

Müzeyyen Pandir (Isik University, Turkey) (online): *The construction of Syrian refugee identity by symbolic annihilation*

This paper is about identifying the ways in which some Syrian refugees and refugee experiences are underrepresented or made invisible in media representations. This mediated invisibility is partly achieved through representing the refugee within usual stereotypical patterns which reduce the experiences of the refugee only to a few (victimhood or being a threat) and partly through symbolic annihilation, which is defined as the absence of representation (Gerbner, 1976). Through an analysis of newspaper photographs published between the years 2011-2015, this paper discusses that what is made invisible in Syrian refugee representations are the diversity of their lived and positive experiences and characteristics, such as being entrepreneurs, well-educated people and even “normal people” enjoying the daily life. Diversity in representation is important because it reflects the actual complexity of lived experiences of refugees and brings a challenge to the stereotypical refugee images. Portraying the diverse refugee experiences also emphasizes the human agency which is neglected in the case of refugee/migrant issues. Consequently the study demonstrates and discusses that the identity of Syrian refugee is constructed not only through manifest representations but also through underrepresentation and symbolic annihilation.