Honor Officers

- A qualitative study of the Kurdish police work against honor related violence
Abstract

This essay examines how the Kurdish police department are working against so called “honour crimes”. Through my investigation I try to examine and analyse positive and negative aspects of the policework in this field of crimes. The focus of analyse are the problems arising in policework connected to Iraqi and Kurdish laws, social and cultural structures and attitudes in the kurdish society. Attitudes within the policeforce are also examined and analysed. This is done to find out if, or how, attitudes towards women and/or the idea of honour, affect the policework against honour crimes. And also how it affects the ways in which individual policemen finds ways to help threatened women.

I have interviewed policemen and others working against honour crimes in two different units of the policedepartement within the Kurdish part of Iraq, in the city of Suleymania. The material from the interviews have been examined and analysed to help answer questions raised in the essay. The essay is based on a feminist socialist view of society as a powerstructure thoroughly connected to genderdifferences. The feminist theory is used as the core theoretical view implicated and used in analysing the results of this essay.
Foreword

My warmest thanks to each of you who I have met and interviewed within polices, and other authorities in Iraqi Kurdistan.

My paper deals with honor related violence in the Kurdish society, and deals primarily with the police’s work in this sensitive field.

I am extremely grateful for all the help I’ve got from those who have not been interviewed but in different ways have been involved and helped with what I needed, personnel at the Ministry of Domestic Affairs and personnel at other authorities collecting data.

Thanks to those who were helpful at the University of Sulaymaniyah.

Big thanks to my best friend Susan Lundgren, who helped me to structure my essay and gave me good advice and guidance to focus on what was important. She meant a lot to me during the stress that I and all other students share when we write our first paper.

Thanks to my family who stuck it out for two months while I was away and wrote this essay.

Once again, thank you all

Reiga Svensson

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Summary

For two months, in the spring of 2011, I lived in the city of Sulaymaniyah in northern Iraq and carried out a study of the local police authority’s work against honor related violence. The study aimed to increase knowledge of the police authority's work and examine how attitudes concerning honor impact on the police work. In order to obtain material for the study I conducted interviews, collected the data, reviewed the literature and previous research.

I interviewed four people who worked at two different units within the police. An interviewee works as a lawyer. The lawyer in particular became an important informant as he had considerable knowledge of laws and the judiciary as well as insight into the police’s work. I found four central problem areas in the interview material, all linked to the Kurdish and Iraqi laws. Based on my research questions, an analysis of the interview material was performed, which could bring the problem areas together and demonstrate complex relationships between society, culture, politics and laws. The result of my analysis was not exclusively the most expected, but gave some unexpected conclusions too. Laws as well as attitudes are restricting police’s capabilities to help women exposed to honor violence, while individual police officers, and others, in reality finds ways to help and change - in spite of the obstacles and problems.

There is a very diverse view on honor and on the role of women in society in the police force. Many seems to hold a traditional, patriarchal, view of women, while others express a modern and even feminist approach to women's situation and subordination in society. Despite the dissent those people work within the same authority and help exposed women in different ways. It can be seen that the choice of methods and approaches used in the effort to combat honor-related violence can be linked to the attitudes of individual police officers and others working on this.

Through the interviews, I have received many statements from informants who believe that the effort to combat honor related violence is still perceived as new and that many resources are still lacking. The legislation is flawed and unclear, social services are missing, and more education is needed to increase knowhow of methods in police work. The shortcomings of the resources of the police mean that the work becomes very short term and limited, which means that trust for the police authority is not created. This probably affects the propensity to report crimes of honor – today the number of reports is low.
My study shown that there are many problems and that much is lacking within the Kurdish police authority’s work against honor violence. But it also shows that individuals can make a difference and provide the impetus for change.
1. Introduction

I have chosen to write about honor related violence as I've been working on this issue since about 20 years as an expert and I have helped many abused women to a better life and even to survive. I became interested in this in 1991 when it became known that many women were victims of honor violence in Iraqi Kurdistan. It started with a growing fear among women in the community as it was rumored that murders were carried out by guerrillas who accused the women of belonging to Saddam's regime. Soon it turned out that honor was the real reason for murders committed. What had been a family affair - the maintenance of honor kept within the family - became at this time a community affair. The whole Kurdish society was perceived as more hostile to women and the rights and opportunities, which after all had existed for women under Saddam's regime, was withdrawn with threats of violence and death. I thought it was unacceptable that anyone should be killed because they damaged the family honor and my involvement grew.

If we go back to before 1991, I have very few memories of women being killed for family honor. I remember hearing of only two women during my first 20 years of life, being deprived of life because of honor. In contrast, there was a law that gave the male family members the right to kill the daughter, wife or sister due to honor reasons. An explanation of the situation before 1991 was likely that there had been a development in the society for a long time with an increased educational level, and higher level of awareness among many women. If a couple who loved each other did not get the family's approval to marry, they could still go to court and get married during this time. Many were married in this way, without consequences, even though the relationship was not authorized by the family. The regime also carried out many reforms aiming to strengthen the position of women in society and in the family. Education was compulsory for both boys and girls, economically Iraq was a rich country, and some reforms were carried out that improved the family income and social welfare. I think the fear of being arrested for breaking the law by the police, which was subject to Saddam's government, made the honor violence decline during this period.

I've thought a lot about why the Kurdish society became so violent after 1991? And why did honor suddenly become so important to some families?

As a result of rebellion against the central power, bloody civil strife and persecution of dissidents, the institutions of society were merged and have largely not worked the past 20 years. That people start to think backwards, instead of forward, in terms of values and old
traditions and customs becoming more influential is not uncommon\(^1\). Religion also appears to have an increased influence and from 1991 onwards, various religious and fundamentalist directions has grown and become stronger in Kurdistan.

My commitment to women's human rights have followed me even to my new homeland Sweden where I got to experience the horror of honor killings taking place here - as in the cases Pela and Fadime. Even though Sweden has different laws and a totally different cultural climate than Kurdistan, honor is an important part of many families' lives, even in Sweden. I've thought a lot why this is so and why the same cruel violence can occur and recur in two such different contexts. I think the answer to this question is as complex as the question itself. For this paper, I chose to explore a small part of the whole issue of honor related violence – how the police authority in Kurdistan works against honor-related violence.

When I performed the work with my paper in the city of Sulaymania and especially when I was transcribing it, I realized that my informants have given me various distinct themes for my essay that was not planned from the beginning. All my informants talked about the four topics that I will analyze later in different ways and explained the importance of each one of them. The four themes that emerged from the interviews were new to me and I thought that I would definitely analyze them, both as a practical problem for the police and as focus in their work. According to the problem formulation I was looking for the difficulties in police work. This was a key when I want to check laws and regulations as a base for their work. Since I learned that the police are working to combat honor related violence, I immediately thought of the laws which I already knew of being obstacles. How can you work against honor where it is legal to commit the crime? Through the different framings of the questions I got knowledge and insight of use to the other parts of my study, that is, the coexistence of conflict between the old and new laws and that there is considerable lack of knowhow even within the police in how to work in a better way to save women's lives, and last but not least, I realized that the legal situation is unclear with regard to the ability to convict a person who has committed the offense.

**1.1 Purpose**

The purpose of this paper is to increase knowledge of how police authorities in Kurdistan are working with the problem of honor related violence.

\(^1\)Nasrin Zrar Qader, (2006). p.57
1.2 Problem
I want to examine how the police are working with honor related questions: What are the various difficulties and advantages the police face in their work, coupled with Iraqi society - laws, social strictures - and/or cultural structures and attitudes. I would also like to get a picture of attitudes the police concerning honor and if those affect the treatment of women seeking police help.

1.3 Issues
1. What methods do the police in Kurdistan use in its efforts to combat honor related violence?
2. What attitudes and beliefs about honor are found in the survey and how do the individual officers treat the help seeking women?
3. What prerequisites and obstacles exist for the police to help vulnerable women and how does it affect the result of police work?
2. Theoretical perspectives and previous research

2.1 Feminist Theory

My theoretical base derives from the perception of women's oppression and violence against women as part of a social structure. In other words, I do not derive it from the idea that acts of violence are carried out by individuals for various different reasons, such as individual men's psychological problems or the like. Violence is in this paper seen as part of a patriarchal power structure that is also intertwined with specific cultural values. The family's honor is central to the Kurdish society examined in the paper. Family honor is sustained through women's behavior governed by men, by the patriarchal power structure.

This study is placed within the borders of the tradition of feministic science. Patriarchal domination in society also naturalizes violence within the family. Carin Holmberg and Viveka Enander shows in their book how the patriarchal society's power structure affects individual women and their way of life. There are significant differences between the Kurdish and Swedish society in terms of legal rights for women. There is an awareness of the presence of differences in the power structure related to sex in Sweden and there are established strategies to combat men's violence against women. These strategies are generally absent in Kurdistan. However, there are similarities between the Swedish and Kurdish society in the way that there is a basic patriarchal power structure which makes the males superiors and females subordinates on many levels - which is also expressed within the family. The tradition of feminist science as a theoretic base can therefore be applied to studies of both the Swedish and Kurdish context.

2.2 The concept and phenomenon of 'honor'

Himdad Majid Ali raises in his book the concept of honor and explains the link with the Kurdish context.

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2 Varför går hon? 2004, p.12-16
3 Kushtn be Byanwy Namus, Himdad Marzani, p.27-32
'... honor is in the Kurdish society one of the most important traditions the patriarchy is required to maintain. But there is a double standard in the maintenance of honor (Sharaf) - the fine content of the concept that exists, disappears as it is only in the woman's life that family honor is marked and the place of honor is the woman's genital area'.

Himdad says that honor has become a burden to carry and maintain exclusively for women. The honor culture, if you want to name it so, that is, customs and traditions in society, has led to women having neither voice nor power, even at home. Furthermore, they liable for the family’s honor and protect its purity and for the whole family's sake, throughout their lives. Himdad also writes about the different meanings of the word of honor: there are cultural, political and moral meanings. To defend and preserve their (family's) honor in relation to the surrounding community / people, specifically by prohibiting all sexual acts outside marriage - that is honor as (socio-)moral principle. Thus this is not only about the individual but the morally honor related actions are part of the family and the honor of the entire family. Himdad believes that discussion of the cultural and political values of the honor concept began with the French Revolution. People then rebelled against the notion that people would be trapped in and oppressed by different values and practices originating in religion and tradition. The popular revolt led to major changes in legislation, which in turn led to "honor" beginning to be perceived as part of the private sphere.

### 2.3 Earlier Research

There are very limited data and previous research on honor violence and police work, focusing on honor crimes. This may be because it has been a tabooed subject and that these types of crimes in many cases been seen as problems within the family - in other words not reported or investigated in public. In recent years, work in various NGO’s (such as women’s shelters and human rights organizations) has successfully highlighted this problem and some research has begun.

After some searching I found a bit of research material about honor violence. Most central to my own study is a thesis of Himdad Marzani and a paper written by Nasrin Qader Zrar. Marzani compares in his thesis family laws in various Arabic-speaking countries which have a similar presentation of honor and with similar penalties for honor crimes, etc. He analyzes

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4 Himdad Marzani. p.34  
5 Himdad Marzani. p.64, 65  
6 Himdad Marzani. p60, 61, 62  
7 Kushtn be Byanwy Namus, Himdad Ali Marzani. (2009)
and investigates the concept of "honor" to explain its cultural significance. Marzani specifically commented that there is a kind of "gap" in the Iraqi legal text about honor - it is unclear what penalties to be dispensed and also which crimes to be classified as crimes of honor. Marzani appear to be influenced by the culture of honor though. He believes that "honor" is basically something positive and nice. He suggests among other things longer sentences for women who kill newborn illegitimate children, children who would put the woman in danger of enduring honor violence and honor killings. Marzani blame, therefore, in this reasoning, the woman / individual and does not lift the problems of honor to a societal scale.

Nasrin Zrar describes in his paper honor violence in Kurdistan in a multifaceted way. She highlights the religion’s significance in the average citizen’s understanding of the laws and how the laws are interpreted in court cases. She also points out how the laws and culture of honor is consolidated and sustained through upbringing, education, politics, the war situation, through financial indices and social aspects. Zrar also highlights specific factors such as alcoholism and age differences in marriage as contributing factors to the honor culture’s maintenance. She gives, in other words, a very broad and multifaceted picture of the culture of honor and what is behind honor crimes. Her theoretical point coincides with my own in this essay; she starts from the feminist social theory which argues that the patriarchal system of power is central to the maintenance of power, inequality and violence naturalization. All the while she variegates the picture by picking up personal and specific factors in her analysis.

In another scientific article Sandra Marie Phelps, using the same approach, describers honor killings as part of a system in which violence is structural and permeates all levels of society. She believes that one reason why women become victims of murder is that they are women. That is the murders are related to sex. She believes that if a system is based on inequality, honor killings are a way to control the female sexuality and body. The thought of honor is connected to the woman virtue and purity. If the woman fails in this murder ensues, a solution for the family under the patriarchal thinking.

James Brandon and Salam Hafez, also describes how the honor concept is linked to the female in the Middle East in particular. They use Kurdish words "Sharaf" and "Namus" which are also used in U.K. to describe the concept of honor.

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8 Dawri rekxrawakani Jnan le charasarkrdni kesha komalayatyakan, Nasrin Zrar. (2006)
9 The essay page number 8.
11 Brandon, J & Hafez, Salam.(2008) p.3-8
They argue that "Sharaf" are linked to a woman's body while it is men that restore the honor when it is damaged. They also describe that sexual relationships, in these cultures, mean a direct threat to the woman's chastity and purity.

3. Method and materials

3.1 Introduction

The methodology for my study is to conduct qualitative interviews with police officers at various levels in Kurdistan. Official statistics from the Ministry of Domestic Affairs and an annual report by the directorate for monitoring women exposed to violence in Kurdistan will also be analyzed and be compared with, alternatively analyzed in conjunction with, the interview responses. Previous research in the field will be used as a reference and comparison in the work of current statistics and interview responses.

3.2 Data Acquisition Techniques

At first I tried to get a supervisor in Kurdistan who could supervise my paper at the location in Sulaymaniyah to help me to search and find the right material. This would have been very easy to organize in Sweden; it would have been enough with a visit or phone call. But I was shocked when a friend of mine who called a teacher in my field at the Sulaymaniyah University to ask for guidance for my paper was told that it required payment to get this help! I reacted strongly and said that this is unacceptable in Sweden and is regarded as bribes, but they said it was legal to get compensation. In all probability it would have been a high sum. I approached my teacher and shared this information and we decided not to pay. After that I talked with a friend, who has a doctorate in psychology and teaches at the Salahaddin University in Arbil, and asked him to be my supervisor and he accepted this without compensation. He is educated in Europe and knows what is required for this task. Since my supervisor was in another city the guiding was mainly conducted by telephone. The supervisor gave me advice on the importance of explaining details, to clarify certain parts of the text and the need to anonymize my informants. He also gave basic advice about the interview situation and how I could make sure to keep a common theme in the interview so as there would not be too much focus on issues outside the area of my paper.

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12 Annual report of the goals of the directorate Preventing Violence and trying to decrease it, 2010.
Although the tutorial was done over the phone it was rewarding and a great support in my research.

I have visited various agencies and organizations to collect materials. I visited the Ministry of Domestic Affairs, who referred me to a data center, where I could get access to statistics. I also visited several police stations. To advance the understanding of the current situation of women in Kurdistan, I also visited some TV stations and had conversations with journalists familiar with the matter.

It has been difficult to get a clear picture of how common honor violence is and there are some explanations to this. Firstly, it is relatively new in Kurdistan to registering a women’s cause of death as honor killing. It is thanks to all the work on this issue in recent years that it is recognized as a social problem and not just taken as a family matter. Second, families who commit this gross abuse of its daughters, manages to successfully hide the body and keeping the knowledge of the death from the authorities. Thirdly, it is not certain that the cause of death is investigated even if the corpse is brought to the hospital or the morgue. With these explanations, I would say that the statistics which can be consulted only gives a little insight into the situation - unreported cases is high, which makes data collection difficult.

3.3 The interview study approach

My material consists mainly of interviews with people in the police force that works with women exposed to honor violence. I contacted the head of the department of law enforcement in Sulaymaniyah working against honor violence. First was an interview with the head of department, Mr. Karwan. From Mr. Karwan, I was advised of some other persons he saw fit as interviewees for my project. Mr. Karwan suggested a lawyer who worked at the same place, Mr. Dilman, and another police chief who worked at another police station in the neighborhood and working on honor violence issues. I call this man Mr. Ahmed.

Mr. Ahmed, in turn advised me to interview a police officer who worked with honor related violence issues, directly encountering the women in his work.

By doing interviews, I strive to gain knowledge of both the police's view on the concept of honor and their opinion of the conditions of the work against honor violence.
3.3.1 Selection of Police

The officers chosen for the study work in either of two units, both under the part of police authority working in particular to combat honor violence. In this paper I call one of the units "the State Department", the second is called "Police Station". In 2007, some brutal honor related crimes and honor killings were carried out in Kurdistan, which was publicized in the media worldwide. This made the Kurdish semi-autonomous government to set up new units to deal with the problem of honor violence and honor killings and the relevant units were established in connection therewith.

I’ve chosen to interview people from these two units because they are actively working with honor related issues / crimes. I perceive the State Department and the Police Station, and their work, as particularly relevant to my study because they have a well thought out approach to combat honor violence. They have, in other words, an enhanced knowledge of these kinds of crimes and problems associated with the handling of cases. The police officers in these units are more experienced in the problems of honor related violence than police officers from other police units.

Both the State Department and the Police Station is funded by the federal government. The units have ongoing collaborations with some European countries' police forces concerning case where women are married off or sent to Kurdistan against their will. Women have been helped by the State Department to get in touch with their embassy and for the transit home. The State Department has also recently begun collaboration with the Swedish police in these kinds of cases.

3.3.2 Selection of interviews

I have prior to the interviews chosen the State Department as suitable for contacts and interviews, but then became dependent on the interviewees suggested to me by the State Department. This may mean that the persons selected for interviews are those that give a picture of the business that those responsible prefer and it can reduce my chances of getting a more nuanced picture of police work and attitudes. As this unit is relatively new and are working with sensitive issues I experienced, that there was no opportunity for me to demand to interview exactly who I wanted. Time was also a limiting factor - there was no time to establish closer links with promoters and / or employees of the State Department in order to be able to get information about particularly interesting people to interview.
In a gender perspective, there were obvious flaws in the interview process. I met only male police chiefs and police officers at the State Department and the Police Station. The only female employees in the police station were working with administrative tasks such as statistics, archiving, and the reception. In general, female police officers are very rare in Kurdistan. I would have appreciated conducting interviews with the women who seek help at the relevant units but since my study focuses on the police's work this falls outside the scope of this study - given the limitation in time and copy space.

3.4 Observations

My paper is an interview study and I had no intention to make any observations of specific cases, such as participating in a hearing in order to observe how the police respond to those seeking help. I was however interrupted in the interview at the Police Station on three occasions, becoming an unplanned observer, when the interviewed police talked to women seeking help in honor violence cases. My observations became spontaneous and not well prepared with a clear methodology for how to implement them. However, they could provide important and relevant information and have therefore come to represent a smaller, but important, part of my material.

3.4.1 Transcription and analysis

The interviews conducted were recorded and I have also made notes regarding things that I perceived as particularly interesting during the interviews. Interview recordings were then transcribed in full and filed by me. The analysis of the interviews meant that I went through the interview responses several times and put the material in relation to my questions. The parts of the interviews I could deem as less relevant, and I chose the parts that specifically responded to my questions and analyze them in depth.

The observations were unplanned and could not get an equally basic documentation as the interviews. I made notes during the course of events, and these formed the basis of the observational material. After the interview I immediately went through my notes and added everything I could remember from my observations. I analyzed these notes and they often gave a detailed picture of the discussion during the interview. Observation material thus became an important part of the overall impression of the interviews and had an impact on my analysis.
3.5 Validity, reliability and generalizability

My purpose in this paper is to examine how police forces in the Kurdish town of Sulaymaniyah work against honor violence and the attitudes held by the police on honor issues. As my material is based on interviews with four people working in two different police units, the responses and tendencies I can find in the material can only be seen as generally valid for these units. The interview study is qualitative, which means that it aims to provide a deeper knowledge on the matter and that it is a case study. The degree of validity in this study is difficult to assess if you assume the definition of validity made by Thurén. In qualitative interviews, one cannot get accurate answers and the analysis of the interview material is based on my own interpretation of what has been said, which means that the validity cannot be seen as high in this study. However, it should be emphasized that validity is a criterion that is difficult to handle with all qualitative studies, and that these difficulties can be adjusted by making the survey as transparent as possible. That is, the methods of data collection and analysis clearly accounted for - giving an opportunity to question and criticize the author's analysis. I therefore endeavor for the greatest possible clarity about my methods in this paper. Reliability means by Thurén's definition that the study has the right approach and that the method can be examined. I have set up an interview template that I used in all interviews, in order for the interviews to resemble each other; the same questions were asked of all informants. However, I must accept that no interview in its entirety can be exactly like the other. In many cases it is necessary to let the informant talk quite freely at first and getting into the interview questions a bit later. I have also in added follow-up questions during the interviews, which can be linked to the interview template but adjusted to the context. The interview template was used in the interview process. It’s been important to get back to the most interesting issues raised and to have a thread running through the interview. In my study, I have tried to understand and get a general picture of police work against honor violence in Sulaymaniyah but since the interviewees are few and only two units were present, there is limited potential to draw general conclusions of the study.

13 Thuren 2007, s34
14 Thuren 2007, s34
3.6 Ethical perspectives and anonymization

In studies involving honor, it is very important to avoid revealing any person’s name. This is very sensitive information and if it is found that a person been talking to me on this subject it could have serious consequences for that individual. All participants in this study have been anonymised regarding name and place of work. The rumor mill is a difficult problem in the culture of honor. Rumor can go fast if someone finds out who I interviewed and who I talked to on these issues. The risks are great for my informants; they speak freely of how they view the work, of views on honor and of attitudes and opportunities at work. One of the informants expressed himself clearly on this:

"If you only mention what police station you visited it is all over! Everyone knows who is in charge of honor violence issue there." 15

Therefore, anonymization forms a big and important part of this study.

The Research Council's ethical consideration16, there is a requirement for anonymization of persons participating in the study to avoid any kind of consistency and to protect informants' privacy. I informed at each interviewee that participation in the survey is entirely voluntary. I also informed each person that at any time - during or after - the interview he can stop participating and take back his statements. Before the interviews began, I told the informant that the interview would be recorded and will be archived by me and will not be played for anyone other than my supervisor. I pointed out to my informants that the material will only be used in this study 17 and that I am using recordings of the interviews for the most accurate representation of the interview as possible.

4 Results

In this chapter I will present the results of the interview study, observational study and the statistical material I have collected. The purpose is to provide a coherent picture of the collected and themed material. To provide a context for the presentations the chapter begins with my pre-understanding. This is followed by a section where Iraqi Kurdistan is presented.

15 Mr, Baban. Wednesday 5th May 2011, kl.11.00
16 Vetenskapsrådets övervägande… 2002, s.6
17 Nyttjandekravet enligt Vetenskapsrådets etiska principer 2002, s14
4.1 pre-understanding

Honor violence is a major problem in the Kurdish community; it appears that the number of victims have increased in recent years\(^1\). Family honor is generally about the whole family following a code of conduct that is primarily linked to sexuality and intimate relationships. The family's women have the "responsibility" for maintaining the honor by behaving in accordance with the existing norm for relationships. There is discrepancy between different areas in Kurdistan, varying degrees of requirements to follow the "correct" behavior. Generally though, it is regarded as a very important part in family life that honor is maintained. Honor culture means that women are subordinated to a patriarchal system of power, women must act "right" and the family's men will monitor such compliance. This structure controls the families and mostly women's lives in every possible level during the whole life. Childhood and lessons learned from parents is also important, for, among other things, the culture of honor to live on and continue to be important, says Rahab Alqazwini\(^2\). He argues that in a society where the use of violence becomes a legit part of everyday life for men the legitimacy is reproduced, men's violence persists and is repeated by the next generation\(^3\).

I grew up in Kurdistan with the oppression of honor ever present. Early in my childhood I wondered why the men had the power to decide so much and why women so often had to suffer punishment for their actions. Even as a child, I and the other girls learned to accept far-reaching restrictions. Girls should not play too active, they should not jump rope or climb trees. This is due to the risk of losing their "hymen" - which is linked to the honor of the whole family. A girl who does not bleed during her first sexual intercourse is seen as unclean. The boys in turn also learn that it is essential that one day marry a girl who has honor intact. In this context there is a lack of knowledge as there is no "hymen" and the whole culture of honor is based on beliefs that do not apply. The whole system is arbitrary and a girl's honor depends rather on her reputation. The rumor mill in particular forms a very central part of the society characterized by honor. Throughout childhood and life girls and women learn that they must guard her honor, a "seal" strongly depending on the reputation they have in their local community. This system leads to, in my opinion, the conclusion that we as women are constantly doomed to death, we always risk losing "honor", but the time of executing the punishment is not determined. Some women have been killed due to reasons of honor when

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\(^1\) UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI): Human rights report 2007, p16 paragraph 49
\(^3\) Nasrin, Zrar, (2004) p.57
they were younger than 18 and still children while others have been killed when they were 30 or 40 years old. The consequence of the honor system is a life-long oppression. In the beginning of the 1990s, my opposition to honor violence and honor culture led me to found an organization primarily combating honor killings. My opposition developed and led to a long-standing commitment against oppression due to honor: I co-founded a shelter for women exposed to honor violence and began to work politically to try to change the patriarchal structure that allowed for the violence. Me and co-workers in the organization strove to reform family laws, we wrote books, published papers and much more. This work helped bringing forth the problem of the culture of honor and honor violence but meant after a while that I was exposed to enemy attacks and even death threats. When I came to Sweden I continued with my commitment against honor violence and for women's rights in Iraq and Kurdistan. I had high expectations of the Swedish legal system, and equality, and there was much that made me happy and proud of my new homeland. But soon situations arose that disappointed me - honor violence was present in Sweden too. The murder of Fadime Shanhindal clarified this beyond any doubt - honor violence, murder and repression does not stop at national borders. I wondered why the equal Sweden also suffers from this disease. What is it that makes people carrying such traditions with them to this place? Is it the system that makes people feeling left out and wanting to keep their customs and traditions? My concerns have not diminished neither has my job to help women exposed to honor violence in Sweden.

4.2 Iraqi Kurdistan

The partially autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan is led by a government based in Erbil. PDK (Kurdish Democratic Party) has its strongest support in the north with the towns of Dahuk and Erbil. PUK (Patriotic Union of Kurdistan) has its strongest support in the southeastern part of Kurdistan and is based in Sulaymaniyah. PDK's leader is the present president of Kurdistan, while PUK's leader is the present president of Iraq. Meanwhile, PUK's position has been weakened by a major secession during the last local elections. The division of Kurdistan into two political parts has made the bureaucracy being designed differently in the two parts. For example, in Erbil significant resources has been invested in rebuilding, education, construction of government buildings and more. This means that Erbil is strengthened as political center and a generally higher standard of living in the environs of Erbil can be seen.

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21 Se for example Ingmar Karlsson: Kurdistan, landet som icke är. 2008. s.148-158
PDK, which are governing in Erbil, is more stable and has a stronger political position than PUK, which is falling apart, partly through internal strife and partly because there was a major secession two years ago when a new party was formed.

The two ruling political parties in Kurdistan can be said to stand for a very traditional attitude towards women. There is a continuous discourse of both parties as an expression of nationalism, conservatism and orthodox religious (Islamic) practices. These aspects seem mostly negative for women who are limited on many levels. Women's potential to impact and participate in the political debate has been, and still is, small. During Saddam's regime 75 percent of the educated women were employed because many men were soldiers drafted into the regime's army. But when the war came to an end, and men came back to normal society, many women lost their employment as they had to leave their jobs in favor of men.

In Kurdistan, there are a number of religions represented. Islam is by far the largest. Next are various Christian faiths, Orthodox, Chaldean, and Syrian. The religious community Yazidi is located in the northern part of Kurdistan and in the south around the town of Halabja, a group called Hawari is present.

Religion has great influence in Kurdistan, particularly after 1991. Religious traditions and customs and a religious view of life has long affected people's behavior and thinking, and by the radicalization, mostly among Islamist groups, it has become very sensitive, and sometimes even lethal, to criticize religion or to openly being an atheist.

The city of Sulaymaniyah, where this study was conducted, is a city that has been exposed to high levels of violence during all regimes in Iraq, particularly during Saddam's regime. This is probably due to the city having had many revolutionary movements and been an independent-minded political environment. The County of Sulaymaniyah has been the target of the regime's attacks by both arrests and executions of political activists and by the use of chemical weapons against towns and villages. In comparison to other parts of Kurdistan women have a freer position in this city. Clothing is more modern and Westernized than in other cities and there are many female activists working for women's issues. Over the past 20 years, many women from Sulaymaniyah have become well known for their involvement in the struggle against patriarchy and for their work to change the situation of women in Kurdistan.

After 1991, Iraqi Kurdistan became a relatively autonomous area, as it rebelled against the regime in Baghdad. United States imposed a no-fly zone that prevented Baghdad to quell the rebellion. Many women were killed during this period and it was during this time that the
concept of honor killings became a reality and honor violence increased dramatically. The County of Sulaymaniyah currently has very high number of cases of threats and violence against women and the number of honor killings are very high too.

4.3 Description of statistics in the survey

4.3.1 Problems with statistics

The statistics available from the authorities are of some interest, but is unfortunately very problematic. Many cases of honor killings never come to the authorities' attention as the families hides these fatalities, the bodies doesn’t always, in fact rarely, arrive to the morgues. Families hide the murders from the society to avoid punishment but also to maintain its reputation in front of neighbors and relatives. The girl or woman killed is simply said to have disappeared or moved to another place, or another excuse is made. Girls or women who are murdered due to honor reasons are not entitled to a funeral, mourning period or other ceremonies - this means that such statistics of murdered due to honor doesn’t exist. Girls and women who murdered due to honor are buried in "unknown" places making it impossible to visit the grave. It can be said in some cases that the families deal with the situation as if the girl never existed. If the death comes to the authorities’ attention after all, relatives might leave fictitious reports of the girl being "crazy," suicidal or died of disease. In such cases, the authorities don’t perform any investigation, although the death rate for young women and girls are unjustifiably high.

In the book, *Help! A Voice from Kurdistan*, I have published a study that I conducted over a three month period during 1999 to identify the number of women being victims of honor killings. From the interviews I made it could be seen that during this time in Kurdistan there was an average of one honor killing per day! “Forced” suicides may also be included in this.

In my study approximately 600 cases were documented during the period 1991-1998 related to honor, both suicide and murder. In other statistics, being presented in France at a conference on violence against women, 1072 honor killings / suicides were conducted between 1998 and 2002.

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23 Rauf & Mohammadi, 1999, p1& 2
24 Nasrin Zrars Essay, p.54
According to a report from the Institution of violence against exposed women in the city of Sulaymaniyah, 33 cases of honor killings, 41 cases of burning, 78 cases of other abuses, 519 cases of reports of threats, violence and theft and 834 cases of assault has been registered in 2010. The highest figures are thus death threats and assault. 

Another part of the statistical evidence linked particularly to the city of Sulaymaniyah shows that the number of reports of threats, violence, assault, murder, burning and abuse consistently increased between 2007 and 2010: (2007) 539 cases (2008) 991 cases; (2009) 1183 cases (2010) 1617 cases. One explanation for the increase can probably be that more people dare to report than before, as State institutions to combat the violence and murders of girls and women have been established.

4.4 Summary and Analysis of the observations

During two of the interviews, I was also unplanned observer to three different cases where the police took reports from three women. This meant I had an in-depth picture of the situation and was able to put the observations in relation to what was stated during the interview.

In the first event I witnessed, a woman of 30 years of age (Naz) came to the police station to report her husband for assault. She said she did it to end the domestic violence. The man was arrested and detained while his wife had her injuries documented by a physician. Naz stated that she wanted a divorce. After that the man was released, I heard that the woman changed her mind. The reason for her not wanting a divorce is that the Chief of Police having advised her no to - he tells her to stay for the children’s sake. A second reason is said to be that she believes the man has changed and has stopped beating her. Naz is helped to get a job through the Chief of Police’s contacts. This is important as she can become financially independent.

I interpret this observation as the police are largely working from a traditional view of family. From a feminist perspective, I view this conversation between the police officer and the woman as an example of the perception that women are inferior and must be sure to keep the family together. This becomes clear when the police officer tells a woman to preserve the family ties, despite the violence. As I understand it, he means that women can endure a little domestic violence, because they have children and the unity is for their good. However, he sees it as important that she gets a job and thus becoming financially independent. I interpret this as a deviation from the traditional attitudes towards women - the police officer sees it as a

25 Annual statistics interior 2010
future investment that the woman can support herself. This can be good for an uncertain future in a family with a violent man. There are no ways for an exposed woman to receive financial support from the State, so the initiative to urge women to get their own work is an important part and is a way for the individual police officer helping to change.

The second case (Shirin, 47 years) I witnessed was kind of an infidelity drama in which a woman was accused of having an extramarital relationship. The woman comes to the police station and wants to report a man who threatened her by phone. Shirin says that the threatening man wants a relationship with her, something she does not. When she refused the man threatened to "reveal" that she has an affair with him, for her husband and family. The story is out in the open and now there is uncertainty due to this, the rumor of the woman's "infidelity" goes. The woman therefore feels obliged to notify the police. Shirin's husband is followed her to the police station and both man and woman are upset. The Chief of Police supports the woman at once and says that her husband, who has been married to the woman for 25 years, ought to believe her word and know her well enough not to believe that any infidelity occurred. The husband should support his wife's side immediately and deny all the rumors, the Chief of Police states with great conviction.

I feel it was very important for Shirin to get the support from the Chief of Police. Although she did everything she could to not do anything wrong the rumors had spread and even her husband was worried and upset. I perceive that it was extremely important that a man in the position of the Chief of Police supported the woman's version. The police's view is governing and I'm wondering what would have happened if another police officer, with a different point of view, had received the woman. In case a police officer who receives a report like this would accuse the woman not to look after her honor enough, or if the police should be suspicious of her sincerity, her situation could be the opposite - rumors and threats against her could be strengthened. In this way one can see how central the culture of honor is, and how important key figures, such as police officers, will be in individual cases.

From my feminist perspective, it becomes very clear that the policeman uses the fact that he is a man of high position when he talks to Shirin's husband and thus making her more credible in front of the husband.

The third case (Bahar, 30 years (sic!)) that I witnessed was a woman of 35 (sic!) years, who came to the police station and was very upset because her husband threatened her. "Can’t you just imprison my husband, so he stops behaving like this?" She said. "No," replied the
Chief of Police, "we cannot just lock him up like that; he must be guilty of a crime according to the law." The Chief of Police does offer the woman help to find work. She received an application form to fill out to seek employment through the Chief of Police’s contacts, but it later became clear that she still had not received any job. The police officer says: "We cannot help everyone. Most people need to be able to provide for themselves." He continues by saying that there are many who actually need much more help and support but the police don’t know how to help these women. We talk a bit about social services (in Sweden) and I explain how it works. We agree that that similar help and support would be needed Kurdistan. As I understand it, the police officers in the observed cases do all that they think they can - they try to find job opportunities for the women. It is indeed a very important part of the honor problem - a woman doesn’t have any real chance to be free of violence and oppression if she is economically dependent on her husband and her family. However, I felt that the police officers in these cases didn’t challenge the notion of honor or the family in itself. Honor culture is the fact, the reality they work in, live in and in which women live - none of them seriously question the relations of power that honor culture creates.

4.5 Summary and analysis of the interviews

As I mentioned at the beginning, I’ve come to the following conclusions based on conversations with my informants:

I have divided the analysis of my material in four different questions, which mainly revolves around the laws that police can use in their work with women exposed to honor violence. The first theme is based on my perception that (1) a conflict exists between the laws that are used in the effort to combat honor violence. The second theme focuses on (2) the legislation in itself is unclear. A third recurring problem is that there is a (3) lack of knowhow in the institutions that handle the cases of honor violence. The fourth theme concerning the problem with the laws is that the laws used in police work against honor violence (4) were established over 40 years ago and they have not followed the progress of the society.

4.5.1 Conflict of Laws.

The Iraqi legal text says:
"The man who finds his wife, daughter, sister or mother having a sexual relationship with another man who does not belong to the family, he will get a mild penalty based on the family's honor if he kills the woman."  

During the 1990s, many women’s organizations began to combat honor violence and honor killings. I myself took a very active part enactment was made in Kurdistan, which inferred that honor killings should be seen and judged as "ordinary" murders. This section was written into the legislation, especially in the city of Sulaymaniyah and reads:

"Anyone who murders a woman for reasons of honor, counts as an ordinary murder"  

According to this clause, anyone who is charged with the murder of his daughter, wife or sister for reasons of honor could be convicted of murder. However, in reality no change has occurred - no one has been convicted of murdering a female family member. This has a political connection. Two different parties are in power in Kurdistan - one found mainly in Sulaymaniyah and the other in Erbil. Section 59 applies only in Sulaymaniyah; it is not applicable in Erbil. The semi-autonomous government in Iraqi Kurdistan also means that there is a "central" control over the entire area and according to this the old legislation rules. The old legislation allows in other words, brothers, husbands, and fathers to commit murder in the name of honor and get a milder or no penalty. The lawyer Mr. Dilman, points to this conflict and argue that this makes his work very difficult. A man who has been convicted of murder may appeal and be acquitted according to the "old" legislation. Proof of this problem is that murders of women are very common in statistics from the Department of Domestic Affairs and UN reports but convictions for murder is very rare. Another problematic aspect is corruption. Political dignitaries can ignore the law and free guilty or suspend sentences. In one well-known case a man from a militant group, "Salih", murdered two sisters, was sentenced to prison but was later released by the president because his group supported the ruling party PUK. Women's organizations conducted demonstrations and protests against it with no result.

Another problematic law related to honor is the law that says you can arrest a man who pushed a woman to self-harm or suicide / attempted suicide because of honor.

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27 § 59, 2000-04-02  
This is called incitement and is considered a serious crime. But if the woman (if she survives) does not call attention to the man's guilt, or self takes the blame for the incident, the man cannot be apprehended.

My analysis of the situation is that the conflict between the different laws leads to major problems for both lawyers and police officers. It's never quite clear which law should apply, section 59 generally only applies in Sulaymaniyah but when it "conflicts" with Iraqi law, it is the Iraqi law that prevails. The result of a process often corresponds to police officers’, lawyers’ and prosecutors’ personal view on honor violence / murder, and even if they try to enforce Section 59 it is not certain they succeed. Girls and women is still assaulted and murdered in the name of honor while the perpetrators go free.

I have two explanations to the fact that the legislation isn’t followed in practice. The first is that women's subordination in society permeates the entire system, which leads to major difficulties in enforcing the laws on individuals who commit this kind of crime. The second is that the family / relatives support the offender and protect him for the judiciary. It is due to the theory that the woman has no personal value in the patriarchal society and therefore even murder of women can be viewed as less serious crimes. By contrast, the man is protected and should not have to pay the price as the reasoning follows the line "the woman is already gone, it is better not to punish the man." That is "you will not get the woman back to life but protect the man’s life."

4.5.2 Legislation and ambiguity concerning the laws

Rega: What kinds of problems do you experience cannot be resolved within 72 hours?  

The lawyer, Mr. Dilman: For example, allegations of infidelity, death threats, or suspicions of loss of honor. Then we have to find a sheltered housing, although this type of accommodation often means that the woman feel mentally ill as it is hard not being able to live a normal life. Another type of long-running case is when a woman comes to us and she has a child where paternity is under investigation. She has identified a man who fathered the child, but the DNA test has shown that it is not true. In such cases, we become paralyzed. We simply cannot solve it! I must add that it is a new phenomenon for us to do investigations of paternity where women are subjected to threats.

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29 § 408
30 This question arose from the fact that institutions and police stations have a policy that all cases should be resolved within 72 hours. But since that honor-related cases often have a complex problem, I thought about whether it is possible to stay within this time frame and how do you do if you can’t?
The lawyer, Mr. Dilman, points to the problem of "new" phenomena not covered by the old legislation. It is difficult to continue pursuing the cases and then exposed people fall through the cracks. Due to this, exposed women have no one to turn.

The lawyer, Mr. Dilman: I worked on many cases which dragged on enormously due to problems with the law.

He told me that many cases finally closed without results, and that he experienced this as highly frustrating and exhausting.

I also asked Mr. Karwan, working at the State Department, if he sees any obstacles in the investigators' work. He highlights in particular how the laws may by themselves be an obstacle and that the ambiguities surrounding the legislation obstructs.

I realize that the biggest problem we have is that we do not have legislation that support us in our work against honor violence, violence against women, and other violence in the family. We do not have basic practices for the work. We do what we think is correct, you can call it arbitrary. And we simply stand for our belief concerning the family, violence, view of women and so on. This is what sometimes stops us from doing very much as if the person / man stands up against us, we do not have support in the law to intervene in the way we want to stop, for example, violence in the family 31.

My interpretation of the situation is that the legal situation is very unclear and that the law is not nationwide. The police officers involved in these cases may often do a good job but it depends on individuals' good will and has no support in the law or any concrete work methods for the employees. One problem is that if it goes "bad" in some cases, no one is held accountable because it is not investigated thoroughly and lacks support in the legislation. Another interpretation is that the legal situation is unclear to the general population due to the system with strong roots in the clan system and to the leaders of the communities and groups being able put themselves above the law. In such a situation it can be very difficult to defend, or seek legal aid for women, who are inferior and in second place in the patriarchal society.

4.5.3 Lack of knowhow among the police and other authorities

The police profession is one of the professions that do not require college education. The educational level of police officers is in other words often low which may lead to flaws in many ways. The police profession itself is a profession with power and I would argue that it

31 Mr. Y, pseudonym
can often be used to oppress and control people rather than being a means of supporting and helping people.

There is a considerable lack of organized training for police officers, a lack of knowhow of new methods or specific methods for dealing with various types of cases. The level of knowledge and level of education also differs greatly between different police units in the area. I posed the question of what "honor" means to the two Chiefs of Police I interviewed and got completely different answers. Mr. Karwan, who is highly educated and has written extensively on violence against women, says:

"Unfortunately, the honor has a different meaning [than the original], and it is the woman who is liable for maintaining and monitoring the honor. Honor that, I think, before actually were about other things and not about sexuality as it is now. And according to this sense of honor [women's sexuality and purity] many women are subjected to threats of violence and death. I think that honor belongs to the basic human rights in society, how we treat others, to be respectful. But honor has, as I said, got a different significance and meaning which have had major consequences for our society, behavior contrary to the United Nations basic human rights."

This concept of honor, I see as radical feministic in the sense that it is considered incorrect that honor is something that should be linked specifically to women and their sexuality.

Chief of Police Mr. Ahmed however, who practically helps women in his work expresses a more traditional attitude to women. He believes that women should fight to keep the family together and that honor belongs to the woman. Mr. Ahmed says that if a woman loses her honor the man also loses his honor - a very traditional view, in other words, where women's actions have consequences for the whole family, especially the men. The first mentioned Chief of Police, Mr. Karwan, have a high level of education while the Chief of Police Mr. Ahmed, despite having the same position, lack a higher education. I interpret their different responses as a consequence of having different knowledge bases about violence against women and problems concerning honor.

The lawyer, Mr. Dilman, also highlighted how important it is to have continuous training of the police. This would give enough information on laws and general awareness of human rights. They need to realize that their job is not just a job with simple policing matters but that it is about safeguarding human rights.

Rega: How do you look upon the police authority's work you daily contact with?
The lawyer, Mr. Dilman: I think the police should attend various courses in human rights, violence against women, etc. They must learn what honor really means and why they should treat women well and humanely. Police officers also need to learn that the actions that citizens perform in the name of honor, is violence and unacceptable! Unfortunately, most police officers have limited education and have no knowledge of citizens' rights and how those rights should be defended. It is the duty of the State to give the police sufficient training to change their attitudes and not least the perception of women's rights in society. Another point that is very problematic is that although the police are bound to secrecy, it is likely that the women will be revealed and the subject of gossip and rumor-mongering by the police. To tackle this problem an increased level of competence among the police is required and it is very important to take steps to stop such things. [The lawyer, Mr. Dilman perceives that:] Individuals who become police officers are the ones that have failed higher education. The result is that police work has a low status, which is also a major problem. Unless police change their behavior and their view of women's problems, it is difficult to offer effective help to women who need protection to get their legal rights provided for.

I think the lawyer, Mr. Dilman, points to an important attitude, that knowhow and training is not seen as something natural or valuable, and that police work itself has low status. You work with it "when you have failed with something else" as he puts it. This attitude can be compared to the Swedish police. In Sweden, the importance of education were highlighted at the moment the problem of honor related violence began to attract attention. In the Swedish context, continuing education is natural and the society requires that police officers are trained to deal with new problems and new kinds of crimes.

To educate and illuminate social problems is an important aspect that demonstrates that the State and the authorities care about their citizens. To achieve an equal society, information and education must based on women's subordinate position and change it. In Sweden, for example, a lot has been made to combat honor related violence by taking major steps to educate, inform and teach agencies and organizations working against honor violence. Despite these actions the situation is still not perfect in Sweden.
4.5.4 The old laws are not in phase with the current situation

As the legislation was enacted in 1969 and is not in tune with the modern society, major problems arise. The police authorities handle cases in new ways despite the fact that the old legislation still applies. As an example, the police perform DNA testing at crime scenes and criminals in order to secure evidence and links between crime and guilt. However, this is not permitted by law. DNA tests are also used in cases where a woman is accused of cheating, DNA testing the child and the by the woman alleged father. When such a test reveals that the alleged father not is the father the situation locks up legally – as the test is not legal, it cannot be regarded as legal evidence. What happens is usually that disputes are resolved by one person's testimony is simply given greater value than another’s. Given that there are no contemporary laws to abide to old traditions and customs are strengthened. The patriarchal power hierarchies are maintained through the police system and justice system as new modern laws are not available.

The lawyer, Mr. Dilman: I am personally very tired of all of our work being hampered by the laws not being consistent with our mission and it takes its toll. The police do not do their job. On the contrary, they are often a threat to the women instead of protecting them. Police officers are sometimes part of a problem and what do you do in those cases? Very difficult ... We need a function that intertwines the courts, police and social services. And such a thing does not exist now.

The analysis four components show a great deal of consistency in the interviews: all informants point out that the old laws must be rewritten to adapt to modern society. All also point out that they consider a significant effort from the government and authorities being necessary to further develop the work against honor violence. The various informants help and support the vulnerable women in their own way but do not have all the resources, knowhow, power and legal support to carry out a successful job.

Changing of the perception of honor within the police force was a question not often raised by the informants. Probably a lack of self-awareness, of how they, in their work, although they mean well, often reproduce the culture of honor and problems, is present. In this perspective, I think it becomes clear that education and generally higher awareness within the police force is necessary. A change of the attitudes and perceptions of honor must also take place throughout the Kurdish community as a whole. In order to change on a larger societal level requires government action and to bit by bit to ensure that key institutions receive knowhow and power to act against honor violence.
5. Analysis

In this chapter, I offer my analysis from my research questions thus the analysis of the material that I have collected. In my analysis of interview material and additional material from observations and investigations and statistics, I have reached the following conclusions:

1. *What methods do the police in Kurdistan use in its efforts to combat honor related violence?*

This question does not a simple answer, not even within the limited area I studied – a single city in Kurdistan. The methods used vary from person to person. Some respondents are interested in international development and other countries’ laws, such as the lawyer, which can be seen as a method of increasing the knowledge of the issue and find new solutions. But there are no general guidelines on methods of combating honor violence. There are differences even regarding what should be classified as a crime or not. Individual interpretations and decisions of individual police officers will determine what happens. What is taken up as a crime and reported at one police station is not necessarily treated the same way at another place or even by another police officer at the police station. I strongly connect this to the fact that there are no effective laws and jurisprudence. The old laws do not work in today's society, and different laws apply to different areas making the situation extremely difficult. Individual police officers, lawyers or others, acting from their own point of view, probably has to do with the lack of legal support which intertwine with the person's views on honor, on his own authority and work tradition at the department. I think legislation is very important to give people security in their work and to provide vulnerable people protection and means of redress and access to their human rights. Clear laws allow a consistent approach and this will also increase people’s confidence in the authorities and institutions. Perhaps increased confidence can lead directly to increased propensity to report crimes of honor.

2. *What attitudes and beliefs of honor are found in the survey and how do the individual police officers treat the help-seeking women?*

Under this point, I should stress that as I have not interviewed the exposed women I can only make an assessment of what I observed and that which emerged in the interviews. My opinion is that the laws’ ambiguity allows for individual police officers' actions to be mostly governed by their own conceptions of honor and their attitude towards women. It is not possible to distinguish the individual police officer’s professionalism from his personal view as so much
of the work depends on the police officer’s individual assessment. If a police officer has a "traditional and paternalistic" attitude towards honor, it is possible for that person to, through statements, tone of voice and body language, reveal this attitude to the woman who comes to the station. Through the interviews, I learned that one of the units have not had a single case where it was confirmed that a woman engaged in an "honor crimes" - i.e., no cases have been received in which a woman was caught as a cheat, meaning that no woman has been reported as having had a sexual relationship with a man outside of marriage. This statement made me very thoughtful. Of course, such cases must exist, but why were they never reported to the police? The general perception about police attitudes is likely to affect whether case are reported to the police and the question is what benefit these institutions do if reports are not made? Or could it be that there were such cases but my informants did not talk about them as they had not been able to support the women in those cases?

In general, my informants expressed that attitudes about honor is still traditional, and there is no clear commitment to equality. I also feel that the honor and honor related crimes are still a very sensitive topic to talk about. It is likely that the severe cases never are reported to the police and that the exposed women's lives and situations are depending on NGOs and women activists.

3. Which prerequisites do the police have to help abused women?

Combating honor related violence is not a priority for the police – neither by the State or the police authority itself. Therefore it is no wonder that there is lack of sufficient resources and a lack of education and knowledge in the field. Much of the police work seems to be guided by individuals' perceptions and ways of solving problems. There are no general methods or practices for the work against honor violence to be conducted. There are some basic procedures concerning who should receiving the reports, which ones who are going through the details of a case, etc. but there is no overall idea of how the work should proceed. The order of how a report is handled differs from case to case. It is a fact that more and more women reports honor related crimes but the development of law enforcement agencies are lagging behind. Individuals will be decisive for the outcome of the work. If it were not for the Chief of Police's efforts, women who sought help at a particular police station would not get help finding work or any other help. I feel that police work is often confused with social services' work, but in the absence of such body there is nowhere send the women. The police authority has no financial capacity to help vulnerable women in a more general, societal level.
Some people working in the police force go so far as to contribute financially themselves to help vulnerable and solve the situation of some of those seeking help. However, it is impossible in the long run to maintain supportive work without resources. The analysis of interview material shows with all clarity that the resources to help vulnerable women is lacking. The police authority lacks both financial resources and knowhow but beyond that new institutions need to be established to deal with problems outside the police’s area. The police authority are now like a dysfunctional "complete authority" in which social, legal, medical and police components of a case are to be solved, but with no real resources for any of it.

6. Concluding discussion

When I began working on my paper, I had many thoughts and beliefs about police work in Kurdistan. This was based on my experience of the Kurdish culture and society, and my picture of how the social apparatus works. Many of my opinions and thoughts were confirmed during the study - for example, that a traditional attitude to women persists and that the resources to help women are scarce. However, the study has also given me reason to think again about this issue in different ways. I now realize that the individuals working at the authorities can be of great value for continued growth and improvement of the situation of women. Establishing institutions that work against honor violence is a good first step, but I have also seen in this study that individuals who have the opportunity to work on these issues may find new ways to go, even if the laws are outdated and there are many problems. An example of this is that some police stations / agencies are currently working with other countries’ police forces - which could provide opportunities for new knowledge and better work methods.

Based on my research questions and study, I find that there is much to be done and that change must start at several levels. The police profession itself needs to reach a higher status and not just be an apparatus for practicing the violence and arrests. Legislation problems have also become very clear in this study. The legal texts must be rewritten to fit today's society and they should be modernized and focus on human rights and gender - in line with UN conventions.

Another important aspect about honor is that the perception of what it means can be a key issue for change. Honor is no fixed term with a fixed content, but may, as some of my informants discussed, be good values as being a good citizen, a good neighbor, to be honest,
generous and loving. Being honorable is perceived as important by many and if the views on honor can change from being solely associated with women and control women, to include human values, there is opportunity for change. This is an example of how my informants reason - there is not only one way, you have to find many ways and many levels to achieve change, specifically, in legislation and resources but also in discussions and conversations about values in society. In the 1990s, it was taboo to talk about honor and honor violence but today it is a societal problem that is discussed at many levels of society.

The people and civil society in Kurdistan have walked away from being passive and oppressed, a silent audience, to today being more and more active participants. But there is still a large gap between policy makers, legal texts and authorities on the one hand and the people and everyday life on the other. Happily, however, individual police officers, government officials and private individuals can be seen to bring their commitment to their work and despite weak resources and complicated bureaucracy, seek change.

Raising the awareness of women belongs to the structural perspective. Society is permeated from top to toe of misogynist and patriarchal attitudes and to change this view; we need to influence all levels, from the individual level all the way to the legislature. And both men and women.

It's a long way to go but even a long road begins with a single step.
Litteratur


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http://www.equalityiniraq.com/

Interviews

Mr. Karwan. Pseudonym, 27042011, State institution, at 09.00 AM
Mr. Dilman. Pseudonym, 27042011, State institution, at 10300 AM
Mr. Ahmed. Pseudonym, 04052011, police station, at 09.00 AM
Mr. Baban. Pseudonym, 04052011, police station, at 11.00 AM

Observations

Naz, Pseudonym, 04052011, police station, at 09.30 AM
Shirin, Pseudonym, 04052011, police station, at 09.45 AM
Bahar, Pseudonym, 04052011, police station, at 10.00 AM
Appendix 1: Consent Letter for Individual Interview

This interview is for my final thesis that I’m writing at the Department of Social Work at Ersta Sköndal University Collage in Stockholm, Sweden. I received a scholarship from Minor Field studies to be in Iraqi Kurdistan writing my thesis. The interview you are participating in is completely voluntary and can be called off at any time; you are also free to refuse answering certain questions or call off the interview at any time.

I will record the interview, and only I and my supervisor at Ersta Sköndal University Collage will be able to read or listen to the material. The material will be used only in my thesis and in the final thesis. The reader want be able to know at which organizations the study have been made or relate to any individual statement made by you or others participating in the study. The raw material will be kept in a safe place so that only I can get access to it. After my thesis is finished I will destroy all the material.

After the interview I might get in contact with you for some complementary questions of course all the material for that will be handled as mentioned above. After the thesis is finished you can of course get access to it. If you want the thesis please write your email address below so that I can send it to you as soon as it is finished:

___________________________________________
Consent to the implementation of the interview

___________________________________________
Date:

___________________________________________
Rega Svensson
Ersta Sköndal University Collage, Stockholm, Sweden

If you have any questions please contact me!

Mobile: +964 (0)7507643660 (Iraqi Kurdistan), +46 (0)73- 9126675 (Sweden)

Email rega_svensson@yahoo.com

Thank you for participating!
Appendix 2: Interview guide

The interview questions will highlight four themes

- The person’s background
- The organization’s work
- The honor’s relevancy
- What the law says

1 - Tell us a little about your background and your position in the police!
2 - How did this organization start and who / which support it!
3 - Can you tell us about how you work with women from the time you come in contact with them / get a report? How is a case treated and what steps are you taking to help them!
4 - Are there positive / negative aspects of your work such as legal, cultural, economic barriers!
5 - What does honor mean to you!
6 - What is the perception of honor in society, there has been no change in those years?
7 - How do you see the progress in your work, is it moving forward or standing still?
8 - Do you have any cooperation with women’s organizations and what does your collaboration look like?
9 - How do you see the laws? Is there a significant difference between the laws and work in reality?
10 - What changes in legislation would you propose to improve the situation of women?