Islam, gender, and immigrant integration: boundary drawing in discourses on honour killing in the Netherlands and Germany

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Abstract
Public discourse on Muslim immigrant integration in Europe is increasingly framed around the presumed incompatibility of Islam and Western values. To understand how such framing constructs boundaries between immigrants and majority society in the media, we analyse newspaper discussions of honour killing in the Netherlands and Germany. These debates reinforce existing bright boundaries, or a strong sense of us versus them, between immigrants from Muslim and/or Turkish backgrounds and the majority population. Limited elements of boundary blurring are also present. We extend existing theory by showing that these boundaries are inscribed in the intersection of ethnicity, national origin, religion and gender.

Keywords: Ethnicity; gender; Islam; honour killing; cultural incorporation; media.

In 2005, public debate on family violence among Muslim immigrants, especially honour killing, intensified in the Netherlands and Germany. In the Netherlands, such debates ignited after the murder of Theo van Gogh, whose film Submission criticized violence against women in Muslim societies. After his murder, an ongoing political debate on the incidence of domestic violence in the Netherlands came to intersect with a debate on the position of Muslims in Dutch society. In Germany, a similar set of questions came to focus on the issue of honour killing after the brutal murder of 23-year-old Hatun Sürucursalü by her brother at a Berlin bus stop (Ewing 2008).

In this article, we treat newspaper discussions of honour killing as a site in which boundaries between immigrants and majority society in the Netherlands and Germany are drawn. Boundaries create a sense of
‘they are not like us because …’, or a strong sense of us versus ‘not us’, capturing the social or cultural distance between immigrant and majority society (Zolberg and Long 1999, p. 8; Alba 2005, p. 22–3). Whether boundaries are ‘bright’ or ‘blurred’ has implications for the kinds of immigrant integration that are possible. Bright boundaries imply that society is structured around a sharp ‘distinction between insiders and outsiders’ so that individual members of minority groups (but not groups in their entirety) can cross into majority society only if they give up part of their group identity and adopt some of the practices of majority society (Zolberg and Long 1999, p. 8; Alba 2005). By contrast, blurred boundaries imply tolerance for various forms of difference and for multiple memberships in different groups so that, for example, an immigrant group can be considered Muslim and Dutch. Blurring bright boundaries entails a change in the dominant perception of immigrants as dramatically different from majority society (Alba 2005).

In the literature, boundaries are seen as cultural (Zolberg and Long 1999) or ethnic, rooted in part in Weber’s ‘subjective belief in common descent’ (in Alba 2005, pp. 22–3). Boundaries are analysed in the divergent domains of language, religion, citizenship, and race, tracing how collective identity and notions of difference are shaped through various institutions. We focus on one such institution, the media. In our analysis, we treat boundaries as cultural, defining culture as providing shared meaning through which to articulate belonging to social groups. The boundaries between Muslims and majority society in European immigration countries are generally bright (Zolberg and Long 1999; Alba 2005). An analysis of honour killing, which in media discourse is treated as an extreme example of the differences between Muslims and majority society, allows us to show; a) which elements of culture are mobilized in the drawing of boundaries; b) that such boundaries can be blurred; and c) the implications of these processes for immigrant integration. We find that in this case cultural differences are articulated in reference to ethnicity, national origin, religion, and gender, requiring an intersectional analysis to illustrate how these elements interact in drawing bright or blurred boundaries.

**Extending theories of boundary formation**

The focus on boundaries between immigrants and majority society comes out of a renewed interest in the concept of assimilation (Alba and Nee 1997, 2003; deWind and Kasinitz 1997; Brubaker 2001; Joppke and Morawska 2003). In the contemporary era many immigrants eventually integrate into their host societies while retaining some aspect of their (group) identity. This empirical reality has
generated a shift in the definition of assimilation from the old-school assumption and even normative goal of complete absorption into majority society to one in which assimilation is achieved when (perceived) differences no longer have an impact on life chances (Alba and Nee 2003; Alba 2005; see also Brubaker 2001).

In theories of boundary formation different integration or assimilation trajectories are associated with three ‘distinct patterns of negotiation between newcomers and hosts’: crossing, blurring, and shifting (Zolberg and Long 1999, p. 8; see also Bauböck 1994; Alba and Nee 2003; Alba 2005). Boundary crossing and boundary blurring are particularly relevant here. Boundary crossing coincides with bright boundaries – only individuals can cross such boundaries, and crossing entails the adoption of majority society attributes, practices or values (Zolberg and Long 1999; Alba and Nee 2003; Alba 2005). In addition, crossing does not affect the boundary itself; if anything, crossing affirms the existence of the boundary. In the extreme, bright boundaries do not allow for group incorporation with retention of group identity markers, and assimilation is associated with giving up important aspects of immigrant culture. Boundary blurring is indicated by immigrants’ ability to cross as a group into majority society without relinquishing distinct aspects of their identity. Simultaneously, the majority society changes its legal, social, and cultural institutions to enable multiple memberships and the participation of immigrants (Zolberg and Long 1999, p. 8).

Boundaries have strong cultural components and it is culture that concerns us here (see also Lamont and Molnar 2002; Alba and Nee 2003). In boundary theory, the term culture refers to everything from ethnic food and leisure activities (Alba and Nee 2003) to ‘fundamental beliefs and ideas regarding existence’ (Zolberg and Long 1999, p. 8). We use the term to denote shared meaning involving the imputed norms, values and traditions of a perceived group.

In the European context, dominant understandings of Islam inform the drawing of bright boundaries between Muslim immigrants and majority society (Zolberg and Long 1999; Alba 2005). Yet, oftentimes it is not Islam in general but gender inequalities attributed to Islam that are the basis for drawing these bright boundaries (see Norris and Inglehart 2002; Razack 2004). Hence we argue that we need to unpack which sources of meaning are mobilized in processes of boundary formation.

To understand the linkages between cultural elements deployed in boundary formation, we use intersectional theory, which sees markers of difference that inform the production of meaning, such as race, class, or gender as mutually constituted, with each given meaning through the others (Yuval-Davis 1997; Glenn 1999). We argue below
that in discussions of honour killing ethnicity, national origin, religion, and gender are the relevant differences and that the ways they intersect to exclude immigrants from majority society is understudied.

Making these cultural sources of meaning and their intersections explicit advances the concept of boundaries in two ways. First, it brings the interacting effects of ethnicity, national origin, religion, and gender’s cultural dimensions to the foreground in the process of boundary formation. Here, we build on work arguing that ethnicity and national origin intersect to create ethnonational identities but find that religion and gender play a similar role (Fenton and May 2002; see also Brubaker 2004). Second, this analysis lets us draw some tentative empirical conclusions about the kind of integration (or assimilation) that is possible for immigrants from predominantly Muslim countries in Western European countries.

**Immigrant integration in the Netherlands and Germany**

Immigrants from predominantly Muslim countries entered the Netherlands and Germany as guest workers starting in the 1960s, with current immigration resulting mainly from family reunification and marriage. These immigrants now make up an estimated 4.5 per cent of the total population in the Netherlands and, depending on the source, 3.8 to 4.2 per cent in Germany (Forum 2008). They lag behind majority society socio-economically. For example, between 1996 and 2006, non-Western immigrants were 3.5 times more likely than non-immigrant Dutch to be unemployed (Jaarrapport Integratie 2007, p. 139). In 2006, the unemployment rate for Turkish immigrants in Germany was 31.4 per cent and approximately 10 per cent for Germans (Bundesagentur für Arbeit 2007).

Historically, the Netherlands and Germany approached the integration of immigrants in different ways. Starting in the early twentieth century, the Dutch approached confessional political conflict through ‘pillarization’, or the institutionalized recognition of different forms of Christianity through the establishment of Protestant and Catholic schools, political parties, and social welfare organizations. Large-scale immigration from Muslim countries led the Dutch government to establish a Muslim pillar, thus marking immigrants from predominantly Muslim countries by their religion as well as their national origin (Entzinger 2003; Koopmans et al. 2005). However, in recent years, Dutch multiculturalism has been challenged by a new emphasis on cultural integration through mandatory language classes and integration exams even for long-term immigrants (Entzinger 2003, 2006; Korteweg 2005).
In Germany, religious discourse is often masked by discussions of ‘cultural competence’ and national differences between Turks and Germans. This also fits with historical understandings of citizenship, which root belonging in an ethnic conceptualization of nationhood (Brubaker 1992; Koopmans et al. 2005). At the same time, a more multicultural approach to immigration developed in the 1990s with the rise of the Red–Green coalition of the social-democrats and the Green Party. The implication of these different national trajectories is that boundaries might be drawn differently, with religion more influential in the Netherlands and ethnic understandings more prevalent in Germany.

Violence against women, honour killing, and boundary formation

Discussions of gender also mark Muslim immigrants as different from majority society in both countries with violence against women in Muslim immigrant families – in its most extreme form honour killing – cast as impeding immigrant women’s integration in both societies. In the Netherlands, reports show that domestic violence is even more prevalent in immigrant communities than in non-immigrant ones (Privé Geweld, Publieke Zaak 2002; Commissie Blok 2004; TransAct 2005). Similarly, in Germany, recent research has shown that while violence against women is an issue for all women in Germany, immigrant women, particularly Turkish women, suffer disproportionately (Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend 2004).

In the literature and public debate, honour killing is a particular response to the sense that a woman or girl has violated her family’s honour, usually because of perceptions of sexual impropriety (Sev’er and Yurdakul 2001; Van Eck 2003; Mojab 2004). Men are obligated to guard their family honour and honour killings are planned by family councils. Many scholars argue that honour killing is an outcome of patriarchy rather than Islam (Pitt-Rivers 1974; Mojab 2004; Kvinnoforum 2005, p. 16). In this context, patriarchy is a form of rule through kin relations in which family and society closely overlap, and in which family is stratified according to gender and age (Kandiyoti 1988). At the same time, contemporary economic and social forces, including the migration experience, also shape the guarding of women’s honour (Maris and Saharso 2001; Abu-Lughod 2002; Kogacioglu 2004; Warrick 2005).

In European debate, discussions of honour killing become sites in which different cultural elements associated with drawing boundaries between immigrants and majority society can be analysed. Discussions of honour killing brighten boundaries insofar as they enable the voicing of concerns about Muslim immigrants that in other contexts
might be construed as anti-religious, ethnocentric or racist, while a focus on similarities between immigrant and majority society offers opportunities for boundary blurring (see also Abu-Lughod 2002; Razack 2004).

Methodology

We analyse newspaper articles that discuss honour killing, including news, background pieces, and op-eds, in three Dutch and three German newspapers. We use newspapers, not because they give an unmediated reflection of general public debate, but because they are one of the loci from which discursive strategies that influence such debate are drawn (Gamson and Modigliani 1989).

In each country, we focus on three nationally distributed quality newspapers that reflect the political spectrum. In the Netherlands, we selected De Volkskrant, NRC, and Trouw. In the German case, we focus on die Tageszeitung [TAZ], the Süddeutsche Zeitung [SZ] and the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung [FAZ]. We chose quality newspapers because this is where the discussions of honour killing took place. A search of popular publications netted very few in-depth discussions (see Koopmans et al. 2005, p. 27 for a similar finding). Moreover, by using newspapers that span the political spectrum in both countries, we ensure that our comparative conclusions are not the result of the political outlook of a given newspaper.

We selected articles that discuss honour killing by searching for the term ‘Ehre’ or ‘ Ehrenmorde ’ (honour and honour killing) or ‘ eerwraak ’ (literally ‘honour revenge’, which covers both honour killing and honour-related violence) in either the title or the body of the text. From these, we selected those dealing with honour killing as it occurs in the Netherlands or Germany (see Table 1).

Our qualitative analysis looked at which underlying ideas about differences are mobilized in dominant discourses about immigrants in the reporting on honour killing. In our initial coding of the newspapers, we asked how honour killing was defined. Guided by the literature on boundaries and the categories that emerged after multiple

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rounds of coding, we identified a discourse as reinforcing bright boundaries if honour killing is portrayed in ways that highlight differences between immigrant and majority society. We identified discourses as containing elements of boundary blurring when they emphasize similarities between immigrant and majority society. A given article may contain both bright and blurring discourses depending on who it gives voice to.

In presenting our evidence, we use quotes that exemplify the ways in which bright boundaries are established or in which those boundaries show the possibility of blurring. We emphasized quotes by immigrants, cited by others or writing themselves, because their positioning in the discussions further illuminates how boundaries between immigrant and majority society are established.

Drawing boundaries: honour killing in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands, we saw evidence for both bright and blurred boundary drawing, though in each of the three newspapers, bright boundaries dominated. Articles containing elements of boundary blurring are a smaller proportion of the articles in each newspaper and in our overall sample (see Table 2). In both cases, we found definitions of honour killing as a Muslim practice, as one informed by ethnicity and national origin, and/or as a form of violence against women. However, these references to religion ethnicity, national origin, and gender intersect differently depending on whether boundaries are bright or blurred, indicating different integration trajectories.

Drawing bright boundaries

In 53 out of 86 articles that drew boundaries, honour killing was discussed in ways that solely evoke bright boundaries. Two influential Dutch women of Muslim origin, writer, columnist, and translator Nahed Selim, and writer and politician Ayaan Hirsi Ali, give examples of how such bright boundaries between Muslims and non-immigrant Dutch are drawn in the intersection of ethnicity, national origin, religion and gender.

Table 2. Bright and blurred boundaries in Dutch newspapers

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Selim, who immigrated to the Netherlands from Egypt in the early 1980s, considers herself religious but not orthodox. She describes the Muslim community in the Netherlands as dramatically different from Dutch society, referring to several forms of gendered violence often cited in the newspaper articles as evidence for this difference:

The largest segment of Muslim youth in the Netherlands receives a traditional education from their illiterate, ignorant parents that combines the worst of Islam (discrimination against women, homosexuals, atheists and Jews) with the traditions from the oppressed and undeveloped regions of origin (forced marriages, abuse of women and children, circumcision, honour killing, etc.). The second and third generation of Muslims regard this mixture of religion and tradition from their parents’ countries of origin — where they themselves would of course never want to live — as their identity, something elevated above western norms and values. Dutch society encourages this “own identity” by facilitating and subsidizing the establishment of mosques, Islamic foundations, organizations, and schools — in effect creating an anti-integration policy. (Trouw, 19 February 2005)

Selim attributes gender inequality to Islam and gendered violence to national origin or ethnicity, using honour killing as an example of the particular form violence against women takes. Thus, ethnicity, national origin, religion and gender intersect to segregate Muslims from Dutch society and its ‘western norms and values’. Selim then argues that Dutch society is complicit in this segregation because multicultural policies reinforce the ways in which this particular blend of ethnicity, national origin, religion and gender shapes Muslims’ identity (see also Okin 1999).

Where Selim situates honour killing in tradition and gender inequality in Islam, Ayaan Hirsi Ali connects both honour killing and gender inequality to Islam:

Honour killing is a component of something bigger. It has to do with sexual morality within Islam, the desire to control women’s sexuality. A woman who does not abide by the rules is allowed to be expelled [from the community], hit, murdered. (Volkskrant 2 February 2005)

In this interview, Hirsi Ali recounts her proposal to label honour killings acts of terrorism and to hold entire families, not only individual perpetrators, accountable. She links this to her opposition to Islamic schools because through them, “We raise a cohort of children who have been born here but who have an understanding of
the relationship between men and women between their ears that we in the Netherlands do not condone’ (Volkskrant 2 February 2005). For Hirsi Ali, honour killing indicates that the relationship between Islam and gender inequality makes it impossible for orthodox Muslims to integrate into Dutch society. These Muslims’ values are diametrically opposed to those shared by ‘we in the Netherlands’, a we that Hirsi Ali places herself amongst.2

Such analyses of the link between honour killing as a form of violence against women and Islam lead right-wing politicians like Marco Pastors of Leefbaar Rotterdam (Liveable Rotterdam)3 to argue that ‘change should not come from both sides’ when it comes to the integration of Muslims into Dutch society (NRC, 19 February 2005, emphasis added). Rather, Muslims should adopt the values of Dutch society, which he defines as based in ‘Judeo-Christian humanist norms and values . . . that’s who we are’ (ibid.).

In such accounts Islam has few positive attributes and people affiliated with traditional forms of Islam are positioned as sharply different from Dutch society, particularly in the impact that their religion has on gender relations, an impact further reinforced by ‘traditional’ practices associated with national origin and ethnicity. Such discourses inscribe a divide between immigrants and majority society that can be crossed but not blurred.

Elements of boundary blurring

Eighteen out of 86 articles gave a sense that the bright boundary we describe above could be blurred (with another 15 articles containing elements both of bright and blurred boundary drawing, see Table 2). A number of these articles discuss feminist organizing among secular and religious women from Muslim backgrounds in the Netherlands, presenting an image of immigrant women not as victims of their religion, ethnicity or national origin, but as claiming full membership in their immigrant group while also questioning practices within the group.

For example, columnist Nazmiye Oral, whose parents moved from Turkey to the Netherlands before she was born, describes in her column a gathering she attended where a diverse group of women from Turkish descent discussed the phenomenon of honour killing. ‘The room was filled with girls and women, with and without headscarf, who all shared the same desire: “Violence against us women has to stop”’ (Volkskrant, 21 June 2005). Based on the ensuing discussion, Oral argues:

The vast majority of Turks do not need to be convinced that murder is no solution for salvaging family honour . . . [but] there is no
answer to the question this leaves: what is the definition of namus (honour)? The woman plays an important part in this. She has to release the man of the heavy responsibility of being the guardian of her honour by taking that responsibility back. (Volkskrant, 21 June 2005)

While Oral acknowledges that honour killing is a severe form of violence against women, she also positions women in the larger Turkish community as capable of addressing this issue, undermining images of immigrant or Muslim women as victimized and in need of rescue, images that reinforce bright boundaries between immigrants and majority society (see also Ahmed 1992; Abu-Lughod 2002). Oral shows that women representing a range of religious observances (i.e. some wearing a headscarf) who also can be identified by their national origin as Turks do not accept that violence against women is inherent in their religion or national identity.

Oral also argues that norms and values often claimed to lie only on the Dutch side of the divide between immigrants and Dutch society are already shared: ‘Freedom and the right to self determination are a universal human need that cannot be claimed by anybody. It is not western. It is human’ (Volkskrant, 21 June 2005). Such discussions offer resources that can change dominant perceptions of immigrants, particularly of immigrant women, a key element of boundary blurring. First, Oral exemplifies the possibility of membership in multiple communities. Second, appeals to universal human rights position immigrant women as different in some but not all respects from women in Dutch society, transcending identification based solely on religion or nationality.

However, this is only one side of the story. Oral argues that the process of addressing violence against women is happening ‘organically’ in Turkey where there have been dramatic changes to the law pertaining to honour killing since 2004. In the Netherlands such change is ‘infected with the label westernization. Every little piece of freedom means … betraying ones own tradition and abandoning the identity of the group or origin’ (Volkskrant, 21 June 2005). Here, Oral shows how the possibilities for boundary blurring are limited by the existing bright boundary. The discussions she reports on are weighted down by the negative portrayals of religion (Islam) and nationality (Turkishness) that is reflected in much of the debate on honour killing in the Netherlands and that make any recommendation by members of Turkish communities to alter its traditions suspect.

Another indication of boundary blurring comes from Geert Mak, a social historian whose works are widely read. Mak argues that the parliamentary debate on honour killing instigated by Hirsi Ali is about confirming the superiority of Dutch norms and values while avoiding a
true encounter between the new and the old Dutch citizens. In other words, such debates reinscribe existing bright boundaries. In a long piece on the state of integration in the Netherlands, Mak argues,

Words have enormous power, but how are we doing on action? It’s striking how this government ... speaks with two tongues. On the one hand, strong language about honour killing, arranged marriages, violence against women and other excesses that are linked to Islam. On the other hand, the current policy has little to no support for the (women’s) groups who form the front line in this battle. (NRC, 14 May 2005)

Mak directly critiques the framing of violence against women as a Muslim problem while claiming that a number of women’s organizations involving women from Moroccan or Turkish descent have had their subsidies cut. From his perspective, Dutch policy makers actively prevent the emancipation of women from an immigrant background. He argues that this shows that these debates serve to create an ‘image of the enemy’ (ibid.), the enemy being Muslim immigrants.

Such accounts outline how boundary blurring might take place by addressing the need for change on the majority side of the boundary. By positioning Muslim women as capable of altering violence against women within their communities, they also decouple the link between gender inequality and Islam and/or national origin and give less starkly different meanings to immigrant identity. This implies the possibility for integration with retention of a (fluid) immigrant collective identity. However, as Table 2 shows, the elements of boundary blurring represented by Oral and Mak do not dominate in the Dutch debate.

**Drawing boundaries: honour killing in Germany**

In Germany bright boundary drawing also dominates, though less than in the Netherlands (see Table 3). This is largely due to the overrepresentation of boundary-blurring articles in the TAZ, which represents left-wing discourses influenced by the German Green Party and its multicultural politics. As Table 3 shows, though, the TAZ’s approach to immigrant portrayals does not extend to the other newspapers which were less likely than the equivalent Dutch newspapers to contain elements of boundary blurring. As in the Dutch case, ethnicity, national origin, religion and gender are mobilized in both kinds of boundary drawing in ways that also indicate particular integration trajectories.
Drawing bright boundaries

Twenty-nine out of 56 articles in German newspapers solely drew bright boundaries. In the German context, we would expect that bright boundaries are mostly drawn through references to immigrants’ ethnonational origins and traditions, where ethnicity is imputed from membership in a particular national group, rather than their religious affiliation (Kastoryano 2002; Koopmans 2005 et al.; Yurdakul 2006). Indeed, FAZ writer Mark Siemons explicitly argues that ‘Islam cannot be made responsible here … it is actually the culture, which is so murderous’ (FAZ, 3 March 2005), something Muslim clerics agree with (TAZ, 22 February 2005; TAZ, 11 April 2005). Likewise, an article discussing reports that some high school students had cheered Sürück’s murder states: ‘Evidently, … the youth of Turkish or Arab origin had the view: the woman behaved like a German – it was her own fault. Hatun Sürück was a German woman and wanted to live like a German, namely emancipated, free, Western’ (TAZ, 22 February 2005). This description inscribes a bright boundary by juxtaposing ‘Turkish or Arab origin’ with the ‘emancipated, free, Western’, in short German, life Hatun Sürück lived. Such discourses call forth a sharp distinction between a German ‘us’ and an immigrant ‘them’. This shows how a bright boundary is constructed in the intersection of ethnicity and nationality, becoming gendered by labelling Hatun Sürück a ‘German woman.’

In newspaper articles that focus on ethnonationality to explain honour killing, religion only shows up to have its impact denied. However, other articles explicitly refer to Islam as the root cause of honour killing: ‘These so-called honour killings do not concern individual dramas but are social phenomena in societies that have a modernization deficit and that are disproportionately stamped by Islam’ (TAZ, 22 February 2005). Contrary to our expectations, then, religion is deployed to explain differences between immigrant and majority society in Germany. Quotes like this show that Islam is mobilized with the same effect as references to ethnonationality to inscribe a bright boundary.

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Both ethnonational and religious explanations for violence against women thus reinforce a sharp divide between immigrants as Muslims
and German majority society, one that is often captured by the term ‘parallelgesellschaften’ (parallel societies). An example of linking these differences comes from a discussion of the new coalition’s approach to immigrant integration associated with Chancellor Angela Merkel:

Merkel, despite wanting to have an open dialogue with Islam, will not tolerate parallel societies in Germany. The coalition agreement is entitled “Jointly Together for Germany.” Parallel societies with fundamentally different values about living together would not fit in this way of thinking. Forced marriages and so-called honour killings would not be tolerated. Mastery of the German language is a requirement for integration, emphasized the Chancellor. The dialogue with Islam has great significance, differences however should not be blurred but have to be explicitly named. Germany is a tolerant and open country that at the same time takes care of its culture. (FAZ, 30 November 2005)

Here, ending gendered practices like forced marriages and honour killings is linked to successful immigrant integration, which, in turn, is marked by learning German. This connection of gendered forms of violence, Islam, and integration through language shows how the bright boundary between immigrants and German majority society is inscribed in the intersection of ethnicity, national origin, religion and gender. The FAZ’s discussion of the new government’s proposed treatment of immigrants shows how such discourses foster approaches to integration that focus on change by immigrants while leaving dominant understandings of German national identity and institutions intact.

As we saw in the Dutch case, the ways bright boundaries are drawn in Germany often assume a homogeneous German culture into which immigrants should integrate. In such discourses, immigrants’ integration comes to depend on their capacity to adopt the values majority society is said to hold.

Elements of boundary blurring

German articles, like the Dutch ones, also contain elements of boundary blurring. Twenty-three out of 56 articles fit in this category (17 appearing in the TAZ) while 4 out of 56 show elements of both bright boundaries and boundary blurring (see Table 3). Boundary blurring occurs, first, in attempts to offer alternative representations of Turkish immigrant communities than those presented in bright-boundary discourses, and second, in appeals to human rights values as a common ground that already bridges purported differences between German Turks and German majority society. As in the
Dutch case, this means articulating alternative linkages between gender inequality, Islam and ethnonationality.

In the German newspapers, representatives from Muslim and secular Turkish organizations are positioned to create images of Turkish immigrants, Islam, and ethnicity that differ in some important aspects from those that inscribe bright boundaries. These representatives are often actively involved in their communities while simultaneously being part of majority society (Yurdakul 2006). They have crossed the bright boundary without losing their ethnic, national, or religious affiliation and embody the possibility of multiple memberships associated with blurred boundaries. In addition, Turkish women take leading roles in discussions of honour killing, which contradicts the perception that Turkish women are victimized and silenced. Furthermore, we see a description of contemporary Turkish communities in Germany in which Turkish culture is not understood as an ‘import’ brought wholesale from a distant homeland but rather as continuously developing, though now in a new national context (see also Adelson 2005). This contradicts the view of Turkish ethnonational identity or Islam as not modern that comes to the fore in the drawing of bright boundaries.

Seyran Ates exemplifies these trends. Ates, a participant in a four-way interview with representatives of Muslim religious and secular (Turkish) organizations, is a lawyer, a member of the Green Party, and an activist in the gay–lesbian movement in Germany, who also very much claims her Turkish identity, including a sense of religiosity (TAZ, 28 February 2005). In terms of how she portrays the Turkish German community, Ates inhabits a complicated position – on the one hand, she is highly critical of the German left’s multiculturalism, stating that ‘It seems to me that multikulti is organized irresponsibility’ (TAZ, 28 February 2005). She sees multiculturalism as leading to segregation much as Selim and Hirsi Ali do in the Netherlands. On the other hand, she also blurs the bright boundary such discourses create. Ates argues that ‘[T]he high status of women in Islam is a myth’ (TAZ, 22 February 2005). But rather than using this indictment of Islam to situate Islam in unchanging tradition, Ates sees change in gender relations as something that can come from within Turkish communities in Germany. The two representatives of religious organizations who participate in this interview assert that definitions of honour are changing within Turkey itself, though seemingly not in the German-Turkish communities, which appear to retain their traditions in the diaspora. In response Ates contends:

These definitions have been sticking in their [Turkish men’s] heads for decades. And to change that, we need the support of your organizations. Female lawyers and female social workers can put out
fires, but we have to start a larger process of development. For that, we need models. Youth should not have certain values imposed upon them by the majority society, but our men should tell them: *Those are our values too!* At issue is the position of women. (*TAZ*, 22 February 2005, emphasis added)

In arguing that alternative definitions of honour can be supported within Turkish communities in Germany, Ateş rejects dominant discourses that link violence against women to practices of an explicitly Turkish, i.e. ethnonational, community or to Islam. Ateş portrays a contemporary Turkish community in Germany that does not need to adopt majority values to change, giving alternatives to discourses that inscribe a bright boundary by linking ethnonationality and religion to violence against women.

Another example of alternative representations of both the Turkish communities and honour killing comes up in an interview with Hatice Akyūn, a journalist and the writer of a popular book about Turkish women and girls:

I do not deny what is reported in the media. Of course there are forced marriages, honour killings, and women who are not allowed to leave their homes. But that is only a small proportion. By contrast, there are thousands, thousands of Turkish young women in this country who live a completely normal life. I wrote a book that represents the life of a normal German-Turkish woman. At least it represents the many Turkish women that I know. The murder of Hatun Aynur Sürücü in Berlin is a tragedy. For Turks too. The Koran says nothing about honour killings. It is not Islamic and it is also not Turkish. Is a woman, a German mother, who starves her child, a typical German? No, she is inhuman. The people do not differentiate. (*TAZ*, 11 October 2005)

Akyūn positions herself both in the Turkish and the German community, using a hyphenated identity in her self-description as a ‘German-Turkish woman’ to indicate her multiple memberships. Akyūn also describes a Turkish immigrant community in which women’s existence is not defined by violence against women. At the same time, she argues that issues like honour killing represent neither Islam nor Turkish ethnonationality. Thus, Akyūn inserts an image into public discourse that contradicts those that are mobilized in the drawing of bright boundaries. While this, in and of itself, does not blur that boundary, by delinking gender inequality from ethnonational origin and Islam, Akyūn, like Ateş, creates discursive avenues for such boundary blurring.
Addressing the issue of honour killing by using a human rights frame creates another opening for boundary blurring. Safer Çınar, the former spokesperson for the immigrant association, Türkische Bund Berlin-Brandenburg [TBB] argues that religious and other Turkish organizations should say:

We maintain that honour killings, forced marriage, and the oppression of women are not compatible with our religion. But the majority society has to finally stop discussing German values as values that foreigners should adjust to. It is not a matter of German or Turkish values. It is about universal human rights. (TAZ, 22 February 2005)

Like the example given by Nazmiye Oral in the Netherlands, Çınar shows how the discourses that are used to draw bright boundaries make it difficult to address both the divide between immigrant and majority society and specific problems like honour killing. He appeals to a shared belief in human rights to bridge this boundary. Similarly, Eren Ünsal, a prominent woman in the TBB, argues that ‘We must refrain from saying Turkish or German values, there are universal human rights here’ (TAZ, 28 February 2005). Rather than categorizing Turks in Germany as trapped in tradition, whether that tradition is informed by Islam or not, these immigrants argue that liberatory values are already shared. Here, human rights are neither indigenously German (or Western) or Turkish, but universal. This framing offers a way out of the dominant dichotomy between German values (gender equality) and Turkish values (family honour) that informs the drawing of bright boundaries.

These alternative discourses share two important characteristics. First, they are mostly initiated by German Turks; there are very few Germans who create framings that could be used to draw a more blurred boundary between immigrant and majority society. Second, these alternative representations appear less often than those that create bright boundaries, therefore they seem ‘weaker’ voices. They can mostly be found in the left-wing newspaper, TAZ. In sum, while these discourses offer alternatives to the dominant representations of what it means to be an immigrant of Turkish descent in Germany, such alternatives are less dominant in German newspapers, specifically in the FAZ and SZ, than those that draw boundaries brightly.

**Conclusion**

These findings show that an analysis of the media is fruitful for understanding how the boundaries between immigrants and majority society can be shaped discursively. In both the Netherlands and
Germany, much of the newspaper reporting reinforced bright boundaries by discussing honour killing in ways that posited stark differences between immigrant and majority society. They did so by describing honour killing as a form of violence against women rooted in Islam, ethnicity or national origin, and portraying religion, ethnicity, and national origin as homogenous, unitary, and/or a-historical forces that by definition lead to gender inequality. Some articles contained possibilities for boundary blurring as they: a) approached honour killing as a violation of women’s human rights similar to other forms of violence against women; b) stressed differences within immigrant communities and (religious) practices when discussing honour killing; or c) showed how immigrants themselves work to change honour-related violence.

The resulting analysis shows that ethnicity, national origin, religion and gender intersect in giving meaning to the group identities of immigrants, though they do so in importantly different ways in Dutch and German newspapers. We found that in the Netherlands, bright boundaries are produced as violence against women is tied to religion, i.e. to Islam, which reflects how the Dutch institutionalized differences between Christian denominations and tacked Islam onto that framework. In Germany, the discussions link ethnicity to national origin to create ethnonational distinctions which then alternate with religion to explain the occurrence of honour killing. Prior research found a tendency to discuss group differences in terms of national origin, rather than religion. However, we show that in Germany honour killing is presently discussed both in terms of religious and of ethnonational difference.

In both countries, these cultural elements intersect differently in discourses that contain possibilities for boundary blurring. In such discourses, gender equality is positioned as a universal (human rights) value that is congruent with Islam, ethnicity and national identity. Yet, in each country blurring discourses are relatively rare and articulated mostly by immigrants, indicating limited change on the part of majority society.

The ways in which these boundaries are drawn has implications for general processes of assimilation. The dominance of bright boundaries in both countries indicates that absorptive assimilation, which requires giving up ones group identity and adopting the majority society’s norms and values, becomes the route towards integration. Indications of boundary blurring in both countries suggest a less assimilative form of integration.

A number of costs are associated with the dominance of bright boundaries, and the accompanying pathways for integration. First, drawing such bright boundaries forecloses the possibility of ending violence against women within immigrant communities. In particular,
from a bright boundaries perspective culture appears immutable, and thus change can only come from the outside. Yet, an understanding of the various elements of culture as flexible has enabled people to find solutions do not require dislocating women from their particular communities (Maris and Saharso 2001; Mojab 2004, pp. 20–1). If such an understanding of the link between ethnicity, religion, national origin and gender relations would become widespread, the issue of honour killing might be more effectively addressed. Second, the emphasis on honour killing can lead to a failure to appreciate the extent to which domestic violence is a problem for all women. The risk of domestic violence among non-immigrant women is great enough to call into question the implicit assumption that immigrant women would be safer if they lived like Dutch or German women (see also Narayan 1997; Bhabha 1999).

In conclusion, our analysis extends theories of boundary formation by seeing such boundaries as constructed in the intersections between different cultural resources such as ethnicity, national origin, religion and gender. From this perspective, we can begin to identify the discursive forces that retard immigrant integration in the Dutch and German contexts as well as those that might facilitate such integration. Here, we advocate for further research on how these discourses impact the integration process.

Acknowledgements

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Seventh Mediterranean Social and Political Research Meeting, Florence and Montecatini Terme, 22–26 March 2006, organized by the Mediterranean Programme of the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies at the European University Institute and at the European Studies Conference in Chicago, March 2006. We thank Stefano Allievi, Martin van Bruinessen, Randall Hansen, Marcel Maussen, Ruud Peters, Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, Bob Brym, Michal Bodemann, Jim Davis, Adam Green, Linn Clark and Nadine Blumer for their feedback.

Notes

1. We exclude a few articles containing solely factual reporting.
2. Her membership in this ‘we’ proved tenuous. In the spring of 2006 Hirsi Ali was accused of lying on her refugee application and her Dutch citizenship was (temporarily) revoked. She gave up her seat in parliament and moved to the United States to work for the American Enterprise Institute.
3. In 2005, Leefbaar Rotterdam was the largest party in Rotterdam’s city government holding 13 out of 45 seats and supplying 3 of the 7 members on the city governing council (www.rotterdam.nl).
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