

A Researcher's Identity

1st Place

Hande Gür
Anthropology
Doctorate program
Image location: In the backroom of a Sufi owned
ceramic workshop in Konya, Türkiye.



Image Description

In the summer of 2022, I traveled to Türkiye, my country of origin, for a four-month ethnographic research project on the rise of Sufi -mystical Islamic- practices among mainly young, middle-class women of Turkish origin. Throughout my fieldwork, I repeatedly asked my interlocutors the question, "Can you tell me about yourself?" Little did I know that there would come a time when I would need to retreat to a quiet room, retrieve my laptop, and turn the same question inward.

Anthropological fieldwork traditionally involved going to a 'foreign' place and describing 'the other' to academia upon return. However, studying a religion historically constructed as 'other' to the West requires self-reflexivity. As a young Turkish woman and daughter of a Sufi practitioner, I found myself questioning my position as an insider or a researcher in the field. With no one else to turn to, I took a seat and asked myself, "Can I tell a little bit about myself too, please?"