

It is truly an honour and a great encouragement to receive the KRAKA Award – especially as a young researcher who defended my PhD dissertation just over a month ago. I would like to say a heartfelt thank you on my own behalf, but even more so on behalf of the minority ethnic men whose experiences are now receiving attention – experiences they have carried with them throughout their lives, which have far too often been rendered invisible or silenced.

The article “‘Don’t show them anger because then they think we are criminals’: unequal conditions of anger for minority ethnic young men” sheds light on how young minority ethnic men with brown skin in Denmark face unequal conditions for expressing anger and having their anger recognised as a legitimate response to experienced injustice. The analysis shows that these young men often encounter situations of injustice in their everyday lives that make them angry, while at the same time experiencing that they do not have the same opportunities as others to respond to this anger without risking being perceived as threatening or criminal. Put simply, this means that this group of young men does not have the same opportunity to draw on the transformative potential of anger when confronted with injustice.

This article is a part of my PhD dissertation “The (limited) space of anger: unequal conditions of anger among young people across social positions in society”, in which I explore different aspects of anger’s unequal conditions through four academic articles. This particular study emerged in the wake of the first article in the dissertation, “Angry Place Claims and the Deceptive Female Body,” which examines the challenges and limitations women’s bodies may encounter in relation to anger. When I began exploring what happened when ethnicity and skin colour became part of the analysis, some striking parallels became visible. Suddenly, the white woman and the brown man – two groups not often immediately associated with one another in Danish society – shared experiences of restricted access to legitimate anger, though in very different ways.

Anger is a universal emotion with important potential at both the individual and societal level. But when access to that potential is unequally distributed, anger also becomes a valuable lens through which to examine social inequality. It highlights who has the opportunity to respond to injustice and thereby create change – and who instead must suppress their anger, accept the status quo, or in the worst case risk sanctions for expressing it. When access to legitimate anger is unequally distributed based on the body’s social and symbolic position in society, certain young people are systematically excluded from the opportunity to challenge inequality and injustice. In my view, that is a significant democratic issue in any society.

A sincere thank you to the Danish Association for Gender Research for helping bring attention to this issue through this award. I hope the prize can contribute to creating greater awareness of the forms of inequality that minority ethnic brown men continue to face in Danish society.

THANK YOU!

*Betül Özkaya*

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