

THE REPRODUCTION OF ADMINISTRATIVE AND CULTURAL BARRIERS: LESSONS LEARNED FROM SOCIAL SERVICES INVESTIGATIONS OF HONOUR PROBLEMATIC

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ABSTRACT

This contribution departs from Fadime Sahindal's speech in the Swedish Parliament in November, 2001. Her speech highlighted the reluctance of mainstream society to understand the problematics of honour, and in particular to see and acknowledge the difficult experiences of her parents and other migrant parents. With this in mind, I address how understandings of sexuality and gender relations among some migrant groups are interpreted today by mainstream society civil servants.

Taking inspiration from Reza Banakar's (1994, 1998) analysis of the Swedish legal system's ability to assess and translate multi-cultural issues, I investigate legal pluralism as a system-oriented, structural condition with social, actor-oriented implications. I use findings from recent studies of Social Services records, which indicate that the legal system – as represented through these records – can be understood as consisting of two barriers. The first barrier is administrative and creates an uneven power relationship in favour of the civil servant over the client(s). The other barrier is cultural and reproduces moral notions of sexual relations. A central disagreement concerns whose definition of gender equality is the most legitimate one. A suggested way forward is to “agree to disagree.”

Keywords: honour related oppression, social work, legal pluralism

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Johan Rosquist is a senior lecturer in criminology at Linnaeus University. He applies socio-legal theory to the study of interaction between public authorities and individual citizens and groups, with a particular focus on ethnicity related issues. His research includes investigations of honour related violence, riot control and the policing of violent extremism.