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Araştırma Makalesi

BEING AN INSIDER AND/OR OUTSIDER IN FEMINIST RESEARCH: REFLEXIVITY AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN ACADEMIA AND ACTIVISM

Arş. Gör. Dr. Pelin DİNÇER
Hacettepe Üniversitesi, İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi
pelindincer@gmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0002-8999-0535

Abstract

Despite the 'objectivity' requisite of classic positivist approaches for the research to be considered as 'scientific', feminist research stresses the impact of researchers' positionality within knowledge production and criticizes the emphasis on neutrality for a scientific inquiry. Feminists have explored the power relations within the research and discussed the researchers' position – holding an insider and/or outsider positionality – in terms of their complex relations of power. This examination requires elaboration on reflexivity, a critical stance in feminist research that stresses the situatedness of knowledge, which has a significant potential to eliminate the hierarchy within the research and to reconcile the dichotomy between academia and activism. Thus, this study focuses on the dynamics within the feminist qualitative research, particularly interviewing, the notion of reflexivity, the discussions of researchers' insider and/or outsider status and how feminist reflexivity can be used as a tool to form a bridge between academia/activism binary.

Key Words: Reflexivity, Positionality, Feminist research, Interview, Insider/outsider positions

FEMİNİST ARAŞTIRMADA İÇERİDEN VE/VEYA DIŞARIDAN OLMAK: AKADEMİ VE AKTİVİZM ARASINDA BİR KÖPRÜ OLARAK DÜŞÜNÜMSELLİK

Öz

Araştırmanın 'bilimsel' olarak kabul edilmesi için klasik pozitivist yaklaşımların 'nesnellik' gerekliliğine rağmen, feminist araştırma, araştırmacıların bilgi üretimi içerisindeki konumluluğunun etkisini vurgulamakta ve bilimsel bir araştırma için tarafsızlığa vurgu yapılmasını eleştirmektedir. Feministler, araştırma içindeki güç ilişkilerini incelemiş ve araştırmacıların konumlarını – içeriden ve/veya dışarıdan gelen bir konumluluğa sahip olarak – karmaşık güç ilişkileri açısından tartışmışlardır. Bu inceleme, feminist araştırma içerisinde bilginin konumluluğunu vurgulayan ve araştırmadaki hiyerarşiyi ortadan kaldırmak ve akademi ile aktivizm arasındaki ikilemi uzlaştırmak için önemli bir potansiyele sahip olan düşünümsellik üzerine detaylı bir çalışmayı gerektirir. Bu nedenle, bu çalışmada, feminist nitel araştırma, özellikle mülakatlar, içerisindeki dinamiklere, düşünümsellik kavramına, araştırmacıların içeriden ve/veya dışarıdan konumlarına dair tartışmalara ve feminist düşünümselliğin akademi/aktivizm ikiliği arasında bir köprü kurmak için nasıl bir araç olarak kullanılabileceğine odaklanılmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Düşünümsellik, Konumsallık, Feminist araştırma, Mülakat, İçeriden/dışarıdan konumları

1. INTRODUCTION

Despite the positivist tradition's emphasis on researchers' analytical separation from the researched, feminist methodology has supported the engagement with participants and the enhancement of self-reflexivity (Nowicka & Ryan, 2015: para.2). Feminist research has

questioned the value-free and objective understanding of research and has highlighted how the power relations between the researcher and the researched alter the knowledge production process (Mullings, 1999: 337). Leacock even argues that "attempting to conduct research as a 'neutral' observer 'means to align oneself, by default, with the institutional structures that discriminate and exploit poor and non-white people'" (Leacock, 1987 as cited in: Bell, 2015: 34). Feminist works, as well as critiques from women of color, have challenged the white domination on knowledge production, which involves white biases and colonial assumptions, such as the false supposition of universal women's experience. Instead, contemporary feminist works highlight the complexity of power dynamics within research methods and the need of the participatory methodologies and reflexivity (Pollack & Eldridge, 2015: 132).

Feminist scholars have emphasized a standpoint analysis to demonstrate the partiality and multiplicity of situatedness. The most cited works on situated knowledge are of Haraway's (1988) and Harding's (1991) where both scholars argue the fallacy of universally accepted knowledge and knowledge production processes and instead suggest the situatedness and limitedness of one's knowledge. It is argued in feminist research that researchers' knowledge is partial and their positionalities are shaped by a mixture of various factors, such as gender, race, sexuality, class, nationality etc. and how researchers view and interpret the world is time and space bounded (Mullings, 1999: 337).

Although some quantitative research methods are adopted in feminist research, "to recognize the patterns of occurrence of violence or violations, to identify the intervals that it occurs and to identify the number of incidents and the range of population it affects" (Nirmala, 2018: 21), in this study the focus will be on qualitative research, particularly on interviews. Feminist scholars have discussed interviewing as an important method for feminist research for its potential to deliver women's experiences and voices, which have traditionally expelled from knowledge production mechanisms (Linabary & Hamel, 2017: 98). The particular focus on interviews also carries the potential to successfully examine researchers' insider/outsider positionality in feminist research in detail. In order to explore the partiality of researcher's knowledge based on the researcher's positionality during the research, this study will first discuss the features of interviewing from a feminist perspective, under which the reflexivity and being insider/outsider positionality within feminist research will be analyzed. Finally, reflexivity arguments will be applied to academia and activism binary division within feminist research, which has a potential to make this oppositional differentiation redundant.

2. INTERVIEWING FROM A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

Defining some methods as feminist and some not is problematic since there are no definitive rules on how to conduct a "correct" feminist research. Nevertheless, it can be argued that both the aims of the feminist research, as well as the practice of performing it, should be in line with the aims of social change and emancipation (Falconer, 2017: 76). Feminist research questions the vital structures that subjugate women by giving voice to women's experiences and knowledge, and exposing stereotypes related to women. Moreover, feminist research aims to empower women and generally feminist researchers use their findings to advance social justice for women (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007: 4).

In feminist research interviewing is a common method, as is in qualitative research, and one of the most used versions is semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews, or semi-standardised interviews as Berg defines them (2007), are situated somewhere between structured and unstructured interviews. Even though there are still some predetermined questions and specific topics that are asked of each interviewee, interviewers are also free to digress from their standardised questions (Berg, 2007: 95). In semi-structured interviews, although there are fairly specific topics to be covered, interviewees are allowed flexibility in how to reply to questions. Interviewers may not follow the schedule exactly in order and may ask different questions that are not included in the guide as a response to interviewees' replies. However, generally, all the questions on the list are asked in a similar way from one interviewee to another (Bryman, 2008: 438). The related literature often refers to an interview guide, rather than a list of questions (Bryman, 2008; King & Horrocks, 2010; Kvale, 2007). King and Horrocks suggest that flexibility is the key requirement in the interviewing process. Therefore, rather than having a strictly scheduled question list, an interview guide that outlines the main subjects the interviewer would like to cover gives such flexibility to the interviewing process, as it allows the interviewee to lead the discussion in unanticipated directions (King & Horrocks, 2010: 35). As Reinharz aptly points out through interviewing researchers are able to reach the narratives of "people's ideas, thoughts and memories in their own words", which has a significant importance in feminist research since women's voice is historically silenced (Reinharz, 1992: 19)

One of the very first feminists to question the hegemonic discourse in social science research was Ann Oakley (1981). In a well-known article, she argues that literature about conducting research consists of lists of "proper" and "improper" interviews. Proper interviews generally emphasise the importance of objectivity, detachment and hierarchy; while improper ones include subjectivity, involvement and the "fiction" of equality (Oakley, 1981: 38). She

does not approve of these generally accepted opinions about interviewing and stresses significant processes that feminist researchers need to follow, such as avoiding an exploitative attitude viewing interviewees only as sources of data, giving visibility to women's subjective situations, and establishing a non-hierarchical relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee (Oakley, 1981). Thus, acknowledging feminist methodological guidance in qualitative research, and in interviews in particular, necessitates challenging the power dynamics between the researcher and the researched and avoiding "perpetuating the exploitation of women as research subjects" (Falconer, 2017: 76).

Like Silverman, some scholars analyse interview as a meaning-making process between the researcher and the participant, rather than the conventional view which considers interview as a text that indicates the reality (Silverman, 2011 as cited in: Nowicka & Ryan, 2015). However, critical scholars argue that when dominant groups research marginalised people, this necessitates to question for whom the research is beneficial (Pollack & Eldridge, 2015: 134). This examination requires elaboration on reflexivity, a critical stance in feminist methodology, which has a significant potential to eliminate the hierarchy within the research.

2.1. Reflexivity

Feminist researchers stressed the importance of showing "sensitivity" to the complicated aspect of the researcher and the researched relationship and manifested "a commitment to reflexivity as part of the discipline of doing research, especially about women's lives and lived experiences". Moreover, they also supported a more critical stance on the power structures within knowledge production (Philip & Bell, 2017: 72). As Rose argues knowledge is fully generated in distinct conditions and that those conditions somehow frame the knowledge production itself and this applies to researchers' own situated positionings as well (Rose, 1997: 305). In order to establish reflexivity during the research process, researchers are required to acknowledge their own positionings in the knowledge creation, pay attention at their self-knowledge and sensitivities to a greater extent, attentively self-observe the effects of their own prejudices, values and individual involvements on the research and sustain the equilibrium between the self and the global (Berger, 2015: 220). In other words, researchers should establish a meaningful dialogue with self and a critical self-evaluation of their positionality while acknowledging their positionings' effect on the research process and the final outcome. Thus, researchers should be aware of their own situatedness within and its impacts to the research. With these features, the notion of reflexivity brings the idea of the independency of knowledge

creation from the researcher's positionality and the objective knowledge production process into question (Berger, 2015: 220).

Active listening is one of the crucial components of feminist research and a part of reflexive knowledge production. As Bloom argues when the interview moves from a "mutual dialogue" to an "unnatural monologue", where the interviewer does not response to participants' in-depth stories, then participants may feel disturbed and uneasy (Bloom, 1998 as cited in: Falconer, 2017: 76). Hence, interview is more than a simple question-and-answer conversation, but rather "a fully engaged practice that involves not only taking in information via speech, written words, or signs, but also actively processing it – allowing that information to affect you, baffle you, haunt you, make you uncomfortable, and take you on unexpected detours" (DeVault & Gross, 2007: 182). Therefore, the researcher needs to listen attentively, sensibly and closely to participants' commentaries (Hesse-Biber, 2007: 134). One of the ways to be reflexive about your work is keeping a fieldwork diary. King and Horrocks (2010: 131) define the importance of keeping a fieldwork diary as follow:

> *These are not field notes in the strictest sense, whereby you record and reflect on unfolding interactions, thus forming the basis of your research data. Rather, the research diary contains the uninhibited, candid and personal thoughts of researchers as they work on a specific project. Nevertheless, for those of us using qualitative interviewing, some of the thoughts and reflections recorded in our research diary may indeed, at a later date, be used as data that can be analysed in its own right, offer elaborations that enhance our analysis and/or provide methodological insight.*

The fieldwork diary is as important as any other method as it gives you a perspective about what has not been said in recordings which provides additional information to analyse and also helps you to be more reflexive about your own work. Berger suggests two additional practical measures, apart from the use of a log – documenting what the researched participants stated, the interpretation of what was being said, and what the researcher's understanding about it is based on her/his experience – to establish a reflexive account: repeated review – reviewing the same interview a short time after the original analysis to see whether researchers' own experience influenced the report – and seeking peer consultation – getting feedback from colleagues which may point out the researcher's own projections on data (Berger, 2015: 230). With these practical measures, as Berger argues, researchers should steadily question the impact of their positionings at any given moment during the research process (Berger, 2015: 231). Reflexivity then evolves into a notable process for revealing the power dynamics within the research practice (Mullings, 1999: 348).

Discussions on the power relationships between the researcher and the participant have more likely discussed the researcher's more powerful position during the process (Mullings, 1999: 338). While Oakley suggests that establishing a non-hierarchical relationship is a must for feminist research, Letherby (2003: 125) argues that it is unfeasible to do so because the researcher has the utmost authority over the data collection and presentation. She argues that the power dynamics within the research practice are conflicting for both the researcher and the researched participant. However, she claims that the researcher has more power during the fieldwork process, when she/he decides what questions to ask and in what order, as well as she/he controls the tape-recorder, and also during the analysis period and deciding on the presentation of the research (Letherby, 2003: 114) She adds that, although it is important to see things from the participants' perspectives, researchers should acknowledge their "privileged positions" within the research relationship (Letherby, 2003: 125). Mullings also argues that researchers hold the ultimate authority in the research process when they interpret and write up the research. The way researchers interpret the information they were given, the quotations they use to support their arguments and the final text they present to the public are all under the control of researchers (Mullings, 1999: 347). However, researcher's "privileged position" can fluctuate based on other factors. As Berger argues pertinent positionings of researcher's involve "personal characteristics, such as gender, race, affiliation, age, sexual orientation, immigration status, personal experiences, linguistic tradition, beliefs, biases, preferences, theoretical, political and ideological stances, and emotional responses to participant" (Berger, 2015: 220). These positionalities, as Berger points out, have three different effects on the research. First, they can have an impact on researchers' access to the field. Second, they can affect researcher-researched relationship, which may have a direct impact on participants' willingness to share their experiences. Third, and finally, researchers' backgrounds affect the language they use, the questions they form – it constructs their world and hence the way they make meaning out of their data. Reflexivity, then, assists to identify those personal, contextual and circumstantial facets' effects on the research practice and the outcome (Berger, 2015: 220).

Reflexivity practices, however, are not easy to achieve. As Rose argues, there are two different and related reflexivity practices: "reflexivity is formulated in terms of visibility, then, but also in terms of a particular spatiality. This reflexivity looks both 'inward' to the identity of the researcher, and 'outward' to her relation to her research and what is described as 'the wider world'" (Rose, 1997: 309). They are both called as "transparent reflexivity": assuming that the researcher-self is "a transparently knowable agent whose motivations can

be fully know", which constitutes the "inward" transparency (Rose, 1997: 309). Then the transparent researcher-self considers her/his positionality in the outer world by understanding her/his position in the knowledge production and in relative to power (Rose, 1997: 309). She defines transparent reflexivity as both "certain notions of agency (as conscious) and power (as context)" as knowable: **"**As a discourse, it produces feminist geographers who claim to know how power works, but who are also themselves powerful, able to see and know both themselves and the world in which they work" (Rose, 1997: 311). However, Rose also poses questions about the possibility of such transparent reflexivity and argues that whether researchers can fully know themselves and the context surrounds them (Rose, 1997: 311). The lack of analytical tools to aid feminist researchers to determine how their social locations, such as gender, race, sexuality, class etc., impact their knowledge production poses a difficulty to fully achieve transparent reflexivity (Rose, 1997: 312). Expecting the self and the context to be transparently understandable, Rose argues, is as dangerous as the universalistic certainty claims (Rose, 1997: 318). Researchers should acknowledge that both them and the subjects re-interpret and re-present themselves in different ways (Mullings, 1999: 348). Thus, Rose suggests that we should allow some "absences and fallibilities" in our research practices whilst acknowledging that the consequences of this does not wholly in our control (Rose, 1997: 319). Having said that, as Berger argues, reflexivity is also influenced by "whether the researcher is part of the researched" and whether the researcher has similar experiences as the researched (Berger, 2015: 219), which brings us to the issue of researchers' positionality.

2.2. Researchers' Positionality in the Research: Discussions on Insider and/or Outsider Status

Holding an "insider" and/or an "outsider" position has been argued as an epistemological matter since the relation between the positionality of the researcher and the researched has a direct effect on the knowledge co-produced between them (Hayfield & Huxley, 2015: 91). Moreover, insider and/or outsider positions have an influence on different stages of research – research design, data collection and analysis. Early discussions of researchers' insider and/or outsider positions mostly assumed that researchers could be *either* insiders *or* outsiders and that each position had its own advantages and disadvantages. Commonly, it is argued that an insider positionality brings along: "easy access, the ability to ask more meaningful questions and read non-verbal cues, and most importantly, [to] be able to project a more truthful, authentic understanding of the culture under study" (Merriam et al., 2001: 411). In other words, scholars argue that holding an insider position – studying a group

to which researchers belong – "have an advantage because they are able to use their knowledge of the group to gain more intimate insights into their opinions" (Mullings, 1999: 340). Researchers who hold insider position likely to have the knowledge of the researched as they are culturally, linguistically, ethnically etc. associated. Thus "ascribed" rather than "acquired" statuses and identities of the researcher can provide the insider status (Nowicka & Ryan, 2015). On the other hand, being an insider may blur boundaries, where the researcher might project their own values, beliefs, perceptions which can cause biases (Berger, 2015: 224). These potential inherent biases might stop researchers to raise challenging questions (Merriam et al., 2001: 411) and participants might be willing to withhold information, based on an assumption on the researchers' and researched' shared identities (Berger, 2015: 224). Researchers' previous experiences as a member of the group might affect their studies, which might result in studies that are mostly guided by the researcher's experiences rather than the participants' (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009: 58).

Being an outsider, on the other hand, is mostly seen as a disadvantageous position since access is not easy and misunderstandings and misinterpretations might occur as the result of being a stranger to the group under study (Merriam et al., 2001: 411). However, it also has its own advantages, such as being able to ask taboo questions and participants' tendency to explain and give more information because the researcher is seen as someone who is not familiar with the group's culture (Merriam et al., 2001: 411). It provides an advantageous position, especially while studying marginalised or disadvantaged groups. As Berger argues, since participants hold the expert position in researcher-researched relationship, they feel respected, empowered and validated. On the researchers' viewpoint, because of their unfamiliarity on the subject, they might prone to ask original questions which may lead the interview to creative directions (Berger, 2015: 227). Moreover, it is argued that outsiders "are likely to have a greater degree of objectivity and ability to observe behaviors without distorting their meanings" (Mullings, 1999: 340). Nevertheless, while studying the "other", reflexivity is essential to avoid viewing participants' narratives through judging lenses (Berger, 2015: 228). However, studies reveal that insider and/or outsider status is more complex and that the boundaries between the positions are not so clear and simple because one's positionality changes according to race, class, gender, culture and other factors (Merriam et al., 2001: 405).

James Banks (1998) suggests a different classification for cross-cultural researchers. He defines four different positions: indigenous-insider, indigenous-outsider, external-insider and external-outsider. The indigenous-insider supports the, prospects, values, ideas, faiths,

behaviours and knowledge of her/his indigenous society and is seen as an affiliate of the community by its people. The indigenous-outsider is someone who was socialised in the indigenous culture but has been assimilated by an oppositional community whose ideas, beliefs, values, prospects, and knowledge she/he is now part of. Therefore, the indigenous community perceives her/him as an outsider. The external-insider was socialised within another community. However, she/he rejects many of the values, prospects, ideas and knowledge of her/his indigenous culture and rather accepts those of the examined community. She/he is therefore perceived as an "adopted" insider by the studied community. Lastly, the external-outsider was socialised within a different group and she/he has very little understanding of the beliefs, perspectives, values and knowledge of the culture she/he is researching, which might result in misunderstandings and misinterpretations of the behaviours of the studied community (Banks, 1998: 8). Even though Banks adds more positions rather than simply being an insider or outsider, I argue that the line between each position is not that simple and being an absolute insider or outsider is not possible. As Mullings argues, "the binary implied in the 'insider/outsider' debates, however, is less than real because it seeks to freeze positionalities in place and assumes that being an 'insider' or 'outsider' is a fixed attribute" (Mullings, 1999: 340).

Griffin sees insider and/or outsider status during the interviewing practice as "a negotiation of shifting positions where the binary structures suggested by the role differences of interviewer and interviewee in the interview situation mask the more dynamic interactions actually at play in that situation" (Griffin, 2016: 16). As she argues, in some researches where the main theme is a "third", an object, which was participation in public arts, particularly theatre in her research, "rather than a topic that immediately and obviously required engagement about personal and/or structural traits", led the interviews' focus shift from the self and thus allow the "third", theatre, to "function as the initial point of discussion between us". She argues that this does not imply that the differences and similarities among interviewers and interviewees are not at play, but they are not the urgent focus (Griffin, 2016: 21).

Dweyer and Bucker suggest another position, which is being in the space between – rather than being an insider or outsider. As they explain, having membership of a group does not mean absolute sameness with that group. Likewise, not having membership is not a sign of complete difference. According to them, the origin of the space between lies in the fact that when we note the ways in which we are unlike others, we also acknowledge the aspects in which we are similar. They argue that, as researchers, we can only be in the space between; we might be closer to the insider position or to the outsider position, but we cannot fully

occupy either (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009: 60-61). Being an insider/outsider is not a fixed and steady position and that during the interview your position might transform from one to the other. David Chawla puts this clearly about the position of being an insider. According to him, we are all "another" in the field because there will always be sides of us which are similar to the people we are researching, but there will also be other things that emphasise our differences, which results in the fact that we cannot be a complete insider (Chawla, 2007 as cited in: Liamputtong, 2010: 119). As Mullings asserts the insider or outsider binary also neglects "the dynamism of positionalities in time and through space". This means that individuals cannot always remain as complete insiders or outsiders (Mullings, 1999: 340). That being said Nowicka and Ryan argue that researchers should even relinquish the insider-outsider dynamic since it "prioritises one particular kind of difference – most commonly the ethnic or national – over other categories of difference". They warn about the potential endanger of assuming a priori commonality between the researcher and the participants and suggest a position of uncertainty that the researchers should adopt (Nowicka & Ryan, 2015, para.5).

When we look at researchers' positionality and the discussions around insider and/or outsider positionings in feminist research, early works highlighted the importance of building a rapport with participants. Oakley stresses the importance of interviewers' self-disclosure of personal information in order to develop close relationships with their participants (Oakley, 1981). DeVault and Gross also highlight the value of establishing rapport and mention the effects of similarities and differences between the interviewer and the interviewee. Even though similarities might create over-rapport and differences could be reasons for bias, feminist researchers have cultivated more complex and reflexive views of identity, and therefore of its effects on interviewing. In other words, even though there are obvious differences between the two parties, such as ethnicity, there could be other similarities based on age, marital status or education which could help to establish rapport (DeVault & Gross, 2007: 179). A critical aspect of "being an insider" is argued via the risk of collusion while establishing rapport with participants. Duncombe and Jessop stress that there is also increasing professionalization and commodification of establishing rapport, which has led to interviewer to form "fake friendships" in some occasions (Duncombe & Jessop, 2012 as cited in: Philip & Bell, 2017: 72). Moreover, while emphasizing the importance of non-neutrality of feminist research process, it is important to emphasize that when the interviewer forms friendships with the participants, the boundaries between where the data collection begins,

and ends become unclear and this can cause ethical dilemmas. On the other hand, it can be argued that such complications can alter research ethics' formality (Falconer, 2017: 77-78).

Mullings refers to "positional spaces" that researchers hold during the qualitative research, instead, "that is, areas where the situated knowledges of both parties in the interview encounter, engender a level of trust and co-operation" (Mullings, 1999: 340). These "positional spaces", as Mullings argues, cannot be reduced to visible attributes such as gender, race, ethnicity and class etc., but instead they are often transitory. Researchers can also represent themselves as "temporary insiders" in the field by gaining participants' respect through sounding knowledgeable of the topic discussed. This performance creates an environment in which the researcher and the researched may regard each other as "intellectual equals" (Mullings, 1999: 340). However, requesting from women to share their stories and disclose their lived experiences has its problems, especially when the analysis and deciding to share the findings with public are done without the contributions of those women, which constitutes the academic work as privileged (Pollack & Eldridge, 2015: 138). In that case, the importance of reflexivity in feminist research remains significant to balance the hierarchy that is contained in the research. As Rose (1997: 307) argues,

> *no feminist should produce knowledge that claims to have universal applicability to all women (or men). This argument was preceded by a critique of the way the feminisms of white straight women ignored the specificities of black and lesbian women; more recently, with the academic institutionalization of at least some feminisms, it is also an argument directed at academic women (still mostly straight and white, especially in geography) whose knowledge may exclude others.*

The dualistic approach, seeing academia and activism as binary oppositions, however, may embody the reproduction of hierarchies within the research. Thus, performing reflexivity process to this duality may potentially bridge the seemingly poles apart.

3. Academia vs. Activism Duality and Reflexivity

There is a prevalent belief that academia and activism are two separate worlds, based on the binary divisions between "mind/body, theory/practice, reason/emotion, abstract/concrete and 'ivory tower'/ 'real world'", which sets thinking and reflecting in opposition to doing and acting:

… the frequent assumption [is] that academics theorise and write, while for activists "action is the life of all…"; academics exercise their cognitive skills, while activists are animated by passion; academics are impartial commentators on the world while activists are partisan, polemical advocates; academics work in elite institutions while activists are

embedded in the everyday, "on the streets" or at "the grassroots" (Eschle & Maiguashca, 2006: 119).

Audrey Kobayashi argues that women scholars are privileged since they hold middle-class affluences, such as access to education and professional status, which remain comparably unreachable for many women with different backgrounds (Kobayashi, 1994 as cited: in Rose, 1997: 307). Thus, hierarchy between these two positions is created in either direction. Either academia is defined with "bourgeois theorising" and its presence in the society is seen far above than people or it is accused of being "passive" by diminishing its less contribution to social change than activism. However, as Grewal argues, "the lines between activism and theory are not absolute; they exist at once as both" (Grewal, 2008: 178).

Assuming that academic research only consists of predetermined stages that are sharply disconnected, such as "literature review stage", "fieldwork stage" and "writing-up stage", underestimates the impact of researchers' positionality during the process. Critical reflexivity requires researchers to acknowledge that their "period 'in the field' was not discretely bounded" (Maxey, 1999: 203). Maxey argues that "activism is not a fixed term". It rather constitutes different characteristics, which actively construct activism it, and these characteristics include academia as well. Therefore, understanding activism solely as "going on an action", depicts an understanding of activism which is restrictive and exclusive: "The insistence of equating activism only with taking a physical action led to confining it to a discourse of 'dramatic and macho' forms of activism with short-term public impacts" (Maxey, 1999: 199-200). Maxey aptly suggests that the notion of activism should be inspiring, encouraging and engaging as many people as possible and thus the term should be viewed very broadly, without excluding other facets of everyday life (Maxey, 1999: 201):

> *the social world is produced through the acts each of us engages in every day. Everything we do, every thought we have, contributes to the production of the social world. I understand activism to be the process of reflecting and acting upon this condition. We are in a sense all activists, as we are all engaged in producing the world. Reflexivity enables us to place ourselves actively within this process. Paradoxically, activism under this interpretation often starts from a mental rather than physical process. By actively and critically reflecting on the world and our place within it, we are more able to act in creative, constructive ways that challenge oppressive power relations rather than reinforce them. This is, perhaps, what one activist I spoke with termed a "direct action attitude" (Maxey 1998). For me, activism means doing as much as I can from where I am at. Where I am at, of course, varies politically, spiritually, emotionally, physically and so on. Perhaps the central part of my understanding of activism is that it gives rise to a continual process of reflection, challenge and empowerment. I do not punish myself for the infinite number of things I cannot*

> *do, rather I celebrate each moment, each thought and deed undertaken in this spirit of critically reflexive engagement.*

Feminists have discussed the problematic aspects of the "objectivity" in academic thought and emphasised the importance of generating knowledge from women's everyday lives. This understanding also has re-shaped the relationship between academia and activism, specifically between universities and the feminist movement, with the help of gender studies programmes. Universities have become a significant source of political activism for many feminists (Eschle & Maiguashca, 2006: 120). Feminist ethnography can be regarded within activist practices since it stresses "revealing the lived experiences of social inequality and injustice among research participants" and also attempts "to do something to bring about positive social change for the people in the study". Thus, by giving attention to individual experiences of injustice and people's stories, feminist research becomes a powerful tool to "bring the voices of marginalized individuals forward to the policy arena" (Bell, 2015: 32). Hence, researchers can use their "privileged" academic positions to good use and provide credibility and draw attention to the social movements in the eyes of policy-makers. As feminist researchers, "we must carefully consider the consequences of our own research agenda and ensure that it does not undermine our research participants' goals for the community driven portion of the project" (Bell, 2015: 51). As Brooks argues, aiming to produce knowledge not only about women but also for women, who can benefit from the research to some degree "breaks down boundaries between academia and activism, between theory and practice" (Brooks, 2007: 77). Harcourt discusses how feminist practice is a part of everyday life and thus her argument connects academia and activism dichotomy:

> *I see the doing of feminist practice (whether collectively or individually) in advocacy campaigns, protests, teaching students, writing, speaking, listening, or challenging through my dress and life choices… My method also reflects my consciousness of border crossing from academe to activist worlds and all the marginal places in between. So my feminist method is navigating and moving between being a feminist in an academic institution, and being an intellectual/academic in a feminist space. (Harcourt et.al., 2015: 159)*

Even though not all academic work can be regarded as activism, just as not all activism exists in academia, there are clear overlaps. Therefore, academia can become a mean of activism (Maxey, 1999: 202). Like Maxey, I also reject the binary definitions of academia and activism and highlight the fluidity of these two positions, rather than seeing understanding "academic researcher" position as a block and a sign of an outsider. It can be argued that activism should not be limited to demonstrations in the streets. Rallies, protests,

signing a petition, researching, trying to expand students' knowledge in the classrooms are all different forms of activism, with a greater or lesser impact. Especially when we see feminism as a daily praxis, embedded in one's everyday life (Ahmed, 2017), which necessitates constant reflexivity, we may argue that the division between academia and activism blurs.

4. CONCLUSION

The classic positivist research claims the requisite of "value neutrality" and "objectivity" during the research for it to be considered as "scientific". However, feminist research, and particularly feminist standpoint theorists, emphasise that researchers' positionality cannot be separated from the knowledge they produce and thus criticises the emphasis on neutrality for a scientific inquiry. It is argued that the specific social location that the researchers occupy has an impact on the knowledge-production process – starting from the research questions to how the research results are reported (Bell, 2015: 33-34). Feminists have explored the power relations within the research and discussed the researchers' position in terms of their complex relations of power. Moreover, they discussed the knowledge production through the lens of "positionality" – how researchers' "race, nationality, age, gender, social and economic status, sexuality may influence the 'data' collected and thus the information that becomes coded as 'knowledge'". Based on the arguments on positionality, knowledge is "positioned" and "situated" and thus "can no longer claim universality" (Rose, 1997: 307-308). It is often emphasised in feminist research that researchers produce knowledge about women's lived experiences, from a "fluid rather than static" positionality (Berger, 2015: 231). Thus, holding a membership position of one group – an insider positionality – does not indicate utter sameness, just as not being a member – an outsider positionality – is not a sign of total difference. The key feature to understand the positionality during the research is reflexivity. As Rose argues reflexivity is discussed "as a strategy for situating knowledges: that is, as a means of avoiding the false neutrality and universality of so much academic knowledge" (Rose, 1997: 305). In order to move away from the academia and activism binary, feminist researchers should be conscious about the "intersection of power with academic knowledge" and their privileged positionings – in terms of having preeminent access to material resources and holding power in knowledge production about other women (Rose, 1997: 307). In other words, in order to make the research process explicit, feminist researchers should adopt reflexive strategies to think critically about their positionings in the knowledge production. Moreover, while aiming to add women's experiences to the current epistemology, adopting reflexivity is a key for feminist researchers to potentially abolish the dichotomy between academia and activism. Using feminist methodology is not solely about

how we position ourselves within fieldwork, but it is also related with the purpose and the effects of our works (Harcourt et.al., 2015: 158). Feminist researchers, as Letherby argues, begin with a political maxim to produce effective and fruitful knowledge for women, which potentially creates social and individual change in their lives (Letherby, 2003: 4). A significant component of feminist research, as Bell notes, is that the feminist research can be both used for "social science inquiry" and at the same time provides "an opportunity for research participants' stories to be heard—and acted upon—by those with political power" (Bell, 2015: 27), which reconciles academia vs activism tension.

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TÜRKÇE GENİŞ ÖZET

Araştırmanın 'bilimsel' olarak kabul edilmesi için klasik pozitivist yaklaşımların 'nesnellik' ve 'değerlerden bağımsızlık' gerekliliklerine rağmen, feminist araştırma, araştırmacıların bilgi üretimi içerisindeki konumluluğunun etkisini vurgulamakta ve bilimsel bir araştırma için tarafsızlığa vurgu yapılmasını eleştirmektedir. Feminist araştırmalar, araştırmacı ile araştırılan arasındaki iktidar ilişkisine işaret etmekte ve bu ilişkinin bilgi üretim sürecini nasıl değiştirdiğini vurgulamaktadır (Mullings, 1999: 337). Leacock, hatta araştırmayı tarafsız bir gözlemci olarak yürütmeye çalışmanın kendisinin, dar gelirli ve beyaz olmayan insanlara karşı ayrımcılık yapan ve sömürü uygulayan kurumsal yapılarla iş birliği yapmak anlamına geldiğini tartışmaktadır (Bell, 2015: 34). Bunun yerine, feminist çalışmalar araştırma metotları içerisindeki iktidar dinamiğinin karmaşıklığına ve katılımcı metodolojilerin ve düşünümselliğin gerekliliğine işaret etmektedirler (Pollack ve Eldridge, 2015: 132). Haraway (1988) ve Harding (1991) gibi feminizmin önde gelen isimleri bakış açısı analizleri ile konumluluğun kısmiliği ve çokluluğunu vurgulamakta ve evrensel olarak kabul edilen bilgi ve bilgi üretim süreçlerinin yanlışlığına işaret etmektedirler. Diğer bir ifadeyle, feminist bakış açısı teorisyenleri, araştırmacıların konumlarının bilgi üretiminden ayrılamayacağını ve böylece bilimsel bir araştırma için tarafsızlığa yapılan vurguyu eleştirmektedirler. Bununla birlikte, feminist çalışmalar araştırmacının bilgisinin kısmi olduğunu ve konumlarının toplumsal cinsiyet, ırk, cinsiyet, sınıf, milliyet gibi birçok farklı etken tarafından şekillendiğini belirtmekte (Mullings, 1999: 337) ve bu etkinin araştırma sorusundan araştırma sonuçlarının yansıtılmasına kadar olan süreçteki her aşamada belirleyici olduğunu tartışmaktadırlar.

Feminist araştırma içerisinde birçok nitel ve nicel metot kullanılıyor olsa da bu çalışmada asıl odak, araştırmacının konumluluğunu, içeriden ve/veya dışarıdan, detaylı bir şekilde tartışmaya imkân sunan mülakatlarda olacaktır. Feminist araştırmacılar, mülakatların, bilgi üretim mekanizmalarından geleneksel olarak dışlanmış kadın deneyimlerini ve kadınların seslerini duyurabilme potansiyelini tartışmışlardır (Linabary ve Hamel, 2017: 98). Mülakatlara feminist bakış, mülakat sürecindeki hiyerarşik ilişki düzenine ışık tutmayı gerektirmektedir. Bu değerlendirmeyi ilk yapan feministlerden Ann Oakley, literatürdeki "uygun" ve "uygun olmayan" mülakatlar listesine işaret ederek, "uygun" mülakatların nesnel, tarafsız ve hiyerarşik olarak listelendiği ve "uygun olmayan" mülakatların da öznellik, ilişkilenme ve eşitlik "kurgusu" içerdiğini belirterek, bu ayrımı net bir şekilde eleştirmektedir. Oakley, feminist bir araştırmanın, katılımcıları sadece bir veri kaynağı olarak gören sömürücü tutumlardan kaçınmasını, kadınların ikincilleştirilmiş konumlarını görünür kılmasını ve araştırmacı ile katılımcı arasında hiyerarşik olmayan bir ilişki kurulmasını vurgulamaktadır (Oakley, 1981). Feminist çalışmalar, araştırma sürecindeki iktidar odaklı hiyerarşik ilişkilerin eleştirisinin ve araştırmacının bilgi üretim sürecindeki konumunun ancak düşünümselliğin kavranması ve pratiğe geçirilmesi ile mümkün olabileceğini tartışmaktadırlar.

Araştırma içerisinde feminist düşünümselliğin gerçekleştirilebilmesi, araştırmacıların bilgi üretim süreci üzerinde kendi konumlarının etkisini kabul etmelerini, kendi bilgi ve hassasiyetlerinin farkında olmalarını ve kendi değerlerinin, önyargılarının ve araştırdıkları konu ile ilgili kişisel katılımlarının araştırma üzerindeki etkilerini dikkatle gözlemlemelerini gerektirmektedir (Berger, 2015: 220). Araştırmacının, araştırma sürecindeki konumu, düşünümsellik açısından ele alınması gereken bir diğer önemli husustur. Konumluluk üzerine olan argümanlar, bilginin sınırlı ve konumlu yapısından hareketle, evrensellik talebini reddeder (Rose, 1997). Berger'in tartıştığı gibi, araştırmacının farklı konumu onun alana erişimini etkileyebilmekte, araştırmacı-katılımcı ilişki dinamiğini şekillendirebilmekte ve araştırmacının elde ettiği verilerden anlam üretme süreçlerini etkileyebilmektedir. Bu aşamada, düşünümsellik, bu kişisel, bağlamsal ve koşulsal özelliklerin araştırma pratiği ve sonuçlar üzerinde nasıl bir etkide bulunduğunu anlamaya yardımcı olmaktadır. Geleneksel çalışmalar içerisinde araştırmacının konumluluğu "içeriden" – çalışılan grubun içerisinden olmak – veya "dışarıdan" – çalışılan grubun dışarısında olmak – olarak tartışılmaktadır. Ancak bu ikili konumsallık, yakın dönemli araştırma metotları üzerine olan çalışmalarda eleştirilmekte ve araştırmacının araştırma süreci içerisindeki konumunun akışkanlılığından ve mutlak "içeriden" ve benzer olmanın ya da mutlak "dışarıdan" ve farklı olmanın imkansızlığından bahsedilmektedir (Dwyer ve Buckle, 2009; Liamputtong, 2010). Bunun

yerine araştırmacının konumluluğunun araştırma süreci içerisinde değişkenlik gösterebileceği kabul edilmelidir. Örneğin, feminist araştırma kadınların deneyimleri üzerinden bilgi üretiminin akışkan bir konumluluk gerektiğini ifade etmektedir (Berger, 2015). Mullings, araştırma sürecinde araştırmacıların sahip oldukları "konumsal alanlar"a işaret etmekte ve bu alanlarda araştırmacının ve katılımcının sahip oldukları konumlandırılmış bilgilerin güven ve iş birliği içerisinde buluştuğunu tartışmaktadır. Bu performans araştırmacı ve katılımcının birbirlerini "entelektüel eşitler" olarak görebilecekleri bir ortam yaratmaktadır (Mullings, 1999: 340). Ancak, kadınların hayat hikayelerini ve deneyimlerini paylaşmalarını talep etmek, özellikle analiz ve sonuçların paylaşılması aşamasında karar verme süreçlerinin dışında yer aldıkları düşünüldüğünde, akademik çalışmayı ayrıcalıklı kılma eğilimine sahiptir (Pollack ve Eldridge, 2015: 138). Bu aşamada, düşünümselliğin feminist araştırma içerisindeki önemi bu hiyerarşik ilişkiyi anlamada belirleyici olmaktadır. Araştırmacılar, "ayrıcalıklı" akademik konumlarını politika yapım sürecinde etkin olan aktörlerin dikkatine çekmek üzere kullanabilir (Bell, 2015), bilginin sadece kadınlar hakkında değil ama aynı zamanda kadınlar için üretilmesine dikkat ederek akademi ve aktivizm, teori ve pratik arasındaki sınırları yok edebilirler (Brooks, 2007: 77). Akademi ve aktivizm ikiliğinden uzaklaşmak için, feminist araştırmacıların "akademik bilgi ile gücün kesişiminden" ve kendilerinin maddi kaynaklara öncelikli olarak erişmelerini ve diğer kadınlar hakkında bilgi üretebilmelerini sağlayan "ayrıcalıklı" konumlarının bilincinde olmaları gerekmektedir (Rose, 1997: 307). Buradan hareketle, feminist araştırmacılar, araştırma sürecini şeffaf hale getirmek için bilgi üretimi sürecindeki konumsallıkları üzerine eleştirel düşünümsel stratejiler benimsemelidirler. Bu düşünümsellik, feminist araştırmacıların akademi ve aktivizm arasındaki ikilemi potansiyel olarak ortadan kaldırmalarının anahtarıdır. Bu vurgulardan hareketle, bu çalışmada, feminist nitel araştırma, özellikle mülakatlar, içerisindeki dinamiklere, düşünümsellik kavramına, araştırmacıların içeriden ve/veya dışarıdan konumlarına dair tartışmalara ve feminist düşünümselliğin akademi/aktivizm ikiliği arasında bir köprü kurmak için nasıl bir araç olarak kullanılabileceğine odaklanılmaktadır.