

ADVISOR REPORT FOR SEBIHA GUNGOR'S MASTER'S THESIS IN GENDER STUDIES  
AT CHARLES UNIVERSITY, PRAGUE, CZECH REPUBLIC.

I am writing as the advisor of Sebiha Gungor's thesis. Sebiha's thesis started with what I think was a very personal experience for her, going to the gynecologist in Ankara, Turkey. She then turned that experience into a well-developed thesis. Her thesis explores how cultural and religious understandings of virginity affect women's experiences at the gynecologist. Through her research, she connected these understandings with the importance of access to education regarding women's bodies and the role of class. I think that Sebiha would agree with me that having only 10 participants truly limited the types of conclusions she could make in her study.

I found the thesis well-organized. Sebiha started with a primary research question: "What is the relationship between beliefs about virginity and women's gynaecological healthcare experiences in Turkey?" (16), and then developed that question by possessing some more detailed questions to which she sought specific answers. Consistently, she returned to these questions for organizing the thesis. Even the participants' answers were woven into this organizational structure. I found that this helped readability.

I also consider the thesis to be well-researched. There is a wide range of articles related to the topic as well as her methodology. They are fairly summarized, and, I think, appropriately used within the thesis. However, I do wish that, as the thesis progressed, she would have explained some of her analysis more. It is often expressed in a sentence that there is a connection between the literature she read, and it is clear that she sees one, but then there is almost no explanation - what is that connection she sees? Some examples are her use of Meltem Muftuler-Bac on page 39 and her discussion of virginal facades on page 45. The one sentence explanations are not enough.

Another methodological issue is overgeneralizing. For example, on page 48 she concludes that the information provided by Esra, the only participant who identified as particularly religious, "...show[s] once again how analyzing the narratives with the intersectionality lens is useful." I truly wish she would have explained this in more detail.

With this comment on intersectionality we move to where I think Sebiha struggled the most with the thesis. Much of what she writes is well-argued and draws good comparisons between the literature used and her participant interviews. Yet, she continuously grappled with incorporating intersectionality into her analysis. It worked when she discussed age, although I would have liked more detail about that. It also worked well in the discussion of class and being able to purchase private health insurance and choose which clinic to go to, but the concept did not work when it came to religion. This is despite the fact that I found most of the analysis of religion as it affected the examination itself and the concept of virginity quite convincing.

That being said, I would like her to say more about her analysis of Esra on page 48 (and her analysis of this situation on page 68). Having one participant prefer a female gynecologist because she identified as religious is not enough to make generalizations about religious heterosexual women's choice of doctor. It is also not clear how this would relate to intersectionality. For religion to be a factor in an intersectional analysis, it would, I think, have to factor into the system of oppression. Islam in Turkey supports a patriarchal and sexist system, but how does embracing

the religion of the majority create an intersectional identity for Esra that is different from those participants who choose not to be as religious? How does her religious identity further cause her oppression? I would think that Sebiha would actually have a better case here to say that non-religious individuals struggle more in Turkey. Then she could discuss intersectionality from that point of view of the non-religious.

Finally, my last comment is more stylistic. I discussed with Sebiha multiple times that she often writes quite unintelligible, wordy sentences. Unfortunately, many of them are still in this final version of her thesis. It needs more proofreading.

To conclude, I commend Sebiha on this thesis. She took a very personal question and created an academic research project and subsequent paper out of it. While there are some concerns with the incorporation of intersectionality when it comes to religion, the overgeneralizations on a sample size of 10, and the sometimes quite difficult English, I recommend a grade of 1. Sebiha put a lot of work into this thesis and it shows.

Submitted by Ivy Helman, Ph.D.

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