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Article

Interrogating the evolutionary morality of maternal care with its historical use in maternal colonialism

Research Proposal

The Roots of Femonationalist Convergence: Secularism and Gender Equality

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I hereby declare and assure that I, [Sıla Kurşun], have drafted this thesis independently, that no other sources and/or means other than those mentioned have been used and that the passages of which the text content or meaning originates in other works - including electronic media - have been identified and the sources clearly stated.

Interrogating the evolutionary morality of maternal care with its historical use in maternal colonialism

Abstract

This article specifically examines Nel Noddings' theory of natural caring which argues that mothers have an instinct to care derived from evolutionary development. It does so in order to challenge certain central assumptions, such as what the practice of maternal colonialism brings to light. The practices that occur in the name of caring and motherhood demonstrate that the maternal voice is not necessarily positive in every form of a caring relationship, and that there appear to be oppressive elements to the settler-colonial actions taken by settler mothers who intended to care for the indigenous children. This historical use of care and motherhood challenges the assumptions of the theory central to care ethics. In such a theory where the natural factor is assumed to be "good" and to be "present [the] same as in everybody " can be a constitutive element for violence as in the case of maternal colonialism. As such, this article concludes that Nel Noddings' evolutionary morality idealizes a particular form of care. That is, her theory rather obscures the possible ambivalence of mother/child dyad and the structural oppression that care is involved.

Introduction

The importance of care labor became highlighted during the recent Covid global crisis in the world (ECLAC 2020). Especially through the isolation of lockdowns, the pandemic made clear to us that we are vulnerable, dependent, and in need of each other. The invisible care of the doctors, nurses, parents, and our loved ones became apparent in our lives. It was essential to care for others and receive care during the pandemic. For instance, with the closure of schools, the children needed 24 hours care taken by their parents or nannies. According to the data from Unesco, more than 116 billion learners were influenced by the schools' closure (2021). These numbers increased the burden on care providers such as nannies, mothers, family members, and healthcare workers. For instance, In Latin America and the Caribbean, women spend 22 to 42 hours on care work. Moreover, at the beginning of the 20th-century philosophers claimed that care is not only labor, but it is also a value in our lives. This approach led to the emergence of care ethics which indicates that individual human beings are dependent on one another and fundamentally rely on each other's care (Held 2005, Ruddick 1998, Noddings 2013).

Care ethics has become an inspiring theory in medicine, pedagogy, and today even for climate change (Falkenberg 2009; Gardiner 2004; Swanson 2015). More importantly, care ethics has received attention related to the concepts of mothering in different disciplines. Nevertheless, even though a lot has been written about childbirth, pregnancy, and mothering in sociological, anthropological, and natural science, the philosophical significance of these phenomena has been denied and marginalized in the canon (Adams, Lundquist 2013, 3). In canonical philosophy, childbirth and mothering are discussed as either a part of patriarchal oppression within capitalism such as in Engels' work *Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1942), or regarded as a part of a modern family in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* (1992). Over and against this lack, feminist philosophers have constructed theories specifically about motherhood. Among those theories of motherhood, the mother/child dyad received attention for ethical theories.

The well-known care ethicist Nel Noddings built a theory of natural caring that was inspired by the mother and child dyad, which positions itself in the evolutionary perspective. In her book *The Maternal Factor* (2010), Noddings presumes that mothers instinctively care for their children. The presumed differences in evolution between males and females[1] have

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[1] Noddings uses the word female to identify mothers. She pays attention to the biological differences between male and female animals and uses this distinction for humans as well. I assume that she uses the adjective female

affected that females have a more natural tendency toward caring than males. (Noddings 2010, 10-17). To note, even if she does not fully agree with the idea that suggests any female must be prone to caring, she does not fully oppose that females and males have essential differences since these differences can provide her with a positive approach to further developing human relations. According to Noddings, the natural caring of mothers can provide us with a pre-moral statement that "I must" care, by which we begin to develop care ethics. She has two main presuppositions about natural care that mothers develop: we hold it as *a basic human good* and natural care should be the *preferred form of care* as opposed to principled and abstract reasonings of moralities.

Who can object that the instinct of a mother is a 'good' thing? It sounds self-evident: caring for a child is better than neglecting it. But this paper considers its historical use in colonial times. The natural 'good' instinct of motherhood and care were used as instruments to justify the racist and violent acts. Contrasting contemporary care ethics with the discourse of care in colonial settings, Uma Narayan determines that "While much of the contemporary discourse on an ethics of care focuses on the import of one's relationships to particular others, thinking about care-discourse in the colonial context highlights, in contrast, the roles it has historically played in justifying relationships of power and domination between groups of people, such as colonizers and colonized" (Narayan 1995, 134). This pertains to Noddings' theory as well. I suggest that both Noddings' natural account of care and the usage of the maternal voice in the practices of colonialism presuppose that motherly care is a glorified work as well as universal and essential. This article aims to show that Noddings' maternal and evolutionary approach idealizes a particular form of care which obscures the possible ambivalence of the mother/child dyad and the structural oppression that care is involved. Two questions are posed: whether a natural account of caring is always purely good; in other words, does natural caring as a normative concept conflict with the way "the maternal factor" was applied in practice? Can maternal care as a normative concept be legitimate in the way that it operationalizes?

The article consists of two main sections. The first section will introduce the emergence of care ethics and sketch a brief analysis of the natural care defined by Noddings. It will involve a discussion about Noddings' overgeneralization and simplification of care that obscure the ambiguities and diversity of mothering. To show the differences that is outside of the

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for referring to women. However, this is not accurate nor inclusionary. Not everyone who was born female must be a woman nor every woman is a female. In this paper, I use the word female to be consistent with Noddings' terminology and to emphasize her essentialist point but I no way agree with her distinction. In my opinion, a mother does not have a be a 'female' subject.

generalization of Noddings' mothering, I will outline respective definitions of motherhood by Patricia Hill Collins, and Kim Anderson. The two authors define different forms of mothering which enable us to understand that mothering is not a universal and a fixed concept but rather defines itself based on race, class, and gender differences.

In the second section, the theoretical assumptions of "natural care" will be confronted in the maternal colonial practices where we see the historical use of care. I will scrutinize the maternalism that occurred in the 19th century in America, Australia, and Canada where the removal policies that aim to assimilate through boarding schools were implemented. As part of the removal policies, many indigenous children were forcibly taken to boarding schools as a key practice of colonialism. (Jacobs 2005/2008/2009) These practices of colonialism in the name of caring and motherhood demonstrate that the maternal voice is not necessarily affirmative in every kind of caring relationship. The oppressive forms of implementation appear in the settler-colonial actions taken by settler mothers through their intention to care for the indigenous children. The discourse of settler mothers was shaped around care, motherhood, and finally civilization (Jacobs 2005, 2008). This discourse, however, I argue in the third section, allowed for the "maternal instinct" to effect harm instead of care. Ultimately, a caring relationship derived from the natural instinct of being a mother can be harmful to those that are 'cared for,' and can even eliminate local, indigenous forms. In such a theory where the natural factor is assumed to be 'good' and 'same as in everybody' can be a constitutive element for violence as in the case of maternal colonialism. Now, let us begin with the emergence of care ethics.

Section I: Care Ethics

How did care ethics emerge?

For moral philosophers such as Immanuel Kant and John Rawls, humans are defined by their capacity for reasoning and categorical thinking (Kant 1788/2005, Rawls 1997). This definitive statement about humans as rational individuals influenced moral theories greatly. However, opposing such ethical theories by Rawls and Kant that claim to appeal to the core of humanity via the objective rules which relied upon reason and logic, feminist thinkers such as Virginia Held and Nel Noddings brought up the emotions of human relations in moral theories. This first started with psychological research. The feminist psychologist Carol Gilligan criticized Lawrence Kohlberg's moral stages that rank abstract reasoning as the highest moral value (1982). Lawrence Kohlberg conducted research that presented a moral dilemma called the

Heinz problem to children (1981). Shortly, Heinz's wife who is in a life-threatening condition needs medicine, but Heinz cannot afford it and tried all ways to have the medicine, but he could not find a way to receive the medicine. In this case, the question asked to children is "should Heinz steal the drug or not?" According to Kohlberg, the moral answer should be that he chooses his wife's life over the property of the pharmacist (1981).

The reviews of Kohlberg's results led to a theory of moral development ranging from the lowest reasoning to the most universal level, which Kohlberg termed the "post-conventional" level (1981). Explicitly, human beings, in their post-conventional level, are able to determine the universalistic/ethical principles as in the example of the Heinz dilemma. However, the answer that came from one of the interviewed children, Amy was that if Heinz steals the drug, he would go to jail and there would be no other way for his wife to receive healthcare. Amy responds that Heinz should find another way to solve the problem. Gilligan regards this answer as not being "logical" but relational and based on caring (Gilligan 1982, 2-5). If we must evaluate the responses of children based on Kohlberg's moral stages, Amy's answer would fail simply because the answers were not capable of touching on the highest level of moral stages, which is the most universal and principled (Gilligan 1982). Contrary to Kohlberg, Gilligan argued that the moral stages do not necessarily develop from the lowest to the most principled/universal level (ibid.). Using another lens, she observed in Amy's moral response to the dilemmas that Amy looks after one's own and others' wellness (ibid.). Apart from the moral decisions made upon logical grounds, there is thus another decision-making mechanism that is not categorical, but rather based on a form of care that focuses on the dynamics of situations and relationships (ibid.). Gilligan then distinctively proposes that the caring voice is not that which is situated below the moral stages, but rather is a neglected voice of humans in developmental theories. According to Gilligan, a theory without care represents an incomplete one (ibid.).

Gilligan's psychological analysis of children's moral responses to dilemmas opened up a new path not only in psychology, but also in the ethical theories termed "care ethics". For instance, Virginia Held claims that human beings are dependent on each other from their earliest to their eldest ages (Held 2005, 10). According to Held, each and every human being in the world receives or practices some sort of care, such as having the responsibility to care for someone or to be in need of care (ibid.). This fundamental core of humanity reminds us of the vital place care takes in our lives, both as a practice and as a value. Moreover, the ethics of care described by Held signify such reciprocal emotions as empathy, sensitivity, sympathy, and responsiveness (ibid.) Held insists on the employment of these caring emotions in institutions

and among citizens at social, global, and political levels. In a nutshell, her argument proposes that instead of being restricted to the household, care should be the main point of flourishment from which to establish a just and ethical society.

Unlike pointing to the general value of care on a global scale, some philosophers draw attention to the smaller-scale relationship between mother and child as the initial genesis of caring. The behavior and emotions that mothers have are key to human development. As such, Noddings develops a theory based on the 'natural' factors of mothering which suggests that the instinctive responses of mothers to children' needs can be a prototype for care ethics (2010).

As this paper focuses on the practices of maternalism in the 19th century in America, Australia, and Canada as part of colonialism, I will discuss Noddings' philosophical contributions to maternalism. I will interrogate the assumptions of both maternalism in colonialism and the maternal care defined by Noddings. I believe that the link between maternal care and colonial maternal practices needs adequate attention since interrogating the historical use of a concept can illuminate the contradictions, oppressions, and impurity of the concept itself. That is, studying the historical use and meaning counters the presumed essential characteristics that allow for stereotypes we mostly hold as true. Hence, the similarities between an ethical concept and historical use will show the justification of oppression in colonial times, but it will also contribute to critical thinking about the concept of care.

To demonstrate this, the following section will begin with a summary of Noddings' theory which will allow us to grasp the basics of care ethics. It will continue with a critical point, which is about the ambiguity existing in her definition of natural care. It will be discussed whether natural care and the 'goodness' of care conflict with each other.

The Maternal Factor

Noddings developed her moral theory in her early work called *Caring: A Relational Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (2013). There, she acknowledges two sentiments for morality, the first and enabling one is natural caring and the second is ethical caring which she calls the remembrance of the first one. In addition, she discusses maternal care in her recent book *The Maternal Factor* (2010). There she develops an evolutionary morality that argues that there are certain evolutionary developmental differences between females and males. In this section, I will summarize the source of natural care and propose one of my critiques, which is about the ambiguity of the natural sources of care.

Noddings explains that the female caring experience is empirically significant as well as provides us with a moral basis. Let me briefly explain this statement that Noddings offers.

Basing herself on examples of female animals providing care for their infants, Noddings argues that females have more responsibilities when it comes to caring for their children (2010, 11). She writes;

> The instinct to nurture and care for offspring is basic to the survival of every species. Some of the "lower" animals—insects, fish, and reptiles—may simply prepare the natal environment so that the newly hatched are likely to survive without the attention of a parent. But most mammals must provide food and protection for their babies until they are ready to fend for themselves. It is usually the female who cares for the young. (Noddings 2010, 11)

As mammals need to feed and protect their children, the mothers had to develop emphatic skills in order to ascertain the needs of their children (ibid., 12). According to her, when a mother identifies the needs of an infant, she instinctively generates a response to the needs of that child. A mother does not think about whether it is right to give the infant what it needs; rather, she *immediately* meets its needs through the pre-moral imperative of 'I must' (ibid.,13). This is called pre-moral since the response does not come from a moral decision, even though it requires consideration about how to respond. Hence, the pre-moral response is "the maternal instinct" of mothers.[2] To note, Noddings does not clearly explain why the instinct must be there for a mother, rather she presupposes a present instinct in mothers, which I will critique in this article. For the early female humans, she adds that "a successful female—one who survived and nurtured more than one living infant—was aided by capacities associated with the maternal instinct. Maternal instinct prodded her to care about her infant's survival" (ibid.) Accordingly, the need for survival developed certain skills and feelings in female primitives. That is, female primitives needed to read the expressions of the infants to meet their needs. A mother then generates a feeling of empathy and love. The instinct includes the love that a mother feels for her child (ibid., 35). Here again, neither does she scrutinize the source of love, nor does she describe it in detail. She only assumes that love is present because such a relationship

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[2] Noddings emphasizes that maternal instinct originates in evolution rather than merely socialization. She does not mention how she makes a distinction between sex and gender, nor does she use the word 'woman' to refer to female humans. This shows us that she does not touch upon the social concept of gender. Instead she attributes the caring practice to females but in some paragraphs, she uses the word woman. Nevertheless, the emphasis on genetic differences brings out a consequence that Noddings has a distinct conception of females that are attentive to caring practices. She mentions that the biological differences between female and male humans can be a source to enhance morality, however, the social differences between men and women in gender should be fought to dismantle care ethics (ibid., 12-15).

necessarily needs caring and love. In addition to that, Noddings considers this instinct "good" since it is a response to the needs of a child.

Based on the assumptions that care is good and natural act in mothers, Noddings describes the genesis of care ethics shortly as follows:

> In the relation between mother and child, we detect also the pre-moral "I must" or "I ought." No matter the mother's own activities, exhaustion, or fear, the imperative "I must" arises in connection with satisfying the infant's needs. As in the case of the lactating mother and a child not her own, the "I must" may arise in response to the needs of some others. When this response is generalized to wider situations, it becomes a genuine moral approach to life, and it is this beginning on which we may build an ethic of care. (ibid., 16)

Multiple conclusions can be drawn from this fragment. First, as I explained above, the care of the child does not actually emerge from a principle but rather from an instinct brought about by the connection between the mother and the child. Secondly, caring takes place not only between biological mothers and their biological children. If one possesses the instinct of care, then one might seek to cultivate a relationship where one meets the needs of others. This represents the first sentiment of morality called "natural caring," which presupposes love that comes from an instinct.

To be clear, it is almost impossible to provide formal instructions for carrying out natural caring since it must come from an instinct. In other words, one cannot force natural caring because it is presumed to be instinctual. Noddings emphasizes that natural caring is not a systemic theory nor a principle: "Natural caring is not a conceptual contrivance. It is a state we see in everyday life—a practical, empathic mode of responding to one another. It is a social way of interacting with others" (ibid., 18).

Perhaps it can be made clearer with an example: imagine you want to help a friend, but your friend keeps saying that you do not need to have her burden resting on your shoulders. However, in order to assuage your friend's concerns, you would say that you indeed do not have to help her, but you are doing so because you *want* to do so. In other words, you feel the obligation to be with your friend that stems from your instinctive caring and love. As long as the instinct is present in a relationship, the "I must" inclination proceeds toward a natural activity. Noddings sums it up: "In situations where we act on behalf of the other because we want to do so, we are acting in accord with natural caring" (2013, 79). Therefore, even though

natural caring was a maternal act, we see that it might serve for other kinds of relationships as well.

Now, imagine a lack of natural caring in a mother (ibid., 83). She does not respond to the crying of her infant. One question would then be whether her rejection makes her immoral and another to concern about how to provide care in such cases. To the first question, Noddings answers, "a woman who allows her own child to die of neglect is often considered sick rather than immoral; that is, we feel that either she or the situation into which she has been thrust must be pathological" (ibid.). Even so, the mother should not be called sick or "defective" since she is fully human in every other sense, nor should she be labeled as not fully female (2010, 34). Even though Noddings does not dehumanize such mothers with neglect, she emphasizes that the situation is problematic because instinct is missing. Nevertheless, in such cases where natural caring is lacking, one needs to summon ethical caring. If the desire does not emerge at all, one must recall the best experiences of one being cared for. This is the second sentiment of morality that appears in the absence of the first. Contrary to principle-based ethical theories, Noddings suggests that care ethics does not offer us an ideal that we should follow to construct our ethical caring. Care ethics rather suggests pursuing one's own ethical ideal that has been created so far from the best experiences of one being cared for.

So far, I explained the basics of her theory. I now continue with two critical points. One is about the remembrance of the best experience of care. Since Noddings' argument is based on the natural instinct of care, she does not want to offer any instruction for the lack of care situations. Rather, she merely suggests that one needs to remember the past experience and build the 'personal' ideal based on the experiences. However, this explanation of ethical caring raises many questions. One question is how one can recall the best experiences of caring to provide care if one does not have the instinct to do so. Is it then by force because caring is necessary and good? But the fact that the care is already lacking in such situations tells us that the desire for care is also lacking unless it is a structural lack. This brings us to a problematic point of her theory because one might not feel the best experience either since people have tensions between interests and certain priorities. However, Noddings would perhaps say that care is a good thing, one should then provide it for others. But then are we providing care because we recognize the good in it or do we naturally care for people because we love them? This leads us to think that natural caring is not merely natural, but it is a valuable thing to be followed. To clarify better, if natural mothering is 'good' unto itself as it fosters a moral sense in our relationships, then how do we differentiate it from ethical caring which is also good but

not directly natural? Do we know the intentions of someone who cares for others? It is almost impossible to know every mother's intention and generalize from it. These are the questions that can be posed towards Noddings' ethics. To put it short, there seems to be a certain ambiguity about the motivations of someone's care. Now let us continue with the second critique.

The second critique is a general question about her theory. Even though Noddings' morality is claimed to be the neglected voice of women, it needs an inquiry into whether it does justice to mothers in various situations. In this regard, a critique can be drawn. That is, even though the intention of care ethics was critical of universal theories such as those of Kant and Rawls, it nevertheless makes the same mistakes as "a false objectivity" (Brennan 1999), since it assumes instinctual caring is and 'should be' present in all mothers. This assumption risks obscuring the various forms that mothering can take. As I will mention later, the practices of mothering can be different such as for Black and indigenous mothers. So, we must ask, which women's experience can we then generalize in order to provide an account of morality based on experience? Brennan asks further "is this not perhaps itself part of the patriarchal heritage of ethics?" (Brennan 1999, 864). In other words, is the defined experience of women not the result of the oppressive gender system's exposition on women? Noddings did not define who are those mothers and children she focuses on in her theory. The question whether she presupposes the same good and instinct in every mother needs attention in her theory.

For this question, I will investigate whether the presumed empirical differences establish an ideal of motherhood or describe the lived experience of mothers in the next section. I will first explain the difference between the ideal theories as idealized and the ideal theories as descriptive. I will then explain why natural care that Noddings suggest is an idealized form of moral theory. For a counter example, I will show Patricia Hill Collins' and Kim Anderson' descriptions of motherwork.

Ideal or Descriptive?

According to Noddings, theories based on justice and reason allow for generalization and abstraction (2010, 38). Contrary to such theories, she explains that natural caring is "natural" in the sense that it is exercised without any reference to moral principles or direct reasoning from such principles(ibid.). Her relational approach to morality presupposes that the fundamental core of being in the world as humans is that we relate ourselves to others by constructing relationships. This claim contrasts individualist approaches that presume that

human beings are merely independent of each other. Nevertheless, what concerns me in her theory is not her critique of individualist approaches, but her abstraction of the maternal care which produces an ideal rather than describing lived experience. In this section, I will discuss the reasons why we can say that natural caring is an idealized form of caring.

Categorically, Noddings' theory can be regarded as an *ideal-as-idealized* theory as opposed to *ideal-as-descriptive* theories (Mills 2005, 166-67). To grasp this opposition let me explain what a descriptive and an ideal theory mean. An ethical theory can describe an empirical fact and reveal its working principles and nature. In this way, the theory abstracts from crucial properties or aspects. This modeling is termed *ideal-as-descriptive* (Mills 2005, 166). In this kind of a theory, the ideal version of the phenomenon must be matched with the actual object/behavior/fact since the modeling only aims to describe certain features while not imposing "ought" or "should" on the actual. In contrast, an idealizing theory might present a model and argue that the model *should be* what we would need to accomplish in ethics. This one is named as *ideal-as-idealized* (2005, 166). In both kind of ideal theories, the ethical theory abstracts, but it remains a question if the ideal theory does in fact justice to reality. Now let us see if this problem relates to theories of motherhood and care.

In the case of Noddings' theory, it appears to be descriptive, since it describes a behavioral pattern and claims to demonstrate its empirical reality. Nevertheless, it is suspicious that the mother-child exemplary offers an *ideal-as-idealized*, since a mother who feels the pre-moral "I must" still endorses a model that is ideal. The pre-moral "I must" remains a moral obligation that lies between the natural and the moral because it is in the level of pre-moral as coming from the natural. The pre-moral obligation displays the positive moral side of care and defines the "good" in "care" because Noddings has designated the natural, maternal instinct that we have evolved biologically are crucial to our survival and develops a relationship involving love and empathy. There are indeed good sides in natural caring, but the problem is that if the goods are the only defining conditions of the concept. Later, I will explain that caring is not a purely good activity in its historical use but for now let us discuss if we can assume that all mothers have the natural caring. This is a substantial discussion because it determines whether the theory is ideal or descriptive. For this reason, I will now provide two different theories of mothering/motherhood. In these two theories of motherhood, Black, and indigenous, it is evident that mothering differs depending on race, and the structure of the society. The responsibilities and struggles mothers and children face in everyday life draw attention to the differences between communities, living conditions, and culture. To note, maternal work and

care are investigated more than just by these three scholars. Their theories are chosen to exemplify various perspectives on mothering. Collins and Anderson's work described the mothering activities but does not build up an entire ethical theory based on care and mothering.

Patricia Hill Collins (2007), conceptualized the mothering practices of Black women as having three constitutive elements: survival, identity, and empowerment. She points out that not every mother is the same since the difference in race reveals a great distinction between White-middle-class mothers and Black mothers. For example, whereas in a White nuclear family the survival of the children is taken for granted, Black mothers must protect their children from everyday violence. Given lack of medical care and police brutality, Black mothers empower themselves in order to be able to provide care to their children (Collins 2007,274-89).

Furthermore, Kim Anderson (2007) describes the native communities' mothering practices yet again differently than Collins. For native communities in America, Australia, and Canada, there is a common mothering practice based on collectivism, spirituality, and sovereignty. In indigenous families, mothers take care of their children through the help of the elderly, other family members, and female networks. Giving birth and mothering are not regarded as activities to be shamed for, but mothers are rather associated with the Earth as being life-givers (Anderson 2007).

Overall, Collins suggests that the safety and surviving of children are the main issues of Black mothers. Kim Anderson points to the communal mother work that appeared in indigenous societies. In these two theories, caring develops differently depended on the environmental factors, class, family structures and societal struggles. Specifically, Anderson and Collins do not offer that the mothers feel an instinctive/ natural caring nor that the black and indigenous caring activities are examples of moralities. Their approach is simply descriptive. The abstraction that Collins and Anderson draw are the key factors of maternal experiences of Black and Indigenous people. Nevertheless, the abstraction regards color, societal struggles, and community rules. In contrast, the idealized form of abstraction in Noddings' theory does not describe how mothers engage with their children rather it focuses on the 'good' nature of mothering from the presumed biological differences. In other words, it shows that an ideal mother looks after her children under all conditions. Remember her opinions about the lack of care in a mother. She suggested that the case might be pathological. She did not think that the factors of such case because she engages with the practice of caring by establishing the ideal form of a mother who is prone to care under all circumstances. Moreover, her interpretation of

motherly care is universalistic since she presumes that care is a 'natural' capacity of mother, therefore present for all mothers. To simply explain, she perhaps assumes that the natural care is part of our bodies that developed through evolution. For this reason, Noddings does not mention any differences in natural caring in her theory because it is supposed to be present and the same in every female body. This assumption allows for omitting such experiences and struggles of mothering as Collins and Anderson describe, but it also establishes what a mother 'ought to' do. Therefore, we can say that even though care ethics by Noddings claims to oppose abstraction and generalizations, we must nevertheless abide by the fact that it generalizes mothering in a natural form and assumes that all mothers have the described natural care regardless of color, class, religion.

As mentioned before, the ideal natural caring is assumed good which flourishes a moral theory for Noddings. Nevertheless, as the next section explores, racialized care in its historical, colonial manifestation can in fact be a harmful practice. Focusing on this negative manifestation of maternal care in the colonial context, I argue, ultimately troubles Noddings' naturalistic theory about maternal care. For this, I will give an account of the historical usage of care by giving three characteristics of maternalism with examples. The characteristics of maternalism will show the parallel between the historical usage of maternal care and Noddings' natural care.

Section II: Critique of Care

Maternal Colonialism

As a part of the settler colonial project that aims to eliminate Indigenous people and exploit the land in America, Australia, and Canada, a continuing but new operation was introduced in the late 19th century. Removing policies were designed to aim at "assimilation" and "protection" for indigenous people in Australia and in the United States. According to an official governmental note, these policies were to end the cruel strategy of the settler army. Margaret Jacobs (2009) quotes

> The hateful adage that found currency in the army, that 'the only good Indian is a dead Indian,' has been fruitful of harm, discreditable to our Christianity, and a reflection upon our national magnanimity." This, however, is ceasing to be a dominant force in our vocabulary, and it is coming to be generally recognized that the Indians are entitled to consideration and kind treatment" (Morgan 1889-93; as cited in Jacobs 2009, 25).

This presumed kindness, however, was one of the most violent and unfair actions taken by the settler officials (Jacobs 2009, 25). The policies were to remove indigenous children from their families to distant boarding schools to control the remaining indigenous lands in both Australia and the United States. By the early 1900s, 17,865 children were enrolled in boarding schools, and more than 6,000 children were sent to missionary schools in West America (ibid.,31). It was almost impossible to escape from the removal policies for indigenous families (ibid.). The children were not just introduced to the boarding schools, but they were forced to be enrolled by police (Jacobs 2008, 192). Moreover, in the boarding schools, the main curriculum was to change the rituals and clothing of indigenous children, teach them the English language, and therefore, assimilate the indigenous people into a White race (ibid., 26-27). It was not only purifying the dark race to a white, but the gender roles were also enforced in the sex-segregated schools which I will explain later on (ibid.,31). This colonial practices, Margaret D. Jacobs argues, was a "key practice of colonialism" rather than "just as a by-product of the federal Indian policy of assimilation" (Jacobs 2008, 193). Even though the removing policies were introduced to be a consideration and kindness for indigenous people by officials, it was a part of settler colonialism which scholars define as a persistent usurpation of land (Arvin, Tuck, Morrill 2013, 13).

In these assimilative policies, not only the White men were great actors, but the White women took on the roles of being the "Great Mothers" of indigenous children (Jacobs 2008). These women who articulated their role as the "mothers" of the nation-state helped to implement assimilation policies and removal of the children from their mothers. They worked with associations and institutions that were known to be reformative for women. In contrast to nation-states' paternalistic depictions of White women as subjects to be protected against "a rising tide of color," the White women considered themselves independent reformers (Jacobs 2009, 88). Interestingly enough, while the white women refuse the "dependency" that White men assigned to them, they did not acknowledge the independence of "other" women. Instead, they allowed for removal regulations that oppressed the indigenous women (Jacobs 2009, 89). According to Jacobs, the reformist white women identifying as mothers were the subjects of maternalism which, Sonya Michel writes; is a "politics that claims a position of authority for women in their 'natural' roles as wives and mothers and seeks to protect the health and welfare of women and children" (Michel 1999 footnote 16, 311, *as cited in* Jacobs 2008, 196).

Besides this definition, Jacobs provides four characteristics of maternalism that were central in the 19th century (2009). For the purposes of my article, I will outline three of them, which I

argue are important since they demonstrate similarities between Noddings' theory and maternalism in the colonial project. After the characteristics of maternalism, I will show why such practices and assumptions were harmful to the indigenous communities.

First, *the maternalists amplify motherhood as the most glorified work of women (Jacobs 2009,89).* For example, in the publications of Women's National Indian Association (WNIA), it is noted that "The Indian women, old and young, need to be taught that their highest, holiest duty is the intelligent management of the home and the children that God has given to them" (The Indian's Friend 12, December 1899 *as cited in* Jacobs 2009, 87).[3] For the white maternalists, domestic work was a holy and key practice in motherhood that needed to be carried by every mother. Somebody, who is capable of home management and nurture, white 'Great Mothers' in this case, needed to show how to manage the domestic work properly.

What is striking is that those mothers, who were complicit in severing children from their land, did not respect the mothering practices of local and indigenous women already in place. [4]The indigenous women were seen as 'unfit mothers' and therefore the children needed to be severed to boarding schools by which they can receive proper care. The underlying presumed approach which considers motherhood as women's work considered indigenous women as 'not enough' One possible explanation of this might be that native women's bodies were often designated, not in terms of motherhood, but as immoral and merely sexual, which allowed the colonizers to sever the children from their families based on the portrayal of American Indian women as not being suitable for a family (Robert 2001, 76). Maternalist politics, therefore, did not recognize the caring practices of Indigenous and local people or found those practices not adequate for 'proper' family structure, whereas they purported themselves to be the prototype of mothering.

This brings us to the second characteristic: *performing a motherly attitude toward other women whom they assume to need help and rescue* (Jacobs 2009,89*).* In other words, women who took up the role of mothering presumed that the people needed to be saved from what they currently lived in and for. They implemented certain practices in the name of civilizing education which was based on the superior/inferior image of themselves and the children. The women who

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[3] *The Indian's Friend* 12, no. 4 (December 1899): 10.

[4] To note, whereas the domestic work was seen as the main sacred work of women by the white women as stated in the above quote, in the indigenous communities, nurturing was a practice of the community not adhered to only women and birthmothers. The mothering practice for indigenous communities appears to go beyond the mother-child relationship because the elderly and other community members were also responsible for the children (Anderson 2007).

became "civilizing" mothers to these indigenous children targeted the homes of indigenous women as they considered the home to be the "cradle of civilization" (Jacobs 2010, 170). Jacobs states that "Maternalists also believed that the root of other women's problems –in fact, society's problems – could be found in the home and thus the solution they posed was to rescue other women and uplift them" (ibid.,169). Hence, not only were the children of indigenous people targeted, but the maternalists also aimed to control and discipline the mothers of indigenous communities. Coming from mostly middle and upper-class backgrounds, maternalist women depicted American Indian children as being victimized by the indigenous lifestyles they had been raised in, accusing the mothers of neglect. A missionary in California stated that:

> No comfortable home; no toys of any kind; the little girls have no dolls; no picture-books; no music excepting at their dances, and nothing that can make childhood bright and happy. Is it any wonder that so many of them grow up hard, wicked and immoral. (WNIA Report 1889,18 *as cited* in Jacobs 2010, 174)

According to this portrait of indigenous life painted by maternalist women, there was an alleged "lack of care and proper mothering" in the indigenous home. The idea of improper care resulting in the development of immorality then gave rise to a White maternalist movement that sought to take over the mothering responsibility from actual mothers.

As can be already drawn from the first two characteristics, maternalism advocates for the reforming policies not merely as reformers but the mothers *advocated for their presence in policies and reforms "as an extension of their natural experience or socialization as mothers"* (Jacobs 2009, 89). Maternalists used the traditional maternal role of women to justify their participation in reform policies in a male-dominated field, arguing that they only expand their natural role as potential mothers with the values and skills necessary to solve the important problems of the day (Jacobs 2009, 91). This draws the key similarity between Noddings' natural care and maternalism in colonial times, which I will explain in the next section. For now, it is important to note that this characteristic helped the white women to justify their positions in a male-dominated environment. The identity of motherhood was valuable and morally acceptable for women, therefore, it allowed white women to play role in such removing policies. For instance, Alice Fletcher, an anthropologist, went on to analyze and "civilize" the indigenous children as she felt responsible for the lives of those native children from Nebraska, Oklahoma, Ohio, Colorado, Wyoming, Idaho, Wisconsin, and South and North Dakota, where she lived for a while (Schuller 2021, chapter 3). While she was conducting her research on the

so-called "primitive" side of humanity, she played an enormous role in severing these children from their homeland. Alice Fletcher held campaigns and collected money to remove children from their homes, who needed protection from their "poor" ways of living, disregarding thereby these people's sovereignty. Still, Fletcher assumed that natives were not "frozen in prehistory" but they were "in need of a mother—*a white mother*, who could raise the race into maturity" (ibid.). Her anthropology presupposed that American Indian women were subordinate to men, stating that "the Indians cling to me like children" and "I must protect them." (Schuller 2021, chapter 3). However, the native women were not deemed to be the "victims" of the indigenous lifestyle nor were they adhered to domestic occupations. Instead, Fletcher herself, found out that the indigenous women were independent, powerful, and responsible for more than childcaring. In fact, childcare was a collective activity that the elderly, aunties and other community members provided together. In addition, compared to western understanding of "helpless babies" children were rather seen as "spiritual beings, gifts and leaders" who may teach to their community (Simpson 2006, 26).

Overall, these characteristics provide a descriptive image of maternalism. Even though the intentions of white mothers seemed to be good since they aim to provide wealth and care for the indigenous children, it was still violent for indigenous families. The assimilation and protection policies were to discipline and control the population. The agency of indigenous women and children was denied based on the dichotomy of savage/civilized as the former being dehumanized, killed, and racialized through the structures of settler colonial project, the latter being the representative of moral humans, developed and educated. Moreover, I argue that the key assumption that underlies in the caring discourse of white women and settler colonialism was the idea that *indigenous people were not gendered (Lugones 2020)*. As such, they were 'not capable to the family values' and 'the proper caring' because they were seen as *less than human* or *wild beings* of the world in the eyes of colonizers. That is, the only gendered people were the civilized Europeans because they were humans, but the rest such as indigenous women were neither 'human' nor 'women'. (Lugones 2020, 26).[5] As stated above in the first characteristic, the indigenous women were designated '*as sexual, not reproductive' (Robert*

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[5] To be clear on this, the indigenous communities did not have the modern application of gender in their lifestyle (see Kim Anderson, Paula Gull Allen, and Margaret Jacobs). By modern, I mean the presence of dichotomies of reason/emotion, public/private, and active/passive in family tradition. Maria Lugones argues that the gender-based system was introduced to the indigenous people by the European colonizers(2021).

2010, 73). Maternalists harbored a specific idea of motherhood that presupposes that the gendered oppression needed to be universal and present in every culture.

With this assumption about indigenous people, through the model of the "European modern woman" as opposed to the "uncivilized" women, the bodies of children and the mothers of those children in boarding schools were oppressed in terms of gender. Starting from the idea of changing their homes and of "killing the Indian to save the man," they attempted to mold the Native children to conform to Western gender roles and often subjected them to sexual violence (Arvin, Tuck, Morrill 2013, 15). Scholars have revealed that the settler colonial system enforced the patriarchal institutions by replacing the women-headed clan lifestyle (Allen 1986/1992, 42). As an example of the practices that Europeans enforced on the native children, the American Indian girls were expected to engage in such practices as knitting, serving, speaking the official language properly, sewing, dressing in a proper feminine style, etc. The indigenous girls' hair braids were cut and made to look like standard *non-wild* girls so that they may be proper citizens of "modern" nations. In these practices and assumptions explained above, the indigenous lifestyle, children, and motherhood were harmed as a part of the violent colonial projects. In the name of maternal instincts and derived from the "good" of mothering by using the *natural/biological* mothering capacity of women's bodies, these women, in the making of colonialism, enabled the oppressive gender and racial practices regarding the bodies of children. This allowed them to exert control over the "uncivilized" communities.

To summarize, the maternalist women, claiming to "civilize" the children and women of the American Indian and local communities, sought to "purify" the American Indian race by reinforcing gender structures. These women were not only engaging with their gender identity, but they were also white, "developed, and modern," as opposed to their imagined women and children of color. Their privileges as white women gave them opportunities to participate in the so-called reforms that allowed for harmful consequences for indigenous women and children. In other words, the maternalist women took advantage of their presumed racial superiority that gave them a "higher" position over the other women.

Now remembering the three features of maternalist women; enhancing the role of motherhood as a sacred job of women, extending the natural capacity of motherhood to justify their action, and enforcing the norms of motherhood, I suggest that those women performed the gender hegemony in their discourse and practices. I therefore suggest that the defined maternalism is

hegemonic because maternalism predominates, excludes, and authorizes other women's subjectivities and lifestyles by the privileges and advantages of their race and class status. I borrow the category *hegemonic* from the concept of hegemonic femininities: in a nutshell, different kinds of femininities are ranked hierarchically, allowing for one kind of femininity to be appreciated and privileged, based on factors like status, class, race, and religion. As in the example of maternal colonialism, the specific motherhood that consider domestic work as sacred is a celebrated and appreciated by the white women. I argue that their enhancement of motherhood fit with the definition of hegemonic femininity. Specifically, hegemonic femininities are described as *complicit* in the harmful power structures and are the "most celebrated cultural ideals of womanhood in a given time and place" that play a powerful role in reproducing the other forms of oppositional categories (Hamilton, A. Armstrong, Seeley and M. Armstrong 2019, 322). By this, the concept of hegemonic femininity on the one hand draws attention to harmful feminine actions such as European women's participation in racial domination rather than obscuring the intersections of race, gender, and sexual orientation. It further sheds light on the fact that the women who actively partake in the domination of race and heterosexuality should be recognized and held accountable for their actions. On the other hand, it argues that there is no such womanhood that is disengaged from other categories like race, religion, and sexuality.

So far, we saw the main characteristics and assumptions of maternal colonialism. Let us continue with the similarities between Noddings' natural care and colonial discourse of care in order to understand the philosophical significance of the historical case.

What is the parallel between Noddings' maternal factor and maternal colonialism?

The hegemonic motherhood over racialized mothers and children during colonialism reinforced the oppressive gender structures based on civilized/savage distinctions – respectively associated with moral and non-moral beings – and provided the way for their harmful means of mothering by separating children from their families and placing them in boarding schools. The previous section attempted to demonstrate that hegemonic mothering not only dismisses the identity of diverse mothers but can also harm the children receiving the care.

Now, returning to Noddings' theory of care ethics, remember that the natural capacity of mothering was an essential element in the caring relationships between mothers and children. Likewise, maternalists advocate for their presence by claiming to expand on the

"natural" experience of motherhood. In the colonial case, the naturalistic attitude toward motherhood created a norm that suppresses other women's subjectivity which differs from the modern model of mothering. European mothers, as "possible natural mothers of some children," presented themselves as *proper and caring* mothers.

Here the dehumanization of the children of these native mothers and the native mothers themselves begins in the superiorization of such "natural mothering," wherein the roots of natural caring coincide with maternal colonialism. This similarity challenges natural caring that Noddings' describe due to two reasons.

First, natural care abstracts away from the structural power dynamics, its historical use whereby ends up being of *ideal-as-idealized* theory. Recall the description of ethical theory of *ideal-as-idealized*. An ideal-as-idealized theory abstracts and generalizes certain characteristics of phenomena by providing "how it should be like" rather than how it is. It was a point of hesitation in ideal moral theories whether the concept truly represent the behavior/fact. From the historical use, it is apparent that the ideal "natural" care or the essential goodness of care does not coincide with the colonial practices of care. The abstraction of the presumed nature in mothers created an idealized form of motherhood not as innocent as imagined by Noddings. The conflict between the goodness of natural care and maternalism is a typical flaw of an ideal-as-idealized theory. According to Charles Mills, a moral ideal theory "abstracts away from structural domination, exploitation, coercion, and oppression, which in reality, of course, will profoundly shape the ontology of those same individuals, locating them in superior and inferior positions in social hierarchies of various kinds" (2005, 168). If a theory prioritizes the so-called "natural core" of human beings, it in fact obscures the enabling conditions and categories of the systemic domination.

This brings us to the second reason. Noddings does not take into account the lived experience of mothers, the operations of race, gender, and class that shape any mother's behavior toward her child or others. She rather universalizes and generalizes natural care as the good core of the human condition. To clarify, if natural mothering is "good" unto itself as it fosters a moral sense in our relationships, then how do we differentiate it from maternalism wherein natural motherhood is extended to justify assimilation? Additionally, Sarah L. Adams comments on Noddings' ethics: "Noddings's 'natural inclination' assumption is oblivious to familial, cultural, and social factors that enable or disable women's caring" (Adams 2013, 20). Agreeing with Adams, it is suspicious that the "natural instinct" derives care for every mother. Care

might result and stem from different feelings, experiences, identities, and sorts of love. By not examining the political and social factors of care, Noddings' natural care dismisses the complexity of care by reducing it under an essentialist perspective. Adams and Lundquist emphasize this problem of essentialism in the introduction to their collective essays on pregnancy, childbirth, and mothering:

> Generalizing can perpetuate inaccurate universalist and/or essentialist ideas. To speak of the "nature" of lesbians, Asian Americans, or women, for example, is inherently dismissive. It forecloses the question of identity; implies that an individual or group's "essence" is something one can have in hand; assumes commonality where there are certainly vast differences; identifies the individual with a group with which she may not feel any solidarity; denies the uniqueness of the individual as well as her agency, choices, and intentions; and implies that people are conclusively constructed by outside forces. Thus even the presumably straightforward categories "woman" or "mother" become potentially problematic. (L. Adams and R. Lundquist 2013, 11)

Moreover, even though Noddings focuses on the bright side of maternal love, the lived experience is much more complex than it seems. For the mother/child dyad, there is a lot more than just the inherently "good" side of it. For example, in her book *Mad Mothers, Bad Mothers, What a Good Mother Would Do* (2014), Sarah L. Adams investigates the contradictions and violent actions of a mother/child relationship from an existential and social lens. In contrast to the sacred portrait of motherhood that scholars like Noddings provided, Adams recognizes an ambiguity in maternal subjectivity that moves in the tension of neglect and care (ibid., 4). This existential condition of motherhood is sometimes heightened to detrimental levels by the social oppressive factors such as the killing of the child (ibid., 6). For such mortally dangerous situations, Adams explores the underlying factors that drive a mother to kill her child even though she sincerely cares for the child (ibid.). Rather than assuming that a mother always tends to care for a child, she sheds light on the interests of conflicts between a mother and a child. Nevertheless, I do not disregard that caring can be a means of healing, surviving, and supporting. Still, I insist that care does not necessarily come from our natural instinct and ends up in good consequences. In contrast to the sacred theories that are rather based on the stereotypes of motherhood, Patricia Hill Collins also draws attention to Black mothers' struggles and the multiple oppression faced in everyday life (Collins 2000, 174). These two examples look at the intersections of dominations and the ambivalence of maternal subjectivity. I believe that it fosters a complex and rich analysis of maternal subjectivity than reproducing the stereotypes of motherhood.

Concluding remarks

Speaking of motherhood in ethical terms requires a deep understanding of the various forms of mothering. As essential as mothering and caring are in our lives, it is also crucial to explore the political, social, and economical aspects of this so-called "natural" activity because the presumed 'natural' care leads to dangerous results which reproduce the gender hegemony and racism. For this reason, I demonstrate that an idealized form of care might result in unintended consequences. Specifically, maternal colonialism involved (and still involves) the symbolization of maternal care as a norm to be forced on children and other mothers in local and indigenous communities. Maternalist women regard mothering as a "woman's activity" which must be universally present and is essentially good. Their enforcement of the mothering role and "proper care" resulted in the establishment of boarding schools where colonial, assimilative practices took place. Such an "education" of the indigenous and local children focused on "civilizing" these "savages" and therefore resulted in their assimilation and colonization. Basing myself on the settler colonial setting, I argued that maternalist colonial care can be a challenge to a naturalistic, essentialist account of care, as well as illustrating the inherent danger in the ideal mother-child exemplary.

Desiring the "good" is not enough in a moral theory since structural oppression can be present in and despite good intentions toward others. Looking at the positive side of the things such as in Noddings' evaluation of natural caring might obscure the realities of life; however, the negative aspects of mothering deserve further attention since they can reveal the hidden structures that lead to the reinforcing of oppression. In this regard, I specifically argued that the motherhood in Noddings theory carelessly account for the naturalization of motherhood wherein one might miss out on the consequences of their actions. The naturalization of motherhood thus does not leave any room for an "ethical" discussion of care since the exemplar of the mother is already always morally good in its essence. Indeed "the romanticization of mothering can be difficult to resist. Motherhood carries heavy symbolism and mothering/being mothered is a significant formative experience for most people. Still, mothers are not straightforward moral figures" (Adams 2013, 22). Indeed, there are mothers who abuse, kill, or abandon their children, yet they still consider themselves to be "good mothers" (Adams 2013, 4). These harmful actions of mothers should be regarded to be as significant as the glorification of motherhood. Thus, instead of establishing an ideal based on the assumption that care is a sacred moral, any inquiry into mothering should discern the ambivalence in the mother/child relationship. Only by including the supposed "bad" of mothering can we provide

a philosophical account of maternal care. It is still possible to provide an ethical understanding of the phenomenon of maternal care without being stuck in the ideal form, but the question of how to do so must begin with a detailed examination of mothering by including the bad, the good, and the ambiguous aspects.

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<p align="center">**Research Proposal**</p>

The Roots of Femonationalist Convergence: Secularism and Gender Equality

1. Summary

Gender equality and religion have been instrumental discourses for the neo-liberal governmentalities. (Repo 2015, Yeng 2014, Scott 2017) The most infamous example is the European governments' targeting of immigrants with Middle Eastern and Muslim backgrounds i*n the name of women's rights* in their political agenda (Farris 2017). The nationalist governments ascribe 'backwardness' to religious activities and people, whereas they represent themselves as the 'modern'. They portray the Muslim men as hostile, and as the potential perpetrators of gender violence whereas victimize Muslim women due to their religion. This ideology termed *femonationalism* "refers to both to the exploitation of feminist themes by nationalists and neoliberals in *anti-Islam and anti-immigration* campaigns and to the participation of certain feminists and femocrats in the stigmatization of Muslim men under the banner of gender equality" (emphasis mine, Farris 2012, 14).

This phenomenon is mostly introduced and searched in Western European countries. However, the convergence of anti-religious politics and gender equality needs adequate attention as a worldwide system rooted in secularism and biopolitics of gender. This project aims to investigate the convergence of gender equality and anti-religious discourses from a worldview perspective rather than engaging the ideology only with western countries. It will investigate the links between gender equality and secularism from the decolonial perspective that sees modernity as the other side of coloniality.

2. Aims and the research question

Gender politics and the immigrants coming from Middle Eastern countries have been important issues in several European countries' general elections (Farris 2017, 2). The ideology called femonationalism in the name of gender equality and the safety of nation-states that western countries follow targets immigrants and Muslim, Middle Eastern people with racist motivations (ibid.). For example, not too long ago, the foremost affair was the immigration and the 'Muslims' veil in the French election. The campaigns approached the 'Muslim' issue as the main threat to the nation (Kilickaya 2022). However, this was not exclusive to European Union countries. Within the rise of refugees in Turkey, the nationalist party called Zafer Partisi (Party

of Victory) announced a new campaign against Syrian, Afghan, and Pakistani migrants in Turkey. The central discourse is the idea that the current economic crisis in Turkey is a result of the flow of immigrants coming from misogynist countries (Birdal 2002). The party endorses the narrative that Turkish identity is superior to those of immigrants, but that Turkish people are in the middle of a "refugee crisis" caused by nation-state policies: Turkish women in particular, according to this narrative, are targeted and in danger due to the increasing population of male Arab, Afghan, and Pakistani people. The striking point in this example is that even if the major religion is officially Islam in Turkey, the hatred against Muslim Arab, Afghan and Pakistani people is rising up by dehumanizing those people as the 'non-developed' or the members of the 'uneducated' nations of the world. Interestingly enough, Turkish male immigrants in Europe are identified as the same as Afghan, Syrian, and Pakistani people in Turkey. However, the Turkish nationalist party does not point out the fact that Turkish, Afghan, Arab, and Pakistani people are altogether seen as the same 'non-developed' and 'misogynist' people in Europe. Neither that the misogyny in Turkey itself is problematized by the nationalist party. It only mattered for nationalist politicians when gender equality and immigration issues are enmeshed. Both in western Europe and many other countries like Turkey, this ideology finds its target under the umbrella category of 'backwardness' and 'non-civilized'. In other words, even though we used to hear the Islamophobic roots of such ideological convergence in Europe where the main religion is Christianity, it happens throughout the world where such dichotomies like tradition/new, modern/civilized are reproduced. These dichotomies such as modern/religious within the rise of secularism strengthen the national enmity and racism. It sets the hierarchy as the former being associated with civilization and superiority and the latter with inferiority and a lack of development. On the other hand, this dichotomy is not excluded from gender politics. Secular countries represent themselves as gender-exceptional places and therefore positively associated with gender equality. In contrast, the Middle East is seen as the undeveloped, misogynist part of the world. This presumption is not only wrong, but it also dehumanizes Middle Eastern and Muslim people. The rise of secular nation-states and their positive association with gender equality raises questions like whether secular policies do in fact protect women's rights or rather discipline and govern society in the name of gender equality.

To sum it up, racist implementations and discourses related to gender and religion are not only Western issues but operate through the modern/colonial worldwide system that upholds the dichotomies of modern/religious, sacred/profane, and reason/mythology (Maldonado Torres

2007). Rather than approaching the question by linking it with the western or European, the roots of the racialized gender politics require a deep analysis of secularism as a form of modernity/coloniality and the presuppositions related to gender. In this regard, two questions are posed in this project. First, how to understand the link between gender equality and secularism from the perspective of decolonial critique of modernity which sees secularism as the second form of modernity/coloniality (Torres 2007, Lugones 2007, Mignolo 2009). As part of the first aim, I will try to uncover epistemological links between gender equality and secularism. As Charles Mills (1997) posited a concept of *The Racial Contract*, which determines our way of knowing, understanding, and experiencing the world based on the distinction between white/non-white, secular gender politics presupposes such dichotomies that operate at the epistemological level (Randell-Moon 2010). Second, I will investigate how, why, and where secularism and gender equality converge and operate as regulatory by searching the hidden biopolitics behind femonationalism. Biopolitics denotes a life-centered politics that regulate, govern, and discipline societies (Lemke; Trump 2011,33). Michel Foucault introduces the concept as a new form of power that integrated from the old sovereign power. The sovereign power lets live or take life, however, biopower asserts that "*If you want to live, you must take lives; you must be able to kill" (Foucault 2003, 74.)* Accordingly, this new form of power consists of two forms: disciplining the individual body and regulating the population as its subject. In this project, biopolitics involves both forms of power. I will investigate in what ways secularism and gender politics become an intermeshed biopower.

For these two aims, the yearly schedule will be as follows;

In the first year, I will explore the critical literature on secularism from a decolonial perspective. I will understand how secularism serves as a second form of coloniality. The presumed dichotomy interprets the world as modern/religious(Mignolo 2009, Torres 2007, Lugones 2007). However, the secular is not an opposition to religion but a continuum of religious modernity (Torres 2008). I will deepen the shift from religious to secular modernity to understand secularism's material, political and epistemological roots.

In the second year, I will examine the presuppositions of secularism and its presumed inherent connection with emancipation and progress. This will be followed by an investigation with regard to gender politics to understand in what sense and why secularism and gender politics connect to generate gender exceptionalism. I will investigate the colonial/modern gender system and its possible connections with religion.

In the third year, following the analysis of the colonial/gender system, I will analyze the biopolitics of gender and secularism in relation to capitalism. Following Farris's analysis of femonationalism, the ideology of nationalists in the name of women's rights allows nation-states to gain economic benefit. I will approach it from a biopolitical angle rather than only an economic one. The benefits are not only economical, but they also regulate the population, life, and deaths of citizens.

Finally, to conclude the research project, I intend to search for non-secular, anti-colonial feminist movements in the contemporary world. I will draw alternative resisting perspectives and examples from this factual analysis.

3. Background

Even though the term femonationalism is new to scholars, the political ideology behind the convergence is all familiar. Scholars of secularism, gender equality, and critiques of modernity engage with the fusion of racism and gender equality. However, in this research, each phenomenon needs attention to grasp the merging points.

The racist gendered anti-immigrant campaigns of governments can be interpreted as a part of *race-religion constellation* that divides people into groups based on the religious difference. Anya Topolski defines race-religion constellations as "the practice of classifying people into races according to categories we now associate with the term "religion" (Topolski 2018, 58). According to her analysis, the religious difference begins to divide people into groups in the 16th century and continues to do perform as anti-Semitism and Islamophobia today in Europe. The critiques of Islamophobia for instance can be found in the literature of secularism. However, secularism is a broad concept that received enough attention in the literature.

To begin with a small analysis, secularism is often thought of as the separation of governmental institutions from religion. This definition is too simple to define such an influential ideology that claims to govern our age. Scholars investigated the roots of secularism and demonstrated that it is not a separation of religion from the state nor the establishment of a non-religious society (Taylor 2007, Asad 2003, Bracke 2011, Casanova 2009, Maldanoda Torres 2008, Mahmood 2009, Scott 2017). Instead, it presumes a new definition of religion, politics, and ethics (Asad 2003, 2). From the advocates of secularism, Taylor argues that belief did not just disappear from society; rather, it has moved from the public to the individual/private sphere (2004). Taylor interprets secularism by assigning it to progress,

freedom, and modernity. (Asad 2003, 2; Scott 2007, 5). Furthermore, as another advocate of secularism, Jurgen Habermas points out that religion has to coincide with secular principles. That is, religion should become 'reasonable' and adapt to 'scientific authorities' which derives from secular knowledge (Habermas 2003,104). Here, Habermas privileges the scientific knowledge associated with secularism. However, critical scholars went far beyond Taylor's and Habermas' understanding of secularism.

In the critical literature on secularism, there are different approaches and methodologies. The common ground of the critical scholars is that secularism and the term secular are not universal or fixed categories but transformed through historical shifts and geographies (Asad 2003, Maldonado Torres 2008, Scott 2017). Asad claims that anthropologists associate religion with myth as being opposed to reason. In the so-called secular age, religious experiences and activities are assumed to be at the level of super-natural, non-rational and therefore disqualified by this opposition between belief and truth. Asad explores this oppositional standing of knowledge/belief, myth/allegory, and imagination/reason to show whether the oppositions were at stake before secularism came to the throne. He suggests that the epistemological origins of the presumed categories have interconnection rather than oppositions. Such dichotomy of modern/religious needs to be understood not as two opposites; the modern does not oppose religion but regulates. Asad interprets secularism neither as a 'progress' nor the success of 'modern' states. In contrast, secularism brings reason and violence in its state-sanctioned form (Asad 2003, 22). He writes, "The nation-state requires clearly demarcated spaces that it can classify and regulate" (2003, 201). In the same line as Asad, Saba Mahmood interprets that religion and the secular are not opposites of each other. She writes that "the religious and the secular are not so much immutable essences or opposed ideologies as they are concepts that gain a particular salience with the emergence of the modern state and attendant politics - concepts that are, furthermore, interdependent and necessarily linked in their mutual transformation and historical emergence" (2009, 83)

Moreover, Maldonado-Torres considers secularism as a second form of modernity, continuing the religious modernity based on this modern/colonial world-system perspective. A decolonial reading of modernity understands modern and colonial as two sides of the coin that oppress the non-European, indigenous, black, and racialized people (Lugones 2007, Torres 2009,Mignolo 2009). The modernity/coloniality as a governing system implies epistemologies, ontologies, and moralities. For instance, the knowledge produced by the Western languages is

considered scientific 'knowledge', whereas non-western, non-European research is to be 'local sociology' (Mignolo 2009, 166). Accordingly, secularism is not excluded from such epistemological assumptions of modernity/coloniality. It devalues religious knowledge of, for example, Islam and Confucianism, associating them with a myth/mystic and dogma in the cultural beliefs rather than recognizing them as sources of knowledge (Maldonado-Torres 2009, 379).

Furthermore, secular states serve alternative to religions and to Islam in particular in the name of gender equality in its current use (Scott 2011). According to Scott, secularism appears synonymous with gender equality by opposing Islam as the backward, traditional, inherently patriarchal religion. Again, based on the reason/religion dichotomy, it presumes Muslim women cannot decide independently and are trapped by the dictates of Islam (Yeng 2014, 93). They are intellectually undeveloped and brainwashed by the unequal religion of Islam. (ibid.,93-4). The veil, headscarf or hijab are seen as the symbols of submission, which is not compatible with the assumed secular principles (Scott 2011, 92, Korteweg and Yurdakul 2021) Hence, based on the assumptions that Muslim women are passive in their decisions and they are oppressed by their religion, the secular governments like France, Germany and the Netherlands find excuses to regulate the living of Muslim women (Korteweg and Yurdakul 2021, 424) On the other hand, Muslim men are seen as the perpetrator of patriarchy. This hierarchy can be termed *gender exceptionalism*: Puar writes that gender exceptionalism works "as a missionary discourse to rescue Muslim women from their oppressive male counterparts" (Puar 2007,3). It relies on moral superiority, as Puar writes, "constructing American women as saviors and rescuers of the 'oppressed women'"(ibid.) as well as marginalizing Islam religion.

Moreover, gender equality becomes a concern only for those not religious and not Islamic (Scott 2017, 3). In his book *Sex and Secularism*, Scott argues that the presumption that gender equality is inherent to secularism is false. Both gender exceptionalism and secularism refer to each other's assumptions to claim emancipation, and equality but neither secularism nor gender equality discourse truly guarantee emancipation. Rather, the Euro-Atlantic modernity upholds a new order of women's subordination by assigning women to a feminized family domain that aims to complement the rationally masculine domains of politics and the economy (ibid.,). Scott's claim furthers an analysis of women's subordination in the modern/colonial world system, including religious and secular modernity. It also raises questions regarding the biopower of secularism and gender politics.

This project aims to deepen the argument that Scott proposed and search how and why secularism serves to be a symbol of emancipation for women whereas religious activities especially Islam are seen as submissive. The research in this way sheds light on how the convergence of secularism and gender politics controls the population.

4. Methodology

The power relations and the convergence of secularism and gender politics will be examined using conceptual analysis, historical analysis, and comparative methods. First, there will be a historical understanding of religious and secular modernity as worldwide systems, but this will not emphasize secularism as merely a progressive fact of history. Instead, the aim is to understand the structure of the power structures, discourse, and governmental technologies.

Second, the comparative method will show different camps' analyses and the structural differences. The primary literature will be critical perspectives on the problem instead of the scholarly advocates. Decolonial, post-colonial and anti-colonial scholars will be on the project's agenda by comparing the conceptual sides and geographical differences.

Third and last, the project aims to reveal the underlying biopower of secularism and gender politics. It will be investigated by researching the policies, regulations, and technologies of different governmentalities in today's politics. It will allow us to understand why and how the fear of others is present in the intersections of gender, religion, and race.

5. Scientific and Social Relevance

Even though gender oppression, nationalism, and hostility against religions may seem like old-world issues, they are still very much present in the political, social, and everyday parts of life. Consider the U.S Supreme Court's recent overturning of Roe v. Wade, the decision in which abortion was established as a constitutional right. The so-called free country of the United States does not allow women to make decisions regarding their lives. This is not 'new' and will never be the 'old' issue of the world. Again, the same 'old' and 'new' applies to the hostility against religious people.

We see in both women's rights and Islamophobic discourses the collision of the hypocrisies coming from the 'secular' and 'emancipated' governments. Here, the discourse of nationalism intersects with gender equality even though the ideological grounds dispute to one-another. The intersection no doubt reflects on the individuals and creates anxiety and paranoia against immigrants and 'foreigners'. The 'Muslim' Arab, Turk, and Moroccan men

are seen as the men of women's oppression since their religion is accused of misogyny. This not only creates a hostile environment but also ignores the gender oppression coming from the white 'educated and rational' people and the states. The convergent ideology makes the Muslim the scapegoat for the patriarchal system, whereas it somehow clears the oppression coming from the 'us'. This project aims to uncover the collision of nationalist, secular, and 'feminist' mechanisms to understand how, why, and where these three connect.

6. Key Words

Femonationalism, secularism, gender exceptionalism, biopolitics

7.Working Schedule:

Period	Research and Education	Output
Year I		
Semester 1	- Take a course on research methodology. - Select texts from different geographies on secularism - Identify the main ideas and differences between critical texts	Outline the critical literature on secularism
Semester 2	- Research secularism in the decolonial camp to analyze it as a world-system - Analyze and interpret the shift from religious modernity to secular modernity	Chapter 1: *Is secularism a worldwide system?*
Year II		
Semester 3	- search the epistemologies that religious and secular modernity rely on - understand what kind of disregarding and ignorance secularism upholds	Chapter 2: *The epistemologies and ignorance of secularism*
Semester 4	- research feminist texts related to religious and secular modernities - compare the key texts and identify the shift in women's subordination	Chapter 3/Part 1: *Women and Secularism in Modern/Colonial System*
Year 3		
Semester 5	- Search colonial/modern gender system, analyze how women's subordination operates in religious and secular modernities - Define gender exceptionalism in a secular modern/colonial age	Chapter 3/Part 2: *Gender Exceptionalism in Secularism*
Semester 6	- Search biopolitics of gender and secularism relation to capitalism	Chapter 4:

		- Identify where gender and secularism connect to regulate societies	*Why are secularism and gender exceptionalism interconnected?*
Year 4			
Semester 7		- find current examples of movements that break the secular-gender exceptionalist camp's presumptions - analyze what they might offer an alternative to femonationalist camp	Chapter 5: *Is there a non-secular feminist movement?*
Semester 8		- review and edit based on the received feedback - write introduction and conclusion	Finalize dissertation

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Curriculum Vitae

a) Education

2020-present	MA Social and Political Philosophy (Research), Radboud University, Nijmegen
2019	Philosophy Erasmus Programme,Johannes Gutenberg University, Mainz
2017-2020	Political Studies Minor Degree,Middle East Technical University, Ankara
2013-2020	Philosophy, Middle East Technical University, Ankara

b) Relevant academic experience

2020-2021	Teaching Assistant for the first year Bachelor course Ethics: Theory and Contemporary Issues

c)Summer Schools

2021	Frankfurt Digital Summer School - Feminist Movements, Practices and Experiences of Decolonization
2021	Frankfurt Digital Summer School De/Postcolonial Feminist Theory and Activism

d) Langugages

Turkish: Native

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