidays. Yet the daughter-in-law was still openly criticised by the mother-in-law to her son on the grounds that the housework had not been completed to her satisfaction (case 2). Such control exerted by mothers-in-law appears highly reminiscent of the Duluth wheel of power and control (Pence and Paymar, 1993)<sup>xii</sup> highlighting an overlap with traditional forms of domestic abuse, with the same control mechanisms exerted by mothers to young daughters’ in pre-marriage abuse. Such extracts illustrate women as central and willing participants in perpetuating oppressive practices against other women (Okin, 1999; Gill *et al.*, 2012; Eisner and Ghuneim, 2013). By contrast, distinctly new findings also emerge from the quantitative incident data. As indicated in chart 6.6, post marriage abuse accounts for a much smaller proportion of HBA cases (26%) in comparison to pre-marriage abuse. Second, in a departure from previous research (Gill, 2004; Rew *et al.*, 2013) the quantitative findings highlight that abuse by mothers-in-law is relatively rare and inflicted in only 6.5% of cases (5/76)<sup>xiii</sup>. However, it must be highlighted that Bates’s study conflicts with these findings in identifying a greater volume of cases involving mothers-in-law (23/81) (28%) (2018). Third, although psychological abuse is debilitating, humiliating and stifling in its replication of over controlling surveillance behaviours, there is scant evidence of the severe bullying and multiple perpetration that is so evident in the mother against daughter extracts. Fourth,

there is significantly less evidence of direct violence by the mothers-in-law, with no evidence of violence in the incident data and only two instances of direct violence (police officer b and j) by mothers-in-law across fifteen police interviews. Therefore, findings expose that the nature of abuse by mothers-in-law is not as debilitating and is relatively infrequent. However, it is worth acknowledging that many victims brought to the UK for marriage may not possess knowledge around reporting mechanisms, nor have the confidence in language skills to progress any complaint, which may contribute towards these lower reporting rates.

### **‘Soft’ psychological abuse**

Counterintuitively, there is evidence of female relations attempting to maintain a psychological bond of friendship with victims, almost akin to grooming behaviours. Note the findings of Wiener, who makes a similar link in the coercive control context (2017:7). Findings highlight how women act as enablers to HBA, heavily engineering situations, communicating and facilitating HBA either through deception or practically ‘transporting’ victims to their punishment. Women use the communication of tears and emotive language prompting other protagonists into ‘action’. However, this behaviour is insidious and includes deceptive tactics to present a duplicitous narrative both to victim and public authorities, all with the aim of luring victims back for punishment and/or reconciliation. Key perpetrators in the ‘soft’ psychological domain are sisters (6/20), sisters-in-law (5/20) accounting for 55% of cases, and equally mothers with the aid of sisters (2/20) aunts (2/20) and husbands (2/20). More distant relations (cousin, friend and female relatives) play a role in 3/20 cases.

### **Women as communicative messengers**

Although many of the behaviours do not constitute criminal ‘offences’, female relatives appear adept at using communication skills to verbally antagonise and create problems for female victims. In a pregnancy case, a female cousin was “stirring things up about the family honour ...putting pressure on [the victim’s] mum to encourage victim to have a termination” (case 87). Such Machiavellian ‘stirring’ caused the mother to slap her own daughter twice in the hip with the intention of hitting her stomach.

Females also act as ‘messengers’ and in doing so falsely present a veneer of protecting and warning victims. A victim fled her flat with her love choice boyfriend, who she later married. Her ‘trusted’ female cousin had keys and regularly accessed the flat and acted as ‘messenger’ by passing information between the victim and her ex-lover perpetrator. The female cousin betrayed and exploited the trust by passing the victim’s mail to her own husband, who was a close personal friend of the perpetrator. Notably, there was no recognition within the data, either from the police or the victim, as to the cousin’s role in facilitating the harassment. The cousin was the conduit communicating the threatening messages, telling the victim and her love choice that the ex was going to “find them, kill them both and chop them up with a knife.” Such actions precipitated the poor mental health suffered by man and wife<sup>xiv</sup>, almost dissolving the marriage (case 85). As such there appears to be a lack of solidarity between some women. In a similar case, a male Sunni Muslim and his Shi’a Muslim wife fled to the UK and married against family wishes and have been pursued ever since. When detail of the plight was journalised in a magazine, a female friend of the female victim wrote to editors requesting details of their location. Included in the information was a letter written in Urdu outlining that the family were “thirsty for her blood” and that “the village elders have decided that they should both be stoned to death” (case 99). The purpose of contacting the magazine appeared to be to locate the victim(s) using the seriousness of the threat as persuasion. In a similar vein, a 26-year-old Iraqi victim of post forced marriage abuse living with her new husband, received mail suspected to be from her estranged sister-in-law. It contained a ‘welcome to your new home’ card with approximately 50 photos of her husband’s family with cuts through their faces, necks and head, which in the Kurdish culture is deemed to be a serious threat (case 25). These final three cases illustrate how victims, through the involvement of female messengers, are psychologically maintained in an anxious and hyper vigilant state.

### **Sisters**

In two thirds of cases involving perpetrating sisters (6/9)<sup>xv</sup>, they enabled HBA by keeping lines of communication open with fleeing victims, in some instances acting as a close and trusted ‘confidant.’ In the honour killing of Aqsa Parvez, it is worth acknowledging that it was sisters who policed and reported back to parents the way the victim dressed at school, in terms of removing her hijab (Welden, 2010).

In the current research, victims were duped into believing sisters afforded them genuine love and support. This is evident in the case where the “trusted older sister” persuades the victim “look you need to come home I’ve managed to iron all this out now things are sorted, come on” (police officer m). One 20-year-old Bangladeshi fleeing from HBA complained she was getting “constant calls and texts” from her sister, yet police officers trivialised this by giving advice (case 66 also evident in 37, 45, 46) without appreciating the role of women in locating victims and persuading them back into the fold. Similarly, in the case of a victim with learning difficulties, it was the *sister* who successfully convinced Adult Social Care that the victim consented to a marriage- which ultimately the victim had been “tricked” and “cheated” into (case 46).

There is also evidence of sisters being openly hostile and ‘stirring up’ trouble, encouraging other ‘would be’ perpetrators into committing offences, particularly in defence of patriarchy. When one victim rejects an arranged marriage, her sister vigorously discredits the victim and concocts an alibi for her father so that he could avoid criminal prosecution. She suggests her “sister is evil...*she* had arranged marriage at 17 and she ...should do the same” (case 49). In another case a sister made counter-allegations against the victim, erroneously telling the police that the victim had tried to kick her in the stomach (she was pregnant) in the hope this would influence officers into taking no further action against the perpetrator uncle (case 60). There was no evidence across the sample, of genuine support by sisters towards victims. Like mothers, sisters appeared to fluctuate from ‘supportive’ ‘soft’ yet deceptive behaviours to ‘hard’ denigrating behaviours, suggesting these are underhand disingenuous tactics designed to deceive and/or discredit victims.

### **Women deceive and enable**

Deception is often used by women to help physically ‘deliver’<sup>xvi</sup> victims’ home to receive their punishment, often to the surprise of unsuspecting victims. In several cases, parents ‘string victims along’ under the misconception that they accept the relationship (cases 24, 42), but this resembles a deceptive ‘delaying’ tactic. In one case the victim was imminently due to marry her betrothed partner of six years and was under the misapprehension that her parents consented. A situation was engineered by the aunt, who instead of taking her ‘shopping’ as promised, delivered the victim to the uncle’s house with the victim’s father following in a car close behind, indicating the premeditated nature of the act. The uncle hit her, stating she would not be marrying her love choice and falsely imprisoned for “about a

week.” Rather than express regret or guilt at such a betrayal, the aunt threatened her with - “if you want to go to the police, go ahead and see what happens” (case 24). In a similar case, the parents “stopped” the victim dating a male she had met on Facebook and consequently she went MFH. Parents provided hollow promises that she could continue the relationship, but instead they took her to Pakistan to visit “relatives.” After a short time, they cancelled her flight home, told her she was marrying her cousin and locked her in a room (case 42). Again, the parents deceived victims and appeared to be ‘biding their time’ to force victims into compliance with the demands of the collective.

The level of planning by women in facilitating HBA, whether that involves transporting victims to their punishment or making wedding arrangements, is often overlooked but it is evident:

The male party may have been the physical side, but you’ve got somebody in the background who’s make the plans as well who’s having those communications you know buying the wedding clothing, wedding jewellery putting it in storage, getting everything together, they’re as much culpable as the physical side (police officer k)

In a pregnancy case it was the sister-in-law who was told in confidence of the pregnancy and “convinced” the victim to divulge the information to her parents. Yet, instead of extricating herself from involvement, she engineered the dangerous situation by transporting and ‘presenting’ the unaware victim and her boyfriend at the parent’s address, whereupon the victim was kicked in the stomach by her mother. Ironically, despite this betrayal, the sister-in-law rang the police some weeks later trying to elicit information as to the victim’s whereabouts, persuading the authorities that she ‘supported’ the victim and was “willing to give a statement against her mother” (case 95). Victims often appear deceived by women who betray them one moment and ‘support’ them the next, highlighting a clear disjoint between words and action. Mothers often use deception, tears and emotional ‘pulls’ and promises to facilitate the recovery of daughters. This is evident when one victim of a forced marriage left her husband and fled with her children to a hotel. Her mother convinced her to return, stating her husband had left the address. Yet when she did the victim found the husband “waiting upstairs” (case 72).

There are numerous other occasions where female relatives erroneously “reassure” victims that the husband has left the address (case 88) or that the “mother had thrown him out” (case 98) merely as a ruse to facilitate the victims return. For those already within a forced

marriage, a second ploy is to convince the victim that the husband is “willing to give her a divorce”. This promise led to a victim being fooled a second time in the hope that “mum is supporting her and her mum is going to speak to her dad to see if he will accept her new relationship” (case 72). The police themselves even doubt the sincerity of the mother when they comment on the incident log - “she thinks that her mum is on her side but clearly last time she lied to get her to return to the address” (case 72). Victims are often lulled into a false sense of security, with optimistic yet unrealistic hopes for a family reconciliation. This ‘softer’ approach appears a more effective strategy in playing on the victims’ emotions. This was evident when a fleeing victim of HBA was visited by female relatives at her place of work:

Her mother was very emotional and was crying, (victim) spoke to her grandmother on the phone as she was also crying, her mother assured (victim) that they did not know her home address and they just wanted to have contact with her, if they had wanted to do her harm, (victim) said that they would have kept hidden and followed her home. Her mother told her the estranged husband no longer lived with her she had thrown him out (case 98)

In another case, a mother was extremely volatile to police officers when they arrived, screaming at them to “fuck off” as they escorted the daughter to safety. Yet within twenty-four hours, she reverted to the softer skills of negotiation, tears and emotional blackmail:

“Mother called crying on phone saying everything would be fine if she returned home.” And so, she returned back home (case 89)

Female relatives are particularly effective at ‘smoothing over’ trouble, of convincing victims that more freedom would be forthcoming, that if she left the refuge “everything would be ok if she went home and she could do what she wants” (case 18). Females, often sisters and sister-in-law’s, make conciliatory phone calls (case 66, 37) text messages and pleas to ‘meet’ in order to reconcile; often with the hollow promise that female relatives will negotiate with the father to “accept the relationship” (case 65, 42, 48, 49) that was initially so reviled. This can involve ‘delay tactics,’ for example persuading victims to ‘postpone’ a planned marriage with a love choice in order to seek the consent of opposing parties (case 79, 42). Duping victims by suggesting that they are going on “holiday,” to “visit relatives” (case 23, 42, 64) or attend a family wedding abroad (case 5, 38) usually results in victims finding out later on that it is *their* wedding.



Women also employ euphemistic language to underplay the ‘finality’ of a forced marriage. For instance, the mother may suggest she go to Pakistan “for a holiday only” (case 90), or the aunt may intersperse discussions of marriage with notions of a ‘holiday’ or “long engagement” (case 64). These appear to be negotiation strategies by the collective, in order to make the ‘offer’ more palatable to victims. Feigning a family illness (an ill grandmother) appears to be a common strategy used to ensure victims travel abroad. Indeed Bates (2018) research shows that mothers commonly use emotional manipulation, such as threatening to kill themselves if daughters did not comply with their demands. Such emotional blackmail has the effect of “pulling on the heartstrings” (police officer m), not only impacting on a victim’s mental health and overall safety but effectively facilitating the retraction of crimes:

There seems to be a pattern forming... sister, or maybe even from Mum saying - “the worry you've brought onto the family has caused Dad to have a heart attack”- or “your Mum is now very poorly” - to try and lure them back, to get the withdrawal. So I think - you have the trusted older sister...saying “look you need to come home I've managed to iron all this out now things are sorted, come on” -and it's more about that trust element I think, whereas the men are seen as the risk from the physical side; the ones who actually ‘do the damage’. I think that it's in some cases the females in the family who get the child back into the family, where then the incidents can take place. I think they do have a part to play definitely - they pull on the heartstrings (police officer m)

Mum sometimes does play that role, but plays it quite ‘slyly’ really (police officer n)

Women play- “A big role. The unseen role...They do, from my experience and knowledge, the ‘emotional chipping away’ exercises...she’ll tell you that “My mum, my eldest auntie (it seemed to be like the lieutenants in all of this) and my grandma just chipped away every single day. Mum wouldn’t talk to me. I felt abandoned. Nobody would talk to me. People would say, you know, your mum is going through all of these health issues because of you. I’d have arguments with my dad.” So, yes, what role do they play? A massive role... the minute she strays, or he strays in marrying a different culture, then I think that person would revert to ‘psychological warfare’ as I call it, to make sure that they don’t cause an embarrassment to the family, embarrassment to the community (police officer d)

In several instances, officers appeared unaware of the ‘feigning illness’ tactic and consequently they unwittingly assist in returning the female victims back to perpetrators:

She needed to go back and help her mum and support her mum that her mum had been ill recently, whether her mum was still ill or how seriously her mum was ill- we never got to the bottom of (police officer p)

(Mother) is clearly at her wit's end with female victim's behaviour and she looked like a broken woman (case 93)

Findings showed insincere and inconsistent support by female relatives. As one victim commented after returning home from a refuge, the family:

Did not stick by their word and slowly things returned to how they previously were (case 48)

These extracts of soft psychological abuse highlight a dichotomy or clear disjoint between words and deeds. Friendship and support are afforded, but this contrasts with denigration and a 'fanning of the flames' behind the scenes by women. Such persuasive strategies appear to be hollow rhetoric and are fundamentally employed to 'reel' victims back home in order to exert further, more intensified, pressure and reinstate the abuse. This supports Ballard's contention that women have the capacity to "pursue their own ends on their own terms," hurling insults and satisfying their own agenda in playing "all sorts of dirty tricks" (2002:3). Women are effective in negotiating women and girls back home, effected through both hard and soft psychological strategies, using the power of language, emotional blackmail, tears, manipulation and deception. These extracts confirm Chesler's proposition that women can be the chief negotiators in luring young victims back to the family home (2010).

### **Females ostracise victims**

Women do harbour female victims of HBA. However, such support appears to be short lived and swiftly withdrawn. This was evident when an 18-year-old Somalian victim attained a forced marriage protection order and fled to her aunts. The brother-in-law threatened that if his sister-in-law "did not set her free he would burn the house down"<sup>xvii</sup>, so she asked the victim to leave as she "didn't want any trouble" and would not support a police prosecution (case 51). This lack of solidarity is apparent even between sisters. In the case where the pregnant victim had been drugged in Pakistan and fled back to the UK, the sister harboured her for several days, but the father threatened to "disown her" if the

support continued (case 100). There are also instances where women who harbour victims also facilitate the abuse. A female cousin witnessed a brother's assaulting his 16-year-old sister. He assaulted the victim on numerous other occasions, and the cousin was encouraged by CSC to give her refuge. Given the consistent assaults and the fact that the cousin had been taking the underage victim to late night bars, this was a poor CSC decision. The female cousin was found to be taking the victim to her brother's address for "visits" in clear breach of police bail conditions (case 96). Therefore, there is undoubtedly pressure placed on women by some men *not* to harbour victims, and the outcomes illustrate that self-preservation rather than female solidarity is the priority.

### **Turning a "blind eye": Mothers as complicit, 'hapless' secondary victims?**

In these findings it is mothers who are largely responsible for condoning physical abuse and failing to intervene in any violence meted out (see chart 6.4). Mothers personally condoned violence inflicted by sons (cases 68, 50); and, in concert with fathers, were complicit in the sons' violence (case 32, 71, 94, 96). Mothers also condoned their own brother's violence to daughters (cases 21, 43). However, interwoven throughout some police narratives is the sense that mothers acquiesce and turn a "blind eye" (police officer e) to offending but play an "unseen" role (police officer d) role:

They're witness to it... they know what goes on in that house whether they agree with it or not, you know. But they perhaps don't say anything, you don't do anything about it...there is probably an element where they encourage it or whether they acquiesce to it you know. I don't know-the accepting of it (police officer p)

Not necessarily committing the abuse themselves but knowing about it and saying or doing nothing. Being on the periphery to the point where they're either covering or trying to mediate, or acceptance of it. That's what you have to do. That kind of periphery, rather than the abuser, so to speak... the cases I've had, mum's role has been quite defined in it, but never as the abuser (police officer e)

Researcher: So have mums been condoning activity?  
Potentially, yes. Or turning a blind eye (police officer e) (Aplin, 2017)

This concept of mothers as "invisible" is absent within the incident data and conflicts sharply with the extracts highlighting violence from mothers. However, it resounds with

Welden's assessment of the Aqsa Parvez honour killing, whereby the mother is considered "nearly invisible" and the power relations between man and wife highly asymmetrical (2010:389). Moreover, detected in these discourses are police judgements that the mother is a 'secondary' or "indirect victim" (police officer g), acting under a patriarchal pressure rather than being perceived and defined as a perpetrator:

Sometimes you [the mother] are doing it because you *have to* do it - and you are doing it because if you don't do it these are the ramifications. But other times I think they actually do it because they feel that that is their *role* to do it...I believe that Mums-and they are often told to do it by the father. [Be]cause the father's like- "I go out, I am the breadwinner, you are the mother who looks after the children-you bring her up right. You get her ready for marriage" (police officer a)

They [females] can play quite a big part-you've got the one where they are the wife of the main perpetrator and their children are being HBA or FM...even if they wanted to help their child it's very difficult because they themselves can be an HBA victim. It's not direct-it's indirect because, if-for example a mother was trying to help her daughter not go through a FM- threats of HBA can come from her husband or extended family-not just to the victim-but the mother as well. Sometimes I think-they are oppressed- pressured into complying with it (police officer g)

(Aplin, 2017)

This last extract highlights the difficulty for officers, and possibly other professionals, in differentiating between the 'oppressed' mother and the 'controlling' female perpetrator; which rationalises why female perpetration is poorly recognised and crimed, and why children are left in risk predicaments. One officer eloquently highlights the complex interplay of factors involved in female perpetration which includes issues of duress, patriarchal culture norms and dutiful obligation:

Because it's usually honour crime against females they [victims] look to the older females in their family, so mum, older sisters, aunties for guidance...they [women] have to 'toe the party line' (probably not quite the correct terminology) because they are being made to do it as well, they will be giving the advice that the males want the females to give, rather than the advice that they actually believe in. So, the younger kids are listening to that from the older females thinking "Oh well, it must be right then, so I'll have to go along with it"... So for example, marriages are 'arranged' and that's that. There is no going back from that. But I think women play a massive part in it. And I think it's duress and an element of- sometimes they believe it, they believe it should be

happening so they're passing that information to the younger people, because it's their thought process-their belief (police officer c)

Officers appear to fluctuate uncertainly between positions of perceiving mothers as secondary 'victims' to that of culpable 'villains' who fail to protect their children (Aplin, 2017). The view is contingent upon each situation. For instance, one 14-year-old Romanian victim kept running away from home with her boyfriend. Her mother had seven children, who attended 4 different schools. The mother could not drive, spoke no English, was reliant on her controlling husband, and was entirely isolated from her own family as the husband had previously attacked her relations. The husband was trying to marry his daughter off by trying to sell her for £10,000 pounds. He was issued with a DVPN as a policing strategy in order to provide the mother with the 'breathing space' to work with the IDVA team (police officer h). The intention of that policing strategy was to empower the mother in order to more effectively protect the children. In this instance the mother was treated as a 'victim' under the control of the father, rather than a potential perpetrator. However, achieving empowerment and dismantling cultural norms is far from a simple process.

The stance taken by professionals in given situations is crucial, as it affects the police criminal investigation but also highly influences the safeguarding of victims. Viewing mothers as secondary victims is not universal amongst officers, with one police officer seeing women who failed to protect as equally culpable:

If you've got a young boy or a young girl who is at risk and you've got family members who are the perpetrators and you've got a mother who is failing to protect, I think they are as much responsible as the people who are actually physically doing that abuse (police officer k)

This is aptly illustrated in a case (fully explored in chapter three) of systematic HBA from an older brother for which the victim was on the child protection register. Amidst the instances of physical violence, the victim's mother stood and watched her son kick her daughter in the head and "eventually ...told the son to stop, but he didn't" (96 also linked to 94 and 32). Clearly in this instance, the authorities took the stance that this was isolated individual offending and that the parents were not complicit in the abuse. It was a gradual dawning, rather than an immediate realisation from professionals, that parents condoned the abuse. Yet, by this stage the victim had been suffering abuse for a prolonged period. It took nearly two years and many more assaults for CSC to place the victim in long-term

foster care (Aplin, 2017). Any attempt at motherly intervention in these extracts appears wholly half-hearted and ineffectual. In another case the actions of the mother paint a contradictory picture, failing to protect her child and yet on a superficial level appearing to support and reassure the victim:

Uncle grabbed her by the hair and dragged her to the top of the stairs. He then continued to rag her about. He then dragged her back down the stairs. At this point the mum intervened and victim was instructed to sit down. Uncle went into kitchen and picked up a knife and threatened to kill her should she go missing again (case 43)

The intervention by the mother consists of her telling the uncle (her brother) to “go”. The mother then “hugged” the daughter and “tried to reassure her”. However, the uncle was still able to threaten the victim with a knife and told the victim “had his sister not been there he would have done so” [killed her] (case 43). The write-up by the attendant police officer highlights the difficulty in concluding whether the mother is a victim or a colluding perpetrator:

The mother is either assisting uncle or is in fear of reprisals from other family members (case 43)

(Aplin, 2017)

Despite clumps of hair being located around the house, the mother and elder sister closed ranks against the police and victim, denying the uncle was even at the address. The mother refused to allow the witnessing children to be video interviewed. The uncle’s dramatic threats to kill in using a knife, like many threats to kill within the findings, is a very public display designed to demonstrate moral resolve. However, such examples of passively condoning abuse, rather than signifying a frightened mother acting under duress, seem more consistent with the family developing an orchestrated family strategy or ‘coalition’ (Welden, 2010:389) designed to regain control of a victim’s wayward behaviour.

### **Contradictory behaviours and a daughter’s unwavering loyalty to mother**

Moreover, the way mothers present themselves to victims creates the perception that mothers are ‘secondary’ or indirect victims. Both data set findings indicate that despite evidence of controlling and oppressive behaviours, victims are reluctant to divulge abuse inflicted by the mother, often due to an abiding sense of love and loyalty around getting “mum into trouble” (cases 10, 17, 87, and 67). Against their own best interests, daughters

possess unwavering trust in mothers. Victims perceive that mothers will protect them from the wrath of fathers, regarding hiding discreditable or shaming behaviour, such as knowledge around ‘secret’ boyfriends (police officer d); or when caught ‘sneaking out’ of the house at 01:00 am, one daughter was convinced the father was “unaware” (case 62) (Aplin, 2017). Another mother intercepted a letter from her daughter’s lover, but the victim remained adamant “she doesn’t believe her mother will tell dad any of this” (case 6). Victims possess a naïve and misguided belief that mothers pose no risk and that they will continue to protect their best interests. This implicit trust appears tied to the vain hope that mum will “eventually support her” (case 87) regarding her chosen boyfriend, even when this seems unlikely to an objective outsider. One female presented to officers as if she had mental health issues. She would draw injuries on herself but this was deemed by the officer as a “desperate act”:

This girl presented to officers as almost as though she was barking, as if she was crazy. She wasn’t... She never betrayed her mum... [she was saying] “I was doing things that I didn’t like just to keep her ‘on side’, just to see her happy, just to see her smile” - but she was living a life that she did not want to live (police officer d) (Aplin, 2017)

In another case an officer recalls the way in which victims are made to feel guilty for prioritising themselves over the family, and it is clear that the “emotional chipping away exercises” (police officer d) had taken effect, reflective of Wiener’s “drip, drip” (2017:9) analogy, where victims are sucked into the perpetrator’s world view:

All these female adults, the male adults, the patriarch, the matriarch system is kicking in and she feels very guilty, “mum’s depressed, etc, to bring her out of that I’ll agree to this, I feel guilty myself”...So, she gets on a plane and then slowly, that thing I said to you about victims coiling back thinking “You know what, this is just a load of fuss. The less fuss I make, the easier it is” (police officer d)

As evident in a prior example (case 43) there are inherent contradictions in the behaviours of mothers towards daughters. For instance, one victim spoke tearfully to the police of her father beating her mother in Macedonia when they were children (Aplin, 2017). Yet it was the *mother* who demanded that her daughter marry a suitor in Macedonia to reduce the embarrassment of the family (case 58). Despite conflicting behaviours of mothers, daughters tend to view them in a favourable light:

Her mum is on her side but she slapped her the other week (case 72)

Her mum told her that ‘she had to marry this male’ but recently she has gone back on this with mother stating ‘she only wants (victim) to do whatever makes her happy’ (case 61)

(Aplin, 2017)

Despite one victim being twice being duped by her mother into returning home, the victim *still* had faith in her. When she returned home a third time the victim was in fear of further violence from her overbearing father, husband and two brothers. The mother reacts differently, supporting her escape from the address and exhibiting what could be deemed as guilt and regret:

Her mother gave her a phone and told her to run away, which she did, and apologised for allowing the marriage (case 72)  
(Aplin, 2017)

Such behaviours might reflect the inner turmoil mothers face in securing daughters in a life of misery. Yet conversely, when analysed alongside the deceptions within the soft psychological abuse narratives, these could be considered as ploys to ensnare victims in order to resume the cycle of abuse. Unwavering loyalty is also apparent but to a much lesser extent, in victims’ attitudes toward sisters, sister-in-law’s and cousins (case 37, 65, 87 and 95). As explored previously, it was the verbal “stirring” of a cousin (case 87) and a sister-in-law (case 95) which precipitated serious levels of violence against daughters by mothers. In another case the same misplaced loyalty was evident, with the police write-up stating:

(Victim) seems to have a lot of trust in her sister-in-law and seems to think that her presence means her family are much more reserved and understanding than they would usually be (case 65)

Yet in all of these cases victims remain almost oblivious to the sleight of hand and betrayal by female relatives which precipitates the abuse. Victims often fail to recognise the ‘wolf’ lurking in sheep’s clothing.



## **Policing response to female perpetration, duress & individual agency**

### **Police stereotype and under-record female perpetration**

The role of police officers in managing female perpetration is both obscure and complex. An exacerbating feature is the inability by some frontline officers to recognise mothers and women more generally as perpetrators. Despite police incident reports directly implicating mothers in violence (solely or with others), frontline officers did not place mothers as perpetrators on police computer systems (PPI) or within formalised crime reports in 12%<sup>xviii</sup> of cases (Aplin, 2017). Instead, fathers were often logged as perpetrators and/or arrested, sometimes based on little to no evidence. In one case, despite only the *mother* being implicated in the violence by throwing shoes and chairs at the victim, surprisingly only the father is named as key perpetrator in the crime report (case 17). In a different case, despite both parents being implicated in slapping their 15-year-old daughter, only the father is arrested (case 26). Similarly, a mother had argued with her female child and then hit her with a slipper. Despite this, only the father was placed on the police nominal as ‘perpetrator’. Within the incident report it was rationalised by the victim that:

Mother always obeys her father’s instruction and that she [the mother] has fallen out with her family members [abroad] and they do not have any contact (case 84)

Certainly, police responses reflect a typically feminist asymmetrical argument that perpetration is highly gendered and almost exclusively made up of men (Dobash and Dobash, 1979; Stark, 2007; Johnson, 2006). The author does not dispute this contention, yet this fixed world view impedes recognition of female abuse. The frontline officer’s write-up (case 84) in line with the victim’s defence of her mother, tends to portray the mother as much of a victim as the daughter, oppressed under a patriarchal regime and committing acts of violence out of duress to satisfy the demands of her husband. Interviewees suggest that frontline officers are heavily influenced by gender role expectations, possessing stereotypical views of mothers as non-criminal, nurturing and supportive, with men as offenders and women as victims (Aplin, 2017):

I think Dad is always made out to be the one who’s the main person to be concerned about (police officer n)

I think sometimes people forget to look ...I think sometimes they [women] are overlooked as being a bigger part of it as they should be (police officer p)

You can tell that by the way that we all speak [police] - because the perpetrator will always be called "he" and the victim will always be "she"... because we're going off numbers aren't we -you'll deal with 10- [males] to every one [female] and unfortunately it can sway what you say. I think we are getting better, just to be open to the investigation mind-set of - 'who was responsible for this,' rather than thinking it must be Dad. So just thinking it can be anyone. It can be sister, or an aunt or a mum- yeah (police officer m)

A lot of the focus is on the male relatives whether it be fathers, uncles, brothers, etc. (police officer p)

Sometimes we're [police] a bit stereotypical and we see it as the male as being the perpetrator and not just in the honour-based stuff as well... it could be a male victim who's covered in blood... female's the first person who will say "well he assaulted me" and then they end up locking the male up... I think we are stereotypical in that way where we see it as a male dominant issue but it's not, it's not gender specific it should be anybody's responsible (police officer k)

Such discussions imply that the gender of a parent can lead practitioners to make erroneous assumptions about their level of culpability. It also reflects how uncomfortable professionals may be about conceiving that mothers may be perpetrators or accomplices in systemic physical abuse (Haringey local safeguarding children board, 2009 as cited in Broadhurst *et al.*, 2010). This inability to recognise mothers as complicit in abuse is evident in UK homicide cases, where mothers manipulate the authorities by providing misleading narratives which successfully conceal ongoing abuse. In the case of Shafiea Ahmed, the mother acted as key communicator to the authorities in justifying the victim's bleach swallowing incident as 'accidental' (Gill and Brah, 2014:77). In the case of 'Baby P', murdered at 17 months (2007) by his mother's boyfriend and his brother, mother Tracey Connelly prioritised her relationship with her boyfriend over that of her children. Connelly was highly manipulative, often lying and hiding Peter's horrific injuries from social services and the police. She consistently justified injuries found on her infant son as accidental, even smearing chocolate on his face to hide bruises from the authorities (Jones, 2014). Such findings reconfigure the landscape and challenge the professional assumption that mothers, and females more broadly, can and do routinely safeguard.

Moreover, there is recognition from specialist officers that far from being archetypal perpetrators, men can sometimes perform a protective function (Aplin, 2017). For instance, one mother sent her 17-year-old daughter off to Pakistan in order to marry her cousin, but because the daughter did not consent it was the uncle rather than the mother who halted the wedding plans (police officer b):

‘Well I’m not forcing my child to get married to someone who doesn’t want to marry him’. So if it wasn’t for *him*, she would have probably ended up in a forced marriage from her mother (police officer b)

Sometimes the partners may disagree—the actual father may disagree....  
(police officer a)

(Aplin, 2017)

It was only through observing a DVD during child genital mutilation training that one officer’s personal paradigm shifted entirely concerning the role that women play in abuse:

I heard the children screaming and mum’s pinning them down while they’re doing it. That’s what’s opened my eyes really as to any future jobs that I might attend, after seeing that video-is not to always discard mum ..//..Because normally you would think that mum is this nice person who does all the cooking and has the family kind of organised and does everything, but mum I think in a lot of cases probably does play a lot more of an active role than is ever disclosed really  
(police officer n)

(Aplin, 2017)

### **The duress argument versus individual agency**

It is clear from the narratives that two conflicting positions emerge in terms of the professional response to female perpetration. That is, the notion that women are seemingly obligated and under duress to act against their own kin, or conversely that they possess individual agency in being willing and complicit in that perpetration.

The typically traditional approach to female perpetration, herein referred to as the duress argument (Aplin, 2017), suggests that mothers are likely to be held accountable for the ‘sins’ of ‘wayward’ daughters (Wilford, 1998; Akpınar, 2003; Haj-Yahia, 2011; Chesler and Bloom, 2012) and are therefore pressured by men into acting against women out of dutiful obligation (Wilford, 1998:17; Akpınar, 2003) particularly evident in situations of illegitimate pregnancy. Many feminist academics subscribe to this sympathetic, almost

‘excusing’ approach, notably Durbas (2015) who examined 174 honour killing court cases in Turkey. Whilst accepting that mothers can be sole perpetrators who both instigate and collude in abuse, academics argue that women are obligated to remain loyal to the male dominated collective rather than being loyal to each other-or suffer a high price as a consequence (Elden, 2011; Durbas, 2015; Bates, 2018). Due to the implication that “bad goods belong to their owner” (Durbas, 2015), mothers may therefore attempt to mitigate that there is a degree of ‘necessity’ to their actions against daughters.

Although findings show that some officers concur with the traditional feminist perspective that mothers are secondary victims, the quantitative data along with a recognition from other specialist officers (7/15) (47%) challenges the accuracy of this perception. Overwhelming evidence of abhorrent behaviours by women is hard to reconcile with notions of women as “hapless” or “passive victims” (Yuval Davis, 1998:31). Mothers deceive and denigrate daughters, ostracise them from kin, barter to sell them, wish them dead and threaten to kill them or throw them downstairs. The extracts illustrate how mothers, in the name of ‘honour’, are as capable of serious violence against daughters as men and play a central role in HBA perpetration. Such depictions highlight that feminist explanations of the phenomenon that is violence and abuse against women by other women remain “inadequate” (Rew *et al.*, 2013:154). This perspective is supported by Ranalvi, Indian founder of the organisation ‘we speak out’ ([www.wepeakout.org](http://www.wepeakout.org)) against Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) (termed khafz), who argues that women who support prevailing oppressive practices against other women, such as the Dawoodi Bohra Women's Association for Religious Freedom (DBWRF) ([dbwrf.org](http://dbwrf.org)), do so of their own volition rather than out of duress (Ranalvi, 2018). Such countervailing female forces supporting FGM are highly intelligent (some possessing post graduate qualifications) and they level the argument that those condemning FGM practices are merely tutored by a western colonial narrative (ibid). The notion that mothers represent a grey, indistinct and “nearly invisible” figure within the family dynamic (Welden, 2010:389) is barely recognisable in these findings. Moreover, the prospect of a mother’s safety being actually jeopardised due to the behaviours of wayward children is barely discernible in these UK findings, with direct evidence of this in only 3% of incidents (3/100).

There is some evidence which accepts that both propositions (individual agency *and* duress) can coexist. This is evident in the contradictory behaviours by women that are

present in the findings, in simultaneously deceiving and then appearing to afford support to victims, which is apparent from mothers and extended female relations, notably sisters and sisters-in-law. Such ambivalent attitudes reflect the “coping mechanisms” referred to by Kandiyoti (1988:285), with women under an obligation to accommodate and adhere to the ‘patriarchal bargain’ by punishing wayward family members, then ‘resisting’ these obligations out of love and loyalty. This is indeed a ruthless ‘bargain’, with women constantly appearing to strategise within their limited constraints. It may be too simplistic to suggest that the attitudes and behaviours of female perpetrators are wholly independent ‘rational choices’, somehow ‘separate’ from patriarchy. Such subordination to social norms subconsciously permeates the context of a woman’s early socialisation (Kandiyoti, 1988:285). Yet equally, an abundance of evidence reflects the conniving way women conspire against other female relatives, which makes *who* to trust extremely challenging for victims. Ultimately, findings show how women, and mothers in particular, appear to sacrifice the victim due to self-preservation and a fear of losing reputation, which could destabilise their own position (see also Elden, 2011). A lack of genuine solidarity towards women in the extracts tends to support this sceptical assertion.

Furthermore, rather than view the motivations for the use and support of violence around what female perpetrators functionally aim to *gain* (Rew *et al.*, 2013), it could also hinge on what women *fear to lose* by *not* supporting the collective. Perhaps women perceive that it is not in a woman’s best interests to subvert the gender order by behaving otherwise. Conforming to social norms, rather than to personal relationships, affords women greater personal protection, security and stability (Kandiyoti, 1988). Lack of evidence of mothers performing a protective function (1/100) reinforces this assertion. Women have become negotiating “experts in maximising their own life chances” (Kandiyoti, 1988:280). However, in the context of these findings, this is interpreted as self-interest in terms of ‘saving one’s own skin’ and has adverse ramifications for the safeguarding of children and young adults, as explored in the following chapter.

Despite the data set showing significantly large volumes of multiple perpetration (83%), paradoxically police officers appear to ‘simplify’ and dilute cases by arresting and processing only one “key” offender, very often a male. Operational expediency assists in explaining this, in which officers rationalise their workload, as explored in chapter four. This may involve keeping it ‘simple’ and doing what is “satisfactory” (satisficing) in an

environment of diminishing resources (Simon, 1976). Yet, although this argument has merit, it does not explain why women are not arrested in cases where *only* they are solely implicated (Aplin, 2017). This supports the contention that some police officers, like some academics (Wilford, 1998; Akpınar, 2003; Durbas, 2015), perceive of matriarchal perpetrators as indirect victims. Incident data findings suggest that, particularly where there appears to be a blurred distinction between mothers as controlling ‘perpetrators’ and mothers as oppressed ‘victims,’ there exists a difficulty in professionals ‘labelling’ (on PPI and crime reports) females as perpetrators. Furthermore, where this blurring is apparent there *also* exists an enduring loyalty by daughters who appear reluctant to blame mothers for the infliction of HBA, again alluding back to the theme of victim reluctance explored in chapter four. Victims often underplay the involvement of mothers and constantly mitigate the actions committed by them. Mothers that are viewed in a favourable light by victims, despite evidence of contradicting and controlling behaviours, remain unblemished by the criminal justice system (Aplin, 2017). It is therefore argued that the perception of mothers as secondary victims (by officers and communicated by victims themselves) actually influences and impacts on police decision-making; with officers unlikely to categorise mothers as perpetrators or pursue formal action, especially when mothers are portrayed as prioritising the best interests of victims, therefore figuratively seen as ‘more sinned against than sinning’. Police interview data supports this contention, as a third of officers (5/15) had never investigated a female offender of HBA, despite being operational specialists in this field. This may signify that frontline officers are not bringing these incidents to specialist attention, because they have not recognised female perpetrators as ‘criminal’ nor logged them on crime reports as such (ibid).

The fact that victims refuse to prosecute parents, particularly prevalent in the research, may lead officers to apply discretionary practices in circumventing NCRS crime recording rules (see chapter four). Even when there is direct evidence that mothers and other female relatives pose a risk to victims, police take no action, highlighting that victim wishes may be utilised by officers to legitimate police inaction. This is evident in several pregnancy cases where victims and boyfriends predict the outcome and clearly outline the threat posed by the family (cases 65 and 87) and yet officers did nothing to mitigate the risk. The unwillingness of victims to take cognisance of the risks posed by mothers should not be ‘used’ by officers to justify non-enforcement practices. It is difficult to ascertain with certainty whether police turn a blind eye to female perpetration as part of a larger set of

non-enforcement practices; whether it is through lack of training that officers fail to recognise female perpetration; or whether officers perceive the mother to be an “indirect victim” and therefore not ‘culpable’. However, it is highly probable that all facets play some part in shaping the criminal justice response to female perpetration (Aplin, 2017).

### **Concluding remarks**

Female perpetration of HBA is an unanticipated finding of this research, as well the most controversial amongst feminists studying gendered abuse. Such findings present a challenge to the asymmetrical stereotypical constructs that women are victims and men are perpetrators. Due to socialisation, women enter a ‘patriarchal bargain’ and in order to resist total male control, they become willing participants with a vested interest in a system which perpetuates oppressive practices against other women (Kandiyoti, 1988; Okin, 1999; Gill *et al.*, 2012; Eisner and Ghuneim, 2013). These findings depart from previous research by illustrating that, far from playing a peripheral role, women, and mothers in particular, exert much more control, influence and involvement in HBA than extant research has thus far advocated.

It is erroneous to consider these six categories (use violence, forced abortion, hard and soft psychological abuse, ostracising victims and being complicit in the violence) as existing on a continuum from the ‘least’ to the ‘most’ serious levels of abuse. Indeed, the corrosive and emotional ‘chipping away’ exercises by women appear more psychologically damaging to victims, as these pull on the heartstrings, inhibit victims from pursuing prosecutions and often retain them in risk predicaments. Such psychological warfare adversely impacts on the mental health of victims, causing them to be doubly discredited both by perpetrators and then professionals. Long term, psychological abuse is as damaging as physical violence (Campbell, 1995; Stark, 2007) and the UK offence of controlling or coercive behaviour in an intimate or family relationship (Serious Crime Act, 2015 s.76) which specifically covers HBA and forced marriage, acknowledges this. Degrading victims, isolating them from family and friends, financial abuse and depriving them of a job, all evident within these findings, are all behaviours specifically alluded within this Act of parliament (Home Office, 2015). The practicalities of prosecuting psychological abuse remain difficult territory for law enforcement, as implied by Wiener (2017), no physical

evidence compounded by an unwillingness to prosecute relatives makes prosecutions difficult to execute.

Women are deemed as integral to ending HBA and it is proffered that governmental policy should focus more on women in order to halt the cycle of abuse. Professionals in the safeguarding arena (police, CSC, health, education) must reconsider the role played by the mother and other women, rather than assume that the natural position of women is to protect. That mothers at the very least turn a blind eye to HBA perpetration should encourage a re-evaluation of law enforcement and social services strategies, to avoid children and young women returning to or remaining in risk predicaments. Equally, it is important for agencies to be more discerning in assessing the attitudes of other female relatives within the family dynamic, such as sisters, sister-in-law's, aunts and cousins. Because, in an environment of dwindling resources, such relatives are requested to 'care' for child victims due to difficulties in locating secure foster placements or long-term local authority care. Social workers and police officers must ensure that victims are not returned back to the abuse by relatives who enact and condone equally oppressive practices (Aplin, 2017). It is this subject of child reconciliation and the role played by professionals in such interventions which is the focus of the following chapter.

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<sup>i</sup> Police officer a, b, c, d, g, f, h.

<sup>ii</sup> Cases 1, 3, 5, 14, 15, 16, 19, 31, 41, 73, 82 and 92.

<sup>iii</sup> Cases 8, 48, 52, 76, 81, 88 and 97.

<sup>iv</sup> Cases 10, 13, 17, 20, 26, 39, 61, 72, 84 and 93.

<sup>v</sup> DASH is a risk identification, assessment and management model adopted by United Kingdom police forces and partner agencies in March 2009 and accredited by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) council

(now NPCC). It is intended to cover cases of Domestic Abuse, Stalking, Harassment and Honour-based violence (DASH, 2009). The DASH checklist is comprised of 27 questions and provides staff with a practical tool to assist in the early risk identification and decide on the appropriate level of intervention for victims (high, medium, standard risk). There are an additional 10 questions specific to HBA.

<sup>vi</sup> Cases 5, 65, 67, 69, 70, 83, 87, 89, 95 and 100.

<sup>vii</sup> An ‘Osman warning’ is given by police officers to intended victims to warn them of a threat to their life. This is derived from the case of *R v Osman* 2000 in which the ECHR ruled that public bodies, such as the police are under a positive obligation to take preventative operational measures to protect an individual when there is real and immediate risk to life from the criminal acts of others.

<sup>viii</sup> There was one case where the husband slapped his pregnant wife across the face causing swelling and bruising to the eye (case 9). However, the pregnancy itself was not the trigger for the HBA.

<sup>ix</sup> Cases 13, 20, 22, 32, 39, 44, 45, 57, 74, 93 and 96.

<sup>x</sup> Such findings not only show female involvement but support the contention that some honour killings in the UK and abroad may be disguised as accidents or suicides.

<sup>xi</sup> Cases 81, 96, 64 and 53, police officer c.

<sup>xii</sup> Originally devised in 1982 due to the Domestic Violence intervention Project, Minnesota, USA.

<sup>xiii</sup> Cases 2, 9, 30, 47 and 91.

<sup>xiv</sup> Constant harassment by in-laws and husbands can also often push married women to *commit* suicide (Waters, 1999 as cited in *Rew et al.*, 2013; Cihangir, 2013; House of Commons, 2008).

<sup>xv</sup> Cases 37, 45, 46, 49, 60 and 66.

<sup>xvi</sup> Cases 24, 32, 37, 45, 55, 60, 61, 66, 72, 94, 95 and 96.

<sup>xvii</sup> There is some evidence of perpetrators threatening to burn down the house of those who *harbour* honour victims (cases 51, 37, 73).

<sup>xviii</sup> Cases 12, 13, 17, 26, 27, 44, 58, 62, 64, 84, 87 and 89.