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Is It Not Just Another Form of Violence Against Women?  
A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Swedish Government  
Office's Investigation on Honor Oppression through a  
Postcolonial Feminist Lens

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## Abstract

The recognition of honor-related violence has been emphasized in the media and through legal regulation during the last decades in Sweden. Honor oppression is often characterized by its cultural/religious roots and is found in patriarchal and collective societies. However, the regulations might have stigmatizing effects as they target certain communities in society. Previous research shows that honor-related violence differs in interpretation contextually and that the understanding of whether different forms of violence against women should be distinguished is discussed. This thesis aims to critically investigate how HO is described in the SOU 2020:57. The Theoretical Framework based on Third World feminism and Orientalism and Fairclough's critical discourse analysis enables an analysis of the hegemonic discourse on honor oppression. The analysis illuminates the postcolonial feminist traits reproduced in the investigation on a textual- discursive- and social dimension. The analysis illustrates how critical tools from Postcolonial Feminism make visible interpretations of HO that can be discriminatory. The investigation furthermore can be interpreted as reproducing Othering effects, power asymmetries between gender and race, making certain communities "the" honor-related problem and that honor oppression have more similarities than differences with other forms of violence against women.

Keywords: *critical discourse analysis, honor oppression, Orientalism, Postcolonial Feminism, Third World feminism, violence against women.*

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## Table Of Contents

Abbreviations.....	6
<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>7</b>
1.1. Socio-legal Framing.....	8
1.2. Main Aims.....	9
1.3. Research Question.....	9
<b>2. Background.....</b>	<b>9</b>
2.1. A Brief Description of the Political Structure in Sweden.....	9
2.2. Violation of women’s rights (4 kap. 4 a § Brb).....	10
2.3. The Istanbul Convention.....	11
2.4. The Prosecutor’s Office’s Handbook on Honor-related Violence.....	12
2.5. Honor Oppression (4 kap. 4 e § Brb).....	13
<b>3. Literature Review.....</b>	<b>14</b>
3.1. Underlying Causes of the Emergence of Honor-related Crimes.....	14
3.2. Domestic Violence/Honor Crime.....	17
3.3. The Cultural Impact.....	19
3.4. Contribution to the Field.....	21
<b>4. Theoretical Framework.....</b>	<b>22</b>
4.1. Feminism in the Context of Postcolonialism.....	22
4.2. Third World/Western feminism.....	23
4.3. A Third World feminist understanding of Power.....	25
4.4. Legal Orientalism.....	25
<b>5. Methodology.....</b>	<b>26</b>
5.1. Critical Discourse Analysis.....	26
5.2. Selection of Material.....	28

5.3. The Investigators of the SOU 2020:57.....	29
5.4. Validity & Reliability.....	30
5.5. Reflexivity.....	32
5.6. Ethical Considerations.....	33
5.7. Fairclough’s Three Dimensions of CDA.....	34
5.8. Coding.....	35
<b>6. Analysis &amp; Discussion.....</b>	<b>35</b>
6.1. The Colonized Definition of Honor.....	36
6.1.1. Honor-related Attributes.....	38
6.2. Binary Gender Structures & Asymmetries.....	41
6.2.1. The Collective.....	43
6.2.2. HO/VAW.....	45
6.3. Us/Them.....	47
6.3.1. Backwardness.....	50
6.3.2. Discriminatory Traits.....	53
<b>7. Discussion in Relation to the Literature Review.....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>8. Conclusions.....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>9. Bibliography.....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>10. Appendix.....</b>	<b>64</b>

## Abbreviations

**CDA:** Critical Discourse Analysis

**EU:** The European Union

**GO:** The Government Office

**HO:** Honor Oppression

**SOU 2020:57:** The Government's Official Investigation - 'A particular honor crime'

**UN:** The United Nations

**VAW:** Violence Against Women

# 1. Introduction

The 1990s marked an era for international women's rights. Violence against women (hereafter VAW) was recognized as a human rights issue and was put on the agenda in the United Nations (UN). Honor crimes are understood as a culturally specific form of violence, separate from other forms of domestic violence (Abu-Lughod 2013: 114). Honor oppression (hereafter HO) is an umbrella term covering different criminal acts committed with an honor motive. This strong form of negative social control is characterized by an infringement of freedom in (mainly but not only) girls' and women's lives. Furthermore, HO occurs in different contexts around the world, with the common trait of existing in collectively organized societies. Rigoni (2022: 7) argues that the phenomenon is accentuated in migration contexts to keep the integrity and culture within the family or community and avoid becoming too influenced by the new country's culture and codes of conduct. The causes of HO originate in patriarchal societies with power asymmetries based on gender, age, social reputation, and economic interests (ibid: 8). The European response to this phenomenon has been tackled with legislation and policy actions in the Istanbul Convention most EU countries have ratified (ibid: 9).

However, these regulations raise questions. Honor crimes are understood as cultural- or ethnic-specific behavior and the culture itself is interpreted as the cause of violence (Abu-Lughod 2013: 114). This means that the legislation only applies to people of certain ethnicities. By extension, the regulations might stigmatize entire communities. This also has consequences for the victims who themselves might come from those communities. Victims, therefore tend not to report the crimes they are subjected to because they are trapped in a situation where often more than one of the family members hurt or threatens to hurt the victim. The second reason for a low report rate is that social control is stronger than trust in the community's criminal justice system (Rigoni 2022: 9, 10). To combat this form of VAW, the Swedish government decided to investigate honor-related oppression and analyze whether a special criminal designation should be implemented as a complement to the legal regulation of VAW. This investigation (SOU 2020:57) is selected as the material for analysis and will hence be central to the thesis.

## 1.1. Socio-legal Framing

The notion that law and societal forces are interrelated is a shared socio-legal understanding, however, how the study of law and legal behavior should be conceptualized differs (Banakar 2013: 4). The sociology of law employs social theories and methods to study the law itself and legal institutions or legal behavior to analyze their impact on the social world. An intellectual openness to the simultaneous study of sociology and law opens up a wider understanding and approach to socio-legal phenomena (Banakar & Travers 2013: 2, 3). Petrazýcki interprets law as intuitive and official law. Intuitive or unofficial law as a system can be found in, for instance, religious or tribal groups. Communities with a strong impact of ancient law living in societies with an official law create a dual system. This dual influence of systems of law affects groups and how they act in accordance with their legal consciousness. However, these systems are not complete opposites and can influence each other (Banakar 2013: 13). This understanding of socio-legal research is relevant in the context of how HO is legally sanctioned as honor is described by its strong cultural roots which may clash with prevailing state law.

What is central in this thesis is the study of how legal professionals, commissioned by the government office, can impact other areas of social life, namely discourses about honor oppression. The socio-legal emphasis can furthermore be illustrated by Max Weber's approaches to the study of law. Based on Weber's work, Deflem (2008) argues that there are three approaches, the first one is the law itself regulating the law, it upholds the internal consistency of the law by employing legal practice and building knowledge of legal scholarship. The GO's investigation illustrates what those in power state as facts and "the truth". It presents the current stage in terms of knowledge production, positionality, and legal practice. The second approach to the study of law is more critical and moves beyond the strictly legal perspective by incorporating the moral principle as justification of the law to criticize current structures and reach a normative standard. The critical approach of the study strives to present an alternative strand of knowledge production to discuss the prevailing discourse on honor. The third perspective is an empirical study of the law that analyzes characteristics within the systems of law, including the state (Deflem 2008).



## 1.2. Main Aims

From a socio-legal perspective, this study aims to critically investigate how HO is described in the SOU 2020:57 by employing a postcolonial feminist framework. By employing this theoretical framework, I interpret what is being said and how it is being told in order to illuminate knowledge production, and underlying power asymmetries and critically analyze the current hegemonic discourse. This thesis furthermore aims to enable a discussion on how honor is defined and how the discourse about “the truth” is presented by recognizing alternative strands of knowledge.

## 1.3. Research Question

How can Postcolonial Feminism be used to point out how Westernized discourses are re/produced in the Swedish government office’s investigation (SOU 2020:57) on honor oppression?

# 2. Background

This chapter presents Sweden’s political structure to illustrate the impact an investigation by legal professionals from the GO has. Furthermore, a brief description of the Violation of women’s rights illustrates the legal regulation that more or less lays the foundation for the addition to the penal code, namely HO. This chapter furthermore describes how the EU, through the Istanbul Convention, influences certain legal standards in Sweden on how to combat VAW and HO. At last, a presentation of how the prosecutor’s office understands the violence and prosecutes such cases.

## 2.1. A Brief Description of the Political Structure in Sweden

Sweden has a parliamentary form of government with a vote for representatives to the parliament, regions, and municipalities every four years. The parliament designates a Prime Minister who is tasked with forming a government. The government presents legislative proposals and proposals for legislative amendments to the parliament. These proposals are what are referred to as

*propositioner* (bills). The government office (GO) is commanded to assist the government with investigations and bills. The parliament's duties are to legislate and control the government's work. The procedure of implementing a new law or an amendment to the law starts with an investigation by the GO about the current conditions of the law. After that, the investigation which presents a law/amendment to the law is sent back to the government which is referred to as a deliberation. The deliberation is sent to affected referral bodies such as authorities, organizations, and municipalities. The government processes the bill and proposes a law, which is often sent on legal council referral for examination. The bill is sent to the parliament which can leave suggestions and finally the parliament votes for the law proposal (Regeringskansliet 2015).

## 2.2. Violation of women's rights (4 kap. 4 a § Brb)

The regulations of *grov fridskränkning och grov kvinnofridskränkning* (coarse breach of the peace and coarse violation of women's rights) are characterized by repeated criminal violations or single violations against a woman with whom the perpetrator has a relationship. The inflicted harm is a violation of the person's integrity and self-esteem. The regulations were implemented in 1998 to enhance the seriousness of crimes directed at people in close relationships and with characteristics of repeated insults and systematic violations. The penalty for these crimes is six months to 6 years in prison (Prop. 1998/99:145). This regulation intends that the crime is perpetuating, consisting of several acts that can be individually punishable. Individual violations are separately punishable but seen in a context with the prop of the acts being disruptive, it will be possible to ascertain the repetitive aspect of violations. The reason for this change enables the possibility to consider acts that were not prosecuted as the perpetrator can only be convicted of a crime once. To exemplify, if a perpetrator is convicted of several violations and a pattern of repetitive insults is discovered, the former convictions cannot be brought to court. The difference between coarse breach of the peace and coarse violation of women's rights is that the latter contains the requisite that the perpetrator has committed these repeated violations against a woman he is/has been married to or lives/has lived with in a marriage-like relationship (Prop. 1998/99:145).

### 2.3. The Istanbul Convention

In 2011 Sweden ratified the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating VAW. The convention condemns all types of VAW in the home and requires preventive measures to reach equality between women and men. The convention states that VAW is an expression of the historical power asymmetries which has resulted in men's domination and discrimination of women and women's development. VAW exists on a structural level and implies that women and girls are exposed to violence in the home, sexual violence, forced marriage, honor-related crimes, and forced genital mutilation. The convention aims to protect-, prevent-, prosecute, and abolish VAW in the home. It also aims to abolish all forms of discrimination and combat the inequality between women and men by enforcing women's position and forming an international collaboration to tackle this form of violence (Europarådets fördragsserie -nr 210, 2011).

According to the convention, the parties (states that ratified the convention) shall apply the regulations in the convention without making distinctions based on "sex, gender, race, skin color, language, religion, political view". The convention also states that necessary repercussions to prevent and protect women can be made regardless of whether those can be interpreted as discriminatory. The parties shall use necessary measures to promote women's position by eradicating prejudice, customs, and traditions that uphold these social and cultural behavioral patterns. They shall also ensure that religion, culture, customs, or "so-called honor" cannot be used as justification for violent acts, especially in cases where the victim is considered to have crossed religious, cultural, and traditional boundaries (Europarådets fördragsserie -nr 210 2011). The long-term work against violence of this kind began in 1993. In 1998 the Women's Freedom Bill (Prop. 1997/1998:55) was ratified by the Parliament and contained a program of how to combat VAW, this included several new regulations as well as preventive measures against the violence. Equality policy and the women's rights reform had their basis in the understanding that men are superior to women as a group and that VAW is an expression of this. The Committee Directive states that the lack of such understanding reproduces current power structures and makes change impossible (Kommittédirektiv 2003:112).

## 2.4. The Prosecutor's Office's Handbook on Honor-related Violence

In 2006 the prosecutor's office compiled a handbook of knowledge and tools about honor-related violence in the stage of prosecution. The prosecutor's office understands honor as an undefinable concept and argues that it is difficult for people of Western values to understand crime in the context of honor both seen from the perspective of the crime victim and the perpetrator. The handbook informs that it is important to bear in mind that honor can be taken into account even in cases where the honor motive is ruled out but the family has a "strong sense of honor thinking" as the threat can be reinforced when reporting a crime (Åklagarmyndigheten 2006: 6). Despite death threats and abuse which is common in other relationship violence, honor-related cases imply what follows in relation to the plaintiff: derogatory statements, surveillance, getting spat at, threats of abductions to the country of origin, to be taken away by car, get physically abused with shoes or getting burnt with various objects (ibid: 9). According to a mapping made by the prosecution's office, the countries where "honor-thinking" originates are: Iraq, Türkiye, Lebanon, former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, Jordan, Iran, and Palestine (ibid).

According to the handbook, revenge was integral in many ancient legal systems. All cultures rely on this notion, shaping society based on the "an eye for an eye" principle and corporal punishment in relation to the inflicted damage. This social structure kept society feeling safe and honor reinforced this balance in times without an official legal system but this tradition continues today to a lesser extent. Åklagarmyndigheten (2006: 13, 14) further argues that compared to other cultural contexts, Swedish society is particularly individualistic and governs every individual's unique self, the self is always prioritized before the family or collective. Furthermore, honor norms are not acquainted with a specific religion but rather with religiousness since these norms are more prevalent in religious societies. However, honor norms exist within non-religious families as well, therefore, the term honor ought to be interpreted in a social context rather than a religious one (Åklagarmyndigheten 2006: 18). They further outline that immigrants entering an honor-based context bring these values with them and a culture clash occurs which complicates the integration process.

Åklagarmyndigheten (2006) stresses that when honor-related violence is reported, it is essential to consider the victim's perspective. The responsible authority should offer protected residences to keep the victim safe. This is considered a difficulty for the victim since she is kept away from her family. That the plaintiff feels safe also creates the best conditions for the often stressful legal process. In cases of honor-related violence, the plaintiff is much more hesitant to disclose family members or relatives and potential witnesses might be discouraged from testifying (ibid: 20).

Supposedly, the police make a family tree to map the closest family and relatives with information such as previous convictions, where they lived when the crime took place, as well as a mapping of friends to family members. Such a family tree helps the police to analyze if the family lives in a traditional lifestyle where honor exists. For instance, cousin marriage is understood as an indicator of honor. The police also gather information from healthcare, municipalities, and sheltered accommodations while securing evidence (Åklagarmyndigheten 2006: 26, 27). During the hearing with the plaintiff, the word honor should not be brought up as it might be interpreted as blaming the plaintiff. The hearing should always be recorded and video recorded in case the plaintiff regrets reporting or changes information. The use of interpreters should be carefully chosen since the interpreter might share the information during the hearing with the community. This can be prevented by choosing an interpreter from another part of Sweden (ibid: 29).

## 2.5. Honor Oppression (4 kap. 4 e § Brb)

In June 2022 the new paragraph on honor oppression was implemented in the criminal code and has its basis in the investigation that is selected as the empirical material in this study. HO as a criminal act implies:

“...if each of the acts constituted part of a repeated violation of the person's integrity and a purpose with the deeds have been to preserve or restore a person's or family, relatives or other similar group honor, for honor oppression to imprisonment for a minimum of one and a maximum of six years.” (Prop. 2021/22:138: p. 38)

The paragraph builds on the violation of women's rights crimes previously mentioned. The penalty scale for *grov kvinnofridskränkning* and honor oppression is the same (a minimum of one and a maximum of six years). Violation of personal integrity can be, for instance, abuse, unlawful coercion etcetera. For the acts to be judged as a violation of integrity requires repeated violations, depending on the seriousness of the violation. Another requirement is that the perpetrator intentionally damaged the self-esteem of the violated person. However, self-esteem is according to the bill damaged by the single fact of living in a context with honor (Prop. 2021/22:138). Since the investigation forms the basis for this addition to the criminal code, the content will be developed further in the Analysis chapter.

### 3. Literature Review

This chapter is primarily based on qualitative research on perceptions of honor-based crimes in different parts of the world. The literature review was conducted in LUBsearch and the inclusion criteria were peer-reviewed academic journals written in English between the year 2000 and now. The search words employed in different combinations were; honor crime\*, honor oppression, honor killing, honor-based violence, regulation, law, criminal code, penal code, discourse, feminism, and postcolonialism. A small selection of articles was made that debated the specific topic of discourses about honor-related violence. The selection of academic articles was primarily sixteen but after reading the articles excluded to seven articles discussing the specific topic.

#### 3.1. Underlying Causes of the Emergence of Honor-related Crimes

VAW and femicide have taken place all over the world for as long as the existence of *patriarchy*. Patriarchal structures manifest themselves and take different shapes in different societies and are justified by law and power within society and the family (Nisha et al. 2024). VAW has been tackled by legal systems, codes, and justice professionals without sufficient effect. Females continue to get murdered because of their gender despite criminalization and sociopolitical and legislative changes. Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2002: 578) argues that Palestinian society like other Arab countries is affected by femicide as a response to “crimes of honor”, committed by girls and

women who by behaving in an “immoral” way tarnish the honor of the family. The Palestinian legal system fails to combat this type of violence because of its strong socio cultural roots.

Shalhoub-Kevorkian (ibid) used official statistics, court rulings, and six legal records of femicide cases for in-depth analysis. Culture, masculinity, and Crimes Against Women lay the foundation for the theoretical approach employed in the study. Masculinity implies a structure of control, objectification, and dehumanization of women in this context. The masculine norms, values, and practices interact with gender, ethnicity, and religion and seep into the structures of private life and cultural and political processes. Discourses about how women should be are hence created in a gender-biased process. The requirement of female chastity as a regulatory practice of gender surpasses the biological or physical body and is transformed into the gender political body (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2002: 579). Instead of focusing on the patriarchy as the primary reason for HO, Reddy (2008: 306) argues that discourses within the legal system tend to interpret honor as a *cultural phenomenon* rather than a patriarchal one. Reddy’s article is situated within the context of the United Kingdom and examines the extent to which honor should be interpreted either in the context of culture and traditions or in a wider understanding of gender-based VAW. The purpose of this distinction is to gain a greater understanding of honor crimes and improve the protection and prevention of such violence in the United Kingdom.

Honor is closely tied to the male self and social worth and is constructed through the dualistic notion of “honor” and “shame” which is a reputation that female family members are responsible for. The way of upholding honor is hence to control women’s behavior (ibid: 307). Multiculturalist discourses understand minority communities as homogenous with solid cultures, but who then defines the meaning of culture? This question can be raised in relation to honor crimes which tend to be described as cultural traditions within certain communities within society (ibid: 309). Reddy’s (2008: 310) context-based analysis problematizes culture as a static concept. Cultural identity is chosen and actively used. The scholar also problematizes that the patriarchal structures would have less of an influence in Western societies and that Western societies would be “neutral” and lack culture.

On the contrary, Heydari et al. (2021: 94) argue that honor killing is a significant sign of *sexism* which limits and controls women's behavior on every level in a systematic way. Heydari et al. (2021: 97) employ a feminist Durkheimian perspective to develop an underlying understanding of honor killing. Durkheim's mechanical solidarity is built on morality, solidarity, and shared moral values between members of a community. It is thus a collective understanding of the roles and rules within the group. The honor system has symbolic significance and works as a strong form of informal social control. According to Heydari et al. (2021), those who do not behave according to the rules are sanctioned. These structures thrive in communities where formal social control is lacking. Mechanical solidarity explains the group-mindedness but not the sexist aspect of honor killing. The scholars explain this through the lens of classical feminist theory. The woman's role is to reproduce and the honor system is a framework used to enforce the patriarchy. Heydari et al. (2021: 99) thus argue that a feminist Durkheimian perspective explains how certain communities trust the honor codes to ensure the woman's reproductive role.

Another factor that has made honor killing persistent and intensified is modernization is the Enlightenment which aimed at human progress where autonomy and rationality were the foundation and being modern meant being civilized compared to backward and irrational. The individualistic value moved society away from collectivism and the conditions justifying honor killing. However, the control over women's bodies did not vanish but rather changed its disguise. From being controlled by communities to being controlled by the nation-state (Heydari et al. 2021: 99, 100). The rise of the modern state delegitimizes traditional power structures and stigmatized and marginalized communities which led to an increased interest in relying on honor codes and a legitimizing of honor killing. The scholars conclude by stating that honor killing is a combination of aspects of sexism, fundamentalism, and the systematic exclusion of minority communities (ibid: 102). Korteweg (2014: 185) further emphasizes the complexity of honor-related violence. In line with previous scholars, the argument builds on the multidimensional aspects of such violence and should be contextualized in the intersections of immigrant-receiving societies' cultural, social, political, and legal practices despite aspects such as race and gender.



### 3.2 Legal Regulation of the Crime

VAW in the context of honor is seen as a private issue and implies “mitigating circumstances” of “excuse in murder” according to the Jordanian Penal Code. This, in short, implies that if a man (husband/brother/father) finds a female relative in a situation they interpret as wrongful, if the woman comes home late, and similarly “shall be liable to a lesser penalty”. Similar legal codes excusing males for VAW could be found in Western countries like Spain, Italy, and France until 1975. However, Korteweg (2014: 197) argues that different countries treat honor as a mitigating factor and in other cases an aggravating factor. The media has a misleading portrayal that can lead to the mistaken impression that honor-related violence is “legally tolerated” in immigrant-sending countries. For instance, Türkiye in 2004, made changes in the law to reflect that honor is an aggravating motive in murder-sentencing. For those countries, which do not make a distinction in the law (most European countries), the argument follows that current laws cover all aspects of such crimes. However, some countries have educated prosecutors to better understand the motive and motivation for honor-related crimes, since it makes sense to recognize such traits to better understand how the crime unfolds (Kortweg 2014: 198).

Reddy (2008: 311) illustrates how honor killing is legally sanctioned in the United Kingdom. Ignoring cultural issues of violence against minority women removes the contextual element and results in a lack of understanding. In cases of honor killing in the United Kingdom, cultural and religious beliefs play a significant role in the gravity of the provocation a defendant suffered. The judicial discourse on the “clash of cultures” between ethnic minorities and majority communities removes the patriarchal VAW as a factor for such violence and solely directs the attention to culture as the motivation for such crimes (ibid: 316).

### 3.2. Domestic Violence/Honor Crime

Honor killing is a global issue but is mostly developed in Middle Eastern- and South Asian countries. Regardless, honor killings occur in Western countries as well which invokes questions about the distinction between honor killing and domestic violence. Heydari et al. (2021: 91)

address this distinction by analyzing the specificity and causes of the crime. In Western countries, the killing of a partner is typically categorized as domestic violence, but domestic violence and honor killings are similar in several aspects. In some cases of domestic violence in the United States, men kill their spouses due to reasons for having an affair, which is a trait that is visible in both aspects of VAW. Domestic- and honor killings are both based on men's control over women. Another similarity that Idriss (2017: 4) highlights is that women are undoubtedly the most affected by the harm caused by both honor-related violence and domestic violence. Both forms of VAW involve several types of abuse and violence and can in both cases lead to death, hence one form cannot be argued to be barbaric if the other one is not (ibid: 5).

Similarly, Gill (2022: 3) argues that the term honor alone is used to define an understanding of body and control and a female embodiment of male honor. Control and policing of women's bodies is not restricted to honor crimes but underlies all types of VAW. Therefore, the term honor-based violence cannot be isolated to a specific community because its root, VAW, is current in all communities. Furthermore, Gill (2022: 17) writes that national crime statistics in Canada on VAW is a systemic problem regardless of the perpetrator and the victim's ethnic background. The honor crime label does not come close to explaining the magnitude of violence women are faced with. Popular media and political rhetoric fail to address reasons why certain types of VAW are committed (ibid). Kortweg (2014: 189) refrains from distinguishing between different forms of VAW and suggests the umbrella term *gendered violence*.

On the other hand, Gill (2022: 17) writes that categorization is well used when developing an understanding of VAW but the popular discourse and political rhetoric tend to ignore nuances and state ethnicity and religion as signifiers when addressing honor killing. Heydari et al. (2021: 92) agree with Gill (2022) and argue further that the biggest distinction to be made is that honor killing is collective by nature. The similarities and differences would not separate honor killing from domestic violence though. Still, the specificities need to be illuminated through the lights of contextual-, structural-, and historical factors. Heydari et al. (2021: 93) argue that sexism and religion combined play a crucial part in justifying honor killing but cannot explain the phenomenon. Honor crimes are a separate category of VAW (including "crimes of passion") due

to several identified characteristics: the type of violence requires advanced planning before the crime is committed, familial collaboration is required, and the aim of avoiding stigma against the family or community is needed (ibid).

Chesler (2010) takes the distinctions even further by stating that aspects that contrast the characteristics between homicides, domestic violence, and crimes of passion and honor killing should be emphasized in the discussion on honor-related crimes. Chesler (2010) agrees with Heydari et al. (2021) on the aspects that there is no cultural pattern of several perpetrators in the family targeting girls and women. Furthermore, there is no planning, justifying, or legitimizing of these crimes within a Western context. However, using culture as an aspect dividing honor-related violence from other forms of VAW is according to Kortweg (2014: 190) not accurate since all forms of VAW are to some extent culturally informed.

### 3.3. The Cultural Impact

Contemporary media and policy discussions on honor-related violence tend to portray groups, societies, and specific countries as backward (Kortweg 2014: 186). Gill (2022: 1) argues that the Western world has a monolithic and binary conceptualization of racialized communities from South Asian and Middle Eastern cultures. The West/First World supposedly being liberal and the Global East or Third World supposedly being conservative and religious. Such portrayals construct stereotypes and reinforce how women and men behave within “Eastern” cultures. In the context of Canada which Gill (2022) writes about, the narrative that this culture is atypical to Canadian society and a culture exported to Canada is widespread. Immigrants are blamed for honor-based violence and oppression because they “refuse” to assimilate into Canadian culture, which is committed to gender equality.

Gill’s (2022) study aims to problematize the notion of honor-based violence based on Canadian popular discourse by analyzing a case of honor-killing (Aqsa Parvez) through a critical discourse analysis. The study employs a postcolonial and transnational feminist lens. Feminism in general fails to understand the broader societal complexities underlying this type of violence by simply

blaming cultural norms, tribal practices, and the patriarchy. The postcolonial feminist approach draws attention to structures of inequality around the world by imposing the role of colonialism (Gill 2022: 5). Gill problematizes the use of the term “honor killing” because it automatically puts certain communities within a criminal category when such killings could be defined as domestic violence or family murders to avoid differentiation (2022: 2).

The article juxtaposes a nationally known case in Canada of honor killing against examples of family murder not considered honor killing to illustrate how popular media and political discourse emphasize the honor aspect. In a case not considered honor killing, a girl was brutally beaten by her parents with an unknown motive, yet “honor” was not visible in the text once. There was no reference to culture and the case was reported objectively with a focus on individual or psychological problems rather than a pictorial description and reference to ethnic and cultural differences as in the honor killing case (Gill 2022: 13). The conclusions Gill (2022: 16) makes is that labeling minority communities through discursive techniques such as Othering, creating Us/Them binaries, and reinforcing the helpless Third World woman will reproduce internalized racism.

Similar to Gill (2022), Heydari (2021: 93) writes that according to the religious aspect of German dominant discourse, honor killing is explained by failed multiculturalism, cultural issues, and locating the problem with the Other. This rhetoric is compelling in how exceptional the crime is and diminishes the existence of oppressive forms of control over women in the West. Viewing honor crimes through the lens of culture has counterproductive effects and might cause communities to be more closed and amplify the violence. Another counterproductive effect might be that xenophobic and racist discourse can nurture anti-immigration rhetoric which in turn leads to the stigmatization and stereotyping of certain communities (Reddy 2008: 310, 311). Similarly, Idriss (2017) writes that separating honor-related violence draws the “political spotlight” to race, culture, and religion and creates divisions. Korteweg (2014: 187) sees another aspect of the problem from the immigrant communities point of view. Associating honor-related violence with minority groups can further worsen the minority status.

On the contrary, Chester (2010) argues that the motivations and codes of morality differ in cultures where honor killings occur and are reinforced by religious precepts. Second-generation immigrant families in Europe engage with this phenomenon if they still have a tight bond to their cultural values or due to Islamic radicalization (Chesler 2010). According to the article, 58 percent of the victims of honor killings worldwide were murdered for being “too Westernized” and not living up to the native cultural and religious rules. Being too Western implies being too assimilated, independent, choosing a partner, and wearing Western clothes etcetera.

### 3.4. Contribution to the Field

To conclude, the majority of the literature had a critical perception of the current situation of how honor is understood and handled by domestic regulations. Some of the articles have a feminist approach and others were also positioned within the postcolonial field and criticized how the West views and blames the East for problems such as honor-based crimes, except for one article arguing for the opposite. This underlying critical notion informed the Theoretical Framework of this thesis since it enables an analysis of both the aspects of gender and race. The academic journals also discuss the causes and reasons for the development of these customs. However, the answers to such questions differ from the answers provided in Swedish media and knowledge production due to a different hegemonic discourse. To my knowledge, none or at least very few academic articles provide a qualitative analysis of discourses on HO provided by the state in a Swedish context. This thesis would contribute to partial coverage of the gap in the research field in a Swedish context and present an alternative approach to the phenomenon by highlighting discourses that might have counterproductive effects in the struggle against HO.

## 4. Theoretical Framework

This chapter describes the postcolonial feminist approach to this thesis which was inspired by the Literature Review. By employing different concepts from postcolonial and postcolonial feminist scholars I create the Theoretical Framework that is applied as a lens through the discovered discourses in the investigation and is theoretically analyzed (van Dijk 2001). The postcolonial feminist perspective not only enables critical analysis of gender but also the underlying postcolonial causes and discourses that can be utilized to understand the hegemonic honor discourse. As will be elaborated on, gender and race are interrelated, and both are historically of a lower hierarchy in society. What can be a conclusion from the previous chapter of this thesis is that gender and race are the two predominant factors in the discussion on honor-related violence which makes the theoretical approach suitable to employ by illuminating both aspects of the discourse.

### 4.1. Feminism in the Context of Postcolonialism

What is common within any perspective on postcolonial theory is a concern for the continuation of systemic racial and ethnic divides and power asymmetries between the East or the “Other” (the “barbaric and lawless”) and the West or “Us” (the “civilized and lawful”). These structures carry on despite the officially ceased existence of colonialism (Darian-Smith 2013: 249). Both Postcolonialism and Feminism perceive and understand the world from a different view than the hegemonic Western perspective. These theories also share systems of racist and gendered oppression and seek answers to how these oppressive systems are normalized. Another commonality is the patriarchal structures that created colonies and sexism, which explains why indigenous women experience “double colonization” (George 2018: 1). To ignore race while defining feminism is limited to the understanding of being a “woman”. Ideologies of womanhood are closely related to race and class and are required to account for in the process of “becoming a woman” (Mohanty 2003: 55). Postcolonial feminist theory adopts a transnational focus, supports historical perspectives, and critically assesses how the postcolonial world is shaped and informed (Kerner 2017: 55).

The postcolonial feminist approach delves into *power* relations between genders but also the interactions between feminists across the world. There is dissatisfaction in the field toward how “global” feminism is constituted in theory and practice. Postcolonial feminists argue that work needs to be done to reshape current structures by employing new forms of political interaction and an overarching solidarity (ibid: 847). As will be elaborated later on, feminism must be identifiable for all women across the world and not only feminists in the West. There are different sociocultural and historical interpretations of the term and it has been questioned among feminists from the Third World. They argue that the meaning of gender concerning structural struggles like internal racism, classism etcetera cannot be carried through media as the only representation and truth of feminism (Mohanty 2003: 49, 50).

#### 4.2. Third World/Western feminism

Chandra Mohanty (2003) is an established scholar in the field of Postcolonial Feminism and uses the intellectual and political concept of Third World feminism as a critique of hegemonic “Western” feminism based on geographical, historical, and cultural foundations. To achieve a development from current, hegemonic, Western feminism, the structures require dismantling, deconstruction, reconstruction, and rebuilding. This production of Third World feminism might risk marginalization from both mainstream discourses (left and right) as well as Western feminist discourses (Mohanty 2003: 17). Mohanty employs a discursive analysis of Third World feminism in the context of Western feminism writings (mainly from the United States and Western Europe) on the Third World to capture definitions of colonization, appropriation, and codification of knowledge production.

Mohanty (2003: 18) acknowledges that general Western feminist discourse and politics are heterogeneous in their aims and interests, hence, there is a coherent understanding of the West in theory and praxis. Mohanty defines and uses the term Western feminism between the codification of “the Others” (non-Western) and themselves (Western). By colonization, the scholar refers to political and economic hierarchies and the production of cultural discourses about the Third World. The term also refers to the relationship between oppression and the dominant structure

(Crenshaw 1991). Feminist theory needs politics to form coalitions across race, class, and national boundaries, meaning, feminists across the world, working-class feminists, and Western feminists. The necessary connection between the different strands of feminism would expand knowledge-, political-, ideological- and discursive production (ibid: 18).

Mohanty's critique of Western feminism is directed at three principles. The first critique is of the analysis of "women" as a homogeneous group with equal interests regardless of ethnicity, race, or class and that women are equally affected by the notion of gender and patriarchy (c.f. Crenshaw 1991). The second critique is on a methodological level. What is seen as proof is universally justifiable. Lastly, the third critique is the political biases in analyses of power and struggle. These three critiques lay the structure of the homogeneous notion of shared oppression among women and the construction of the Third World woman (Mohanty 2003: 21).

VAW is mainly carried out by men, which makes women victims of male control and oppression. This binary puts women in a position of being objects who are exploited and men subjects who exploit. The simplistic explanations of these created binaries only reinforce the gendered structures and are ineffective while combating violence and oppression against women (ibid: 31). To change this structure, women as a group must be put in the context of historical and political components and not be limited to gender. Men as a group must be analyzed within a particular context and not in the world as a whole (Mohanty 2003: 24). Another notion that Mohanty detects in Western feminist writings is the colonialist move between First (Western) and Third World scholarship. While Western scholars examine women's status within structures such as the family, religion, and the legal system, there is a degree of generalization. First, there is a simplification in the previously mentioned strands of feminism but there is also a simplification within these groups, e.g. "Arab women" and "women of Africa" and a view of these groups of women as oppressed, constrained, and victimized. There is a convincing understanding that these groups would be culturally coherent and detached from men in these societies, simply because of their gender (Mohanty 2003: 38). Whereas women in the West are seen as secular and liberated, which however is a questionable notion (Mohanty 2003: 42).



### 4.3. A Third World feminist understanding of Power

Third World women are exposed to (at least) two-dimensional struggles, one originating across cultures and classes and one through the overarching notion of oppression by the group in power (read: men). Western feminist discourses on Third World women assume, as previously mentioned, a homogenous group of women and a set structure of power division between the different categories of feminists. Power relations are formed after a fixed structure. This understanding of power is limited and simplistic and puts the history of women's struggles into binary structures - those possessing power and the powerless (2003: 38).

The only approach that can be utilized to avoid reproducing structures of power based on the two categories of gender is not to give women as a group power but to erase the binary divisions or abolish the orders of power that arrange society in these binaries. What the postcolonial aspect illuminates in this context is that Western feminism portrays itself as "subjects" but that Third World women never rise above the status of "objects" (ibid). Contemporary Euro-American state is argued to rule through a "gender regime", where the state regulates power relations of gender. Meaning, that the gender regime redraws the boundaries of domestic violence, criminalizes the deviant, and expresses masculine power (Mohanty 2003: 64). Mohanty suggests a fluctuating understanding of power that moves beyond the two-way relationship of power. Furthermore, Mohanty argues that multiple, fluid structures of domination interact with women from different historical contexts in a more nuanced fashion. This approach would acknowledge multiple intersections and processes of power and not only present the fixed embodiment of power (ibid: 55, 56).

### 4.4. Legal Orientalism

Edward Said (1935-2003) is a leading postcolonial theorist whose work is of utmost relevance to this day and has inspired the work of Mohanty. Said (1979: 2) coined the concept of Orientalism which refers to the cultural and ideological discourse produced by institutions, scholarship, and doctrines that form a colonial state of affairs. Orientalism is a Western style of domination, reconstruction, and authority over The Orient. Said employed Foucault's notion of discourse to

detect how European culture disciplines the production of the Orient politically, sociologically, and ideologically. European societies were constructed in a way of opposing themselves to the Arab and Muslim world (ibid: 3).

Darian-Smith (2013: 257) draws on Said's work and argues that the presence of postcolonial law requires scholars to understand that there is no such thing as a universal legal code but rather a web of a legal plurality of legal systems with a variety of different culturally informed legal meanings. Scholars who have ignored postcolonial law try to tackle legal pluralism by raising the question of legal orientalism and argue that legal orientalism has shaped Euro-American law since the sixteenth century to this day. Hence, the doctrines, institutions, and state practices shaped the language and practices that exist today and are a result of cultural and racial biases and inform "universal" legal concepts (ibid: 259).

## 5. Methodology

This chapter describes how critical discourse analysis informs the methodology and why it is the most suitable approach to the study of how discourses on HO constructed by the investigators from the GO dominate knowledge production about the phenomenon in Sweden. This chapter also describes why the SOU 2020:57 was selected as the material, validity, and reliability in relation to the research, reflexivity, and ethical considerations, as well as a description of how to employ the CDA through Fairclough's three dimensions.

### 5.1. Critical Discourse Analysis

Language and meaning are an integral part of social life. While researching meaning, some sort of discourse analysis is useful (Fairclough 2003: 2). Language in written words and texts are common objects of analysis in discourse/critical discourse analysis (CDA). However, for CDA, language is not powerful on its own - powerful people give language power. People in powerful positions are "enablers" of change from inequalities, discrimination, and dominance to improved conditions. CDA is interested in the critical analysis of social inequalities and how it is expressed

and legitimized through language or discourse (Wodak 2001). The government is a power elite with the majority of the power. To be an expert in an investigation made by the GO constitutes great influence and will have a heavy impact on how people (the majority) think because of the discursive effects of such a document (Svenaeus 2021: 82).

Ideologies are central in CDA since they maintain, reproduce, and create social relations of power, domination, and exploitation. To clarify, ideologies will not be analyzed as political ideologies, ideologies rather include positions, attitudes, perspectives etcetera., directed towards those in power and those subjected to power. Texts can be used to detect such ideological representations (Fairclough 2003: 9). Although power and knowledge might reflect reality, discourses are only limited to the discursive reality and not a universal reality. For these reasons, CDA is a useful methodology to answer the research question as the language and meaning produced in the investigation are central, and the use of CDA enables a meaningful analysis. Despite language and meaning, the interest is particularly directed at power. CDA can unpack such relationships in the investigation and illuminate ideologies such as positions and opinions on the matter of honor (ibid).

Fairclough (2003: 124) understands discourses as representations of the material, mental, and social world. Hence, different discourses are different representations of the world, shaped by positions within the world, and are never objective or unbiased representations. To elaborate further, a certain position might differ based on people's identities within the position. Social, class, gender, and ethnicity produce various performances within one position (Meyer 2001). Besides power and ideology, the historical aspect of texts is also important in CDA. Every discourse is historically produced and interpreted with the time of age when it was produced. Discourses in Sweden are not only affected by domestic influences of power in the sense of previous governments power and knowledge. Dominant discourses in Sweden are also accepted by a historical transformation and influence from the EU, a Western mindset, and such.

The concept of hegemony is used while analyzing how a discourse is legitimizing domination. Discourses are interpreted as fluctuating and part of an open system affected by interactions with

other discourses (Fairclough 2001). Furthermore, CDA is interested in power relations and the problems of disenfranchised or marginalized groups of people are confronted with, for instance, oppressive gender or race relations (ibid). According to the Literature Review, these oppressive relations are argued to exist in Western societies. Hence, CDA not only enables this type of analysis but can arguably be the only sort of analysis that is interested in such relations.

Knowledge and power are interrelated. Where there is power, there is knowledge, and when power is weakened, so is knowledge (Wodak 2001). This relationship is another aspect of CDA that aligns with the approach of this thesis. The government represents power and knowledge and can thus be used to analyze the dominant discourse. CDA is not about concluding what is right or wrong, it is about making theoretically oriented choices and being reflexive about it. The shared knowledge structures, social practices, and discourses often shape public discourse. The SOU 2020:57 is one-sided in the aspect that it only presents the government's understanding of the phenomenon of honor and not those who are subjected to oppression or those who uphold such ideas about women.

## 5.2. Selection of Material

The strategic/theoretical purpose of using the SOU 2020:57 is a meaningful facet of the social world and aims to establish insight on the prevailing discourse on honor (Mason 2002: 122). The selected document ought to be able to express something about the Theoretical Framework and vice versa. As mentioned before, the SOU 2020:57 is selected as the document employed in this study since the interest lies in why the legal regulation was made, how honor is defined and understood, and how gender and race interact with HO. The aim of using this particular investigation is due to the frame of reference of the producer and because the investigation enables interaction with its hermeneutic circle (Mason 2002: 110). Employing CDA on the SOU 2020:57 unpacks how people in power use language and meaning to re/produce the hegemonic discourse and how such knowledge production shapes the understanding of honor.

Furthermore, a formal and legal document such as the SOU 2020:57 has gone through several procedures and laid the foundation for the addition to the criminal code that was introduced, which should make it a fair representation of the current stage of knowledge and power. The choice not to collect statements made by single politicians lies in the limitation it would imply. It would only represent single politicians' opinions and not illustrate a wider discourse. Not employing the government bill that resulted from the investigation is due to the very technical legal language in which the text is written and because justifications and understandings of HO are not as deeply expressed in the bill as in the investigation.

However, the investigation is greatly comprehensive and includes topics that are not directly connected to discourses on HO, for instance, contact ban, sexual violence, persons with disabilities, and economic crimes to name a few. The investigation also contains a great amount of strictly legal information such as crime and punishment in general, data protection, and determination of penalties etcetera. Such information is irrelevant to this thesis as it goes beyond the aims, and will hence be left out for obvious reasons. The only parts of the SOU 2020:57 that are analyzed are the parts that answer the research question by using the Theoretical Framework to filter out relevant themes. The information from the investigation that is selected and analyzed are arguments and representations of HO and VAW since both forms of violence generally originate from male violence. As the investigation is written in Swedish, the method for translating the selected material focused on finding the most suitable translation in English to ensure that the words and meanings stay intact.

### 5.3. The Investigators of the SOU 2020:57

Politics and law are inseparable, however, a distinction can be made between politicians and public officials or legal experts. As mentioned in the Background, the government commissions the GO to investigate a new bill. The government consists of politicians but the majority of the employees at the GO are officials without a political mission. Out of the approximately 4,500 employees at the GO, 200 officials are politically appointed and are replaced at the change of government (Regeringskansliet 2015\*). The coalition government at the time (2020) consisted of

*Socialdemokraterna* (the social democrats) and *Miljöpartiet* (the environmental party). Stefan Löfven (social democrat) was the Prime Minister from 3 of October 2014 to 30 November 2021.

The appointed investigators were: The national public prosecutor Petra Lundh was appointed as a special investigator (current national police chief). The lawyer Ulf Bergquist, the Commissioner at the Police Agency Jenny Edin, the former legal expert now Chancellor of the Exchequer Cecilia Eneman, the doctoral student at Stockholm University Mariet Ghadimi, the former expert and subject manager in law at the Linné University Tord Josefson, the chief councilor in Solna were appointed as experts to assist the investigation, district court Axel Peterson, former university lecturer at Umeå University now university lecturer at Stockholm University Devin Rexvid, investigator at the Crime Prevention Council Nina Törnqvist and former the deputy chief prosecutor at the Prosecutor's Office in Eskilstuna Jessica Wenna (SOU 2020:57). The producers of the investigation are primarily legal experts, however, they worked in a political municipality. I argue that the producers can be categorized as representatives of the state as they work on behalf of the state but cannot be representatives of the political debate. Hence, the investigation will not be situated within the political climate at the time, but will rather be situated within a context of "legal knowledge production".

#### 5.4. Validity & Reliability

Official documents by the GO such as the SOU 2020:57 tend to be written clearly and understandably, however, biases exist. Without being intimidated by the biases, they can be used as an advantage and in line with the purpose of this thesis. Biases in the investigation are interesting and should be carefully examined since the investigation represents one perception of reality. Accordingly, the SOU 2020:57 has been worked on by multiple public officials and has gone through several referral bodies. Even though it cannot be generalized to a bigger population, it can be generalized to the government at large, at the time (Bryman 2011: 495). The SOU 2020:57 can thus be interpreted as authentic due to the clarity of the producers of the investigation.

There is no objective answer to whether an analysis of qualitative data is valid since what is intended to be analyzed might not be. For instance, Mason (2002: 132) uses an example of researching religious belief. Is it the actual religious belief being analyzed or another kind of belief, culture, or simply religious behavior? A way of anticipating a possible lack of validity in qualitative research is by employing a well-thought-out sample and, in this case, asking if the SOU 2020:57, together with the Theoretical Framework, can answer the Research Question. Internal validity measures how well the theoretical ideas and analysis collaborate (Bryman 2011: 352). This type of validity is a strength in qualitative research since the Theoretical Framework shapes the Methodology. The deductive approach is central in satisfying this quality and is reflected throughout by using the Theoretical Framework as an operational lens during the Analysis.

The questions that need to be asked are what the material might tell me and how well that can be told. I argue that the SOU 2020:57 expresses the GO's perception of HO, how it is defined, how it came to exist in Sweden, and what should be done to combat the problem. Hence, the investigation is valid as a source of information in this study and the actual content is interpreted through Theoretical Framework that makes sense of the content and answers the research question. Capturing this representation of what the government reason about honor crime cannot be done in many ways. It requires either interviews with government officials, legal professionals, or written documents about the topic. However, using interviews with a few, selected public officials would be limited to those persons perceptions and cannot reflect a more overarching understanding as in the investigation.

Reliability will be considered in relation to how reliable the sample is. This is based on how relevant, accurate, reliable, authentic, and meaningful the sample is concerning the people who generated the text. Besides reliability being considered in the sample, it is also considered vis-a-vis the researcher. External reliability measures to what extent the research is replicable. Even though reliability is not as applicable in qualitative research as in quantitative, the methodological steps are possible to replicate in this thesis (Bryman 2011: 352). However, due to

the deductive approach, the analysis is limited to this specific context of research since it argues for one representation of the perception of HO in Sweden.

## 5.5. Reflexivity

Mason (2002) argues that active reflexivity should be central in all qualitative research and implies that the researcher is constantly aware of the choices that are being made about the research as well as a critical reflection of oneself. According to Wodak (2001), theory and CDA are closely related and should guide the research question. CDA studies are theory-driven and how the data is collected and interpreted is through the Theoretical Framework. The deductive approach amplifies the importance of being reflexive of how data is analyzed since the data is carefully selected and viewed through a specific lens that leaves out other themes than the predetermined ones. CDA is biased, which is part of the methodology (Wodak 2001). However, being aware of the biases and not denying them is essential. Reflexivity deals with critical thinking about what the researcher does and why, challenging and confronting one's thoughts (Mason 2002: 5). If we agree that all researchers are biased and do not assume that we are not, it enables awareness. Meyer (2001) highlights four levels in the analysis that raise awareness of biases: the immediate intertextual language, the discursive relationship between texts or discourses, the social dimension of analysis, which is related to the middle-range theory, and finally the broader, socio-political, and historical context. The constant consciousness of these levels is thus important.

My approach to the topic of honor crime is critical on several levels. First, I am aware that a feminist ideology characterizes how I interpret the world, which guides topics of interest in academia. Second, honor crime as a political, legal, and social problem has for a long time invoked questions and encouraged a broader view than what is distinguished in a Swedish context. However, critical positionality and prejudice are vastly different things. My position while researching will guide the choices I make but I will actively be aware of prejudices while analyzing the material (Bryman 2011: 44). Means of quality require flexibility, for instance, if the empirical material leads in another direction than what was anticipated, I will adapt accordingly



by recognizing the limitations of knowledge. By interacting with the investigation in the way of quoting meaningful facets, I am illustrating transparency about the information that is being analyzed.

## 5.6. Ethical Considerations

Compared to other methodologies, using the SOU 2020:57 from the government simplifies many of the ethical difficulties that typically need to be accounted for in qualitative research since the investigation is neither private, sensitive, nor confidential. For instance, in qualitative research interviews, there are several ethical considerations to take into account. Similarly, observations, ethnography, and such require established consent. Another aspect of ethics is the requirement of ensuring maximum safety for participants and the researcher and accounting for power asymmetries between researcher and participants. However, none of these considerations are relevant to this research. Using an official document, which is available to everyone per the principle of openness, shows transparency but also emphasizes the “non-secrecy” of the document and its authors. A part of being a government official is about representing the state, which applies to the analysis of the SOU 2020:57 since it was worked on and written by public officials on behalf of the government.

However, if a politician would comment on a topic as a civilian (to the extent possible) in a chat forum or similar, and the material would be used, then a consideration of the ethical requirements would be re-evaluated. Similar goes if the study had taken a bottom-up approach where affected women and girls of honor crime would be subject to interviews or similar. Yet, such a research approach is not consistent with my ethical position (c.f. Mason 2002: 53). Then the ethical considerations would be prominent at a completely different level. Naming oneself critical can be related to a certain ethical standard. The critical position informs about the interests and values and keeps the approach transparent. A critical position indicates an alternative approach to what has previously been studied and supports “subjugated knowledge” and accounts for other perspectives than the dominant one (Wodak & Meyer 2016: 7). This can also relate to ethics since the purpose is not to reproduce hegemonic discourses but to shed light on subjugated ones.

## 5.7. Fairclough's Three Dimensions of CDA

As explained throughout this thesis, power relations are at the center of analysis and closely related to the development of patriarchy, men's VAW, and HO. Hence, CDA is the most appropriate methodology to enable a close interaction with the Theoretical Framework. To explain the approach in more technical terms Fairclough's three-dimensional approach to CDA will guide the analysis. Discourse in any type of practice is a spoken or written language text, hence, the first dimension is (a) the *text analysis* implies a description of the language (Fairclough 1995: 97). Text analysis is a form of qualitative analysis in social science that focuses on details and internal aspects of texts such as semantic and grammatical relations. It enables an analysis of beliefs, attitudes, values and meaning-making (Fairclough 2003: 8).

The second dimension is what Fairclough calls (b) *discourse analysis* and implies that texts can also be broken down into the producer, the readers, or interpreters, and the meaning-making is a fluid creation based on the production and interpretation of the text, which makes the meaning contextual. What is said or what is implicit in texts is related to what is unsaid or assumed and therefore leaves room for interpretation. Since texts are more or less transparent, the room for interpretation is left open for the reader (ibid: 10, 11). This means that my interpretation of the SOU 2020:57 is shaped by the Theoretical Framework and me as a researcher and would undoubtedly, to a greater or lesser extent, be interpreted differently through another theoretical lens. Discourses are categorized into different genres of text, for example, an official investigation or public debates, and will always occur in social practices (ibid: 26).

The third dimension of CDA is (c) *social analysis* since discourses are embedded in a sociocultural context and explain the relationship between the discursive and social process at several levels and can be seen as an external analysis of texts. For instance, the situational, institutional, and, societal levels, also include the relationship between hegemonies (Fairclough 1995: 97). Fairclough (2003: 2) argues that language is an irreducible part of social life, which emphasizes that social analysis is essential in the analysis of language and discourse. Social

analysis implies zooming out and analyzing the wider context wherein the SOU 2020:57 is produced and helps tie the Theoretical Framework together with the Analysis.

## 5.8. Coding

Relevant sections out of the 341 pages in the SOU 2020:57 were selected for analysis. The coding process was initiated by going through the document and creating themes based on the Theoretical Framework which resulted in: *The Colonized Definition of Honor* (sub-theme: *Honor-related Attributes*), *Binary Gender Structures & Asymmetries* (sub-theme: *The Collective, HO/VAW*), and *Us/Them* (sub-theme: *Backwardness, Discriminatory Traits*). The coding unit is direct quotes rather than words since the interest lies in how the arguments are carried out and how choices of words frame the meaning. The coding strategy is interpretative rather than descriptive to make sense of the material.

## 6. Analysis & Discussion

This chapter contains an interpretation of the codes extracted based on the predetermined themes. The themes will be situated on Fairclough's three dimensions (text-, discourse-, and social analysis) and analyzed through the Theoretical Framework. The analysis illuminates choices of words, rhetoric, how discourses are framed, the meaning of the statements, and how these aspects dictate the wider social impact of HO in society. The language used in the analysis is based on the choices of words that the investigators use to further illustrate the linguistic aspects of the analysis. To make sense of the material and to keep the Discussion closely related to both the CDA and Theoretical Framework, the Discussion is integrated in this chapter as a part of each theme.

The Research Question in this thesis aims to answer: How can Postcolonial Feminism be used to point out how Westernized discourses are re/produced in the Swedish government office's investigation (SOU 2020:57) on honor oppression?

## 6.1. The Colonized Definition of Honor

This theme illustrates how the investigators describe honor in different contexts. Early on in the investigation, the investigators describe how the definition of honor is interpreted in the Swedish language without reference to HO which is interpreted as a distinction between what honor “originally” means and what honor historically indicates in a Swedish context. Emphasizing that there are different meanings of the term indicates what understanding of honor is referred to in the investigation and hence avoids misinterpretations. The definition referenced from the dictionary and used in the investigation:

...reputation based on recognized good character traits acc. certain (often traditional norms). According to the same dictionary, a man of honor is a “reliable and decent person”. (p. 58)

This definition is situated on a textual dimension of CDA as it describes the language and an attitude towards honor. The definition is interpreted as a positive view of the meaning of honor. A man of honor is a reliable and decent person which shows, first of all, that men are persons who can be honorable and avoid defining what honor concerning women means, or if women even can be honorable according to the dictionary. Secondly, excluding women in the definition implies a patriarchal value and describes the culture wherein the dictionary is produced (Mohanty 2003).

When describing the definition of honor while referring to the criminal act, there is according to the investigators no common definition among the actors who work with such issues concerning their backgrounds, positions, and needs. Since there is no further elaboration of what that argument means, it can be interpreted as the actors making their interpretation of what constitutes HO. The investigators continue describing the term by stating that some people react negatively to the word honor killing because murder can never be something nice but that honor is universally fine (p. 98). The investigators instead suggest honor-related killing or honor-related crime as an “excellent alternative” to avoid misunderstandings. An interpretation of the use of “excellent” implies confidence in the word choice honor-related. The textual dimension illustrates the different and value-loaded meanings of the definition and the exclusion of honor that does not

imply honor-related. Using an example of murder illustrates that a fine understanding of the meaning cannot be placed in the same context as murder, hence, a different meaning of honor is discursively produced (Fairclough 2003).

Postcolonial Feminism, in the context of honor, becomes a topic of discussion. The investigators make a clear distinction between what type of honor they refer to e.g. the “problematic” understanding of honor in contrast to the “fine” definition of honor that does not belong in the context of crime. This perspective aligns with the idea of Orientalism (Said 1979). The Swedish discourse on honor is designed in a way that contrasts “Us” to “Them” by referring to “Their” idea of honor in contrast to “Our” or killing in contrast to honor-related killing. This is interpreted as Their way of tarnishing Our inherently fine perception of honor, which transitions to a discursive dimension of CDA as the producer is using the language of opposing understandings of honor to achieve meaning-making (Fairclough 2003). As Said (1979) writes, European societies designed laws, discourses, and views by contrasting Us to the Arab and Muslim world. Based on Said’s view, European societies tend to reproduce these contradictions rather than find a way of uniting discourses, understandings, and values. The problematization of the definition continues in the HO/VAW sub-theme.

Furthermore, on the discursive level, the use of the word “related” separates the universally fine view of honor and excludes it by referring to the other definition and the “negative” meaning of honor. This excludes those who have the “right” view on honor and includes those who have the bad or wrong view in the definition. Hence, the linguistic aspect of the definition has the utmost powerful effect in this context as it indicates that suddenly a certain group of people is responsible for “honor-related killing”. Separating honor-related violence from other forms of violence indicates linguistic choices which in turn influence the discourse around HO.

Those who commit already criminalized acts with an “honor motive” are sentenced for an honor crime. It thus entails an additional penalty if there is an honor motive, making certain people legally additionally affected by these criminal acts compared to a person committing a crime against, for instance, life and health or a crime against freedom and peace without the honor

motive. The investigators argue that the honor motive does not have to be the only or even the main motive behind the crime for it to be sentenced as an honor crime, it is enough that the act can be attributable to honor. These arguments textually and discursively indicate that crimes committed with an honor motive imply an aggravating circumstance in contrast to a crime committed without one, which on a discursive dimension of CDA shapes a discourse about honor as something worse or at least different than other motives behind a crime. However, the most important aspect according to the investigators to consider while naming the crime is that it “should” avoid a formulation that gives legitimacy to “such honor thinking that can lead to crime” (p. 176). The CDA compiled so far together with the honor motive can be placed on the social dimension of CDA since the definition, meaning-making, and hence motive together constitute a wider discourse that refers to certain people within society and hence an ideology and power relation between groups (Fairclough 2003).

### **6.1.1. Honor-related Attributes**

This sub-theme presents, analyzes, and discusses what I refer to as honor-related attributes. The investigators state that the formulation of honor culture or honor-related context is more accepted to use than honor-thinking but that honor-thinking is related to a specific culture without further explanation. The investigators avoid defining what culture means in this context or what type of culture they refer to. Avoiding these fundamental definitions can be interpreted as hiding an important meaning. As stated in the Background chapter, the Swedish discourse on honor is influenced by the EU, both in the aspects of ratifying conventions but also affected by the current discourses on honor within those organizations which means that the definition and discourse are to some extent predetermined. These institutions are both what Mohanty (2003) and Said (1979) would refer to as a Western mindset and illustrate a Western style of domination. The current hegemonic discourse on honor can be placed on the social dimension of CDA to illuminate how European law has shaped Swedish law and thus discourse. The “Western” approach to HO can be interpreted as united in its aims and interests and hence explains the shared discourse (Mohanty 2003).

The term culture is recurring throughout the investigation but is never properly defined. However, sophisticated rhetoric such as a culture that is not inherently Swedish explains the approach to culture without literally saying it. Introducing the so-called cultural aspect of HO automatically makes a distinction between a culture in Sweden that is agreed on in contrast to other cultures. Crimes that are committed “in the name of honor” (p. 60) are examples that constitute honor props. The wording: “in the name of honor” can itself be interpreted to allude to a religious parable since “in the name of God” is typically used in religious contexts. “In the name of honor” could therefore be interpreted as carrying religious meaning and the use of the phrase informs about something that is not outspoken but makes the audience interpret the phrase and thus honor as something inherently religious on a discursive dimension. Connecting “in the name of honor” with honor culture is an additional example of meaning-making that adds yet another aspect of honor as a deviating phenomenon (Fairclough 2003). Connecting honor with religion aligns with Said’s (1979) notion of Orientalism since the West strives to oppose itself from the Orient and Eastern culture. Hence, culture and religious meaning both have Othering effects since a division between honor and other types of VAW is being reproduced.

Another example of what I refer to as sophisticated Othering rhetoric is how the investigation expresses how these crimes should be tackled despite definitional issues and knowledge of the prevalence of HO. The investigators are uniting “Us” by referring to that “We” need to react forcefully against “such oppression”. The rhetoric of defining honor in the investigation thus starts as a culturally fine concept and is step by step narrowed down to the concept and definition bearing connotation to a specific group, with a specific culture and possibly taking place in a religious context. Sweden is internationally known as a secular country, which emphasizes the contrast between such a statement and other attitudes within society. This religious rhetoric is interpreted as a move to contrast “Us” to those societies that are influenced by religious law and approve of “such honor-thinking” (Said 1979).

The investigators claim that persons who are exposed to HO are particularly vulnerable because they lack support from relatives. First, if the claim is that these persons are particularly exposed, it implies a comparison to other forms of oppression that would, according to their logic, mean

less vulnerability. Second, just because a characteristic of honor-related oppression is that there tends to be a plurality of family members or relatives involved does not mean that this always is the case or that the majority of a family sympathizes with such oppression. This “fact” can be placed on the discursive dimension of CDA as it adds to the understanding of attributes related to an honor context. Using certain words that indicate certain attitudes on a textual dimension contributes to meaning-making on a discursive dimension (Fairclough 2003). The investigators claim:

Many – if not all – honor-related acts are committed against relatives. (p. 165)

However, in contrast to the *kvinnofridsbrott* (crimes of breach of the peace), the investigators suggest that it would be problematic to have the *närstående* (close-relatives) despite the claim above. This argument is made as they state that the perpetrator does not have to be a relative or a distant relative, which makes their arguments contradictory and non-credible. These persuading and generalizing formulations imply self-evidence which is strong discursive rhetoric. This statement can be interpreted as indicating “facts” and hence leaves no room for questioning the statement. Why the investigators suggest excluding the close-relatives will be explained in the Backwardness sub-theme.

This theme intends to illuminate what is referred to by the investigators as “the truth” and the current state of knowledge about HO. What is central to the sub-theme are the generalizations and ambiguities about a phenomenon that Swedish society condemns and distances itself from. Legal Orientalism (Darian-Smith 2013) explains why a complex and culturally informed phenomenon such as honor has different legal meanings in different contexts. Facts about what HO is and how it should be tackled are interpreted differently in different contexts because there is no such thing as a universal legal code. As Darian-Smith (2013) writes, Euro-American law was created during the times of colonialism and contains cultural and racial biases. This is reproduced throughout history by using certain language and practices.



## 6.2. Binary Gender Structures & Asymmetries

This theme is based on codes differentiating women from men and describes their roles in an honor context. Honor requires certain behaviors from women and men.

Among the requirements for men are reliability and honesty. (p. 99)

This description of men in an honor context is nearly identical as previously mentioned in the Defining Honor section. The Swedish dictionary's definition that according to the investigators shall not be confused with an honor culture means that a man of honor is reliable and honest. I interpret the linguistic difference in defining men in a context without honor culture and a context that the investigators agree upon as non-existent. Hence, regardless of culture or honor-thinking, the definition of an honorable man is based on the same values. The definition that the investigators chose to use while defining men does not have an equivalent for honorable women. Either women and honor do not follow the same logic definition-wise or do not co-exist at all (Mohanty 2003). The description of women in an honor context is that they are expected to bear the honor of the man. The only context where women and honor are covered in the same sentence is when women are dishonoring a man. This definition can be placed on a societal dimension of CDA as it describes the static gendered societal structures between men and women, honor or not (Fairclough 2003). The binary role between the woman and man is reproduced throughout the investigation and will be further exemplified (Mohanty 2003).

The definition of a non-honorable woman in the context of honor is hence clear, however, what it means to be an honorable woman in a non-honorable context can neither confirm nor contradict this statement since the Swedish dictionary lacks a counterpart for women. If the investigators agree with this binary between women and men, they are by using this definition reproducing gendered power asymmetries. If they disagree with the static structure of contrasting women to men, they could have constructed a more neutral definition in the investigation that makes no distinction between genders. This positioning follows Mohanty's (2003) critique of reproducing the binaries between genders and hence counteracts a shift from such a structure that could improve conditions for women. The definition can also be placed on the social dimension of

CDA and connected to the patriarchy as the basis for knowledge production and domination over women and implies no major difference between how the West and the East view an honorable woman (Mohanty 2003).

The Western feminist approach to combating HO is through juxtaposing women with men and describing women as static victims of male violence. To move beyond static gendered structures would require reshaping current structures which Mohanty (2003) suggests can be done by political influences e.g. a discursive change among those in power, which in this context would require the investigators to use a language that erases such asymmetries and produces a non-binary discourse which eventually affects how honor is interpreted on a societal level. However, this requires a great dismantling since power and knowledge interrelate (Wodak 2001) and thus the interest in reproducing a certain discourse is important to those in power. Another occurrence of Mohanty's (2003) critique of the binary structures that can be traced in the investigation is that women are described as affecting men's honor and that men control female family members to avoid dishonor. The statements in the investigation illustrate the static power relations between women and men, e.g. those possessing power and the powerless (Mohanty 2003).

Despite an agreement/disagreement that honor, as described in the investigation, is a detached form of VAW, the group where this "specific culture" exists cannot be understood through a Western feminist perspective (Mohanty 2003). The critique of Western feminism in the context of honor is two-dimensional. First, as mentioned, if women interpret HO versus other VAW as a completely different form of violence and secondly, the structure of Western feminism is limited in its understanding of how to combat HO simply because, from what the discourse informs, Western women are not affected. This reasoning leads the discussion to what George (2018) refers to as double colonization since women's ethnicity, class and struggles differ between Third and First World women. The examples of women exposed to such oppression in the investigation indicate that the women are not ethnic Swedes, hence a minority, and potentially exposed to double colonization.

It is on a social dimension of CDA crucial to reshaping the current structures to avoid women being exposed to double colonization, the voices of the affected women must be heard to influence knowledge production about this phenomenon. Hence, Third World feminism is crucial to dismantling current gendered asymmetries (Mohanty 2003). The investigators state that the knowledge about the victim's situation "must" increase. This indicates a knowledge gap, however, there are no suggestions on how knowledge can be developed or what a greater understanding of the phenomenon would entail. Despite claiming that knowledge about the victim's situation must increase, the investigators state in a different part of the investigation that no extraordinary educational efforts are needed since the proposed legal change "technically" builds upon the crimes of breach of the peace (p. 292). Although HO technically builds on crimes of breach of the peace, it is in the investigation presented as a different form of VAW, which makes the argument ambiguous. Another example of a claim that can be placed on the social dimension of CDA is that the investigators suggest that their proposals may improve equality between men and women. However, in line with Mohanty's (2003) critique of Western feminism, "improved equality" would not necessarily improve the status of Third World women since women's struggles are not universal and cannot be generalized.

### **6.2.1. The Collective**

This sub-theme illuminates how the investigators describe the collective aspect as a generalized trait in "the honor culture". A significant distinction the investigators make between HO and VAW is, despite the cultural aspect, the collective nature of honor. They argue that there usually are several perpetrators, both female and male. There are also victims of both sexes, however, women and girls are more commonly affected. The investigators also state that "gender separation is made at an early age" (p. 102) and that sons control daughters at places where the parents are absent, for instance at school, and in public. The sons carry on the family name and are considered more "important" to the family than the daughters.

In most cultures, the family is the most important part of a person's life. In many countries, the family is ranked according to gender and age... (p. 104)

Despite signaling a difference by stating that the family is important in “most countries” and that gender and age hierarchy exists in “many countries”, an interpretation is that the meaning of the family is as important on a global, societal level as it describes the common structure of the family. However, while described in the context of honor it is interpreted as a control mechanism as the collective aspect is described as destructive. If the family is ranked according to age and gender in many countries, the argument implies that it is seen as “normal” since it is generalized. Hence, the argument is not significant in an honor context and is not a unique characteristic that can be argued to oppose HO from VAW. Orientalism describes how the West opposes itself to the Orient and legal Orientalism emphasizes how this notion is recognized in legislation (Said 1979 & Darian-Smith 2013). The differences that the investigators present in the investigation between honor culture and what the investigators would refer to as not are limited. Hence, using rhetoric that makes the audience interpret the arguments as characteristics of honor, might not be, but still has a powerful discursive effect as it contributes to meaning-making (Fairclough 2003). Another common rhetorical technique detected in this theme is the creation of binaries which emphasizes the gender differences in an honor context (Mohanty 2003). The investigators state:

women’s behavior affects men’s honor. (p. 99)

monogamy for women and polygamy for men. (p. 103)

boys and men are often given more freedom than women (p. 104)

the men who guard and control their female family members (p. 104)

These clear textual distinctions not only put men in an honor context a binary position but also reinforce gendered power relations between women and men (Mohanty 2003). Another interpretation is that these assumptions are again claimed as facts, regardless if these binaries exist in an honor context, these assumptions indicate a generalization of how every situation is shaped. For instance, men in an honor context are described as having several wives. The source of information for this claim is “the Pakistani researcher, Tahira Khan, who is often quoted in the literature in the field” (p. 103). Even though it might be a scientific claim, stating the claim in such a generalized way magnifies its meaning and makes the audience believe that all men in a culture of honor have multiple wives and illustrates another example of Orientalism as the understanding of men in the East having multiple wives in contrast to men in the West (Said

1979). Despite the example of having several wives, the other quotes illustrating the binaries between men and women can be visible in non-honor contexts as well. However, such oppressive/controlling traits can be interpreted as normalized in a Western context (Mohanty 2003).

### **6.2.2. HO/VAW**

The last sub-theme in this theme emphasizes the similarities between VAW and “such” oppression (read: HO). The investigators state:

Honor-related violence and oppression, like men’s violence against women in general, has its basis in gender, power, sexuality, and cultural ideas about these. (p. 100)

The view of women’s and men’s sexuality is central to understanding the structure and mechanisms of violence, both concerning men’s violence against women in general and honor-related violence and oppression. (p. 101)

The investigators write that these statements are confirmed by a report by the UN. Although the investigators have not previously denied that power and gender are linked to “ordinary” VAW, the investigation has claimed that two aspects that distinguish HO from other forms of VAW are precisely sexuality and culture. Hence, as this analysis of the investigation continues, the lines between the “different” forms of violence become more unclear. One of the tasks of conducting the investigation was to analyze whether an addition to the criminal code should be implemented or if the previous regulation of violation of women’s rights was sufficient. Hence, to argue for the change, a distinction between the forms of violence must be illustrated. As Fairclough (2003) states, language becomes powerful when used by powerful people. Hence, finding arguments that oppose HO from VAW is crucial. Stating what HO is and how it should be tackled in an official document representing the government is not only convincing in itself but discursively affects several parts of society and can have an intended effect even though the difference between the different forms of VAW might be few. However, a conclusion that can be drawn from stating that VAW has its basis in “cultural ideas” rejects the claim that culture is a significant aspect of HO.

The notion of honor is based on strong patriarchal and heteronormative ideals (p. 106)

...primarily affects people who live in conditions with significant gaps in gender equality. (p. 330)

This quote illustrates, again, that the rhetoric contrasts the, according to the GO, two categories of VAW. As has been clarified, these attributes are not particular in the context of honor, the forming of such a claim makes the audience interpret patriarchal and heteronormative ideas as correlating with honor and dismisses the fact that it might be a component in all forms of VAW. All forms of violence and oppression against women are unarguably based on gender inequalities (Mohanty 2003), hence, using the rhetoric of defining and distinguishing honor from other violence with those words is problematic and contributes to a particular discourse about honor.

Another claim is that the acts of restoring honor are mainly committed by men against girls and women, but that other situations can occur, meaning that also women can be perpetrators. The investigators also claim that a person can be both a perpetrator and a victim. These statements add a nuance to the understanding of the violence. However, the argument follows that the provisions should be stated in a gender-neutral way to include the rare occasions when “other situations occur”. Formulating the provisions in a gender-neutral way and stating that perpetrators can also be women separates HO from the violation of women’s rights. However, reproducing the image of women as static victims of male violence and then also stating that women can be perpetrators does not improve the position of women in this context. If the provisions are suggested to be designed in a gender-neutral way, so should the entire discourse on honor be as to avoid reproducing the binaries (Mohanty 2003).

The overall picture of how women are exposed to HO and women living in what is referred to as honor culture is described as oppressed, dependent on the men, and as static victims. In line with Mohanty’s (2003) reasoning, this is the perception of Western women and men. Reproducing these simplified binaries is ineffective in combating all forms of VAW since it contradicts its aims. Mohanty (2003) criticizes the notion of universally justifiable proof since political biases exist and affect how HO and the role of women are portrayed. If the aim is to combat the

violence, the investigators need to suggest solutions that align with the interest of exposed women to reshape postcolonial structures that reproduce how women are viewed and the status of women.

### 6.3. Us/Them

In this theme of the analysis, a discourse that contrasts people who “sympathize with such culture” in contrast to the rest is central. First off, the investigators state:

...the honor of the family or kindred is an incentive to set standards and threaten and carry out sanctions that are not accepted in Swedish society in general. (p. 14)

In some cases, it may even be the case that a person’s concept of honor is such that it can motivate the person to perform a certain deed that is considered abhorrent according to prevailing social norms, for example, a so-called honor killing. (p. 59)

These two quotes illustrate how the investigators use words to distinguish such forms of violence and oppression as something that deviates from “Swedish society in general” or clashes with “prevailing social norms”. This rhetoric puts both perpetrators and potential perpetrators e.g. persons that sympathize with “such culture” in a different category of people and hence, opposes “Us” to “Them” (Said 1979). As has been interpreted previously, using “such” oppression, honor-“related” violence and honor-“thinking” shows that pointing “Them” out as deviant, but also describing how the majority distance themselves from “Them” reinforces a picture of who a perpetrator with an honor motive is. This is an example of how the textual dimension of analysis visibly affects the discursive and social dimensions as simple words contribute to meaning-making and illustrate a Western style of domination (Said 1979). Words like these have contextual, powerful effects since the meaning becomes clear for the reader of the investigation. “Them” in a context of domestic violence would indicate violent men, however, in this context, it is very clear that not all men are meant to be included but those who are “able” to be included e.g. with a certain culture and maybe religion. A simple and in another context objective word as “them” affects the societal understanding of honor (Fairclough 2003).

Furthermore, stating that honor-related sanctions would not be accepted by society in general is an assumed interpretation by the producers of the text. What is interpreted on the social dimension of CDA, refers to what is accepted by society since all forms of violence should be condemned. By pointing out Swedish society “in general”, the investigators linguistically emphasize the fact that HO is seen as a deviating phenomenon and hence separates Swedish forms of violence from non-Swedish forms of violence (Said 1979). The statement is interpreted as aiming to emphasize that HO is unaccepted by the majority. Referring to honor killing as “so-called” honor killing further illustrates the unfamiliarity of the word and the political and ideological distancing from the phenomenon. Further illustrations of such distancing:

Honor in Western contexts has, as mentioned above, a highly charged value. Honor can have something heroic and noble about it. Even in non-Western contexts, honor stands for something that can be perceived as positive by people in that context. (p. 99)

Postcolonial feminist theory can explain why different forms of oppression can be categorized based on race and gender. The investigators are clear about the fact that both VAW in general and HO originate in patriarchal societies, however, they argue for the distinctions despite the many shared similarities of the violence. Based on how the language is used to distinguish between other forms of oppression in contrast to honor, referring to honor as a specific culture, categorizes honor-thinking people in a separate category. Producing a discourse of a certain group as especially harmful to women and then placing “Them” in the margins reproduces Said’s image of Orientalism and especially legal Orientalism since Euro-American law is seen as superior to other legal systems and is constructed in an opposing fashion (Darian-Smith 2013).

As has been interpreted previously, the definition of honor is shared between the contexts. Honor in a Western context is understood as something inherently fine and would not be questioned, on the contrary, honor in an honor culture is described as a source of violence and is not acceptable. Even though the definition is so similar, how it is described in different contexts and the interpretation of its meaning differs significantly. The quote above continues by stating that “even in a non-Western” context honor can be perceived as positive “in that context” (p. 99). This quote



illustrates how honor is problematized while perceived in non-Western countries. The quote also illustrates the significant cultural discourse surrounding honor. The second quote further highlights the distinction from Swedish society by using “in such societies”. These words that in this particular context mark a significant position, might in a different context not imply such Othering tendencies (Said 1979), which is explained through the discursive level. The second quote describes how a man in a context of honor is perceived, however, the description need not necessarily differ from other contexts.

Honor-related violence and other such oppression can be assumed to work against the conditions for integration into Swedish society. (p. 299)

HO is at the beginning of the investigation described with more neutral words, but as the investigation continues the formulations become more blameful and specifically directed at a certain group of people. This is illustrated by the higher page numbers after the quotes as well as the indirect exclusion of everything other than the descriptions and tone the quotes reflect in this theme. The discrepancy between avoiding defining honor in an honor context and being relatively neutral in stating that honor will negatively affect the integration goals in Sweden illustrates a rhetorical “escalation”. This rhetorical tool is interpreted as stigmatizing and clearly illustrates an attitude toward immigrants which is an illustration of the structures of power and ideology on a social dimension.

Without being too literal in the description of how honor is understood and the roles within the culture, the investigation makes a clear remark about the meanings of their claims (Fairclough 2003). This not only affects how the discourse is shaped but also how attitudes toward honor in society are shaped and who is to blame for the violence. The investigators are aware that the proposals might stigmatize certain groups by separating honor-related violence from other forms of violence. However, they argue that researchers claim it to be important to find causes and explanations for violence. The argument is certainly valid to some degree, as “nuanced” knowledge about VAW might counteract generalizations (Mohanty 2003). However, the investigation aims to analyze whether an addition to the criminal code should be implemented

rather than a scientific study of different forms of violence.

Another example of when Orientalism appears in the investigation is when HO is understood to work against the integration goals in Sweden. This statement not only concludes that HO occurs among immigrants, but it also scapegoats a certain group and blames “Them” for another societal problem, namely integration. Although the investigators have pointed out that the honor culture need not be linked to a particular culture or religion, they also state that religiosity is common within the honor culture. To point out that HO can influence the integration goals in Sweden without reference to statistics or a source of information is interpreted as reinforcing the image of “the Others” through the mechanism of blaming them for not fitting the Western standard (Said 1979). Another point with the potential problem with integration is that honor oppression as a form of VAW becomes a problem of integration and can hence be interpreted as redirecting focus from the violence and using the information in the investigation to shape discourses about immigrants.

### **6.3.1. Backwardness**

This sub-theme is a composition of codes illustrating how honor is described as a primitive and backward phenomenon. The investigators describe the context where honor occurs as a conflict between the roles of the individual, family, and the state. The problem with the conflicting understanding is that it does not correspond to the legal system, which means that the perpetrator of honor-related violence distances himself from the justice system and disagrees with the monopoly on violence that the state possesses. The investigators state that the attitude of such perpetrators implies a denial of prevailing laws e.g. “These are your laws” (p. 108), making honor-thinking people in Sweden lawless (Said 1979). Furthermore, they claim that the perpetrators of such violence show no remorse and are perhaps even proud of their honor-related actions. This is explained by the collective character of honor which means that several family members are involved and in turn creates a strong silence culture.

...clan culture or a pre-modern society corresponds in many cases to the fact that smaller groups, such as families or clans, have taken or maintained control over some exercise of power because the state is weak... (p. 108)

In a modern society, however, such phenomena must be regarded as intolerable. (p. 109)

These excerpts illustrate another social dimension of CDA and how the power asymmetries are visible through the investigators' understanding of prevailing societies where HO occurs. This shows that Swedish society in comparison to "such societies" is a model for how things should be and condemns what is referred to as pre-modern societies. Neither clan cultures nor pre-modern societies exist in the Western world which is another rhetorical technique that separates those who live in a secularized, civilized society and are law-abiding compared to those who are in the opposite type of society (Said 1979). Another interesting fact about the comparisons illustrated in the quotes above is that the qualities of Swedish or modern society are reinforced at the expense of the rhetoric of diminishing the opposite and vice versa (Said 1979). Referring to honor perpetrators as lawless and proud of their illegal honor-related actions adds to the postcolonial discourse of "Them" as lawless and is precisely how the West is understood to view the Orient from a postcolonial perspective (Said 1979). The aspect of clans has an important role in the context as it is also included in the criminal code for groups affected by the actions of the plaintiff. Clans are included in addition to family and relatives because a clan might view the bond as relative despite the absence of blood ties.

The government gave the *Kriminalvården* (prison service) the task of conducting an interview study with ex-honor-related perpetrators to increase knowledge about honor and preventative work against re-offending in honor crimes. The report shows that all the participants had migrated to Sweden and most were from the Middle East. According to the participants, HO affects countries with institutional deficiencies, and their upbringing was marked by poverty and limited schooling. When they arrived in Sweden they were exposed to new values and a lifestyle that distanced them from a "violence-affirming honor culture" (p. 119-120). The investigation shows that almost all of the participants distance themselves from having an honor motive while committing the crime because an honor crime conviction is particularly stigmatizing and an

aggravating circumstance (p. 120).

These interview studies can be interpreted to confirm the discourse about the perpetrators. According to the investigators, all participants had migrated to Sweden and the majority were from the Middle East. This statement might be interpreted as objective facts, however, when used in a context where discriminatory traits exist, the image of the perpetrator is emphasized and reproduces the stereotype. Hence, the claim that HO can occur in any context is not convincing when those who are referred to as perpetrators are all immigrants. As children, these men were affected by poverty and were uneducated (p. 119). Again, such superior rhetoric is useful when referring to the perpetrators as backward (Darian-Smith 2013). Sweden is later described as the ideal society that exposed those men to the right values. This statement illuminates the power asymmetries between “Us and Them” and Western domination (ibid). By using the voices of “the Others”, the investigators can legitimize their statements and above all neutralize the tools that are reproducing the oppressor and the oppressed (Mohanty 2003). The way this interview study is designed and described in the investigation singles out Middle Eastern men as common honor-related offenders. Their background is marked by poverty and poor schooling which distinguishes “Them” from “Us Swedes” in Sweden and illustrates structures of domination on a social dimension of CDA.

Another example of a report that is used in the investigation to illustrate among which ethnic groups the violence manifests itself is a survey on teenagers distributed to several schools, conducted by *Socialstyrelsen* (The National Board of Health and Welfare). The *Socialstyrelsen* states that comparisons between the girls and boys were made but also comparisons between Swedish/Nordic teenagers and teenagers with two foreign-born parents. Despite these two studies being conducted by other government bodies, they were used in the investigation as further arguments for the addition to the criminal code. In the social dimension of CDA, what is referred to as knowledge is chosen by the investigators and used to their advantage. Using external sources communicates objectivity in contrast to claiming these facts without reference. By emphasizing the distinctions between Swedes and immigrants, the view of who the perpetrators of HO are, becomes more distinct, making it easier to point them out as scapegoats. The

perception of who the oppressors are is clear despite the initial discourse about “the neutrality” in which context honor can occur. Despite the claims that HO can exist in any culture or religion, the only actual examples that are used are related to “the Others” which again points “Them” out as barbaric and lawless (Said 1979).

### **6.3.2. Discriminatory Traits**

The last sub-theme illustrates particularly clear examples of discriminating factors which contains both my own interpretations of potential discriminatory effects as well as the investigators’ own description of potential discriminatory effects.

The concept of honor can take different forms depending on cultural beliefs and religion but is not linked to any specific culture or religion. Honor thinking can also occur in non-religious contexts. (p. 101)

...a high degree of religiosity can mean a so-called excess risk of honor-related violence and oppression... (p. 161)

The first statement is interpreted as that anyone can have a pretense of honor and thereby fulfill such a crime requisite. However, when stated in a context among claims that singles out a certain group as perpetrators this quote is unintelligible. The investigators claim that honor-thinking or honor culture can be invoked in all situations but do not use other examples than the ones that can be placed with the “Others”. At first, defining honor as a “kind of culture of its own” (p. 101) and then stating that it is not linked to a specific culture calls for explanation and is interpreted as ambiguous. The other quote shows that the investigators are positive that religion is a great factor in honor-related contexts as they state that a higher level of religiosity correlates with a higher risk of honor-related violence. Hence, religion automatically navigates closer to honor. Also, stating religiosity in such a general fashion and without specification can be interpreted as ambiguous by the audience. The quotes above further illustrate the repeating Othering effects reproduced by the investigators. The ambiguities about “the facts of honor” illustrate a lack of knowledge despite that the discourse is dominating. These subtle examples illustrate the power asymmetries between the Western and Oriental mindsets and can be placed on the social dimension of CDA as it differentiates potential perpetrators as deviating from the Swedish

ideology/religion (Said 1979).

A decides that B must cover her hair, wear long-sleeved or long-legged clothing or clothing with certain colors, or that B must not wear jewelry or make-up. (p. 195)

This is an example of an honor-related violation. What is interesting about the example is that the investigators chose to write that such a violation can be forcing a woman to cover her hair which is a religious symbol that mainly Muslim women do. This creates a discourse of characteristics of the victim. The investigation claims that honor-thinking is not linked to a specific religion but chooses to use a religious symbol either way, which designates Muslims as part of the culture of honor (Said 1979). Hence, this example is interpreted as a point that singles out Muslims and illustrates controlling behavior, often imposed on women by men but there are no significant traits that would only apply to HO. Again, the example linguistically implies that a certain group can be interpreted as the perpetrators and that religious law in the countries of origin legitimizes such oppression. What is presented as truth about honor aligns with Said's (1979) notion of superiority over the Orient and how European culture disciplines the production of the Orient politically, sociologically, and ideologically. The covering of hair can be interpreted as another example of opposing Swedish society to "Those societies".

The investigators find it important to consider the addition to the criminal code in relation to the Discrimination Act (2008:567) since ethnicity, religion, and minority are the basis for discrimination but also occur in the debate on honor. The protection against discrimination must be applied in all forms of legislation e.g. in criminalization of certain behavior. The legislation must hence be designed in a non-discriminatory fashion. Despite the ambiguities surrounding the characteristics of a perpetrator of HO, discrimination becomes a topic of debate in the investigation, signaling that the investigators to some extent are aware of what their suggestions might imply for certain groups. However, the investigators state that it is unavoidable in neutrally designed legislation that one group will not be more affected by the criminalization than others. This description implies that the investigators are aware that the implementation in practice affects one group harder than another but prevents potential criticism by describing it as

inevitable and giving legitimacy to their claim. This is another. As has been illustrated, several examples of postcolonialist traits are made visible in the investigation. Highlighting that the proposals may have both discriminatory and stigmatizing effects (p. 100), again shows another example of domination (Said 1979). The discriminatory effects are highly relevant to the social dimension of CDA and will be further analyzed.

Highlighting the topic of discrimination acknowledges the continuation of colonialism. The investigators do not take any responsibility for the potentially negative effects on “the Others” and for reproducing the opposing rhetoric that Said (1979) describes as systematic racial biases. Regarding the Theoretical Framework applied here, one can however argue for the importance of emphasizing that the group or community that is portrayed as the perpetrator fulfills the grounds for discrimination, even if anti-discrimination laws are not applied in this case. The investigators do not point out a specific ethnicity in relation to honor culture, but, since honor-related violence is not an inherently Swedish phenomenon, ethnic Swedes will not be affected by the suggestions. “In the name of honor” and the references to women covering her hair indicate that the investigators connect Islam with honor. Honor culture is referred to as a culture that clashes with Swedish norms, hence, the claim that honor culture occurs in a minority group within society can be concluded. These claims taken together indicate strong postcolonial traits and discriminatory effects (Said 1979).

## 7. Discussion in Relation to the Literature Review

The underlying patriarchal structure that has enabled VAW in general and HO, in particular, is a notion that exists both in the SOU 2020:57 and previous research. This is a shared understanding among the academic articles, in which case, there is a consensus that VAW can be explained by patriarchal structures and masculine norms. Nisha et al. (2024) write that patriarchal structures manifest themselves differently in different contexts. This perception is not visible in the investigation, as patriarchal structures are used rather to explain specifically HO and not VAW in general. Early on in the SOU 2020:57, the investigators define honor in relation to men and their

characteristics to later describe how women can inflict the picture of an honorable man. Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2002) refers to masculinity as a structure of control, objectification, and dehumanization of women. The investigators however refer to these forms of oppression as specifically HO and hence culture or honor thinking rather than universal patriarchal structures. Heydari et al. (2021) even refer to the honor system as a tool for enforcing the patriarchal structures. The investigators were tasked with an investigation on HO specifically, however, if the investigators would agree that all the traits of HO could be explained by masculinity, HO would not be interpreted by the reader as a separate form of violence. Hence, situating HO within a wider discourse of VAW would not align with the aims of the investigation as the separation is used as an argumentation for the addition to the criminal code.

Reddy (2008) discusses the purpose of making a distinction between the different forms of oppression which the investigators briefly discuss. Reddy emphasizes the cultural aspect of HO and argues for the use of separating forms of violence to gain knowledge about protection for women and the prevention of such oppression. This notion aligns with the investigation, however, my interpretation of the underlying argument in the investigation is to legitimize criminalizing “a certain form” of oppression rather than suggesting tools for improved protection for women since it is not a stated aim of the investigation. There is a mutual understanding that culture and oppression interrelate, however, neither previous research nor the SOU 2020:57 defines what culture is or implies. Neither is it clear when the investigators refer to “cultural ideas” in relation to all forms of VAW. The meaning of culture is wide and contextual but stating that HO and culture are interrelated and also stating that VAW has its basis in cultural ideas unifies the forms of violence rather than contrasting them. Since culture is not defined, I take the liberty of claiming that culture exists everywhere and also in a Swedish, liberal, secular, and relatively equal context. Hence, speaking about culture in a context of oppression lacks a significant meaning, which again returns to the patriarchy as an explanation rather than culture.

Heydari et al. (2021) describe the emergence of HO by referring to a lack of formal social control. Mechanical solidarity can explain group-mindedness in societies with strong informal social control. These societies are what the investigators refer to as clans or premodern societies.



Hence, these similar descriptions of the phenomenon can be interpreted as a critique of the state in those countries. However, such claims raise postcolonial feminist critique due to our understanding of “Those” states as barbaric and lawless according to Said (1979). In the context of HO, strong informal social control is interpreted as something inherently bad in contrast to informal social control in a different context.

Heydari et al. (2021) argue that honor killings are a global problem but that such killings are more common in the Middle East and South Asia, however, since they occur in the Western world as well, the categorization of the crime is questioned. A husband killing his spouse is often assigned the crime classification domestic violence in the West or Sweden *grovt kvinnofridsbrott* (coarse violation of women’s rights). As has been interpreted, the similarities between these forms of violence are greater than the differences. Heydari et al. (2021), Idriss (2017), and Gill (2022) question whether distinctions should be made. Gill argues that the media’s attention on honor-related crimes shadows the majority of VAW as it continues to be a problem for women despite the perpetrators’ ethnicity. This critique in Gill’s case is directed at media in Canada and could tentatively be understood as a relevant critique of the Swedish discourse as well. Although not investigated in this thesis, the hegemonic discourse in the investigation illustrates a skewed focus. Categorizing and focusing on the binary aspects between women and men reproduces Western feminism (Mohanty 2003) and the binary between men from the East and men from the West is an active trait of Orientalism (Said 1979).

Gill (2022), Heydari et al. (2021), Idriss (2017), and Korteweg (2014) argue that placing violence with “the Others” even has counterproductive effectuates on the minority status, as it further stigmatizes and stereotypes certain communities. Placing immigration problems with “the Others” directs the political spotlight on race, culture, and religion. This notion exists in the investigation as well. The investigators state that HO works against the integration goals in Sweden which logically implies that reducing immigration would result in a less negative impact on those goals since HO is located within certain communities despite VAW continuing either way. On the contrary, Chester (2010) argues that HO should be placed with “the Others” since the violence is explained by cultural values and Islamic radicalization and that the murders occur

when women become too Westernized. Similarly, the investigation states that ex-honor-related perpetrators are exposed to new values in Sweden and hence can let go of the “violence-affirming honor culture”. The notion identified in both Chester’s (2010) article and the investigation illustrates strong postcolonial traits as it illustrates the ethnic and racial divides between Eastern and Western men committing the same type of criminal act but with different “labels” (Darian-Smith 2013). As has been illustrated in this chapter, previous research, to a large extent, corresponds to and affirms the hegemonic discourse that has been pointed out in the SOU 2020:57 although the articles study discourses in other countries.

## 8. Conclusions

The selected investigation as material for the study reveals a large amount of material and provides the conditions required to meet the study’s aims, namely unpacking underlying power asymmetries and knowledge production by analyzing definitions and how “the truth” is presented. The contributions of this thesis illustrate how critical tools from Postcolonial Feminism make visible interpretations of HO that can be discriminatory. The findings point out tendencies that align with Said’s (1979) notion of Orientalism, how the West/Sweden discursively and legally opposes itself from the Orient and how such effects are neutralized. The Analysis furthermore unpacks how the investigators legitimized their claims and the current power asymmetries between “Us” and “Them”. Following such analysis, the investigation can be deemed to have discriminatory expressions, which may lead to negative effects on certain communities within society and the legal procedure of honor crimes might be affected by the ethnicity, culture, and religion of the people involved. This will in turn affect certain already affected communities in Sweden even further by the Othering effects that the investigation reproduces.

The themes illuminate how HO, and the knowledge about how women and men’s position in an honor context are understood in the investigation. The reproduction of the binary between women and men strengthens the current gendered structures and delimits the influence of Third World

feminism (Mohanty 2003). Distinguishing between different expressions of VAW should not be used to categorize perpetrators' ethnicities, but rather to gain knowledge about a wider understanding of VAW. Moving beyond the Western mindset and employing other strands of knowledge can add several dimensions of understanding and destabilize power asymmetries of gender and race.

The three-dimensional analysis of the hegemonic discourse on HO in the investigation illustrates how discriminatory traits are neutralized. The CDA unpacks the discursive development from words to meaning-making and on several occasions, is visible and/or a representation of social structures. Since the investigation is from 2020, I expect that the current stage of knowledge has not expanded much since then. However, if the investigation had been written today, the far-rightist politics of the new government might have influenced the aim of the investigation resulting in a stronger postcolonial feminist critique.

As a suggestion for further research, investigating the effectiveness of legislation would add the dimension of a larger legislative context. The approach would enable a discussion of whether the possibility of anyone being convicted of an honor crime is legally possible (everyone's equality before the law) and how the law in practice interprets culture. Hence, an analysis of court cases and/or interviews with prosecutors and judges enables answers to such questions. A critical reflection of how the Prosecutor's office (see Background chapter) tackles honor-related cases indicates postcolonial feminist traits which emphasizes the importance of further research. The socio-legal study of postcolonial feminist phenomena will, with the current societal structures, continue to be relevant and important.

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## 10. Appendix

The coding scheme containing quotes from the SOU 2020:57 (directly translated from Swedish to English)

<b>The Colonized Definition of Honor</b>	<b>Binary Gender Structures &amp; Asymmetries</b>	<b>Us/Them</b>
<p>Honor is defined in a dictionary as “reputation based on recognized good character traits acc. certain (often traditional norms)”. According to the same dictionary, a man of honor is a "reliable and decent person".</p> <p>honor denotes something universally fine, and murder can never be something nice.</p> <p>should not be formulated in such a way that it risks giving legitimacy to such honor thinking that can lead to crime.</p> <p>An excellent alternative to honor killing is honor-related killing, which can be generalized to honor crime.</p> <p>no common definition is applied by all actors who work with the current type of issues.</p> <p>different competing proposals for definitions, formulated by different actors against the background of their respective needs and positions.</p> <p>“Honor culture” or “honor-related context” is now a more accepted concept than “honor thinking”.</p> <p>The culture of honor...a kind of culture of its own.</p> <p>definitions of what constitutes honor-related oppression vary.</p>	<p>Honor requires men and women to meet certain requirements.</p> <p>A man in an honor context must also have control over related women such as daughters, wives, and sisters.</p> <p>men may fall into dishonor, which is the opposite of honor.</p> <p>women’s behavior affects men’s honor.</p> <p>A man whose honor has been violated needs, in a culture of honor, to react.</p> <p>No extraordinary educational efforts should be needed</p> <p><b>The Collective</b> gender separation from an early age is common in a culture of honor</p> <p>the son controls the sister at home, at the school, and out in public.</p> <p>boys...considered more important to the family than girls.</p> <p>monogamy for women and polygamy for men.</p> <p>In many countries, the family is ranked according to gender and age</p> <p>boys and men are often given more freedom than women</p> <p>the men who guard and control their</p>	<p>carry out sanctions that are not accepted in society in general.</p> <p>in a non-Western context, honor stands for something that can be perceived as positive by people in that context</p> <p>Honor in Western contexts has, as mentioned above, a highly charged value.</p> <p>Honor-related violence and other such oppression can be assumed to work against the conditions for integration in Swedish society.</p> <p><b>Backwardness</b> in an honor context, there is often a different and competing view of the relationship between the state, individual, and family/kindred than the established view within the framework of the legal system.</p> <p>that perpetrators in a context of honor do not accept...a monopoly on violence.</p> <p>“These are your laws/rules” and shows no remorse, but perhaps even pride...for his actions.</p> <p>clan culture or a pre-modern society corresponds in many cases to the fact that smaller groups, such as families or clans, have taken or maintained control over some exercise of power because the state is weak</p>



<p>in the name of honor</p> <p>honor will – regardless of the detailed formulation – always be associated with problems of interpretation and demarcation.</p> <p><b>Honor-related Attributes</b> The person who is exposed to honor-related violence and other such oppression is particularly exposed and vulnerable because he or she often completely lacks support from relatives.</p> <p>In an honor context, the family, kindred, or group often sympathizes with the perpetrator.</p> <p>it is enough that a motive for the crime has been attributable to honor.</p> <p>Based on our knowledge acquisition regarding honor-related violence and oppression</p> <p>Many – if not all – honor-related acts are committed against relatives.</p> <p>Furthermore, it would be problematic...to have close relatives prop in respect of honor-related deeds</p>	<p>female family members</p> <p><b>HO/VAW</b> Honor-related violence and oppression, like men’s violence against women in general, has its basis in gender, power, sexuality, and cultural ideas about these.</p> <p>The notion of honor is based on strongly patriarchal and heteronormative ideals</p> <p>primarily affects people who live in conditions with significant gaps in gender equality</p> <p>crimes with motives of honor are mainly committed by men against, often young, women, but other situations can also occur.</p> <p>The provision should therefore be designed in a gender-neutral way.</p> <p>Our proposals may lead to improved equality between men and women</p> <p>knowledge of and understanding of the victim’s situation and the context in which the crimes take place must increase.</p>	<p>In a modern society, however, such phenomena must be regarded as intolerable.</p> <p>a societal problem in countries and areas with institutional deficiencies</p> <p>Growing up has in many cases been marked by poverty, political oppression, and limited schooling.</p> <p>All participants have migrated to Sweden, most from conflict-affected countries in the Middle East.</p> <p>Integration in Sweden has meant exposure to new values</p> <p>distancing from, a violence-affirming honor culture</p> <p>the honor motive is both an aggravating circumstance and is perceived as particularly stigmatizing.</p> <p>comparisons between young people with a Swedish background, in the sense that both parents were born in Sweden/Nordic, and young people with a foreign background, in the sense that both parents were born elsewhere.</p> <p><b>Discriminatory Traits</b> The concept of honor can take different forms depending on cultural beliefs and religion but is not linked to any specific culture or religion. Honor thinking can also occur in non-religious contexts.</p> <p>the use of the term may risk stigmatizing certain groups.</p> <p>Although religion is a basis for discrimination and a high degree of religiosity can mean a so-called excess risk of honor-related violence and oppression, such oppression can also occur without a</p>
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		<p>religious context.</p> <p>it is inevitable that neutrally designed legislation – including criminalization – can in practice hit a certain group harder than another.</p>
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