Biopower, Gender, and Sexuality in Contemporary Turkey

by

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Abstract

This thesis explores the disciplinary and biopolitical tools that are employed by the current neoconservative government of Turkey regarding women's bodies. Since 2002, with the rise of a new conservative Islamist government, social life has been reshaped and reformed by the conservative discourses of the government. Women's lives in Turkey have been greatly affected by the changing political and social atmosphere. Discourses about women center around the body and aim to discipline women's bodies in many different ways, while women's bodies are also crucially at stake in the government's attempts to control the natality rate of the population. In this thesis, I analyzed how the Turkish government uses biopolitical apparatuses to discipline women's bodies under two main categories. The reproduction economies of the government, as well as the surveillance and control of gender and sexuality, are the two main topics examined in this thesis. Examples are analyzed in light of the works of French philosopher Michel Foucault and feminist scholars. Foucault's explanation of biopower and how it operates to control populations (biopolitics) and discipline individuals (disciplinary power), has been one of the most influential parts of his work. A combination of Foucauldian and feminist theory constitute the backbone of the thesis. To exemplify and understand how biopolitics and the disciplinary practices of the government impact women's lives in Turkey, this thesis analyzes news articles, bill proposals in the parliament, and the public discourses of leading political figures in the country.

Liberty;

Sprouts with a sincerely vital suffering,

Cultivates through questioning the present,

and

Blooms into a cognition demanding freedom.

Hope is in that it may put forth its fruit, too.

—Anonymous

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List of Abbreviations

AKP	Justice and Development Party/ Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi
aHBR	A News/ A Haber
MERNIS	Central Registration System/ Merkezi Nufus Idare Sistemi
TRT	Turkish Radio and Television Cooperation
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
YOK	Council of Higher Education/ Yuksek Ogretim Kurumu

Introduction

During his honorary doctorate award acceptance speech in a ceremony held by Mukogawa Women's University in Hyogo, Japan, where he appeared as one of the participating leaders of the 2019 G-20 summit, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the President of Turkey, commented on women's universities in Japan and stated that "we will examine them closely and take steps" towards establishing gender segregated universities in Turkey (Mukogawa Women's University). In the same speech, Erdogan also added that there are 80 women's universities in Japan that strictly accept only female students and that we should look to them as an example (Mukogawa Women's University). After returning to Turkey, Erdogan ordered the Council of Higher Education (YOK) to begin working on this project. But what is the function of these women's universities in Japan? According to Sevilay Yilman, these universities act as a prep school for women to learn about how to be a good housewife, how to do home decoration, cooking, childcare and other womanly duties in the domestic sphere (Yilman). Following his visit to Japan, Erdogan wants to establish women's universities that would serve the same purpose in Turkey. It can be argued that this recent event showcases the AKP government's perception of women in Turkey: women should be confined to the domestic sphere and are expected to follow traditional gender roles as housewives. As I will elaborate in Chapter Three, the desire to open gender segregated universities to teach women how to act is one of the many steps that the AKP government has taken to create a pious generation where women are confined within the boundaries of the domestic sphere and are constantly being reminded about their roles.

In February of 2019, the Council of Higher Education (YOK) canceled a part of their Gender Equality Project by announcing that the project had gotten out of their control, that people were using it for different purposes than it had been originally intended, that it was not conforming

to the country's societal and cultural norms, and that it was not doing any good for the institution of the family (Gezen). The part they have omitted from the project is the phrase "gender equality." In his explanation of the cancelation, Yekta Sarac, the president of YOK, said that "we launched this project to work on topics like violence against women and offer courses or organize seminars at higher education institutes, but today the term gender equality has gained a different meaning that does not align with our cultural values and is not accepted by the Turkish society" (YOK Baskani). These two examples represent the government's perspective on gender equality and women's place in society. Although both of these examples are fairly new issues regarding women's roles in society, how women ought to act in public and their reproductive rights have been ongoing concerns of the Turkish government.

It is not particular to Turkey that women are at the center of governmental disciplinary practices. In this thesis, however, I focus on some of the ways that the current Turkish government has been employing biopolitical practices to discipline women's bodies and regulate the population because this topic is close to my heart. I have been one of the subjects so disciplined and regulated, and I have experienced the increased gender and sexual oppression in Turkey under Erdogan's presidency in my own life. In a way, this means that writing this thesis has been a journey of understanding the changing dynamics in my own life due to the rise of a conservative government and of trying to make meaning out of it with the help of critical theory.

When the AKP first came to power, everything seemed to take a good turn for religious people, especially for women such as myself who wore headscarves. The government that ruled before the AKP had banned wearing headscarves in educational institutions, which is why my parents did not allow me to go to school because in order to go to school, I would have had to take off my headscarf. However, the AKP government lifted the headscarf ban and then I was able to

continue my education. Nonetheless, the more I wanted to socialize in public spaces, the more I noticed that the social spaces I would have liked to be in had mostly become hostile environments for me. The AKP government's discourses on women had divided women into two categories: veiled versus unveiled. The way the government favored veiled women and stigmatized unveiled women had resulted in an atmosphere where people found themselves positioned to be at either one of the poles. Veiled women were simplistically labeled as pro-government while others were assumed to be anti-government. This polarization has made my life excruciatingly challenging. For instance, I have had days when I was scared to go to the campus due to the debates among those two groups of women. By that time, I found it very difficult to comprehend what has changed in the society that has made me feel cast out of the spaces to which I used to belong, which begged the question: What has divided us? How did we come to this point?

Those were the questions in my mind, yet I was not able to make sense of them until I began my first critical theory course in my junior year at university. As I read theories from different philosophers, I began to understand how social dynamics and the government's acts have an impact on my life. It was in that theory class that I began to understand my own life and make meaning out of it. That is when the topic of this thesis emerged in my mind, and it has existed and evolved there ever since.

When I first read the works of Michel Foucault, I was enlightened by his ideas about how governments manage and control masses and how power operates in ways that are sometimes unseen, internalized and normalized. As I read Foucault and Foucauldian feminist theorists further, I began to recognize the claws of patriarchal and disciplinary power that I have been trapped in without even noticing. Feminist scholars like Uma Narayan and bell hooks have argued that we do not need a theory to understand our own oppression (hooks 139-140; Narayan 225-28). Narayan

and hooks make this argument for different reasons. For Narayan, it is to resist the idea that the feminism of women from so-called developing countries is a result of Westernization (225). According to Narayan, her feminism arises directly from the lived experience of patriarchy, and not from reading Western feminist scholars (228). In contrast, hooks makes this argument in order to distinguish between the experience of middle class white women and poor Black women in the U.S. context. hooks argues that while middle class white women may need to read feminist theory to recognize the ways that discrimination operates in their lives, poor Black women such as herself have no such need of consciousness raising to know that they are oppressed (hooks 140). Like Narayan, hooks argues that oppression is obvious to women such as herself, and women who need their consciousness raised by feminist theory are likely not actually oppressed.

While I agree with Narayan's and hooks' arguments to a certain extent, we can also point to many examples of oppressed people who have internalized their oppression, and for whom oppression appears to be the natural and inevitable structure of the world. Focusing primarily on North American contexts, feminist Foucauldian scholars such as Sandra Bartky, Johanna Oksala, Ellen Feder, Susan Bordo, and Iris Marion Young have, for example, provided detailed examples of how the internalization of gendered oppression has operated in women's lives, and how gender is one way in which what Foucault calls "docile bodies" (*Discipline and Punish* 135) are produced (Bartky 101; Oksala 121-26; Feder 200-1; Bordo 180; Young 152). This has also been the case in my own life. Women in my family have internalized oppression to a degree that it feels natural to them to live under patriarchal tyranny. For me, personally, I always have been an inquisitive person questioning my position and the position of other women in my family and why women have to act and dress in a way that never made sense to me, and yet, growing up, I was still not able to identify these gendered norms as oppressive. I remember thinking about why we have to serve the

best part of the food we prepared to my father, and why we are only supposed eat after the men have satisfied their hunger. What is it that makes my father's life and his body more valuable than mine or my mother's? Why were his needs and health prioritized above those of the women in the family?

Before going to university and taking critical theory classes I was aware of these things and, like hooks, I was angry about them (hooks 140). I felt the wrongness of the actions, but I did not have a name for them or a way to articulate my anger. I did not know it was oppression simply because it is normalized for women in my family to live like that. When I began reading critical theory, I felt relieved because I began to be able to identify oppression as oppression. After learning that my experiences were being thought of and identified by other people, I began to see and identify them not as normal or natural but as historically contingent structures of oppression. This is where Foucault and feminist theory came into play. Foucault's theory of disciplinary power, and the ways that feminist scholars had described modern instantiations of patriarchal power as disciplinary, were useful tools to understand how oppressive gender norms had been internalized and normalized by the women in my family and myself. Foucault's ideas, and their extension by feminist scholars, helped me to uncover the internalized and naturalized parts of oppression in my life.

Inspired by my personal struggles, in this thesis I analyzed how the AKP government has been employing patriarchal biopolitical and disciplinary tools on women's bodies with their increasingly conservative and authoritarian governing. While my thesis thus focused on the contemporary Turkish context, I was aware of how the phenomena I was describing had parallels in other countries. For example, when I was writing the second chapter about the reproduction economies of the government, abortion was banned in Alabama, in the United States, and, as

mentioned above, while writing this thesis I also became aware of gender-segregated education in Japan. In some places the patriarchal workings of biopower might be more visible while in others it may be harder to detect, and the ways that biopower operates take different forms in different countries. If it is the neoconservative, Islamist discourses that affect women's lives in Turkey, then it might by completely different tools and forms in another country. In short, I began this thesis trying to understand my own body and my own problems, but, as I wrote, I found many other women being affected by the same disciplinary practices of the government in Turkey, and by comparable biopolitical practices in other parts of the world. The journey of writing this thesis has taught and changed me a lot.

In the first chapter of this thesis, I discuss the theoretical background of the thesis by delving into Foucault's explanation of biopower and feminist scholars' application of his theory to explore the disciplining of gender and the modernization of patriarchal power. I also explain why I draw on Foucault in this thesis and, alongside other feminist scholars, I engage with some of the critiques of his work. After outlining this theoretical framework in Chapter One, in Chapters Two and Three I use textual evidence to exemplify the disciplinary practices of the government on women's bodies in Turkey. To do this, I analyze the government's discourses in two main areas: 1) The government's discourses on and surveillance of reproduction (Chapter Two); and 2) the government's disciplinary practices and discourses on women's sexuality in Turkey (Chapter Three). Throughout the second chapter, I provide examples of the government's regulation of reproduction and how the AKP government has been shaping the reproduction rights of women by giving examples from debates about abortion, governmental claims about the aesthetics of the pregnant body, biopolitical attempts to regulate the number of C-section versus vaginal births in the country, and biopolitical attempts to increase natality rates through governmental promotion

of large families. In the third chapter, I explore examples of the government's sexual politics and attempts to discipline women's intimate lives.

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Chapter One

The AKP Government and Biopolitics

Introduction

> "Our bodies, ourselves; bodies are maps of power and identity" (Haraway 180).

As one of the most influential feminist scholars of our time, Donna Haraway suggests in the above quote that our bodies represent our identities and that they are tools to utilize power. It is through the body that we contact and connect with the outer world. As a contact zone and a representation of our identities, we are "made constantly aware of how others observe their appearances and abilities. Yet the body has been widely neglected in political thought" (Coole 165). However, as Susan Bordo explains, the body is subjected to power and so should be a topic of political theory:

> [The] body [is] itself a politically inscribed entity, its physiology and morphology shaped and marked by histories and practices of containment and control—from footbinding and corseting to rape and battering, to compulsory heterosexuality, forced sterilisation, unwanted pregnancy and (in the case of the African-American slave women) explicit commodification. (Bordo 188)

Since the body is the focal point of politics and power, in this thesis I will analyze what kind of body politics the current Turkish government employs, and what that tells us about their ideology and politics. Before delving into the details of individual cases, in this chapter I will explain the theoretical background of this thesis and my reasons for choosing Michel Foucault's work alongside that of feminist scholars. I am using a Foucauldian analysis to explore the body politics of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government, because, in his middle works,

Foucault's genealogical method provides details of "the material construction of sexed/gendered bodies…that constitutes subjectivities and identities" (Coole 178). As a method, genealogy first and foremost questions norms and what is accepted as normal. Therefore, Foucault's work questions the topic of sex and gender from its very roots. My aim in this thesis is to use examples to provide a perspective on the ways power operates through and on sexed and gendered bodies "via detailed technologies of control" under the rule of the current governing party in Turkey (Coole 178). To do this, I will be using examples from the government's discourses on the body, particularly the female body. Although Foucault did not specifically address the functioning of biopower on different genders, and he has been frequently criticized for inadequately addressing women's bodies in his analyses, I chose to analyze discourses on women's bodies in contemporary Turkey due to my personal experiences. My position as a Turkish woman gives me an inner perspective by which to judge the discourses and policies of the government on women's bodies, allowing me to better analyze what I have been subjected to for the last two decades in my home country.

This chapter problematizes the concept of power and analyzes how the AKP, the ruling party in Turkey, has strategically and successfully implemented biopower to manage and control, corporeally, not just female lives, but the entire landscape of its population. The first part of this chapter deals with the concept of power and biopolitics from a Foucauldian perspective. The second part of this chapter focuses on how and why women have become the objects, then the subjects, of power. In this section, I detail the tools the AKP government has employed since 2002 to demonstrate the process through which women's bodies, sexuality, and reproduction have been objectified. The major theoretical base of this thesis is Foucault's explanation of the two-sided effects of power: the objectification and subjectification of women's bodies, and the surveillance

methods the government uses to regulate the female body. Foucault's analysis of power is then applied to the gendered body politics of the AKP government in Turkey as manifested in the ways that women's bodies are regulated and controlled by its policies and discourses. This control has been structurally implemented through the institution of the family, confining women to the private sphere as mothers, and promoting childbirth for economic and national health and welfare.

I. Michel Foucault: Biopower and Governmentality

As the theoretical framework of this thesis I will be using works by feminist scholars and Michel Foucault's books and lectures, including the first volume of *The History of Sexuality, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison*, and his interviews and lectures, to define "biopower," "disciplinary power," and "biopolitics." In this part of the thesis, my main focus is on how power and its effect on life are explained by Foucault, including the apparatuses that are used to implement biopower. Foucault's middle works center around a genealogical analysis of what power is and how it operates through practices that he calls "the art of government" (Foucault, *The Foucault Effect* 90). Foucault problematizes the notion of power and its correlation with knowledge, both of which can be considered as the fundamental structure of "the art of government." He further elaborates on this concept by emphasizing a shift in the workings of power by the early 16th century, which evolved from what Foucault calls "sovereign power" to what he describes as "biopower." I use power in Foucault's sense of "actions on the actions of others" that operationalize themselves in modern societies (Foucault, *Essential Works* 341). Power and knowledge became the focal point of governing, according to Foucault, due to a shift in the workings of power; the art of government is concerned with "the correct manner of managing

individuals" that led to the "development of the administrative apparatuses" and the "emergence of governmental apparatuses" (Foucault, *The Foucault Effect* 92-6).

Due to this shift from sovereign power to biopower, knowledge has been placed at the center of governing and regulating both individuals and the population because the government's problem is not only about ownership of bodies and lands, but even more about governing them and finding methods to control them. Hence, the art of government is made possible by having both power and knowledge support and enhance the government's ability to control the population. This shift has given birth to the problem of *governmentalisation* within the emergence of the modern state. Foucault considers this a "double movement, then, of state centralization, on the one hand, and of dispersion and religious dissidence, on the other" (Foucault, *The Foucault Effect* 202). "Governmentality" is a term coined by Foucault by combining the words "government" and "rationality." In Mitchell Dean's book, *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society*, he defines governmentality as:

> …any more or less calculated and rational activity, undertaken by a multiplicity of authorities and agencies, employing a variety of techniques and forms of knowledge that seeks to shape conduct by working through our desires, aspirations, and beliefs, for definite but shifting ends and with a diverse set of relatively unpredictable consequences, effects, and outcomes. (Dean 3)

In short, governmentality refers to the ways a government exercises control over the population and governs the populace. With governmentality, the relationship between the subject and the sovereign transforms into a situation where the modern state is not content merely to own its subjects; it wants to manage them in a manner that facilitates their internalization of this mode of power, so that they ultimately police themselves. The problem of managing of the population

then supersedes the modern state governing its subjects in a way that ensures the perpetuity of the state and sustains a healthy nation. Foucault writes that "it is the exercise of something one could call government in a very wide sense of the term. One can govern a society, one can govern a group, a community, a family" (qtd. in Houen 64).

As we see in this quote, governmentality, in the Foucauldian sense, does not refer only to the governing of a population at a macro level, but also to small communities and families governing their own small populations on a micro level. The form of government changed from the sovereign's "power over life and death" to the modern state's "function of administering life" (Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* 138). This does not necessarily mean that sovereign power has been eradicated, but rather that it has been linked to biopower (Foucault, *Essential Works* 342). Thus, biopower has consequently become the most important medium for political welfare and the perpetuity of the state. In the case of Turkey, and on the positive side, the biopolitical strategies of the AKP government have achieved significant gains in improving the overall health of the nation (Ongur 180). The Universal Health Insurance laws, the family physician system, and the smoke-free air zone policy are among the biopolitical practices the AKP government has implemented for the overall health of the population (Ongur 180-81).

With biopower as the predominant form of power, the correlation between power and knowledge is problematized by Foucault in the sense that power and knowledge have an interdependent relation: power produces knowledge and knowledge then signifies a power relation. This relation between power and knowledge is defined by Foucault as follows:

> Power produces knowledge (and not simply by encouraging it because it serves power or by applying it because it is useful); that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor

> any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations. (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 27)

Therefore, as the production of knowledge increases, it leads to the expansion of the effect of power. The subsequent production of knowledge increases both scientific knowledge and the moral framework which become building blocks for modern forms of power. Foucault argues that power and knowledge relations constitute biopower, transforming subjects into objects by investing and subjugating their bodies. As Dianna Coole explains:

> Normalization, discipline, surveillance, and biopower are some of the modes taken by constitutive powers that work up and work over the body's most visceral properties such that flesh is always in a process of materialization and saturated with constitutive power rather than being a natural given that power merely uses or subjugates. (Coole 178)

Understanding power and its correlation with knowledge is crucial to understanding the infrastructure of biopower. It is the combination of power and knowledge that enables the modern state's "function of administering life, its reason for being and the logic of its exercise" (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 138). As we see in Foucault's works, for the modern state the power of the state is not enough by itself, but must rather be combined with knowledge that enables the state to manage, control, administer and regulate the lives of its subjects. Foucault explains biopower as "the technology of power" that exercises its power over the bodies and lives of its subjects. The exercise of power over biological existence empowers the modern state to access and control life itself. It is:

> biopower [that] proliferates through the actions of the State in such a way as to regulate populations at the biological level in the name of promoting the health and protecting the life of society as a whole. This protection and regulation intersects with the disciplining of

> individual bodies within the context of modern societies, Foucault argues, and the norm is the mechanism along which this intersection occurs. (Taylor D. 50)

While biopolitics and disciplinary power are distinct forms of biopower, governmental regulation of the population "intersects with the disciplining of individual bodies," as Dianna Taylor observes in the above quote. The intersections of disciplinary power and biopolitics will be analyzed in more depth in the second chapter.

Foucault does not consider power as a completely negative concept. He separates biopower from sovereign or juridical-legal forms of power. As mentioned before, sovereign power is about having decision-making power over the life and death of the subjects (Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* 138). As Foucault demonstrates in *The History of Sexuality,* when it comes to modern state, the lives of (at least some biopolitically valued) subjects are fostered by biopower. Foucault argues that biopower "exerts a positive influence on life, that endeavors to administer, optimize, and multiply it, subjecting it to precise controls and comprehensive regulations" (Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* 137). By "positive," Foucault means the creative and constitutive effects of power that are not necessarily good. It is the productive or constitutive outcome of biopower that makes it positive, in the sense that it is not eliminative or subtractive in the way of sovereign power. Foucault famously writes that power and "every power relation is not bad, but it is in fact always involves danger" (Foucault, *Politics, Philosophy, Culture* 168). Therefore, biopower does not have exclusively negative connotations, as will be seen in my discussion of C-sections below, but rather is a concept that addresses the health and wealth of the population manipulated by the modern state to control the population. Since the new mode of power, for the modern state, is to administer the life of its subjects and exercise biopower over their lives, the population is a crucial element.

II. Women, Foucault, and Body Politics of the AKP Government

> "The body is an over-determined site of power for feminists as well as for Foucault -- a surface inscribed with culturally and historically specific practices and subject to political and economic forces." (King 30)

Although his works have been very influential in shaping the analysis of numerous feminist scholars and are used widely in gender studies, Foucault did not write specifically about feminism or the problems that stem from sex and gender (King 29). Discipline, power, sexuality and the creation of subjects are predominant focal points of Foucault's discourse and, from a twenty-first century perspective, lead one to anticipate some gender-based analysis of the aforementioned topics in his books. Angela King, in an article on this issue, writes:

> Yet despite his preoccupation with power and its effects on the body, Foucault's own analysis was curiously gender-neutral. Remarkably, there is no exploration or even acknowledgement of the extent to which gender determines the techniques and degrees of discipline exerted on the body. (King 29)

Indeed, in his analysis of power and how it operates, Ellen Feder has argued that Foucault mainly considered the male body and his work focused on masculine spaces such as prisons and armies (Feder 197-98). Despite his frequent focus on masculine institutions, Foucault does not specify the male body; rather, he mentions "the body" without signifying gender, and this has been deemed problematic for many feminist scholars. As Sandra Bartky argues, for example, "Foucault treats the body throughout as if it were one, as if the bodily experiences of men and women did not differ and as if men and women bore the same relationships to the characteristic institutions of modern life" (Bartky 95).

Foucault's gender-neutral or masculine-biased analysis has been highlighted by feminist scholars as problematic because the female body is arguably subject to more discipline than the male body. Feder thus asks why Foucault did not write more about feminized institutions, such as the family, where women are both objects and subjects of disciplinary power (Feder 198-9). Similarly, Bartky asks, "where is the account of the disciplinary practices that engender the 'docile bodies' of women, bodies more docile than the bodies of men?" (Bartky 95). While Bartky's claim that women's bodies are more docile than men's is debatable, given the existence, for instance, of toxic masculinities, or the ways that men are more disciplined than women to control their emotions, even Foucault realized that women's bodies are particularly prone to be pathologized by scientific and medical discourses, and that the maternal body is a central stake in the workings of biopolitics. In *The History of Sexuality*, he refers to as "hysterization" of women's bodies which he divides into two categories; the hypersexualization of the female body and the female body being the object of the medical and scientific knowledge (*The History of Sexuality* 104-6, 153). As such, women's bodies are certainly targeted by disciplinary power in gender-specific ways, legitimizing women's subjugation and "prescribing in the past what activities women should engage in, what clothes they should wear to preserve appropriate 'womanliness', their moral obligation to preserve their energy for child birth and so on" (King 31). Bartky writes: "women, like men, are subject to many of the same disciplinary practices Foucault describes" (Bartky 95). However, despite his brief reference to the "hysterization" of women's bodies in *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault is for the most part oblivious "to those disciplines that produce a modality of embodiment that is peculiarly feminine" (Bartky 95). Foucault's gender-neutral analysis is problematic because we do not live in a gender-neutral society, and nor did he (King 33).

While problematic, these issues do not make Foucault's analysis of power irrelevant to the topic of this thesis. Even though he did not provide a gendered analysis of the creation of docile bodies or the effects of power on bodies and human lives, Foucault's theories of power are still valuable for feminist scholarship, as numerous feminist applications of his thought have shown. In this thesis I will follow in the footsteps of this feminist scholarship by applying Foucault's analyses of the body as the target of power to the body politics of the AKP government in Turkey to deepen our understanding of what is happening with their policies and discourses. According to Foucault, disciplinary power which creates docile and normalized bodies operates under two categories, namely "the subjection of those who are perceived as objects and the objectification of those who are subjected" (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 185). Departing from this point, it is important to keep in mind that a Foucauldian analysis situates individuals not only as the objects of power, but also as the subjects of power. Individuals are objects of power in the sense that power is exercised on them to discipline their bodies, and they are subjects of power when they exercise power to discipline each other and internalize power to a degree that they desire it. This brings us to disciplinary power—a form of power that does not primarily control subjects through repression, but rather constitutes what kinds of subjects they are. A famous example of this constitution of subjects is Foucault's discussion of how the prison—and disciplinary power more generally—produces "docile bodies." The process of "manufacturing" docile bodies operates simultaneously through the subjectification and objectification of individuals, and becomes an automatic process that requires very little to no repressive power.

In what follows I will provide a Foucauldian analysis of the current Turkish government's regulations of law and policy discourses that are meant to discipline women's bodies. From these

examples, it is clear that the body is the primary target the AKP government utilizes to control and regulate the lives of its subjects. In this section, I will specifically focus on how women's bodies and sexualities have become the primary target of the AKP government.

III. The AKP Government and Biopolitics

In 2011, the AKP government changed the name of the Ministry of Women and Family to the Ministry of Family and Social Policy (Kaynak 5). In fact, it was more than a simple name change. The Ministry of Women and Family was replaced by the new ministry through new legislation published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Turkey in 2011 (Kaynak 6). This change incited many protests by women's organizations in Turkey. They collected more than three thousand signatures to contest the government's decision, but AKP president Recep Tayyip Erdogan responded to them by saying "We are a conservative democratic party. Family matters to us" (Devletin Kadin Politikasi Artik Yok). Although the organizational structure of the ministry has remained the same, the change of name carries a symbolic meaning which indicates that women have lost significance as individuals and are exclusively recognized under the umbrella of the family unit. This change aligns with the conservative neoliberal ideology of the AKP government which considers women only as mothers and wives whose lives are confined within the domestic sphere. The change in the ministry occurred not only at the level of words, but also in the logo of the ministry. The new logo portrays a family hierarchy where the man stands at the top of the logo as the head of the household. A prominent Turkish political scientist, Arif Dirlik, has written about the biopolitics of women's bodies under the AKP government. Dirlik writes:

> The consequences of religion in state power are readily evident at a more trivial but no less significant level in the urge to sumptuary regulation of one kind or another, which not only

> infantilizes citizens, but also opens the way to the biopolitical colonization of everyday life. There is no need here to dwell on pork and raki. The most significant aspect of such regulation is the regulation of women's bodies, which is also the greatest source of controversy globally. I have no objection to women wearing the headscarf or the veil if that is their choice. My aunts did that, and nobody thought the worse of them for that reason. But state or patriarchal regulation—the two are intimately related—is another matter. Having made women into the mothers of the country, a religious nationalism then turns around and burdens them with the responsibility to carry on the traditions that supposedly are emblems of a national identity conceived in terms of a religion dictated from above. (Dirlik 241)

Alongside other biopolitical improvements the AKP government made with respect to the overall health of the population, the government has also been employing pronatalist discourses (Ongur 180). Since the AKP came to power in 2002, its biopolitical target has predominantly been women's bodies. The reproductive abilities of women provide a leading cause and rationale for this targeting because as Foucault writes the reproductive female body has become a public matter and concern (*The History of Sexuality* 104-153). The AKP government has strived to discipline the next generation of the so-called healthy nation state, beginning with the bodies of the women who will be the next generation of mothers. They have done this by creating a new model of patriarchy based on religion and neoconservatism. Feminist Turkish scholar Simten Cosar writes:

> The new patriarchy exemplifies the settling of religio-nationalist motifs in a neoliberal frame. In this frame the AKP defines the familial sphere as the natural locus of women. This definition can be found in the primary and secondary school textbooks as well as in the discourse of the AKP members with an emphasis on women's education as a means for the fulfillment of their domestic responsibilities. (Cosar & Keresteciogl u 162)

Arguably, the AKP government has been applying significantly and markedly more disciplinary power to women's bodies than to men's. Since coming to power, the AKP government has established new reforms and instituted reforms around subjects affecting women such as, in 2011, lifting the headscarf ban from public institutions which had been in effect since 1997. This was a huge step for veiled women in Turkey who had been banned from universities by the law of the Council of Higher Education. None of the right wing parties that were in power before the AKP government were able to make that change. Doing so, the AKP government gained support from the majority of the population consisting of conservative Muslim families. There is no denying the positive impact of that change on Muslim women's lives in Turkey; however, it also provided a powerful tool for the government to subjectivize and objectivize veiled women. More in-depth analysis of veiled women will be discussed in Chapter 3. Year by year, the AKP government has been increasingly employing biopolitical tools and applying disciplinary power on women's bodies and sexualities through both its discourses and the modification and establishment of new policies. As Foucault demonstrates, objectification and subjectification is a simultaneous process. Veiled women in Turkey who initially benefited from the reforms become the objects of the government as they gained subjectivity with the help of those changes to their daily lives, such as being able to attend university with their headscarves or getting a job at a public institution without being required to take off their headscarves. While it appears that the AKP government has provided increased freedom for veiled women, we need to keep in mind that those women can only benefit from those opportunities if they fit into favorable AKP government categories of womanhood. The construction of the ideal woman of the AKP government is an attempt to create a pious generation that will continue to support the government. As shall be seen

in the next two chapters, starting from their second term, the AKP government has begun to contest women's rights through its discourses and policies.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have introduced the theoretical framework of this thesis by delving into some of the details of biopower, biopolitics and governmentality and explained it in light of Michel Foucault's works as well as the work of some Foucauldian feminist scholars. Although Foucault does not focus on the female body in any detail in his analysis of biopower, and has been widely criticized by feminist scholars for being gender-neutral or even male-biased, I nonetheless chose Foucault's works for this thesis because of his analysis of power and how it operates sheds light on my analysis of what is happening in contemporary Turkey and how we can understand it. This chapter acts as a theoretical introduction to the rest of this thesis that enables me to analyze the textual evidence from a Foucauldian perspective. As I have mentioned in this chapter, the body is at the center of biopower, whether it be individual bodies or the population as a whole. Since coming to power, the AKP government has increased the pressure on disciplining practices and implementing biopolitical apparatuses to control the population. Examples of the ways in which disciplinary and biopolitical apparatuses targeting women have been implemented by the AKP government will be discussed in the following chapters.

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Chapter Two

Reproduction Economies of the AKP Government

Introduction

This chapter problematizes the biopolitics and control mechanisms of Turkey's ruling AKP government on reproduction, abortion, and methods of giving birth, particularly birth by C-section. President Erdogan condemns abortion in his public speeches and advises married couples to have at least three children. He equates abortion with murder by saying that "there is no difference between killing a baby in its mother's stomach and killing a baby after birth. I consider abortion to be murder. No one should have the right to allow this to happen" (Ahmadi). Since coming to power, Erdogan has always been a pro-family political leader, emphasizing the importance of a young and growing population for the country's economic stability and wealth. In 2017, Turkey had one of the highest on-demand C-section rates in the world at 53.1%, which is well beyond the recommended rate of 15% (OECD 180-81). For this reason, decreasing on-demand C-section rates has been a major concern for Erdogan and his party. Erdogan's position against C-section and abortion has led to pregnant women being the targets of massive surveillance through MERNIS, family practice, and Sağlık-Net (Avsar 36). As a result, although abortion is legal in Turkey, most of the public hospitals do not want to perform abortions, and getting the procedure done at private hospitals is unaffordable for many women. In July of 2012, the AKP government established a "caesarean law" to decrease on-demand C-section operations, and to investigate and fine medical practitioners with high caesarean rates (Dumas). After this law was passed, doctors, especially those working at public hospitals, have increasingly promoted and directed vaginal birth in order to avoid being fined by the government (Dumas).

The neo-conservative ideologies of the AKP government particularly emphasize the family as being the moral/legitimate site of both sexuality and reproduction. Erdogan has repeatedly claimed that the priority of his party is the family, that they value family as the core of society, and that they believe the family should be protected against all threats to ensure a healthy family life which, they believe, leads to a healthy nation. These beliefs are connected to the underlying opposition to abortion and are also the reason why the president considers abortion a threat to the Turkish nation. He blames feminists for supporting a pro-choice ideology which he says comes from the West. Erdogan often points to the West as the enemy of the Turkish nation, arguing that the West has been conspiring against the wealth and health of the Turkish nation since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

In this chapter, I borrow the term "reproduction economies" from Amy Kaler, whose work, *Baby Trouble in the Last Best West*, inspired me to focus on reproduction (23). Following Kaler, I use the term "reproduction economies" to refer to social and political "imaginative economy of reproduction" (Kaler 22-3). In her definition and her entire book, Kaler uses the word "imaginative" to refer to political and cultural questions surrounding reproduction such as what pregnant women ought to do and what ought to be done for them from the methods of giving birth to the health of newborn babies and their mothers (Kaler 23). This chapter analyzes the reproduction economies of the AKP government in four ways. The first part of the chapter will delve into AKP discourses concerning the pregnant body. In the second section, the central health system will be discussed in relation to the surveillance of pregnancy. In section three, discourses around C-sections will be discussed. Finally, in section four, I will examine the problem of getting an abortion in public hospitals in Istanbul, and how it is equated with murder by the president and the ministers of the AKP government. This chapter will draw primarily on news articles to illustrate

the discourses produced by the AKP government to exemplify their reproduction economies. A Foucauldian perspective will be used throughout the chapter to analyze these discourses on pregnancy, C-section, and abortion.

I. Is the Pregnant Body Aesthetic?

In a 2013 TV show on the state channel TRT (Turkish Radio and Television Corporation) during Ramadan, lawyer and theologian Omer Tugrul Inancer commented on the pregnancy of women and the aesthetic of pregnant bodies. He claimed, as a theologian, that pregnant women should not go outside and should hide their pregnancies because "announcing pregnancy with a flourish of trumpets is against our civility. [They] should not wander on the streets with such bellies" ("Presence of Pregnant Women"). To justify his claims, he pointed out that "First of all, [the pregnant body] it is not aesthetic" ("Presence of Pregnant Women"). He then went on to give some suggestions to pregnant women about how and when they should leave their homes, by saying:

> After seven or eight months of pregnancy, future mothers should go out [with] their husbands by car to get some fresh air. Moreover, they should go out in the evening hours. But now, they are all on television. It's disgraceful. It is not realism, it is immorality. ("Presence of Pregnant Women")

These comments caused public outrage, especially from feminist organizations. In response, TRT officials said that the comments reflected Inancer's opinions alone and did not reflect the channel's view, despite their decision to air the program. Inancer later responded to the reaction by saying:

> You get married and get pregnant. Okay, you did well. [However], this cannot be singled out as the reason you are swinging your belly. The image is not aesthetic. I am still saying

> the same thing. Why don't you understand? These are sacred things. And sacred things are kept in a respectful way. Pregnancy is not made that apparent. Moreover, that's why young girls are scared of giving birth. ("Presence of Pregnant Women")

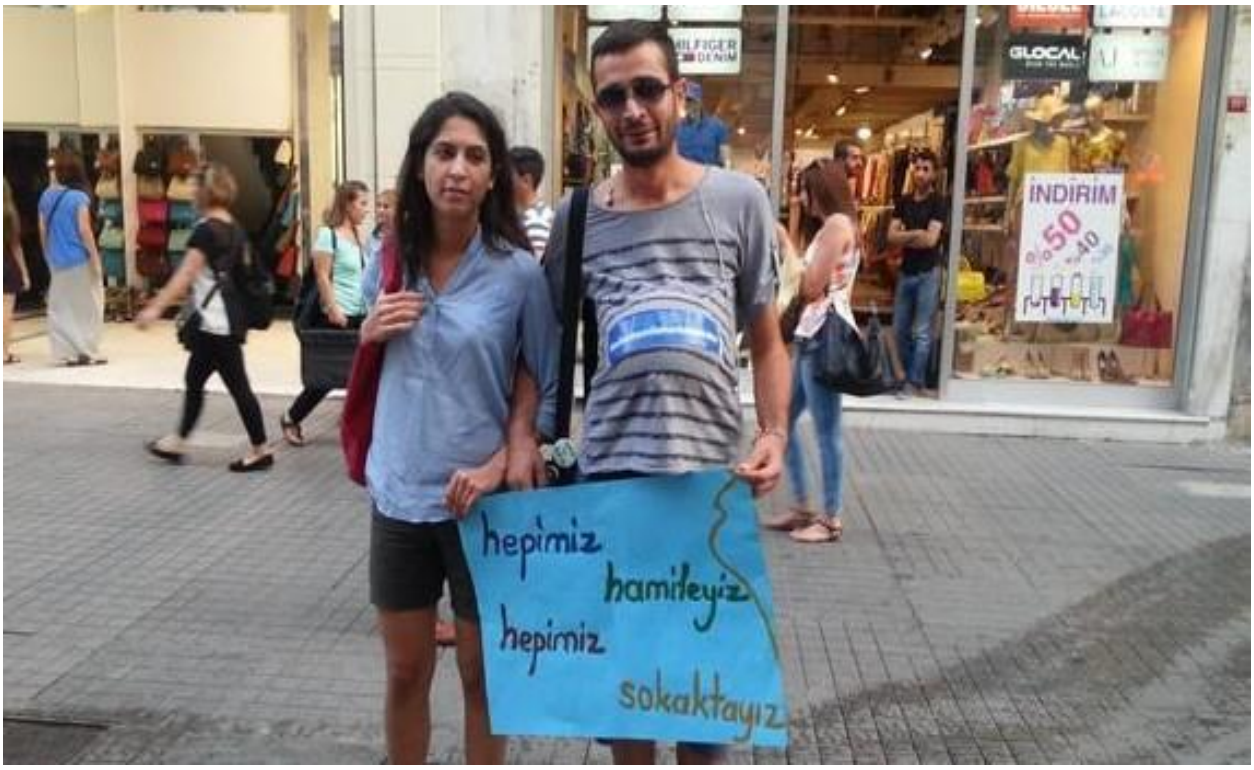
He also added that this is why companies give maternity leave to women, so they can sit at home and not wander outside. Later on, in another interview, Inancer stood by his claims and took the matter even further by stating that pregnancy outside of marriage is for "whores," but it has been normalized and called "freedom" in the West.

The underlying reasons for his comment about a pregnant woman's presence in public are derived from the view of pregnancy as carrying another human being whose life is "vulnerable." Inancer's reminder to pregnant persons of their precious cargo fits with Rebecca Kukla's analysis of the maternal body where she writes: "we take the womb as a space that must be kept pure in order to perform its task of producing well-ordered nature, and we also take this space as easily corrupted from without, and thereby transformed into a dangerous laboratory of monstrosity" (106). That interpretation suggests Inancer's problem is not only with pregnant women "swinging their bellies" in public, but also with women exposing their babies to danger rather than protecting them from it. This reflects the idea of women being a mere container for the fetus. As Iris Marion Young points out, "Pregnancy does not belong to the woman herself. It is a state of the developing fetus, for which the woman is a container; or it is an objective, observable process coming under scientific scrutiny; or it becomes objectified by the woman herself as a 'condition' in which she must 'take care of herself'" (2).

Thus, according to this view, exposing the pregnant body is disgraceful. The focus is not on the mother's interests—who is perceived as a vessel—but mostly on the baby. One may think that Inancer does not represent the government's ideas about pregnant women; after all, he is a

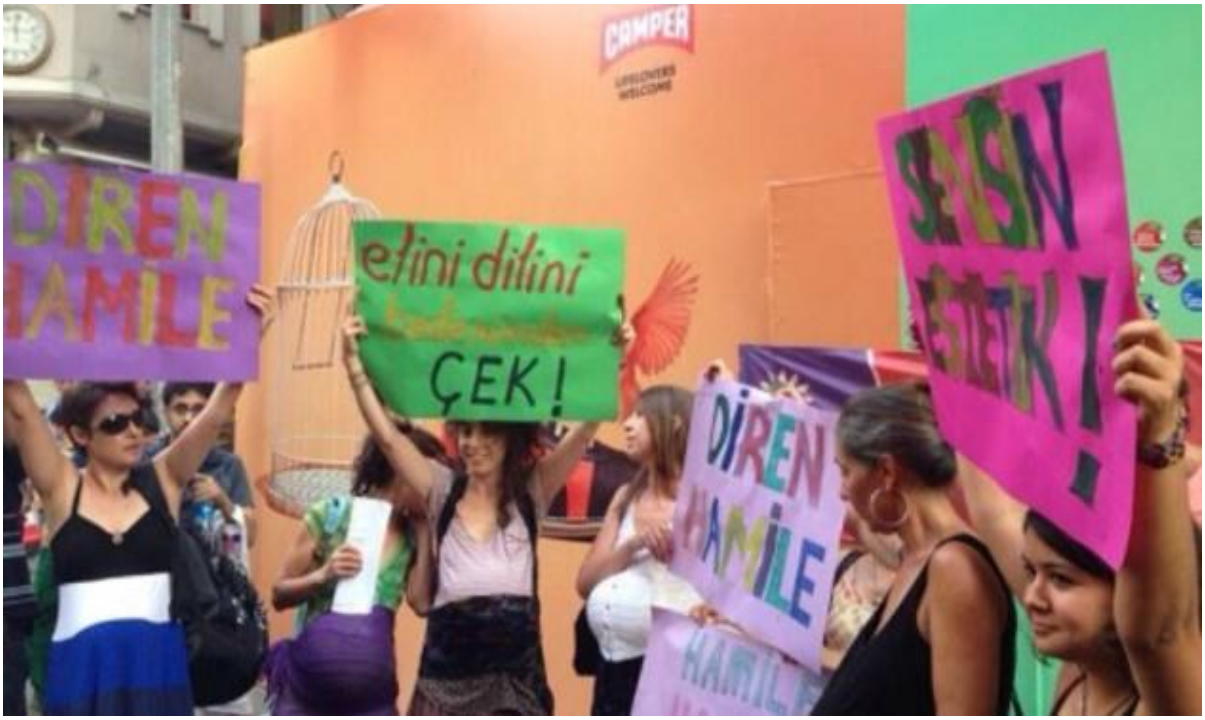
lawyer and a theologian, not a politician. However, the fact that he made these comments on the state channel without any hesitation tells us that his ideas are welcomed by the government as well; it is very well known in Turkey that the government exerts a high level of control over TRT and that it cannot air any program or commentary inconsistent with the government's ideology. As we can see in this example, it is not always the politicians who try to discipline and organize women's lives in Turkey; people like Inancer can also be instruments in the process because, as a theologian, his messages are received and welcomed by a majority of the Muslim population in Turkey.

Inancer made these comments about pregnancy in the same year as the Gezi Park protests, where Turkish people, including myself, occupied the Gezi Park in Taksim Square for several days to protest the government's increased authoritarianism. After Inancer's comments on the state channel, Gezi Park protestors were joined by pregnant women and non-pregnant women who protested the TV show using slogans and hashtags like #direnhamile, meaning #resistpregnant, in line with the famous hashtag of the Gezi Park protests #occupygezi. Male protestors supported their female allies in this protest by stuffing their shirts to simulate pregnant bellies and carrying around placards as demonstrated in the following photo.



The placard reads “we are all pregnant and all out”

Another slogan shown below is a response to Inancer’s claims about the aesthetic of the pregnant body.



The pink placard on the right reads, "you are [un]aesthetic!"

II. Surveillance of Reproduction and Governing Life Through "MERNIS," the Central Civil Registration System

"Congratulations your daughter is pregnant! Please visit your family doctor as soon as possible" (Tezel). This text message was sent to a father after his daughter took a pregnancy test in a public hospital in Turkey in 2012. The AKP government has developed various control mechanisms concerning the health of citizens, such as MERNIS, KPS, MOBESE, and Sağlık-Net, with the ultimate aim of creating a high-security neoliberal state where every subject is watched and controlled. MERNIS, which stands for Merkezi Nufus Idare Sistemi (the Central Civil Registration System) has been in operation since 2003, and is at the heart of all these mechanisms as the largest database. It was launched during the first period of the AKP government. With the establishment of MERNIS, Turkish citizens have been assigned an 11-digit number known as the

Republic of Turkey Identification Number. This number gives Turkish citizens access to any governmental and non-governmental services such as hospitals and schools, and other bureaucratic and legal processes. It is mandatory for all people living in Turkey to have this ID number. Since there are many people in Turkey with the same name, and even the same parents' last name, the ID number is the most important piece of information for control mechanisms like MERNIS to collect data about citizens. The Department of the Interior's website describes the system and its purpose:

> MERNIS is a centrally administered system where any changes in civil status are registered electronically in real time over a secure network by the 966 civil registration offices spread throughout the country. The information kept in the central database is shared with the public and private agencies for administrative purposes. The system aims to ensure the up-to-dateness and secure sharing of personal information and therefore increase the speed and efficiency of the public services provided to the citizens. (The Civil Registration System (MERNIS))

As we can see in the description, the system's primary purpose is to collect data and share it not only with the public but also with private agencies. That means even third-party agencies have open access to personal data, including health and criminal records. This is problematic in itself and exemplifies a mode of surveillance operated by the government. As political scientist Servan Avsar puts it, the "death of privacy seems to be a joint project by government, corporations and free market that is intimately related to governing populations. Therefore, surveillance and the issue of privacy can be considered as a form of governmentality, a biopolitical strategy" (40). The following quote from Foucault draws our attention to how systems of surveillance, like MERNIS

in this case, are useful and crucial tools for governments to have knowledge and power over the population:

> Our society is one not of spectacle, but of surveillance; under the surface of images, one invests bodies in depth; behind the great abstraction of exchange, there continues the meticulous, concrete training of useful forces; the circuits of communication are the supports of an accumulation and a centralization of knowledge; the play of signs defines the anchorages of power; it is not that the beautiful totality of the individual is amputated, repressed, altered by our social order, it is rather that the individual is carefully fabricated in it. (*Discipline and Punish* 562)

As an all-encompassing database that collects information about the citizens of Turkey, MERNIS is a site through which knowledge is accumulated and centralized to "invest bodies in depth." MERNIS perfectly fits the aim of biopower as Foucault describes it in the following quote:

> During the classical period, there was a rapid development of various disciplines — universities, secondary schools, barracks, workshops; there was also the emergence, in the field of political practices and economic observation, of the problems of birthrate, longevity, public health, housing, and migration. Hence there was an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations, marking the beginning of an era of "biopower." (*The History of Sexuality* 140)

If we remember the text message that I mentioned earlier in this section, we can see how those mechanisms of control work very well together. These mechanisms of control and data storage allow the government to track the number of pregnant women in the population, which is instrumental in its attempts to regulate natality rates, controlling not only how many women are pregnant but also which ones are pregnant. This can be considered an example of power as

productive, or, as Foucault writes: "a power that exerts a positive influence on life, that endeavors to administer, optimize, and multiply it, subjecting it to precise controls and comprehensive regulations" (*The History of Sexuality* 137). While ostensibly claiming to optimize the lives of citizens, tools such as MERNIS are used to collect data about how many of those pregnancies are "moral" (meaning pregnancy within marriage), and how many are "immoral" (meaning pregnancy outside of marriage).

Due to the system's structure, through which information is shared among the smaller systems and collected in MERNIS, pregnant women can easily be detected by other arms of government. This massive surveillance assemblage not only compromises individuals' right to privacy but also aims to eliminate the right to terminate a pregnancy by keeping bodies visible and coordinated, defining what is possible and what is not possible, and rendering individuals calculable and programmable. This overarching system is very convenient for the government due to the structure that enables them to share information among these control mechanisms. This way, when a woman goes to a hospital in Turkey, information about the procedures she undergoes is shared with the family doctor, and from there with her family. A case in point was the woman whose pregnancy test results were sent to her father. She was an unemployed woman covered under her father's health insurance. That meant her father was the primary contact for issues regarding the insurance. First, the hospital she went to shared her medical information with the family doctor via the MERNIS system, where her health information was updated by any of the hospitals, clinics, or other government-controlled health institutions she visited. Then, the family doctor texted her father to let him know about his daughter's pregnancy as well as to follow up with the process of pregnancy care. The aim is not only to see how many women are pregnant, but also to track pregnant women in order to make sure that they are going to their monthly check-ups

at the family doctor's office and are taking the necessary vitamins and other supplements to increase the chances of having a healthy baby. If any monthly follow-up is missed by the pregnant person, local clinics would call the primary contact number—in this case, the pregnant woman's father once again.

Another incident happened a year later in which two women went to the same private clinic to receive treatments for different reasons. One of them was pregnant, the other was not. The clinic's registry erroneously mixed up their test results in the system. This time it was the non-pregnant woman's family doctor who—without any hesitation—called her father without her knowledge to tell him about his daughter's supposed pregnancy (Gurcanli). This announcement caused a scandal for the family because they were very conservative, and because the woman was unmarried. Luckily, the doctors caught the mistake in the system before the situation risked becoming one of the honour killing cases that occur occasionally in the country. After this second incident, the Department of Health became a target of greater scrutiny by the media. In their defense, the department admitted that it was a mistake; however, they did not agree with any of the comments about how the system is labelling pregnant women. The reason behind both of the incidents is that the system accepts only one phone number, which is not the number of the woman, but the number of her father, or that of her husband if the woman is married.

The way pregnancy is monitored in Turkey is, first and foremost, an example of the violation of privacy and human rights. Avsar names this system of surveillance "a shift from discipline through surveillance (Panopticon) to governing through surveillance ... under modern biopolitical strategies" that constitutes an:

> ePanopticon [see Figure 1] that is utilised towards keeping bodies visible and coordinated; by rendering individuals calculable and programmable and acquiring power over population

[*sic*] by collecting and controlling personal information. Thus, we have witnessed not only the rise of biopolitical strategies but also the proliferation of various mechanisms of surveillance making citizens transparent to the government, thus calculable and governable. (Avsar 41)

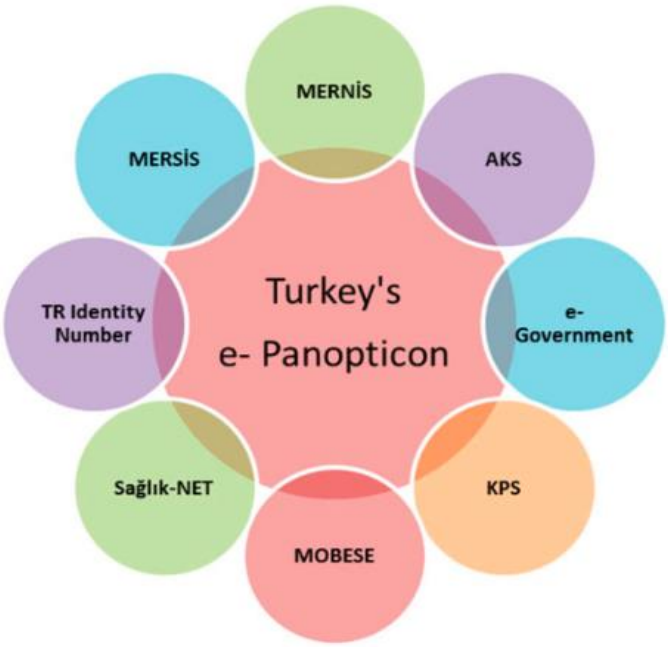


Figure 1. Map of Turkey's e-Panopticon.

Turkey's e-Panopticon. Image from Servan Avsar. "'Congratulations, your daughter is pregnant!': right to privacy in Turkey" (Research and Policy on Turkey: 2017) 39.

MERNIS works within a panoptic principle. The difference between MERNIS and Bentham's panopticon is that it does not require the physical structure of a panopticon. As Ellen Feder observes, "the contemporary practices… are effected through the same deployment of the authoritative gaze that constitutes the principle of panoptic operation" (197). MERNIS was launched during the first period of the AKP government, and since then, it has become further developed and more comprehensive. Its reach is deeper and it includes many other smaller

infrastructures, as it has given birth to 50 more projects with the integration of databases from different public institutions (Eroglu 88). All those systems are connected together to watch people in a physical sense, for instance by having CCTV on every corner, and also to watch them through data on cyber platforms like MERNIS.

III. Governmentality on Abortion

In 2012, during the closing session of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), then prime minister (now president) Erdogan stated his opinions about abortion and C-section births in Turkey. During his speech, Erdogan explicitly opposed both of the practices; he also made an analogy between abortion and the Uludere incident, where 34 Kurdish citizens were killed in an airstrike by the Turkish forces mistaking them for PKK (Kurdish militant organization) members. Erdogan compared the Uludere incident to abortion by saying, "I see abortion as murder, and I call upon those circles and members of the media who oppose my comments: You live and breathe Uludere. I say every abortion is an Uludere" ("Abortion Sparks Raging Debate"). His comparison of abortion to Uludere is ironic given the fact that the airstrike was ordered and organized by the Turkish military forces, who are under the control of the government and who killed innocent people "by mistake." His claim, in a way, conceals the fact that those people were killed by the government, but it also recognizes the incident as a murder. Thus, those who want to terminate their pregnancies are murderers in his view because "pregnant bodies that do not heed the call to be the protectors of their fetuses are marked as less-than-mothers," or, in this case, murderers (Cummins 41). From Erdogan's perspective, pro-choice women are no different from criminals. On the one hand, Erdogan's discourses about abortion criminalize the practice and blame pro-choice women, and, on the other hand, decriminalize the horrific incident he references.

Since 1983, abortion has been legal in Turkey, upon request, within the first ten weeks of pregnancy (Badamachi 46). It was not a subject of considerable debate until the AKP period, specifically not until Erdogan's speech at the UNFPA closing session in 2012. One month after this speech, the AKP government prepared a new report suggesting some restrictions on the practice of abortion (Badamachi 46). Then a bill was drafted, proposing to limit the practice of abortion to gynecologists at public hospitals. However, even before making it to parliament, the bill was responded to by a tremendous amount of protest on the streets, in an attempt to prevent it being brought to the parliament's agenda (Badamachi 47). The abortion bill never appeared again, and there has been no legal change regarding the practice of abortion; nevertheless, the government's discourses on abortion have made a difference. Research has shown that the practice of "abortion in public hospitals has diminished significantly" (MacFarlane 1).

Erdogan's anti-abortion comments sparked social outrage and protests, mainly from women's organizations. For example, women in Turkey protested his claims, and AKP's discourses on women's bodies in general, on the streets and on social media by sharing slogans written on their bellies such as "Do not touch my body!" and "My body, my decision!" His comments were the last straw for women in Turkey. Erdogan's claims and his exclusive emphasis on the fetus could lead one to infer that he cares only about the fetus, and not the mother. In her article, "Rights, Reproduction, Sexuality, and Citizenship in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey," Ruth Miller writes, "As long as abortion remains criminal, choice has to do with whether women, apart from their wombs, will be punished for attempting to undermine political control of that space" (Miller 365). Just as we see in this quote, Erdogan also politicizes pregnant women's bodies and prioritizes the fetus. Getting an abortion is equated to "undermining the political control of that space" (of the womb) and undermining authority in Turkey. It is not up to women in Turkey

to make choices about their bodies and whether they want to be mothers or not; rather, pregnancy is more of a political interest in contemporary Turkish society. In today's Turkey, it is not strange for women to feel that the fetus does not belong to them, but to the state instead. This is why abortion is perceived as a threat to the nation's wealth and health, as is demonstrated by another discourse of Erdogan where he says, "They betrayed this country for years by [promoting] birth control and attempting to dry up our [next] generations" ("Turkish President Erdogan Declares Birth Control 'treason'"). By "they," Erdogan refers to the West and Western culture, where he thinks feminism and pro-choice ideas originated. By saying this, Erdogan not only erases Turkish women's agency over their bodies, but also implies that Turkish women would not consider abortion had there been no outside influence. His implication represents a common perception about feminism as a Western ideology, and the assumption that non-Western women fighting for equal rights are mere "products of… [their] 'Westernization'" (Narayan 225). However, many Muslim scholars and scholars of color counter this idea and "confront the attitude that our criticisms of our cultures are merely one more incarnation of a colonized consciousness" (Narayan 225). As was discussed in the introduction to this thesis, Uma Narayan contests this perception by speaking from personal experience. Narayan insists that her feminist contestations of her culture emerged even before she learned the meaning of the word "feminism," and the impetus for that process was found in the cultural dynamics of her home rather than in a "Westernized" education (228). Erdogan's stripping of women's agency over their bodies also serves to reinforce the Western portrayal of "oppressed women" in the Middle East, "especially when one remembers that Western popular media continues to portray Muslim women as incomparably bounded by the unbreakable chains of religious and patriarchal oppression" (Mahmood 7). Women's reproductive rights and the disciplining of the pregnant body are common concerns of politicians elsewhere as

well, but in this case the Turkish government seems to be preoccupied with controlling birth rates and maintaining a young population.

As it is typically the case for the AKP government to blame anything it dislikes on the West, Erdogan says that abortion does not belong to Turkish culture, nor does it belong to Islam: "Our religion [Islam] has defined a position for women: motherhood, some people can understand this, while others can't. You cannot explain this to feminists because they don't accept the concept of motherhood" ("Recep Tayyip Erdogan: 'women not equal to men'"). This is not the first time since the government came to power that the Turkish people have seen the AKP government use religion as the most vital instrument to impose their ideology. By making this statement, however, Erdogan clarifies that his position on abortion and women is one that is based on religion. He shows us that he and his party consider motherhood the ultimate role a woman can have in society; thus, being pro-choice or having an abortion denies this fundamental role of womanhood drawn by the AKP government. As the following quote explains, women in Turkey are constantly reminded of their roles by the government: "women are disciplined into remembering their roles as caregivers, regardless of personal wishes, needs, or desires, and shame and guilt are powerful self-disciplining tactics" (Cummins 40). One might think that Erdogan's discourses do not have any effect on daily life, but in fact they do. Since Erdogan came to power and initiated the AKP government's increasingly oppressive discourses about women, women are put down more than they were before, and women's choices about their bodies are more often questioned (Bora 122-23). Erdogan's discourses on women's bodies have increased social pressure on women in Turkey. Despite these increasingly oppressive governmental discourses, resilient women in Turkey have not remained silent, but rather have demonstrated to defend their rights whenever needed. While Erdogan's discourses on women's bodies have produced power and transmitted the party's

ideology on society, they have also generated reaction and resistance, and feminism has been invigorated in the country. Foucault explains this phenomenon in the following quote:

> A discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart. (*The History of Sexuality* 100-1)

As discussed in Chapter One, women in Turkey have advocated for themselves and defended their rights. More examples of resistance and resilience will be discussed in the next chapter.

I am not suggesting that women in Turkey have never been subjected to discourses about their bodies before the AKP era, but I am arguing that the intensity and the scope of these discourses have changed. What Erdogan says about abortion clearly produces power effects; it is important to remember that the government prepared a bill to restrict the practice, and the number of public hospitals providing abortions has diminished significantly. His "opposing strategy" has been affecting women's reproductive rights, specifically against the right to have an abortion, which has been legal since 1983. As we see in this chapter and in the following one, Erdogan legitimizes his claims about women's bodies by using Islam. Ruth Miller argues: "Abortion as a crime, the debate surrounding it, and its eventual legalization thus became not issues of whether or not women's reproductive behavior should be regulated but issues of whose ideology this regulation ought to support" (366). In this case, the stigmatization of abortion and the drop in abortion rates at public hospitals support the AKP's ideology of putting the family at the forefront of their action plan; as Erdogan himself has said, "We are a conservative democratic party. It is family that matters to us" (Gurcu).

IV. The C-Section vs. Vaginal Birth Dilemma

> "I am a prime minister who opposes caesarean births, and I know all this is being done on purpose. I know these are steps taken to prevent this country's population from growing further." ("Abortion Sparks Raging Debate in Turkey")

Abortion, surveillance of pregnant bodies, and the aesthetic of pregnant bodies are not the only concerns of the AKP government with respect to pregnant women. The type of childbirth that women experience is another topic of AKP government discourse when it comes to the disciplining of pregnant bodies. As in the case of abortion, Erdogan again suggests that Western countries have conspired against the growth of the Turkish population to prevent the health of the nation's future generations, as caesarean deliveries are known to be more risky than vaginal births both for the mother and for the baby (World Health Organization). Part of the reason for his condemnation of caesarean births comes from data that shows "Caesarean deliveries … have increased astronomically over the last two decades. By 2011, 48 percent of all deliveries in Turkey were via C-section" ("Rise in C-sections Coincides with more Private Hospitals") while the number was "only 8% of all births in Turkey in 1993" (Ministry of Health 5). As with the AKP's attempt to ban abortion, trying to lower the incidence of C-sections represents the government's aspirations for regulating and disciplining reproduction, as well as promoting pronatalism:

> Perhaps more than ever, population planning policy has been used to promote the political and economic ambitions of the state. The current governing political party has systematically targeted women's reproductive freedoms while espousing the importance of pronatalism for the future of Turkey, and Caesarean sections have been just one piece of the puzzle. (MacFarlane 34)

The AKP government's attack on the reproductive rights of women in Turkey is about its emphasis on the family as an institution and its pronatalist ideology (MacFarlane 8). Since the AKP's coming to power, Erdogan and his ministers have implied a correlation between C-sections with abortion. Both abortion and C-sections are considered by the AKP government as serious threats due to both procedures' possible negative impacts on women's reproductive systems resulting in women not giving birth to as many children as Erdogan recommends (MacFarlane 30-1). It is not up to women, according to AKP politicians, to decide between a vaginal birth or a C-section. The Turkish minister of health, Muezzinoglu, has stated: "It is the duty of the midwives and the doctors to prepare them [women in labour] for the birth. The patients cannot say 'I want a C-section,' they do not have such a right" (Yilmaz). As in the case of abortion, this statement calls into question the individual's right to make decisions about their own bodies, particularly for women (MacFarlane 31). This reminds us of the government's frequent references to the fetus and their avoidance of women's needs and demands for control over their own bodies. It appears that when a woman gets pregnant in Turkey, she loses physical autonomy. It is all taken care of and dealt with by the government because, in Miller's words, "There is no actual choice on the part of an individual woman between, say, personal control over the womb and political control of the womb. A woman as an individual has nothing to do with her womb—it has become a separate, political space" (Miller 365). Muezzinoglu, the former Turkish minister of health, spoke about the duty of doctors and midwives to prepare women for birth, instructing pregnant women to defer to the authority of medical practitioners, as they are the ones who have "scientific knowledge"; thus, they are seen as knowing better than pregnant women what is good for them and their babies. Muezzinoglu, as a medical doctor himself, emphasized the "norm producing" and "truth

producing" authority of scientific knowledge that goes hand in hand with Foucault's argument below:

> Knowledge linked to power, not only assumes the authority of "the truth" but has the power to make itself true. All knowledge, once applied in the real world, has effects, and in that sense at least, "becomes true." Knowledge, once used to regulate the conduct of others, entails constraint, regulation and the disciplining of practice. Thus, there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time, power relations. (*Discipline and Punish* 27)

The scientific knowledge of medical doctors is considered the ultimate authority when it comes to deciding what type of childbirth a woman will experience. As Muezzinoglu says, "The doctors' job is to fulfill their medical responsibilities, not to follow the patients' demands. Doctors must give the medical services that the patients have right to, the C-section is not one of those rights" (Yilmaz). As I mentioned earlier, the government's desire to lower C-section rates is due to the operation being risky for the mother and the fetus. Their goals are to have healthy babies and to increase the chance of future pregnancies. As Jane Clare Jones writes, "the inconclusive appearance of medical evidence is a product of understanding the pertinent facts as consisting only of purely material consequences, a type of Cartesian symptomology attendant only to malfunctions of the mother and child's 'body-machines'" (102). However, if pregnant women demand a natural birth, this goes unquestioned. It is seen as the "healthiest" and least threatening practice for the reproductive health of women because "we discipline pregnant bodies as a container filled with precious cargo. That precious cargo comes before all else and all decisions must be based on the needs of the fetus" (Cummins 41). Muezzinoglu says: "Demanding a natural birth is a natural right of the patient and this is the way it should be"; however, he also informed the public that it is "the

state's duty to remind them [pregnant women] that demanding C-sections is not a natural right" (Yilmaz).

As we have seen in this section, which can be considered only a glimpse of the AKP government's attempt to discipline reproduction, Turkish women's bodies have become the target of the government's conservative ideologies, especially when they are pregnant. In Turkey, a pregnant person becomes the object of biopower starting with a simple blood test. This is registered with the civil registration service which then tries to interfere with the woman's decision whether to keep the baby or not. Governmental control then extends to the point of giving birth and beyond, where women in labour are directed to have vaginal births in order to ensure they can give birth again in the future.

V. "You should have at least three children!"

Thus far, this chapter has described some of the discourses produced by the AKP government about pregnant women's bodies, abortion, and methods of giving birth. However, conception and family planning are also on the government's radar. Whenever he speaks at a wedding ceremony and occasionally in his other public speeches, President Erdogan is famous for praising women for having multiple children. "I would recommend having at least three children," he says, and emphasizes that "family planning and contraception are not for Muslim families" ("Have 'at least 3 kids'"). He explains the reason behind this recommendation: "one [child] would be strange, two means rivalry, three means balance and four means abundance. And God takes care of the rest." This statement simply ignores the economic chaos in the country, which limits parents' chances of providing proper financial support for their offspring, and ignores

women's rights to decide and have choice over their lives ("Turkish President Erdogan Declares Birth Control 'treason'").

When Erdogan counsels married couples to have at least three children, he also makes a point of reminding women of their primary gender role as mothers in Turkish society by saying that "a woman is above all else a mother" ("Recep Tayyip Erdogan: 'A woman is above all else a mother'"). He also underlines that there can be no excuse for avoiding this role as a woman in society. He condemns women who choose their career over bearing a child as refusing to fulfill their purpose in life, as we see in the following quotes: "A woman who says 'because I am working I will not be a mother' is actually denying her femininity" and "a woman who rejects motherhood, who refrains from being around the house, however successful her working life is, is deficient, is incomplete" (Bulbul). These statements about the role of women in society show that Erdogan considers that a woman can only be counted as a woman when she gives birth to a child, and sees this as the only way women can maintain their femininity in Turkish society today. It appears that a woman's responsibility and duty to provide offspring to maintain her status and her femininity is only one of the burdens faced by Turkish women; Erdogan holds them responsible not only for the future of Turkish society, but for humanity as a whole by saying that "rejecting motherhood means giving up on humanity" (Bulbul). By directing women to bear children and identifying women only by their ability to conceive a child, the president devalues women's lives. He considers women complete only if they are mothers who accept the role of motherhood. As Molly Cummins writes, "we discipline pregnant bodies…by treating them only as producers of a new generation. When we focus more on the product the pregnant body offers and less on the pregnant body as a human, we relegate pregnant bodies through disciplinary techniques as mere producers" (Cummins 39). The government's focus on the fetus' health and mode of delivery can be clarified

by the above perspective. This perspective highlights how the Turkish government, through its acts and discourses, sees itself as the baby's warden, because "when pregnant bodies or their fetuses-as-products are considered commodities, the ownership of bodies never belongs to the individual," but instead to those "who stand to make the most profit from the commodification of the bodies" (Cummins 39).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the reproduction economies of the AKP government and how pregnancy is disciplined in Turkey by the government's conservative discourses on the pregnant body, abortion, methods of giving birth, and family planning. I provided examples of how the government's discourses are not just mere speeches, but also have an impact on social life and women's access to reproductive rights that were granted by the government in 1983. Before the AKP's ascent to power, as a Turkish woman, I do not remember having discussions about these topics in the media or in society. But in contemporary Turkey, women's reproductive systems are common topics of discussion in both the political and the social realm. Compared to other European countries such as Sweden and Norway, Turkey's population is not in decline or disproportionately geriatric, but the AKP government has taken more precautions than previous governments to prevent future population problems in the country. As detailed in this chapter, the government's discourses on pregnant bodies, their attempt to legally ban abortion, their focus on decreasing the number of abortions and C-sections performed at public hospitals, and their disciplining of reproduction by using religious, nationalist and pronatalist discourses exemplify how government and government institutions employ biopolitics to further their political agenda. Having a neo-conservative Islamicist party ruling contemporary Turkey shapes the form and tone

of the discourses and disciplines they use, such as feeding on nationalist and religious sentiments. By going so far as to tell Turkish women how many children to have and how they should be delivered, violating the privacy of pregnant women by sending text messages to their fathers or husbands, and criminalizing abortion and equating it with murderer, the government violates Turkish women's reproductive rights. In today's Turkish society, when a woman becomes pregnant, she becomes the target of the government who follows her through every step of her pregnancy, starting from the very first test.

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Chapter Three

Disciplining Sexuality

Introduction

> "In contemporary patriarchal culture, a panoptical male connoisseur resides within the consciousness of most women; they stand perpetually before his gaze and under his judgement. Women live their bodies as seen by another, by an anonymous, patriarchal Other." (Bartky 101)

Inspired by the above quote by feminist scholar Sandra Bartky, in this chapter I will analyze how the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government has been regulating and disciplining women's bodies and sexualities in contemporary Turkey. In doing so, examples from government discourses and discussions from the main Turkish media outlets will be provided to give context to the situation. Since 2002, there has been a transformation of the political discourse regarding many social issues like sexuality and women's bodies regulating Turkey's social and cultural domain (Acar 14). Disciplining of women's sexuality in contemporary Turkey begins with the intersection of pro-Islamism, neoliberalism, authoritarianism and conservatism (Cindoglu 40). As explained in the previous chapter, "the heterosexual family with children is promoted as the basic unit to reinforce hegemonic moral values and norms," and this characterizes the AKP's gender politics in Turkey (Cindoglu 40). Of course, patriarchy and the tradition of state dominance did not begin with the AKP, and the AKP is also not the only party with those anti-secular policies. But it is the first modern Turkish government to openly joke about women's bodies and explicitly state that it opposes the equality of men and women (Bora 122-23). The AKP's explicit and

conservative discourses on women's bodies and sexualities have become a tool for the government to discipline women and keep them under constant surveillance. In other words, as feminist scholar Evren Savci writes, it "is an orthodox Sunni position married to neoliberalism and nationalism" (129). In contemporary Turkey, women are divided into two categories: veiled versus unveiled. There are also many more sub-categories related to their identity that exist under these two main categories. This chapter will analyze these categories and what they mean for Turkish women in different aspects of their lives, but first let us examine the dichotomy created by the government.

The following quote from Aksu Bora, who is a prominent political scientist, explains the binary that has been polarizing Turkish women in contemporary Turkey:

> The government uses the old nationalist cliché very cleverly that there are two kinds of women—the shameless feminist and the Anatolian woman. The AKP builds its hegemony on these ideological grounds, while in the economic sphere resorting to social policies. Throughout the history of the republic, social policies have been formulated around the notion of the family. But today, for the first time, the AKP government is addressing women as the head of the family. Remember that this is the same AKP government that removed the status of the head of the family from civil law. The Kemalist regime made upper-middle- and middle-class women its allies, and the current government has allied with middle- and lower-middle-class women. Women in the feminist movement have different positions on this: there are those who defend Kemalism with an anti-AKP stance, offering critiques of AKP policies from the left, and there are those who struggle to break the ideological hegemony of the AKP. (Bora 123)

In today's Turkey, "the shameless feminist" category refers to secularist women, but on top of that in almost every instance they are blamed as imposters of Western power and Western values (as

we will see in the examples), and whatever they defend is rejected as foreign to Turkish culture and tradition. Thus, their voices have been silenced by the conservative government.

In contrast, "the Anatolian woman" refers to women who follow traditional gender roles, are mostly veiled, and who conform to conservative discourses and practices imposed by the AKP government. By lifting the ban on the headscarf, the AKP government embraced veiled women and expected the same thing in turn. However, it did not work, because veiled women became a threat to the government by striking at the very roots of their political agenda. This chapter will begin with the debate on the headscarf and the dichotomy of veiled versus unveiled women, then move on to other topics related to the body, politics and sexuality of women.

I. Women Redefined: Veiled vs Unveiled Women

> "All Muslim women share the burden of their bodies being at the center of heated ideological, political, or religious debates, and deliberations at national and international platforms. They are subjected to different forms of idealized discourses and pressures (of secularist and Islamist patriarchies) on multiple fronts." (Sehlikoglu 2)

As Sehlikoglu suggests, the female body (particularly the veiled female body) has been under increasingly close scrutiny during the last two decades of political transformation in Turkey. After coming to power in 2002, the AKP government struggled against the headscarf ban that had been in effect since 1980, and successfully lifted the ban in 2010. The infamous headscarf ban had been initiated by the Kemalist regime in an attempt to separate religion and government in Turkey, and control religion in the country (Taskin 80). Wearing the headscarf while participating in public institutions—such as working for government or public hospitals and attending public

universities—had been prohibited in 1980, but discussions about women's attire have been around since the establishment of the Republic of Turkey as a way of distancing the new government from the Ottoman-Islamic rule and "emancipating" women from the harem walls and the veil (Cinar 60). Because the veil was seen "as a mark of the oppressive Ottoman-Islamic rule that had subjected the nation… to backwardness, barbarism and, degrading conditions… the unveiling of the female body came to be the ultimate sign of the emancipation of women and the liberation of the nation" in order to advance and progress (Cinar 63). Although Turkey has a long history of debate over the headscarf, and there have been other right-wing Islamist parties that were a part of the coalition government and the Turkish parliament, none of them succeeded in solving the headscarf problem before the AKP government. The AKP government's success in general, and in lifting the headscarf ban in particular, is due to its adaption to global powers and its cooperation with the West; this can be compared to the previous right-wing Islamist parties that were uncooperative and hence unsuccessful (Kirbasoglu 99). Since its establishment, the AKP used the headscarf ban as a trump card, and explicitly promised to solve this problem if people voted for them (Arat, "On the Emancipation" 50).

The infamous headscarf ban had been an obstacle for veiled Turkish women who want to get a job at public institutions and who want to go to university. They were forced to take their headscarves off if they want to enter the university campuses or take any national exams. Some of them preferred (or were obliged by their families) to drop out of university rather than remove their headscarves, while some others preferred to use a wig to cover their natural hair and attend university. I was one of those women who was affected by the ban when I graduated from the 8th grade and was supposed to start my high school education. My family did not want me to go to high school at the expense of unveiling my hair. In the end I could not attend high school until

2012 when the AKP government lifted the headscarf ban. Unfortunately, the government solved the problem and lifted the ban on the headscarf by taking a great risk that led to the party being shut down by the Constitutional Court. The positive outcome of this act should not be underestimated, but while lifting the ban on the headscarf made Muslim women more visible in public, it also served to polarize Turkish women at different ends of the political spectrum; in Turkey, wearing a headscarf has never been a mere religious act, but rather, it is an instrument conveying political meanings that have been the subject of a struggle between secularists and Islamists (Vojdik 664). Moreover, women were divided into two spheres as either secularist elites who represented the republican/Kemalist ideology, or conservative/Islamist lower-to-middle class veiled women who became the symbol of the AKP government. This created a dichotomy of "veiled versus unveiled" that corresponds to "chaste, modest, decent versus sexually assertive" women (Cindoglu 40).

For many secular women in Turkey who are advocates of feminist movements in the country, wearing a headscarf "was a means of control over women's bodies under the pretext of religious dictates" (Arat, "Islamist Women" 130). Hence, the increased visibility of veiled women in public spaces subverted "the authority and control of the secular public gaze" that perceives wearing the headscarf as a return to "degrading conditions" and the oppression of women (Cinar 47). Alev Cinar asserts that the subversive effects of veiled bodies stem from "their power to disrupt the binary oppositions established within secularist discourse" in the previous decades (47). As more veiled women appeared in public spaces and become more active in workplaces and universities, they contested the secularist discourse, "thereby undermining the authority of secularism" (Cinar 47). Muslim women's veiled appearance in social spaces is a contestation of gender roles that pertained to their bodies by secularist discourses, as they were confined to private

spaces before the AKP government. Now they gained the right to attend university and work at public organizations or even in government bodies. In the conclusion of her book *Gender Trouble,* Judith Butler discusses this deconstruction of gender identities and contestation of rigid binaries by saying that:

> If the rules governing signification not only restrict, but enable the assertion of alternative domains of cultural intelligibility, i.e., new possibilities for gender that contest the rigid codes of hierarchical binarisms, then it is only *within* the practices of repetitive signifying that a subversion of identity becomes possible. (185)

As seen in this quote, it is possible to subvert gender roles that are imposed on women's bodies by secularist discourses and public gaze "by not avoiding the gaze and remaining invisible, but by gaining public visibility in ways that escape and undermine existing categorizations" (Cinar 47). Thus, veiled women's increasingly frequent appearance in social spaces generates a subversion of the gender roles and veiled women's identities that were attributed to them by the secularist discourses. As Jelen notes, "their sudden visibility in the Turkish public sphere - and most importantly in intellectual, media, and professional circles - is strongly disturbing for both the secular intellectual and cultural elite, and the more conservative community" that is against women's public appearance (Jelen 316). On the one hand, challenged social spaces opened up for veiled women, but on the other hand, the AKP government's discourses on Muslim women and women in general continued to confine women in the private sphere. Women were repeatedly reminded that they "are rendered subservient to the unity of family and the familial roles assigned to them as mothers and wives" (Cindoglu 42).

An example of this could be the Directorate of Religious Affairs, which began encouraging women to cover their hair and discouraging women's participation in the labor market as

interfering with women's domestic responsibilities (Arat, "Religion, Politics and Gender" 880). Because the headscarf has been a heated and frequently-referenced topic in politics, media and public discourse, "women's bodies and the ways women should or should not wear headscarves became objects of debate" (Arik 19). Not only headscarves, but also women's attire overall has been a topic of increasingly authoritarian and oppressive debate during the AKP period. I am not suggesting that discussions about women's attire began with the AKP government; they have always been at the very core of political ideologies in modern Turkey (Cindoglu 47). Studies have, however, shown that disciplining women's sexualities and controlling their bodies by way of discourses about how women should dress has accelerated during the AKP era (Turam 480). The former Minister of Education of Turkey and spokesperson of the AKP, Huseyin Celik, commented on the outfit of a TV presenter without naming her by saying that "we don't intervene against anyone, but this is too much. It is unacceptable" (Turkish TV Presenter Fired). Later it became clear that the woman Celik was referring to was Gozde Kansu, a TV presenter who wore a dress showing some cleavage on a TV show the day before Celik's comment. After Celik's comment spread on the internet, Kansu was fired by the producers of the show she had been presenting every week. Although they claimed her dismissal had nothing to do with Celik's comment, but rather was about Kansu's busy schedule, this excuse was not accepted by the media.

Another example of the AKP's dichotomy of veiled versus unveiled and chaste versus promiscuous women was the claim about headscarves by Cuneyt Zapsu, one of Erdogan's advisors. During the discussions in 2008 about removing the headscarf ban, Zapsu said: "asking a woman to take off her headscarf equals to asking a woman on the street to take off her panties" (Turbanini Cikar Demek). Zapsu's claims about removing headscarves was a reaction to the common practice of asking veiled students to take off their headscarves before entering university

buildings. As we see in his claims, he equates not wearing a headscarf to being naked, thus stigmatizing women who do not wear a headscarf. His comments also demonstrate the significance the AKP government placed on the headscarf by comparing it to underwear; he does not compare it to optional outerwear but to what are commonly considered essential garments. Thus, he reminded women again about the necessity of wearing the headscarf, and stigmatizes those who do not.

A further example on this topic is again from 2008, when one of the major Islamic retail companies (Armine) advertised a veiled woman on their billboards with a caption saying that "Dressing is Beautiful." This sparked controversy among journalists such as Ayse Arman, a popular columnist at *Hurriyet,* one of the major newspaper outlets in Turkey. Arman said that this slogan otherizes non-veiled women and implies that if you are a woman who is not veiled you are not only not properly dressed, but are naked (Arman). Obviously, this slogan equates the headscarf as the proper way for women to dress, thus the "non-headscarf was equated with nakedness, a state that is intimately connected to a lack of morals and honour and that puts women in a place deserving of sexual objectification" and also feeds on that dichotomy of veiled versus unveiled woman (Arik 26). Debates on the headscarf in Turkey once more "have put women's bodies and sexualities under public and political spotlight" (Arik 27). It is discourses around this debate that have created an idealized image of women and their proper mode of dress, according to the newly-constructed female body.

Because the headscarf has played a vital role in the AKP government's discourses and they have benefitted from this discourse tremendously, backlashes against veiled women who are not pro-government are predictable. Recently, with the famous #10yearchallenge tag that spread on Twitter, people around the world shared their photos from ten years ago side by side with their

present pictures. Many people from Turkey took up this challenge as well. Among those people from Turkey, there were women who were once veiled but were not wearing the headscarf anymore, and this received media attention (Kalafat). Not long after this Twitter challenge, BBC Turkey reported on a website called yalnizyurumekeyeceksin.com (meaning "you will not walk alone"), established by a group of liberal feminist women who were subjected to headscarf oppression and were fighting for their right to choose their clothing (Kasapoglu). This website is composed of stories sent by both once veiled and/or still veiled women who continue to live under the oppression of their families or partners. This website deserves extensive analysis, as the stories shared on the platform detail the oppression of women, but because it is a relatively new platform, there has been no scholarly analysis of it. Hence, I will do my own analysis in this part. After BBC's coverage, Turkish media outlets have paid more attention to this topic and investigated the details about the women speaking in the BBC video. Veiled women and women who chose not to veil anymore were covered in the media as a threat to the government because they are the women around whom the AKP government centered their discourses, but these women now claimed that they are not pro-government and that their lives have become more difficult in the last decade due to becoming political symbols of the AKP.

At first, none of the pro-government channels and newspapers covered the news, but when they did, they attacked the identities of the women in the video with a familiar discourse. aHBR, one of the major news channels in Turkey which often acts as a spokesperson of the AKP, covered this news with the headlines: "Their Mask Has Fallen" and "Who Finances Yalniz Yurumeyeceksin Platform" (BBC'ye Konusan Melek Bilgili). In this news article it says that enemies of Islam have changed their tactics in Turkey, and condemned these women for speaking against Islam to a British channel. BBC's position as a U.K.-based channel is emphasized in the

news article repeatedly, a familiar tactic which we saw in the previous chapter (BBC'ye Konusan Melek Bilgili). Just like Erdogan blaming the West for feminism and abortion, this news article also implies a Western, specifically British, power behind this story that supports the platform. As a counter-attack and also to demonstrate that these women are not "actually Muslim" but puppets of the West who conspire against Turkey and Islam, they added some old tweets by the women in the video that were critical of the government's policies and actions. They extensively focused on Melek Bilgili, who tweeted as an ex-veiled woman (BBC'ye Konusan Melek Bilgili). Some of her tweets that they used were five years old and had nothing to do with Islam; they critique Erdogan and his discourses on veiled women, but the news article presents those tweets as coming from a non-Muslim who is only acting as if she is one. The article claims Bilgili's tweets against Erdogan show that she is not actually Muslim, and moreover, is an enemy of the government (BBC'ye Konusan Melek Bilgili). Using old pictures of Bilgili (showing her smoking, a practice socially and culturally frowned upon), and stressing her word choice and her way of talking about Erdogan, the article argues that she is not the veiled woman AKP has been portraying and glorifying, but rather is a puppet of the West. aHBR strategically chose tweets and pictures that served to demonize Bilgili and other women who participated in the BBC news story.

If nothing else, this reaction and backlash from the pro-government media outlets demonstrates that veiled women and the AKP government have merged into one identity, and cannot be thought about separately. Thus, any veiled woman, or one claiming to be one, who is not pro-government poses a threat to the AKP's ideology, as Erdogan himself has said that they want to maintain "a pious" and "a conservative generation who values our Islamic roots" (Butler D.). Women like Melek Bilgili, who courageously spoke up about their oppression, have become the target of the government's discourses and government supporters' rage so that they have had

to fight back or even fall back. Just as individual woman in the BBC video became targets of the government-sided people and media, the online platform where they share their stories (yalnizyurumeyeceksin.com) has also become a target. Yet, as of June 1, 2019, 83 individual stories sent by oppressed women have been shared on the site and it seems like the number of stories will continue to increase. All of the examples in this part demonstrate that not only have unveiled women been otherized and shamed by the government's discourses, but ex-veiled women have also been denigrated by the government and pro-government media to avoid any further conflict that might vitiate AKP's trump card of the headscarf.

II. Politics of Intimacy and Discourses on Sexual Assault

> "Like women's reproductive behavior, women's sexuality became an issue of increasing public concern as the modern Ottoman and then Turkish states developed. The defining and confining of both sexual activity and sexual identity became necessary." (Miller 366-67)

In this section I will analyze discourses surrounding women's sexuality. I would like to preface this section with a story about a famous Turkish movie that I find relevant to this section. *Selvi Boylum Al Yazmalim*, translated into English as *The Girl with the Red Scarf,* is a 1977 drama directed by Atif Yilmaz. The movie tells the love story of a truck driver, Ilyas, and a village girl, Asya, who wears a red scarf. Falling quickly in love, Asya runs away with Ilyas to escape from a marriage her family has arranged with a man she has never met. After some scenes of their happy marriage and the birth of their first child, Ilyas cheats on Asya, the relationship falls apart, and Ilyas runs away. During their separation, Asya has a chance meeting with another man, Cemsit,

who takes care of her and her newborn baby, expecting nothing from her in return. Yet Asya still waits for Ilyas' return. After spending years together with Cemsit, Asya feels a great amount of gratitude, and compares her love for Ilyas to her feelings for Cemsit. Then the day comes when Ilyas appears in their house due to an accident. Finding herself in a dilemma between her love and her logic, Asya finally makes her choice and does not return to Ilyas, but choses to stay with Cemsit. She believes she has found love with Cemsit.

This movie plot is relevant to this chapter and this thesis in general. We used to watch this classic movie often when I was growing up, because almost every channel would screen it on TV and everybody in the house would appreciate the characters' naïve feelings and relationships. This year, in 2019, I saw this movie advertised again and decided to watch it with my parents, hoping to share some memories together. Much to my dismay, my parents' current response to the movie was completely different. Now they believe this movie signifies the corruption of morals in Turkish cinema since the 1970s, and that the story does not represent Turkish society or family structure. They went even further and suggested that this movie should not be screened, and should even be banned outright, so as to protect young minds from corruption because it "does not fit to our national and moral values," a statement Erdogan uses frequently (Erdogan Urges). Working on this thesis, my mind occupied with the related readings, I wondered what had changed in my family and how they came to see the much-loved movie differently now. It was formerly appreciated as a love story, but has now turned into an immoral story that may corrupt young minds, and therefore should not be screened. Answers to questions such as how my parents' perception of love and morality regarding intimate relationships has changed can be answered only by looking at the bigger picture. The question should be: what has changed in Turkish society, and

which values are being replaced with those manifesting themselves in my parents' interpretation of this movie?

I am hoping to find some answers to these questions in this section by analyzing the sexual politics of the AKP government and their discourses on topics related to sexuality and sexual assault. The dichotomy of veiled versus unveiled and modest versus promiscuous women manifests itself in the sexual politics and disciplining practices of the AKP government as well (Cindoglu 40). As Simten Cosar argues, "in the last decade, discourse on sexuality has proliferated in an unprecedented way in the political realm in Turkey" (Cosar 555). Similar to their disciplining of reproduction, the AKP government's politics of sexuality mainly rely on neoliberal-conservative regulations and disciplining practices (Acar 15). Cindoglu contends that when we take a look at the process of the AKP becoming more and more authoritarian in their neoliberal-conservative gender discourses, we can find the intensified "moral regulation of women's sexualities, reproductive rights and their position in the familial realm" (Cindoglu 41).

One of the many examples of this phenomenon is the moral panic over mixed student housing. After a general meeting of AKP members in 2013, it was stated that Erdogan wants to outlaw mixed dormitories at state universities, and also control off-campus mixed housing by introducing new legal measures. When questioned about this by the media, Erdogan said:

> This [co-ed student housing] is against our conservative, democratic character. We witnessed this in the province of Denizli. The insufficiency of dormitories causes problems. Male and female university students are living in the same accommodation. This is not being checked. We never permitted male and female students to stay in the same dormitory and we never will. (Dettmer)

After verbalizing his and his party's uneasiness with this situation, Erdogan continued:

> Nobody knows what takes place in those houses [where male and female students live together]. All kinds of dubious things may happen [in those houses]. Anything can happen. Then, parents cry out, saying, "Where is the state?" These steps are being taken in order to show that the state is there. As a conservative, democratic government, we need to intervene. (Alyanak)

As we see in his statements, Erdogan believes that single male and female students should not be staying together because "nobody knows what takes place in those houses." By this statement, Erdogan refers to sexual intercourse that he believes should be "checked," otherwise "anything can happen." It is clear from his statements that the AKP government would take measures to protect the neoliberal-conservative values they defend. Clearly, the government wants to use surveillance methods to regulate student housing. But the aim is not only to regulate student accommodation, but more so to regulate women's virginity and sexual activity (Kaynak 67). As one of the senior consultants of the Ministry of Justice, Professor Dogan Soyaslan, said: "nobody wants to marry with [an] un-virgin" (Kimse Bakire Olmayan). The former Minister of Family and Social Policies, Fatma Sahin, commented on maintaining conservative norms and values by saying: "we have family values to preserve that are in our society's genetic code" (Yezdani). Similarly, Samil Tayyar, another MP from the AKP, said that mixed-gender housing and TV shows that show sexual relations out of wedlock are attempts by Western powers to change family dynamics in Turkish society and represent intolerable corruption of our traditions and norms (Samil Tayyar). Tayyar's comments are very familiar discourses that Erdogan also uses frequently. By saying that these elements are not in our culture and come from the West, the AKP discourses portray the whole country as one united identity that follows their ideology. Claiming that this is not "normal" is also an attempt to reinforce sexual norms (i.e. that it is not normal to have sex

before marriage) according to the AKP discourses. All of these voices from the AKP government represent the party's conservative ideology and produce conservative discourses to discipline sexuality among young people.

Another example of the AKP's gender discourses is from the Deputy Prime Minister, Bulent Arinc. He says the following:

> Chastity is so important. It is not only a name. It is an ornament for both women and men. [She] will have chasteness. Man will have it, too. He will not be a womanizer. He will be bound to his wife. He will love his children. [The woman] will know what is haram and not haram. She will not laugh in public. She will not be inviting in her attitudes and will protect her chasteness, where are our girls, who slightly blush, lower their heads and turn their eyes away when we look at their face, becoming the symbol of chastity? (Women Should Not Laugh)

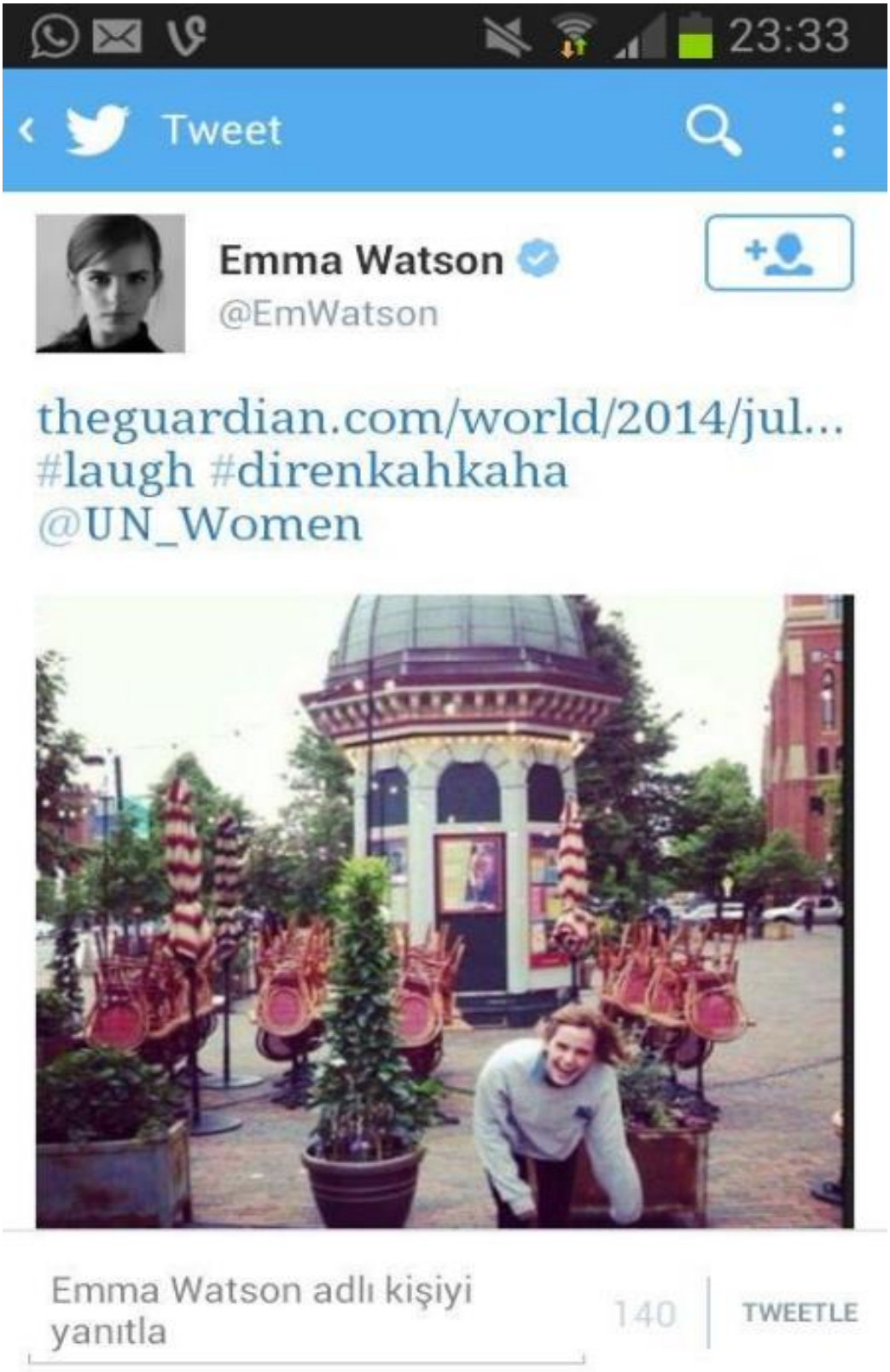
As we see in his comments, Arinc suggests that women should be modest and be careful in public to avoid any "inviting attitudes." Behind these statements, we can see women blamed for invoking male desire in public; as we will see later on in this section, a consequence of this discourse is that women are held responsible for their own sexual assaults. Arinc's description of a woman subject to men's desires fits well with Sandra Bartky's analysis of the female body:

> But women's movement is subjected to a still finer discipline. Feminine faces, as well as bodies, are trained to the expression of deference. Under male scrutiny, women will avert their eyes or cast them downward: the female gaze is trained to abandon its claim to the sovereign status of seer. (Bartky 97)

Although Bartky's analysis of female subjects dates back to 1997, what she discusses is still being employed by the AKP government discourses. In Arinc's statements about chastity, modesty and

haram it is expected from female subjects that “their movement, gesture, and posture must exhibit not only constriction, but grace as well” (Bartky 98).

Thousands of women protested Arinc’s remarks on laughing by posting statements and pictures of themselves laughing with the tag #direnkahkaha meaning #resistlaugh. Not only ordinary women but also many celebrities joined the movement and shared their own photos of themselves laughing in public. For example, British actress Emma Watson supported Turkish women by posting the following photo on her twitter account.


23:33
Tweet
Emma Watson
@EmWatson
theguardian.com/world/2014/jul...
#laugh #direnkahkaha
@UN_Women
Emma Watson adlı kişiyi yanıtla
140
TWEETLE

Arinc's misogynistic claims faced reaction from the Turkish Parliament as well. Female MPs from various parties reprimanded him and said that they will be responding to Arinc's statements by laughing (Women Should Not Laugh). Arinc's statements represent how the AKP government portrays Turkish women and attempts to discipline women's bodies and even behaviors like laughing (Kaynak 66). As I mentioned in Chapter One, disciplinary intervenes in every part of life and controls every sphere of the body and its actions (Kaynak 67). As in Foucault's explanation of normal and abnormal, the AKP government's definitions of women and women's behavior create a "normal" feminine identity that fits with their neoconservative ideology (Kaynak 66). Under this perspective, a woman who laughs in public is abnormal. In an attempt to explain his misogynistic statements about women laughing in public, Arinc said that "there are women who leave their husbands behind and go on vacation and there are women who pole dance. Beyond my anger I can only pity you" (Arinc'tan Kahkaha Yaniti). His explanation is even worse than his original statement, because he keeps denigrating and rendering abnormal women who do not fit into their category of "ideal women."

When the AKP's definition of women finds its way into criminal cases—in other words if the victim is not seen as the "ideal victim"—the result is much worse than just a hashtag clash on Twitter. In 2009, 16-year-old Sezgi Kirit was kidnapped in front of her house, taken to another city, drugged and raped by multiple men for days. She ultimately died. The perpetrators panicked when they discovered that their victim was not breathing anymore. They broke her spine to put her into a suitcase and ripped off her eyebrows when they were zipping the suitcase. They dumped her body at a bee farm hoping that the bee stings would make her body unidentifiable. When her body was found, the forensic investigators who examined the body thought it was the body of a missing prostitute, and they did not care a bit about writing the post mortem report properly. They

considered her just another prostitute who "deserved" what happened to her, because they detected traces of semen on her body that belonged to more than one man. Almost ten years after this rape-murder, the perpetrators, even though they had confessed to the murder, got off with a one-year sentence each due to the lack of evidence and the undetailed post-mortem report (Arman).

This horrific and heartbreaking femicide reminds us of the insignificance of women's lives in Turkey, especially if they are thought to be a sex worker. Due to the forensic scientists' belief that the victim's body was that of a prostitute, they did not do their job and it took years for the prosecutors to prove the evidence of the murder. Clearly, if the woman whose body was found at the bee farm had been considered to be an "ideal victim" then the case would have been reported much more thoroughly and would have had an easier legal journey of finding the perpetrators.

The number of sexual assaults during the AKP period appears to have increased tremendously, which is an important issue that I will be researching during my doctoral studies (Kadina Yonelik Siddet). The number was so high that President Erdogan called major media outlets and ordered them "not to cover too many sexual assault news" that he thought "will distort the peace in society" (Erdogan'dan Medyaya). Apparently, in his opinion, if we do not see any sexual assault news reports, they will be solved by themselves, or people will live in a world of illusion which is likely to happen if one watches only the pro-government channels on TV.

Another common discourse surrounding sexual assault cases in Turkey is to use victim-blaming language, particularly blaming women. One example of this is the claim of Melih Gokcek, former Mayor of Ankara, who said: "as a woman if you wear miniskirts, get drunk, go out at night and act flirty you may get raped. Do not let this happen to you" (Melih Gokcek). His statements put forward the neoliberal and neoconservative discourses of women being responsible for whatever happens to their bodies and responsibilizes them to take care of themselves. As Lise

Gotell has argued, under neoliberalism "sexual assault is reconstructed as the outcome of failed responsibilization and the power relations that define sexual violence are obscured" (218). Thus, if anything happens to a woman, including sexual assault, she is responsible for what happened to her.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I analyzed the sexual and body politics of the AKP government in two ways. First, I looked at the body politics of the government from a broader perspective in terms of their dividing women into two categories, namely veiled versus unveiled women. In this part I gave details about how the government created and praised a new category of women, while stigmatizing the other category, and how this contributed to further polarizing Turkish women, pushing them onto two separate edges of the political spectrum. Secularist women, who are advocates of feminist movements in Turkey, have been stigmatized during the AKP period and have been constantly put in a binary opposition with veiled women. On the other hand, veiled women who become increasingly visible in public spaces found themselves caught in the middle between the AKP's never-ending claims of protecting and emancipating them while becoming political symbol for the party. Both unveiled and veiled women have been objectified by the government. After the lift of the ban on headscarves, veiled women who had been confined to private spheres began to emerge into public spaces. This transgression from private to public sphere resulted in various discussions and the objectification of women's' bodies by the government's discourses in an attempt to regulate women's bodies and create the desired "pious" and "modest" generation. Simultaneously, the AKP government backed up their discourses by religious and conspiracy theories of Western powers' infiltration into Turkish society to corrupt

the Turkish nation. Second, I looked at the intimate and sexual politics of the AKP government. As we saw in the examples above, the government discourses aim to regulate women's sexuality by forbidding mixed student housing, telling women how to act in public spaces, and putting responsibility for any consequences on women should they fail to behave the way described by the government.

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Conclusion

To conclude this thesis, I want to reflect back on to my initial thoughts, questions and concerns about this thesis. In this thesis, I tried to answer the following question:
How does the AKP government employ patriarchal biopolitical tools and disciplinary practices on women's bodies? To exemplify the biopolitical tools and disciplinary practices of the AKP government, I narrowed down my question into two categories as follows:

- How does the government govern reproduction and what kind of discourses does the government produce on the reproductive rights of women?
- How has the sexuality of women in Turkey been disciplined by governmental discourses and practices?

In those two categories above, I provided examples from news articles, and the social media accounts of the government bodies such as municipalities and ministries, among other sources. As I was doing my research to provide examples, I realized that there were many methods I could use such as studying legal documents, or examining only established bills and the parliamentary documents from the AKP period, but I chose to use relatively recent news articles and social media because they provide daily life instances to understand how the government's biopolitical tools and disciplinary practices impact the lives of women in Turkey. As I have mentioned in the introduction, I began thinking about the questions which I have tried to answer in this thesis as the problems of my personal life, but then I realized that many women in my country are being affected by the disciplinary practices of the government. As I did more research, I realized that some of the phenomena that I was describing are not only happening in Turkey, but in different parts of the world as well. Women are being subjected to patriarchal strategies of disciplinary and biopolitical practices in many countries, and this made me understand that power operates everywhere, albeit

in different forms. While biopower takes the form of conservative discourses in Turkey, it may take the form of liberal or Christian discourses in other countries. However, what is consistent is that women's bodies are the target of patriarchal forms of biopower, and that they are disciplined in many ways. Some of the ways that biopower functions might be invisible at first sight because they have been so normalized and natural as it was the case in my personal journey. I began this thesis to understand myself and the oppression I face as a Turkish woman, but throughout this journey this thesis has taught me to look at the problem from a wider perspective. I learned that what manifests itself in my small household, at a micro level, can be traced back on a macro level such as the government's policies and discourses on women's bodies. I explained in Chapter One why I have used Michel Foucault's work on this thesis, but I would like to mention once again that reading Foucault's works in tandem with feminist theory helped me to unveil and understand how the government has been disciplining women in Turkey and controlling women's bodies through their discourses and surveillance practices.

Biopower and the AKP government is a topic that I found rather understudied during my research. I came across only one article written about the biopolitics of the AKP government, which mostly refer to safer issues such as the population health and smoking ban in closed spaces, and I found only one master's thesis written on the same topic of this thesis. I have benefited from both of these works and written my thesis using up-to-date examples. Nevertheless, I noticed the gap in scholarly work written in this area, and I am hoping to extend on my research during my PhD studies.

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