"Other" and "othering" in the intersectionality of inequalities: Alevi women's experiences in private and public spaces

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Abstract

Turkey is one of those geographies where ethnic and sectarian communities live together. Ethnic and sectarian differences in social life create a fragile structure in terms of "othering" and position groups against one another. Alevis are one of the several ethno-religious communities of Turkey that are positioned against Sunni Muslims. In Turkish literature, othering experiences of Alevis are discussed within the framework of totalizing discourses by reducing this issue to the category of sects, thus creating inequality in the social space which is generally related to the Alevis' ethno-religious identity. Furthermore, it is observed that women's experiences are ignored in discussions and evaluations due to gender-blindness. Based on the claim that Alevi women experience a different kind of othering than Alevi men, this study examines the othering experiences of Alevi women in private and public spaces based on patriarchal relations and intersectionality of gender, class, and belief (sect). By focusing on social relations within the context of time and space, as proposed by the intersectionality theory. Intersectionality among social categories based on social standing and hierarchy is examined within the context of attitudes towards "the other". In this study, data was collected by conducting in-depth interviews with 20 Alevi women from the lower socio-economic sections of society. The women live in Mamak which is, sect-wise, one of the most heterogeneous and the least developed districts of Ankara. As a result, this study determined that although gender and belief (sect) intersectionality define "the other" in the private space, class was added as a category of inequality to "othering" in the public sphere. Consequently, from the stratification point, the othering experience is more severe and devastating in vertical social relations, that is, in the relations of different classes. As members of an ethno-religious community, Alevi women experience twice as much patriarchal oppression in their private space since they are women and belong to the Alevi community. Multiple aspects of one's identity, such as class, ethnicity, gender, and belief (sect), affect an individual's status in the social hierarchy, the inequality they face, and the degree of pressure they feel due to these factors.

Keywords: Alevi woman, Inequality, Intersectionality, Gender, Qualitative research, Othering

Introduction

Alevis are one of the ethno-religious communities that have lived in Turkey for centuries (Aydın, 2015; Geçgin, 2015; Okan, 2016). Alevism is based on the Bektashism traditions of the 13th century, after the period of conflict that took place between the Ottoman state and the Safavid state in the 16th century. Alevism has also become known as "Qizilbash". While this concept was used by the Ottoman state to refer to the belief system of the heterodox, that is, the fraction which "deviated" from the official religious perception (Ay, 2012), over the years, it has assumed a derogatory implication against those who hold this belief (Koca, 2014: 45). Since the 19th century, the term "Alevi" has been used instead of "Qizilbash" (Okan, 2016). However,

the practice of labeling people who believed in Alevism as "the other" has not changed, and it is responsible for the tension between Alevis and Sunnis due to religious prejudices.

Until the 1960s, Alevis generally lived in the rural regions as an isolated and homogenous community. During and after these years, they migrated to the city centers due to industrialization, modernization, and political factors (Shakland, 1999; Yaman, 2010). The cities that became heterogeneous as a result of the migration from the countryside to the city turned into areas where different "others" met. Therefore, the state of sharing the same place with the "others" resulted in creating neighborhoods and helped to form bonds between colleagues and schoolmates. In daily life, we often encounter statements such as "S/he is Alevi, but s/he is a good person" or "S/he is Sunni, but s/he is a good person". The word "but" in these statements refers to the damage done, and the distance created in social relationships by the othering attitudes (towards each other by Alevis and Sunnis), which has stayed imprinted in their minds and continues to affect future generations.

In the various academic studies and reports that question the basic dynamics of othering and othering towards Alevis in Turkey, the evaluations have been based on the attitudes faced by Alevis both in their private and public lives (Çoban Keneş, 2015; Erdemir et al., 2010). The findings of the research report, titled "Discrimination in Turkey from the Alevi Viewpoint" (2010), revealed that 76% of Alevi citizens had been subjected to discrimination during the last one year and 73% faced discrimination because of their beliefs (Erdemir et al., 2010). In a study by Çoban Keneş (2015), it is underlined that Alevis are defined not only as "the other" but also as "the dirty other". Apart from these studies that question the phenomenon of "othering" unilaterally, some studies treat the cases comparatively where different groups see one another as "the other" and question the attitudes of groups towards the other, based on the differences (Çelik et al., 2017; Toprak et al., 2009). In a study conducted by Çelik et al (2017) that deals with the phenomenon of "othering" in Turkey, based on ethnic, religious/denominational, and ideological dimensions, the author studies the factors that influence different groups in Turkey (Alevi, Kurdish, AKP supporter, AKP opponent) in othering one another. According to the findings of the study, the higher national identity, that is, being Turkish, shows a tendency to other the Kurdish people both in private and public spaces, while othering Alevis only in the private space (Çelik et al., 2017). The basic demographic factor that determines the othering of Alevis in the private space is pietism. The most notable result of the study reveals that Alevis are considered the most cultured, peaceful, and trustworthy group, although there is limited social contact with them (Çelik et al., 2017: 232). Another study on the othering tendencies of different groups in Turkey towards each other is titled "Being Different in Turkey: Marginalized Others within the Lines of Religion and Conservatism" (2009). When othering is considered from the Alevis' perspective, it is revealed that Alevis are exposed to discrimination both in public and private spaces (Toprak et al., 2009). It is determined that people are sometimes stigmatized as Alevi because of their hometown (such as Erzincan and Tokat) or because they do not fast during [2]Ramadan, which results in creating a social distance towards them in the public space (education, trade, etc.). As a consequence of this stigmatization, Alevi citizens hide their identity (Toprak et al., 2009: 54-55). For example, when we look at the experience of othering from the point of view of women, we come across a situation like this: In Erzurum, Alevi women take off their headscarves in the presence of men when they are indoors but put them on when they go out. However, Alevi women do not feel pressured to do this; instead, they believe it is related to the cultural texture of Erzurum (Toprak et al., 2009: 10).

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[2] Ramadan: According to Islamic belief, it is the month when the verses of the Qur'an were revealed to Prophet Muhammad. Fasting during this month is one of the five compulsory acts of Islam.

Studies conducted within the context of the other and othering by centralizing Alevi ethno-religious identity are generally gender-blind and ignore the experiences of women. The study also takes identity into consideration, not as a single category but within the intersectionality of class, gender, and belief/sect. The experiences of Alevi women, both in the private and public spaces, will be evaluated from different dimensions of identity. Moreover, the study aims at assessing the phenomenon of othering from a comprehensive viewpoint by questioning it within the context of both the "othering" experience and the attitude towards "the other", as it acknowledges that "othering" is not a unidirectional process.

Encountering the "Other": Migration and the Transformation of the Identity of Alevi Women

Orthodox Sunni Islam plays a significant role in the social, cultural, and political construction of the Alevi identity. The mass migration by Alevis to the shanty areas of the cities resulted in a stronger sense of citizenship and, thus, in the feeling of "us". This spatial segregation with Sunnis, that is, with "others", manifested itself in the competition and tension that surfaced when Alevis entered public space (occupation, education, employment, etc.) (Kineşçi 2017). In the 1970s, the Alevi identity started being integrated into Marxist and left-wing political ideas while Sunnism began to be considered within the framework of right-wing ideologies (Erman, 2004, 2010; Kineşçi, 2017, 257; Kolukırık, 2008).

After the September 12, 1980 military coup, the clashes in shanty neighborhoods that had been ongoing between the communities close to the right and left ideologies, that is, between the Sunnis and the Alevis, came to an end. Subsequently, religion, in line with the Turk-Islam synthesis, was considered the element that would unite a society that had become polarized and divisive since the 1970s (Erman, 2010). The September 12, 1980 military coup and collapse of the left-wing bloc of the bipolar world accelerated the politics of Alevi identity (Erman, 2004; Knapp, 1999; Kolukırık, 2008; Taştan, 2012).

The emphasis on gender equality while constructing the Alevi identity as a parallel with Islamic conservatism has been widely discussed (Akdemir, 2017; Erol, 2010; Koçan & Öncü, 2004; Metin Açer, 2019; Okan, 2014; Salman, 2016; Seyman, 2004; Yalçın, 2016) as "human" instead of using the dichotomy of "women-men"; that is, non-sexist expressions such as [3]"soul"/"souls" are preferred in the Alevi sect (Yalçın, 2016: 82). Alevis believe that women and men are equal and this statement is frequently expressed by the people who belong to this sect as well as in the studies on Alevism. However, the status of Alevi women is instrumentalized to assert the difference between Alevism and Sunni Islam (Metin Açer, 2019; Okan, 2014: 35). Although Alevi women were "so-called" liberalized as a result of urbanization and migration, there were other factors in the patriarchal system that acted as catalysts for oppressing women by recreating the dynamics of social relations after migration (Salman 2016: 195). In interviews conducted among Alevi women who were chief executives of Alevi organizations, the women stated that there is no such equality in the family structure, in the institutions and associations they were involved with, or generally in the social practices as emphasized in the discourse.

Ataş (2018) conducted a study on Alevis who had immigrated to London after the Maraş incident in December 1978, where more than a hundred Alevis were massacred. The study indicates that immigrants expressed that they were motivated to ensure gender equality,

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[3] Soul/souls: It is one of the most significant addresses in Alevi belief. The "dede" (a religious leader who has the highest social status in the Alevi-Bekthasi tradition) starts by saying "souls" when addressing the people who join the cem service. It means considering everyone as one and equal, regardless of their gender.

especially at [4]cem houses, in order to adapt to the culture of the country they had migrated to (England was considered a matriarchal society that valued gender equality). However, gender equality could not be secured in its true sense. The participants stated that Alevis living in Turkey were steadily becoming like Sunnis and the philosophy of gender equality was transforming them (Ataş, 2018: 101).

"Other" and "Othering" from the Perspective of Intersectionality Theory

The basic theme of the Intersectionality Theory is based on the assumption that the category "women" is not homogenous, and that women experience oppression and discrimination in various forms and intensities (Brah & Phoenix, 2004; Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1989; Gottfried, 2008; McCall, 2005; Motowska & Debska, 2020; Walby et al., 2012; Yuval-Davis, 2006).

Intersectionality theory has become an analytical tool to clearly understand the different categories of inequality and the heterogeneity of being a woman, both of which have led to their oppression and discrimination in society. In addition, the theory brought forth a significant theoretical and methodological approach in analyzing the functionality of social inequality and influencing the attitudes of women from different layers of society, both towards one another and in the construction of their own identities.

Class, ethnicity, and gender that create inequality on the social level have been widely discussed in literature as the determinants of unequal distribution of resources (Anthias, 2012; Dhamoon, 2010; Ferree, 2009; McCall, 2005; Yuval-Davis, 2006). In sociology, the general tendency is to relate stratification to class division, while the intersectionality approach relates stratification to the distribution of power and other resources in society (Yuval-Davis, 2017: 4). Thus, intersectionality includes the most common and comprehensive discussions on stratification. Unequal distribution of power and resources in social life constitutes the basic dynamic for othering. The approach by Yuval-Davis (2006) is significant in the formation of the attitudes towards "the other" and in comprehending the discrimination created by social categories. These social categories mark the exclusion and inclusion limits of the differences between "the other" and "us" in daily life. This perspective reveals more clearly both the discrimination women experience and the attitudes and prejudices towards "the other" (Yuval-Davis, 2006). On similar lines, Anthias (2013) states that social categories disclose the forms of belonging and othering and that it is necessary to focus on the interpersonal social relations that take place in time and space. Social categories, such as gender, ethnicity, and class, influence the interpersonal social status in the social structure and these statuses determine hierarchy (Anthias, 2013). In this case, it is necessary to discover the intersectionality among social categories by focusing on the experiences and stories that occur in intersubjective time and space (Anthias, 2013).

It is essential to examine the experiences of women in private and public spaces separately to put forth the different forms of intersectionality among social categories. The oppression and discrimination that women experience in their private space (within the family sphere) by the patriarchal system constitutes the building block of the feminist perspective. According to the intersectionality approach, all women face oppression and discrimination on the basis of gender; at the same time, they experience different forms of inequality in family and work life, in their social relations with neighbors and friends, and through other platforms such as the media. Thus, patriarchy affects different public constructs. The most significant of

[4] Cem: It is the religious gathering where Alevis perform together as a congregation.
Cemevi: It is the place of worship in Alevism.

the theoretical discussions on the issue was put forth by Sylvia Walby, who distinguishes between private and public patriarchy. Private patriarchy is based upon the relative exclusion of women from the social living spaces, except in the household (Walby, 1989: 228). In public patriarchy, it is not possible to exclude women from these spaces; however, women are in inferior positions in all these spaces (Walby, 1989). Therefore, examination of women's experiences within the framework of discrimination between the private and public spaces will help to bring a more comprehensive perspective to the phenomenon of "othering".

Methodology and sampling

Mamak, a district of Ankara that receives most of the immigrants and has a low level of development (Ankara Development Agency, 2017; Endeksa, 2018), constitutes the population under study for this research and provides different ethnic and denominational representations within the context of the research. Mamak receives migrants from areas where there is a dense Alevi population. According to the research report on Human Development Index, generated from the available data on the social, economic, and environmental factors, and published by INGEV (Human Development Foundation), Mamak ranks 92 amongst the 161 districts in Turkey (Şeker et al., 2018). Mamak is listed as average on the human development level in the report and shows a low level of development in the categories of social inclusion, social life, and environment (Şeker et al., 2018). Through this research, it was possible to reach out to women of the disadvantaged social class, thus ensuring the ethnic and denominational diversity of the sample.

This study uses the Institutional Ethnography design by Dorothy Smith (2005) which proposes significant methodological opportunities for women's studies and accepts their daily experiences as a starting point in any research pertaining to social sciences. However, it should be noted that this method is not limited only to the problems of daily life; it also tries to disclose the experiences from the perspective of the subjects who go through it in their daily lives. The point where institutional ethnography differs from other methods is that it asserts that institutional processes exist in our daily lives and provides the opportunity to research society ethnographically from the macro to the micro processes (Smith, 1988). Therefore, instructional ethnography was to reveal the relation between power and competence in women's experiences by focusing primarily on their social positions in private and public spaces. Accordingly, data were collected by observing participants' behavior and conducting in-depth interviews with 20 Alevi women, using a semi-structured question form.

Table 1: General Profile of the Participants

No	[5]Participant	Age	Hometown	Marital Status	Educational Background
1	Aycan	34	Sivas	Married	High school graduate
2	Deniz	37	Sivas	Married	Primary school graduate
3	Fidan	59	Tunceli	Married	Illiterate
4	Gülbahar	37	Erzincan	Married	Secondary school graduate
5	İlkay	59	Çorum	Married	Primary school graduate
6	Nazan	44	Tokat	Married	Secondary school graduate
7	Zahide	31	Sivas	Married	Secondary school graduate
8	Zühre	54	Kırşehir	Married	Primary school graduate
9	Sema	60	Sivas	Married	Illiterate
10	Ayşe	29	Sivas	Married	High school graduate
11	Fatma	57	Sivas	Married	Illiterate
12	Hayriye	33	Çorum	Married	College graduate
13	Cevriye	37	Sivas	Divorced	College graduate
14	Keriman	42	Erzincan	Single	Secondary school graduate
15	Candan	39	Yozgat	Married	Secondary school graduate
16	Zeynep	30	Tokat	Single	High school graduate
17	Melek	35	Erzincan	Married	High school graduate
18	Kiraz	29	Tunceli	Married	High school graduate
19	Gonca	39	Tunceli	Married	Secondary school graduate
20	Güleycan	48	Sivas	Married	Secondary school graduate

The profile of the participants in Table 1 shows that the women are immigrants from Turkish cities with a dense Alevi population and a low level of education. Only four of the women worked outside their homes and were employed as house cleaners. In addition to their education level, a limited contribution to the labor force and a low level of income led to their state of poverty. Thus, they were also experiencing multidimensional deprivation.

Initially, this field study was conducted between January and March 2019. After analyzing the data collected, it was noted that this data was not sufficient. Hence, additional interviews were conducted by returning to the field of study in August 2019. Subsequently, the field study was completed after conducting in-depth interviews with more Alevi women, where a total of 20 Alevi women were interviewed for this research between January and August 2019. The sample was determined by considering basic inequality factors, such as denominational identity (belonging to the Alevi sect), class (low socio-economic level), and the status of being an immigrant (having migrated from different cities of Turkey). The purpose of using this technique is to thoroughly investigate the phenomenon that is studied through a small but homogenous sample (Neuman, 2014).

The analytical induction approach was adopted as the data analysis strategy for the study. In line with Dey's (1993) qualitative data analysis approach, the data collected were first described; subsequently, the data coded were categorized by classification. Finally, the categories and themes that were determined after the coding process were correlated with one another. The Nvivo 8 qualitative data analysis software was used to analyze the data.

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[5] Real names of the participants were not used in the study; they were referred to in the text by pseudonyms assigned by the researcher.

Findings of the Field Study

The existence of patriarchal structures that are the underlying cause of the "being marginalized" experiences of Alevi women from low socio-income groups cannot be ignored. Patriarchy causes women to suffer in private and public spaces in different forms and intensities. Although male violence is clearly observed in multiple spaces, including personal and public spheres, it constitutes a structure beyond these, and is a result of the blend of patriarchal and capitalist structures (Yiğittürk Ekiyor, 2018: 215). The experiences of Alevi women living in Ankara were examined in two dimensions: public and private spaces. The reason for this discrimination is owed to the fact that the experiences of women in each of these spaces occur in the intersectionality of different social inequality dynamics (categories). While the intersectionality of gender and belief (sect) determines "the other" in the private space, class is also added as a category of inequality, along with gender and belief.

Being the "Other" in the Private Space: Gender and Belief (sect) Intersectionality

Several studies have revealed that the gender equality discourse is only assumed, and it is not actually practiced in real life (Ataş, 2018; Okan, 2014; Salman, 2016). It is observed that the women who were interviewed repeatedly emphasized the gender equality discourse in Alevism to assert the difference between them and "the other", that is, Sunni women. However, it is relevant to note that they referred to headscarves while expressing the concept of gender equality:

> "It affects our lives as women as our community is [6]Ataturkist. I mean…
> It improves our social life. At least, as women, we can voice our opinions
> better, we can talk better. No restrictions, you know, like wearing a
> headscarf like Sunnis have to" (Ayşe, 29).

In countries where Muslims form the majority of the population, the representation of gender in the public space is at the center of modernism discussions (Dressler, 2010). Hence, discussions on the image of the "westernized woman" presented within the framework of Kemalist modernization in Turkey determined the social, cultural, and class differences. This led to the basic dynamics of othering between the traditional (with a headscarf) and modern (without a headscarf) woman (Arat, 1998; Barbarosoğlu, 2009; Kadıoğlu, 2009). It also explains the political, cultural, and historical reasons why Alevi women refer to their community as "Ataturkist" when they define the difference between themselves and Sunni women. However, the totalizing perspective of Alevi women towards Sunni women makes it difficult for Alevi women to realize their own unequal status.

One of the areas that determine the social distance between these groups, and thus allows observing othering most clearly, is the kinship formed through marriage (Bogardus, 1947; Parrillo & Donoghue, 2005; Wark & Galliher, 2007). When the attitudes of the participants towards their children marrying a Sunni were questioned, it was observed that Alevi women generally remain hesitant about this issue due to a fear of being excluded from their community. Their hesitancy towards their children marrying a Sunni was shaped by the emphasis on gender

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[6] Ataturkism: It is the founding ideology of the Republic of Turkey. It is defined by the social, political, cultural, and religious reforms which Mustafa Kemal Ataturk designed for the newly established Turkish state to be a secular and modern one.

equality in Alevism. Participant Candan's (39) brother is married to a Sunni woman. According to her, her brother's wife does not experience any discrimination in the family:

> "… For instance, my brother's wife is not an Alevi, she is a Sunni. There is absolutely no discrimination among us. Whenever my father sits with us, his first advice is always: 'My daughter, be a human, the important thing is to be a human'. In our culture, whatever you are, you are accepted. Even when you are very oppressed, have suffered and been excluded a lot, you still have more acceptance in our culture [than in Sunnis']. Such things do not happen [in our community] because we believe it is not right for us to oppress the oppressed" (Candan, 39).

However, Alevi women who married Sunni men faced discrimination and othering in their private space within the family circle because of their belief (sect) and due to the fact that they are women. On the other hand, we see that Alevi women categorize the "other woman" (Sunni Muslim) in the belief that they are more liberated in the Alevi community. In other words, in Alevi women's categorization of "us" and "the other", the perception that an Alevi woman is "more liberated" than the "other woman" (Sunni Muslim woman), is functional. However, from a homogenous perspective, the "other woman" is viewed as a "woman with a headscarf", a "veiled woman", and a "woman enslaved by patriarchy". In a study conducted by Ali (2019: 15) on Muslim women living in Australia, the same homogenizing construction of "identity" was detected. For Muslim women who are a minority in Australia, "the other", that is, the Australian woman, is "western", "white", "Christian", and "not Muslim". Yet, when Alevi women's experiences in the private and public spheres are observed, it can be seen that they believe they are restricted by the strict patriarchal gender codes of the society they live in. The husbands of all the participants are Alevi; however, themes of oppression and violence were encountered repeatedly in their experiences. For instance, it was reflected in participant Aycan's (34) statement that women in the Alevi community also face oppression and, in some cases, gender-based violence as well.

> "We have neighbors who wear hijabs… they do not visit us but they joke around when we meet in the garden, they say unpredictable things, they are very nice to us. Hijab was worn in our village in the past, too. I remember that my father beat up my mother because she was not wearing socks when doing laundry. But our [husbands] passed over these things. At least, we do not get beaten" (Aycan, 34).

As seen in Aycan's statement, it is also important to cover and conceal a woman's body according to Alevi belief, which is based on a more secular religious faith. Tripathi (2016) states that a person who experiences being marginalized may marginalize others without realizing it. In religious as well as secular communities, it is necessary to cover a woman's body to protect the chastity of the group. A woman's body, in this sense, is used to rationalize the act of "othering" those who belong to a different faith or religion (Tripathi, 2016: 12). Moreover, the feeling of oppression and discrimination that Aycan experienced reveals a contradictory case in itself; on the one hand, she experienced social distancing that "the other" woman—described as "my veiled neighbor"—subjected her to because she was not wearing a headscarf, while on the other hand, she experienced oppression and violence that her husband put her through in order to retain control over her body. This twofold oppression describes the lives of Alevi women. Participant Sema (60) also speaks about the violence she faced from her husband:

> "Previously, I could not take off my headscarf; nowadays, this has changed. I remember we once attended a couple's wedding in Ankara; they belonged to our village. I aspired to be like other women who do not cover their heads with a headscarf. I decided to take off my own headscarf. When I returned home, my husband put me through the wringer" (Sema, 60).

The discourse of the "so-called equality" becomes disputable as seen in this study. When analyzed through Sema's experiences, it seems that a woman's body is controlled and oppressed in the Alevi community. However, when the case of being held under pressure is deeply questioned, it is seen that there is a fear that the existing perception of "the other" towards them because of their sect may increase twofold. The point is that women are exposed to this pressure not only by the men in their lives, but also by themselves. For Hayriye (33), being an Alevi woman meant she had to be particular about what she wore at her cousin's wedding. However, her brother's wife, who is a Sunni, had the freedom to wear whatever she wanted:

> "My sister-in-law is Sunni. She dressed indecently at our cousin's wedding, but no one interfered, neither her husband nor any of us. I cannot wear what she wore, maybe because I don't want anyone to say, 'You see Alevi women dressing indecently'. I dress more carefully because of that" (Hayriye, 33)
> "In some places, I have to restrict myself as an Alevi woman. If a Sunni woman behaves the same way, she may not be judged, but it is more difficult if you are an Alevi woman. I cannot behave the same everywhere" (Zeynep, 30).

As seen in these narrations, patriarchal social norms determine the different dynamics of "othering" women in the private space. The patriarchal social structure enforces limitations in women's lives and firmly defines their roles. Protecting, veiling, or preserving the body is one of the significant control mechanisms of patriarchy, regardless of faith (Frenkel and Wasserman, 2020). It is significant to note that this control mechanism reinforces male power, uses it to distinguish among the women, and presents the boundaries of "us" and "the other".

Being the "Other" in Public Space: Gender, Class, and Belief (sect) Intersectionality

In this section of the field study findings, the experiences of Alevi women belonging to an ethno-religious community are examined within the intersectionality of gender, belief (sect), and class. Most of the Alevi women who were a part of the research sample did not work outside their homes. Thus, it can be surmised that their interaction in the public space was limited. Four of the women were house cleaners and contributed to the family income. Fatma (57) had worked as a cleaning lady at the homes of foreign diplomats from various countries, including America, Japan, Denmark, and South Korea. To avoid the reactions, she predicted she would get from her employers, Fatma stated upfront during the job interview that she is an Alevi:

> "I have never faced discrimination when I work for foreigners. I will introduce myself first. Elsewhere, they ask me, 'What are you?' I tell them before they ask: 'I am an Alevi; it is up to you whether you hire me or not'. I always let them know before they hire me" (Fatma, 57).

As seen, Fatma makes it a point to specify to foreign (Christian) employers that she is an Alevi. She believes that being an Alevi would be an obstacle for her in finding a job. This case provides clear evidence of the damage that othering causes Alevi women in their personal lives. Ilkay (59), who was in direct contact with people in the public space compared to the other women, has been cleaning houses regularly for 25 years. Her response to the question "Would you like someone who is Christian to be your neighbor," was striking and enabled a better understanding of "the other". Ilkay compared the attitudes of this foreign family, who belonged to a different religion, with the Sunni family she had worked for a long time ago:

> "Maybe s/he is more like a Muslim than a Sunni. Gâvurs[7] don't discriminate against Alevis. I work for them; they are not unfair. Look, if I work there half an hour more, I would not even know, but they know and pay me more. I ask them, 'Why have you paid me more?' and they say, 'If I am unfair to you, God will not forgive me; you worked overtime'. But if they were Sunni, they would not pay that [extra money]. The other day, I cooked, and I worked overtime. I saw them give me 200 liras. And they don't put the money in your hand, they put it in an envelope and place it on your purse because it is not nice [to throw it at me]. I am a worker, but they don't embarrass me. If they were Sunni, they would throw the money at you" (Ilkay, 59).

Ilkay's statement, "Gâvurs don't discriminate against Alevis", referring to her Christian employer demonstrates that othering occurs within the intersectionality of class and belief.[8] The concept of trans locational lens by Anthias (2012) emphasizes that it is necessary to focus on social status instead of groups. Hence, Ilkay's social status is not evaluated only for "being an Alevi". As observed in the statements, "the other" (Sunni) is defined as the oppressor encompassing both class and belief. Moreover, Zuhre (54) and Gulbahar (37), who were working for foreign (non-Muslim) families, talked about the attitudes towards them by comparing their foreign (Christian) employers to the Sunni ones:

> "Foreigners (Christians) don't close the door when I am leaving, they wait right behind me, give me my slippers. I put them on and step out, foreigners wait [with] the door open until I leave; Sunnis slam the door as if they are scolding me. They [the Christians] are more Muslim than we are. That is why Allah gives them more. Muslims are at each other's

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[7] Non-Muslim, someone belonging to a religion other than Islam.

[8] This concept is a tool to analyze the statuses and results produced by the intersectionality of different social structures and processes. According to Anthias (2012), it is significant, in this context, to place emphasis on a wider social context and temporality.

throats; [they] kill each other, lie, deceive each other, they are unfair to people" (Zuhre, 54).

"Foreigners say that God created us equal, our worker and president eat at the same table. The diplomat for whom I work says you will sit with us too; we will have the meal together. This is not what happens with us, they [Muslim employers] don't let you go outside the kitchen; they tell you to stay inside and work. But with Christian employers, it is not like this" (Gulbahar, 37).

Anthias (2012: 130) asserts that social status is buried in the hierarchical relations within the multiplicity of specific situational and contextual areas. Different aspects of one's identity, such as class, ethnicity, gender, and belief (sect) affect status in the structure of social hierarchy in varying degrees. When the results are evaluated from this perspective, it can be stated that the degree of discrimination is felt more severely by those from the lower and higher levels of social class in the public space, that is, on the vertical axis of the stratification. In other words, the degree of othering intensifies when different statuses such as class are in question. For instance, the following views of participants Gonca (38) and Guleycan (48) are of importance:

"Thanks to our neighbors, they give fitrah in Ramadan; it helps us get by for a few months. A few days ago, a rich relative of one of our neighbors was looking for a family to give his zakat. Our neighbor mentioned us, may God bless them. Then I heard from another neighbor that they changed their mind because we are Alevi. It seems [to them] we don't perform prayers. That really upset me, you know" (Gonca, 38).

"(…) At least we do not discriminate [against] anyone like Sunnis do. My son fell in love with a Sunni girl, her family didn't approve as he is Alevi. If we were rich, they would approve even though he is Alevi" (Guleycan, 48).

Another type of relationship that Alevi women from low-income groups build with "the other" in the public space is friendship. In this relationship, which I define as horizontal, it is observed that the participants again face othering behaviors and attitudes. However, it is seen that women consider this situation more acceptable. Thus, they experience othering less severely than in a vertical relationship. For instance, Nazan (44), said that although her guest asked her a very awkward question by inquiring if her husband has a tail, they continue to have cordial social relations after the misunderstanding was cleared:

"When you say you are an Alevi, people's faces change instantly. Their first impressions are bad. Then, when they get to know you better, this changes. [The] wife of my husband's friend was looking at my husband's back all the time when we first went to Giresun. The woman said to me, 'I want to ask you something. I am wondering… does your husband have a tail?' Do you know, she had always heard such things about Alevis in her social circle and believed them. They say Alevis have tails, I swear (laughs). And who could tell that this woman is a college graduate! So later, when they got to know my husband, they both loved and valued him very much" (Nazan, 44).

Differences should be considered a part of the process of building boundaries and hierarchies in social life that could take different forms at different times and within different contexts. In this context, traces of different othering experiences are seen within the intersectionality of class and belief (sect) in the experiences of Alevi women in public space.

Conclusion

According to Walby's (1989) distinction between private and public patriarchy, attitudes towards "the other" and experiences of Alevi women from low socio-income groups as members of an ethno-religious community are examined within the framework of two dimensions: private and public. When the results were evaluated, it was observed that being "the other" in the private space for women occurs in the intersectionality of belief (sect) and gender. Women in the Alevi community experience external pressures differently than men in the same situation. In fact, it can be stated that Alevi women face twice as much othering and oppression compared to Alevi men who share the same status and belief (sect). Women in the Alevi community, as in all communities, are considered the representatives of the community's chastity. Chastity, thus, enables control over the body, both in the personal and public context, to sustain the social order in a hierarchy (Kalav, 2012: 156). Specifically, it increases the internal oppression towards women of ethnic and minority groups, that is, the group chooses to intensify the oppression of women to avoid external pressure. As members of an ethno-religious community, Alevi women experience twice as much patriarchal oppression in the private space because of both these reasons: for being a woman and an Alevi. However, culture-based othering narratives (the belief that they are more liberated and have more equality with men than Sunni women do) in the private space cause the women to ignore or mask their own unequal status and, thus, inequality goes into a reproduction cycle. The experiences of the participants, based on cultural narratives, reveal that these narratives may be functional in starting the othering process by "the other"; hence, an "othering" person can marginalize another. Thus, it can be stated that the other has an "other" against whom they establish their own identity. Therefore, one of the most crucial implications of this study is that the process of othering is not unidimensional.

When analyzing the experiences in public space, the social status of the participants is not evaluated only on the basis of them "being an Alevi ". In fact, statuses are buried within the relations of hierarchy that exist in the multiplicity of specific situational and conjectural areas (Anthias, 2012: 130). Alevi women from the economically deprived class described "the other" (Sunnis) as the ones who oppress them because of their class and belief. When the experiences of these Alevi women in the public space are thoroughly examined, it is observed that the oppression experienced in the public space is collective in contrast to the oppression experienced personally in the private space (Nagra, 2018). Consequently, from the stratification point, an othering experience is more severe and devastating in vertical social relations, that is, class-related relations. However, in horizontal social relations in the public space, that is, in relations where individuals have the same level of income and where there is no subordinate-superior association (neighbors, friends, etc.), it is concluded that othering is less severe and more tolerable. Different aspects of one's identity such as class, ethnicity, gender, and belief (sect) affect the status of Alevi women in the social hierarchical structure and the oppression that they experience.

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