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The View From Downstairs: Place and Stigma in the Lives of Caretakers & Wives

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HOUSING QUESTION OF THE OTHERS

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Housing Question of the 'Others'

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THE VIEW FROM DOWNSTAIRS: PLACE AND STIGMA IN THE LIVES OF CARETAKERS' WIVES

Gül Özyeğin

This paper examines how the structure of the apartment house caretaker's[1] work produces contempt and stigmatization that permeate the occupation and encompass the worker as well as the members of his family.

Women and children experience stigmatization differently from the male caretakers. While caretakers can effectively subvert stigma producing meanings inscribed in the definition of their work and confer a sense of honor upon themselves in their work experience, the stigma, in the case of the children and wives goes deeper than *"courtesy stigma"*. This is because the burden of "pollution" is placed on the wife as the symbolic (and material) keeper of cleanliness, and on her children as carriers of pollution who endanger the purity of the children of the tenants.

This paper is based on data gathered through interviews and observations as well as quantitative data from survey research with 103 wives of caretakers in Ankara, Turkey, who also work as domestics in middle class homes[2]. During the course of the field work I was in continuous interaction with their husbands, and conducted informal interviews with some of them.

Stigma as experienced by the family of the caretaker

The caretaker is often imagined in Turkish popular culture as the peasant in the process of modernizing, still wearing his cap (kasket) -a palpable symbol of peasantry- yet ready to adapt to urban ways. In a sitcom on public television which chronicles the daily lives of tenant families and their relationships in an apartment

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building, a young caretaker is one of the main characters. This character embodies the popular perceptions of caretakers and their occupation. His portrayal reflects an image of the caretaker as backward, slow, uneducated, lazy, and coarse but also cunning and opportunistic, connivingly tactful, yet nosy. He tries to get ahead by "kissing-up" to those who are above him. While juggling the different and often contradictory demands of the tenants day and night, he successfully avoids finecky tenants but drops everything to run to cater to the demands of others who are good tippers. He hears and sees a lot of things about personal lives of his tenants but knows how much and with whom he should strategically share his information. He strongly resents being in the position of an order-taker but pretends to be passively and submisively obeying orders given him by the tenants.

This image of the caretaker constitutes a sugar-coated version of the reality of the interaction between caretakers and tenants[3] -a significant relationship in the Turkish urban landscape. My interviews with the wives of the caretakers revealed the extent to which this relationship was experienced as a form of painful stigmatization attached not only to the caretakers but more importantly, to their wives and children as well.

The questions in the research instrument were primarily designed to elicit information on the general situation of caretaker families, specifically on the positive and negative aspects of being a caretaker's family. There were no specific questions on contempt and stigmatization. The discussions of contempt and stigmatization were initiated by 70 percent of the respondents[4].

Contempt, as seen in the following accounts, was typically expressed in terms of the isolation of the children of caretakers and the allegation of their uncleanliness.

> You are home-bound; you can't leave home for a visit for your enjoyment. You are like a prisoner. They see you as a dog in their door step, we are beneath them, they hold us in low esteem. They say we don't know how to eat food (meal time behavior); they say our homes smell.
>
> The main problem is with children. As they grow up they become unhappy, they start asking why we are caretakers.
>
> They belittle, humilite caretakers children. They look at caretakers as unclean, they are all villagers. They treat us with contempt.
>
> They despise you. We are considered unclean and ill-bred/ill-mannered. They see us as different, they don't want to associate with us.
>
> They despise caretakers. They warn their children "don't play with caretakers' kids, they would contaminate you with microbes"..We're humans too, only our appearance does not fit with theirs".
>
> Regardless of how well you dress and groom your kids, they are still identified as the caretaker's kids. They still don't play with our kids.
>
> It's the name of caretaker that is bad. We are looked down, treated as inferiors. We'are conceived as evil, unclean people... that is the worst part.

The commonality of these experiences is striking, even in the case of an atypical response: In contrast to the accounts illustrated above, a wife and mother proudly reported that "tenants never treate my children like caretaker's children" and she

added that "If you dress your children clean and then send them among other kids, they would not segragate your children as caretaker's children." Here, she does not reject the tenants' definition of a caretaker's family and their association with "uncleanliness" but she merely conveys her exceptionalism.

These testimonies voice the strongly felt existence of a stigma surrounding the occupation. Smell and bodily uncleanliness become the symbol and symptom of a deeper character structure, a sign of an essentially contemptible existence. The perception of uncleanliness goes beyond an arguable statement of fact or an accusation but takes on the status of a moral evaluation of character - of the entire family of the caretaker. The caretaker wives feel particularly singled out, for they are the ones responsible for hygiene and therefore the ones to blame.

Caretakers themselves experience the stigma in somewhat different terms, focusing more on the theme of servitude[5]. The perceived stigma of their work can be seen by looking at the data from ex-caretakers[6], who are in a position to express the intensity of the degradation they had experienced. Their wives reported that the unbearability of servitute was the reason why their husbands switched to different jobs. In some of the cases, the experience of a status decline ("he had been his own boss, when he worked on the land") must have exacerbated their sense of occupational inferiority. Their recently preferred (and never used) title of licenced heating-system operator ("ehlivetli kaloriferci") in place of the "caretaker" is an example of their attempts to achive a dissasociation from the negative associations of the occupation.

Situating the caretaker in urban space

From a sociological perspective, this stigma should be traced to its rootedness in the structure of the caretaker's specific occupational structure, rather than solely in the peasant origins of people involved in it. Although caretaking has been an occupational enclave for many migrant men from rural areas, so is the recruitment of much of the formal working class and informal occupations. However, the latter generate no such occupation-specific stigma (see previous footnote). Yet, in the formulation of the stigma the migrant origins and identity of caretakers constitute a pool of images and meanings that interact with and operate through structural features of the occupation.

The vast majority of caretakers (80 percent) in this study had come to Ankara from small villages in rural areas without previous urban experience[8] (cf. also Levine 1973). However, unlike the majority of the migrants in cities, the caretakers do not live in squatter settlements but live in the same building with their clients. Because it is a residentially-based occupation, it allows for no precise boundaries between the workplace and other spheres of life and brings in the full or peripheral involvement of household members, other than the official job holder. Although they establish and maintain communities among themselves, caretaker households are physically isolated from other migrants in squatter settlements. Caretaker families share many features with the larger squatter settlement community[9], including patterns of migration, class origin, but a collective, occupation-based identity sets them apart from

migrants in squatter settlements who are an occupationally heterogenous group. Their locality as migrants in the urban space generates distinctive grammars of life for these people, who otherwise possess a past common identity as peasants. Locality structures the totality of migrants' lives in terms of the kinds of social relations they engage in: the housing conditions, the different levels of family privatization, the kinds of schools their children attend, and the relationship of these people with modernity and urbanity. In other words, this division speaks more directly to the ways in which "migrantness" is lived out. If we use the metaphor of "outsider" to define the marginalized position of the migrant in urban space, then the caretakers could be called "outsiders within"[10] to describe their deeper experience of marginality by virtue of their being more inside within, whereas squatter settlement migrants could be called "outsiders" to capture their community-based collective experience of relative distance from the "within." As we will see, it is this "outsiders within" status of caretaker families and their claim to an equal use of urban space that challenge the existing divisions in the city and cause pollution, calling for the deployment of "pollution beliefs" by their middle class employers.

Groundedness of the caretaker family's stigma in the caretaker's occupation

Caretaking is, in many ways, an occupation that resists definition along the axes of informal/formal, premodern/modern, and servitude/service polarities commonly used in conceptualizing the social-cultural aspects of work and the identity of the worker. The caretakers' work encompasses a series of activities and work roles ranging from servitute to self-directed work with the implications of autonomy in controlling conditions of his labor .

The caretakers' main duties include operating the central-heating system, caring for the maintenance of the apartment house (keeping the building and grounds clean), taking the residents' daily trash out, buying and distributing fresh bread[11] twice a day, doing grocery shopping for the residents, providing building security, collecting monthly maintainence fees from the tenants, and putting out the refuse from the coal-burning central heating furnace. These duties may extend to include walking the tenants' dog, tending the garden, or taking the children of tenants to school.

Caretaking is full of anomalies. The problematic nature of the relationship between social identity and occupation has been a major preoccupation of sociology of occupation and work, especially in the case of professionals. What makes the caretaking institution especially problematic is that it also borders on servitute — one that involves multiple masters (an average of about 14 masters per caretaker in my survey[12]). But this multiplicity also allows a space of maneuvre which subverts the relationship by allowing the worker to pit one master against the other. The existence of multiple- masters with their differing conceptions of what the services and work priorities of the caretakers should be prevents establisment of any consensus. This results in the caretaker's maintaining some control over the decisions of what work to

do, of to whom he should serve first and over the disposition of his time. And yet it is not only the worker but his family who is implicated in the relationship and whose social identity is defined primarily in terms of his occupation as well. In fact, caretaking becomes an occupation that defines the whole family, not only the caretaker himself. This is best evidenced by the established and highly unmarked phrase in the popular urban vernacular: the "caretaker's family"-also used by the caretaker's wives in reference to their own families ("we are caretakers"). It is a circumstance reminiscent almost of serfdom. Finally, caretaking is organized by the state. It is an area of work that has been formalized as a service occupation by the labor legislation and the condominium ownership laws[13] since1970, which gave the caretakers formal worker status. They have been included in a mandatory social security program under which caretakers, like other workers in the formal sector, are covered and protected by the labor regulations of the state through pension, paid holidays, severance pay, health and safety regulations, right to pension for disability and medical coverage. His spouse and children are also automatically covered by free health insurance. They are paid the official monthly minumum wage by the apartment house tenants[14].

The caretaker lives, always with his family, in dingy apartments in the basement of the building -a job compensation that offers little in the way of professional pride. Their housing conditions not only preclude any constitution of a shared sense of place and space with tenants but constitute an important element in the formulation of stigma and contempt. Many apartment houses visited for this study, new or old, had caretaker quarters placed under ground and had confined the caretaker and his family to dark, airless, and damp rooms with inadequate windows. The majority (70 percent) of caretakers' dwellings consists of only two rooms with a half kitchen and often no adequate bathing facilities[15]. This kind of accommodation often does not allow a separation of household space in terms of age and sex, thus minimizing privacy. The thoughts and feelings of the caretakers and their wives on the subject are articulated by statements such as " we are stuffed in under the ground", and "our children do not see the face of the sun." In other words, a "contemptible" existence is reflected in the spatial structure of the apartments they are given. The absence of sociospatial boundaries for eating, sleeping, socializing, and bathing contributes to the degradation, conjuring up images of an urban peasant way of life.

The caretaker's occupation entails obvious servitude, yet, it has, at the same time, many structured possibilities for strategically undermining its negative effects. Many of the tasks and roles assigned to caretakers are carried out outside the "work place" (apartment building). Getting out to buy bread, newspaper and groceries for tenants and going to the bank to make payments for the building's utilities mean that the caretakers often operate without any supervision by a watchful employer who is in fact non-existent as a person[16]. This gives him the opportunity to organize his own rhythm of work. All tenants are the caretaker's "masters", yet they give orders without having much effective power over his labor process. It is service to an imprecise lord.

The fact that the caretaker often labors away from the apartment building generates meanings about caretakers' conduct and character which often render them simultaneously suspect, untrustworthy and powerful. There are two very plausible

sources for such beliefs. First, it is suspected that the shopkeepers may be contributing to the income of caretakers by paying commissions either in the form of cash or in kind. In a typical neighborhood of several closely located groceries, butchers, and bread bakeries, the caretaker who shops for an average of 14 households (as in my survey) is a rather respectable customer[17]. Second, the possibility of the caretakers' sharing of their knowledge about the personal, domestic lives of tenants with people with whom they associate, such as shopkeepers and other caretakers, and other tenants is acutely recognized. Thus, the very conditions that bestow some real power to the caretaker also constitute some of the sources of his stigma and distrust.

The same is true for the tasks he carries out inside the building. The co-existence of two spheres of life in the same space makes the caretakers' time available to his masters/employers without the limits of a schedule. He is potentially kept on call all day and night for all sorts of "emergencies." What constitutes an emergency is quite subjective. For example, apartment no. 2 unexpectedly receives a guest; she needs some pastry to go with the tea; apartment no.5 while preparing her toddlers' lunch remembers she's out of milk; no. 10's son returns from school sick and needs some cough medicine; no.15 is off to Istanbul and needs the caretaker carry down his luggage; a stranger wants to know whether Mr.X lives in this building. His most obvious counter-strategy is, of course, to exercise a good deal of discretion in how -if ever- he responds to such emergencies. However, the more he exercises discretion, the more the "evidence" or "stigmata" that he really is the lazy good-for-nothing person that the dissatisfied tenants have known all the while.

The following time-schedule for a caretaker, which was framed and hanged on the wall of the entrance in one of the apartment-houses I visited, is a striking illustration of the way in which the stabilization of work hours and the establishment of a locus of work are impossible. While it could have the effect of reducing stigma by means of apparent depersonalization and formalization of the caretaker's routines, I will argue that this type of scheduling also has the effect of strengthening the stigma.

Table 1. Time schedule for caretakers

5:30	6:30am	Starting the central heating furnace
6:30	7:30am	Bread and newspaper service
7:30	10:00am	Rest
10:00	11:00am	Shopping Services
11:00	12:30am	Rest
12:30	2:00pm	Noon Shopping Services
2:00	4:00pm	Cleaning
4:00	6:30pm	Rest
6:30	8:00pm	Trash Collection

P.S:

1. Sundays are the caretaker's day off.
2. The caretaker can not leave the apartment house within his work hours, even if he completes his duties.

This schedule makes the service requests during the off-hours of the caretaker implausible. However, the tenants do have "emergencies", as mentioned above. And since the relationship between tenant and caretaker is highly personal, they would tend to request special, off duty favors - and could get them on the discretion of the caretaker. This, however, is what happens anyway without such schedules, and is a rich source of gossip about perceived misbehavior, as aforementioned. The literal specification of several long "rest" periods or "forced leisure time"[18], further legitimates the existing perceptions of laziness. The schedule literally mocks itself by its very statement. Notice the paradoxical postscript. Who operates the heating system on Sundays, if Sunday is day off ? How is it possible that the caretaker performs his shopping duties without leaving the building?[19]

The erratic condition of work and leisure leads people to regard it as an easy occupation - despite the 5:30 a.m to 8.00 p.m. stretch of the job as declared in the above schedule. Ironically, some of the caretakers' wives shared the same sentiment when they complained that the work is not challenging enough to fully occupy their husbands, thereby leaving them idle and leading them to some bad habits (going to coffehouses, for instance). When they were asked what their husbands do in their spare/leisure time, many women responded with a somewhat figurative saying, "all of his time is leisure time." One of the women, whose husband wants to take an illicit second job, expressed the idle and captive condition of her husband by saying, "look (pointing out her husband), he sits around the house all day, like a woman."

In short, the structured absence of any direct supervision and the existence of erratic patterns of work, as well as laboring away from the "workplace," are sources of the stigma associated with the caretaker's illegitimate power - the perceived laziness and the self-serving, wheeling-dealing type of engagements[20].

Differentials of stigma

Goffman (1961:30) refers to the individuals who are closely connected to a stigmatized individual such as "the loyal spouse of the mental patient, the daugher of the ex-con, the parent of the cripple, the friend of the blind, the family of hangman" as "persons with a courtesy stigma." In the case of the children and wife of the caretaker, the stigma that attaches to them goes beyond "courtesy stigma." In a real sense, they are partial carriers of the original stigma, for the stigma is placed on the entire family and its residence in the dingy underground of the building. The wife and the childen are subject to stigma also for the same reason as the caretaker himself, for they often help out or substitute for the caretaker.

The strategies employed by the caretaker for reducing the experienced stigma are not available to his wife and children. Their only option is to distance themselves from the image of the "caretaker family." In fact, their location in the building and the conventional means of accessing the caretaker undermines the efforts of distanciation. The boundary between work and home is routinely breached by the interruptions of the tenants by calling loudly from the stairway of the building or conveniently pushing the buzzer's button linked to a bell inside the caretaker's living quarters. These buzzers, one might think, are remnants of an older order that would have

disappeared with the formalization of the occupation. On the contrary, they are increasingly becoming a common fixture of apartment houses as more and more luxury apartments are built with intercom systems. The existence of bells not only deny the use of a well defined schedule but necessitate the involvement of his wife and children. The caretaker is conventionally obliged to respond whenever a resident buzzes with a request for service from the caretaker. Since the nature of most caretaking tasks is such that they require no special knowledge and skill, the obligation can be potentially carried out by his wife and/or children. The use of unwaged family labor plays an important role in defining the servitude aspect of the occupation.

Only a small percentage of the wives never get involved with the work of their husbands. There is also no relationship between their work loads and their not becoming involved with the apartment-house work. Of the 66 wives (71 percent of the total) who regularly or occasionally "help out" their husbands, close to one half perform tasks in three areas of work (42.4 percent). A substantial proportion of women with their own heavy work schedules (who work "5-7 day" a week) still perform multiple tasks associated with caretaking (33.3 percent) although less than their counterparts with light weekly work loads (53.8 percent). Thus, although some wives are rescued from some tasks of apartmant-house caretaking by their own heavy work schedules, their own paid work is not effective enough to remove them entirely from the work of the caretaking. Here, although small in numbers, it would be instructive to look at the situation of women caretakers to see whether they can deploy their husbands' labor. Of the nine women caretakers, six (out of 8 valid cases) do receive help from their husbands, mainly in the areas of operating the heating system and shopping. Similar to the wives' pattern of helping the husbands, husbands who are in part-time employment situations tend to carry out the work of the apartment-house caretaking in a greater number of areas than their full-time counterparts.

There is a significant difference between tasks carried out predominantly by the caretaker and his children and those carried out by the wife. Apartment-house cleaning, although carried out only periodically, constitutes a physically laborous task and often requires the joint labor of the husband and wife and is the most frequently performed task by the wives. Starting the central heating furnace is the second task women perform most often. This is the core task for which he has a licence/certification that is acquired through a brief (3 weeks) formal training. And, as we have seen, the caretaker would like to define his occupational identity through this task. Yet since it requires getting up early, it is delegated to the wife at the "backstage." Wives are less involved in outdoor activities of the caretaking. But by distributing bread, they take part in some phases of this activity; they do complete what is partly done by the husband or the children. In a way, women perform the kinds of tasks that keep them away from the position of directly taking orders from the tenants, thereby disguising their labor as well.

The caretaking institution, despite its formalization as a service occupation, does not allow the caretaker to become an individualized wage laborer. It reconstitutes the migrant family as a laboring unit with a male head of the household who continues acting as the head of the "enterprise" and directing the labor process. It gives the

husband great discretion to organize work and allocate his own, as well as the family members', labor power. Therefore, caretaking can be described as a labor system based on the exploitation of family labor that both builds on and reinforces the gender and age-based hierarchical relations within the family. An apartment-house recruits an individual wage laborer but always presupposes the recruitment of the whole family or family acting as a labor unit. The tenants recruit one but get the rest of the family free. This presupposition is not necessarily "imposed" from above but typically shared even by the women themselves. One example is that majority of the wives, when probed as to why they take part in their husbands' work, were baffled by the very question, for they had no "explanation" to offer for this situation which struck them as natural. Particular reasons surfaced only in rare cases. One of those instances is in the case of husbands who are defined as "lazy" and "irresponsible" by their wives, since they jeopardize their employment by not complying with the requirements of the job would. In another instance, it is the caretaker's having "too much work" due to his moonlighting or having an apartment-house with too many units which necessiates the wives' greater participation. The caretaking job puts an emphasis on work commitment by, and co-operation among, family members and reinforces their interdependence. Women resent having to work for the apartment-house but see it as a necessity. Being a caretaker's family is having to do the caretaking tasks. One woman remarked ironically that "you become the daughter-in-law of all the residents/tenants of the apartment-house," expressing a perceived reconstitution of her role as a hard-working bride at the service of her status superiors in the domestic hierarchy of the patrilocal extended households of her early marital years in the village. That unpaid family laborer status of the village is recreated in the caretaking institution. The caretaker husband enjoys the privileges the structure of the occupation generates at mainly two levels: he retains his authority derived in part from his autonomy to organize the labor process and he has more leisure (or more correctly, idle) time than his wife.

The bounded nature of the occupation is also legally sanctioned. According to the labor legislation regulating the caretakers' work conditions[21], a caretaker should supply a laborer to work in his absence when he is on vacation or in a case of emergency. This substitute could be his wife, child, nephew or even a friend (like the caretaker next door), and, more often than not, the substitute is a member of the caretaker's family.

It should not be assumed that caretakers happily appropriate their children's labor. Quite the contrary, they try to protect their children from the stigma. In this study, among those who have eligible children, about a third reported that the caretaker received help from his children. However, only 5 percent "regularly" and 22 percent "occasionally" received help. Children were mostly involved in shopping (14 percent), followed by collecting trash (7 percent). There are even a couple of reported instances in my sample of caretakers leaving their previous employment on account of the mistreatment of their children.

Caretakers can effectively subvert stigmatizing meanings inscribed in the definition of their work and confer honor upon themselves in the very process of doing

their work. Aspects of bringing in honor / dignity in an otherwise degrading or "dirty" work have been analyzed in many studies since Everett Hughes' much quoted classical statement urging students of work and occupations to study "arrangements and devices by which men make their work tolerable, or even glorious to themselves and others" (1971, 342). As many studies show, the source of "dishonor", "indignity" and "degradation" of an occupational group does not lie in their handling and dealing with "dirt". It is the "outsiders" who interfere in the relationship between the worker and his her object of work rather than dirt itself which poses the greatest threat to the defilement of their dignity, honor (cf. Meara 1974, Hood 1988, Romero 1988, Dill 1988).

In the case of the caretaker, he finds honor in those aspects of his work which offer him self-worth and indispensability -a sense of honor which is independent of stigma, prestige and social ranking in the larger society. He represents the apartment building to outside world, his daily work helps to define the status of the apartment building; a clean, well maintained apartment confers him status- a status often achieved by his appropriation of the labor of his wife. It allows him an identification with the place of work ("my apartment house") and pride in the status of the building in relation to other buildings in the neighborhod. In a very real sense, he becomes the master of the building[22]. He deals with strangers (salespersons, beggars) and protects the building and the tenants from potentially disturbing and threatening elements. He provides order. His relationship to the apartment house is a relationship similar in some respects to that between a housewife and her home, especially when looked at in terms of the effects of their daily work. Both the caretaker and the housewife strive to establish and maintain order by removing disturbing, unpleasant, threatening elements from their respective spheres to protect their superiors (husband and tenants, respectively)[23]. Furthermore, in both cases, their status enhancement by the removal of dirt is aided by the domestic worker (i.e. most often a caretaker's wife).

However, the caretaker's wife and children experience stigmatization differently, because an important source of the stigma attached to them is related to concerns of boundary maintaince and pollution prevention by the employer classes. As we have seen in the accounts of the wives, the pervasive link between "uncleanliness" and "contempt" is established through children. In other words, the burden of pullution is placed on the wife as the symbolic keeper of cleanliness and on the children as they are polluted by their family and, in turn, endanger the purity of children of the tenants.

Looked at from a Douglasian perspective, stigma is attached to those persons and groups that reside at the margins of society; the function of the stigma is to define the margins. Douglas says witches, novices, and unborn children are threatening, because they have no official place in the patterning of society. She goes on to say, marginal persons, groups whose status is ambigious or weakly defined, are dangerous because the margins are the most vulnerable point in any social structure; by being over-anxious about the margins, the "center" strengthens itself. Viewed from this perspective, caretaker families are marginals (outsiders within) in the city for

they belong neither the apartment-house (in the same sense as tenants do), nor the squatter settlements (like their fellow migrants, who are themselves marginal in their own way). Marginal groups are usually seen as carriers of pollution and disorder. They are handy objects of blame for everything that goes wrong at the "center."

While at the bottom of the class hierarchy and a subordinate group in cultural and economic terms, caretaker families are still to be feared avoided because of the symbolic threat of close contact with them. Urban classes are concerned with the confusion caused by the blurring of their boundaries. This concern with the maintaince of boundaries and fear of "pollution" seems to be greater in the middle classes, which are more concerned with establishing status distinctions (as middle classes have a particular class insecurity, what Ehrenreich called "fear of falling"). Social distancing from the caretaker families is, in this sense, a typical practice in the self-definition of the identity of the middle classes. But we should first ask under what conditions boundaries get to be perceived as under threat. The location of caretakers' home at the bottom of the apartment building and their positions as the order takers do not seem to be strong enough markers of the boundaries. I argue that social boundaries are perceived to be undermined when they are in actual fact permeable and when a great deal of mixing is going on through children - as in our case. Not only the proximity of living quarters but also the caretaker families' claim for a fair share of opportunities that the city promises make such mixing a reality.

The possible threat of "mixing" that may be caused by the caretaker and his wife is handled by established rituals. Social contacts of a highly ritualized type occur between caretaker families and tenants to assert and reassert class and status differences in the form of an asymetrical participation in the systems of exchange which mark the boundaries of the groups. For instance, the giving of unreciprocated gifts by the tenants places caretaker families in a low status position. During religious holidays when social visits are exchanged between relatives, friends, neigbors and acquaintances, caretakers visit the tenants but their visits are not reciprocated by the tenants. This is considered normal due to established cultural norms, which allow the superiors (in age and status), to not reciprocate without appearing unfair .

However, in the case of children, there are either no routinized forms of exclusion or they are more difficult to actually implement. Hence the unregulatable "mixing" of the caretaker's children with others in the neighborhood is a main source of stigma. They go to the same school with tenants' kids; they may even share the same desk in the class room, play at the same playground, 'hang out' at the same neigborhood corner, get hair cuts in the same barber-shop, ride in the same school-bus, and take the same route when they walk to school[24]. These are not mere examples: this mixing of children, which may even lead to cross-class romantic attachments, is a structural condition created by the very existence of this occupation.

Conclusion

In this paper , I looked at the occupation of apartment-house caretakers. The structure of this occupation is such that it incorporates servitute with modern service work, exhibiting imprecise boundaries between the locus of work and home. By

their inexpensive services, caretakers create an orderly and comfortable existence for middle and upper class urban populations in Turkey. This occupation creates a meeting place for urban/modern and "modernizing" populations by situating caretaker households into an "outsiders within" position in urban space, literally symbolized by the location of their apartments at the bottom of the building. Thus, despite their sharing of the same gate and roof and calling the same building "home", the caretaker families and the tenants face each other as people from "upstairs" and "downstairs" and experience cross class relations in these terms.

Under conditions where physical segregation and distance is inadequate, the creation and maintenance of the boundaries between groups become an issue and require a greater attention to social segregation to minimize the informal and intimate social interaction not checked by the existing rituals. The response to the perceived 'pollution' is the multiplication and elaboration of symbolic means in classifying and segregating various strata of the society[25]. In the case examined here, uncleanliness, smell, demeanor, and manners constitute the terms of a symbolic distancing and ranking device, provided by the stigmatized group's actual involvement in 'dirty' work, their living under unhygienic housing conditions, as well as their peasant background.

Notes

Closest approximation for this job title in the North American context is "Janitor" or "Super", or the "Concierge" in France, though neither of them fully describes Turkish caretakers' work and occupational identity. For a study of Janitors in the US context during the 1950's, see Ray Gould (1952).

The data used here is a part of my dissertation research, titled "Work, Family and Community in the Informal Sector: The Case of Turkish Domestic Workers". My entire data consist of interviews with 160 domestic workers in Ankara during a one year field study in 1989 and 1990. 103 of those are wives of caretakers and it is a representative sample . Of the 160 women, 57 domestic workers who lived in squatter settlements constitute my comparison group. It should be also noted that 103 domestic workers includes 7 women who were officially employed as caretakers in addition to working as domestic workers. They, as female caretakers, represent a pioneer group, a recent phenomenon. This last group is disregarded in this paper.

I use the term "tenant" in this paper for the sake of convenience. This term will be used to refer to middle and upper-middle class residents of an apartment house, regardless of their real status as owners or tenants, to whom a caretaker provides services. The gender of the "tenant" is woman in a double sense: first women are the chief "clients" of caretakers, from whom the caretaker takes "orders"; and secondly, from the perspective of this paper, women as mothers are the main actors in the formulation of the stigma. Thus when the wives of caretakers in this study state that "..they teach their kids not to play with caretaker's kids", the unspecified "they" in this discourse refers to mothers who are concerned with the protecting the purity of their children.

Twenty percent reported no "negative aspect of being a caretaker's family."

5 According to a study (Senyapili cited in Culpan 1978: 170-174) conducted among the population of different squatter settlements in Ankara and Istanbul, caretakers were placed at the bottom of occupational hierarchy in terms of characteristics of their job, job security and prestige. Although there is no necessary connection between stigma and occupational prestige, it is worth noting that from the perspective of caretakers' fellow migrants, caretaking also occupies the lowest place in occupational pres-

6 Forty-four percent of the 57 domestic workers in my squatter settlement sample were married to men who had at one point in their lives worked as caretakers.

7 The licensing of the "operators" (i.e. caretakers) of the heating system was required as part of a measure that regulated the rights and responsibilities of the condominium owners sharing the same building. Heating systems in Turkey until recently were coal based, which, combined with backward technology, entails frequent and dirty manual intervention by an "operator."

8 Caretaking was the first job held by 61% of the caretakers upon arrival to the city. The work experience as caretaker ranges between 2 months to 28 years. with an average of 8.1. Mean age of the caretakers in the study was 34.6, with a range of 22 to 58. Their wives' mean age was 30.8, with a range of 18 to 50. The average household size is 4.3.

9 It is well documented that the migrant families in Turkey tend to establish neighborhoods in squatter settlement areas which are highly homogenous in terms of family kin, village, and town of origin (Duben 1982). Sencer Ayata (1988) explores the meanings given to living in an apartment-house among a group of Ankara residents , who recently moved to the apartman-houses from squatter settlements. His analysis reveals that these two types of residentiality are defined in opposition to each other by these "new" tenants; while the squatter settlement embodies negative values attached to ruralism, traditionalism, the apartment house represents modernity, modern values. From the perspective of the caretaker families I studied, since their apartment-house residency is inextricably linked with the occupation, the meaning of being a resident in an apartmant-house is quite different. For starters, the definition of being a "tenant" includes having access to a caretaker in the building.

10 I'm borrowing this notion from Patricia Hill Collins (1991), who uses it to describe the marginal status of Black intellectuals in academic settings. She argues that by making creative use of their marginality, these "outsiders within" produce distinctive knowledge.

11 Bread is the main component of diet in Turkey.

12 This is the average number of households which a caretaker serves.

13 See Sener Gultekin and Gurel Bulent (1978), Tum Hukuk Sorunlariyla Kapicilar, cited in Oya Culhan (1979).

14 This new "service worker" status also enabled caretakers to form a union without the right to collective bargaining, because their "workplaces" consist of single workers.

15 About 18% live in apartments with single room; 11% live in apartments that have more than 2 rooms. (As mentioned in footnote 8, the average household size is 4.3.)

16 Apartment-buildings' financial and other matters are managed by a "board of managers" ("yonetim kurulu") elected by the owners of the apartments each year; one member of this body functions as the chief "manager" to handle the matters regarding the maintanence of the building, and, as such, he is the highest person in command vis a vis the caretaker. Yet, due to his absence from the workplace of the caretaker, he can rarely act as an immediate supervisor. Retired army officers who have plenty of time on their hands and skills to discipline the caretaker are notorious managers.

17 I should emphasize here that although super-markets are increasingly becoming a fixture of Turkish cities since the late 70's, small, diversified stores which are organized on a clerk-service (usually the owner himself) basis continue to serve neighborhod households in significant ways. For example. meats are sold in butcher shops and vegetables in green groceries.

18 Sarah H. Maza (1983) coins this phrase in relation to lackeys under the Old Regime in France. Despite vast differences between caretakers and servants in pre-industrial and industrializing Europe, it might nevertheless be fruitful to make certain comparisons.

19 Note that the hours mentioned in the schedule are so meticulously specified because there is an 8 hour legal limit to the workday --which is the sum of the hours of work listed in the schedule.

20 Worthy of note in the context of "laziness", is the fact that it is not uncommon for a caretaker to work for more than one apartment building. Thirteen percent of caretakers hold a second caretaking job in another building. Furthermore, it was found that some caretakers (18%) also engage in other income generating informal activities. Some of these included a plasterer, an injection giver ('igneci'), street-peddlers, and unskilled constuction workers-hired on a day-rate base.

21 Labor legislation provides for one day off a week (Sundays) and an annual vacation period (ranging from 12 to 24 workdays per year, depending on the lenght of the service), Is Kanunu Tuzuk ve Yonetmelikleri cited in Culhan (1979: 48).

Tenants address him by adding "master" after his given name. "Master" is here a device for giving him a sense of worthiness. This discursive inversion of "master-servant" relation is possible, because "the peasant is the master of the nation"--the slogan created by the elite of the Turkish Republic in an effort to incorporate the rural masses in the process of transforming a defunct empire into a modern nation-state.

3 Davidoff (1974) makes a similar analogy between servant and wife in Victorian and Edwardian England, although the basis of her analogy is different. Paternalistic domination, she argues, by definition structured the same kind of relation, shipbetween these two pairs, "master-servant"and "husband-wife." Thus subordination to a master or a husband has similar meanings in circumstances where subordinate groups have "few other links to the wider society" and the right to be independent.

4 I think we can also talk about a sense of future -oriented fear of "mixing" from the perspective of the middle classes. It is worth noting that compared with other migrant families who live in squatter settlements, children of caretaker families are more likely to achieve inter-generational mobility. Caretakers' children have higher educational attainment and lower drop-out rates than children of squatter settlement families.

5 See, Leonore Davidoff (1974 and 1976) for a thorough analysis of the operation of a whole symbolic system based on the divisions between dirt and cleanliness through which distinctions based on class and gender were elaborated throughout the 19th century in England.

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