

# NO DIGNITY WITHOUT THE CORRUPT!\*

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## ABSTRACT

In this article, I interpret the perceptions about the Other of the women interlocutors that I interviewed with during a fieldwork in Turkey in 2013 and 2014. In the form of a *mystory* that combines my personal and professional—including unintended academic tendencies or occasional tensions during conversations—I essentially discuss how some Turkish women tend to gain, measure, compare, and preserve their self-respect and superiority through an analysis of honor killings and othering. This self-preservation proceeds via patriarchal images and vis-à-vis an Other. I translate this as the presence of, at least, two others: an Other within the self, and an Other mitigating the differences within the Self. In most cases, the stories resemble a zero-sum game in which one's dignity necessitates the indecency of an Other. The stories remind us how women should not be regarded solely as victims of patriarchal structure but also as active agents in/of the patriarchal and women-suppressing constructs. Finally, the research techniques and non-mainstream approach of writing such as providing a literature in a non-sterilized structure in this article shows the non-linear and complicated steps of conducting research in social sciences.

**Key Words:** Otherization, Women, Turkey, Ethnography, Honor killings, Inter-Relations

## YOZLAŞMIŞIN YOKLUĞUNDA ASALET OLMAZ

### ÖZET

Bu makalede, 2013 ve 2014 yıllarında Türkiye’de yapılan alan çalışması sırasında görüşülen kadın katılımcıların öteki hakkındaki görüşleri yorumlanmaktadır. *Mystory* formatında kişisel ve akademik eğilimler veya yer yer gerçekleşen gerilimleri de içerisine alacak şekilde yazılan bu makalede bazı Türk kadınların nasıl kişisel saygı ve üstünlüklerini bir öteki üzerinden kazandığı, değerlendirdiği ve koruduğu gibi konular namus cinayetleri üzerinden değerlendirilmektedir. Bu kişisel koruma eğilimi genelde bir öteki ve erkek-eril yapı içerisinden devam ettirilmekle birlikte makalede bu durum en az iki ötekinin varlığı şeklinde yorumlanmaktadır: Biz içerisinde bir öteki ve biz içerisindeki farklılıkları ortadan kaldıran öteki. Makalede geçen örnek hikayeler özellikle kadınların erkek-egemen yapıdan ve dışselleştirilmiş toplumsal rollerden sadece zarar görenler değil aynı zamanda bu yapısal durumdan yer yer bir öteki sayesinde fayda sağlayabilecek rasyonel aktörler hareket edebileceklerini hatırlatmaktadır. En son olarak, makale steril bilimsel yazım dilinin ötesine geçip *Mystory* formatını kullanarak sosyal bilimlerde araştırmanın lineer bir doğrultudan ibaret olmadığını ve hem sosyal olgunun hem de araştırmacıların insani boyutlarının araştırmadaki etkilerinin tekrardan gözden geçirilmesi gerektiğine vurgu yapmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Ötekileştirme, Kadın, Türkiye, Etnografik Araştırma, Namus Cinayetleri

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\* This article is an abbreviated version of a Dissertation Chapter submitted to University of Florida.

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**Makalenin Gönderilme Tarihi:** 5 Ocak 2020

**Kabul Tarihi:** 15 Şubat 2020

## INTRODUCTION: MY MOTHER WANTS ME TO MARRY A GIRL! NOT A SLUT!

I started an earlier version of this article with the news about a mother who killed her illegitimately pregnant daughter. It could have been a catchy introduction as the murderer and the victim were both women, I thought. However, it would not have been original since similar accounts had been already used (See i.e. Boon, 2006; Chesler, 2009; Cihangir, 2012; Hasan, 2002; Parla, 2001). However, more prominently, I chose not to re-depict the news because of personal reasons.

During early phases of my research, each story of violence against women discomfited me. The horrendous emotions persisted for some time. After a while, I started to normalize the sufferings in the stories. My attention shifted more towards the sections such as correlations between variables. I was drawn into technicality and overlooked the human mostly because of the sterilized language of the articles. Having realized this loss of sensitivity, I wanted to lessen my contribution to the normalization of violence against women by changing the introduction of my article and hoped that the rest of it does not, by any means, de-humanize violence. Still, concerning violence against women, I will briefly share the words of two women about their own other as they partially shed light the general background of socializing in certain segments of the Turkish society.

First, in early 2000s one of my parents' neighbor who was the mother of three daughters and two sons, concluded, during a conversation about a matchmaking mission she undertook, that the candidate woman was unwilling to meet a man because he was a "widow" (sic.) and the neighbor protested that the candidate was "too picky!" "A guy is a guy! What's wrong with a guy having been married? For God's sake! What makes a guy a widower? As if they have virginity." the neighbor cried out. During this conversation, for the neighbor, marriage meant not the same for a man and a woman. For that moment, biological differences transcended into different social meanings in the form legitimate or proper numbers of marriages for different biological compositions.

Female virginity was a matter of conversation once again when one of my college friends expressed, "My mother told me to marry a girl, not a slut!" His mother rejected the prospect of a daughter-in-law from our college because she had said that girls studying at our university college were not in fact *girls*. As Ozyegin (2009) describes, a female is a girl as far as she is a virgin and after loss of hymen there comes the womanhood. Clearly, at least during the two conversations I witnessed, loss of hymen meant loss of certain social statuses and brought various burdens and negative belongings.

Within such a social background, following a pilot study in 2012, I conducted "at-home-ethnography" (Alvesson, 2009; Leap, 1996) in 2013 and 2014 for collecting information to understand the everyday representation of the Other in Turkey. I had more than a hundred 'semi-structured ordinary language interviews' (Schaffer, 2006) —not all of them were successful—applying techniques such as 'free-association' (Isaacs, 1958).

Through the exemplary stories, I interpret that the perceptions of self-dignity and superiority at the expense of other women's dignity was prominent among the women interlocutors I could talk with through a writing style of *mystory* or chorography (Pearson, 2006). Their self-preservation proceeded via patriarchal images and vis-à-vis other women's alleged indecency. I translate this as the presence of, at least, two others: The other woman within the self, and the other women that mitigate the differences within the Self. In most cases, the stories resemble a zero-sum game in which one's dignity necessitates the indecency

of the Other. In understanding this, I emphasize that the impact of the structure that shapes—if not cause—women’s perceptions of the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ can be problematized and it exceeds the merits of this article. Still, I believe that the general picture of representation of the Other in the following stories reminds us how women should not be regarded only as victims of patriarchal structure but also as active agents in/of women-suppressing constructs.

### 1. Pearls in Mud: Turkish Women as the Self

Zehra was a single mother in her mid-forties who looks after her daughter by cleaning apartments. “We live at my parents’. My daughter has a scholarship. (...) She should go to college not to suffer from poverty. I’ll do everything for her to graduate. *Inshallah* [If Allah wills it], she’ll become a teacher and save herself. I clean houses. And she pays me back by being a decent girl. She goes to school and comes back home. (...) Her grandfather is very proud of her. She’ll never let our heads down [She will never bring shame to the family]. Her father couldn’t see her daughter starting college. *Ilahi takdir* [Decree absolute],” she proudly but sadly summarized her economic situation and relationship with her daughter.

In Istanbul, I was temporarily residing at my friend’s. The night before the cleaning, my friend had stressed that Zehra was not comfortable with other people, especially men, at the apartment. I did not intend to stay in on that beautiful spring day of 2013, anyways. However, I was not eager to leave before breakfast, either. While I was on the phone talking to my mother and pouring tea, the doorbell rang. It could not be Zehra, I thought. It was too early. I left the teapot on the counter and opened the door while I was still on the phone. I greeted the lady at the doorstep with a gesture and asked my mother if I could hang up. I introduced myself and explained that I was about to leave as I was having my last cup of tea. Zehra told me I could leave after I finish my breakfast and she would have a cup of tea, as well. Carrying our teacups, we directed to the living room.

I sat on the couch so relaxed while she chose a chair by the door. Some sort of power relationship, it was, I thought. The situation reflected the Turkish society. I did not have to think where or how I sat, as the man in the room. Zehra was the agent who was supposed to keep it formal. Perhaps, the socio-economic dynamics were at work or she was just seeking security. For me, one thing was certain. She was keeping a distance.

Exchanging some questions with pauses in between, Zehra asked, “How long are you staying in Turkey?” “Until the end of summer (...) I am here for my dissertation” I replied. She seemed unconcerned and just nodded. “Are you married?” she continued, while I was skimming the news on my phone. “No. Single. I used to date someone. After moving to America, things started to get complicated. We had to break up. (...) Later, I heard that there were several complications. [Such as different family religions]. You know such things (...)” I explained. “Oh! A foreigner?” she questioned. I scoffed, “No. She was not a foreigner. She is Turkish like you and I are (...) just different religion (...)” “You’ll find another one. Don’t worry. But get married soon. Don’t wait for too long. [Otherwise] You miss your chance to marry a nice girl,” she consoled and warned. I smiled and kept my eyes on my phone.

I was about leave. I thanked her and started to search for my other cell phone. In the meantime, a fight started on TV. Zehra stood right in front of the TV. I could not understand why Zehra was so excited. Intolerantly, she complained, “Girls, these days, are crazy. She is on this show for weeks. She divorced twice, *already*. Every day, there is a new guy who comes [to the studio] to propose her. Some of the guys are wealthy. All she wants is fame. A guy called yesterday and told that all she wanted was money. She denied it. He was one of her boyfriends. She denied that, too. She is quite *comfortable* [of doubtful morality]. God keeps

[women like her] away from our homes. And (...) You better find a decent Turkish girl (...) Don't find another foreigner! What happened to the Turkish girls?" That shy lady disappeared and an authority dictating me on marriage or decency stood there. I told her I will listen to the advice and left.

I thought that Zehra was a typically woman who would consider a foreigner as promiscuous. The other women were inferior compared to the Turkish self and this is an antagonistic form of representation of the other women. It is an unfortunate truth for various Turkish women. The situation is worse among so many Turkish men and there are countless examples of male perceptions of other women from my fieldwork. Yet, let me continue with the women I interviewed with.

Didem and I met at a little café in Kadikoy—one of the central districts of Istanbul on the Anatolian side. I had reached her through a friend of mine. After a brief conversation about one of her favorite cafés and the fortuneteller working there, we talked about her education at Bogazici University and politics. She criticized the increasing Islamist appearance and the weakening tolerance in Turkey. "In Istanbul, we are still okay. But day by day, the space where we can walk comfortably gets smaller (...) Women can wear headscarf freely now. I really support that. But no one talks about the increased rate of violence against women" she told me. "Increased rate of violence"—without referring to any reliable statistics—was quite a common phrase during my fieldwork. I asked if the conformist pressure on women to become more traditional had increased or not. "It certainly has (...)," she answered and complained about the lack of respect for personal choices [or liberties] in Turkey. I agreed with her by continuing with some of my fieldwork stories in Anatolia and perceptions about the European or American women as indecent or promiscuous. She was annoyed and complained, "This is what we suffer from all day my dear. You get on a bus. Guys do give their seats to a woman wearing a headscarf but not to someone in a low-cut dress (...) I am sure things are worse in Anatolia (...)"

Gonca was one of the women whose perceptions annoyed Didem. Gonca was a thirty-five-years old housewife. She chose to quit her job after having her first child and I believe her perceptions reflect how supportive of the patriarchal structure women might become of. Gonca and I met at her gentrified neighborhood in Ankara. It was cold outside. Hence, we chose to sit inside at a restaurant. Her kids were at school and she had a few hours off. "I still take projects [occasionally]. (...) I work whenever I choose" she told me. I explained her what my research was about. A server had intervened twice before we ordered our food. Then, for my planned free association technique, I asked her what she thought of when I said, "the Other," "West," "East," and "the Self." She seemed quite indifferent. Instead of elaborating, she said, "I don't think there is any other for Turkey. Do you think there is a threat against us? I don't think so," and "I can't really say anything for this. I do not belong to any certain group. I do not affiliate with any political party," and for "West" and "East," "just directions," She mentioned. It was not an easy interview because I had the feeling that she was either hesitant to talk or trying to complicate my research for some reason.

At some point, I asked her what she thought about the planned 'Burn a Quran day' in Gainesville, Florida and 'the Cartoon crisis in Denmark.' These were among the keys that I had planned to use for my free-association technique. She defined them as instances of hatred and lack of education. True education, for her, did not start in school but with the family. Mothers had the responsibility of teaching their kids to share, especially to share the world, she emphasized. I agreed with her idea of "teaching the kids to share the world." She finally started to elaborate. Perhaps, the topic was something she was proud of. I should not have

intervened. Still, I could not resist the idea of provoking the conversation. I had some irrational or unexplainable anger.

For a sudden, I was not a researcher and my behavior could be regarded as unethical. However, I asked, “(...) if families are where kids learn not to hate (...), can we also say that they also learn how or whom to hate from their parents?” I even did not question the rationale under my inquiry. I only had a strong urge to aggravate. Her response was, “Possible.” And she continued, “Families change nowadays. I always believe in the power of family. That is why, I quit my job when I had my son. As a woman, my priority is to make sure that my kids (...) grow up properly. It is more important than buying them new toys. (...) Maintaining a strong and supportive family should be a priority of governments, so that children are not traumatized in their childhood. Traumatized kids mean future generations with all sorts of problems. And female bird makes the nest. That’s, women with professions, first, if they choose to get married, should prioritize their families (...)”

It was again my turn to challenge her. I asked, “Perhaps they have a stay-home-partner?” “Maybe. I heard about that new fashion. But women, by nature, are more capable of doing the delicate work, not men” she quickly responded. “I have some friends. They are in a *civil union* [I did not know what it was in Turkish, so I had to explain what a civil union was] with a same-sex partner. They seem to be doing fine in managing ‘delicate’ jobs without needing anyone else. (...) I do not agree that woman is by nature more inclined towards delicate work.” “Who taught you how to cook? Your mother, right?” she asked. “Not really. But let’s assume that she did. This does not mean that my kids must learn it from their mother. They’ll probably learn it from their father,” I reasoned. And then, I continued, “You see. We have, at least, one clear example to show how gender roles can be misleading.” She asked me, “You do not believe in the separation of man and woman? Everything is equal?” I replied, “In an ideal world it should be. But in our world, there are already socially and historically created realities (...) We need to, I believe, teach the new generations to question these. So, we should add to our list: share the world and question,” I smiled because I wanted to soften the tone of our conversation that I increased the tone of. “So, your friends, living in this not-normal-marriage life, do you find them normal?” she asked. I knew that topic was not over, and I responded that I found it normal and everyone should be free in their preferences.

After a very brief silence, she told me, “You must be thinking that I am a narrow-minded person, but I do not see anything normal in that. I would not even call them a family. I know some of them want to adopt kids, as well. I see it on the news, but it is too wrong. It would destroy the marriage and the family. A child cannot be brought up with two father figures at home. They will eventually need a mother. And that point will be devastating. That is one thing I would certainly oppose. Can you imagine a homosexual next-door neighbor? God forbids. *Knock on the wood!* If my kids do such a thing, I would break their legs before their father do.” “Okay! (...) we better change the subject. I believe we have two opposing world-views (...) But I do respect your ‘share the world’ principle, which means that the world is everyone’s.” I replied. She got mad. I admit it now that I must have sounded a little bit sneaky or sarcastic with that comment. Yet, I really saw no point in further discussion. Furthermore, I must confess that after the fieldwork I realized that I was disrespectful or intolerant. On the contrary Gonca kindly wished the best for me and generously paid the check by saying “You are still a student. When you start working, you pay then.”

Nuray, who also thought I was a student-guest in my hometown, was a twenty-one-year old woman working as a secretary in Kayseri, Turkey. A friend of mine introduced us and I asked her if she could help me with my research. She enthusiastically agreed to meet

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and promised to bring a few friends of hers. The following Friday evening, she called and invited me to their dinner and coffee get-together. After the dinner, for which all of them co-paid my share as they all insisted that I was their guest, we went to a nearby Starbucks. I asked for their drink orders and insisted that at least I pay for the coffee. We sat outside for the comfort of the smokers. After settling, Mustafa asked, "Shall we start?" They were all looking at me. I wondered, "Start what?" They all laughed and Reyhan, with a snobbish tone, probed, "Aren't you going to ask questions? Interviews?" It was one of the most awkward moments during my research. I was sitting on a chair while all of them were sitting on armchairs across me.

While I was an exchange student at University of Amsterdam, in *Communication During Conflict Situations* class, we used to perform a workshop called *The Theater of the Oppressed*. We interpreted situations of everyday conflict between different identities by re-creating daily scenes in the classroom. On the first day of the workshop, our professor asked us to arrange five chairs in a way to show who hold the power or which chair represented the authority. Our seating plan at the Starbucks was like one of the arrangements we discussed.

A chair stands on its own facing the other four lined next to each: Me facing my interviewees. In class, some of us thought that the single chair held the power as it is the authority giving a speech or teaching the class, while the rest argued that the four chairs shared the power as a commission judging the single chair. No matter whichever scenario was taking place in that Starbucks, I was disturbed. I sensed the "power of a group" across me. On the other side, I felt the power of being the interviewer or the researcher from the land they want to visit so much.

Due to my discomfort, I told them that I did not have any questions, at least nothing fixed. I mentioned that I was going to ask them my questions whenever they came to my mind while we enjoyed our drinks as friends. Even though we were not friends, in a cordial atmosphere, we all started to compare the pros and cons of living in Turkey and America.

Although they had never been to America, they all agreed that women had more freedom in America. Reyhan, Nuray, and Yasemin all complained that they did not have a life in Kayseri. They complained that they could not dress as they wish or walk on the street after the sunset. Yasemin told that once she was verbally harassed and she called the police who had told her to go home instead of walking alone on the street after midnight. "I was going home from a concert (...) What could I do? Sleep somewhere on the campus instead of walking to my home from the bus stop?" Nuray asked her, "What were you wearing?" "Skirt and t-shirt," Yasemin responded.

I intervened, "It does not really matter what she wore. Nothing gives a guy the right to disturb her (...)." Nuray protested, "No. It does not give anybody the right to disturb her, but she better not forgets where she lives. Every society has its rules or morals. We should obey them. (...) You cannot wear a short skirt when you are walking alone on the street. We always have this fight with Reyhan. As her elder sister, I always warn her not to wear *differently*. Because I know how those women are known." Yasemin seemed to have been offended. Nuray noticed that and told her, "Do not get me wrong. We all know you. But we all know those other women, too. Why would you even let yourself seen like that?"

"Why would you let yourself seen like those women?" I could not understand or agreed with the rationale under Nuray's words. It was towards the end of my fieldwork and my interview notes and memories were shuffling and creating a mess on my mind. Luckily,

my destination was my desk in Gainesville, Florida, where I was planning to tidy the stories I gathered.

## 2. Honor Killings: Stories of Women without a Woman

Sadly, the number of easily accessible studies on violence against women in Turkey is remarkably high. It is unfortunate because there are so many cases and continuity of the issue. During my fieldwork, intuitively, or as an effect of a book, I struggled to formulate an argument: These stories were violent attitudes towards the Other women to “justify” self-honor or dignity. *Mothers, Monsters, Whores: Women’s Violence in Global Politics* (Sjoberg & Gentry, 2007) was one of the studies that had helped me see “individuals as equal” *in every aspect*. Before this book, I had stereotypes such as women were more peaceful or less prone to hate. Perhaps, with the intuition I gained from Sjoberg’s book, I had the idea that women were the main perpetuator of honor killings in Turkey as one woman’s honor was meaningful as far as another woman’s dishonor was condemned or punished. One’s death was, I argued, another’s gain as honor-currency.

These thoughts shuffling on my mind, I decided to write to Laura Sjoberg at the University of Florida for help. In her prompt response she suggested that *feminization*—especially Spike Peterson’s use—could be one of the key and interesting terms that could direct my interpretation.

Finding articles or books on the issue was not a major problem. Still, I did not know where to start. Besides, I had a major concern about authoring this article. I had never written anything feminist. I questioned my professional capability. Therefore, first of all, I had to overcome this self-doubt.

In her *Foreword to Gender, War, and Militarism: Feminist Perspectives* (Sjoberg, 2015), Enloe (2010, p. xi) writes:

Adopting an explicitly feminist perspective is not the same as choosing to look at something from a gender perspective. Certainly, there is substantial overlap, but they are not coterminous. Sometimes a lot of us describe our analytical explanatory approach as from a ‘gender perspective’ because, we imagine, that sounds to many of our listeners and readers less frightening, less radical, less political than from a “feminist perspective.

Enloe’s remark on choosing “gender” to “feminist” was what I went through in defining what this article is (about). For me, “gender perspective” in interpreting interviews concerning some Turkish women’s representation of the Other was less frightening, less radical, and less political than from a feminist perspective. This, I thought, before reading the rest of Enloe’s *Foreword*, could decrease the value of my article. Yet, Enloe indicates, “Substituting ‘gender’ for ‘feminist’ doesn’t seem cowardly; it just seems prudent. And then, too, there are those occasions when we really are not aiming to fashion a feminist analysis” (2010, p. xi). Hence, my article is not a feminist work. I believe creating a feminist study on representation of the Other is beyond the scope of my article. However, I use gender as a category for organizing and discussing some of the information I gathered during my fieldwork on representation of the Other.

To clarify it, I authored this article with “gender lenses” which Sjoberg and Gentry (2007, pp. 11-12) summarize by referring to leading feminist scholars:

Jill Steans explains gendered lenses as (...): “To look at the world through gender lenses is to focus on gender as a particular kind of power relation, or to trace out the ways in

which gender is central to understanding international processes. Gender lenses also focus on the everyday experiences of women as *women* and highlight the consequences of their unequal social position” (Steans, 1998, p. 5). Spike Peterson and Anne Sisson Runyan describe lenses as ‘filters’, which organize, prioritize and categorize knowledge (1999, p. 1). These (...) ‘foreground some things, and background others’ in all research and knowledge formulation (Peterson & Runyan, 1999, p. 21).

Having clarified the characteristics of my article, I advanced my research towards a more specific framework of interpretation. One of my presumptions was that the stories I gathered during my fieldwork were instances of women disliking other women and their understanding of purity was a matter of *us vs. them*.

When the issue of violence against women is of concern, honor is usually a key term. The reason for this is that Turkish society values honor, which in turn results in the definition of the Turkish culture as a ‘honor culture’ (van Osch, Breugelmans, Zeelenberg, & Bölük, 2013) or a ‘culture high on honor’ (Cihangir, 2012) in contrast to ‘culture of dignity’ (Cross, Uskul, Swing, Alozkan, & Ataca, 2012). Individuals, mostly men, in honor cultures are more willing to confront others who insult their dignity or devalue individuals who choose not to confront but withdraw. The first thing I noted down about honor and Turkey was the summary of what ‘honor culture’ is: A society, especially its male members, actively confronting any insult or danger to their honor. But what is exactly honor, especially in Turkey? Most of the empirical studies apply a generic definition (see i.e. Cross et al., 2012; Guerra, Giner-Sorolla, & Vasiljevic, 2012). However, when women are considered, honor became *namus* and involved sexual purity. It became much more serious.

In the literature, man is the dominant actor in honor killings. Chesler, referring to Feldner (2000), indicates that “according to a psychiatrist in Gaza honor killing culture is a culture in which a man who refrains from ‘washing shame with blood’ is a ‘coward who is not worthy of living...’” (Chesler, 2009, p. 2). Individuals, especially men, in honor cultures are willing to confront any danger to their honor by any means because being a person of honor is the most important virtue (Bagli & Sev'er, 2003; Gregg, 2007; Kardam, 2005). In honor cultures, individuals’ worth is determined not only by how they behave and evaluate themselves, but also by how others evaluate them. Traditionally, a man needs to carefully cultivate a reputation for toughness and willingness to retaliate against any threat to *himself*, his family or his property (Cross et al., 2012, p. 346; Nisbett & Kohen, 1996). Finally, ‘paradoxically, honor cultures are often known as places of great politeness, which Turkish people are no exception to’ (Cross et al., 2012, pp. 346-347).

If you take a closer look at the literature, some certain characteristics counted to refer mostly to structure without leaving space for the agency of the women. In honor killings, mostly men: a woman’s husband, father, brothers, cousins etc. are involved (Awwad, 2002) (Sev'er & Yurdakul, 2001) and sometimes taxi drivers, neighbors, and mosque members help the families or prevent the women from fleeing (Chesler, 2009). Honor killings are not *only* about religion, Islam (Sev'er & Yurdakul, 2001) and they should be called ‘customary killings’ as it points more explicitly to the real issue: the relation between these killings and the socio-cultural background (Onur İnce, Yarali, & Oysel, 2009). Related to this, “In Turkey, some ethnic groups are associated with honor killings. Especially Eastern Turkey, highly populated by feudal Kurdish families, is where honor killings mostly occur. However, there is evidence that metropolitan areas such as Istanbul or Izmir are main locations where the most of the honor killings occur” (Onur İnce et al., 2009, p. 539). “Despite the feudal and patriarchal nature of honor killings, generally one older woman family member agrees to and



approve the killing” and “this shows that honor culture can reproduce itself in daily life without challenge from its female members, who are structurally located in subsidiary roles in every aspect of life’ (Onur İnce et al., 2009, p. 548). One of the reasons, why women are thought to have been left with subsidiary roles might be that *namus* is considered to be much important to be trusted to women alone (Sev'er & Yurdakul, 2001) (Kagitcibasi & Sunar, 1992) (Baker, Gregware, & Cassidy, 1999). *Namus* in the currency of purity whose “indicator is crucially virginity” (Parla, 2001) belong to family and protected through female bodies.

“Shame on you! What will the others think about you?” is a disciplining warning in the Turkish society. The reason for the popularity of this statement is that traditional families warn their children against the danger of shame or the importance of other’s perception as one of the most important indicators of one’s social status in the society (Kagitcibasi & Sunar, 1992). Although both gender groups are disciplined with the fear of public-shame, I do not think that anyone would dispute the fact that daughters are controlled by honor more. Women always have an extra burden!

Shafak (2011) writes:

There are several words in the Turkish language for honor, each with different connotations. Male honor, *namus*, is defined through women. When a woman does anything degrading she brings shame to the entire family (...) The word *sheref* can be both male and female, and it is this kind of honor that we refer to when we make a toast at a party. Most importantly, different criteria of honor are applied to different sexes.

Since my childhood I have heard more than once old women advising young women to be modest. (...) A woman who is believed to have lost her modesty is at times worth no more than a chipped coin. There are always two sides of the coin: dignity or disgrace, and little consolation for those who get the wrong side.

For women, *namus* is a social status that needs to be protected especially through ‘approved sexual behavior’ that regulates various aspects such as proper dress code. Women virginity—which is biologically possessed by women but socially owned by the entire family—is still one of the most important indicators of *namus*. Women participation in the preservation of honor is usually considered as to be active at the stage of cleaning family honor. This active participation of women is mostly considered limited to their roles in ‘deciding’ whether, well mostly *how*, to kill or force a ‘woman-of-shame’ to commit suicide and protect the murderers from the judicial system. Hence, women are mostly considered as victims or rather minor agents. Women themselves believe in the naturalness of gender-based social inequalities and the value of complying with violence or tolerating coercion (Onur İnce et al., 2009).

In this general structure, it is mostly believed that “there is no benefit for female members ... in preserving that culture, while abolishing it would be very beneficial for them” (Onur İnce et al., 2009). Is that it? Are Turkish women merely the victims of the honor system or ‘little players in the game?’ Are they better of overcoming the patriarchy that they vastly suffer within? Their perception of the other women as lacking decency or honor, I believe, stems from the fact that some women’s honor depends on the dishonor of the other women. Honorable women do not only suffer from the codes of the society but also benefit from them by achieving a higher status vis-à-vis Other woman.

## CONCLUSION: STICKS AND STONES MAY HURT! WORDS CAN, TOO!

In Turkey, the modernization project has impacted individual lives that have been subordinated to the prosperity of the ‘modern state’ and the status of women has been an exceptional priority in this process. However, the visibility granted to women was limited to a space whose borders had already been precisely defined by the state (Onur İnce et al., 2009, p. 541). Modern Turkish women is ‘projected’ or ‘designed’ to be Western in public but Eastern at home; someone who can be involved in a man’s world and has a modern persona, but who should also simultaneously be—or remain—‘a good housewife and a compassionate mother’ (2009, pp. 542-543). They were objects of a patriarchal modernization project (Onur İnce et al., 2009; Ozyegin, 2009). They were individuals to fit the ‘gender roles,’ not agents to choose.

As Sjoberg and Gentry (2007, p. 2) remind us:

A conservative interpretation of gender sees women as peaceful and apolitical, a liberal view understands women as a pacifying influence on politics, and feminists who study global politics often critique the masculine violence of interstate relations. Women’s violence falls outside of these ideal-typical understanding of what it means to be a woman. These women fall into the historical categorization of ‘bad’ women (Summers, 1975).

Although the stories I shared are not explicitly related to inter-state peace or pacification of global politics, the women I interviewed with reported their perceptions and feelings about their ‘inter-relations’ and usually their words are not even considered as indicators of violence. The current understanding of honor and the lack of interest in tension between ‘women-of-honor’ and ‘women-of-shame’ is I believe a result of (academic) culture of feminization that the stories in this article challenge.

Sjoberg (2013, p. 147) summarizes Peterson’s concept of feminization as:

V. Spike Peterson accounts for feminization as devalorization: Not only subjects (women and marginalized), but also concepts, desires, tastes, styles, ‘ways of knowing’ ... can be feminized—with the effect of reducing their legitimacy, status and value. Importantly, this devalorization is simultaneously ideological (discursive, cultural) and material (structural, economic). (...) This devalorization normalizes—with the effect of ‘legitimizing’—the marginalization, subordination, and exploitation of feminized practices and persons ... the ‘naturalness’ of sex difference is generalized to the ‘naturalness’ of masculine (not necessarily *male*) privilege, so that both aspects come to be taken-for-granted “givens” of social life” (Peterson, 2010).

As described in another study, feminization is ‘the naturalization and/or expansion of traditional(ized) gender roles and a tool for projecting (devalued) femininity onto traditional masculine subjects and objects’ (Sjoberg & Tickner, 2011). A similar practice of feminization is apparent in the studies focusing on honor and women in various stages.

First, in the literature, in ordinary times, there is not even the probability of women actively deciding or shaming the women who do not comply with the honor codes. Women are considered as supporting characters for men during times of ‘*namus*-crises.’ Men are pictured or conceptualized as the key agents over women body and the ‘possibility’ of women’s role in violence is almost ignored.

Second, while studies on women in Turkey and honor, in general, has the moral or political goal of liberating women from the oppression of patriarchy, they regard them as

mostly sufferers of the structure. They consider the women who support the killing of other women as irrationally suffering from the honor culture. They do not even give a chance to the idea that those women can rationally benefit from the culture. They might be agents playing the game according to the rules and achieve an equilibrium. At least, it can be argued that some women can be better off by rationally choosing to comply with and enforce the codes of honor. In short, their violent behavior towards women-of-shame or their discourse should not be considered as defects in their 'women nature' but as agents rationally functioning in a structure.

One of the remarks that directed my interpretation of the stories of women was the following: '(...) women who commit violence have been characterized as anything but regular criminals or regular soldiers or regular terrorists; they are captured in storeyed fantasies which deny women's agency and reify gender stereotypes and subordination' (Sjoberg & Gentry, 2007, pp. 4-5). Although the 'seriousness' or 'degree' of violence of women shaming the other is 'different' than the violence conducted by a suicide bomber, the subordination of the role of women or denial of their agency is similar. 'The current political culture of storytelling about women's violence,' Sjoberg and Gentry (2007, pp. 17-18) argue with reference to Snider (2003, p. 356), 'excludes the possibility that a violent woman rationally chose her violent actions. (...) The traditional female offender is pictured as either innocent or irrational because of her gender, much like the traditional image of a woman portrays her as unable to think, reason, or work like a man.'

Those Turkish women who maintain a discourse opposing or underestimating the value system of the Other women are normal. They are usual in the sense that their points of view should not be considered as mere result of their oppression by the patriarchal honor culture. In more extreme cases, many women with diverse social or economic backgrounds resort to violence as a result of their political dissatisfaction (Sjoberg & Gentry, 2007, p. 3). Hence, violence can well be means for women to achieve goals including 'higher social status.'

The neighbor and my friend's mother discriminated against women who were not virgin. For the latter, not being a virgin was a lower status of morality and it was unacceptable for her son to marry a girl of shame. For the neighbor, virginity of a man was different than the virginity of a woman. In fact, there was no issue of virginity for men. Hence, a widow man had more options in marriage than a widow woman. Were they different than a man who believes that there are two types of girls: one to have fun with and the other to marry?

Zehra brought up her daughter with manners. Her daughter spent her time between home and school so that she did not bring shame to her family. Zehra was also quite sure that a Turkish man would be better if he found a decent Turkish girl to marry. She advised staying away from foreign girls. She was a typical example of considering foreign women as immoral.

Didem, who identified as a modern woman with a Western worldview, complained about stereotypes that she had to live with. She was seen less respectful on the buses because of her clothes. She also had a tone of underestimating the other women in Turkey.

Gonca, a proud stay-home-mother, believed that women, by nature, were more capable of doing the delicate work, not men. She was very confident in the necessity of a strong heterosexual family structure for next generations who 'share the world.' Yet, the world she envisioned was not a place for women who choose to work at the expense of looking after their families or non-heterosexual couples. Besides, she indicated that if her

children were to choose a non-heterosexual partnership, she would have punished them before her husband would.

Finally, Nuray, her sister, and Yasemin all agreed that women had more freedom in America. They also agreed that they did not have a life Turkey. Proper dress was one of the main points of their conversation and while Yasemin argued that she should have been free in whatever she wanted to, she was exposed to the micro-scale of 'shaming' even during our conversation. Nuray and her sister, Reyhan, both agreed that clothing in a certain way, as most of the Westerners do, was signaling sexual 'easiness' or showing lack of decency and honor.

Although not all of these women conduct serious atrocities, their words nourish dislike. They harbor hatred. Using patriarchal images of women, their self-dignity is described in comparison with some other women who lack the virtues that they themselves have. There is a clear lack of solidarity based on being a Turkish woman. There are some good Turkish women and some bad Turkish women according to them. However, when they start reporting 'bad images of the Western women,' their discourse adopts the term "Turkish women" as an honorable unified entity. The presence of appearance of the Other women triggers a more glorious and stronger women-self.

When Turkish women's stories or their perception of the Other women I shared are considered, it contributed to our understanding that women can be agents benefiting from the structure they are situated within. Their stories or their self-perception indicate that Turkish women tends to gain self-respect or preserve their dignity, hence superiority, via patriarchal woman images and vis-à-vis the women in 'other' societies. Their hostile images of the Other women resemble an interaction where being a decent Turkish woman necessitates the constant presence of a woman lacking the virtues of a proper woman. I believe the overall picture of representation of the Other among the Turkish women reminds us how women should not be only regarded as mere victims of the structure but also as 'agents' that can be the antagonists in/of the patriarchal relations.

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## GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

### Giriş

Ötekinin temsili, anlaşılması için belli başlı sembollerin veya söylemlerin ötekileştirmenin özel konularına odaklanarak analiz yapılmasını gerektirecek kadar karmaşık ve çok katmanlı bir olgudur. Bu varsayımdan yola çıkarak, mevcut çalışma Türkiye’de yaşayan bazı kadınların öteki kadınlar hakkındaki görüşlerine odaklanmaktadır ve onur cinayetleri ve onur-namus kurumunu başlangıç noktası seçerek gündelik ötekileştirme örneklerini analiz etmektedir. Ana akım çalışmalara ve kadına biçilen geleneksel dışiselleştirilmiş rollere karşı durarak, çalışma kadınların ötekinin temsilindeki duruşlarını tekrar düşünmekte ve kadınlara atfedilen geleneksel rolleri derinlemesine sorgulamaktadır.

Bu sorgulama esnasında, çalışma kadınların geleneksel namus kurumunun veya onur kültürünün devamlılığında hiç mi yararları olmamaktadır? veya kadınlar onur kültürünün sadece kurbanları ve önemsiz bireyleri midir? veya kadınlar erkek egemen yapıların ortadan kaldırılmasından fayda mı göreceklerdir? gibi sorulara cevap aramaktadır.

Onur kültürü olarak tanımlanan Türk toplumu ve bu toplumun dinamiklerini anlamaya çalışan araştırmaların birçoğu genelde kadınların namus cinayetlerinde veya genel yapının sert kurallarının devamlılığında kadınların rolünü olduğundan daha az etkili olarak değerlendirmektedir. Kadınlar çoğunlukla geleneksel olandan zarar gören olarak resmedilmektedir. Fakat bu çalışma, durumun tam tersi olabileceğini veya en azından mevcut anlayıştan çok daha karmaşık olabileceğini göstermektedir. Bunun yanında her ne kadar makale ötekileştirmenin feminist bir çalışması olduğu kanısına varılsa bile, böyle bir çalışma mevcut araştırmanın sınırlarını fazlasıyla aşmaktadır. Bu yüzden, çalışma kısaca toplumsal cinsiyet lensleri doğrultusunda ötekileştirmenin analizi olarak dikkate alınmalıdır.

### Amaç

Bu makalenin amacı iki şekildedir. Birincisi kadınların onur ve ötekilerini kavrayışlarından yola çıkarak ötekinin temsilini anlamamıza ampirik ve teorik olarak katkıda bulunmaktır. İkinci amaç ise özellikle Uluslararası İlişkiler disiplinine veya genel olarak sosyal bilimlere, metod tartışmalarında özellikle ana akım dışı veya pozitivist-olmayan—özellikle yorumsamacı—yaklaşımları ve farklı yazma tekniklerine kullanarak metodolojik açıdan katkı sağlamaktır. Bilimsel araştırmaların yer yer doğrusal olmayan doğasına vurgu yapmak için pozitivist olmayan ve steril hale getirilmemiş bir yazım biçimi bu makalede benimsenmiştir.

Başarılı bir şekilde yorumsamacı yaklaşımı benimseyen ve kişisel olanla akademik olanı harmanlayan bu çalışma, steril hale getirilmiş pozitivist yaklaşımlar kayda değer akademik çalışma gerçekleştirmenin tek yolu olmadığını ve alternatif yaklaşımlar karmaşık sosyal-politik olguları anlamlandırmamız da nasıl etkili bir yol olduğunu göstermeyi amaçlamaktadır.

### Method

Makaledeki hikayeler veya ötekileştirme ile ilgili ampirik veriler 2013 ve 2014 yıllarında Türkiye’de gündelik hayat ötekileştirmelerinin gözlemlenmesi için gerçekleştirilen saha çalışmasında sırasından toplanmıştır. Bu genel çerçeve içerisinde ‘ev etnografyası’ (Alvesson, 2009; Leap, 1996) halinde ‘yarı planlanmış gündelik konuşma mülakatları’ (Schaffer, 2006) ve ‘serbest çağrışım’ (Isaacs, 1958) gibi yorumsamacı yaklaşımlar olarak sınıflandırılabilir teknikler kullanılmıştır. Araştırma sürecini kabaca saha çalışması ve masa-başı-çalışma olarak tanımlayan bu çalışma *mystery* ve *chorographic* yazım tekniklerini (Pearson, 2006) kullanarak *Ben* ve karşılıklı ilişkilerdeki özneli açmaktadır.

### Sonuç

Çalışma, bazı kadınların kendini korumalarının ataerkil imgelerle ve diğer kadınların iddia edilen ahlaksızlıklarına göre ilerlediği sonucuna varmaktadır. Makalede öyküleri paylaşan Türk kadınları için en az iki öteki olduğu kanısına varılmıştır: Biz içindeki diğer kadın ve Biz içindeki farklılıkları azaltan diğer kadınlar. Çoğu durumda, hikayeler bir kişinin onurunun Ötekinin ahlaksızlığını gerektirdiği sıfır toplamlı bir oyuna benzemektedir. Bunun yanında, kadınların 'biz' ve 'öteki' algılarının şekillenmesinde yapının etkisinin sorgulanması gerekse de bu makalenin esaslarını aştığı vurgulanmaktadır. Yine de öykülerdeki mevcut olan ötekinin temsilinin genel hali, kadınların nasıl sadece ataerkil yapının kurbanları olarak değil, aynı zamanda kadınları baskılayan yapıların içinde aktif ajanlar olarak görülmesi gerektiğini hatırlattığı da ileri sürülmektedir.

**No Dignity Without the Corrupt!**