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IN THE NAME OF ACTION AGAINST "HONOUR-RELATED" VIOLENCE:

National nations, gender, and boundaries in the Swedish school's ambitions to combat violence and oppression

Abstract

"Honour-related" violence and oppression has become an important issue for various social institutions in Sweden during the last decade. The school is one of these and has been awarded a particular responsibility to detect and take action against this violence. Aside from a few studies however, knowledge remains limited regarding how professionals in various institutions take measures against this violence. In this article I examine how the school's mission to combat "honour-related" violence and oppression has evolved into a practice permeated by national notions. With the support of empirical examples, I will show how efforts to tackle "honour-related" violence are based on ideas of "Swedish" values, national borders, and gender, and how these become tools for production of exclusion and inclusion. Attention is also given to how boys and girls who are brought together with an "honour cultural" background are assigned different positions in the "Swedish" community. The study is based on interviews with student welfare staff, participant observations on training days for school staff about "honour-related" violence, and document studies.

Keywords

Gender • honour-related violence • nation • school • values

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1 Introduction

The murders of two young Swedish women with backgrounds from Kurdistan, killed by male relatives, focused at the beginning of the 2000s an extensive attention to "immigrant girls" and their situation in "patriarchal families" in Sweden. The murders were defined as "honour killings" and related to "honour cultures" as practiced in "traditional" and "patriarchal" societies. The political consensus about how to understand this violence and the measures that need to be taken was broad and made into a major political issue, and the then Social Democratic government decided to set aside 180 million Swedish Kronor to deal with this violence in the period 2003–2007.[1] The political priority given to "honour-related" violence has resulted in intensive efforts to counter this violence on both policy level and practice level. From a point where "honour" violence and "culture of honour" were unknown as concept and phenomenon they are now, a decade later, both legitimised and institutionalised as problem categories in various welfare institutions (Carbin 2010; Hanberger et al. 2008). A number of institutions have been given the responsibility to identify and combat "honour-related" violence and the school is one of them (see e.g. Länsstyrelsen Östergötlands län 2004; Länsstyrelsen Södermanlands län 2005; Länsstyrelsen Västmanlands län 2006). This article draws attention to these efforts and the school's ambitions to prevent and deal with "honour" violence.

Most children and young people spend a considerable time of their lives at school, so it is hardly surprising that the school system has been identified as an important institution for discovering and countering "honour-related" violence. Huge efforts have been made to educate school personnel about this violence and the National Agency for Schools has developed information materials about "honour".[2] There is no doubt that the school staff has taken this mission seriously. However, it is not only important *that* the school is

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acting when pupils are exposed to threats and violence in the family, equally important is *how* the school is acting in these situations. The how issue is important because it highlights how individual students and parents, as well as groups of students and parents are made subjects of the school's efforts against "honour-related" violence. Central questions for the analysis in this text are: How does school staff understand "honour-related" violence? How do they attend to and handle this violence? And with what consequences?

Given the important task to take action against "honour violence" and the central role that schools have for many of society's children and young people and their parents, it will be important to critically investigate how this institution and its professionals are dealing with this. Nevertheless, the lack of such studies is striking. Critical research available within the field in Sweden and other Nordic countries has so far chiefly studied media debates and political debates about "honour violence". For example, analyses of the concept of culture and how it is used in the debate on "honour violence" (León Rosales 2005) and how the murder of Fadime Sahindal, one of the above-mentioned killings, was given attention and gave rise to a "media event" (Reimers 2005). This debate is also one of Stefan Jonsson's (2004) empirical starting points for an analysis of how the idea of universal values and value conflicts is the basis for a new racist discourse in Sweden. Suvi Keskinen (2009) in her turn has analysed the public debate on "honour-related" violence in the Nordic countries. Maria Carbin (2010) has conducted a comprehensive analysis of the political debate in Sweden that followed the current killings, based on reports and manuals on "honour-related" violence. There is also some critical research about those who are exposed to this violence (Darvishpour 2006; de los Reyes 2003) and those who are presumed to be exposed to it (Barzoo 2010). But aside from single studies on social workers' response to "honour" violence (Sjöblom 2006), and how the school handles requests for exemptions from compulsory education, based on assumptions about "honour" norms (Högdin 2007), knowledge is limited about how professionals in different institutions take action against this violence. The study presented in this text is based on field studies in the school and will contribute with knowledge about how "honour-related" violence is handled in one of society's key institutions. It can thus be said to fill a gap in the Swedish research on "honour-related" violence.

Results from the above-mentioned research demonstrate that there is a problematic discourse in media and in policy documents, which normalises "honour-related" violence as common in some cultures, that is, in "traditional" and "patriarchal" cultures. Migrant men are represented as violent in this discourse, while migrant women are represented as oppressed by their men and as victims of this violence. Thus it shows "Swedish" men and women not only as modern and equal in their relationships, but also "Swedish" men's violence against women remains invisible. Important contributions from these studies are also the analyses of how nation and gender are constructed in relation to "honour-related" violence and "Swedish" gender equality (see also Eduards 2007). This study confirms a lot of these earlier analyses. The main ambition with this text is not, however, to develop the analytical points, the aim is rather to use empirical examples to highlight the school's social practice concerning efforts against "honour" violence. I will address how ideas of nation and gender permeate the school staff's efforts to tackle "honour-related" violence in speech and action. The strength of this presentation is thus its empirical observations. The scrutiny of this practice also raises questions concerning how the massive production of policy on "honour-related" violence, in contrast to its intentions, appears to have created uncertainty among school personnel, who begin to doubt their own judgements.

2 Schools and national education

Scholars have emphasised that the school system is not just a place of knowledge transmission; the school is also an institution that conveys specific norms and values, not least national ones. Michael Billig (1995) has for instance, pointed out that the school system reproduces "banal nationalism" through everyday learning processes and routines. In the Swedish case the education for national solidarity and unity has mainly been of importance after the break with the catechism school system at the beginning of the 20th century (Linné 2001). Since then, the "nation" and "the people" have been central in the school's fostering of future citizens (Linné 2001; Tallberg Broman et al. 2002). During the Second World War period, when the nation's borders were under threat, the promotion of national identity was strengthened in order to safeguard national solidarity and national heritage (Linné 2001). In addition to European values national values were once again given a strong position in the school curriculum from 1994 (Lpo 94), with a value system founded on "Christian ethics and western humanism" (Hedin & Lahdenperä 2000; Sawyer & Kamali 2006).[3] Furthermore, ethnographic studies have demonstrated how the nation is reproduced by way of organizing school activities, and in teachers' interactions with students; that conceptions of the nation and "Swedishness" produce various categories of students and citizens (see e.g. Gruber 2007; Lahdenperä 1997; Parszyk 1999; Runfors 2003). Other studies have shown how educational material contains pictures and descriptions of alien and traditional "others", producing self-images of a "Swedish" and "modern we" (see e.g. Ajagán-Lester 2000; Eilard 2008; Skolinspektionen 2011). In short, the school emerges as a central mediator of ideas about national identity and community, and in this article I will argue that such training to "Swedishness" integrates into the school's actions against "honour-related" violence. In other words, I assert that the school's measures against this violence also reflect a historical continuity of educating national citizens.

It is important to remember, however, that ideas of national community and identity are not limited to the school system; nationalism is rather something built into the Nordic welfare model and hence its institutions (de los Reyes et al. 2003; Eriksson 2006; Gullestad 2002).

3 Theoretical points of departure

A theoretical point of departure for the analysis is that nations are "imagined communities" (Anderson 1993), based on notions of shared history, politics, culture, and values. Lisa Malki's (1992) description of our time as characterised by notions of a "national order of things" captures how the nation and its boundaries have become so obvious that they often are beyond critical reflections (see also Hylland Eriksen 1993). And as Ernest Gellner (1997) clearly has pointed out, nations are created by nationalistic ideologies, not vice versa. What is important for the analysis is that nationalistic ideas locate people in specific places and cultures and that people are assumed to belong to a nation. Nationalistic ideas thus differentiate and maintain the social world in a "we and them", where "the others" are linked to differences.

Traditional theories about nations and nationalism have rarely problematised gender. An analysis of nationalist ideas and how these produce different identities and practices requires, however, a gender perspective. I join feminist scholars who have emphasised the importance of gender and sexuality in such analysis, and established that nationalism and constructions of gender are intimately linked to each other (see e.g. de los Reyes et al. 2003; Eduards 2007; Lutz et al. 1995; Yuval-Davis 2000). Constructions of the nation rest, as these scholars pointed out, on a particular masculinity and femininity, where women are assigned responsibility for biological and cultural reproduction, whereas men are assigned responsibility for defending the nation against external threats. Thus, men and women are given different tasks when the nation is to be protected; men deal with weapons to defend the nation and women give birth to secure it. Protection and violence constitute therefore important themes in all nationalist ideologies, but women risk being exploited in both cases since their bodies become the object of both struggle and violence (Lutz et al. 1995; Yuval-Davis 2000).

National identities as described above are based on certain constructions of both gender and ethnicity, differentiating men and women, "Swedes" and "the other". These theories provide tools to show how the school in its attempts to combat "honour-related" violence not only fosters a national community, but also shapes and maintains different national identities and categories.

4 Field study and empirical material

The analysis in this article is based on an ethnographic study conducted during 2005–2006 in the county of Östergötland.[4] The county administrative board of Östergötland is characterised by its activity and involvement in issues related to "honour-related" violence, and since 2005 also by a national mission to support preventive projects against this violence (see also Carbin 2010). In consequence a number of measures, written policies, and training for staff in various welfare institutions have been implemented in this county.[5]

The field study includes interviews and participant observations. The interviews comprise group or individual interviews with 26 student welfare staff working at 13 different compulsory and secondary schools.[6] All interviews are tape-recorded. Interview excerpts presented in this text are however slightly edited for the convenience of the reader. The participant observations have been conducted at three training days and one network meeting concerning "honour-related" violence and are documented as notes. The observations have mainly given me an opportunity to listen to lectures and discussions and to talk informally with current participants. In addition, I have also taken note of the various policy documents, primarily national and regional policy documents and guidelines.[7]

Most of the student welfare staff whom I interviewed had either participated or planned to participate in trainings about "honour-related" violence. They also had access to the handbook about "honour-related" violence produced by the county administrative board in Östergötland (Länsstyrelsen Östergötland 2004), and often referred to this text during the interviews. Some informants had encountered pupils who have been victims of this violence. Others had no such experience, their knowledge of "honour-related" violence primarily derived from courses they attended and from media's reporting of this violence. Despite this discrepancy, regarding past experience, a majority of the informants spoke about "honour-related" violence, its causes and symptoms, and how it should be addressed in a rather informed way. Their statements are, regardless of former experiences, remarkably similar and consistent. However, the character of these statements is perhaps not very surprising given the enormous attention that was given to "honour-related" violence at this time. Politicians, journalists, commentators, and officials created a pressure on school staff to do the "right" thing in order to prevent further threats and violence against "immigrant girls". "Think about if one of our girls would be murdered as Fadime", as a student carer put it with jumpy voice during an interview.

The informants' concern about "immigrant" girls is often expressed as a fear for not discovering when girls are victims of "honour" oppression in the family. Given this situation, is it hardly surprising that during the interviews I sometimes got the feeling that I was seen as a kind of inspector, with mission to check the schools' knowledge and actions with regard to "honour-related" violence. My lasting impression is that some informants perceived my study as a kind of control of their action against "honour-related" violence and oppression, this despite the fact that I thoroughly explained the purpose of the study and also my role as researcher. Some apologised that they not had developed their work with this violence, others hesitated to participate in the study. Comments like "We have not yet had a perfect (klockrent in Swedish) case at our school", or "We have not had any typical cases", demonstrate the doubt expressed and the unambiguous understanding of the violence. Comments like these also suggest that the study was seen as a further confirmation of the importance of paying attention to and combatting "honour-related" violence, and that I was yet another of many with an interest

in how the school handles this violence. In the next section I will show how "honour-related" violence is localised globally, nationally, and locally in various efforts and how this violence is separated from "Swedishness".

5 This violence is not Swedish

"It should be self-evident, but it isn't always, there are patriarchal family systems where girls are not allowed to make decisions about their own lives". With these words the lecturer began a study day for secondary teachers, where I attended as a participant observer. She presented an overhead slide with the title "The right to a life of one's own" and continued "honour-related violence is about deep cultural traditions of honour, in which the girl is not seen as a victim but as having committed a crime for which she must be punished in order for honour to be restored". The silence in the room signalled a concentrated listening from the audience; the lecturer looked at us with a serious glance and said, "This is a culture that has come to Sweden, it should not be here, but it is, and this violence is like no other violence".

The speaker's argument reflects a typical way to talk about "honour violence", which is repeated on training days and in interviews with the student welfare staff. It singles out "honour-related" violence as something that does not belong in the Swedish society. This reasoning is also in line with the definition of "honour-related" violence that is presented in the handbook developed by the County of Östergötland:

> Honour-related oppression and honour-related violence are found in clans in a patriarchal social system. The individual is subordinate to the group, which owns and assumes the final responsibility for honour and shame. The honour of the men and the group is here directly dependent upon the actual and alleged behaviours and relationships of the female group members. The concrete oppression and violence is most often carried out by a man who has a close relationship with the victim, who is most commonly a girl or a young woman. Other women who have a close relationship with the victim may directly or indirectly support the oppression, which is openly supported by the approval of the collective. The system also makes victims of the perpetrators. [Länsstyrelsen Östergötland 2004]

The definition includes central concepts and terms that build up the arguments concerning "honour-related" violence: patriarchal social system, honour, oppression, individual, and collective. These words indicate a difference that makes it clear that this violence is not in tune with Swedish norms and values and cannot be attributed to "Swedish" men and women. The wording clarifies rather that it is about "the other" men and women. To put it another way, the definition is intended for a "Swedish" reader to explain central mechanisms in "the others" violence. The text is thus not intended as a text or information for "the others", it speaks to the Swedish school staff. The vocabulary is strong and emotionally charged, both in the definition from the county administrative board and in the lecturer's arguments, and this conveys seriousness and drama. Its message is clear, this violence is a matter of life and death.

The student welfare staff whom I interviewed told me that "honour-related" violence and oppression is practiced in specific cultures, and these cultures were defined in relation to nations and national borders. Countries usually mentioned were: Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Syria, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Somalia, and Pakistan. "This is a bit controversial, of course," as one of the student welfare staff commented after she had listed the countries, "but we have learned that it primarily occurs in these cultures, you'll also find them in the county administrative board's handbook," she explained a little apologetically. Just as the comment suggests, there is some scepticism to generalise the violence in this way. But in contexts that are signified by a desire to clarify the origin of "honour-related" violence the handbook seems to serve as a primary source. This way of associating specific geographic locations and areas with "honour" violence can with the help of Maria Carbin (2010) be understood as a consequence of what she has clarified as a politics of "geographical sorting".

But if "cultures of honour" to begin with are localised to geographically distant locations they are now even in "our country", as the lecturer put it. That is, "honour cultures" are perceived as having moved and spread to Sweden by immigrants, but not just anywhere in Sweden or the whole of Sweden, but to specific locations. The thinking can be illustrated by the next quote from a student welfare staff:

> In order to be here in this municipality, I think our catchment area has a fairly high proportion of people with different ethnic backgrounds, so we ought to have a few cases. Although when I think about it, I think we're fairly unprepared. If anything like this were to happen in Rinkeby, or in Rosengård for that matter, people are probably better prepared, because there this is something that does happen of course.[8] Do you see what I mean? If we compare in percentage terms, then there's a big difference between the number of immigrants living in Rinkeby and the number living in this municipality. And that of course means a difference in how well-prepared you are, but if it should happen then of course we wouldn't just sit about with our arms folded; absolutely not.

This quote illustrates that the prevalence of "honour" violence and repression is localised and limited to specific places and spaces even in Sweden, more precisely to places with large numbers of "immigrant" residents. According to this the number of "immigrants" is fairly critical to the extent to which the individual school develops a capacity to identify and take measures to combat "honour violence". You could say that the level of involvement in the issue of "honour violence" appears to be based on a "mathematical logic" (Dahlstedt 2005), where the number of "immigrant students" will be governing

for the action taken. In line with previous research showing that "the suburb" is an important symbol of the "non-Swedish" (Dahlstedt 2005; Ericsson 2007; Ristilammi 1994), the "immigrant-dense suburb" appears as an unwanted feature of the Swedish nation even in this discourse of "honour-related" violence. The violence is thus linked to the suburb and its residents who are not perceived to be a part of Sweden.

The empirical data show that "honour cultures" and "honour" violence are located in specific and limited geographic areas, globally as well as nationally and locally, which separate them from the "Swedish" society. Paulina de los Reyes (2003) has called these locations "patriarchal enclaves", which captures both their delimitation and distribution in the geographical space. Despite the fact that the violence exists and is practiced in Sweden it is seen as an alien feature in the nation. These ideas are also reflected in comments that claim that "honour-related" violence is a "special" kind of violence and not comparable with any other violence. A perception that is repeated is that "honour-related" violence is more brutal than Swedish men's violence against women and that this violence is accepted within the group. The following quote from an interview gives an example of this reasoning:

> Of course a great many girls are victimised in all social classes. Violence against women is terrible! But it's still not as systematic or backed up by the group, and you can never get the same level of support for it as you can when it's honour-related. You can't compare it in the same way as people try to in the public debate. Sure, there are many thousands of women being beaten black and blue every day, but it's not the same. Those men are ashamed of what they've done and they don't go out and say: now I've beaten the missus. But that's what these men do, and there's a tradition that says that you can do so, and that you'll get support for doing so. I mean of course it's complicated, but … I don't know.

Although the concluding "I don't know" suggests a doubt, the statement illustrates how "honour-related" violence is constructed as institutionalised violence. That is, the violence is normalised and collectively accepted by "the others". "Swedish" men's violence against women in contrast is portrayed as an individualised violence, with no support among the population and decoupled from the "Swedes" as a group. I return to the interview to follow this reasoning to its end:

> These men who have a need to exert control and who engage in psychopathic behaviours, they're quite alone in the way they are. Honour violence on the other hand is about a culture and a way of looking at things.

Although it is about gender-related violence in both cases, where girls and women are subjected to control, threats, and violence by men, "Swedish" men's violence against women is not regarded as an expression of a culture that makes violence possible. "Swedish" men's violence is viewed as expressions of individual deviance, perpetrated by specific men, while violence perpetrated by foreign and immigrant men is understood as linked to their collective.

The student welfare staff spoke not in terms of "child abuse", yet their stories of "honour violence" are almost exclusively about children and teenagers below 18 years. Instead of reflecting on the fact that all violence to which children are subjected should reasonably be regarded as child abuse, "honour-related" violence is compared with adult "Swedish" men's violence against adult women.

In consequence the categorisation of violence differs, dependent on whether the victim and perpetrator are identified as "Swedish" or as "immigrant". This distinction – to link "honour-related" violence and oppression to "immigrant girls", "immigrant boys", and "immigrant parents" – characterises also the organization of measures against violence. School staff was sent to specific training days focused on "honour-related" violence – not courses on abuse and violence against children that also include "honour-related" violence – and they worked with the guidance of action plans particularly intended for "honour-related" violence and oppression, with specific measures to combat this specific violence. Threats and violence against children are thus not a common concern for school personnel, parents, or students. It is a matter of specific groups. Below, I continue to discuss how efforts to handle "honour-related" violence and oppression are intertwined with ideas about national values.

6 On the barricades for our values

Along with several hundred participants from schools, social services, the police, and the primary care sector, I attended as participant observer on a training day on "honour-related" violence. The training was arranged by the county administrative board of Östergötland and the lecturers, who represented several agencies and organisations, were presented as experts on "honour" violence. I identified all of these experts as "Swedes". With a voice that conveyed commitment and authority one of these lecturers, working as school counsellor, told an emotionally charged narrative of his encounters with girls exposed to "honour-related" violence. But the presentation was not just focused on the violence that girls and young women with certain cultural backgrounds are subjected to by male family members and how to handle this, it was also framed by a message about the values that "our" society is based on, and the threats that now were directed towards "our" values and the need to defend them. The following field note reflects the beginning of the lecture:

> I have worked for many years with girls and boys who have problems with people close to them who think that honour is more important than safeguarding individuals' human rights. It is about a form of oppression that is directed at the girls' human rights. It is an attack against the right of individuals to grow up as free people in society, and it flies in the face of values that are deeply rooted in our society. It is an attack against the

> convention on the rights of the child, the UN charter on human rights, and the right of women to sexual equality.

Towards the end of the lecture, he summarised his message as follows:

> Sure, it may feel hopeless and difficult sometimes to work with these questions [refers to "honour-related" violence], perhaps you have also felt this way sometimes. But when you feel that way, think of the fact that you are standing on the barricades to protect the human rights. I usually think so, and then it's not as hopeless. Think of the fact that you are standing on the barricades for human rights.

In the brief silence before a big ovation broke out, I heard the woman next to me whisper a "yes" in agreement.

It is hard to escape the military language used in the quotations above. Words such as barricades, attacking, and protecting say that something is at stake, that there is a war in which "our" values are under threat and must be defended. Efforts to combat "honour-related" violence are woven together with a defence of values belonging to "us". This is also shown by Stefan Jonsson's (2004) analysis of the debate that followed the murder of Fadime Sahindal. Those who are not part of "us" are portrayed as if they do not share universal values with "us" and have not even contributed to the development of human rights and gender equality. They are rather represented as threats to these values. The reasoning constructs a conflict between civilised "Swedes" and cultural "others", whose culture does not fit into "our" civilisation (Razack 2000). That is to say, "the others" are attributed to cultures whose values cannot be accepted by "us".

This conflict line is a recurrent theme in my interviews with the student welfare staff, which emphasise the importance of conveying that "we live in a democratic society" and that "they must accept our school system, our way of life, and our norms". "We can't just give up what we have struggled to achieve" as a third student carer argued. Comments like these demonstrate that the school's work is not solely limited to take action against the violence, they also underline the importance of combating backward cultures and the problematic values attributed to these. "Otherwise nothing will change," as someone put it.

The threat to "our" democracy and equality is thus perceived to require more extensive efforts then just action against the specific violence; it requires a civilisation of "the others". One expression of this are the action plans that the school uses to inform "immigrant parents" that it is not allowed to expose their children to "honour related" oppression or violence. The action plans stress frequently the importance of democracy, human rights, and sexual equality. The following points, taken from one of the plans I have read, give a typical illustration of this:

- Providing safety for the student.
- Working with sexual equality and human rights.
- Having a dialogue about the fundamental values that form the basis of life in our society.
- Strengthening the student's self-esteem.
- Recreating at an early stage a relationship of trust between student and parents in order to prevent the girl being subjected to crimes against her human rights

It is worth noting that only the last point contains measures designed to direct action to protect girls from violence. All points before stress the importance of measures concerning equal gender relations, human rights, and fundamental values in our society. Even if other parts of the current action plan describe various steps to be taken when a student is exposed to "honour-related" violence or oppression, these points illustrate how the efforts against the violence are intimately linked to enlighten and teach "the others" about "our values". The items in the action plan are like a checklist of values that need to be communicated and taught to pupils and parents.

As other researchers noted before me, concepts such as (sexual) oppression and democracy seem to be given a clearer focus and regarded as ideal categories in relation to men and women who have an immigrant background (see e.g. Eduards 2007; Wikström 2007). Neither does the need for information and training seem to be unique for contexts related to "honour-related" violence. To be more explicit and informative regarding school rules is a common approach to correct what is assumed to be a lack of knowledge among parents of immigrant background (Granstedt 2006). The very idea that these parents are different seems to legitimise this approach from the school's staff (Mulinari 2007).

The general approach that characterises the points I just mentioned, which rather problematises a group of students and parents than specific events and conditions, is also found in other measures against "honour-related" violence and oppression, for example, when the school staff in context of parent–teacher meetings provides information about human rights and especially girls' right to control their own body, or are planning to distribute written information in different native language about laws and conventions related to children's rights and parental responsibilities. The school is thus represented as a self-evident democratic institution and a meeting with the Swedish school system is seen as a first encounter with democratic values for students with migrant background. The next quote gives an illustration of this idea:

> I mean it becomes much more tragic for them when they come to Sweden. The girl maybe spends six, seven, eight hours a day in school and reads about social studies and the democratic value base. She listens and learns a great deal, and then an imbalance emerges between her and her parents. The girl in Kurdistan doesn't know what democracy means, she doesn't have the knowledge that Swedish girls possess.

This statement from one student welfare staff gives a picture of how students with migrant backgrounds are assumed to lack

knowledge and previous experience of democracy, that they are like blank cards in this respect when they arrive in Sweden. Their entry into the Swedish school system is described as the first socialisation to basic democratic values. The reasoning also suggests that these new experiences are a bigger problem for girls than boys. "Immigrant" girls but not boys are torn between the various values conveyed by the school and family, and these aspects will be put in focus in next section.

7 Our girls and patriarchal boys

In the following I will shed light on how students are positioned in the "Swedish" community and how gender is a central aspect for these positionings. With support from interview excerpts I start discussing how boys, who are brought together with a background in "honour" cultures, are portrayed as problematic individuals.

> Gunilla: I think about these boys, the brothers of these girls. I wouldn't say that I know, but just feeling like. They adopt the behaviour that they would have had in their homeland and they have their freedom and they're strict with their sisters. I mean they ought to have seen what it's like in Swedish society and to have eased on that.
>
> Marie: At the same time they're so … they live free [in Swedish: lever loppan] and they meet Swedish girls and so on. But it would never occur to them to get married to a Swedish girl.
>
> Monika: And they get a lot out of all this, they get their clothes washed for them and food on the table.
>
> Gunilla: I mean it's [inaudible, all three talking at the same time]. If they don't change, when will it ever change, because they're the ones who are carrying on the tradition.
>
> Monika: Yes, absolutely!
>
> Gunilla: That's what I mean.

The conversation about the "brothers" is about boys and young men who are ascribed "honour" traditions, according to the student welfare staff they do not change; they cling to their traditions and values from the "homeland". The problem that is singled out is that these boys do not adapt to "Swedish" norms for gender relations. A bit later in the conversation one of the informants claimed that these boys' views on gender relations are now spreading to the "Swedish" youth:

> Marie: I think that for a while now it's been a bit like that the woman should please the man. That it's the man who makes decisions and that he's worth more. Particularly among the younger guys and girls it's been tolerated.
>
> Sabine: Why do you think that is?
>
> Marie: In part I can imagine that they [referring to "Swedish" boys] pick it up from their mates who come from other countries. In other countries this is full on, and then of course we have all these American series, and what aren't things like in the USA, if you travel across the Atlantic.

Boys and young men associated with "honour" traditions emerge as the most challenging and provocative individuals in the discussion above. They are described as oppressors of their sisters, that they exploit "Swedish" girls and that they influence "Swedish" guys to a traditional attitude towards girls and women. In short, they are attributed a patriarchal behaviour that is incompatible with norms for "Swedish" gender equality and this makes them objects for corrective measures.

One such corrective action that occurred in several of the schools are so-called "boys-only groups" (in Swedish: killgrupper) for boys with an immigrant background, to teach these boys the "Swedish" approach to gender relations. Although some informants are in doubt of the possibility of changing the current generation of boys and young men, their opinion is that the groups are of importance for the next generation of young men, that those boys who attend boys-only groups will hopefully provide their children with values other than those which they themselves have grown up with. The importance of such groups was also stressed at the training days that I attended.

Unlike the boys the girls are perceived as more changeable. With understanding and empathy in the voice the student welfare staff spoke about the girls as either freedom fighters – that they stood up for their rights – or in need of support in order to liberate themselves from the family's "honour" traditions. The schools also arranged girls-only groups for girls with "immigrant" background. But in contrast to the boys-only group's corrective framing, the girls-only groups are more supportive in their approach. The overall aim of these groups was to raise the girls' awareness about their rights, for example, the right to choose one partner and that it is not permissible for parents in Sweden to make this choice. Another ambition was to create a forum for girls, where they could feel safe and talk about possible "honour-related" conflicts in the family. The approach was described as preventative by lecturers and student welfare staff, with ambition to "capture girls who live in families with honour norms at an early stage", and take action. However, the criterion for joining the group was primarily the girls' ethnic and national background, not a suspicion of actual on-going "honour" conflicts in the family. With project support from the county board one school for example arranged a girls-only group for girls with a "non-Nordic background".

Comments from student welfare staff like "We must work for human rights together with the girls" reinforces the image of how the girls, unlike the boys, seem to be welcome in the school's "Swedish us". There are no statements about "our boys" in my material, but a number where the informants speak of "our girls". This idea is also in

line with the fact that the school is represented as a free zone for girls. In guidelines from the national school board the school is described as an "oasis", which offers "a life outside the family" (Myndigheten för skolutveckling 2007:5). Even the following field note shows how the school was presented as a free zone, this time by a lecturer at a study day:

> When girls are absent or play truant, do not immediately contact the parents. It may be that they use the free zone the school provides them, to socialize with other peers and the other sex. And dear friends, if you had to go home directly after school and could not walk and take a coffee with your sweetheart, what is left to do? This is something that most girls in this country will never have to experience. Do not call home directly! She might use her free zone. Talk to the girl instead!

The next interview excerpt provides yet another illustration of how this free zone takes shape in everyday school practice.

> Lena: Several, I mean that's what we've seen here, that there are girls who take time from school because perhaps it's the only time they have to be together with friends and can go out for a coffee and so on.
>
> Sabine: Mm.
>
> Lena: Because otherwise … the parents know exactly what time they finish and how long it takes them to get home.
>
> Kajsa: And it's true of the adults too, of course, then it's the husband who knows.
>
> Sabine: Yes.
>
> Kajsa: And they check and ring, then we can put up some homework. We've done that a few times, added it to the timetable.
>
> Sabine: Mm.
>
> Kajsa: So that the timetable becomes a bit longer, but also to get them to do their homework [laughs].

The need to see and discover girls who are exposed for "honour" oppression or "honour" violence is underlined not only by the student welfare staff, it is even emphasised in different guidelines. The manuals often contain a list of so-called observation points, which school staff can use for judging a girl's (or boy's) situation; if they are exposed to "honour-related" traditions or oppression in the family. However, in everyday practice it was felt difficult to determine which girls might be exposed. The informants described for me how they try to "sniff" (in Swedish: luska) or "question a bit cautiously" when they meet girls with background from countries that are usually associated with "honour" cultures. One such opportunity to "sniff" a bit was offered in connection with the girls' health talks with the schools' health care. But as the following interview excerpt shows, these talks are also used for another type of issue about "honour" violence:

> Sometimes when I ask a student, who I know lives in a normal family, I ask gently, "do you know, do you know if this is the way in your culture" [referring to "honour" violence]. "No, it's not", they answer with timid voice. It's hard, I do not know at all if they know this, they might not have any experience of it.

The statement suggests a hope that the girl has something to tell about the violence or culture, that she can convey any experiences that might be useful in efforts against the violence. Besides, the uncertainty that is reflected from the student welfare staff demonstrates this affidavit that the girls, whether they are exposed to violence or not, are the centre of attention. That is, the attention that is given to the girls is vitiated by the "culture of honour" and "honour" violence. Given their geographical and national background they are seen as girls from "honour" cultures. Better put, the girls end up in a "pathologising presence" (Burman et al. 2004), which means that the violence is perceived as part of the girls' daily life to such an extent that it will have a stigmatising effect on the girls, their families, and their ethnic group. That the girls are subject to an intrusive and intensive attention is also evident from the student welfare staff's somewhat indignant comments about how the girls express their femininity; too much make-up, clothes that are too tight, or when the girls "show too much of their bodies", as somebody put it. During the interviews discussions also occurred about whether a particular girl had a boyfriend or not. Comments like these prove how the girls were observed by school personnel; when they came to school, when they walked in the corridors, who they socialized with, and that there was talk about them.

The free zone the school is asked to be and also strives to be is thus not unequivocal, the school emerges also as a control zone, and in both cases the girls are put at the centre of attention. Better put, it is the girls' bodies that are in focus and controlled; how they behave with their bodies, what they do, what they signals with their bodies, and so forth. The girls' position in the Swedish community is not nearly as unambiguous as the boys, who were not considered to qualify and fit into "Swedishness". Their position is rather ambiguous on the border between "the Swedes" and "the others", where they become the object of both protection and control.

The analysis makes it clear that gender is of central significance for how students are positioned in relation to the national community. While "immigrant boys" are very much an object for correction and "Swedish" girls are viewed as ideal and as role models for "immigrant girls", "Swedish" boys are almost invisible in the material. Besides being discussed in comparisons of different categories of violence, their absence from the discussions is striking. As scholars (Eriksson 2006) noted before, the combinations "Swedish" and "patriarchal" and "immigrant" and "gender equal" seem to be quite unthinkable, and according to my material they appear to be unthinkable even for school staff.

8 In the name of action against "honour-related" violence

In this article I have examined how the school's efforts against "honour-related" violence and oppression had developed a few years into the 2000s, after a period of extensive political attention, policy work, and media debate. With support of empirical examples and illustrations I have discussed how these efforts are permeated by notions of a national community and "Swedishness". The analysis shows that violence in the family and intimate relationships is not made into a common problem for the school's students, but rather into a concern for different groups. That is, violence is categorised, interpreted, and dealt with in different ways, depending on the student's and parents' ethnic background. Consequently "honour-related" violence is attributed to "the others" and thus not seen as a problem for the "Swedish" students and parents. Put another way, "Swedish" parents' violence against children is not represented as an expression of patriarchal oppression.

A key finding from the study is that the school's efforts against "honour-related" violence and oppression are not restricted to the important task of combating the violence and actual events where students are exposed to threats and violence. As is shown in the analysis the efforts against this violence have developed into a larger project, with focus on conveying and defending "Swedish" values. This project is, however, quite in line with the school's mission to foster national citizens and cannot be identified or described as a new phenomenon. On the contrary, there is a long historical continuity in school to have and take responsibility for educating students as citizens in a national community, and this mission seems even to have been strengthened in recent curriculums. It is therefore more relevant to talk in terms of a familiar phenomenon that emerges in a new guise. As with previous research my study shows that the school's national education works as a tool for inclusion and exclusion. That is, actions that are designed to protect and assist students who are victims of "honour-related" oppression or violence become also tools for a sorting, whereby students and parents are excluded or included in the national community. The school's measures against "honour-related" violence is thus part of a arrangement that draw boundaries between "us" and "the other", between "here" and "there" and between the "gender equal" and the "patriarchal". The uncertainty that is exposed in part of the student welfare staff's reasoning, that they are unsure of how to act or find it difficult to determine what is "honour-based" violence and oppression and what is not, seems even to strengthen the nationalist content in the school's action against the violence. And instead of relying on past experiences and their own assessments, they tend to lean towards problematic guidelines to do the "right" thing.

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Notes

1. 180 million Swedish kronor is approximately 18 million Euros. The Centre-Right Alliance government completed the programme when it came to power in 2006 and has allocated a further 70 million Swedish kronor to promote measures against "honour-related" violence and oppression.
2. The Agency for School Improvement has for example developed a book box with the title Honour Words (Myndigheten för skolutveckling 2007), material that provides guidance for the school's work with "honour-related" violence.
3. Recently, 1 July 2011, a revised curriculum has been implemented, but it is not included in the analysis. However the wording "Christian tradition and Western humanism" remains in the new curriculum. And in one sentence about values that schools should communicate and gain support for the word "Swedish" has been added, so that it now explicitly says "which Swedish society rests on" (Lgr 2011:7).
4. Sweden is divided into 21 counties, each with a county administrative board. The county board functions as a link between on the one hand municipal local authorities and on the other the government, parliament, and national public sector agencies. See: http://www.lansstyrelsen.se
5. An illustration of this intense activity is that the county board in Östergötland in 2007 arranged 53 courses all over the country for staff in schools, social services, health services, and police (Brottsförebyggande rådet 2010).
6. The term "student welfare staff" refers to those staff categories with a responsibility for student welfare at school. The interview material primarily includes school nurses and welfare officers, but also a number of psychologists, directors of studies, special needs teachers, speech therapists, and teachers of "non-Swedish students'" mother tongues.

7. The reviewed policy documents and guidelines are:
8. County Board Östergötland: handbook Om våld I hederns namn (2004, 2008), guidelines Metodboken: JAG (2005), Att utveckla en handlingsplan i skolan (2008), Att jobba med föräldrar (2009). National Agency for School: book box Hedersord (2007).
9. Rinkeby and Rosengård are suburbs of Stockholm and Malmö respectively, which often become the focus of attention both in the media and political debate. And also in research contexts, where they are characterised as ”immigrant-dense” and high-problem areas.

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