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SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ  
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**RAPE, COMPARATIVE STUDY ON FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES,  
PRIVILEGED FEMINISTS, BLACK FEMINISTS AND TURKISH FEMINISTS**

**Yüksek Lisans Tezi**

**ZÜHRE EMANET**

**Tez Danışmanı: Yard. Doç. Dr. Mary Lou O'Neil**

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## ABSTRACT

Is it possible to assume that “rape” has one specific determination? Is it possible to find different definitions of rape around the world? If women are most frequently victims of rape, is it about being women? Is there a relationship between gender asymmetry and rape in society? Can culture, ethnicity, race, class or gender make a difference while determining the crime? Is it only a crime? Can the perception of such a crime make difference depending on where you stand? How do women perceive this violence?

Rape is a fact of everyday life. It is not an isolated phenomenon. This paper examines three different feminist perspectives. Black feminism and privileged feminists in the U.S, and Turkish feminism are studied in order to find out if the perception of rape can differ. This paper reveals the fact that determination of rape changes depending on where the determiner stands, how the determiner perceives society, how the determiner defines woman. The social explanation of rape can be different depending on the woman’s experience. In the determination of the rape, feminists’ class, race, ethnicity, nationality are factors while in explaining the issue

Key Words: Rape, Feminism, Women, Patriarchy

## I. INTRODUCTION

Women live under the threat of rape. Not a day goes without a story in the media about sexual violence against women either in the U.S. or in Turkey. Rape is a pervasive fact both in America and in Turkey. According to the studies by Joni Seager in the U.S, 90.186 rapes were reported during the late 1990s, however there were estimated 700.000 rapes (58). At the same time in Turkey 705 rapes are reported to the police and the number that is estimated yet not known (59). In addition to these statistics, Buchwald, Fletcher and Roth, the editors of *Transforming Rape Culture*, who analyze the FBI's data of Uniform Crime Report (UCR) and the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) which is the largest nationally representative in the U.S. state that,

There are, at minimum 105,000 rapes annually in the United States and perhaps more than 630, 000. In the time it took to read these statistics at least one person has been raped. Over a twenty year period, as many as 12 million women and children - nearly 10 percent of the current female population of the United States- have been raped. (9)

Rape is a fact of everyday life. Generally, rape is treated as an isolated phenomenon. Focusing on war zones where all kinds of atrocities are rationalized has marginalized rape. Rape has been defined as an incident that occurs in wars, riots or pogroms. On the other hand, out of war zones rape has been defined as an act of "deviant" man. In both perspectives, rape is excluded from mainstream, yet it is at the center. Rape not only occurs in war zones or not only an act of "deviant" men. Thus, it is a significant issue to analyze.

The most significant part is, there is a huge difference between the actual number of rapes estimated to occur each year and the reported rapes. Rape remains a grievously under - reported crime as social stigma is attached to the victim much more than it is to the perpetrator. Victims of rape often do not feel free to report the crime. The silence of women toward such a violent act should be analyzed. Many women who report rape are often subject to other victimizations. Rape can be redefined as “adultery” or “extramarital sex.” There are still countries in which rape within marriage is not viewed as a crime. Rape is not to “have sex.” Rape is a kind of violence that most often targets women.

Rape is an ignored problem. The problem cannot be solved without determining exactly what constitutes rape. In the 1960’s and 1970’s feminists in America began analyzing rape from a feminist point of view. Feminist analyses of rape challenged many traditional ideas and commonly held notions about rape. These analyses incited change in both the social and legal arena. As Adrienne Rich states, “Where language and naming are power, silence is oppression, is violence”(qtd. in Buchwald, Fletcher and Roth 59). Feminists broke the silence and so the public’s beliefs regarding the definitions as well as the prevalence of the act of rape were challenged. ‘Language’and defining made a difference in peoples understanding of rape.

However, is it possible to assume that “rape” has one specific determination? Is it possible to find different definitions of rape around the world? If women are most

frequently victims of rape, is it about being women? Is there a relationship between gender asymmetry and rape in society? Can culture, ethnicity, race, class or gender make a difference while determining the crime? Is it only a crime? Can the perception of such a crime make difference depending on where you stand? How do women perceive this violence?

In order to understand if the culture, ethnicity, race or class has an effect on the perception of the subject, three different feminist perspectives will be analyzed: privileged feminist point of view and black feminist point of view in America and at lastly Turkish feminist point of view. These feminist perspectives are purposefully chosen in order to find out how women perceive sexual assault. The aim of analyzing privileged and black feminism in America is to find out if in the same society there can be a difference in the determination of the crime. Is that possible to find any differences or similarities? How do they theorize rape? Studying different cultures leads one to analyze ones own culture with different spectacles and for this reason the third chapter is Turkish feminism. Turkish feminism is chosen to find out if different members of different societies have same or different analysis or theories of rape. These three different interpretations has been chosen not only trying to deconstruct the dimensions of culture, ethnicity or race as related to rape but also try to discover whether there are some intersections, or kind of world culture or world view with respect to rape.



## II. PRIVILEGED FEMINISTS

### RAPE, PATRIARCHY AND POWER

Naturally, I trusted everything they said, even when it implied my inferiority. I learned what an orgasm was from D.H. Lawrence....I learned from Dostoevski that they have no religious feeling; I learned from Swift and Pope that they have too much religious feeling....I learned from Faulkner that they are earth mothers....I learned from Freud that they have deficient superegos and are “incomplete” because they lack one thing in this world worth having.... (qtd. in Rosen 156)

According to privileged feminists it is a fact that women and men rape, it is not possible to assume rape as solely an act committed by men; however, women are more often the victims of rape and rape committed by women is far rare. Contrary to the studies or the theories that have tended to determine rape as abnormal or have tended to analyze it as an isolated incident, privileged feminists show how rape permeates society. As the attitude of woman in the society is developed by the system in which she lives, the violence against her will and body is interpreted as a consequence of that system. Focusing on the social explanation of rape, privileged feminists claim that it is not an expression of uncontrollable lust or inevitable biological urge, however an “exercise of power.” Rape cannot exist in a society where men and women have equal rights. Privileged feminists associate rape with the social, sexual, economic and political inequality of women. Andrea Dworkin states, “Equality is a discipline. It is a way of life. It is a political necessity to create equality in institutions. And another thing about equality is that it cannot coexist with rape” (19).

Theorizing the rape issue is in fact a manifesto to the socialization that victimizes women in all forms and in that respect, rape is associated with all sorts of oppressions that women experience. Thus, sexual assault is related to power as the result of the subordinate role of women in the society and as the embodiment of this socialization. Feminists analyze this inequality as being within patriarchy. Adrienne Rich defines patriarchy as,

Patriarchy is the power of the fathers: a familial-social, ideological, political system in which men – by force, direct pressure, or through ritual, tradition, law, and language, customs, etiquette, education, and the division of labor, determine what part women shall or shall not play, and in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male. (*Of Woman Born* 57)

Rape becomes the center of the privileged feminist theories on the maintenance of women's subordination and patriarchy. The institutionalization of dichotomous roles of subordinate feminine and dominant masculine promotes violence towards women as culturally normative behavior. In fact the violence against women in all forms is justified within patriarchy. Privileged feminists criticize the naturalization of violence towards women inside the patriarchal system. Focusing on the sexual politics of patriarchy, Kate Millet presents how patriarchy naturalizes the violence in society as, "So perfect is its system of socialization, so complete the general assent to its values, so long and so universally has it prevailed in human society, that it scarcely seems to require violent implementation" (43).

Privileged feminists focus mostly on the concept of ideal woman depicted inside patriarchy. As whiteness is marker of privileges, their focus is mostly on the oppressions of women that are privileged in this way. “The ideal woman” excludes “other” women’s experiences depending on their race, ethnicity, and nationality or for some of privileged feminists even class. Thus, the analyses of rape inside a race context is hardly mentioned and this issue will be analyzed elaborately in chapter two. Privileged women focus on their own problems and experiences.

Privileged feminists analyze how rape was perceived in the past and how the determination of rape changes depending upon the role of women in society. In early patriarchal societies woman neither owned, nor earned money. A woman had no rights and no property. She was the wife; she was the mother; she bore and reared children, she was the housewife and domestic worker. She became civilly dead after marriage. The father or the husband was the ruler. She was the property. These were the early pragmatics of patriarchy, which in the past was seen as a natural outcome of the division of sexes. Almost one and a half centuries passed after the Declaration Of Sentiments of the Seneca Falls Women’s Rights Convention and in this convention women resisted the inferior role of white woman in 1848’s America. Since then the status of women started to change through out American history, however according to privileged feminists, the logic of patriarchy stands still in the roots of modern laws, social codes and cultural pragmatics. Privileged feminists compare the determinations of rape in the past and in the present.

As the perception of rape is dependent on the role of women in the society, the situation of women as a possession was a significant way of specifying and establishing the meaning of rape. Susan Brownmiller gives an example of this using a 17<sup>th</sup> century Puritan fable. In the fable, rape threatens the girl's virginity, which belongs to her father. Her virginity is not her own but a thing that her father possesses. Her sexuality, her body is the property of her father. In the future, it becomes the property of her husband. When virginity disappears, the chastity becomes a possession that belongs not to the father but to the husband (*Against Our Will* 375-376-377). In this context, the act of rape harms the man, the owner, but not the woman herself. Rape is defined as a property crime, which means "contaminating other men's property"(Millet, 43). As women are perceived as a "furniture" or a "cattle" (Brownmiller, 125) rape cannot be defined as a violation of women. Thus, the injured parties were the men, father or husband, almost as if the women were not involved. Brownmiller states,

Women were wholly owned subsidiaries and not independent beings. Rape could not be envisioned as a matter of female consent or refusal; nor could a definition acceptable to males be based on a male-female understanding of a female's right to her bodily integrity. Rape entered the law through the back door, as it were, as a property crime against man. Woman, of course, was viewed as the property. (*Against Our Will* 18)

However, Catharine MacKinnon takes these ideas one-step further. According to MacKinnon, there are rights and responsibilities of the owner to their property and man's property is a valuable thing, however when the subject is woman, man's attitudes change. In that logic, according to MacKinnon women do not even have the same value

with the real property of men. MacKinnon states, “Women’s sexuality is, socially, a thing to be stolen, sold, bought, bartered, or exchanged by others. But women never own or possess it, and men never treat it, in law or in life, with the solicitude with which they treat property. To be property would be an improvement” (*Toward A Feminist Theory* 172).

Furthermore, MacKinnon claims that under male supremacy, women are not free enough to determine violence with their own words. MacKinnon states, “To know what is wrong with rape, know what is right with sex...while for women it is difficult to distinguish the two under conditions of male dominance” (*Toward A Feminist Theory* 174). MacKinnon’s expression can be seen as bold and radical and begs the question whether all men are rapists. However, MacKinnon tries to put a light both on the situation of woman and the naturalization of violence.

This perception extends to war. According to Brownmiller, the logic in patriarchal society continues to express itself in the same manner even in the abnormal situations such as wars, pogroms or riots. Wherever men are dominant, rape is an inevitable fact. This time women are the property of the defeated side. Brownmiller states:

Sexual trespass on the enemy’s women is one of the satisfactions of conquest, like boot in the face, for once he is handed a rifle and told to kill, the soldier becomes an adrenaline-rushed young man with permission to kick in the door, to grab, to steal, to give vent to his submerged rage against all women *who belong to other men*. (“Making Female Bodies Battlefield” 172)

One might ask if rape has to be something that happens only in extreme conditions (war, etc.). Rape is a fact of everyday life. If rape is a crime, then it is important to analyze how it is defined. Thus, privileged feminists analyze the perception of rape in the legal world. Focusing on rape laws in U.S., MacKinnon argues that there are not two genders, but there is only one which is male. As the standards are related to men the “male standard,” men determine rape (Estrich 82). Estrich criticizes rape laws in the U.S. that define rape as committed only by an unknown man. Rape cannot be seen as committed solely by “the armed stranger jumping from the bushes”(Estrich, 8). Thus the relationship between the victim and the rapist changes the attitudes while determining the crime. If the husband, the boyfriend or someone the woman knows attempts sexual assault, it is also rape. Under the logic of women as possessions, this is not seen as the case. This is exemplified by the sentiment “ I just raped my wife! What are you going to do about it....?” (qtd. in Buchwald, Fletcher and Roth 59). Or “If you can’t rape your wife, who can you rape?” (qtd. in Rosen, 183). According to Estrich, the legal mind perceives “real rape” rape by a stranger, a sick man that the victim does not know. At the same time, the legal mind perceives rape that is committed by the rapist that the victim knows as “simple rape.” Presenting new terms such as “date rape,” “acquaintance rape” and “marital rape,” Estrich points out the fact that the rapes committed by the victim’s boy friend, neighbor or husband are real rapes and there is no difference in between a rape committed by a stranger or a husband. Rape is often seen in close relations, but the patriarchal mind that defines woman as a property, still defines the husband as a possessor. Estrich states, “If modern law does not yet

recognize that most simple rapes by friends and neighbors and acquaintances are real rapes, it should not be surprising that the issue is seldom even raised when the simple rapist is the *victim's husband* [emphasis is mine]" (79).

Rape is not only an outcome of rigid sex roles but also serves as a control mechanism for this kind of socialization. Privileged feminists suggest that rape serves a function in preserving the system of male dominance. Rape transforms to a punishment or penalty for women who cross the line. The fear of rape is extensive and women fear rape significantly more than the fear of death. (Scully, *Tecaviüz* 199). This fear not only limits women but also leads women to a certain kind of life in order to avoid the risk of being raped. 24 hours a day or any geographical area is not safe for women as there is the danger of violation. As Andrea Dworkin points out, "Can you imagine what it is like to live as a women in and day out with the threat of rape? (20). Moreover, Scully poses the question as whether the women or the rapists are in the real prison (200). In fact while posing these questions, Scully and Dworkin point out how the freedom of women is restricted by the fear of rape and how this fear serves as a controlling mechanism.

In addition, Susan Brownmiller claims that this fear is a kind of policy. She states: "It is nothing more or less than conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in the state of fear" (*Against Our Will* 15). Being in the state of fear shapes not only women's lives, but also their mind and their sense of self-reliance. The possible rape attack limits women and this is the main target, putting all women in their place (Brownmiller). The fear of rape is an apparatus to control women. While men are

free to express their sexuality women must hide theirs for fear of its being violated. All men are not potential rapists but rather all women are potential victims of rape that is why rape benefits all men whether or not they commit rape themselves. Rape exists in order to maintain the status quo and it functions as a form of terror. Brownmiller points out,

A world without rapist would be a world in which women moved freely without fear of men. That some men rape provides a sufficient threat to keep all women in a constant state of intimidation, forever conscious of the knowledge that the biological tool must be held in awe for it may turn to weapon with sudden swiftness borne of harmful intent....Rather than society's aberrants or 'spoilers of purity', men who commit rape have served in effect as front-line masculine shock troops, terrorist guerrillas in the longest sustained battle the world has ever known. (*Against Our Will* 209)

Griffin also defines rape as: "a form of mass terrorism" (qtd. in Rich, *Of Women Born* 13-14). In both interpretations, there is the resemblance of rape with terror. While analyzing American psychopaths and their depictions in popular culture, Jane Caputi focuses on the sexual murder and points out that both sexual murder and rape convey the same meanings. Caputi states, "...sexual murder is a product of dominant culture. It is the ultimate expression of a sexuality that defines sex as a form of domination/power; it, like rape, is a form of terror that constructs and maintains male supremacy" (121).



## 2.1. RAPE AS VIOLENCE OR SEX

If this is rape, than everyone of us has been raped! (qtd. in Buchwald, Fletcher and Roth 91)

Another significant debate surrounding the issue of rape is whether to define rape as an act of violence or an act of sex. There are certain differences between the perspectives and they both shift the meaning of rape. The approach that defines rape solely as an act of violence does not distinguish it from other types of assault. On the other hand, determining rape as related to sex poses different questions such as, if sex can be crime, then is all sex prohibited or what distinguishes intercourse from rape? Privileged feminists try to analyze whether or not rape is a crime of violence or sex. In that respect, the center of their analyses are the legal definitions of rape in the U.S.

Due to the fact that rape is an action which is “easily to be made and hard to be proved”(qtd. in Estrich 5), privileged feminists focus on how rape can be proved and what are the elemental factors that define the crime. There are two significant, factors consent and force, which define an attack as rape or not. Consent is related to the will of women. The first inquiry is on whether a woman gives consent. However, meaningful consent is not defined by referring to women’s experiences, rather from men’s perceptions. The victim’s sexual history, her marital status, her relation with the rapist and her race can all be significant factors in effecting the courts interpretation of whether a woman really gave consent or not. Estrich points out that the consent factor is

interpreted as referring to the boundaries of woman from the rapist and woman's reputation. As law understands it, the word "no" does not mean literally "no" depending on how well the parties know each other or depending on woman's status in the society. MacKinnon also argues that consent is a problematic element as it is defined from a male point of view. MacKinnon criticizes U.S rape laws by focusing on the "consent" factor,

The law of rape divides women into two spheres of consent according to indices of relationship to men. Which category of presumed consent a woman is in depends upon who she is relative to a man who wants her, *not what she says or does*. These categories tell men whom they can legally fuck, who is open to season and who is off limits, not how to listen women. The paradigm categories are the virginal daughter and other young girls, with whom all sex is proscribed, and the whorelike wives and prostitutes, with whom no sex is proscribed....If rape laws existed to enforce women's control over access to their sexuality, as the consent defense implies, *no would mean no...*[emphasis is mine]. (*Toward A Feminist Theory* 175)

Privileged feminists also focus on how force is determined. Convictions regarding force search for more violent elements. By focusing on and determining the physical harm done to the victim, rape is defined. Feminists criticize the tendency to determine "force" if only certain objects are used -e.g., a weapon, or if a stranger commits the crime. However, authority can also be hard force or a rapist can be the victim's boy friend. MacKinnon criticizes rape laws that search for both force and consent at the same time, "Force is present because consent is absent" (*Toward A Feminist Theory* 172). According to MacKinnon "force" can not only be defined by bodily harms. Women can also be forced by economic and racial dominance or age difference. A

variety of factors can constitute force – e.g., psychological, moral or intellectual force. (*women's lives, men's laws* 244). In addition Estrich points out, "...the cases where a woman is forced to have sex without consent by only one man, whom she knows, who does not beat her or attack her with a gun – then rape emerges as a far more common, vastly underreported, and dramatically ignored problem" (10).

Furthermore, in order to point out the domination of the male point of view in rape laws, feminists also criticize the "penetration" aspect and the perception of the "penis" as a *sin quo non* element of rape. Seating penetration at the center is an outcome of male perception. MacKinnon argues, "...penetration itself is considered a violation from male point of view, sexuality, women's gender definition, is stigmatic" (*Toward A Feminist Theory* 173). This issue is related to the legal approaches that define rape merely an act of violence. However, this kind of thinking defines rape from a male point of view. There should be a difference compared with other assaults, but the idea that tries to determine rape solely an act of violence does not separate rape from other violent crimes and there should be a difference between hitting somebody with fists or using a penis as a weapon. Rape can not be held outside the sexual dynamics. It is not possible to determine the body outside of the realm of sexual politics. The bodies of men and women both are constructed as sexual beings in society. The feminine body is constructed and specific parts are emphasized. Sexuality is the first feature of the identity. MacKinnon states, "To be rapable, a position that is social not biological, defines what woman is" (*Toward A Feminist Theory* 178). In a culture where women

convey sexual meanings, “penis” and “fists” are not same. Susan Brownmiller argues, “In order for a sexual assault to qualify as felonious rape in an American courtroom, there must be ‘forcible penetration of the vagina by penis, however slight.’ In other words, rape is defined by law as a heterosexual offense that is characterized by genital copulation” (*Against Our Will* 378).

With the element of force and consent rape is most often determined as a violation, and to separate sex from this violation is a conscious selective approach. Brownmiller and Estrich define rape as violence not related to sex. Susan Estrich claims that defending rape as violence is a more meaningful approach. Estrich points out that rape as sex presents the idea that sex can have violent elements. In order to avoid these perceptions Estrich resists rape as sex. Estrich points out that “rape as violence” is more logical because “rape sex” presents a reality in which sex and violence can come together. Estrich argues, “...to see rape as violence is to recognize that sex should be inconsistent with violence, a message which is needed precisely because violence in sex has been accepted by so many as normal, and even justified, because of its supposed desirability to women” (83).

Contrary to Brownmiller’s and Estrich’s interpretation of rape as a violence, MacKinnon defends “rape sex.” In fact these feminists disagree on the same point. At the point MacKinnon see sex, Brownmiller and Estrich see violence. In addition, Adrienne Rich agrees with MacKinnon and they both criticize the perception of rape as

violence (MacKinnon, “Sex and Violence: A Perspective” 28, Rich, “Compulsory Heterosexuality And Lesbian Existence” 211).

Rape cannot only be labeled with an abstract word “violence.” According to MacKinnon, determining rape as “violence” is a male point of view. MacKinnon states that rape is not defined according to what women think violates women. The experiences of women are defined by male perceptions. MacKinnon argues that under male supremacy most of the heterosexual intercourses are rapes and that men determine the difference between rape and intercourse. As a result within this context, rape cannot be only defined as “violence.” MacKinnon states,

What I am saying is that unless you make the point that there is much violence in intercourse, as a usual matter, none of that is changed. Also we continue to stigmatize the women who claim rape as having experienced a deviant violation and allow the rest of us to go through life feeling violated but thinking we’ve never been raped, when there were a great many times when we, too, have had sex and didn’t want it. What this critique does that is different from the “violence, not sex” critique is that it asks a series of questions about normal, heterosexual intercourse and attempts to move the line between heterosexuality on the one hand – intercourse – and rape on the other, rather than allow it to stay where it is. (“Sex and Violence: A Perspective” 31)

### III. PATRIARCHY, RACISM AND BLACK WOMEN AS PROPERTY

The Thing to fear was the Thing that made *her* beautiful, and not us.  
(Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* 74)

Black feminists reject the approaches that have a tendency to analyze rape as an isolated issue. Black feminists emphasize the importance of social and cultural factors while examining rape. Thus, the rape issue cannot be analyzed out of social context and the meaning of rape is incomprehensible unless the circumstances that encompass black women in a larger social context are understood. Angela Y. Davis points out the dangers of this tendency as, "...any attempt to treat it [rape] as an isolated phenomenon is bound to founder" (201). Davis points out the impossibility of understanding the rape issue without considering the social facts that affect black women's lives. Nor is rape an isolated issue that is analyzed only by certain black feminists. The rape issue has always been on the agenda of black feminists. For a long time rape has been such a fundamental fact of life for black women that slave narratives and writings are full of rape incidents. As Audre Lorde states, "Black women's literature is full of pain of frequent assault, not only by racist patriarchy, but also Black men" (120). Inside black feminist thought rape conveys specific meanings contrary to white counterparts in the US. Rape is an emblem of black women's segregation. Patricia Hill Collins determines rape "...as a specific form of sexual violence is embedded in intersecting oppression of race, gender and class" (127).

The fact of slavery is central to defining black women's role in America, so this is also the fundamental reference point for Black Feminists determining the issues of black feminism. bell hooks states this position as, "Race and sex have always been overlapping discourses in the United States. That discourse began in slavery" (*Yearning* 57). The experiences of black women during slavery have great effect on defining their situation today. Slavery was a system of labor designed to extract the maximum amount of profit from African Americans. For black women, slavery was a devastating experience. They were torn from their homeland, forced to perform hard work, subjected to both physical and mental degradation. Enslaved women were the legal property of their masters. In this respect the treatment of the slave depended on nothing but the owner's will. Freedom of movement, freedom to earn money or even to learn to read and write were forbidden and outlawed for slaves. Their most basic rights were denied. Whipping, branding, raping or even killing a slave were legal in most circumstances. Black women were literally property. The sexuality of black women was one of the most significant factors differentiating the experience of slavery for black women from that of black men.

The belief in the inherent inferiority of African Americans justified by racist ideologies. Racial ideology determined the whiteness as self and determined blackness as "other." Such constructed ideologies both formed and justified the exclusion of blacks from the center of the society. Whiteness and blackness turned into a marker and

constructed a polarity inside American society between African Americans and whites.

Toni Morrison summarizes this polarized perception as,

Africanism is the vehicle by which the American self knows itself as not enslaved, but free; not repulsive, but desirable; not helpless, but licensed and powerful; not history-less, but historical; not damned, but innocent; not blind accident of evolution, but progressive fulfillment of destiny. (*playing in the dark* 52)

The racist policies that began with slavery and have continued throughout the history of America (toward African Americans) caused blacks to build up a separate and distinct culture outside the mainstream. The grounds for this separation were built during the slavery. According to black feminists these are the reasons for defining the role of black women in the society within two different but correlated perspectives; as being “insider” and “outsider” position. bell hooks explains that,

To be in the margin is to be the part of the whole but outside the main body .....We looked both from the outside in and from the inside out. We focused our attention on the center as well as on the margin. We understood both. .... a main body made up both margin and center. (*Feminist Theory* xv1)

There is a fact of being “at the center” and “on the margin”: thus there are two different spaces and related to those spaces; there are different circumstances that should be analyzed in order to understand the situation of black women in American society. As a result of separating the spaces the role of black women is different in both communities. The racist patriarchy also effects relations inside the black community in which women were victimized for the sake of racial solidarity. Thus, this two-sided



effect of patriarchy is the context in which rape is analyzed by black feminists. The victimization of black woman is analyzed both from inside and outside their communities.

According to black feminists, it is not possible to analyze the rape issue solely under the authority of patriarchy. Patriarchy is not enough to understand the whole matter, as it is not experienced by black women in the same way as it is by white women. Under the authority of patriarchy the sexes and their relationships to each other are organized and certain sex roles are determined. Rigid sex roles are defined for men and women. However, black women do not fit into the 'woman' concept as it is described within the racist patriarchal system. Sojourner Truth criticizes the standard of woman by posing the question "Ain't I a Woman?" (66). Truth criticizes the view that builds up certain features for woman, which are appropriate only for white women. Black women do not fit the woman concept that is defined in the racist patriarchy. According to the patriarchal mind, black women are not really women at all. Patricia Hill Collins following on Truth's statement, criticizes the definition of woman under the authority of patriarchy by posing the question as: "If women are allegedly passive and fragile, then why are Black woman treated as 'mules'..." (11).

Audre Lorde presents a different perspective to the distinction in between the concept of "woman" inside and outside the patriarchy. Lorde attributes to the white feminist definitions of "woman" and points out the ignorance of white women to the

differences under the authority of racist patriarchy. Lorde points out, “As white women ignore their built-in privilege of whiteness and define *woman* in terms of their own experience alone, then women of Color become ‘other,’ the outsider whose experience and tradition is too ‘alien’ to comprehend”(117). So the answers of both white and black feminists to the question “What is a woman?” have always been problematic. In this respect the rulers of racist patriarchy oppress black women and white women differently. Lorde asserts that, “...in patriarchal power system where white skin is a major prop, the entrapments used to neutralize Black women and white women are not the same”(118). Those facts present how racial segregation influenced the construction of black womanhood. Thus, the context is not just patriarchy that is perceived by White Feminists but the racist patriarchy which segregates black woman.

Black feminists point out the legitimated form of rape under slavery. According to black feminists the black women’s situation as legal property explains the racist patriarchal mind’s insights. In this context, racial difference justified rape. The exploitation of the black woman’s sexuality by slave owners was one of the most important factors differentiating the experience of slavery for males and females. During the enslavement process black women were the legal property of white men to be sold, bought and used as breeders. Black women were slaves and it was legitimate to rape black women. It was not perceived as a crime nor as violence. It was the right of white men. According to bell hooks, “The black women’s bodies were the discursive terrain, the playing fields where racism and sexuality converged. Rape as both right and

rite of the white male dominating group was a cultural norm. Rape was also an apt metaphor for European imperialist colonization of Africa and North America”(*Yearning* 57).

Black feminists’ focus on the effect of the slave regime in the lives of black women. For black feminists being a property does not carry the same meaning as for privileged women. Black women were literally property. Being property means a license to rape. The rape of black women was not determined with any terms that are used in the context of privileged women. Rape as a symbol of slavery was a marker of black women’s gender. Sexual violations could only be applied to women. When the subject is work, the system defines slaves as genderless, however, when the subject is punishment black women are determined as female. Davis explains this dilemma as,

Expediency governed the slave holders’ posture toward female slaves: when it was profitable to exploit them as if they were men, they were regarded, in effect, as genderless, but when they could be exploited, punished and repressed in ways suited only for women, they were locked into their female roles. (6)

A racist patriarchy not only defines black women as the other but also has an effect on the black community. For a long time black women had to manipulate their unique circumstances in the struggle for their racial dignity. For the sake of solidarity inside, the black community and for liberation, they condoned the oppressions that they experience inside their communities. Black women were not only oppressed by white men in the name of racism but also oppressed by black men within their communities in

the name of sexism, which is something about the expectation to keep quiet for solidarity. As Collins states, “White men’s rape of Black women during slavery can be discussed whereas Black men’s rape of Black women today cannot”(124). Thus, the black feminists describe rape not only in the context of racism but also in the context of sexism.

However, black feminists perceive this gender based oppression as an outcome of white masculine domination and determine this fact as an attempt to impose the patriarchy on the black community. Black feminists analyze the influence of racist patriarchy on black men. bell hooks explains sexism as an imposition of the white elite. Black men are not “real men” who can control their women. White men try to revise the notions of “manhood” inside the black community (*Yearning* 77). This is because the black man also does not fit into the “man” concept that is determined within racist patriarchy. An ideal man can control his woman. The roles of privileged women and black women in their communities are not same. Many black women had a great effect on the black liberation struggle and they still have significant roles in their communities. hooks states, “Without the material input of black women as participants and leaders, many male-dominated institutions in black communities *would cease to exist*; this is not case in all white communities [emphasis is mine] ” ( *Feminist Theory* 71).

The socialization of patriarchy in the dominant white community can not be imitated by the black community, but according to black feminists the oppressions that black men face can not justify their sexist oppressions. hooks argues,

There is a special tie binding people together who struggle collectively for liberation. Black women and men have been united by such ties. They have known the experience of political solidarity. It is the experience of shared resistance struggle that led black women to reject the anti-male stance of some feminist activists. This does not mean that black women were not willing to acknowledge the reality of black male sexism. It does not mean that many of us do not believe we will combat sexism or woman-hating by attacking black men or responding to them in kind.” (*Feminist Theory* 70)

Black feminists define this situation in terms of silence. The silence of black women covers up the problems that are not analyzed inside black community. Collins defines this situation of rape issue as a “taboo” (124). The responses to Alice Walker’s book *The Color Purple* in the Black community are good examples of the rape issue as a “taboo.” It was interpreted as “anti-black male” (hooks, *Yearning* 69) because the main issue is not the victimization of black women, rather how black masculinity is portrayed. Contrary to other fictions in which the theme is black women’s rape by white men, in Walker’s book rape is explored within the African American family. It was perceived as an attack to both black men and racial solidarity. In order to protect the norms of solidarity black women were victimized and forced to choose between racism or sexism as a primary problem. Collins also states that even a lot of black women resist participation in the feminist movement as they perceive it as an infidelity to black men

and thus, an infidelity to racial unity. This explains why so many black women have been silent about their individual traumas. It was black women who have been victimized in order to support black men.

### 3.1. RAPE AND POWER

#### BLACK FEMINIST THOUGHT

Honey, de white man is the ruler of everything as fur as Ah been able tuh find out. Maybe it's some place way off in de ocean where de black man is in power, but we don't know nothin' but what we see. So de white man throw down de load and tell de nigger man tuh pick it up. He pick it up because he have to, but he don't tote it. He hand it to his womanfolks. De nigger woman is the mule oh de world so fur as Ah can see. (Hurstun, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* 29)

Black women are the most oppressed of all groups in American society. Audre Lorde argues, "Despite our recent economic gains, Black women are still the lowest group in the nation by sex and race"(60). Black feminists claim that the racist bias in U.S. is the dominant discourse while defining the role of black women in the society. However, the oppression that black women face cannot only be ascribed to their racial difference and black feminists point out how racial difference challenges the other oppressions such as class, gender and sexuality. Patricia Hill Collins points out, "Domination encompasses structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal domains of power. These domains constitute specific sites where oppressions of race, class, gender, sexuality and nation mutually construct one another" (203). Economic manipulation, exclusion from sociopolitical context and the controlling images that are attributed to black women are fundamental to the role of black women in the society. Rape serves for all distinctive systems of oppressions. The oppressions that black women experience are so intertwined that one cannot be analyzed without addressing the others. Thus, black

feminists argue that without placing black women within the larger sociopolitical context, their victimization is incomprehensible. It is important to look at not only racism but also heterosexism, class and gender issues. In that respect it is a more complex issue and in order to identify this complexity black feminists analyze all the oppressions that black women face and relate it to the rape issue. As a result, black feminists analyze rape both as a controlling mechanism and a result of these oppressions.

In order to define the victimization of black women, the economic oppression should be determined. bell hooks states, “Today, poverty is both gendered and racialized. It is impossible to truly understand class in United States today without understanding the politics of race and gender” (*where we stand* 120). In fact racial difference becomes a marker of class. Economic inequity, contributes to social inequity. As a result, economic exploitation rationalizes other exploitations –e.g., rape. In effect, black feminists argue that class difference legitimizes the rape of black women. Thus, rape is also an extension of the economic exploitation of black women.

Angela Y. Davis determines rape as “dysfunctions of present-day capitalist society” (172). With an egalitarian approach, Davis relates the victimization of Black women with economic inequality. As most of the black women in American society are members of the working-class, in a context, where capitalism is the subject, the raping of Black women seems still legitimate. The members of the upper classes oppress



women with their economic power. In capitalist societies the rape of women who belong to the working class are not taken into consideration contrary to the women who are the members of upper classes. So as to say whether an action is rape or not is also related to the victim's class. Davis explains this fact as:

In the United States and other capitalist countries, rape laws as a rule were framed originally for the protection of [white] men of the upper classes, whose daughters and wives might be assaulted. What happens to working-class women has usually been a little concern to the courts, remarkably few white men have been prosecuted for the sexual violence they have inflicted on these women. (172)

Despite the democratic premises in American society, so much remains the same as if it has never changed. Like in the slave regime of south, today's capitalist America still tries to extract the maximum amount of profit from black women. In that respect, the rape of black women is not a significant issue of the society to take attention. In other words, it is still not seen as a "crime." Collins develops Davis's ideas as, "...objectifying Black women's bodies turns them into the commodities that can be sold or exchanged on the open market. Commodified bodies of all sorts become markers of status within class hierarchies that rely on race and gender....A second feature of U.S. capitalist class relations concerns how Black women's bodies have been exploited"(132).

According to black feminists the ability to define the terms is also a kind of power. Audre Lorde states that if you do not define yourself, you will be defined by others and "for their use and to our detriment"(45). Lorde emphasizes the terms that are used to

separate and segregate – e.g., racism. Her resistance is to the western mind that always defines everything within a polarity. Beginning with 19<sup>th</sup> century there is a polarity between the “pure” white women continuing today, especially and the “always available black women.” Collins focuses on the “controlling images” that are constructed for black women. Throughout the process of slavery, black women were portrayed as lustful beings that were always available. The hyper sexual “jezebel” is an example of the controlling images that are often used for black women in order to justify the rape of black women. Collins says, “Rape became the specific act of sexual violence forced on Black women, with the myth of Black prostitute as its ideological justification”(147). “Controlling images” consciously label black women and emphasize their inferiority. In that respect, any kind of harm that is done to black women is a thing that they deserve. Rape exists, as black women deserve it. These images serve as a controlling mechanism for both black women and men. In that respect domination mutually constructs the images to justify and in the mean time control the society, to place everyone in an order. Collins points out that one of the reasons for refusing to prosecute those that rape black women is the “controlling images” that are attributed to black women (129).

Black feminists argue that there are two myths, one is “black rapist myth” attributed to black men and the other is “sexually promiscuous black women” attributed to black women in U.S. society. They are ideologically produced and mutually define each other. The rape of black women is justified with the black rapist myth and it “...was a distinctly political invention” (Davis 184). In addition, bell hooks tries to

explain the grounds for such an accusation of black men while questioning sexuality as a tool of oppression. hooks points out, “[black rapist myth]...is a story of revenge, rape as a weapon by which black men, the dominated, reverse their circumstance regain power over white men”(*Yearning* 58). Davis explains this myth as,

...the portrayal of Black men as rapists reinforces racism’s open invitation to white men to avail themselves sexually of Black women’s bodies. The fictional image of Black man as rapist has always strengthened its inseparable companion: the image of Black woman chronically promiscuous. For once the notion is accepted that Black men harbor irresistible and animal-like sexual urges, the entire race is invested with bestiality. If Black men have their eyes on white women as sexual objects, then Black women must certainly welcome the sexual attentions of white men. Viewed as ‘loose women’ and whores, Black women’s cries of rape would necessarily lack legitimacy. (182)

Angela Y. Davis points out how the “black rapist myth” plays a role in suppressing both black men and black women, suppressing with them by fear. Davis argues, “The myth of Black rapist has been methodically conjured up whenever recurrent waves of violence and terror against Black community have required convincing justifications” (173). In this case rape serves to control black men, in order to assert their place in the society. Thus, whenever brutality needs to be rationalized, the myths at hand to confirm their truth in the eye of the society.

Black feminists also point out heterosexist oppression. Heterosexism is also a kind of operating domination which is organized to control the sexuality of black women. bell hooks claims that radical feminists especially have resisted the patriarchy with lesbian identity. Refusing to have relations with men, has hindered male access to

black women. Other choices outside of heterosexism are labeled as deviant. The lesbian black woman is irrelevant to the constructed hyper sexual women who always deserves sexual assault. “Construction of Black women’s sexuality are important to maintaining the difference between normal and deviant sexualities associated with heterosexism; to structuring capitalist commodity relations that sell Black women’s bodies on the open market...” (202).

Collins claims that black women are effectively raped twice, one is the actual rape and the second is that of blaming them for their own victimization. According to Collins, the “jezebel” image, which reemerges across multiple systems of oppression through the American history, is a systematic controlling mechanism of white men. Audre Lorde joins this thinking and states, “One tool of the Great-American-Double-Think is to blame the victim for victimization: Black people are said to invite lynching by not knowing our place; Black women are said to invite rape and murder and abuse by not being submissive enough, or by being too seductive, or too...[etc]” (61). Rape can be justified if a woman has a bad reputation. And skin color is often an automatic indicator of a bad reputation. Collins points out, “Violence against Black women tends to be legitimated and therefore condoned while the same acts visited upon other groups may remain nonlegitimated and non-excusable”(146).

According to black feminists the “silence” of black women to the brutalities of black men is for the sake of racial liberation and solidarity. Solidarity transforms into a controlling mechanism, an oppression. Black feminists state that “Most Black women are raped by Black men” (Collins, 148). According to bell hooks, “Most people in the society do not realize that the vast majority of rapes are not inter-racial, that all groups of men are more likely to rape women who are the same race as themselves” (Yearning 60). hooks directs this statement not only to the racist stereotypes that all black men are potential rapists but also to the black male sexism that wants black women to be silent about their victimizations. Audre Lorde states,

As Black women and men, we cannot hope to begin a dialogue by denying the oppressive nature of male privilege. And if Black males choose to assume that privilege for whatever reason – raping, brutalizing, and killing Black women – then ignoring these acts of Black male oppression within our communities can only serve our destroyers. One oppression does not justify another.(63)

Even myths like hyper-sexual black woman are perceived by black men as a reality. Spike Lee’s *She’s Got to Have It* is an example of this transformation in the minds of black men. The subversive content of Lee’s work is undermined and the stereotype that black women are “loose” and deserve rape and violence is reinforced and also re-inscribed. The controlling images that are constructed by white supremacy are supported by black men. Collins states,

While the historical legacy of the triad of pornography, prostitution, and the institutionalized rape of Black women may have created the larger social context within which all African-Americans reside, the unfortunate current reality is that many Black men have internalized the controlling images applied to Black women. (148).

As a result, black feminists associate rape with class, race and gender issues. The most significant point is that there are “inside” and “outside” factors. Rape conveys different meanings “inside” and the “outside” the black community. As the subject of black feminist thought is mostly “black woman,” the determinations of rape is related to “her” experiences. Racial segregation outside their community and gender-based discrimination inside their community victimizes black women. In this context rape is not only a controlling mechanism but an emblem of the oppressions black women face.

#### **IV. TURKISH FEMINISM; PATRIARCHY, VIRGINITY, MARRIAGE AND RAPE**

“...if you have a free soul, you cannot be honorable...”(qtd. in Kardam 17)

Contrary to its counterpart in the U.S, it is hard to find any analyses of the rape issue in Turkish Feminism. Neither a macro nor a micro study exists that only focuses on rape with a female point of view. In addition a feminist determination or interpretation of rape does not exist. What is rape? What does the entity of rape mean in a wider socio political context? These are not questions posed by Turkish feminists. This does not mean that rape is not a problem in Turkey, rather it should be interpreted as rape is not an issue that concerns the whole society. The invisible situation of rape is not a question of a broader search. Thus the silence of Turkish Feminists concerning the rape issue reveals different facts. As Adrienne Rich states: “Where language and naming are power, silence is oppression, is violence” (qtd. in Buchwald, Fletcher and Roth 59). Referring to Rich’s statement, should this silence be interpreted as ‘oppression’ within the logic that not only language conveys meaning but also the silence itself. Perhaps that is why Deniz Kandiyoti points out the lack of the studies in Turkish feminism as,

Gender asymmetry in Turkish society is produced, represented and reproduced through a wide variety of cultural practices that extended beyond household, class and labor market. It is therefore important that we broaden our agenda to include the whole range of social institutions which are implicated structurally, relationally and symbolically in the reproduction of gender. However, in doing so, we can no longer pursue the woman-centered ‘checklist’ approach which has

gained considerable currency in women's studies in Turkey (such as women and the law, work, education, politics, the media, etc.).(*Patterns Of Patriarchy*" 307)

Than the aim of this chapter is to analyze the role of Turkish women and try to analyze the reasons for this silence. The most significant issue of Turkish Feminism is the emancipation process of women in Turkish society. The liberation process did not take place as a result of women's demands but rights given by the state. Women's issues have always been directed by state politics. A quick look to the history of Turkish Republic explains, this situation.

In Turkey, secular reforms changed the role of women. Prior to these there was polygamy and in matters of divorce or child custody women did not have equal rights with men. Shifting from the Ottoman Empire, which was multi ethnic, to the Turkish Republic meant a gradual process of secularism. The Turkish Republic was founded in 1923 after the decay of the Ottoman Empire. After that abolishing the caliphate, declaring secularism and applying a new civil code; the status of women in society changed. Thus women, who once wore veils, were transformed into citizens of the new state.

Secularism meant that women could enter the public sphere. This huge difference in the situation of women was a part of a "modernization" process. Modernization mostly meant Westernization and the women were symbols of these changes



(Durakbaşa, 24). Şirin Tekeli describes the given rights as “from above” (12). Thus the rights were not gained, rather dictated by the state.

In the new Penal Code of Turkish Republic, which is constructed after the foundation of the Republic in 1924, the status of women changed contrary to the Ottoman rules. Within that time it was a huge transformation however, the women were still in the subordinate position. Men were the heads of the family. Turkish Feminists define this as being liberated but not free. In fact one form of oppression was traded for another. As Kandiyoti states: “...Kemalist reforms emancipating and literally unveiling women required compensatory symbolism and a new veil-that of sexual repression” (*“Slave Girls, Temptresses, And Comrades”* 103).

In order to define the role of women in the society, Turkish feminists, like priveleged feminists in the United States, focus is on the patriarchy and it’s relation with the state, Islam and nationality. Within this context the main issue is try to define whether Turkish women are literally free within the position of the liberated citizen. Deniz Kandiyoti points out the difficulty of analyzing the subordinate position of women in Turkey solely within the patriarchal system. The form of patriarchy changes according to its relation with Islam, state politics and ideologies of Turkey. According to Kandiyoti, determining the role of Turkish women in society is not possible within a context that is classic patriarchy in which men have all the power. Kandiyoti does not define patriarchy as a system of oppression in which all women are repressed as passive

beings. According to Kandiyoti, patriarchy oppresses not only women but also men. Men and women are “bargaining with patriarchy,” and develop reactions for it inside the system (*Cariyeler, Bacılar, Yurttaşlar* 12-13).

Şirin Tekeli states that as a result of the endless migration of rural to urban and the growth of urban populations, the society demolished the classic patriarchy. Tekeli identifies three different groups within Turkish culture. Women can experience different forms of patriarchy always within a subordinating role. The three different groups are: “traditional rural culture”, “industrialized segments of society” and the third one is “‘new urban’ cultural group” (3-4-5). In the first group women experience the classic patriarchy, in the second group contrary to the first group women and men are more free however the third group is stuck in between first and the second. These different stratifications in society point out the different experiences of women.

In this context Turkish Feminists define the control of women’s sexuality, as the most powerful tool of the patriarchy. According to Kandiyoti, women’s sexuality is not an individual issue but an issue of the family or group that the women belong. Women’s sexuality is considered a matter of honor. Controlling women’s sexuality is protecting the honor of the family. Honor is attributed to women’s sexuality. Sexual freedom cannot take place or any harm done to her is perceived as an harm to the family “namus” (honor). Kandiyoti refers to but she does not explain if the virginity, adultery or the rape are part of pragmatics of this control. Kandiyoti points out the responsibility

that is attributed to the sexuality of women and how it reconstructs femininity (*Cariyeler, Bacılar, Yurttaşlar* 73-74-75). Thus maintaining honor is the responsibility of all the women in the family or group that they belong to. Women are the honor of their families, their husbands, their fathers and their brothers.

Attributing responsibility to women for carrying the “namus” of the family begins with their birth and continues through their lives. Most frequent studies are on the marriage and virginity issue. The analysis of marriage, as an institution, reveals the oppression that Turkish women experience. Traditional practices involve violence and there are certain examples from different regions of Turkey. Berdel (a cultural practice in which women are bartered, as an example: both women marry with each other’s brother. Thus if one wants to divorce the other couple also have to divorce. This is also done to avoid marriage expenses.), beşik kertmesi (a cultural practice in which the family members promise each other to marry the selected newborn babies as soon as they become old enough to marry), başlık parası (money that paid to the family members of the woman, in order to marry), görücü usulü evlenme (marrying with the consent of the families) are kinds of traditional practices which force both women and men to marry without their consent. These traditional practices convey how woman in Turkey determined as a property who can be bought, sold in the name of marriage(İlkkaracan 236-237).

Marriages “without” consent give the clues for the potential violence that women can encounter or possibly have encountered. These forced marriages often construct a violent environment for women. Pınar İlkaracan states that in fact more than half of women do not marry with their consent. In this context, the issue of sexual intercourse with consent is problematic. However, according to İlkaracan’s survey in Eastern and Southeastern part of Turkey the number of women who experienced marital rape is striking but not surprising, considering the conditions under which women marry. İlkaracan’s studies on 599 women in the south east found that 51 percent had experienced marital rape (240). Women’s sexuality does not belong to her, it is the property of her family so rape becomes an invisible fact, even it seems it is not determined as rape.

There is no real reason to believe that practices are substantially different anywhere in Turkey from Southeastern or Eastern regions. Leyla Şimşek while analyzing the depiction of women in the news of contemporary media, focuses on how news of rapes is presented. According to Şimşek there is no news about marital rape except one from England. Şimşek interprets as marital rape is accepted as a general fact, it is not news worthy. In addition Şimşek points out the determination of rape as “owning” (46-47). Rather than using the verb “rape,” in news the “own” is used. To give example they are written as: He owned me (means He raped me). It is obvious that women are perceived as a property that can be owned so general notion in society is not far different from Eastern parts of Turkey.

Şahika Yüksel argues, “In our culture and other cultures with similar characteristics, in which attributes of leadership and dominance are reinforced in men while the virtues of patience and servitude are expected of women, the inevitable outcome is that men have great deal of control over women’s lives” (280). Yüksel also a member of the *Purple Roof – Women’s Shelter Foundation (Mor Çatı)*, which is a non-governmental and an independent organization that aims to improve the lives of battered women who experience domestic violence. According to Purple Roof – Women’s Shelter Foundation studies, survey of 1,259 women: between 1990 and 1996, found that 88.2 per cent lived in an environment of violence and that 68 per cent were hit by their husbands. According to Yüksel this is partially an outcome of women’s complete dependence on their husbands. Pınar İlkaracan states that “In fact, even in cases where women are consulted about the choice of husband, a high degree of social control over women’s sexuality is maintained through a taboo on pre-marital sex, certain forms of religious and cultural practices related to marriage and severe violence, all of which limit the space for women to exercise their right to consent fully” (236).

In addition, the control over women is not limited to within marriage. Virginity still is an important issue in Turkish society. Women are not sexually free before marriage. There is a hypocrisy, generally speaking, “intercourse” is something only men or married women can do. Dilek Cindoğlu argues that virginity is a significant fact in order to explain women’s sexual oppression in Turkey. Cindoğlu states: “As a result of

the social anxiety, particularly over a women's hymen, accompanied by the structural transformations that women experience in contemporary Turkish society, women have some to utilize medicine to 'repair' their virginity through medical operations in cases of premarital sexual relationships. Through the artificial virginity, she becomes pure again and her family honor, as well as her hymen, is repaired" (216).

Another significant matter that is analyzed relating to rape issue is "honor killings." Women are killed in the name of protecting the family honor. In fact there are many reasons for honor killings –e.g., pre-marital sex, an affair and rape. İlkaracan defines, "Honor killing is a term used for the murder of a woman suspected of having transgressed the limits on sexual behavior as imposed by tradition, specifically engaging in a pre-marital relations with a man or suspected extra-marital affairs" (238). However, in addition to İlkaracan's statement also a woman can be punished if she is raped. In fact depending on the regional difference meaning of "dishonorable conduct," changes. This is directly related with how women are perceived (Kardam, 42). The incident is interpreted as "rape" often if the victim is a virgin woman and the victim is "punished" with marrying her rapist or death. However, if the victim is a married women, that is often defined as an "affair" and the punishment is severe. Filiz Kardam argues, contrary to the unmarried woman, "In the case of kidnapping or raping a married woman, the people's reactions are even harsher and more brutal. They tend to think that under such circumstances the best solution would be kill the women" (41).

The “honor” concept also existed in law. The Turkish Penal Code that was instituted in 1926 stayed in force until 2004 when a major set of reforms was introduced. The previous Penal Code had violent rules towards sexual abuse of women. Rape was interpreted as an attack on society’s solidarity, the rape victim (if virgin) had a choice to marry with her rapist and if this happens there was no punishment for the rapist. This fact explains that virginity and honor was not only issue in certain regions in Turkey. Even for girls who are raped at the age of eight “consent” was a factor in determining whether there was a crime.

In the rape cases the statue of women as virgin, prostitute or married were important factors to determine the crime. Ayşe Saktanber argues, “For women in Turkey, living under the tutelage of men is both a legal and a social norm. Therefore, adjectives like ‘free’ or ‘independent’ indicate that a woman is not under the protective mantle of a man or that she has violated the authority of the man under whose tutelage she legally exists”(155). While analyzing what it means to be free for a woman in the public eye, Saktanber explains the patriarchal mind in which the freedom of women indicates her availability. Saktanber points out the Article 438 of the old Turkish Penal Code which ‘the rape or abduction of a professional prostitute could be reduced by two-thirds’ (164). In addition, virginity testing was allowed by law in order to determine the chastity of women. In this context women were assumed as a property, a possession. The sexuality of women was strictly controlled by society, by laws.

From 1926 to 2004 rape was interpreted as an attack on society by law, a choice was given to the “virgin” woman to marry with her rapist by law, the attackers of prostitutes are protected by law, virginity is tested by law. In 2004 a reform changed Turkish Penal Code, however this change was due to the fact of accessing to European Union, rape is now interpreted as crime to a women’s personal integrity. Rape became a sexual crime.

Despite the large problem of rape in Turkey women rarely speak out. It is dangerous and women are often punished with “honor killings.” To speak out is also interpreted as a shameful, because she reveals that she is no longer pure or whole in other words valuable. So women are victimized twice and this makes speaking about rape difficult if not impossible. It can be interpreted as feminists also being in this position of difficulty. To speak out brings their own experience into question about whether they are honorable, the laws of the state has changed however the implementations of these laws are still problematic.

To conclude rape is not determined by Turkish Feminists. What is rape or what rape means in Turkish society or culture are not questions that are being asked at all. The aim of this study is to compare feminists’ perceptions of rape. The explanations can only be assumptions. Women’s sexualities are strictly controlled in Turkish society. In a society where women’s sexuality is strictly controlled, where there are “honor killings,” where young women and married women are killed because of rape, where women are



responsible for family honor, where women are in the need of “artificial virginity,” where women marry “without giving their consent” where women is defined as a property rape is “invisible” fact. Rape is not an issue at all.

## V. CONCLUSION

“Terror,” “control mechanism,” “property crime,” “exercise of power,” dysfunction of society,” “oppression,” “violence,” “sex,” etc. are different interpretations of rape. Social interpretations of rape changes depending on feminists perceptions. There is no unique determination of rape. Determination of rape changes depending on where the determiner stands, how the determiner perceives society, how the determiner defines woman. The social explanation of rape can be different depending on the woman’s experience. In the determination of the rape, feminists’ class, race, ethnicity, nationality are factors while in explaining the issue

Rape is crystallized form of all oppressions. It is related to all oppressions that women experience. It targets women’s body, invasion of most vulnerable areas. In fact, what made woman “a woman” in society are used to control, repress, oppress and demolish her. Her body transforms to a stranger. Rape is about women, about being a woman.

Patriarchy is defined as a system of oppression inside three feminist thoughts. However privileged feminists and black feminists have different interpretations of rape within the context of patriarchy. Patriarchy is the main context in which privileged feminists define rape. Privileged feminists focus on the unequal socialization of sexes inside patriarchy. Thus rape is an outcome of this inequality. Pointing out the perception

of woman as “a property” is a significant aspect. Privileged feminists struggle for a socialization in which they can be equal to white men in America. On the other hand in black feminism being property is explained inside the context of racism, their experience leads them to perceive “property” issue far different from privileged feminism. Black women focus on the slave regime and the racist policies in America. “property” implies different meanings for all feminist standpoints. Thus, rape as a property crime determination do not convey same meaning for all feminism.

There is no interpretation of rape in Turkish feminism. There are so few statistics and rape issue mostly embedded into other studies. However, there is no analysis or theories that center rape issue. This does not mean that rape is not a fact of Turkish society, or feminists ignore this problem. Rather the problem is not named. The state of “silence” conveys the meaning that talking about rape issue is problematic in Turkish society. This fact not only affects the women but also feminist women. Turkish feminists do not analyze rape within wide socio political context.

Black and privileged feminism state that rape is an apparatus to control women. However, in black feminism “control” is about race. Rape does not only serve to control black women’s body but also their community. On the other hand, in privileged feminism the word “control” often implies gender-based discrimination. “Control” means to protect the status quo of masculine domination in society. Thus, control signifies different contexts.

In order to define rape whether as an oppression or control mechanism feminists use their understandings as a norm. As there is no unified term as “woman” to determine all women, determination of rape changes depending on how they perceive women.

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