

## Honour or no honour?

How to objectively determine whether a case is honour related

Dr. Rob Ermers

November 3th, 2022, Helsinki

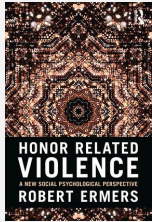
Radboud Univ Nijmegen,  
Midden Oosten Perspectief

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## The speaker

- Arabist and Turcologist (PhD 1995, Nijmegen)
- Trainer on the cultures of the Middle-East
- Trainer on honour related violence
- Analyst of honour related issues, for Dutch courts
- Independent scholar
- Author of 'Eer en Eerwraak. Definitie en Analyse' (2007)
- Author of 'Honor Related Violence. A New Social Psychological Perspective' (2018)

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2018



2010

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## How to determine HBV

Clear concepts

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## How scholars and scientists work

Let's examine a case analysis process of Honour based cases

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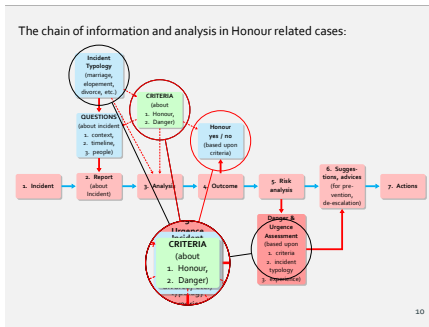
## What do we expect?

A workprocess is based upon a theory and incorporates the points of departure of the theory.

Our requirements from the ideal theory and the associated work process:

- The theory supplies a set of **clear** terms and concepts
  - which can easily be explained.
  - which can easily be understood by people involved.
  - with which we communicate about cases and evaluate risks
- They suggest how we best act for **prevention** and **de-escalation**.
- They **enables** us to contribute to a **fair (juridical) process**.

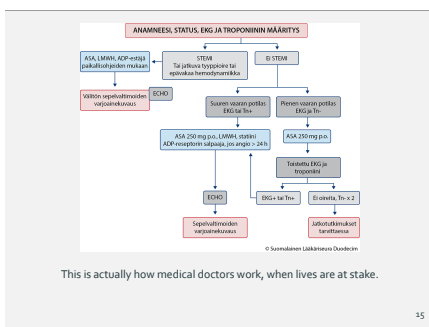
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Criteria

Which objective criteria do we use ... for determining whether a case is honour related?

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Finding criteria

Finding criteria: The 'culture list' approach

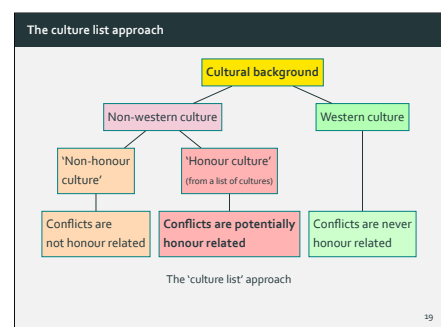
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Certain cultures

In one approach,

- ...honour is related to an 'honour code' in certain non-western 'cultures',
- ...honour is a certain mindset in certain non-western 'cultures',
- ...honour determines relationships between men and women,
- ...honour is based upon traditions of dominance and oppression,
- ...but we know where to look for honour related violence.

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#### Determining honour related cases

The Dutch police have since 2006 found numerous "possibly" honour related conflicts among immigrants from Africa, the Middle East, South America and Asia.

But, interestingly, also among individuals from Poland, Romania and Russia.

Thus far they found not a single case among autochthonous Dutch, Germans, Belgians, French, Swedes, Danes, Norwegians and Finns.

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#### The culture list approach



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#### The culture list approach ...

##### The culture list approach cannot be sufficient:

- The main problem is the lack of definitions.
- Without definitions, there are no criteria.
- Without criteria it is impossible to objectively distinguish between cases.
- Without criteria one risks stereotyping and prejudicing.
- Without criteria people cannot defend themselves against our conclusions and assumptions.

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#### Misinterpretations and miscommunication

##### The 'culture list' approach:

- individuals do not understand why we respond in this way to their problems.
- individuals feel that their position is not understood and recognized.
- individuals feel defenseless against certain stereotypes and prejudices.

All these factors can contribute to misunderstanding and escalation.

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#### Misinterpretations and miscommunication

##### On the other hand, due to lack of understanding:

- individuals are able to exaggerate the problems in order to get what they want.
- individuals get the chance to manipulate us and others.
- individuals can refuse reasonable solutions and compromises.

It is our task to evaluate these situations and hold a clear picture.

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#### Is it true ...

##### We start with some questions:

Is it true that in 'western culture'

- conflicts are never honour related?
- honour is not important?

If so, then

- why is 'honour' common in regular English / Dutch / Finnish language use?
- why is 'honour' used in law texts?

And what does it mean?

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## What does 'honour' mean?

Honour in English / European language use

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## It is an honour to ...



"It is an honour to shake hands with ..."

What does 'honour' mean here?

Could it be this signification of honour which is involved in the violence?

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## Significations of honour

In English 'honour' is used in many significations:

1. **Sense of honour** (or pride): "the accusation **touched her honour**"
2. **High social status, matter of pride**: "It is an **honour** to be invited by the governor"; "To win the League is a matter of honour"; "He received a **medal of honour**"
3. **Respect**: "The people **shows honour** to its heroes"
4. **Decoration**: "She wore **military honours** on her uniform"
5. **Award, laurels**: "He **received an honour** for his work as a politician"

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## Significations of honour

6. **Moral standing/dignity**: "My grandfather is a **man of honour**", "Mary is an **honorable woman**"
7. **Integrity, good reputation**: "Nobody should doubt John's honour", "My **word of honour**"; "Eve was **discharged with honour**"
8. **Chastity**: "My aunt **protects her honour**"
9. **Virginity**: "That night, Eve **lost her honour**"

From the context it becomes clear which meaning is intended.

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## Significations of honour

In which signification of 'honour' people would commit violence?

1. **Sense of honour** (or pride)
2. **High social status, matter of pride**
3. **Respect**
4. **Decoration**
5. **Award, laurels**
6. **Moral standing/dignity**
7. **Integrity, good reputation**
8. **Integrity, good reputation**
9. **Chastity**
10. **Virginity**

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## Honour as 'good reputation'

Imagine what happened if ...

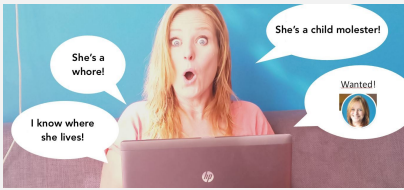
your friends, your neighbours, your acquaintances, your colleagues, your manager ...

started **doubting your integrity** ...

they think you are a parasite, a fraud, a thief, a child beater, or worse ...

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### What if they doubt your integrity?



### What does the law say?

Luckily the law prohibits this!

### Defamation laws

10 § "Jokaisen yksityiselämä, kunnia ja kotirauha on turvattu".  
(The private life, honour and home of every person shall be secured)

#### Art 12 of the UNDHR:

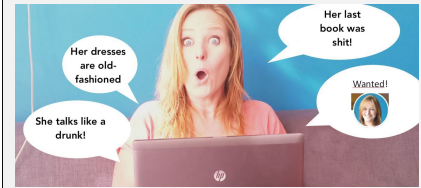
"No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation".

#### What does this mean?

Why is it so important to secure somebody's 'honour' against unjustified attacks?

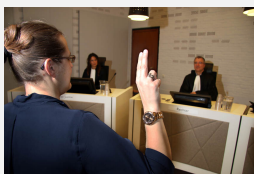
### No protection against criticism

Note that the defamation law does not protect against criticism:



### No protection against criticism

Defamation laws do not protect against criticism,  
but they do protect against **defamation** and **slander**.



"The suspect wrote on FaceBook I am a **lousy cook!**"

"The suspect wrote on FaceBook I am a **lousy driver!**"

"The suspect wrote on FaceBook I am a **whore!**"

"The suspect wrote on FaceBook I am a **pedosexual!**"

### The law protects against defamation

The defamation law does not protect against criticism, but it does protect against **defamation** and **slander**.



## Moral Stigma

The result of defamation typically is a **moral stigma**, which causes damage to one's **reputation of integrity**, one's **moral reputation**.

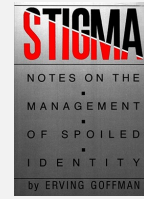
**honour** = 'moral reputation'.

If an individual's **moral reputation** is damaged, other people will no longer **trust** them.

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## Research on stigma

Stigma research starts with ...



Goffman (1954) already discerned are various types of stigma. One is the 'conduct stigma'.

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## The Consequences of a moral stigma

When people think you are **not trustworthy** and have **no integrity**, you risk being ostracized, expelled and stigmatized:



Go away, you're a ...

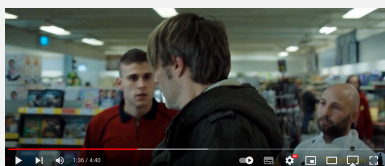
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An angry crowd in front of your door!

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## Problems in your supermarket



Getting a punch in your face in the supermarket!

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Damaging your own moral reputation

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Question



Can an individual damage also his/her own moral reputation?  
And cause a moral stigma?

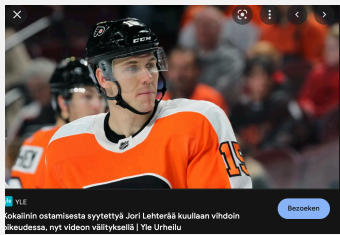
Who would want to experience loss of honour?

Commit fraud



Who would like to experience loss of honour?

Get caught with cocaine



Have a child without being married

Kartanontyttärestä kasvoi epäriilisten auttaja – Alva Forsäuksen sydän sykki yhteiskunnan hylkiöille

Sata vuotta sitten naimaton äiti oli yhteiskunnan alinta kastia, joka pahimmillaan joutui jättämään lapsensa. Tähän surkuteen tartui kartanontyttö Alva Forsäus.



Marry the enemy

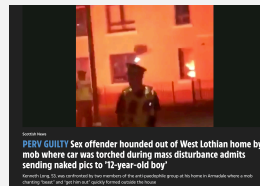
CNN: FBI:n työntekijä matkusti Syyriaan ja meni salaa naimisiin Isis-terroristin kanssa

Daniela Greene matkusti Syyriaan ja varotti terroristien tulkinnasta.



(It is not always possible to 'follow your heart'...)

Send sexual pictures to a child



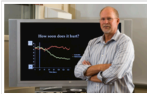
Yet as long as nobody knows, your honour is **not lost**, and you will not experience honourlessness.  
This, however, makes one vulnerable for blackmailers.

### The emotional consequences of a moral stigma

### Professor Kipling Williams

#### Professor: Pain of ostracism can be deep, long-lasting

May 10, 2011



Kipling D. Williams, a Purdue professor of psychological sciences, studies how ostracism hurts individuals as much or even more than a physical injury. His research is reported in the current issue of Current Directions in Psychological Sciences. (Purdue University photo/Mark Simons)

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. — Ostracism or exclusion may not leave external scars, but it can cause pain that often is deeper and lasts longer than a physical injury, according to a Purdue University expert.

"Being excluded or ostracized is an invisible form of bullying that doesn't leave bruises, and therefore we often underestimate its impact," said Kipling D. Williams, a professor of psychological sciences. "Being excluded by high school friends, office colleagues, or even spouses or family members can be devastating. And because ostracism is experienced in three stages, the life of those painful feelings can be extended for the long term. People and clinicians need to be aware of this so they can

Kipling Williams, an important researcher of ostracism

### Williams

Prof. Dr. Kipling Williams:

"More than 5,000 people have [over the years] participated in studies using a **computer game** [...] to show how just **two or three minutes of ostracism** can produce **lingering negative feelings**."

"How can it be that such a **brief experience**, even when being ignored and excluded by strangers [= researchers] with whom the individual will never have any face-to-face interaction, can have such a **powerful effect**?"

### Effects of social exclusion

The effects of a social stigma which causes social exclusion:

- (possible) feelings of guilt and regret (in regard to the misconduct)
- feelings of shame (in the distinct senses of 'Scham' and 'Schande')
- feelings of anger, anxiety,
- feelings of helplessness,
- depression,
- physical problems: heart conditions, etc.

(Rude e.a. 'Social Rejection, 2010; Eisenberger e.a.; Moor e.a. The Heartbrake of Social Rejection 2010)

### Amanda Todd

The Canadian girl **Amanda Todd** (1996 – 2012)



Amanda (15 y) online showed ('flashed') her breasts to someone — a 'joke'. This man then asked her to **show more**.

When she **refused**, he put the photo of her breasts online, so that her **classmates** would see it.



Because of this Amanda got the **moral stigma** of being a 'slut'. She was then **'bullied'** and **ostracized** by her classmates.

When she moved to another town, he did the same for her **new class**. After some time she committed **suicide**.



Exoneration

Exoneration: freed from blame

Exoneration

Exoneration means: re-establishing one's honour.

A Chicago woman's wrongful conviction inspired the California Innocence Project. Now, she's been exonerated



Usually this means an end to the moral stigma,

a chance to restore social relationships.

Note that whether one is re-accepted depends on the people in the community.

Stigma by Association

Someone close to you is ...

What if a colleague, an employee, or, worse, a family member gets a moral stigma?

What would be the consequences?



How would this man feel? And why?

Courtesy stigma

What this man experiences is called a stigma by association, or a 'courtesy stigma' (Goffman).

A courtesy stigma causes a group of people to be negatively judged due to some moral misconduct of one individual of that group.

Small children can be stigmatized too



Metje Blaak, (former) defendant of prostitutes' rights in the Netherlands

"I have seen that children had to leave the daycare-center because their mother was a prostitute."

"I have mediated to let these children back in, but the relationship was damaged too much, and the women would seek out another daycare-center."

Advice to the associates of the women

Questions:

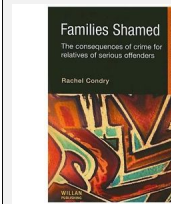
- What would you advise the women's husbands and parents?
- In regard to the social consequences, does it matter much whether they approve of the woman's (former) activities?
- What would you advise their children?
- How would you explain the situation to them?

What are the associates' options?

The associates' options

What are the associates' options?

The associates' options



According to Rachel Condry distancing from the deviant family member is likely to help re-establishing social relations.

Family members who said: 'I condemn what s/he did, but X is still my daughter / son /...', were less likely to restore social relations.

What are the associates' options?

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**EXCLUSIVE 'She's not my daughter': Mother of British jihadi bride dubbed 'the first lady of ISIS'**

**says she regrets giving birth to Tania Joya and 'cut her off many years ago'**

**EXCLUSIVE**

- Tania Joya's mother told MailOnline she is 'sorry she even gave birth to her'
- Jihadi's Childhood: 66, said she 'disowned' her daughter almost 20 years ago
- She added: 'I have nothing to do with her and neither does the rest of the family'

When your daughter marries the 'wrong' guy.

'I Cut Contact With My Friend When She Married A Convicted Paedophile'

When your friend marries the 'wrong' guy.

Groups often expell

Groups all the time expell deviant members that discredit them:

**Finns Party politician denied leave to appeal ethnic agitation conviction**

Terhi Kivimäki, formerly of the Finns Party, was convicted for her writings about immigration, Islam and terrorism.



When a member of your party expresses immoral opinions.

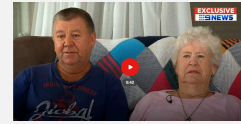
Apologies on behalf of the family

This was published 5 years ago

**'We are so sorry': Brenton Tarrant's family apologise to shooting victims**

Harriet Stoddart, Patrick Beggs, Laura Chung and © Inside the Daily Mail

March 17, 2018 - 11:05pm



Brenton Tarrant's uncle and grandmother

Your ...

All of this no doubt creates an existential fear with the associates.

They often see only one option



"Go away, you ruined **our** organisation!"

"Go away, you ruined **all of your** friends!"

"Go away, you ruined **your** family's lives!"

Moral stigma in non-western populations

Moral stigma in non-western populations:

- Do **moral stigmas** occur among non-western people?
- Do **moral stigmas by association** occur among non-western people?
- Do moral stigmas have **similar effects** on non-western people as on western people?
- Do non-western people **respond** in similar ways as western people?

If so, we can get rid of the defective 'culture list' approach, and apply a well-researched concept.

Criterion

This means:

**A case is honour related ...**

when certain behaviour is likely to evoke a moral stigma on an individual and, by association, on his/her family members.

## Two examples

[British] Jane experienced local children throwing eggs at her windows [...] They just totally ignore me. They won't speak to me. [...] It's like they're blaming me for what [my daughter has] done.' [...]

'And sometimes I get people shouting abuse at me. Telling me to f-off or go and live somewhere else [...]'

'We were the most prominent family, with the best reputation,' said [Jordanian] Um Tayseer, [Basma's] mother. 'Then we were disgraced. Even my brother and his family stopped talking to us. No one would even visit us.'

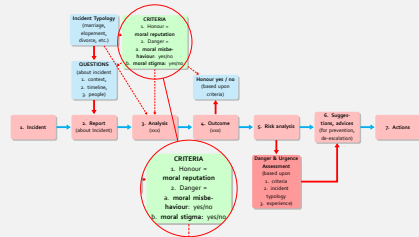
Basma's family was ostracized, her sisters deemed unmarriageable, her brothers confronted with taunts.

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## Completing our model

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## We can now add criteria to our model:



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## Six contexts of honour related violence

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## Six contexts of HRV

1. **Social sanctions** (stigma, ostracism, exclusion, rejection, incl. 'bullying' and violence)
2. **Responses to moral insults** (that cannot remain unanswered)
3. **Protection** of family members against other people's deviance
4. **Prevention** (of moral deviance)
5. **Secrecy** (of moral deviance)
6. **Rehabilitation, Restoration of honour** (= restoration of one's moral reputation)

In all these contexts acts of violence are considered to have a **moralistic** motive (as opposed to a predatory motive) (Black, 1983).

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## Honour related violence

Honour related violence is a response to the fear that oneself and all members of a family (or another group) will be ostracized and bullied, because of a **moral stigma**.

This is an existential fear.

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## Not honour related

Therefore, **not honour** related are disputes about

- losing one's job / money / status, ...
- impolite behaviour, ...
- going against the parents' / elders' **wishes/authority**, ...
- refusing to do **chores**, ...
- school / career **choice / achievements**, ...
- choosing an **unapproved marriage candidate**, ...
- refusing a **proposed marriage candidate**, ...
- **divorce** plans .../ being divorced ...
- taking someone **forcibly abroad**, ...

...unless there is some type of **moral misbehaviour** involved.

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## Not honour related

If there is no moral misbehaviour, the people involved will not consider the case honour related, regardless of the escalation of the conflict.

**If those involved do not consider a case honour related, why should we?**

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## Brief about honour killings

I found that honour killings **only** occur:

- in the context of sexual misbehaviour:
  1. **Honour killing I: Against an external individual:** rape, seduction — against the rapist/ seducer
  2. **Honour killing II: Against a relative (internal):**
    - 2.1 pre- and postmarital sex (i.e. while being unmarried)
    - 2.2 extramarital sex (i.e. while being married)

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## Conditions

Further conditions for labeling a case as 'honour killing':

- the deviant (the victim) can be held **fully accountable** of his/her deeds!
- a HK serves to **restore honour** (HK cannot be a preventive action)
- the people in the community determine whether the murder of X will result in cleansing honour and removing the stigma.

If these conditions do not apply, it is not an honour killing.

Note that...

- HRV (including HK) is both domestic and external violence.
- **blood revenge** is also a type of honour related violence.

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## The label 'honour related'

**Suppose you say:**

"Ayşe is the victim of honour related violence",

you mean ...

"We **are sure** that Ayşe was beaten by her family members because she committed **moral / sexual** misbehaviour.

They feared a moral stigma and social exclusion for all family members, including small children. They had no other motive."

**At least, that is how many people involved will interpret your words.**

So, be careful!

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