

Institution: University of East Anglia		
Unit of Assessment: 25 - Area Studies		
Title of case study: <i>Growing Up Married</i> : Influencing the Development of New Draft Legislation, Improved Training, and Increased Public and Professional Awareness on Forced Child Marriage		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2010–2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Professor Eylem Atakav	Professor of Film, Gender and Public Engagement	2009 to present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2016–2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact <p>According to the best available global estimate (care.org), every day 39,000 girls become child brides. The UK Government's Forced Marriage Unit provides advice or support in around 1,300 possible cases of forced marriage each year in the UK, but many more go unreported. Eylem Atakav's research on gender in the UK and the Middle East has influenced and advanced the UK policy debate and improved training and practice on this key human rights issue. Her research film <i>Growing Up Married</i> (2016) has used women's testimonials to raise awareness of the urgency and intensity of the trauma of forced child marriage as well as the scale of the issue.</p> <p>As a member of the United Kingdom's (UK) Domestic Abuse Research Network, and through her close partnerships with influential NGO groups such as 'Girls Not Brides', the UEA research has brought new perspectives to the ongoing development of a new 'Marriage and Civil Partnerships (Minimum Age) Bill', which is now awaiting a second reading in the House of Commons. It has influenced the development of more effective training programmes for the police and other frontline agencies in handling young women and families affected by or vulnerable to forced marriage. It has also given victims and survivors the confidence to come forward and use their experiences to help others.</p>		
2. Underpinning research <p>Eylem Atakav's feminist film research is focussed on women, media, and the Middle East. Her ground-breaking 2012 monograph, <i>Women and Turkish Cinema</i> (3.1), foregrounds the ways in which modern Turkish cinema represents power relations in gender, cultural identity, and representation. It offers a comprehensive view of cinema's approach to women in a country which straddles European and Middle Eastern cultural conceptions, identities, and religious values. A number of publications and public engagement activities emerge from this seminal work to raise the profile of issues of gender politics, including violence against women in the form of 'honour' crimes, virginity tests, forced marriage, and domestic sexual violence (3.2).</p> <p>Her film <i>Growing Up Married</i> (3.3) offers a direct presentation of the ongoing effects of domestic violence against girls. It follows four women from Turkey as they recollect their memories of forced marriage as child brides. Atakav began interviewing women in Izmir, Turkey, who came forward to document and share their experiences. The film, Atakav's first, shifts her existing theoretical research about representation and visibility into documentary practices of personal narrative and testimony.</p> <p>First-hand knowledge of the cultural contexts within which human rights abuses occur globally is essential to mitigating and stopping future abuse. Stories of what happens to those forced to marry as children are often as invisible as the practice itself. Atakav's academic practice amplifies the visibility of these stories; her work gives an informed and nuanced platform for understanding</p>		

forced child marriage, communicating the urgency of the issues in the UK and internationally. Atakav's article for *Critical Discourse Studies*, 'Growing Up Married: Representing Forced Marriage on Screen' (3.4), reflects on the process of mediating women's and girls' untold stories through film whilst exploring the ways in which women articulate these experiences in retrospect. She argues that the ways in which women speak out about these experiences not only reveals issues around forced marriage, but also sheds light on the wider dynamics of domestic violence, sexual abuse, and child abuse. Atakav's contribution to a chapter in *Creative Practice Research in the Age of Neoliberal Hopelessness* (3.5), extends this self-reflexive feminist practice to include analysis of the impact of her filmmaking and the ways in which creative practice and theory challenge the dominant forms and voices of film in the contemporary academy.

3. References to the research

3.1 "Women and Turkish Cinema: Gender Politics, Cultural Identity and Representation"

Atakav, E.

Routledge, **2012**. ISBN: 9781136681592.

3.2 "Honour is Everything for Muslims": Vendetta Song, Religious Identity and Gender Politics in Turkey', in Heather Savigny and Helen Warner (eds) *The Politics of Being a Woman: Feminism, Media and 21st Century Popular Culture*

Atakav, E.

Palgrave Macmillan, **2015**, pp.49-63. DOI: 10.1057/9781137384669_3.

3.3 "Growing up Married" (2016), documentary film, directed and produced by **Eylem Atakav**. (Held on file at UEA)

3.4 "Growing Up Married: Representing Forced Marriage on Screen"

Atakav, E.

Journal of Critical Discourse Studies, **2019**, vol. 17, no. 2, pp. 229-241.

DOI: 10.1080/17405904.2019.1665078.

3.5 "Against the Grain: Women Film Practitioners and Theorists Talk Creative Practice and Theory", in Agnieszka Piotrowska (ed.) *Creative Practice Research in the Age of Neoliberal Hopelessness*

Daniels, J., Velody, R., and **Atakav, E.**

Edinburgh University Press, **2020**, pp. 19-33. ISBN: 9781474463560

4. Details of the impact

Eylem Atakav's work on forced marriage has highlighted the urgent need to reduce the incidence of what remains a significant human rights issue in the UK and internationally. Her work has brought this issue to a much wider audience by giving a voice to victims and survivors of forced child marriage. In doing so, Atakav has raised national and international awareness of the problem, changed police practice and training in frontline agencies, worked with UK parliamentarians to create new UK law, and enabled victims and survivors to try and influence future generations.

Enriching the Public Discourse – Awareness Raising and Promoting Debate

Since its 2016 UK premiere at London's Phoenix Cinema, *Growing Up Married* has achieved an international reach, including screenings in Bangladesh, Cyprus, Japan, Turkey, and the United States. In 2017, it was featured in the 15th Dhaka International Film Festival Official Selection, at the University of North Carolina (UNC) Charlotte International Film Festival and at the Los Angeles Forum.

Consequent media coverage has widened and enriched the public debate on the reality of forced and child marriages. Reports on the film, including a 2016 article by Thomson Reuters Foundation journalist [REDACTED], have been published in a range of large circulation national and international newspapers, including the *New York Times*, the UK *Daily Mail*, the *Hurriyet Daily*

News (Turkey), *The Daily Star* (Lebanon), and *Gulf Times* (Qatar), as well as online sites such as *The Huffington Post* (5.1).

The film has also brought Atakav's research to an international academic audience through screenings at universities in Japan (Graduate School, Museum of Ethnology, Osaka), Turkey (Bilkent, Istanbul Aydin), the United Kingdom (Anglia Ruskin, Cambridge, Leicester, Southampton Solent, Warwick), and the United States (Drury, San Francisco State, Walsh). After the Aydin screening, the students and staff commented **"it was very valuable [...] to share this film with the young people who could lead the changes in the society"** (5.2).

The Phi Beta Delta Association of International Scholars have awarded a medal of honour and lifetime membership for Atakav's work on *Growing Up Married*.

Enabling Victims and Survivors to Speak Out – Greater Confidence, Advocacy, and Education

Through her documentary work, Atakav has increased the confidence and willingness of victims and survivors to come forward and educate the next generation. [REDACTED] two of the interviewees in *Growing Up Married*, describe how taking part in the documentary has given them a unique opportunity to integrate their experiences of forced marriage into their life narratives and speak to a wider audience:

"After talking [to you], I felt like my confidence was restored and I felt so happy to have shared it. It is comforting to speak out. Those were things that I haven't spoken about before [...] it helped me come to terms with what happened" (5.3).

"I thought it was time to tell someone about my life [...] I am glad lots of people will watch the film and hear about my experience..." (5.4).

[REDACTED] felt that documenting and voicing her trauma had the potential to effect wider understanding and lead to changed perception of the practice: **"if my story can change one person's idea about forced marriage [...] then I will be even happier"** noting that **"education"** was the key to a reduction in forced marriage (5.4).

The impact of these brave women's testimonials is acknowledged by [REDACTED] from Drury University (USA). [REDACTED] who first saw the film at a 2017 NAFSA Association of International Educators' seminar, now includes Atakav's film in her syllabus due to its relevance locally and internationally:

"our state legislature was discussing the minimum age for marriage – discourses about which many of the students [before they viewed the film] [...] had been previously unaware and found shocking" (5.5)

"[The film] helped my students move beyond legislation to visualising the human people – girls and women – whose lives were being profoundly affected by policies in which they had no voice [... and they gained] a deeper appreciation for the power of personal narrative" (5.5).

Influencing Cross-Sector Improvements in Prevention and Safeguarding Training

Growing up Married has proved a valuable resource to inform and train UK public services and charities. The film has raised awareness and changed the content of the training provided by frontline agencies in the East of England (including Norfolk Constabulary, Norfolk County Council, and the NHS). Atakav has spoken at domestic violence and abuse services events, and at public and institutional screenings since the film's release. Through these, she has reached practitioners from the Leeway Domestic Violence and Abuse Services (which supports over 9,000 adults, children, and young people experiencing domestic abuse every year), the Pandora Project (which supports vulnerable women and children affected by domestic abuse), and St Giles Trust (which supports people held back by poverty, exploitation, and abuse in London and across the UK).

Since 2016, and using her film as a training resource, Atakav has run sessions for:

- Honour Based Abuse, Female Genital Mutilation, and Forced Marriage Multiagency Strategy Group (Norfolk Constabulary Headquarters; ongoing sessions since 2016: approx. 180 attendees).
- NHS Norwich Community Conversation Group and Norfolk Constabulary (2017: 30 attendees).
- Designated Safeguarding Children Team (Norfolk and Waveney), NHS doctors and nurses, and Looked After Children Named Professionals (2017: approx. 30 attendees).
- Domestic Abuse Champions training, Norfolk County Council (2019: approx. 50 attendees).

██████████ from the office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (Norfolk) acknowledged the importance of Atakav's research and its influence on police understanding and practice:

"[Atakav] remains an important member of the Domestic Abuse Partners Forum [... her research is] a compelling argument for the need to prevent and eradicate this practice [... and] informed our Strategic Plan by championing, influencing and offering visual content to deliver the group's key message" (5.6).

"[Atakav] has had significant [...] impact on the training content of Norfolk Constabulary and its partners [...] domestic abuse service providers will feel empowered to be able to provide support as they will have a good level of knowledge in this type of abuse [...] our practice has changed" (5.6).

The Norfolk Constabulary Safeguarding Development Officer described *Growing Up Married* as **"invaluable"** in prompting police to recognise that forced marriage happens in Norfolk, reminding **"agencies and the community [... that] the Constabulary can implement prevention and disruption options to manage perpetrators of this abuse" (5.7).**

Helping to Catalyse the UK Policy Debate, Including Influencing the Development of a New Bill

Atakav's innovative approach to research, outreach, and awareness has had a catalytic effect upon the national policy debate around forced and child marriage. The ability of *Growing Up Married* to make such real-life stories accessible has allowed Atakav to forge new relationships with national and international institutions to put a process of change in motion.

Atakav is a member of the Steering Group of the UK Domestic Abuse Research Network, and has worked in partnership with the NGO community, including the Iranian and Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation (IKRWO) and 'Girls Not Brides' (the most influential global non-governmental organisation). Building these relationships has allowed Atakav to use her research to assist the key UK non-governmental groups who advocate for legislative change by providing rigorous evidence to governmental agencies and committees.

In 2019, as part of her involvement in these organisations, Atakav screened sequences from *Growing Up Married* at a meeting of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Population, Development, and Reproductive Health. This group includes in its membership ██████████ as well as key NGOs (such as IKRWO, 'Girls Not Brides', Independent Yemen Group, Karma Nirvana, and the UK Says No More campaign). The film was screened as part of the APPG discussion of the private member's bill, 'Marriage and Civil Partnerships (Minimum Age)', which is aimed at criminalising child marriage and no longer allowing marriage between the ages of 16 and 18 with parental consent.

██████████ (Vice-chair of the APPG) noted that Atakav was **"the only academic representative invited to the meeting"** and that her research was a **"central contribution to our discussions about the need for legislative change" (5.8).**

“Prof Atakav has been influential and poignant in demonstrating the vital need to eliminate this very harmful and shocking practice [...] it is vital to use academic research such as this research film to instigate change” (5.8).

██████████ (Co-chair of the APPG, author of the private member’s bill) noted:

“The film gives an insight into the lasting effects child marriage has [...] Prof Eylem Atakav’s research is welcome [... it] brings an important new academic understanding around women, gender politics, and the media” (5.9).

██████████ (Co-chair of the APPG, who led the September 2019 briefing), echoed her colleagues:

“Her contribution enabled members of the APPG on PDRH to better and more fully understand the long-lasting legacy of child marriage [...] Academic research like Atakav’s strengthens the work of the APPG [...] and its commitment to legislate against the issue of child marriage” (5.10).

██████████ private members’ bill offers the most potent parliamentary route to legislate around this issue, particularly at a time when the government’s attention has been focused on issues such as the COVID-19 pandemic and Brexit. As ██████████ asserts, **“The Bill is vitally important in the prevention of children (predominantly girls) being coerced into early marriage, and thus removing their opportunities in life” (5.10).** The bill was read in the House of Lords on 27 January 2020 and re-introduced to the House of Commons ██████████ on 6 October 2020. The second reading of the Bill in the House of Commons is now awaited. Atakav’s research has had a clear and demonstrable impact on the shaping of the bill as it was prepared and presented to both Houses of Parliament.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- 5.1** Evaluative media reviews: ‘Turkish child marriage film shines light on hidden abuses’, 15th October 2016, featured in Reuters, *The New York Times* (US), *Daily Mail* (UK), *Hurriyet Daily News* (Turkey), *The Daily Star* (Lebanon), and *Gulf Times* (Qatar); ‘Future Filmmakers And Educators: What Do You Need To Know?’, 25th November, 2016, *The Huffington Post*.
- 5.2** Joint testimonial from lecturer and students, Istanbul Aydin University, 7th July 2020.
- 5.3** Testimonial of first interviewee in *Growing Up Married* reflecting on her experiences of participating in the project, 2016.
- 5.4** Testimonial of second interviewee in *Growing Up Married* reflecting on her experiences of participating in the project, 2016.
- 5.5** Testimonial from Professor in Department of Languages and Literature, Drury University (US), 2017.
- 5.6** Testimonial from Policy and Research Officer, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Norfolk.
- 5.7** Testimonial from Safeguarding Development Officer, Norfolk Constabulary, 2017.
- 5.8** Testimonial from Member of the House of Lords, Vice-chair, All-Party Parliamentary Group on Population, Development, and Reproductive Health (APPG-PDRH).
- 5.9** Testimonial from Member of the House of Lords, Co-chair of the APPG-PDRH.
- 5.10** Testimonial from Member of Parliament, Co-chair of the APPG-PDRH.