

Honor killing as a dark side of modernity: Prevalence, common discourses, and a critical view

Social Science Information

2021, Vol. 60(1) 86–106

© The Author(s) 2021



Article reuse guidelines:

sagepub.com/journals-permissions

DOI: [10.1177/0539018421994777](https://doi.org/10.1177/0539018421994777)

journals.sagepub.com/home/ssi



Arash Heydari 

University of Science and Culture, Iran

Ali Teymoori 

Helmut Schmidt University, Germany

Rose Trappes

Bielefeld University, Germany

Abstract

Honor killing is a serious social problem in some countries that is yet to be adequately explained and addressed. We start with an overview of the conceptualization of this phenomenon and review its global prevalence. We argue that honor killing cannot be fully explained by focusing only on religion and sexism. We present a feminist Durkheimian analysis of honor killing as a form of informal social control and argue that honor killing represents a ‘dark side of modernity’ in which the systematic marginalization and stigmatization of minorities and social groups have led them to rely more on traditional honor codes as a kind of informal social control, exacerbating honor crimes. We discuss how a more effective approach to combat honor killing requires not only addressing the issues of sexism and religious fundamentalism, but also the systematic exclusion and stigmatization of local groups and minorities.

Keywords

honor killing, informal social control, marginalization, modernity, stigmatization of minorities

Corresponding author:

Ali Teymoori, School of Social Psychology, Helmut Schmidt University, Holstenhofweg 85, Hamburg, 22043, Germany.

Email: ali.teymoori@uqconnect.edu.au

Résumé

Les crimes d'honneur constituent un problème sociétal grave dans certains pays et qui n'est pas encore correctement expliqué et appréhendé. Nous commençons par une vue d'ensemble de la conceptualisation de ce phénomène et par une analyse de sa fréquence au niveau mondial. Nous défendons le fait que les crimes d'honneur ne peuvent pas être entièrement expliqués en se focalisant uniquement sur la religion et le sexisme. Nous proposons une analyse féministe des crimes d'honneur et basée sur la théorie durkheimienne, en tant que ces crimes renvoient à une forme de contrôle social informel. D'autre part, nous avançons l'idée que les crimes d'honneur représentent une « part d'ombre de la modernité », au sein de laquelle la marginalisation et la stigmatisation systématiques de minorités et de groupes sociaux ont mené ces derniers à se reposer sur des codes d'honneur plus traditionnels, qui servent alors de moyens de contrôle social informel, exacerbant ainsi le nombre de crimes d'honneur. Nous expliquons ensuite comment une approche plus efficace pour combattre les crimes d'honneur requière de ne pas seulement s'intéresser aux problèmes de sexisme et de fondamentalisme religieux, mais aussi à l'exclusion et à la stigmatisation systématiques de groupes locaux et de minorités.

Mots-clés

contrôle social informel, crime d'honneur, marginalisation, modernité, stigmatisation de minorités

Introduction

Honor killing is a particularly harmful and disturbing form of the control over women's behavior. It has been taking place for thousands of years, and continues to be practiced globally, particularly, but not exclusively, amongst communities in or from South East Asian, Middle Eastern, and Mediterranean countries. There have been various efforts to decrease honor killing incidences, including the work of international organizations (e.g., World Health Organization [WHO] and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women [CEDAW]), local activism and organizations (e.g., human right activists and lawyers, NGOs), legal reformation (e.g., rejection of 'honor' defense in legal codes for murdering family members in Brazil in 1991 and in Turkey in 2009), and even cinema (e.g., *The Paternal House* [2012] by Kianoush Ayari, *The Bride of Fire* [2000] by Khosrow Sinai). Although these steps have been important to increase public awareness, the incidence of honor killings is still alarmingly high. From a social scientific perspective, we aim to explore the specificity and causes of honor killing. Our hope is that a better understanding of underlying causes will open a new front to combat this hideous crime against women and subsequently increase the effectiveness of the current efforts and activism dedicated to decrease and hopefully eliminate such crimes.

Various explanations have been or could be proposed for the prevalence and persistence of such a harmful and oppressive phenomenon. Here we contest the idea that honor killing is merely a symptom of a larger problem with social violence, or that it is merely

a consequence of particular religious precepts. Instead, we argue that honor killing must be understood as a technique of social control and cohesion exercised in tightly-knit communities, in which women's sexuality and social behaviors are key communal values and resources. In addition, we challenge the assumption that honor killing is due to a lack of modernization of tribal groups. Indeed, there is a more dynamic relation between modernization and honor crimes and, according to some accounts, the phenomenon of honor crimes has intensified during the modernization process (cf. Kulczycki and Windle, 2011; Rose, 2009; Nowak et al., 2016). We argue that the systematic exclusion and stigmatization of various social groups during modernization have led group members to rely more on their local honor codes for security and control.

We first introduce the phenomenon of honor killing and report its prevalence across different countries. We then consider and reject existing explanations for honor killing. First, we criticize the common view that honor killing is a sign of a primitive or barbaric religious, cultural or social ideology, arguing that this belief is both shallow and orientalist. We also argue that the idea that honor killing is just a sign of sexism is not sufficient because it is reductionist and does not give any indication of how to address the contextual conditions under which this phenomenon takes place. Second, we argue that general theories about the structural causes of violent crime are not suitable because they underestimate the role of group processes in honor killing.

To address these deficiencies, we develop a feminist Durkheimian account of honor killing that can explain the social role of the extremely violent control over women's sexuality and social behaviors. We argue that honor killing's social role can become increasingly important as communities face a transition away from rural or urban traditional contexts. Given the importance of familial and societal organization for the reproduction, economic production, and survival of closely-knit groups, honor codes provide a social norm and value system to secure and control group cohesion. The transition to urban contexts has not offered a viable alternative to the micro-economic production of some communities, and it has also created conditions of systematic exclusion and stigmatization. Hence, we suggest that honor killing is 'a dark side of modernity'. We conclude with some suggestions about how understanding honor killing in light of our analysis may lead to better approaches to tackling honor killing and perhaps improving the efficiency of existing institutional activities and activism in reducing the prevalence of this violent crime against women.

The phenomenon of honor killing

Honor killing is one of the most severe and violent crimes¹ against women (Gill, 2006). It is the murder of a girl or woman by her family members (such as her father, mother, brothers, uncles, or grandparents) or sometimes community members because of her disapproved sexual behavior (Kogacioglu, 2004; Siddiqui, 2005). What counts as disapproved sexual behavior is specific to communities and sometimes even families; it typically includes not only sex outside marriage, but also flirting, refusing arranged marriage, sex before marriage, and even being raped. A woman's perceived or actual transgression of family, community or religious sexual traditions is seen as disrespecting or dishonoring these traditions and bringing dishonor on the family or community. In killing the

woman, family members seek to restore the honor of their family or community (Baxi et al., 2006; Yadav and Tripathi, 2004).

The role of honor in honor-based cultures

Honor crimes derive from a conceptualization of honor that is dominant in many 'honor-based' communities, particularly in the Mediterranean and Middle East (Ahmetbeyzade, 2008). Notwithstanding local variations in meaning, the concept of honor in such communities can best be characterized as the public recognition of one's moral worth, prestige and social standing (Moxnes, 2003). Even when honor might signify one's inner quality in one's own eyes, it ultimately requires group recognition for validation and confirmation.

As a chief source of moral worth and social standing, honor serves as a license for social participation in honor-based cultures. In other words, 'it is through the holding of honour that individuals find a place in their community' (Sen, 2005: 44). A dishonorable act, such as not keeping a promise or not responding to insults, is one that is seen to break with the value system of the social group. Dishonorable acts bring shame or humiliation and damage one's prestige or moral worth in the group, and subsequently restrict participation in various aspects of public life.

Given that group recognition is essential to honor, which in turn determines the ability to participate in the group, the social group and how they perceive and evaluate certain actions play a crucial role in individuals' social interactions and life in honor-based communities. In addition, honor codes become a unifying element of the culture which is ingrained in individuals' social life. As a result, imposing honor codes on individuals is not a matter of personal choice but of community norms and collectively shared values in communities.

Women's sexuality as an object of honor systems

Women's sexuality is an important object of control in systems of honor. In such cultures, women's sexuality belongs by default to the male members of the family and the group, such as fathers, brothers, or husbands. The 'integrity' of women's sexuality is seen as an important source of honor for the family. To preserve their family's honor, women are required to safeguard their sexuality and control their social behaviors through social norms and values such as 'chastity', 'modesty', 'purity', and 'self-restraint'. By not 'safeguarding' their sexuality and deviating from social norms, women are perceived to bring shame on the family, in the sense of damaging the social standing of the family in the eyes of other community members.

Since in an honor-based culture women's sexuality and social behaviors are an important source of honor for the family or group, the transgression of sexual and chastity codes by women has consequences for men's social standing and participation in public life. Such transgression is then often followed by honor crimes committed by men (Nye, 1998). Importantly, individuals within such communities typically do not view honor killing as violence but rather as an act to restore honor, to regain one's social status and

license to participate in social activities. Such action binds the community together and strengthens members' attachment to their community. If individuals have not performed honor killing when tradition dictates it should occur, they are seen to deserve punishment such as leaving the local community forever (Gharaei-Moghaddam, 1999).

Andrea Smith (2004) analyzes the statements of a witness of the honor killing of a woman on the Tunisian island of Djerba. The witness was a member of the same community and believed that the action was 'motivated not by personal interests or individual idiosyncrasies, but by specific cultural codes regarding honorable behavior.' In the eyes of the witness, 'the murder is reframed as a culturally justified, and perhaps even expected, 'honor' killing' (Smith, 2004: 109–110). Smith highlights how the shared beliefs and practices related to 'honour, shame and the provision of hospitality in this small community' (2004: 109) provide members of the community with a meaning for and justification of the woman's murder. In the case of honor killing, those who commit the murder believe that they have done the right thing. Additionally, perceptions of maintained or restored honor and face in the community give perpetrators a positive self-image (Athens, 2005).²

Such a conceptualization of honor implies the men's, and the group's, full control over women's physical bodies and sexuality, particularly their pre-marital virginity. In addition, it is common to claim that the difference between honor and shame can be mapped onto gender differences, such that men are associated with honor and women with shame (Moxnes, 2003; Nye, 1998). That is, this dominant understanding of honor 'is constructed through dualistic notions of male 'honor' and female 'shame', whereby masculinity is largely constructed in terms of female chastity' (Reddy, 2008: 307). In the case of a woman's infidelity or violation of the sexual or marital codes in an honor-based culture, men's honor or reputation is damaged and therefore violence is perceived to be a legitimate tool to restore the honor (Vandello and Cohen, 2003).

It is important to note, however, that women are not passive objects in the system of honor. Lila Abu-Lughod (2016) challenges the simple attribution of shame, victimhood and passivity to women's role in the system of honor as based on a limited focus on men's perspectives. When anthropological attention is broadened to women's own perspectives in honor cultures, women can be seen to play a more active role in honor systems. Amongst women in honor-based cultures, there are complex shared moral codes that can transform an apparently negative and passive position of shame into positive values such as modesty, shyness, self-restraint, a deferential attitude and poetic romance. According to Abu-Lughod's (2011) analysis of Bedouin women in Egypt, honor, modesty, and sexual virtue are central to women's social relations, everyday discussions, storytelling, and their social status, and play an important role in governing their social life. Hence, women can also actively control their own bodies and behavior, finding in this activity a sense of agency, as well as moral and social value. Nevertheless, it remains true that in many honor-based cultures, women's social behavior in general and their sexuality in particular is an object of value and control not just for and by women themselves, but also for and by men in the family or social group. And it is the importance of women's sexuality and social behavior in honor-based communities that characterizes the phenomenon of honor killing.

The global prevalence of honor killing

Honor killing occurs around the globe, mostly in developing countries and especially in Middle Eastern countries such as Iraq, Jordan, Syria, Iran and Yemen (Niaz, 2003; Yadav and Tripathi, 2004), South Asian countries such as Pakistan and India (Niaz, 2003), and Mediterranean countries such as Turkey (Ahmetbeyzade, 2008). Honor killing has also been reported in Western countries, which has provoked questions about the distinction between honor killing and domestic violence. The high rates of honor killing make it crucial to address the specificity of the crime and its causes.

Because many cases go unreported, the prevalence of honor killing is difficult to determine. The United Nations Population Fund estimates that 5,000 women are killed annually in the name of honor (Kulczycki and Windle, 2011). Due to unreported cases, this might be an underestimation and the actual rate is likely to be higher (Kulczycki and Windle, 2011). Some studies have reported an increase in the rate of honor killings in recent years (Al-Adili et al., 2008; Chesler, 2010; Kulczycki and Windle, 2011; Yadav and Tripathi, 2004). The recorded number of honor killings has risen dramatically worldwide from 1989 to 2009 (Chesler, 2010). This observed increase may be due to an increase in reporting, media coverage, and recording of such cases rather than in their actual occurrence.

Although the precise figure is not known, Pakistan is believed to have the highest number of honor killings (Niaz, 2003; Yadav and Tripathi, 2004). In 2004, the Pakistan Ministry of Interior reported that a total of 4,101 cases of honor crimes (1,327 male,³ 2,774 female) were reported to the court between 1998 and 2003 (Warraich, 2005). According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), the frequency of honor killing is steadily increasing, with 869 of honor killing reported in 2013, 1,000 in 2014 and 1,100 in 2015 (Ahmed, 2019).

The rate of honor killing in Middle Eastern countries is variable, but always concerningly high. An average of 23 women are killed in Jordan annually for the sake of honor, constituting approximately 30% of the total murder crimes in Jordan. In Lebanon, between 1996 and 1998, 38 cases of honor killing were reported; the victims were mostly less than 18 years old. In Egypt, 52 honor killing cases took place in 1997, and in the same year, an alarmingly high incidence of 400 women were reported as victims of honor killing in Yemen (Yadav and Tripathi, 2004).

In Iran, there are cases of honor killing in rural or less developed areas in west and south-west provinces such as Kermanshah, Ilam, Kurdistan, and Khuzestan. For instance, among Arab communities in rural and less developed areas of Khuzestan, both acts of adultery and a woman's refusal to marry within her own local community can lead to honor killing (Gharaei-Moghaddam, 1999). Based on the report of the Ministry of Justice in Khuzestan, 54 cases of honor killing were reported in Khuzestan in 2004 (Zare and Ghanami, 2008). And the Police Department in Khuzestan have reported that more than 40% of murders in Khuzestan are cases of honor killing.⁴

Honor killing has been repeatedly mentioned as a serious problem in Iraqi Kurdistan (Begikhani, 2005). From 1991 to 2003, the estimated number of female victims of honor killing in Iraqi Kurdistan ranges 'from 1,250 [...] to some 5,000 according to the Independent Women's Organization' (Begikhani, 2005: 210). Finally, according to media

reports, approximately 53 women in Turkey were victims of honor killing from 1994 to 1996 (Kogacioglu, 2004) and the rate increased in 2000s, especially in the Eastern and Southern parts of Turkey (Cakmak and Altuntas, 2009).

Honor crime has been reported in Western countries, mostly among immigrants and refugees from South Asian and Middle Eastern backgrounds (Chesler, 2010; Siddiqui, 2005; Yadav and Tripathi, 2004; Werbner, 2005). From 1999 to 2004, 20 cases of honor crimes were reported in the United Kingdom (Yadav and Tripathi, 2004). Phyllis Chesler (2009) listed fourteen cases of honor crimes in North America during 1989–2008 and 26 in Europe during 1998–2008.

In Western countries, the killing of a spouse is usually considered to be domestic violence. There are many similarities between domestic violence and honor killing. For instance, in the United States between 1989 and 2004, 21,124 women and 8,997 men were murdered by their partners. In some of those cases the partner (mostly men) committed the murder in reaction to the victim's perceived sexual transgressions, such as flirting or having an affair (Chesler, 2009). Nancy Baker, Peter Gregware, and Margery Cassidy (1999) propose that the rationale behind honor systems that justifies abuse and legitimizes violence is global and can be seen in conventional domestic violence as well as honor killing. They find that both honor killing cases among immigrants and conventional cases of domestic violence in the US tend to involve a cultural or personal system of honor affected by loss of control over women's behavior. The murder of women in both honor killing and domestic violence cases provides a mechanism through which men control women's behavior (Baker et al., 1999).

Nevertheless, honor killing has some distinctive characteristics that distinguish it from most cases of domestic violence. Honor killing is communal in nature, resulting from a family or group council decision (Kulczycki and Windle, 2011). For the perpetrator of honor crime, the murder is an act to purify oneself from the shame that was brought on the family, to restore one's moral worth and social standing in the group (Sen, 2005). In addition, as Chesler (2009) describes, the age of victims, the killer's relation to the victim, and sometimes the amount of coordinated planning differ between honor crimes and domestic violence. For instance, it is likely that the woman's family get involved in the honor killing or that a few of the immediate family members coordinate the murder planning, which is highly unusual in other cases of domestic violence. Finally, cases of honor killing are entangled with group dynamics such as nationalism and marginalization (Abu-Lughod, 2011; Rose, 2009).

The distinct features of honor killing do not necessarily make it a separate category from domestic violence. The specificity of honor killing, however, requires more in-depth analysis. We consider two of the most common explanations for honor killing and then present our own analysis of the structural, contextual and historical factors involved in cases of honor killing.

Two common explanations: Religion and sexism

There are two main explanations for the phenomenon of honor killing: religion and sexism. On the one hand, the communities in which honor killing is practiced often share religious beliefs or practices, and sometimes religious precepts seem to explicitly

condone or proscribe acts and values related to honor killing. On the other hand, honor killing is clearly an example of the control of women's sexuality and social behavior through violence, and therefore seems to fall under standard analyses of domestic violence as a form of sexist oppression. We argue that although both religion and sexism play a role in justifying honor killing, neither is sufficient to provide a full explanation of the honor killing phenomenon.

Religion

After a comprehensive review of religious and traditional expectations of women, Chesler (2009: 62) concludes that 'fundamentalists of many religions may expect their women to meet some but not all of these expectations. But when women refuse to do so, Jews, Christians, and Buddhists are far more likely to shun rather than murder them. Muslims, however, do kill for honor, as do, to a lesser extent, Hindus and Sikhs'. Chesler concludes that 'the common denominator in each case is not culture but religion'. Chesler's argument is exemplary of much of the literature on honor killing, which by and large focuses on religion as an explanation.

We believe that explaining honor crimes based solely on religion is misleading and orientalist. Muslims do not constitute a unified group, nor do all different Muslim groups engage in honor killing. Furthermore, the categorical explanations rely on and reinforce a mainstream discourse that draws a distinction between 'us' Western countries 'as having a civilized culture' and 'them' or 'the other' 'as having a barbaric culture' (see Abu-Lughod, 2011; Rose, 2009; Said, 1978). Such a distinction is an attempt to present the real life conditions as well as the cultural values of different groups from the vantage point of the West as a transcendental dominant discourse, creating an inter-cultural atmosphere that can lead to discriminatory outcomes such as islamophobia (Young, 1990). For instance, in German public discourse, cases of honor killing have been attributed to failed multiculturalism, cultural problems, and issues with religion, locating the problem clearly with the racial-cultural other (Ercan, 2015). In addition, such orientalist explanations make honor killing appear exceptional, as if there was no such oppressive form of control over women in the West.

While we agree that religion does play an important role in honor killing, we argue that it does so only via its crucial connection to contextual factors, especially group norms and group-mindedness. For instance, in an empirical study, Manuel Eisner and Lana Ghuneim (2013) found that Muslim adolescents were more likely to endorse honor killing in comparison to non-Muslim adolescents among teenagers in Jordan; however, the effect of religiosity was no longer significant when they controlled for the effect of value systems and group norms, such as the patriarchal control of women and the group-mindedness of the extended family group. The reliance on religion and culture to explain honor killing essentializes the phenomenon as one aspect of individuals' demographic background rather than contextualizing this type of violence and understanding the mechanism that sustains this practice (Abu-Lughod, 2011; Ercan, 2015; Rose, 2009). The public discourse and policies have treated honor killing as a completely separate category to domestic violence, linking it to the backwardness of minorities or stigmatizing the culture of the respective communities. As we argue later in the paper, such

stigmatization can actually exacerbate the factors contributing to honor killing (also see Abu-Lughod, 2011; Yurdakul and Korteweg, 2020).

Sexism

Honor killing is a clear case of sexism. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women considers honor crimes as one form of violence against women, a practice that sustains the oppression of women (UN, 2009). The link between women's sexuality and family honor makes women's sexual and social behaviors part of the normative structure of the community (Abu-Lughod, 2011), granting an excessive level of power to men to control women's body and behavior (Frye, 1983; Young, 2012). In other words, the normative structure of the honor value system creates a network of forces and barriers that drastically limits the behavioral repertoire for women, controls the available behavioral repertoire of activities such as marriage, childbearing and -rearing, and exposes them to penalty and contempt even within the boundary of acceptable behavioral codes through constant scrutiny and surveillance (Frye, 1983; Young, 2012). This shows how the control over women's behavior is both systemic in the sense that it is a problem of the hierarchical normative structure of a local community controlled by men, and also contextual at the micro-level in a sense that it is ingrained in every aspect of daily life to reduce and immobilize a group or category of people. At both macro- and micro-level, honor killing is a clear instance of sexism. Similarly, one can also recall the connections presented in the previous section between honor killing and other cases of domestic violence, in which honor killing can be contextualized within a broader context of violence against women (Reimers, 2007).

Peter Glick et al. (2016) have argued that honor killing can be understood using the concepts of 'benevolent' and 'hostile' sexism. In this analysis, women who endorse honor codes have a benevolent sexist attitude, since it is for the protection and security of women and the family that they (non-violently) uphold these codes. In contrast, men supporting honor codes have hostile sexist attitudes, upholding the codes to confirm their superiority, control and masculinity (Glick et al., 2016). In addition, Jennifer Bosson and Joseph Vandello (2011) have linked the use of aggression in defense of men's honor to precarious manhood. According to this analysis, masculine status in honor-based cultures is elusive or uncertain, a quality that needs constant social validation and proof. Precarious masculinity must therefore be acquired, maintained, and restored with action and the use of aggression if needed (Bosson and Vandello, 2011; Gilmore, 1987).

Honor killing, as the violent control of women's sexuality and social conducts, construed as an object of men's honor, is certainly a form of sexist oppression. Seeing honor killing as a specific type of sexist violence helps to contextualize it as a form of oppression of and violence against women. Nevertheless, there are two problems with focusing only on sexism as an explanation for honor killing. First, an analysis in terms of sexism risks overlooking the specificity of honor killing and especially the special role that the micro-economics of the family play in group organization (Valentine et al., 2014). Second, a focus on sexism alone tends to reinforce stereotypes of the 'backwardness' of communities in which honor killing is committed, as stressed in the United Nations report (UN, 2009). This, as we elaborate in later sections, has the potential to exacerbate

the conditions that contribute to a high prevalence of honor killing. Drawing on work on oppression by Marilyn Frye (1983) and Iris Marion Young (2012), we argue that honor killing is a form of oppression that should be understood by taking into account the normative structure of the group as well as its complex socioeconomic organization that sustains and justifies honor crimes.

Structural factors of violent crime

Aside from religion and sexism, one potential resource for a theoretical understanding of the causes of honor killing is found in theories discussing common structural elements in various crimes, including homicide. One structural factor that is repeatedly considered as a very important factor for homicide is socioeconomic disadvantage.

From a Mertonian perspective (Merton, 1968), an adverse socioeconomic situation creates tension and deprivation which can lead to aggressive behavior (also see Cloward and Ohlin, 1960; Cohen, 1955). In his conceptualization of the strain theory, Robert Agnew (1985, 1992) highlights the importance of negative stimulants including stressors and economic hardship. The Marxist perspective points to the effect of the macro-economic system on micro-level crimes, and similarly Matthew Lee, Michael Maume and Graham Ousey (2003) point to the deprivation-crime relationship.

In theorizing about the high rate of crime in lower socio-economic areas, it is assumed that areas with lower socioeconomic status have weaker organizational foundations compared to higher socioeconomic status areas. According to the social disorganization theory perspective, socioeconomic disadvantage indirectly leads to crime and homicide through a reduction in the community's ability to reach a normative consensus to regulate the behavior of its members (Lee et al., 2003; Shaw and McKay, 1942). In other words, lower socioeconomic status reduces the community's social control capacity. In addition, economically disadvantaged areas typically have higher racial or ethnic diversity and higher rates of mobility that can potentially disrupt the formation of effective social organization in local communities, creating conflicts (Sampson and Groves, 1989; Shaw and McKay, 1942).

Initially it seems that socioeconomic status does play a role in honor killing. It is true that communities in which honor killing takes place are usually composed of people from lower social classes (Kogacioglu, 2004; Zare and Ghanami, 2008). For instance, Bizhan Zare and Kafah Ghanami (2008) surveyed 300 participants' attitude toward honor killing from marginalized communities of Khuzestan, Iran and found that 28% of their sample reported a very high support for honor killing if necessary. Respondents who were highly supportive of honor killing had very high attachment to group values and were less educated, were mostly from lower social classes and were less likely to travel and use mass media such as internet, satellite television, books, and newspapers. Interestingly, support for and positive opinion of honor killing was higher amongst women than men, even though women are the primary targets of honor killing. This result may be explained by considering that women tend to be less educated and more restricted in terms of opportunities for travel and media consumption, all of which were found to be the strongest predictors of support for honor killing.

However, as with conventional domestic violence and honor killing, there are some important dissimilarities between general homicides and honor killing. First, the motivation for honor killing is not economic but rather a collective value, the so-called 'lost honor' – losing one's license for social participation. It therefore seems unlikely that poverty can fully explain honor killing. Second, despite the emphasis of social disorganization theory on racial or ethnic differences and conflict, honor killing usually happens within largely ethnically homogenous communities. In the same vein, whereas previous theories focused on the effect of social disorganization and mobility on homicide rates, communities in areas with a high prevalence of honor killing have a high and systematic degree of organization (Zare and Ghanami, 2008). Finally, while Travis Pratt and Timothy Godsey (2003) find a strong negative relationship between social support and homicide rate, there is a higher prevalence of honor killing in close-knit communities (Kogacioglu, 2004; Sen, 2005). Thus, social control might function quite differently in a context with a high prevalence of honor killing as compared to the sorts of contexts considered by control theories (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990; Hirschi, 1969).

Thus, the structural factors such as social class and social disorganization do not fully explain honor killing. The study of honor killing requires a deeper understanding of the value system and group dynamics in local tightly-knit communities and of women's sexual and socio-economic roles in the familial and group context.

A feminist Durkheimian analysis of honor killing

One of the most noticeable characteristics of honor crimes is that they are perceived as acceptable and logical based on local norms and customs. These crimes are treated as a sacrifice that maintains norms and a sense of community among members. Understanding how codes of honor function in community life, as well as the role played by women's sexuality and social behavior in these communities, can help to explain the occurrence of honor killing. We call this approach 'feminist Durkheimian' to highlight the combined focus on the role of collective norms and value systems for group cohesion, as well as the importance of women's reproductive and micro-economic activities for close-knit communities.

Collective values and solidarity

In *The Righteous Mind*, Jonathan Haidt (2012) discusses the role of morality in group cohesion. Based on an evolutionary group selection account, Haidt argues that groups that are better able to create consensus and share intentions, norms, and virtues are more collaborative, cohesive and efficient against threat from other groups. In addition, greater identification with the group ('group-mindedness') increases conformance to norms and values, community cohesion, and the strength of social institutions. In tighter groups, the sense of being part of a family can be extended to the whole lineage and local community. The more that individuals identify with their own group and local community as a whole, the more they become depersonalized – a process through which one cognitively detaches from oneself and fully adopts the group norms and values (Voci, 2006). This creates group-minded individuals who have a greater sense of community and are better

able to survive. Hence, Haidt (2012) concludes that moral and social values bind people together and maintain the sense of community. However, morality can also 'blind' people by leading to strong reactions against challenges to norms, cohesion, and the sense of community of that group.

Group-mindedness is important for understanding systems of honor. It is in such group-minded communities that we see the emergence of collective emotions such as honor and pride (Durkheim, 1997). The extent to which groups become tightly-knitted often depends on the formation of codes of honor (Simmel, 1964). These unwritten rules or collectively shared values are related to what Émile Durkheim (1997: 57) calls 'mechanical solidarity or solidarity by similarities'. In general, according to Durkheim, mechanical solidarity creates a sense of morality that focuses on binding moral values, similarity between group members, respect to authority, loyalty to the group, and purification of individuals based on group values.

According to Durkheim, collective emotions aim to protect the group by creating solidarity between group members. The honor system seems to have an important symbolic function to keep group members together and ensure that the rules and roles of the group are upheld. Such honor systems work as a form of social informal control, ensuring that deviance gives rise to emotional reactions of disgust and shame and that deviants from the social and sexual roles face punishment (for more information on collective punishment, see Durkheim, 1997). Honor systems are thus an effective way for local communities to protect their members when there is a lack of appropriate social protection by the state and control over their community and its members. In such a situation everyone in the local community becomes responsible for ensuring group security and cohesion.

Moreover, the creation of a sense of community and group solidarity leads individuals to fuse their identity with group responsibilities and predisposes them to pro-group actions (Swann et al., 2012). When the fusion with the group is higher and individuals are bound with codes of honor, we might see more extreme pro-group behavior.

It is in this context that we can understand the role of religion in the honor system. Both Durkheim (1995) and Haidt (2012) agree that the primary purpose of religious rituals and beliefs is that of creating a sense of community. Religion as a social fact (Durkheim, 1995, 1997) cannot be studied by only focusing on individuals and ignoring the group-level influence of this phenomenon and the binding effects of such rituals and beliefs (Haidt, 2012). More precisely, 'sacredness binds people together, and then blinds them to the arbitrariness of the practices' (Haidt, 2012: 299).

The role of collective values and religious beliefs and practices in maintaining the community can be used to characterize honor killing in such communities. According to this analysis, honor killing would be a mechanism for the group to maintain their social bonds and sense of community. It does so by rectifying a behavior that has challenged the community's norms. However, this does not explain why women's sexuality and social behaviors in particular form a target of such strong control conducted by so many in the social group.

The control of women's sexuality and social behavior

The focus on group-mindedness and solidarity explains how value systems bind group members together, create a sense of community, establish a strong group boundary, and

guarantee the security of the group. However, group-mindedness *per se* does not explain why women's sexuality and social behavior in particular become a central object of this value system. Using classical feminist theory, we argue that importance of women's sexuality and social behavior in the honor value system is due to women's role in the reproduction and micro-economic organization of local groups.

First, women are tasked with giving birth and nurturing the next generation, as well as strengthening in-group relationships through marriage. There is an intersection between women's reproductive role and the honor system, such that the honor system aims to ensure that the reproductive role is directed toward the patriarchal structure of the group as well as the group's survival. In other words, the honor system provides a symbolic contractual framework to enforce a hierarchical relation between men and women, so that men govern the reproductive role of women to serve the strengthening of group ties (c.f., Fraser, 1993; Pateman, 2015).

Exploiting women's reproductive capacity toward strengthening in-group cohesion with in-group arranged marriage also creates a process to socialize new members into this value system, using the oppressed group to expand hierarchical inequality between men and women (Ferguson, 1989; Young, 2012). For instance, the values attached to family honor rest heavily on the premise of women's sexual activity only within approved marriage relations and women themselves might engage in policing the behavior of other related female members to ensure that their behavior upholds the honor codes (Kulczycki and Windle, 2011)

Second, the role of women in production has been crucial for local communities because women have played a central role in agriculture, animal husbandry, and household work in very tightly-knit local communities. Amanallah Gharaei-Moghaddam (1999) calls women's productive role in the group in Khuzestan part of a 'micro-method of rural production'. Anthropological evidence from rural life in Africa challenges the common division of labor assumption between domestic and public roles of men and women and emphasizes the crucial role of women for family in farming agriculture in local communities (Guyer, 1991).

Given the important roles that women play in the production and reproduction of local communities, women become objects of a complex internal network of values to ensure group survival and cohesion. Therefore, women's sexuality and social behavior take on a central as well as symbolic role in the honor system, and codes of honor derive their premises based on the predetermined role of women's sexuality and social behaviors in the family and local community (for a similar argument, also see Boddy, 1997; Moxnes, 2003).

As argued earlier, some common discourses on honor killing such as religious fundamentalism (Chesler, 2009) and sexism (Bosson and Vandello, 2011; Glick et al., 2016) cannot fully explain the causes of honor killing. This is not to deny that there are elements of religious practices that justify the use of violence or the authoritarian control of others' behavior (Eisner and Ghuneim, 2013; Teymoori et al., 2014). Nor do we deny that in honor killing a form of sexism is at play to control women's behaviors, body and sexuality. However, both explanations need to be contextualized in the specific concrete economic, social and familial organizations of honor-based communities. Using a feminist Durkheimian perspective to the system of honor shows that closely-knit communities

rely on honor codes as a kind of informal social control to ensure that the productive and reproductive roles of women are directed toward the unity of the group.

Tribalization in the face of modernity

A feminist Durkheimian analysis of honor killing explains it as an attempt to protect local community's life through mechanical solidarity. However, it does not tell us why honor killing as a form of control has persisted and even, according to some accounts, intensified in response to and in the process of modernization. We present honor crimes as a response to modernity, such that group members remain attached to their local life as a way to maintain their community in the face of marginalization and discrimination.

Although modernity is often used to describe a period in history beginning in the 17th century, it also refers to a specific set of ideas, goals, and political and cultural practices that arose at this time in Europe. In particular, modernity can be understood in terms of the Enlightenment project, according to which autonomy and rationality are the ultimate aims of human progress. The goals of autonomy and rationality, and their pursuit, are morally laden; being modern is mostly regarded as 'being good and civilized' in contrast to what is backwards, irrational or evil. Yet, as Jeffrey Alexander (2013) illuminates through a comprehensive review of social theories of modernity, progress to maturity and rationality does not take place in a linear way. Instead, it has always been accompanied by irrationalities, reactions, and unintended consequences. According to many social theories, the irrational forces and 'evils' are not external accompaniments to modernity, but are rather internal to the modernization process. For instance, while Enlightenment thinkers sought to enhance autonomy by creating a democratic social order at the national level, this at the same time resulted in new forms of control and new institutional barriers for autonomy (see, e.g., Max Weber's account of the Iron Cage in modernity and Michel Foucault's account of governmentality [e.g., Foucault, 2007, 2008]). As a result, modernity can neither be considered as a sharp break from the traditional form of society nor as a linear progression to maturity. Rather, it is a historical phenomenon with specific forms of discipline, control and social problems (Foucault, 1977).

In the traditional power structure, honor killing was understood as a moral act, serving as a punishment that maintains collective conscience and solidarity. Two changes in the transition from the traditional to the modern power structure question the legitimacy of traditional values. First, modernity heralds the rise of the individualistic value system and individual human rights, contrasting with the collectivistic values of traditional societies. This change from collectivism to individualism changes the attitude toward honor codes. The goal to maintain group cohesion and the community is no longer a sufficient condition to justify honor killing. As a result, honor killing becomes recognizable as the murder of an individual woman to unjustly control women's sexuality and social behaviors, a heinous crime that damages rather than supports the sense of community (also see, Durkheim, 1997).

The individualistic value system of modernity does not necessarily mean that the modernization process aims to dismantle honor as a way of dealing with relationships in honor-based cultures. Rather, the state claims the right to govern the society and is thereby in charge of establishing the rules to be carried out at the individual level. That

is, there is a shift in control of women's bodies (with or without honor system) from local communities to the nation-state (Rose, 2009; Sirman, 2014). That brings us to the second point, namely that the honor system has not disappeared with the rise of modernity but is entangled with modernization, urbanization and the rise of modern state (Rose, 2009; Sirman, 2014).

The second change from traditional society to modernity is thus the rise of the state and its both collectivizing and individualizing power structure (Foucault, 2007, 2008). The rise of state power as a source of power over a territory and its population came to prominence in the 17th and 18th centuries in Europe (Foucault, 2007) and around the 19th century in Iran (Heydari, 2016). State power creates a large collective by bringing all the population in a territory under state control. Despite its collectivizing force, state power also individualizes in a sense that it is the state in charge of not only individuals' life and death but also their physical bodies and life processes such as health and reproduction.

The state's collectivizing and individualizing power delegitimizes the traditional power structure in which local groups see themselves responsible for group members, including for women's bodies, as witnessed in honor crimes. There is thus a tension between state and local community power. This tension has intensified where the modern state has failed to provide equal opportunities and protect social groups and their members' rights. Such unequal treatment has led some people to cling to their own traditional codes as a means of maintaining control and security.

The systematic marginalization of individuals or groups in any form (economic, social, etc.) results in various reactions such as the creation of slums and various informal forms of social control (see Hopkins and Wallerstein, 1982). In the case of the honor-based value system, the reliance on informal control stigmatizes the marginalized group further and exacerbates the reliance on group norms in search for security. Systematic exclusion of individuals and groups based on a modern individualistic value system, on the one hand, and the systematic marginalization based on procedural and distributive state justice, on the other, produces a condition which leads groups to rely on honor codes and traditional form of control to find certainty and security.

Such communities and cultures are split between two conflicting value systems. Modern values force them toward individual choice and private possession of personal life, body, and mind. However, accepting modern values separates group members from their traditional honor system and puts them in a difficult position in which the cultural, economic, social and symbolic capitals are not in their favor (Bourdieu, 1984).

Tribalization, or the reliance on local and traditional codes of honor for social control, is intensified with the rise of modern state, a reaction to the problematic procedural and distributive justice of the state toward different ethnic groups, which results, for example, in lack of equality of opportunity, resources and various capitals (cf. Maffesoli, 1995). For instance, over the last century, more than 75 percent of Turkey's population has migrated to the cities where, due to a rapid urbanization, strong nationalism, and an unequal treatment by the state, cases of honor crime have increased (Rose, 2009; Sirman, 2014). It seems that the occurrence of such crimes is not irrelevant to modernity and such historically situated consideration helps understand the high prevalence of honor killing cases in the last two to three decades as reported in the works of Supriya Yadav and

Anushree Tripathi (2004), Jacqueline Rose (2009), and Phyllis Chesler (2010). More precisely, systematic stigmatization and marginalization drive individuals to rely on local honor codes for a sense of security, increasing the likelihood of honor crimes in response to deviance from the honor codes. That is why we call honor killing a 'dark side of modernity'.

It is also important to note that the destruction of the economic, political and social fabric of society because of war has dramatically contributed to the rise of local communities' power that use codes of honor for social control (Kulczycki and Windle, 2011). For instance, in the West Bank during the period between 2000 and 2001 that was marked with upheaval and political violence, Nadim Al-Adili et al. (2008) reported a 41% increase of death for single women inflicted by relatives (62 women in 2000 to 92 in 2001) and a 6% increase of death for married women during the same period (125 women in 2000 to 132 in 2001). Abu-Lughod (2011) reports how the younger Bedouin women in her research in the 1980s in Egypt complained about, but willingly submitted to, restrictions in the name of honor that they considered to be due to the political mobilization and instability that were transforming the broader political system. Thus, the failure or dysfunctionality of central authority in its procedural and distributive justice heralds the rise of local and group norms that heavily rely on honor codes for control and security (also see Nowak et al., 2016).

Conclusion

Honor killing is one of the most violent acts against women. Based on the reports we reviewed, numerous women fall victim to honor killing despite the efforts of various organizations against this form of violence. As indicated in a recent systematic review (Kulczycki and Windle, 2011), despite the gravity and magnitude of the problem there is a paucity of social scientific investigation of this phenomenon.

We presented two common explanations of honor killing, sexism and religious fundamentalism, and argued that honor killing is a specific kind of domestic violence that requires a deeper explanation to account for the condition under which it occurs. We then argued that a feminist Durkheimian account of group behavior can help understand the broader context of honor killing. We elaborated that it is the codes of honor and values rooted in the sense of community of the social groups that bind them together and at the same time blind them to the arbitrariness of the honor codes and values, leading them to ignore the rights of individuals in the group. Such contextual analysis seems to be necessary to situate the violence against women in the familial, social and economic organization of the local communities. Honor codes regarding women's sexuality and social behaviors function as a form of informal social control that maintains group cohesion, upholds an oppressive normative structure to control women's body, sustains the reproduction and micro-economics of local communities, and secures group survival by protecting group members against the insecurity of the surrounding environment.

Moreover, we developed the theory that honor killing is a dark side of modernity, a problem intensified throughout the modernization process. Honor killing takes place in communities which are both marginalized from the distributive and procedural processes of state power and at the same time stigmatized, based on the modern individualistic

value system. The systematic marginalization and stigmatization of social groups make them more group-oriented and reliant on the local honor codes, which in turn exacerbates honor crimes.

Understanding the cause of the phenomenon is of course the first step to solving the problem. Indeed, when the state and its authorities fail to provide security and welfare for society members, different communities rely on their own methods of survival and social informal control. State authorities contribute to the prevalence of this phenomenon rather than controlling it through their failure to provide security for minorities and small communities. If the authority of the state is able to provide suitable social control for all its members, social informal control may lose its significance. It is in this context that we think the efforts to combat honor crimes do not necessarily lie in just dealing with religious fundamentalism and sexism. The sole focus on sexism and fundamentalism can backfire since it might stigmatize groups further and hence increase reliance on social informal control through traditional codes of honor. Thus, we believe that a more effective approach would be to combat honor killing systematically by addressing not only the issues of sexism and fundamentalism, but also the systematic exclusion of minorities and their stigmatization.

Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

ORCID iDs

Arash Heydari  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1494-1365>

Ali Teymoori  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2227-7361>

Notes

1. The term crime is a legal term. The act of honor killing, however, has not been precisely considered as crime in the legal system of some countries, a case which has been extensively criticized by human rights lawyers, women's organizations, NGOs, collective actions against the legal interpretation of honor crimes, and many feminists. The term 'honor' also indicates that those who commit this crime do not consider it to be an immoral act but an honorable one. We use the term crime in its general sense to indicate the violence and immorality of this act.
2. Insights into honor killing in Mediterranean cultures can be gained from studies on lynching, informal public executions by a group or a mob, often by hanging, in order to punish a transgressor or intimidate a minority group (Nisbett and Cohen, 1996). Lynching is very different to honor killing as it is not only directed toward other men, but also directed to maintain racial oppression and sometimes purely for the sake of intimidation. However, although the context is different, there seems to be a similar underlying motivating factor for both honor killing and lynching, namely restoring the honor of a close-knit community. Christine Arnold-Lourie (2008) has argued that cases of lynching are all 'honor killings' as the response of the community to the violent crimes mostly occurs based on gender and race. And Richard Nisbett and Dov Cohen (1996) found that the culture of honor (some rituals or customs which are valued by the community members) determines the crime, even after statistically controlling for poverty, education, and gun prevalence, among other variables.

3. This is among the few documents that report the male victims of honor killing. Sometimes the man involved in the 'perceived dishonored act' is also murdered, but reporting on this aspect of honor killing is almost always missing from honor killing reports (Kulczycki and Windle, 2011).
4. Khuzestan newspaper.

References

- Abu-Lughod L (2011) Seductions of the 'honor crime'. *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 22(1): 17–63.
- Abu-Lughod L (2016) *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Agnew R (1985) A revised strain theory of delinquency. *Social Forces* 64(1): 151–167.
- Agnew R (1992) Foundation for a general strain theory of crime and delinquency. *Criminology* 30(1): 47–88.
- Ahmed S (2019) The honor killing of Qandeel Baloch: Visibility through social media and its repercussions. In: Zaleski K, Enrile A, Weiss EL, et al. (eds) *Women's Journey to Empowerment in the 21st Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ahmetbeyzade C (2008) Gendering necropolitics: The juridical-political sociality of honor killings in Turkey. *Journal of Human Rights* 7(3): 187–206.
- Al-Adili N, Shaheen M, Bergström S, et al. (2008) Deaths among young, single women in 2000–2001 in the West Bank, Palestinian occupied territories. *Reproductive Health Matters* 16(31): 112–121.
- Alexander JC (2013) *The Dark Side of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Books.
- Arnold-Lourie C (2008) 'A madman's deed: A maniac's hand': Gender and justice in three Maryland lynchings. *Journal of Social History* 41(4): 1031–1045.
- Athens L (2005) Violent encounters: Violent engagements, skirmishes, and tiffs. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 34(6): 631–678.
- Baker NV, Gregware PR, Cassidy MA (1999) Family killing fields: Honor rationales in the murder of women. *Violence Against Women* 5(2): 164–184.
- Baxi P, Rai S, Ali SS (2006) Legacies of common law: 'Crimes of honour' in India and Pakistan. *Third World Quarterly* 27(7): 1239–1253.
- Begikhani N (2005) Honour-based violence among the Kurds: The case of Iraqi Kurdistan. In: Welchman L, Hossain S (eds) *'Honour': Crimes, Paradigms, and Violence Against Women*. London: Zed Book, 209–229.
- Boddy J (1997) Womb as oasis: The symbolic context of pharaonic circumcision in rural Northern Sudan. In: Lancaster R, Di Leonardo M (eds) *The Gender/Sexuality Reader: Culture, History, Political Economy*. New York: Routledge, 682–698.
- Bosson JK, Vandello JA (2011) Precarious manhood and its links to action and aggression. *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 20(2): 82–86.
- Bourdieu P (1984) *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. New York: Routledge.
- Cakmak HK, Altuntas N (2009) Reconsidering gender inequality and honour suicide within the frame of different liberal theories: Turkey-Batman case. *Muslim World Journal of Human Rights* 5(1): 1–27.
- Chesler P (2009) Are honor killings simply domestic violence? *Middle East Quarterly* 16(2): 61–69.
- Chesler P (2010) Worldwide trends in honor killings. *Middle East Quarterly* 17(2): 3–11.
- Cloward RA, Ohlin LE (1960) *Delinquency and Opportunity: A Study of Delinquent Gangs*. Glencoe: The Free Press.

- Cohen AK (1955) *Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang*. Glencoe: The Free Press.
- Durkheim E (1995) *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. Glencoe: The Free Press.
- Durkheim E (1997) *The Division of Labor in Society*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Eisner M, Ghuneim L (2013) Honor killing attitudes amongst adolescents in Amman, Jordan. *Aggressive Behavior* 39(5): 405–417.
- Ercan SA (2015) Creating and sustaining evidence for ‘failed multiculturalism’ the case of ‘honor killing’ in Germany. *American Behavioral Scientist* 59(6): 658–678.
- Ferguson A (1989) *Blood at the Root: Motherhood, Sexuality and Male Dominance*. London: Pandora.
- Foucault M (1977) *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Vintage.
- Foucault M (2007) *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–1978*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Foucault M (2008) *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Fraser N (1993) Beyond the master/subject model: Reflections on Carole Pateman’s sexual contract. *Social Text* 37: 173–181.
- Frye M (1983) Oppression. In: *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory*. New York: Crossing Press, 1–16.
- Gharaei-Moghaddam A (1999) Honor killing or ‘Nhoy’ among Arab tribes in Khuzestan. *Legal Journal of Judiciary-Majaleye Hoghooghie Dadgostari* 32: 75–92.
- Gill A (2006) Patriarchal violence in the name of ‘honour’. *International Journal of Criminal Justice Sciences* 1(1): 1–12.
- Gilmore DD (1987) Honor, honesty, shame: Male status in contemporary Andalusia. In: *Honor and Shame and the Unity of the Mediterranean*. Arlington: American Anthropological Association, 90–103.
- Glick P, Sakalli-Uğurlu N, Akbaş G, et al. (2016) Why do women endorse honor beliefs? Ambivalent sexism and religiosity as predictors. *Sex Roles* 75(11–12): 543–554.
- Gottfredson MR, Hirschi T (1990) *A General Theory of Crime*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Guyer JI (1991) Female farming in anthropology and African history. In: Di Leonardo M (ed.) *Gender at the Crossroads of Knowledge: Feminist Anthropology in the Postmodern*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 257–277.
- Haidt J (2012) *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion*. New York: Random House.
- Heydari A (2016) *Genealogy of the Discourse on Iranian Authoritarianism: A Cultural Historical Perspective*. PhD Thesis, Allameh Tabataba’i University, Iran.
- Hirschi T (1969) *Causes of Delinquency*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Hopkins TK, Wallerstein IM (1982) *World-Systems Analysis: Theory and Methodology*. London: Sage.
- Kogacioglu D (2004) The tradition effect: Framing honor crimes in Turkey. *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 15(2): 119–151.
- Kulczycki A, Windle S (2011) Honor killings in the Middle East and North Africa: A systematic review of the literature. *Violence Against Women* 17(11): 1442–1464.
- Lee MR, Maume MO, Ousey GC (2003) Social isolation and lethal violence across the metro/nonmetro divide: The effects of socioeconomic disadvantage and poverty concentration on homicide. *Rural Sociology* 68(1): 107–131.
- Maffesoli M (1995) *The Time of the Tribes: The Decline of Individualism in Mass Society*. London: Sage.
- Merton RK (1968) *Social Theory and Social Structure*. Glencoe: The Free Press.

- Moxnes H (2003) Honor and shame. In: Rohrbaugh RL (ed.) *The Social Sciences and New Testament Interpretation*. Ada: Baker Academic, 19–40.
- Niaz U (2003) Violence against women in South Asian countries. *Archives of Women's Mental Health* 6(3): 173–184.
- Nisbett RE, Cohen D (1996) *Culture of Honor: The Psychology of Violence in the South*. New York: Routledge.
- Nowak A, Gelfand MJ, Borkowski W, et al. (2016) The evolutionary basis of honor cultures. *Psychological Science* 27(1): 12–24.
- Nye R (1998) *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Pateman C (2015) Sexual contract. In: Wong A, Wickramasinghe M, Hoogland R, et al. (eds) *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Gender and Sexuality Studies*. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 1–3.
- Pratt TC, Godsey TW (2003) Social support, inequality, and homicide: A cross-national test of an integrated theoretical model. *Criminology* 41(3): 611–644.
- Reddy R (2008) Gender, culture and the law: Approaches to 'honour crimes' in the UK. *Feminist Legal Studies* 16(3): 305–321.
- Reimers E (2007) Representations of an honor killing: Intersections of discourses on culture, gender, equality, social class, and nationality. *Feminist Media Studies* 7(3): 239–255.
- Rose J (2009) A piece of white silk. *London Review of Books* 31(21): 1–8.
- Said E (1978) *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage.
- Sampson RJ, Groves WB (1989) Community structure and crime: Testing social-disorganization theory. *American Journal of Sociology* 94(4): 774–802.
- Sen P (2005) Crimes of honour, value and meaning. In: Welchman L, Hossain S (eds) *'Honour': Crimes, Paradigms, and Violence Against Women*. London: Zed Book, 47–63.
- Shaw CR, McKay HD (1942) *Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Areas*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Siddiqui H (2005) There is no 'honour' in domestic violence only shame! Women's struggles against 'honour' crimes in the UK. In: Welchman L, Hossain S (eds) *'Honour': Crimes, Paradigms, and Violence Against Women*. London: Zed Book, 263–307.
- Sirman N (2014) Contextualizing honour. *European Journal of Turkish Studies. Social Sciences on Contemporary Turkey* 18: 1–6.
- Simmel G (1964) *Conflict and the Web of Group Affiliations*. Glencoe: The Free Press.
- Smith A (2004) Murder in Jerba: Honour, shame and hospitality among Maltese in Ottoman Tunisia. *History and Anthropology* 15(2): 107–132.
- Swann WB, Jetten J, Gómez Á, et al. (2012) When group membership gets personal: A theory of identity fusion. *Psychological Review* 119(3): 441–456.
- Teymoori A, Heydari A, Nasiri H (2014) Relationship between dimensions of religiosity, authoritarianism, and moral authority. *Social Compass* 61(1): 92–107.
- UN (2009) *15 Years of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, its Causes and Consequences (1994–2009): A Critical Review*. New York: United Nations. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Women/15YearReviewofVAWMandate.pdf>
- Valentine G, Jackson L, Mayblin L (2014) Ways of seeing: Sexism the forgotten prejudice? *Gender, Place and Culture* 21(4): 401–414.
- Vandello JA, Cohen D (2003) Male honor and female fidelity: Implicit cultural scripts that perpetuate domestic violence. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 84(5): 997–1010.
- Voci A (2006) Relevance of social categories, depersonalization and group processes: Two field tests of self-categorization theory. *European Journal of Social Psychology* 36(1): 73–90.

- Warrach SA (2005) 'Honour killings' and the law in Pakistan. In: Welchman L, Hossain S (eds) *'Honour': Crimes, Paradigms, and Violence Against Women*. London: Zed Book, 78–110.
- Werbner P (2005) Honor, shame and the politics of sexual embodiment among South Asian Muslims in Britain and beyond: An analysis of debates in the public sphere. *International Social Science Review* 6(1): 25–47.
- Yadav S, Tripathi A (2004) For the sake of honour: But whose honour? 'Honour crimes' against women. *Asia-Pacific Journal on Human Rights and the Law* 5(2): 63–78.
- Young IM (2012) Five faces of oppression. In: DeFilippis J, Saegert S (eds) *The Community Development Reader*. New York: Routledge, 328–337.
- Young R (1990) *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*. New York: Routledge.
- Yurdakul G, Korteweg AC (2020) State responsibility and differential inclusion: Addressing honor-based violence in the Netherlands and Germany. *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State and Society* 27(2): 187–211.
- Zare B, Ghanami K (2008) A study of social factors affecting attitudes towards honor homicide in Dashte Azadegan, Iran. *Majaleye Adabiye Olum Ensani* 15(58–59): 133–165.

Author biographies

Arash Heydari is an assistant professor in cultural studies at the University of Science and Culture, Tehran, Iran. His research interests are social problems, social theory, governmentality studies, and genealogy. He authored several books in Farsi such as *Criminology: Theory and Application* (1392/2013) and *Genealogy of Iranian Despotism* (1399/2020).

Ali Teymoori is a research associate in social psychology at the Helmut Schmidt University of Hamburg, Germany. His research interests include anomie, authoritarianism, group dynamics and social identity.

Rose Trappes is a PhD student in philosophy at Bielefeld University, Germany. Her research interests cover topics in philosophy of biology, especially philosophy of ecology and behavioral biology, as well as feminist philosophy.