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### **Abstract**

Analyzing policy documents that aim to tackle violence in minority families, the article examines how normativities related to family, ethnicity and race are created and challenged. The article develops an analysis of how neoliberal governmentality operates in two Nordic welfare societies. It shows how the governing of ethnicized and racialized minority families is built on three logics: the normalizing family, normative (liberal) individuality and securitized border rhetoric. Identifying three policy frames (violence, immigration and security frames), the article argues that the presented ideas of family life and individuality are based on normative whiteness.

Key words: gendered violence, racialization, postcolonial feminism, ethnic minority family, welfare state, governmentality

### **Introduction**

During the last 15 years, issues related to gendered violence, ethnicity, and race have been widely debated in many European countries, with topics like honor-related violence, forced marriages, female genital cutting, and spousal abuse receiving widespread attention in the media and politics (e.g. Phillips & Saharso 2008; Siim & Skjeie 2008; Keskinen 2009, 2012, 2014; Korteweg & Yurdakul 2009; Teigen & Langvasbraaten 2009). In such debates, violence and gender equality have become markers of difference: violence in racialized minority families is used to make distinctions between the 'nation' and its 'others', between the allegedly gender-equal majorities and the patriarchal minorities (de los Reyes, Molina & Mulinari 2002; Bredström 2003). Such processes have been particularly characteristic of the Nordic countries, which build their national self-images on notions of a developed welfare state and top achievements in gender equality in international comparisons.

Postcolonial feminist researchers have argued that gender relations and the heteronormative family are central to nationalist discourses and policies, providing the basis for ethnicized and racialized exclusions (e.g. Anthias & Yuval-Davis 1992; Yuval-Davis 1997; Keskinen et al. 2009). Analyses of public debates on gendered violence and racialized minorities illustrate this vividly. Nationalist and racializing accounts of rape often portray patriotic white men seeking to defend the community/nation and the victimized white women against the (allegedly) threatening ‘other’ men (Keskinen 2011a). In a similar way, debates on violence in racialized minority families portray minority men as threatening ‘others’, but focus more on the victimized minority women, as well as the white majority community and the welfare state as their ‘saviors’ (Keskinen 2009; Carbin 2014). The power relations and the colonial logic embedded in such ‘savior’ discourses have been widely criticized (e.g. Spivak 1988; Razack 2004).

Following the heightened media and political attention paid to violence in racialized minority families, state interventions have been introduced in many European countries. Legislative changes, national and local action plans, as well as targeted campaigns, projects, and services have been developed to tackle the problem (Bredal 2005; Carbin 2014). Anne Phillips and Moira Dustin (2004) categorize the interventions into three broad approaches: regulation through criminalization and immigration control; dialogue between state actors and minority communities; and securing the exit of victims from environments where violence takes place. While policies in many European countries favor the exit approach, the regulation approach has gained increasing support from governments in recent years.

This article analyzes constructions of racialized minority families, gender relations, and national belonging in policy documents that outline how gendered violence in families should be tackled in two Nordic countries, Denmark and Finland. Based on an analysis of twelve action plans produced during 2002–2014, the article examines how normativities related to family, ethnicity, and race are created and challenged. How is the ethnic/racial difference introduced into the policies and what effects does this have? What kind of groups are constructed through policy categorizations and how do the categorizations

work to govern these groups? The article shows that the policy constructions are developed within three frames – the violence frame, the immigration frame, and the security frame. Migrant/minority families are portrayed as an anomaly that needs to undergo changes through state-initiated interventions, such as education, support, control, and punishment. These families are governed through references to the normalizing family, normative (liberal) individuality, and securitized border rhetoric.

Denmark and Finland have been chosen as the contexts to focus on in order to shed light on policy representations in two Nordic countries that share characteristics related to welfare and gender regimes, but differ in several other respects such as histories of immigration, policies on integration, and debates on violence in minority families. Both countries can be placed within the ‘Nordic welfare model’, described as having a developed welfare state, strong gender equality policies, and state feminism (Kuisma 2007; Siim & Skjeie 2008). On the other hand, Denmark has had a history of non-European migration since the 1960s, while Finland only changed from an emigration country to one receiving migrants at the beginning of the 1990s; thus, many migration-related processes and policies are of a more recent character in Finland. Danish governments have developed strict immigration legislation, especially since 2001, and have sought to put pressure on integration policies. Finland has an official multicultural policy, but the focus has mainly been on regulating the entrance and early settlement of migrants. In Denmark, public debates on violence in minority families have been widespread since the end of the 1990s, while in Finland welfare practices have developed the means to work with the issue and public debates have remained less intensive than in Denmark.

### **Racialized intimacies, the welfare state and spaces of security**

Welfare state policies and institutions are not only sites for distributing benefits and organizing services, but also play a central role in the categorization and regulation of populations based on notions of belonging, race, and ethnicity (e.g. Lewis 2000; Fink,

Lewis & Clarke 2001; Mulinari 2009; Ali 2014). For example, legislation and policies create categories such as ‘immigrant families’ and ‘immigrant women’, expected to share certain characteristics, which are then utilized to design interventions with effects on individual and family lives.

The production of knowledge is a central means of governmentality in modern societies. Specific categories of people are created through scientific knowledge, calculation, statistics and other social technologies (Rose 1990; Miller & Rose 2008). Simultaneously, these processes are about constructing norms and normativity, against which deviation is defined. In Foucauldian thinking, power is not a possession of a specific actor or agency. Instead, it runs through the social body as a capillary-like effect and is formed in the interplay of struggles and contradictions that shape the order of a specific field (Foucault 1990, 92–94; Keskinen 2005, 44–45). The power of certain discursive practices is nevertheless related to the fact that they become attached to central societal institutions, such as legislation, science, and (welfare state) policies.

Welfare state policies have resulted in an increasing intervention in the sphere of home and family (e.g. Melby, Ravn & Wetterberg 2009). The normative family located at the core of such policies is an ethnicized, racialized, and classed construction that creates exclusions and social inequalities. Minority families that do not seem to conform to the normative expectations of white, Christian/secular, middle-class family forms face scrutiny, regulation, and control when targeted by welfare policies and in welfare practices (Lewis 2000; Fink & Lundqvist 2010). While integration in previous decades was discussed as participation in the labor market and education, more recently integration has become defined as conformity to social norms and cultural values, presented as the cornerstones of citizenship (Olwig 2011). Henceforth, the family and sexual relations of racialized minorities have increasingly become a site of public interventions: presented as part of the problem (a threat to the normative order and ‘proper’ citizenship), and as representing the possibility for change (reproduction or challenging non-normative behavior).

In the Nordic countries, the welfare state is a central element of nation-building and national identities, to which a certain superiority is also attached, both when referring to other European countries (Kuisma 2007) and racialized minorities living in the Nordic region (de los Reyes, Molina & Mulinari 2002; Keskinen et al. 2009). Although the Nordic countries still have a developed welfare state by international comparison, the countries have undergone considerable changes in recent decades, following the introduction of neoliberal policies, the privatization of public services and the rise of ideological perspectives emphasizing individual responsibilities (e.g. Schierup, Hansen & Castles 2006). The welfare state has not lost its relevance, but is being pushed to remold itself in the wake of neoliberal policies and logics, and accommodate itself accordingly.

In this article, I argue that the treatment of gender relations and racialized minority families in current Nordic policies needs to be understood in relation to two growing trends, both of which are linked to the neoliberalization processes in the region and beyond. Firstly, there is an increasing emphasis on individuality in the context of the heterosexual family that (re)produces exclusionary nationalism and racialization. Secondly, the security logic, identified predominantly in defense and immigration policies, also operates in welfare policies and through the regulation of minority families.

As a result of the expanding neoliberalization, new constellations of the intimate, the nation and belonging are taking place. Intimate matters and family forms have moved to the center of the political sphere and become closely entwined with notions of citizenship. Analyzing new forms of nationalist thinking in neoliberal times, Lauren Berlant (2002, 5) argues that citizenship is ‘produced by personal acts and values, especially acts originating in or directed towards the family sphere’ and that the understanding of public good and what people share is restricted to ‘simultaneously lived private worlds’. Moreover, the individualizing logic increasingly characterizing the formulations of citizenship distinguishes the ‘good citizens’ who embody cultural norms of liberal individuality and the ‘right’ kind of heterosexuality from those who need to ‘be liberated’ from constraints they are not (perceived to be) able to ‘free’ themselves from (Lentin & Titley 2011; Gozdecka et al. 2014). Governing through ‘freedom’ and

normative assumptions built on liberal individuality and heterosexual practices modeled by the white majority population has exclusionary and racializing effects, especially on Muslim and non-Western minorities.

While the state is withdrawing from its role as the provider of welfare services, following the neoliberal policies, the same does not apply to security matters (Goldberg 2009). In fact, scholars have identified a rising trend in security concerns and the linking together of a range of phenomena from immigration to terrorism, criminality, and drug abuse in a process of 'securitization' (e.g. Bigo 2002). Thus, migration has rapidly become a security concern that both national and transnational actors seek to regulate and control. William Walters (2006) defines this as the emergence of a new 'space of security'. Typical of this space of security is a concern for the home, selective management of transnational movements, the proliferation of borders throughout society, and enlarged EU frontiers. Security concerns thus range from local matters to national and cross-national ones, the dispersed borders of which provide sites for collecting information, surveillance, regulation, and control. Although Walters does not explore the gendered, sexualized and racialized aspects of these new spaces of security, it is evident that the concern for home he is writing about is embedded in ideas of intimacies, and gender and sexual relations, in the manner discussed in this article. Moreover, security concerns, management of cross-border mobility, and policies that seek to regulate the same have gendered and racialized effects on people's lives.

### **Emerging policies of violence in families in Denmark and Finland**

Gender equality and women's rights have been used to argue for stricter immigration policies and assimilative actions toward the racialized 'others' in both countries under study, albeit for a longer period and with more substantive effects in Denmark. After the parliamentary elections in 2001, the liberal-conservative government in Denmark established what has been seen as one of the strictest immigration legislations in Europe, particularly in terms of tightening the rules of family reunification (Fekete 2006; Schmidt 2011). The law regulating transnational marriages imposed an age limit of 24 years, as

well as demands on the couple to meet the ‘attachment requirement’ and several material conditions (Siim & Skjeie 2008). The restrictions were legitimized with claims of tackling forced marriages, but leading politicians also made it clear that the purpose of the changes was to reduce immigration from non-Western countries. Even after changes of government, the family reunification legislation has remained strict and during the period of intensified migration in 2015–2016 the government sought to effectively ‘signal’ to refugees that they were not welcome in Denmark.

From the end of the 1990s, Denmark experienced several heated public debates on forced marriages and honor-related violence. Political discussions have widely centered on questions of national culture, conditions for the inclusion of Muslim migrants in particular, and so-called ‘Danish values’ (Mouritsen 2006). While Danish Muslims have often been portrayed as tradition-bound and undemocratic, Danishness has been identified with values like gender equality, freedom of speech, and democracy. Thus, debates on violence in minority families have strengthened the racializing and assimilative trends also visible in integration policies.

The Danish policies on gendered violence are divided into policies targeting violence in families or close relationships, on the one hand, and policies tackling forced marriages and honor-related violence in ethnic minority families, on the other. The general policies on violence in families emerged comparatively late, namely during the first years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This coincides with the time that policies on forced marriages and honor-related violence were developed, resulting in a clear-cut division.

In Finland, public debates over immigration and belonging have intensified more recently, following the rise of anti-immigration activism and right-wing populism in the municipal elections 2008 (Keskinen, Rastas & Tuori 2009; Horsti & Nikunen 2013). Questions of honor-related violence, sexual violence, and the subordination of women have been frequent topics in racist discussions on the Internet, but several key politicians, especially from the right-wing populist (*True*) *Finns* party, have also engaged in and initiated such debates (Keskinen 2011a, 2012, 2014).

The Finnish policies on gendered violence began with a universalist stance addressing the issue as ‘violence against women’ or ‘violence in close relationships’, but questions of migration and ethnic/racial differences were introduced in the first national program to prevent violence against women as early as 1998-2002. Particularly during the first decade after the policies were developed the focus was on domestic violence, which provided space to discuss migrant women as one group targeted by such violence. Questions of honor-related violence and forced marriages have gradually gained prominence, but there are no separate action plans for violence in minority families. The topic has been discussed within larger programs throughout the period.

## **Material and method**

In the following, I will analyze 12 key documents that have formulated the respective countries’ policies on gendered violence in families (1). The data covers all action plans on violence in close relationships, forced marriages, and honor-related violence produced during 2002–2014, thus providing a comprehensive overview of the official discourse on the issues (2). Action plans are developed by state actors in order to plan, coordinate, and tackle situations defined as ‘social problems’. Therefore, a certain amount of public discussion and politicization of the topic is required in order for issues to receive the status of a ‘social problem’ in need of state interventions.

The data include six Danish and six Finnish action plans (3). The action plans in question usually consist of a background section, in which the ‘problem’ is defined and explained; a description of the aims of the plan; and a presentation of the implementation of the plan and the actions to be taken.

The analysis method is based on two social constructionist approaches specifically designed for the analysis of policies: the ‘What’s the problem represented to be?’ approach (WPR), elaborated by Carol Bacchi (1999; Bacchi & Eveline 2010), and ‘critical frame analysis’ (Verloo & Lombardo 2007), developed on the basis of WPR by a

comparative European project. Both approaches are based on the idea that policies do not just ‘deal with’ social problems, but create specific impressions and interpretations of what the problem is and what should be done about it. Thus, policies actively produce or constitute problem formulations and categories of people.

The methodologies developed by these scholars are detailed and extensive; hence, I have chosen only those parts that are relevant to the research questions addressed in this article. In the analysis, I have approached the data through the following methodological questions (cf. Bacchi 1999, 12–13; Bacchi & Eveline 2010, 117; Verloo & Lombardo 2007, 33–35):

- What’s the problem represented to be in the policy? How is it explained?
- What are the presented solutions?
- How do gender, race and ethnicity intersect in the representation?
- How are the subjects constituted?
- What are the effects of the representation?

The aim was to identify large frames that characterize the policies under study, with the help of the methodological questions. The analysis resulted in naming three frames (*violence frame*, *immigration frame*, and *security frame*), to be described in detail below.

### **Three policy frames and the construction of the ethnic/racial difference**

#### *Violence frame*

The majority of the action plans (four Danish and two Finnish) construct the problem as violence in close relationships or violence against women – which I refer to here as the violence frame. The understanding of what the problem is and how it can be explained shifts between a gendered analysis of violence against women and a more gender-neutral understanding of violence in families and close relationships. None of the action plans in question delve into discussions on the explanations for violence; thus, they are able to

balance between naming women as the main victims of violence in families, while simultaneously discussing children and men as victims of violent acts as well. In this frame, violence in families is regarded as a problem for the whole society and the texts emphasize that it is not a private issue.

The 'other' family is represented by the migrant/ethnic minority woman. She is the sole focus of most references to questions of ethnicity or migration, despite the fact that some action plans include singular activities directed at men and children. The ethnic/racial difference is introduced to this policy frame in two ways: (1) as a question of the 'specific' needs of migrant/minority women, and (2) as a discussion of migrant/minority women as one of several 'vulnerable groups'. Embedded in both constructions is an implicit comparison to the norm, the white majority family. In most parts of the texts, the unmarked norm and the assumptions related to it are left unaddressed; however, they become visible when the construction of 'specificities' is examined.

The Danish texts mainly understand the difference as 'specific' needs and actions, although the vulnerability aspect is also mentioned:

Ethnic minority women have specific needs in certain areas. It needs to be ensured that the government initiatives cover the specific needs of this group; thus, a study on how the support for this group can be refined may be in place. (*Regeringens handlingsplan til bekaempelse af vold mod kvinder* 2002, 8)

Ethnic minority women who have experienced violence are a specifically vulnerable group. [...] Ethnic minority women can be difficult to reach with the support measures usually offered for abused women. Moreover, their often complex problematics require specific actions so as to provide them with the support they need. (*Handlingsplan til bekaempelse af maends vold mod kvinder og børn i familien* 2005, 7–8)

The specific needs are presented as manifold, ranging from language skills and the need for translation services to ‘cultural and tradition-related behavioral patterns’, lack of social networks and economic dependency. While the requirements for adequate translation services and knowledge of transnational family relations are certainly important for providing effective support, there is a pervasive pattern in this frame to describe the situations of migrant women as worse than those of white majority Danes. The texts use expressions such as ‘complex problematics’ and describe the migrant/minority women through different kinds of lacks (of skills, resources, and networks).

The implicit contrast to the normative (white majority) family presents the ‘other’ family as extremely problematic – a deviation from the already deviant. While violence in family relations overall is portrayed as behavior that needs to be regulated, it is even more tangible when it comes to migrant/minority families. Since the focus is on the migrant/minority woman, the unmarked norm is also built around the white majority woman – expected to be at least more resourceful and skilled than the ‘other’ woman, despite having failed to live up to the gender equal ideals of the Nordic welfare society. The language of culture and cultural differences enters into this frame, but only in passing; it becomes a determining factor in the immigration frame, to be analyzed in the next section.

The discussion of migrant/minority families and women is overtly homogenizing: there is very little discussion of differences among migrant women or minority communities. The benefit of the violence frame is that it treats abuse in minority families together with violence in majority families, thus providing possibilities to outline shared patterns of gendered violence across ethnic and racial divisions (cf. Keskinen 2011b). However, the implicit and unquestioned white norm embedded in the discussion on ‘specificity’ produces racializing and othering understandings. For example, ethnic minority women are presented as being in need of training regarding their basic rights in Denmark, to the degree that they should be told what gender equality is. Minority women are not expected

to argue for women's rights; nor is the work of minority women's organizations on this matter made visible.

An educational campaign will be directed at ethnic minority women. The campaign will address women's rights in relation to children and divorce, violence and economy. Women should gain an understanding of the basic rights they have in Denmark, of the fact that women and men are equal, and what gender equality is. (*Handlingsplan til bekaempelse af maends vold mod kvinder og børn i familien* 2005, 12)

The Finnish *Naisiin kohdistuvan väkivallan vähentämisen ohjelma* [Program to prevent violence against women] (2010) also mentions 'specific' actions, but predominantly uses the formulation 'women in vulnerable positions' to discuss the ethnic/racial difference. This term has been adopted from international programs, such as the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action 1996 on women's rights. As vulnerable groups, the text mentions ethnic and cultural minorities, disabled women, elderly women, and sexual and gender minorities (*ibid.*, 26). Vulnerability is connected to the societal position of the abused woman, the greater risk of becoming victimized, and abilities to obtain help. As in the Danish action plans, the migrant background becomes synonymous with several kinds of lacks, weaknesses and ignorance.

The notion of 'vulnerable positions' connects migrant women to other groups. In places, this strengthens the emphasis on lack of resources and victimization, for example when discussed together with imprisoned women. A discussion on vulnerabilities and social situations leading to them could also provide a basis for developing an intersectional approach to violence in families that would analyze the intertwining of gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, class, and age in the experiences of violence. The potential for developing such an approach is visible in the Finnish 2010 plan, which seeks to open a discussion on how services should be elaborated to meet the diverse needs of sexual minorities, ethnic minorities, and disabled women. However, the intersectional approach

would require a questioning of the normalizing family and the implicit white norm, which are now left unaddressed.

The violence that white majority men commit toward migrant/minority partners becomes a problem only in the Finnish 2010 plan. It discusses issues of immigration legislation and child custody disputes that create unequal power relations between migrant/minority women and their (ex-)partners. According to the police and shelter statistics, nearly half of the migrant women contacting these agencies had been or were married to white majority men (Ellonen & Korhonen 2007). In comparison, the Danish plans do not explicitly discuss the situation and services for women in transnational marriages with white majority partners, although the 2002 plan mentions that one out of three migrant women in shelters belong to this group. The presumption in the Danish plans is that transnational marriages involve partners belonging to racialized minorities.

The violence frame relies mainly on helping and supporting rhetoric. Several actions are also presented as benefiting both victims and perpetrators. Control-related actions are side-tracked, especially in the Danish action plans. In the Danish 2010 plan the only section that addresses control-related activities mentions the established legislation of restriction orders within the family, while other parts of the plan focus on preventive work, support for victims and education of professionals. The supportive activities are designed specifically for abused women and children, but perpetrators are also discussed through a treatment and support perspective. In the 2005 Danish plan, seven activities are outlined to enhance work with perpetrators; only one discusses control actions (the restriction order) while the other six introduce treatment, awareness campaigns and knowledge production/distribution (*Handlingsplan til bekaempelse af maends vold mod kvinder og børn i familien* 2005, 14-15). An exception to this general pattern is the Finnish 2010 plan, which discusses in detail the role of the criminal system in tackling violence against women. The violence frame is thus characterized by a normalizing rhetoric: violence in families is addressed as a problem that needs to be regulated, but the means are to be sought in cooperation with the family members, with the aim of minimizing conflicts.

This normalizing rhetoric, especially in the Danish context, should be understood in relation to notions of a problem under control that characterizes the action plans following the first plan. While the 2002 plan placed the violence problem on the public agenda in Denmark, the subsequent plans emphasize that much has already been achieved and the situation is fairly good; some problems remain, but if work continues along the chosen path, they can be overcome.

Since 2002 the government has – with two action plans – made a considerable effort to tackle partner violence. And luckily we can see that the effort has been successful. [...] But we have not reached the goal yet, and the good work should continue. (*National strategi til bekæmpelse af vold i nære relationer 2010*, 1)

However, this positive direction is seen to be under threat due to the racialized minorities, who are presented as the group in need of an attitude change. Interventions to instruct and guide minorities to change their attitudes gain a prominent place in the immigration frame, to be discussed next.

The taboo, silence and hesitation around family violence are luckily retreating. In order to promote this attitude change the focus on broad educational work will be continued – including initiatives directed at Danes with an immigration background. (*National strategi til bekæmpelse af vold i nære relationer 2010*, 13)

### *Immigration frame*

Within this policy frame, violence in families is approached through a focus on immigration and culture. In contrast to the violence frame, the problem has been constructed in a way that covers only ethnic minorities. Thus, all links to other kinds of gendered violence are rendered invisible or irrelevant. This makes the homogenization and racialization of minorities even stronger than in the violence frame.

The immigration frame constructs the minority family as the ultimate ‘other’ in terms of intimacies. There is a focus on intergenerational relations and individual freedom through which distinctions between the (white) majority and racialized minorities are created. The normative white family and individuality are not only implicitly present but are also the explicit touchstone to which minorities are compared. Neoliberal governing through ‘freedom’ and the disciplining of ‘unruly bodies’ is most evident in this frame.

The two action plans within this policy frame are both Danish. The plans start with a Preface in which responsible Ministers state the requirement to uphold Danish values, individual freedom and gender equality, positioned against the religion and culture of racialized minorities.

It is decisive that values like freedom of choice, defence of the individual, and equality between women and men are respected [...] This requires the Danes to get rid of their anxiety to touch upon the matter and anxiety related to the possibility that it is the religion and culture of the ethnic minorities that dictate the forced marriages. (*Handlingsplan mod tvangsaegteskaber, tvangslignende aegteskaber og arrangerede aegteskaber* 2003, 1-2)

All citizens in Denmark should have the same basic rights. This includes, for example, the right to choose their partners, the right to equality between women and men, and the right to choose the life they want to live. [...] The actions to tackle honor-related conflicts are therefore extremely central for the government. We will not accept that Danish citizens are married by force, that young people are sent to their parents’ home countries or that they are exposed to unwanted social pressure or control. This is also a question of guaranteeing that gender equality increases among the new Danes. (*National strategi mod aeresrelaterede konflikter* 2012, 6)

In the first extract, ‘Danes’ are defined as being separate from ethnic minorities, who are thus positioned outside the nation and not treated as belonging to it. Furthermore, minorities are defined through their religion (Islam) and culture. The second extract, on

the other hand, includes minorities among Danish citizens (as ‘new Danes’) but uses this framing to argue that minorities have not reached the same level of gender equality as the majority; therefore, the state needs to act and find the means to enhance equality within minority communities. Both constructions – the exclusionary and the subordinated inclusionary – include a strong exhortation for the state to intervene in minority intimacies.

In the 2003 plan, the problem is framed as ‘forced and arranged marriages’. These are seen as closely connected and likewise problematic. Arranged marriages are presented as non-Danish and against gender equality due to the lack of individual choice. The text strongly emphasizes liberal individuality as the outspoken norm. It is built around clear dichotomies: Danes – ethnic minorities, youth – parent/older relatives, women – men, modern – traditional. In line with this, the phenomena are discussed in terms of generation and culture conflict.

In Denmark, it is common that young people themselves choose their partner and marry as a result of a romantic relationship. Some ethnic minorities in Denmark continue to follow the traditional ways of their former home countries, where parents choose spouses for the young persons. [...] The tradition of arranged marriages is in conflict with the individual’s right to freely find and choose the person he/she wants to marry. (*Handlingsplan mod tvangsaegteskaber, tvangslignende aegteskaber og arrangerede aegteskaber* 2003, 5)

As the extract shows, no proper distinction is made between arranged and forced marriages. Even arranged marriages are described as being at odds with Danish practices and liberal individuality.

The racialized minorities and individuals belonging to those minorities are treated as a homogeneous group. They are described as ‘traditional’ minorities that the ‘enlightened’ and gender-equal white Danes should guide. The following extract shows that racialized minority women are not presumed to have discussions about forced marriages, their choice of partner, gender or equality issues. In order to initiate such discussions,

interaction with the ‘surrounding society’ is needed, thus emphasizing the savior role of the white majority.

[...] discussions among ethnic minority women about forced marriages and choice of spouse, but also more broadly on gender roles and the equal position of women, should be promoted. Moreover, the understanding between ethnic minorities and the surrounding society should be enhanced. Such an understanding will also provide possibilities to change attitudes in the long run. (*ibid.*, 8)

In the 2012 plan, the problem framing has changed to ‘honor-related conflicts’. The broad conceptualization of the problem has, however, remained. Honor-related conflicts are presented as including not only forced marriages, honor killings, and visits to the parents’ home country against one’s will, but also social control, oppression, gender equality issues, problems with individual rights, and the freedom to choose (*National strategi mod aeresrelaterede konflikter* 2012, 10). The conflicts and social control are explained by a ‘code of honor’ that authorities should be wary of (*ibid.*, 26). Social control becomes understood as an aspect of honor-related conflicts. As a result of this problem construction, the scope of required public interventions become wide-ranging and covers large areas of intimate lives.

The interventions focus on discipline, control, and punishment, although support and counselling are also among the suggested activities. Control and punishment are discussed when referring to immigration law that is used to tackle visits to the parents’ former home countries: according to the law, a child that is sent abroad for more than three months will lose their residence permit (*ibid.*, 15). Local authorities in schools and other institutions are required to inform the municipality about cases where they do not have contact with a child for a week, and suspect that the child is staying abroad. In these cases, the municipality will also see to it that the family loses the child benefit and housing benefit (*ibid.*, 16–17). Police actions are designed to create new ways of monitoring, preventing, and investigating honor-related conflicts, even taking a proactive role that does not require reports by those involved (*ibid.*, 17–18).

To an even greater extent, the immigration frame is built on a disciplinary logic. In the 2012 plan, a variety of actions are elaborated, designed to ‘enlighten’ (*oplysning*) and ‘rework the attitudes’ (*holdningsbearbejdning*) of ethnic minorities: information material is to be produced, campaigns are to be organized, and parents should be engaged in attitude-changing debates (*ibid.*, 54–59). According to the plan, it is not only parents that are in need of attitude changes, but also the minority youth, among whom ‘traditional’ views on gender and generational relations are expected to find support. The plan provides a top-down program of educating minorities and changing their attitudes. It does not address attitudinal differences within the racialized minorities; nor does it take account of the existing discussions on gender roles, equality, and intergenerational relations among minorities.

The young people themselves continue to uphold [...] norms and attitudes that support the honor code and social control. In order to break down the reproduction of norms that conflict with individual rights and gender equality, for example, there is a need for attitude changes among the young themselves. (*ibid.*, 57)

Local actions are seen as an efficient way to promote the educational and attitude-changing work (*ibid.*, 53–59). Areas where a large proportion of residents belong to racialized minorities are singled out as those where local authorities, residents’ associations, libraries and integration projects should take up the work of distributing the information material produced by the Ministry, and engaging minority parents and youth. The initiatives are called dialogue, but the top-down organization and the framing of the activities as education/enlightenment and attitude-changing attest to the disciplinary nature of the approach. Local initiatives can become a means of enhancing the scrutinization and disciplining of minorities, if the racialized power relations and the normative whiteness that characterize the policies are not questioned.

The normalizing family and individual freedom function as technologies of power and governmentality. The minority family is constructed as the cultural ‘other’ and exposed to disciplinary and controlling actions. Even punishment is part of the governmental ‘tool

kit', which combines immigration regulations, withdrawal of welfare benefits, criminalization and educational measures. Victims of honor-related conflicts are provided with information and support, but the role of these activities is overshadowed by the emphasis on discipline and control.

In the immigration frame, cultural differences are the reference point for the problem construction. While the 2012 plan gives the nod to recognizing that not all minority families have honor-related problems and that honor thinking should not be connected to certain religions or cultures (*National strategi mod aeresrelaterede konflikter* 2012, 11), the rest of the text relies heavily on cultural and religious understandings. For example, it discusses cultural skills as a part of professional education (*ibid.*, 22–23), since professionals are expected to have problems understanding the norms, family patterns, and actions embraced by minorities (*ibid.*, 34). The religious marriage ceremony is also discussed among different forms of honor-related conflicts (*ibid.*, 31), implicitly referring to Muslims.

The immigration frame portrays racialized minority families as problematic to start with and, unlike the violence frame, makes no reference to problematic majority families. The normative white family and liberal individuality are the reference points, irrespective of whether racialized minorities are excluded from the national community (through a distinction from 'Danes') or included as subordinated when instructed to be guided, disciplined and controlled in order to reach the 'level' of the majority in gender and generational relations.

### *Security frame*

The third policy frame is built around notions of security and a safe life. The four action plans in this frame are all Finnish. In contrast to the previously discussed programs, these plans do not focus on violence in families or gendered violence, but the problem is formulated as a general problem of violence and insecurity in Finnish society. The plans were written as part of the Program for Interior Security, which ran during two

governments between 2004 and 2015. The aim was to make Finland ‘the safest country in Europe’ (*Turvallinen elämä jokaiselle* 2008, 5).

In the security frame, the migrant family features through its relationship to the nation-state and national community, understood as existing in a world with globalized risks. The securitization and criminalization of migration are characteristic of the concerns outlined in this frame. Intimacies and the migrant/minority family are colonized by national security logics to the extent that they become invisible or ignored in large parts of the texts. On specific occasions, the security logic brings elements of migrant/minority families into the spotlight: transnational marriages and honor-related violence in particular are constructed as security threats.

The concept of ‘interior security’ used in the action plans is extremely broad and directly linked to national security. The focus on the nation-state introduces both the perspective of defending the nation against threats from the ‘outside’ and processes taking place within national borders. The 2008 plan states that ‘the main aims for Finnish security policy are established in the security and defense political account’ (*Turvallinen elämä jokaiselle* 2008, 4). By ‘interior security’, the program refers to

[a] state of society in which everyone can enjoy the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the judiciary, and a secure society without criminality, disorder, accidents, and fear or insecurity following phenomena or changes in Finnish society or the globalizing world. (*ibid.*, 5)

In this frame, many security challenges are portrayed as taking place within national borders, such as marginalization, alcohol-related violence, and different kinds of accidents. Other threats are seen to include transnational or ethnic characteristics, notably cross-border criminality, terrorism, violent radicalization, and racist violence (*ibid.*, 6–13; *Arjen turvaa* 2004, 17–19; *Turvallisempi huominen* 2012, 12–22).

Issues of gendered violence and abused migrant women receive minor attention in the 2004 and 2012 plans, but are discussed in more detail in the other two plans. With a focus

on the security of migrants and ethnic minorities, the 2008 plan discusses several forms of violence: violence in families, human trafficking, sexual violence, racist violence, and discrimination (*Turvallinen elämä jokaiselle* 2008, 5). The process of treating all of these as part of the same phenomenon (the security of migrants/minorities) means that perpetrators are described in cross-ethnic terms and the minority/majority divide becomes blurred. Gendered violence is described as ‘based on culture’, but on the other hand it is discussed together with issues like racist violence and the human rights of migrants. In order to reduce crimes toward racialized minorities, the plan suggests that the abilities of the authorities be developed ‘to recognize racism and discrimination and phenomena related to cultural habits’ (*ibid.*, 29). The text argues for the need to tackle racism and discrimination, yet it simultaneously links these to the problematic ‘cultural habits’ of minorities, such as honor-related violence. The security logic marginalizes notions of racism and discrimination, while presenting cross-border migration as a threat.

In relation to cross-border activities, the migrant/minority family becomes a security threat in three main ways: as a dilemma for border control; as part of the criminal activity of human trafficking; and as the breeding ground for terrorism and violent radicalization (*ibid.*, 41–54, 58–61). When discussing border security and the prevention of illegal immigration, transnational marriages become a problem to combat. ‘Bogus’ marriages are treated as a form of illegal immigration that needs to be controlled and counteracted with specific means. Further, the discussion of trafficking as a security threat is largely framed as illegal immigration that needs to be prevented. Migrant families feature through the figure of the minor asylum seeker, who is expected to misuse the system for illegal entry into the country. The threat of terrorism and the prevention of violent radicalization present minority communities, especially Muslims, as sources of growing insecurity and threats toward the nation and the Western world. This threat is embodied by young migrant men.

Border policies are also addressed as part of the problematics that abused migrant women face. There is concern over the residence permits of migrant women who have married ‘a Finn or another person living permanently in Finland’, but who fear deportation due to

the break-up of the marriage, and measures are suggested to inquire into the issue (*Kansallinen ohjelma väkivallan vähentämiseksi* 2005, 51).

To conclude, in the security frame, violence in families is subsumed under a broader formulation of violence and national threats. The nation-state and border-crossing activities are the central parameters in relation to which aspects of racialized minority intimacies are made relevant in this frame. Some aspects of migrant/minority families are brought to the fore when connected to threats like globalization, terrorism, and organized crime. The securitization and criminalization of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in current European politics and policies has been identified by several researchers (e.g. Balibar 2004; Squire 2009; Mezzadra & Neilson 2012). My analysis shows that honor-related violence and transnational marriages can also become intertwined in such logics. The instances where violence in racialized minority families was coupled with the discussion on racism and discrimination were random, and the security logic tends to frame migrants/minorities as national threats in need of management, control and expulsion.

### **The policies of gendered violence and racialization: a comparison between the two countries**

The main characteristics of the three policy frames identified in the data are encapsulated in Table 1. The differences between the two countries, in relation to the frames utilized in the policy documents and the constructions of violence in racialized minority families, will be discussed below.

	<b>Violence frame</b>	<b>Immigration frame</b>	<b>Security frame</b>
Ethnic/racial difference	Specific needs Vulnerable groups	Ultimate “other” in terms of intimacies	Criminality, border control, ethnic and racial relations
Migrant/minority family	Focus on migrant/minority women	Focus on intergenerational relations and individual freedom	Focus on the relation to nation-state and border-crossing activities
Means	Support	Discipline, control	Subsume under larger activities
Governing through	Normalizing family	Normative individuality, normalizing family	National borders and inside/outside division
Country	Denmark Finland	Denmark	Finland

Table 1.

Only one policy frame is common to both countries under study. The *violence frame* is utilized in Denmark and Finland, as well as being the most common in the data (half of the action plans fall within this frame). There is a slight difference between how the frame is used in the two countries, however. In Finland, gendered violence is treated as an issue that still calls for action, while in Denmark only the first plan is built on this premise. The subsequent Danish plans present the problem of violence in close relationships as being well under control and resolved with the established practices. This positive future vision is, however, marred by the racialized minorities, who may herald a return to the taboo-like and old-fashioned gender relations in Danish society.

The *immigration frame* was only found in the Danish action plans. This frame casts the racialized minority families as the ultimate ‘other’ in relation to the normative white

family and liberal individualism. The means to tackle violence in families are largely based on a disciplinary and controlling approach, although supportive activities are also designed for minority youth. The emphasis on discipline and control are especially visible when compared to the violence frame, which in Denmark mainly promotes means like support, treatment, education of professionals and other non-confrontational methods.

The *security frame* was only present in the Finnish action plans. It is also the most common Finnish frame, if judged by the number of action plans. In this frame, gendered violence received little space and only a few targeted actions were suggested. Discussions on violence and migrant/minority families were intertwined with border control, criminality, and terrorism – but, on the other hand, concerns about racism and discrimination were also raised in this frame. In addition, the focus on the nation-state, and cross-border security threats meant interest was directed toward transnational families, migrant young men, and honor-related violence.

The Danish policies and discourses are characterized by a strong differentiation between majority Danes and ethnic minorities. Both the violence and immigration frame build on normative ideas of gender and generational relations, both of which are deeply embedded in liberal individualism. While the governing in the violence frame is predominantly based on the normalizing family, the immigration frame combines this with a strong emphasis on normative individualism. Neoliberal governmentality through ‘freedom’ is thus central to the Danish context. The Danish policies against minority families are strongly inclined toward discipline and control, and in some cases also toward punitive measures. Violence in majority families is perceived to be under control, while the concern is directed toward racialized minorities.

In the Finnish policies and discourse, violence in migrant/minority families has not been considered a central topic. Overall, only two action plans have been developed to tackle gendered violence, neither of which delve into the problematics of migrant women or minority families. A general trend has been to develop broad programs to tackle ‘interior

security', with the nation-state and border control introduced as the self-evident starting point. While this choice has meant that fewer initiatives to reduce violence in minority families have been developed (at the state level), the migrant/minority family has been at least to some extent spared the intense scrutiny and disciplinary actions that characterize the Danish context. In the Finnish policies, white majority men have also figured as perpetrators of violence in transnational marriages and some concern has been expressed over power relations in custody disputes and the effects of immigration legislation.

While the normalizing family, normative (liberal) individuality and securitization to some extent characterize policy constructions and debates on violence in migrant/minority families in both countries, I argue that a certain difference can be detected in the modes of governmentality. It seems that securitization and (safe)guarding the nation-state and its borders are typical of the Finnish way to address transnational migration and matters related to otherness. In Denmark, normative individuality in particular has a strong foothold in the regulation of migrant/minority families. This attests to the prominent position of neoliberal governmentality in the Danish context.

## **Discussion**

What sort of categorizations of people are created through these policies? How are migrant/minority families in particular governed, and how are their lives regulated as a result of these policies? The analysis has shown that, irrespective of the frame, the categorizations define migrant/minority families as lacking basic values and practices that majority families are expected to share, which allows, and in places even demands, the state to intervene – through support, education, control, or expulsion. State interventions are designed in a manner that has deep effects on intimacies, defining what kind of individual choices and family formations are acceptable. The broad understanding of the problem, especially in Denmark, covers intergenerational conflicts and marriage arrangements of a varying nature. The policies bear few traces of the recognition that racialized minorities are already engaging in discussions concerning different understandings of gender equality, family relations and intimacies. Instead, the policies

proceed from hegemonic understandings of individuality and family relations that are imposed as touchstones for minorities, with the effect of pathologizing the racialized 'other families' and neglecting their existing diverse practices. The main actors presented as knowing and holding the solutions to the problem are the authorities or white, majority-controlled NGOs.

In this article, I have argued that the fact that violence in migrant/minority families has turned from a non-issue into one that characterizes immigration debates and triggers policy development (Phillips & Saharso 2008) needs to be understood in relation to the changing constellations of the intimate, the nation, and belonging in the neoliberal era. If neoliberal governmentality is about governing through 'freedom' with reference to security and danger (Gozdecka et al. 2014, 59), this does not necessarily marginalize the welfare state as is often presumed. In my view, the question is more about neoliberal governmentality bringing new elements to welfare state policies, and also working through the welfare state. While Goldberg (2009, 172) argues that under neoliberalism the state's role is not to ensure the welfare of its citizens but, rather, their security, thus placing security above welfare, I would argue that the relationship is more complex than that, at least in the Nordic region. While security has become a central societal concern, a crucial site for its promotion is the welfare state and welfare policies. We may thus be witnessing a remolding of the Nordic welfare model, in which neoliberal policies and rationalities partly lead to privatization but also work through the welfare structures.

The policy constructions and the governance of migrant/minority families are also embedded in the new spaces of security, as identified by Walters (2006). The categorizations of the migrant/minority family play a central role in the upholding of normative intimacies, as well as in safeguarding the nation and the homeland in a situation where borders have proliferated throughout society and across the EU area. The categorization of the migrant/minority family as an anomaly serves to police the boundaries of acceptable intimacies, of nation-states and Westernized 'values'. Security is sought through (an illusion of) the control of borders by these central institutions and perceived values (cf. Squire 2009). In order to break with this logic, approaches to

violence in migrant/minority families would need to challenge the racialized constructions of the normative family and individuality. Moreover, problem formulations should involve criticism of the securitization logic and take as their starting point the everyday lives, resources and activities of racialized minorities.

## Endnotes

1. The action plans on female genital cutting have not been included in the data, since that would have required an examination of age- and generation-related problem constructions and regulative measures (e.g. legislation to protect minors), which was beyond the scope of this article.
2. I also tried to locate the documents pertaining to the first Finnish program to prevent violence against women and prostitution (*Naisiin kohdistuvan väkivallan ja prostituution ehkäisyohjelma 1998–2002*) but the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health could not find them in the archives. It seems that no action plan comparable to the later plans was made during this program.
3. The Danish actions plans include *Regeringens handlingsplan til bekaempelse af vold mod kvinder* (2002), *Handlingsplan for regeringens indsats i perioden 2003–2005 mod tvangsaegtenskaber, tvangslignende aegteskaber og arrangerede aegteskaber* (2003), *Handlingsplan til bekaempelse af maends vold mod kvinder og børn i familien 2005–2008* (2005), *National strategi til bekaempelse af vold i naere relationer* (2010), *National strategi mod aeresrelaterede konflikter* (2012) and *Indsats mod vold i familien og i naere relationer* (2014).

The Finnish action plans include *Lähisuhde- ja perheväkivallan ehkäiseminen 2004–2007* (2004), *Kansallinen ohjelma väkivallan vähentämiseksi* (2005), *Arjen turvaa* (2004), *Turvallinen elämä jokaiselle* (2008), *Naisiin kohdistuvan väkivallan vähentämisen ohjelma* (2010) and *A safer tomorrow – Internal security programme 2012–2015* (2012).

4. In the Finnish policy documents, the term ‘ethnic minority’ usually refers to ‘old’ minorities, such as the Roma, Sami, Tatar, and Jewish communities. The term ‘immigrant’ is used to refer to more recently arrived groups, irrespective of whether they are migrants or descendants. In the Danish policy documents, the

term 'ethnic minority' is commonly used to refer to groups that have arrived in the country since the 1950s from non-Western countries.

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