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## **Stolen Honor**

### **Stigmatizing Muslim Men in Berlin**

Katherine Pratt Ewing  
(Stanford University Press, May 2008)

"This is a highly original book that must be read by anyone interested in Muslims in Europe. Ewing flips the usual questions about discourses on honor and the 'oppression' of Muslim women to focus on their obverse: the stigmatization of Muslim men. Brilliantly linking media representations to the social worlds of Turkish origin men in Germany, she provides, ultimately, a devastating analysis of the fantasies that animate the German national imaginary."

— Lila Abu-Lughod, Columbia University, author of  
*Writing Women's Worlds* and *Dramas of Nationhood*

Earlier this week Turkey's top court announced it plans to consider reinstating a headscarf ban in universities that was recently overturned. The ban, which had been in place for many years and was even included in Turkey's constitution, was overturned just last February, only to spark intense debate over the future of secularism in the country.

The headscarf is just as charged an image in the West as it is in predominantly Islamic countries like Turkey. The covered Muslim woman is a common spectacle in Western media—a symbol for the challenge facing European governments that are struggling to integrate large and growing Muslim populations. Moreover, she is often seen as a victim of male brutality, and the debate over whether the headscarf is religious freedom or oppression of women still rages in contemporary Europe.

But in all the debate over the status of the Muslim woman, how has the Muslim man been depicted?

In *Stolen Honor* (May 2008), Katherine Pratt Ewing attempts to answer that question with an ethnographic portrait of Muslim men (coincidentally, mostly of Turkish decent) in contemporary Germany. She focuses her research specifically on the Turkish Muslim immigrant community in Germany because it is a population increasingly framed in the media and public discourse as in crisis because of a perceived refusal of Muslim men to assimilate.

Throughout her thoughtful portrait, Ewing focuses on the stereotypes and stigma these men face, arguing that even when men are not directly mentioned in discussions of headscarf bans, such narratives implicitly embed negative stereotypes – stereotypes she terms "stigmatized masculinity." These stereotypes, compounded by the post-9/11 climate in

which the Muslim man is seen as a potential terrorist, have created significant social problems for Muslim men living in the West.

Ewing rounds out her ethnographic portrait by delving into the cultural roots of these prejudices and the effect they have on assimilation and possible citizenship. According to her research, the prominent negative stereotypes surrounding Muslim men are not just private prejudices – they directly influence and shape public policy, citizenship legislation, and the course of elections across Europe and throughout the Western world.

Moreover, Ewing argues that these negative stereotypes are especially dangerous because they have gone widely unnoticed and have become naturalized. Examining how and why these stereotypes have gone largely unrecognized, she discusses how Muslim men manage their masculine identities in the face of such discrimination. With *Stolen Honor*, Katherine Pratt Ewing looks at the creation of masculine identity and the struggles Muslim men face in the Western world, and in doing so, quietly turns the discussion of gender in Islam on its head.

*Katherine Pratt Ewing is Associate Professor of Cultural Anthropology and Religion at Duke University. She is the author of Arguing Sainthood: Modernity, Psychoanalysis and Islam and the editor of Being and Belonging: Muslims in the US since 9/11.*

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