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MATERNAL ACTIVISM, FEMINISM AND WORLD POLITICS: THE CASE OF THE SATURDAY MOTHERS IN TURKEY

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MATERNAL ACTIVISM, FEMINISM AND WORLD POLITICS: THE CASE OF THE SATURDAY MOTHERS IN TURKEY

A Master's Thesis

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To Saturday Mothers and all women who struggle for making the world a more just place



MATERNAL ACTIVISM, FEMINISM AND WORLD
POLITICS: THE CASE OF THE SATURDAY
MOTHERS IN TURKEY

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis addresses the question of whether or not the Saturday Mothers and their protests can be seen as serving feminist objectives in Turkey, situating it within the broader context of maternal activism and feminism in world politics. It draws on an analytical framework derived from Carreon and Moghadam's (2015) work on mothers' mobilization around the world, and seeks to establish the extent to which the Saturday Mothers are socially connected to the women's/feminist movement in Turkey and/or inspired by a feminist vision. Towards this end, data is collected through a series of interviews with participants of the Saturday Mothers, members of the Human Rights Association, members of a women's organization and feminist scholars, as well as a systematic analysis of the feminist journals of *Pazartesi* and *Amargi*. Beyond considerations related to social connectedness and visions, different feminist theories are used as analytical tools for a general assessment of the question. The thesis concludes that no meaningful connection exists between

the Saturday Mothers and the women's/feminist movement in Turkey, that a feminist vision has played no role in inspiring the Saturday Mothers and their protests, and that the latter does not really serve feminist objectives in Turkey. Despite this, an analysis paying attention to the specific historical and socio-political trajectories of Turkey reveals that the Saturday Mothers and their protests have an impact on gender relations at both individual and societal levels, even if these fall short of contributing to a significant transformation and emancipation for women.

Keywords: Feminism, Feminist Theories, Gender, Maternal Activism, Saturday Mothers

ÖZET

ANNELİK AKTİVİZMİ, FEMİNİZM VE DÜNYA POLİTİKASI: TÜRKİYE’DE CUMARTESİ ANNELERİ VAKA ÇALIŞMASI

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Bu tez, Cumartesi Anneleri ve eylemlerini dünya politikasındaki annelik aktivizmi ve feminizm içerisinde konumlandırarak Cumartesi Anneleri ve eylemlerinin Türkiye’de feminist amaçlara hizmet edip etmeyeceğini araştırma sorusuna cevap bulmayı amaçlamıştır. Bu sorudan hareketle, Carreon ve Moghadam (2015) tarafından oluşturulmuş analitik çerçeveden hareketle, Cumartesi Annelerinin Türkiye’deki kadın hareketi veya feminist hareket ile olan olası sosyal bağlantısı ve feminist düşüncelerin Cumartesi Anneleri/eylemlerindeki yeri araştırılmıştır. Gerekli veriler; Cumartesi Anneleri katılımcıları, İnsan Hakları Derneği’nin üyeleri, bir kadın örgütünün katılımcıları ve iki feminist akademisyen ile yapılmış olan mülakatların yanı sıra Pazartesi ve Amargi feminist dergilerinin bütün sayılarının sistematik analizinin yapılması sonucunda toplanmıştır. Sonuç olarak, Türkiye’deki kadın organizasyonları/feminist organizasyonlar ve Cumartesi Anneleri arasında bir ilişki bulunmadığı gibi, feminist görüşlerin de Cumartesi Anneleri ve Cumartesi eylemleri içerisinde yer almadığı belirlenmiştir. Cumartesi

Annelerinin Türkiye’de feminist amalara hizmet etmediđi sonucuna varılmıř olsa da, Türkiye’nin zgl tarihsel ve sosyo-politik kořulları gz nnde bulundurulduđunda, Cumartesi Annelerinin bireysel ve toplumsal dzeyde bazı toplumsal cinsiyet iliřkilerini etkilediđi ortaya ıkmıřtır. Ancak bu etkiler, kadınlar iin toplumsal cinsiyet rollerinin tamamen dnřmn sađlamamıř ve toplumsal cinsiyet rolleri aısından tam bir zgrleřmeyi getirmemiřtir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Anelik Aktivizmi, Cumartesi Anneleri, Feminist Teoriler, Feminizm, Toplumsal Cinsiyet

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On 27 May 1995, at 12:00 pm, Turkey witnessed a group of people who were sitting silently without any political slogans in front of Galatasaray High School in Taksim Square which is one of the most visible and central locations of Istanbul. The only clue for a passerby to understand why those people were there was the photographs of the persons who had disappeared while in custody. The silent protesters were known as Saturday Mothers and they have tried to find their loved ones, whether alive or dead, by showing the pictures of the disappeared persons under custody to passerby. Since 27 May 1995, the Saturday Mothers have continued their silent protests with an increasing numbers of participants to demand justice for their loved ones. To understand that why the Saturday Mothers have emerged, what they have wanted, how they have showed their demands and what the impacts of their actions, it is necessary to look at the historical and political background of both the movement and Turkey.

With the 1961 constitution after the military *coup d'état* in 1960, Turkey started to experience a liberal atmosphere in its political life. Within that atmosphere, socialism as an ideology gained importance and leftists found an opportunity to organize politically. However, that environment did not last long since the conservative part of the military staged a *coup d'état* on March 12, 1971 which positioned leftists as the main targets in the eyes of the Turkish state (Akşin, 1997: 143-144). The result was that Turkey experienced increasing political violence among extreme rightists and leftists, the ultranationalist party, Islamic hard-liners and urban and leftists militants during the 1970s. The tension between leftists and rightists represented itself in the streets and led to the death of lots of people. Based on the argument that it was necessary to intervene to the politics to restore the order in the country, the Turkish military staged another *coup d'état* in 1980 (Oran, 2002: 19-21).

Immediately after the military government came to power, people who were active in politics, especially associated with left-wing political ideologies became the main target of the military government and lots people were arrested, while all political parties, associations, and unions were dissolved (Zürcher, 1993 :278-280). Most of the arrests were not conducted according to legal procedures and arrested people faced unlawful and inhumane treatments under custody and in prisons, which showed the increasing human rights violations under the military government. Since the authorities denied the existence of unlawful custodies, practices, and prison conditions (Tanrikulu, 2003: 275-276), relatives of people who were taken under custody or imprisoned came together to demonstrate these conditions during the 1980s.

With the elections in 1983, Turkey returned to civil government. However, the crisis situation in politics continued. On the one hand, political instability emerged because

of not being able to form a majoritarian government, and frequent changes in coalition governments threatened the state. On the other hand, by taking advantage of the opportunity structure created by the *coup d'état* and transition to democracy, ideologies of political Islam and Kurdish nationalism became a threat in Turkish politics (Karpaz, 2012). The setting fire to Madımak Hotel in order to kill 37 people who came together for the festivity of Pir Sultan Abdal in Sivas in 1993 by radical Islamists and the murder of the Muammer Aksoy, Çetin Emeç, Uğur Mumcu and some other intellectuals within the scope of anti-secularism protests (Şanlı, 2018: 150) signified how political Islam was extreme during that period. Additionally, Susurluk car accident in 1996 showed the inadequacies within the state as the former chief of police Hüseyin Kocadağ and leader of the ultra-nationalist Turkish movement Abdullah Çatlı were found death in the same car (Şanlı, 2018: 150).

Regarding the Kurdish issue, despite the existence of the Kurdish question in Turkey for a long time, the Turkish state ignored the existence of it. However, the capitalist economic development of the Turkish state worsened the economic situation of Kurdish landless peasants and agricultural workers who blamed the state and local elites for their poverty (Çağlayan, 2012, p.8). Thus, some Kurdish people started to recognize their ethnic identity from 1950s onwards. Young Kurdish people who migrated to big cities of Turkey for studying or working opportunities were informed by leftist movements, which enabled them to organize a Kurdish opposition against the state or local elites under the umbrella of left-wing organizations or parties (Çağlayan, 2012, p.8). Although leftist movements and Kurdish mobilization went hand in hand for a time, the political environment created by military *coup d'état* in 1980 enabled Kurdish groups to form and strengthen their separate organization called Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê(PKK), which mobilized for establishing a

separate Kurdish state via a national democratic revolution based on an alliance between peasants and workers (Al, 2015: 98-99).

Since its establishment in 1984, the PKK was able to gain sympathy and support of some Kurdish people in the eastern and southeastern regions in Turkey. To suppress the support for and activities of the PKK, the Turkish state forced some Kurdish people to migrate from eastern and southeastern provinces of Turkey in order to cut the emotional and physical support for the PKK (Sarigil & Fazlıoğlu, 2014: 448-449). As enforced migrations did not decrease the support for and activities of the PKK, the state formed Jandarma İstihbarat ve Terörle Mücadele (JİTEM) to initiate a war against terror in 1987. Since its formation, JİTEM was responsible for enforced disappearances and death of lots of people who were either ethnically Kurds or active in leftist organizations (Çelik, 2015: 43-44).

Within this crisis situation, the transition to democratic government did not only sustain the presence of the military in Turkish politics, but the power of the military and special state forces increased since then. To overcome the feeling of insecurity, the government authorities did not hesitate to use extreme violence and unlawful treatments towards their citizens during the 1980s and 1990s. As part of this, the state violence targeted Kurdish people during 1990s by using enforced disappearances and unidentified murders as suppression tools.

Despite the difficulty to reach concrete and exact numbers of enforced disappearances because of the denial of Turkish state, The Truth Justice Memory Center has estimated that approximately 1352 people were disappeared forcefully since the military coup of 1980 (<https://hakikatadalethafiza.org/turkiyede-zorla-kaybetmeler/>). Thus, Turkey during the 1990s was characterized by societal violence,

terror, repression, forced migration, torture and enforced disappearances (Uysal, 2016: 8). To understand enforced disappearances in Turkey and its political aims more clearly, Göral (2016: 135) defines enforced disappearances as “public secrets” which created a violent atmosphere because of not knowing what happened to the disappeared people. The state constantly denied the existence or arrest of the people, but relatives witnessed the unofficial police forces when they took custody of their relatives. With a similar argument, Çelik (2015: 41) shows how JİTEM and white Taurus cars became the symbols of enforced disappearances and created a panic atmosphere and traumatized leftists and Kurdish people during 1990s.

According to a United Nations’ General Assembly resolution passed issued in 1992, enforced disappearances is defined as follows:

Persons are arrested, detained or abducted against their will or otherwise deprived of their liberty by officials of different branches or levels of Government, or by organized groups or private individuals acting on behalf of, or with the support, direct or indirect, consent or acquiescence of the Government, followed by a refusal to disclose the fate or whereabouts of the persons concerned or a refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of their liberty, which places such persons outside the protection of the law (<https://www.un.org/en/events/disappearancesday/background.shtml>).

Although governments during the 1990s tried to hide the reality of unlawful custodies and enforced disappearances, they became visible with the case of Hasan Ocak who was a member of the Marxist-Leninist Communist Party and found death with evidence of having been tortured in Altınşehir Cemetery for Unidentified People in Istanbul after fifty-seven days since he was kidnapped (Kayılı, 2015: 377). This became a turning point and triggered the emergence of protests of the Saturday Mothers. Mothers whose children were disappeared gathered together in front of the Galatasary High School on Istiklal Street in Istanbul on 27 May 1995 at 12 o’clock noon to demand justice for their loved ones while conducting silent protest (Kürüm,

2012: 68). Although the first protest was composed of not more than 30 people (Ahıska, 2014: 170), the numbers of protesters increased over time. In addition to relatives of disappeared people, some leftists, human right activists and individual feminist activists have participated to the protests (Koçali, 2015: 387).

While, most of the protesters were mothers, they did not choose to call themselves Saturday Mothers because there were fathers, sisters, wives of the disappeared ones as well as human rights activists (Şanlı, 2018: 202-203; Tanrıkulu, 2003: 280).

However, the Turkish media and outsiders labeled those protestors as “Saturday Mothers” with the influence of Plaza de Mayo Mothers in Argentina (Şanlı, 2018: 202). There are lots of similarities between Plaza de Mayo Mothers and Saturday Mothers in terms of their emergence, their demands and their protest strategies. Since Plaza de Mayo Mothers emerged to demonstrate the grievances of mothers because of unlawful custodies of politically active loved ones by the military government since 1976, the Turkish media and some studies drew parallels between Plaza de Mayo Mothers and the Saturday Mothers by arguing that the former group of mothers became the role model for the Saturday Mothers (Ivegen, 2004; Kürüm, 2012; Genç-Yılmaz, 2014).

Similar to their Argentinean counterparts, the Saturday Mothers use silent protests to raise their voices. Each week is dedicated to a memory of one of the disappeared persons and after telling his/her story, they sit silently. They do not use political slogans and do not allow outsider participants to use political slogans because they think that these slogans can damage their legitimate cause (Tanrıkulu, 2003: 288-289). Moreover, they develop some symbols to represent their pains such as photographs of their loved ones, red cloves and white headscarves (Genç-Yılmaz, 2014: 57). Furthermore, their choice of Galatasaray High School in the Taksim

square to conduct their protests is important because they increase the visibility of their movement and share their pains among each other's and other people who pass the street during their protests (Kocabiçak, 2003: 79).

The government authorities did not take the Saturday Mothers and their protests seriously at the beginning. Despite the fact that there were not many external reactions against the Saturday Mothers from public audiences and the government at the beginning of the Saturday protests, when domestic awareness and international support increased for the Saturday Mothers and their movement, the Turkish state started to use police force to suspend the Saturday protests (Ahiska, 2014: 171).

Also, officials of the state have attacked Saturday Mothers discursively by framing them as separatist or terrorist mothers, by depicting the Saturday Mothers as the PKK mothers especially, who do not fit the traditional respected motherhood concept in Turkey to decrease the support of the Saturday protests and legitimize police attacks on those mothers (Karaman, 2016: 389). Because of the systematic violence conducted for approximately 30 weeks against the Saturday Mothers by police forces to suppress their protests, the Saturday Mothers decided to suspend their protests in 1999 (Tanrıkulu, 2003: 287-288). Although they were not at the Galatasaray square physically during that period, they continued their struggle and activism to achieve justice for enforced disappearances in their private lives.

With the Ergenekon trials composed of a series of trials against some members of the Turkish military started in 2008, the Saturday Mothers became active in the public space again. Although the opening of some cases against some members of Turkish military revealed the reality of and some of the perpetrators of the enforced disappearances, the Turkish state did not accept the involvement of the Saturday Mothers to the cases and did not try those state officials because of their involvement

to the enforced disappearances (Şanlı, 2018: 174-176). Thus, they decided to continue their protests in 2009 with the demand for the necessity to conduct a judicial case against the perpetrators of the enforced disappearances by showing how the state denies the reality of the enforced disappearances and how it is silent about them (Şanlı, 2018: 174-175).

As a result of the persistence of the Saturday Mothers in their struggle and protests, the prime minister at the time, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, invited some of the participants of the Saturday Mothers and the Human Rights Association (HRA) in İstanbul to discuss possible solutions to achieve justice in connection with enforced disappearances (<https://m.bianet.org/biamag/toplum/127717-cumartesi-anneleri-ve-erdogan>). After the meeting, a commission was founded to analyze the cases of Tolga Baykal Ceylan and Cemil Kırbayır. Although evidences supported the enforced disappearance and the death of Cemil Kırbayır, the legal procedure was not initiated (Şanlı, 2018: 177). This was regarded by the Saturday Mothers as a strategic move of the government to gain votes for the forthcoming elections.

The marginalization of and physical as well as discursive attacks against the Saturday Mothers by the AKP government in the following years supported this argument of the Saturday Mothers. Additionally, after the end of the peace process in Turkey in 2013, which was designed to solve the Kurdish issue in Turkey peacefully, the AKP government's criticisms and attacks towards the Saturday Mothers increased. However, the investigation of the Cemil Kırbayır case contributed to the legitimate cause of the Saturday Mothers and their protests. By still continuing their protests in the year 2020, the Saturday Mothers represents the longest civil disobedience in the Turkish political history.

The Saturday Mothers and their maternal activism are unique neither for Turkish political history nor for world politics. In the early 1990s, the notion of “maternalism” emerged as an analytical tool which assessed “the gendered origins of the welfare states” in the US and Western Europe (Plant & Klein, 2012: 2). Emerged within the welfare state politics literature, it was used by scholars to analyze activism of women who were mobilized around their motherhood identities to show their demands from welfare state structures (Plant & Klein, 2012: 3-6). Since maternalism became powerful base for the criticisms of US welfare state programs in the late-twentieth century, US academics were considered as pioneers of that literature. (Plant & Klein, 2012: 3).

Despite its first usage in the welfare state literature, activism on the part of mothers increased in other fields different from welfare politics. Thus, it was replaced by the term “maternal activism” to understand and explain activities of women on the basis of their motherhood identities. Hence, academia witnessed the emergence of an increasing numbers of studies analyzing the roles and activism of mothers and motherhood rhetoric in civil wars, intrastate conflicts, revolutionary movements, environmental protests, armament processes, peace movements, human rights advocacy movements, promotion of minority rights, conservative movements, nationalistic programs and national liberation struggles, state-building processes and other political, social, and economic movements all over the world (Jetter & Orleck & Taylor, 1997).

When the activism of women on the basis of motherhood identity increased in world politics, feminist scholars started to analyze maternal activism and the related motherhood discourses to understand whether maternal activism should be considered a source of oppression or empowerment for women. Although activism

on the basis of motherhood enabled women to participate in politics at both national and international levels increasingly without much controversy, there is no consensus among feminist scholars on the value of maternal politics as there is no single and united feminist theory. On the one hand, some feminist scholars do not appreciate the use of motherhood identities by women since they argue that the over-association of motherhood with motherhood is still gendered concept and motherhood is a source of oppression of women. On the other hand, other feminist scholars appreciate the value of motherhood and maternal activism and argue that motherhood can be a source of empowerment for women and maternal activism can help to empower women.

The representation of the protests as mothers' movement and prioritization of the identity of motherhood over citizenship or womanhood are the starting points while formulating the research question of this thesis. First of all, since the Saturday Mothers and their movement are represented by media or other people as maternal activism, there is not much scholarly attempts to establish a connection between the movement of Saturday Mothers and existing maternal activism literature in world politics. Thus, the first aim of this research is to clarify what maternal activism has been in Turkey in order to contribute to the literature on mothers' movements in world politics.

By locating the Saturday Mothers and their protests in the broader context of maternal activism in world politics as well as discussions related to how such activism stands in relation to the feminist struggle, this thesis addresses the following research question: To what extent and in which ways can the Saturday Mothers and their protests been seen as serving feminist objectives in Turkey? When addressing this question, the thesis draws on an analytical framework derived from Carreon and Moghadam's (2015) work on mothers' mobilization around the world. When

analyzing different cases of such mobilization to understand which mothers' movements can serve feminist objectives, they develop two hypotheses. The first one is that a mothers' movement is more likely to serve feminist objectives if it is informed by feminist vision. Secondly, a mothers' movement is more likely to serve feminist objectives if it has connections with feminist/women's organizations. In addition to these, Carreon and Moghadam argue that a mothers' movement can serve feminist objectives even if it is not informed by feminist vision or does not have connections with women's/feminist organizations since these two conditions are not necessary conditions, because a mothers' movement can be an "implicit feminist" or a "de facto feminist" movement.

In their analysis, Carreon and Moghadam classify the Saturday Mothers as de facto feminists by drawing on information provided in a single Amnesty International report published in 1998 (Amnesty International, 1998). However, I think this is not sufficient to classify the Saturday Mothers as de facto feminists because there is lack of analysis in their inquiry. They do not pay enough attention to the personal narratives of the mothers, how they perceive their motherhood, what the political and sociological conditions in Turkey are, what the situation of the feminist movement in Turkey is, whether there is a relationship between the feminist movement and the Saturday Mothers, how class, ethnicity, gender and the socio-political situations of participants of the Saturday Mothers affect their movement, strategies and impact of their movement at the individual and societal levels. To close that gap, this thesis analyzes the Saturday Mothers and their maternal activism by considering the complex historical and socio-political conditions within Turkey.

Since the Saturday Mothers is the case study of this thesis, on the basis of the typology of Carreon and Moghadam and hypotheses drawn by their work, it is

meaningful to inquire into (i) the vision(s) that has informed the Saturday Mothers with a specific reference to whether there has been a feminist vision or not, and (ii) the social connectedness of the Saturday Mothers with a specific reference to whether the movement has a connection with feminist/women's organizations. After that, considering the fact that those are not necessary conditions for a mothers' movement to serve feminist objectives, the actual impact of the Saturday Mothers with regard to feminist objectives in Turkey is further inquired by considering the complex historical and socio-political context of Turkey.

Despite the lack of scholarly attention to draw parallels between maternal activism and the Saturday Mothers in general, there is an emergence of scholarly attempts to analyze the Saturday Mothers, including with regard to gender or feminist dimensions. In this connection, although most of the existing studies analyze the Saturday Mothers and the protests to show how they "change", "challenge", "have potential to challenge", "redefine", or "transform" traditional gender roles and motherhood concepts in Turkey, their arguments are not clear due to four reasons.

Firstly, while focusing on the Saturday Mothers and the movement itself, there is a lack of clarification about what feminist objectives are and how particular feminist theories assess maternal activism based on their premises. I think because of this lack, it is difficult to evaluate the movement and how the protests "change", "challenge", "have potential to challenge" or "transform" the traditional gender roles as each strand of feminism focuses on motherhood and feminist objectives differently. Secondly, the existing arguments are too broad to prove at which levels these changes, challenges or transformations emerged since the analyses are not explicit whether they focus on individual level or societal level. Thirdly, the existing studies do not attempt to establish a link between feminist movements in Turkey and

the Saturday Mothers. In my opinion, considering that connection is necessary to understand whether the protests of the Saturday Mothers have feminist impacts on the society or they got an opportunity from existing feminist movements in Turkey to demonstrate their grievances in public sphere. Lastly, there are not enough feminist scholars' assessments of the Saturday Mothers neither to appreciate nor to criticize them, so it is necessary to look from feminist scholars perspectives to find possible explanations for this neglect.

To uncover whether the Saturday Mothers can be seen as serving feminist objectives in Turkey by analyzing their social connectedness and informed visions, I conduct in-depth, semi-structured interviews with participants of the Saturday Mothers.

Although interviews with participants of the Saturday Mothers are central in the data collection, the interviews with the members of the HRA in Istanbul, members of women's/feminist organizations, and feminist scholars, and analysis of feminist journals including *Pazartesi* and *Amargi* provide further information to understand the possible relationship between the Saturday Mothers and the women's/feminist movement in Turkey and how they perceive each other. Additionally, the existing literature on the Saturday Mothers, the women's/feminist movement in Turkey, feminist theories and my personal observations obtained as an overt-participant observer contribute to the data collection process.

This introductory chapter has introduced the Saturday Mothers, located their protests in the context of Turkey as well as maternal activism in world politics, and presented the main research question and aims of the thesis. In the second chapter, I conduct a review of the existing literature on maternal activism, feminist theories, and the relationship between maternal activism and feminism, and the Saturday Mothers. What maternal activism means is analyzed first. Secondly, I focus on the debate

among different feminist perspectives on maternal activism and the motherhood concept in order to understand how feminists encounter with maternal activism. To specify the general arguments on maternal activism and feminist responses to it, I look at the Saturday Mothers as a case study and try to establish a connection between feminism and the movement of Saturday Mothers. It is necessary to revisit the existing claims about how the Saturday Mothers “change”, “redefine”, “transform”, “challenge”, “have potential to challenge” or “source of challenge” to traditional gender roles. Finally, the methodology of the thesis is outlined in that chapter. In the third chapter, I explore the possible social connectedness of and vision(s) that have informed the Saturday Mothers with specific reference to feminism and feminist vision on the basis of findings drawn from the interviews. Throughout the chapter, I show the possible connection or cooperation between the Saturday Mothers and the women’s/feminist movement in Turkey by revealing how the Saturday Mothers see the women’s/feminist movement in Turkey, how they perceive feminism, whether they classify themselves as a feminist or not, the place of feminist values in the Saturday Mothers, and the possible feminist vision among the Saturday Mothers and in their protests. Irrespective of the Saturday Mothers having or not a feminist vision and connections with the feminist movement in Turkey, the fourth chapter analyzes whether the Saturday Mothers and their protests can be seen as serving feminist objectives in Turkey by using different feminist theories as interpretative tools in the lights of the socio-political context of Turkey. The thesis ends with a concluding chapter which outlines the theoretical conclusions and assumptions on the relations between the Saturday Mothers and the women’s/feminist movement in particular, and possible gender implications of the Saturday Mothers at the individual and societal levels.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to locate the present study in relation to the existing literature and to outline its methodology. Thus, this chapter is divided into two parts. In the first part on literature review, I initially explain how maternal activism is used by women to show their claims by giving examples of different maternal activisms in world politics. With the increasing attempts of women to organize on the basis of their maternal identities both in national and international politics, the debate about the value of maternal activism in general and motherhood in particular emerged among feminist scholars. Thus, secondly, I demonstrate how perspectives on the value of maternal activism vary in the existing feminist literature. Additionally, I show the debates on whether a mothers' movement can or should be classified as a feminist movement. Following that, since the Saturday Mothers is the case study of this research, I point out how the Saturday Mothers and their protests are analyzed

and represented in the existing literature. In the second part on methodology, I first present the research question of the thesis and the nature of the study. Secondly, since the thesis is based on the typology and framework of Carreon and Moghadam (2015), I outline their arguments. Thirdly, necessary conceptualizations are mentioned in order to clarify what I mean by maternal activism and feminist objectives. Finally, I mention the necessary information for the thesis, data collection process, research design and limitations of the research.

2.2 Literature Review

2.2.1 Maternal Activism in World Politics

The first scholarly considerations to analyze women's mobilizations on the basis of their motherhood identities started during the 1990s. With the recognition of gendered the origins of welfare states as a result of the decrease of benefits related to mothers and their children within the welfare state retrenchments in the USA and Western Europe, maternalism became an important concept and analytical tool for scholars when analyzing women's activism in the USA and Western Europe (Plant & Klein, 2012: 2-3). Despite the existence of this background, women's mobilizations based on their motherhood identities go beyond welfare state politics and spill over to other areas including peace movements, environmental activism, protests against state-led violence, revolutionary movements, human rights and minority right movements, state-building processes and nationalist movements. Hence, scholars developed the concept of maternal activism to understand mothers' movements in general and for particular cases, which led to emergence of a significant literature on maternal

activism. As there is a vast amount of literature on mothers' activisms, in this section I show some examples of mothers' activisms in world politics around the specific themes of environmental activism, protests against state-led violence, peace movements, and nationalistic, state-building and revolutionary movements.

The first area where maternal activism has significance is environmental activism. Orleck (1997: 23) argues that "the environmental justice movement was galvanized by mothers - mostly poor and mostly women of color - who were horrified at the effect that toxic waste dumping, pesticide runoff and deforestation were having on their children and families". With that perception, starting in the 1970s, mothers took actions in environmental activism (Orleck, 1997: 23). With regard to maternal activism in environmental movements, the general argument of the mothers is that they give life to their children and they are responsible to protect their lives (Hayden, 2020: 479). One of the first examples of such activism is the establishment of the Citizen's Clearinghouse for Hazardous Waste in 1983 by Lois Gibbs, who dedicated herself to fight against corporate polluters in the USA as a result of her personal experience to protect her child from attending a school located in a toxic waste dump (Orleck, 1997: 23-24). From a similar protection perspective, Wangari Maathai founded the Green Belt Movement in 1977 to combat deforestation which causes devastation, drought and erosion on the African continent (Orleck, 1997: 25)

The other issue where maternal activism has significance is peace movements. The arguments of mothers' activists in peace movements are generally similar to those in environmental activism. That argument can be traced back to mothers' activisms during the First World War. During that war, women around the world formed the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and claimed that ending the war and achieving peace were their moral duty (Mhajne & Whetstone, 2018: 56).

Similarly, women in the USA formed the Women Strike for Peace to protest nuclear armament processes during the 1960s when the nuclear war threat reached its peak (Mhajne & Whetstone, 2018: 56). In 2002, to protest the US war on Iraq, mothers and women activists formed CODEPINK and later expanded their protests to encompass all US-backed military conflicts and wars

(<https://www.codepink.org/about>). Maternal activism in peace movements is not limited to the US context. To illustrate, Kurdish mothers in Turkey established the Peace Mothers in 1995, defining their activism as a motherly duty to end the armed conflict between the PKK and the Turkish armed forces (Aslan, 2007: 41).

When talking about mothers' activism in the protests against state-led violence, the most well-known example is the Plaza de Mayo Mothers in Argentina. As a response to arrest, torture and enforced disappearances of their loved ones during the Dirty War period in Argentina between 1976 and 1983 dictated by the military government, women organized around their motherhood identities to show their demands for justice in Plaza de Mayo. By sitting silently with the photographs of their loved ones and mimicking their roles as mothers, those women revealed the violence of the military government to the public and demanded justice (Taylor, 2001: 100-105). Their silent protests against state-led violence became a role model for women in other countries and their maternal activism spread across and beyond the Latin American continent to include the emergence of mothers' activism against state-led violence in El Salvador in 1977 (Bejarano, 2002), Mexico in 1998 (Bejarano, 2002), Iran in 1988 (Akhavan, 2018: 83-103), Turkey in 1995, and Egypt in 2011 (Mhajne & Whetstone, 2018). The common point among these activisms is that women transfer their motherhood roles from houses to streets.

Despite the significance of maternal activism in peace movements, mothers are active also in state-building processes, nationalist movements and revolutionary movements in a so-called violent matter. In those movements, women as mothers contribute either with their own agencies or depicted as subjects since they are represented as the mothers of the nations and they are required to take part in those movements (Gentry, 2009: 235-242). One of the most well-known examples of such activism is Palestinian female suicide bombers. Starting from the Second Intifada movement against Israel, Palestinian nationalists supported violent actions of women and they are represented as mothers of the revolution (Sjoberg & Gentry, 2007: 120). In a similar way, Black Widows of Chechnya, women generally who lost their husbands and children in the war between Russia and Chechnya since 1993, became suicide bombers to contribute to the nationalist cause of Chechnya (Sjoberg & Gentry, 2007: 90-100).

2.2.2 Feminists' Encounters with Maternal Activism

Although feminist scholars have claimed the significance of motherhood as an analytical subject since the 1970s (Gideon & Ramm, 2020: 1), feminists' encounters with motherhood in general and maternal activism in particular are troubled since their arguments vary according to their perspectives on what feminism is. Thus, there is no consensus on the value of maternal activism. The major disagreement among feminists can be divided into two. On the one hand, some feminists appreciate motherhood and maternal activism since they see such activism as a source of empowerment and as a useful feminist strategy. Some feminist scholars, classified as "maternal feminists" by Neyer and Bernardi (2011: 167), appreciate motherhood. In her social feminism argument, Jean Elshtain (1974: 553-555) criticizes the public/private sphere distinction and appreciation of public sphere as a realm of men

and politics and association of women with private sphere because of their emotions, irrationality, and apolitical status. She wants to reverse the power relations between men and women and argues that experiences of motherhood in the private sphere give moral superiority to women, so the private family sphere is superior to the public sphere (Dietz, 1985: 22). In line with the appreciation of Elshtain, Sara Ruddick praises motherhood with her “maternal thinking” concept. She argues that maternal thinking is one of the womanly thoughts which are learnt through mothering practices and can be performed by many women and also some men (Ruddick, 1980: 346). Thus, motherhood is a social category which cannot be reduced to biological parenting (Ruddick, 1980: 346). She appreciates maternal thinking and practices and promotes their spread to the public sphere in order to achieve a more peaceful society (Budig, 2004: 429). Also, by reminding that motherhood experiences are shaped by interlocking structures of race, class and gender, Collins shows how motherhood is an important source of power and activism that challenge traditional gender relations for African-American women (Collins, 2005).

On the other hand, some feminists argue that motherhood is a source of oppression and subordination for women because of the over-association of maternal identity with femininity. Thus, they do not appreciate maternal activism because of the risk that it can reinforce traditional gender roles and patriarchy. The first argument of that devaluation is that the family is the chief architect of patriarchy and a source of oppression because of the exploitation of women’s domestic labor and men’s control over women’s sexuality and reproduction (Budig, 2004: 423-424). The second argument of that devaluation is that women are exploited under capitalism because of their unpaid labor force in the family and these unpaid domestic works of women

combined with their work in the market place create double burden for women (Budig, 2004: 425-426). To illustrate, when analyzing motherhood in the USA, Barbara Katz Rothman (1989) shows how the interlocking structures of ideology of patriarchy, ideology of capitalism, and ideology of technology make women's bodies as machines which are responsible for producing perfect babies out of the valued sperms of men and, as a result, women become proletariats and children become commodities. Additionally, Enloe (Aslan & Uzun, 2007: 57-59) reminds that despite the fact that using motherhood identity is a way of participating in foreign policy, civil wars and the military for some women, this can be a dangerous attempt to participate in politics since it can reproduce traditional gender roles and patriarchy.

2.2.3 Maternal Activism in Relation to the Feminist Struggle

As the debate among feminist scholars on the value of maternal activism remains unresolved, whether maternal activism can be considered to be part of the feminist movement or not creates another debate among scholars. There are three different views among scholars when evaluating maternal activism as a part of the feminist movement. The first view is that some scholars argue that mothers' movement definitely have a feminist agenda. However, some scholars are against the classification of mothers' movements as part of the feminist movement. The third approach is located between the two, and some scholars make their analyses by considering specific conditions of the mothers' movements and then argue whether they can be classified as feminist movement or not.

The arguments of Allen, Nathanson and Hirsch support the first view. Ann Taylor Allen (1993: 99-100) developed the maternal feminism concept when analyzing the relationship between mothers' activism and the feminist movement in Germany, and argues that maternalism can be compatible with feminism since she perceives

maternalism as women's experiences as mothers and nurturers, so feminism looks to those experiences in order to interpret the history of women and to improve the status of women. Although Allen's argument is limited to welfare state activism of mothers, Nahatson makes a broader analysis of maternal activism and argues that mothers' movements have a feminist agenda because of three reasons (2008: 244):

(i) It exemplifies the very core of feminist ideology - personal is political, (ii) it helps to negate essentialist notions of motherhood by transforming views of it from an isolating or individualized experience to the inspiration for and foundation of visions of large scale social change, and (iii) whether intended or not, it upsets traditional gender roles and power relations.

Additionally, Marianne Hirsch (1997: 367), as a scholar who has tried to reconcile feminism and maternal activism for a long time, argues that on the one hand, feminists need to learn how maternal activists politicize their motherhood identities and their strategies to connect their work with transformative feminist causes; on the other hand, it is necessary for mother activists to see power and gender relations which make their voice effective. Thus, "feminists need to listen the experiences of mothers and that mothers in turn need feminism" (Hirsch, 1997: 367).

Ladd-Taylor is a supporter of the second view and makes a distinction between "sentimental maternalists" and "progressive maternalist" in the particular context of welfare state politics. While the former group accepts the existing gender roles associated with domesticity for women and use motherhood to participate in the public sphere, the latter group uses motherhood as a strategy to achieve broader demands such as justice and democracy (Ladd-Taylor, 1993: 110-113). On the basis of this distinction, she argues that while the former group cannot be classified as feminists since feminism sees women as individual and politically active, the latter can be more close to be perceived as feminist (Ladd-Taylor, 1993: 110-113).

However, she acknowledges that although progressive maternalism can be perceived as internal to the feminist movement, maternalists cannot be feminists because they operate within the traditional gender roles and believe in the public/private divide (Ladd-Taylor, 1993: 110).

As a third view located between the two, some scholars try to classify maternal activism as a feminist movement by developing criteria depending on the nature of a mothers' movement itself. To begin with, Gentry develops the concepts of "passive maternalism" and "active maternalism". While the former represents mothers as political symbols of a nation or a movement by denying the capacity of agency of women and not giving any roles to women except for their socio-biological roles, the latter is a strategy which is acknowledged by women and enabled them to participate in the public sphere with their own agencies by transforming the meaning of motherhood and state policies (Gentry, 2009: 237-240). Additionally, Julie Cupples develops three criteria to evaluate whether a mothers movement can be classified as feminist or not. She argues that "if the critique of machismo, the sense of personal empowerment emerging from collective action and a sense that putting women's issues and rights in the public agenda create feminist consciousness although there is no official feminist ideology" (Cupples, 2006:98). Also, while analyzing different mothers' movements in Latin America, Ramm (2020: 17-18) demonstrates that although motherhood is based on traditional gender roles, it can be used by women in conservative societies as a feminist strategy to challenge traditional gender roles within the gendered structure.

To understand what makes women to mobilize, Molyneux (1985) develops a conceptual framework including "women's interests", "strategic gender interests" and "practical gender interests". She argues that despite the fact that it is difficult to

create general women's interests since they are shaped by a variety of different means including class, gender and ethnicity, there are some common interests of women which she calls strategic gender interests (Molyneux, 1985: 231-232). It refers to real interests of women developed through gender roles and aims to eliminate women's subordination by using a struggle composed of feminist consciousness (Molyneux, 1985: 232-233). On the other hand, women can mobilize as a response to immediate needs within specific conditions rather than to achieve emancipation or equality (Molyneux, 1985: 233-234). It follows that mothers' mobilizations which based on practical gender interests cannot be classified as feminist movement (Molyneux, 1985: 234).

As a criticism of that classification, Bayard de Volo (2003: 93) argues that "the absence of an official feminist ideology does not mean that individual members of an organization do not express interests, identities and ideals that challenge the gendered status quo". She continues to claim that the lives of participants of mothers' movements can change as a result of a questioning of traditional gender roles by individual members, and these micro-level changes can cause macro-level changes in society to challenge gender relations more generally (de Volo, 2003: 94). However, she is cautious to acknowledge that while mothers' movements can challenge some traditional gender roles, they can work to consolidate others (de Volo, 2003: 111).

In that context, it is debated whether activist mothers who do not associate themselves with feminism can still be considered as feminists. In their article, Carreon and Moghadam (2015: 21-22) argue that a mother's movement is more likely to serve feminist objectives if it is informed by a feminist vision and has connections with women's/feminist organizations. However, they acknowledge that a mothers' movement can serve feminist objectives even if it is not informed by a

feminist vision and does not have connections with feminist women's organizations since those two conditions are not necessary conditions. In this connection, they introduce the concepts of the "implicit feminism" or "de facto feminism" (Carreon & Moghadam, 2015: 22).

2.2.4 Maternal Activism in Turkey

In the light of these different examples of maternal activisms in world politics and different feminist perspectives on the value of maternal activism, to understand the connection between maternal activism and the Saturday Mothers as well as the Saturday Mothers and feminism, firstly it is necessary to talk about the emergence and development of different maternal activisms in Turkey. Although there are different mothers' movements in Turkish political history, there is not much work on these movements in a comparative manner. In her master thesis written in 2008, Gözde Orhan classifies mothers' movements in Turkey under four categories.

With the 1961 constitution after the military *coup d'état* in 1960, Turkey started to experience a liberal atmosphere in its political life. Within that atmosphere, socialism as an ideology gained importance and leftists found an opportunity to organize politically. However, that environment did not last long since the conservative part of the military staged a *coup d'état* on March 12, 1971 which positioned leftists as the main targets in the eyes of the Turkish state. The result was that Turkey experienced increasing political violence among extreme rightists and leftists, the ultranationalist party, Islamic hard-liners and urban and leftists militants during the 1970s. The tension between leftists and rightists represented itself in the streets and led to the death of lots of people. In that environment, the first mothers' movement emerged in Turkey in 1975. Nationalism and violence politicized these women because of the

dangers which their children faced (Orhan, 2008: 47-48). With the initiative of the Progressive Women's Organization, mothers organized and started "Stop Mothers' Pain" meetings in order to provide a safe environment for their children as a response to increasing nationalism and its violence (Orhan, 2008: 48). Their activities continued until the military coup of 1980.

The Turkish military staged a *coup d'état* on September 12, 1980 on the basis of the official claim that the military would restore order in the country. To restore order, the military government suspended the existing constitution, dissolved political parties, and arrested all political and union leaders (Baydar & İvegen, 2006: 690). Thus, politically active citizens became the main target of the military and it used systematic repression methods including arresting and torturing people, or forcing people to disappear. In these circumstances, the second mothers' movement which is labeled as "mothers of detainees" emerged immediately after the military coup (Akçam, 1992). After learning the ill-treatment of their children in prisons and under custody, especially in the Metris Prison in Istanbul, the Mamak prison in Ankara and the Diyarbakır prison where systematic repressions methods were conducted by military officers in the 1980s, mothers came together to protest those unlawful treatments of their children. Mothers, wives, daughters and sisters came together in front of those prisons and other popular spaces such as Güvenpark in Ankara in order to demonstrate their grievances. Also, they joined hunger strikes and conducted protests in front of ministries to achieve better conditions for their children (Temelkuran, 1997).

Another mothers' movement was organized by fifteen Kurdish women in 1995. They called themselves "Peace Mothers" and they have demanded peace and an end to the conflict between the Turkish state and the Kurdish nationalist movement (Orhan,

2008: 84). Through establishing a dialog among all mothers and between the Turkish state and the Kurdish movement, they have demanded to prevent the death of soldiers and Kurdish people (Orhan, 2008: 84). To demonstrate their demands, they tried to meet with important public figures, state officials, ministers, government representatives and mothers of the soldiers (Orhan, 2008: 87). Since 2007, they conducted silent sit-ins at Galatasary Square in Istanbul on Wednesdays and they still continue their struggle (Orhan, 2008: 88). The Saturday Mothers at the center of this thesis started their activities in the same year as the Peace Mothers, and Orhan classifies them as the fourth mothers' movement.

Whether intended or not, the media has often depicted the Saturday Mothers and the Peace Mothers as the same group of mothers, and they are similar or the same in the eyes of most people in Turkey. Although the Peace Mothers were influenced by the mobilization and protest strategies of the Saturday Mothers, the rationale behind the emergence, demands and priorities of these two mothers' groups differ. The promotion of human rights and a discourse which tries to open a dialogue among all other mothers' group are prevalent in both group of mothers. However, the Saturday Mothers show the human rights violations emerged because of the enforced disappearances, whereas the Peace Mothers show the human rights violations emerged because of the conflict between the Turkish armed forces and the Kurdish nationalist movement. Additionally, a Kurdish ethnic identity plays no role in the Saturday protests because the priority is to achieve justice for the enforced disappeared loved ones no matter their ethnicity, which is unlike the prioritization of the Kurdish ethnic identity and specific ethnicity based experiences of the Peace Mothers.

In addition to these four mothers' movements in Turkey as classified by Orhan, the Mothers of Martyrs (also known as the Friday Mothers) and the Diyarbakir Mothers are two other mothers' movements in Turkey. Unlike the mothers' movements mentioned above, the Mothers of Martyrs are not organized by themselves but their motherhood identity is constructed by the Turkish state and its nationalist discourses on the basis of traditional gender roles (Gedik, 2013: 41). Those mothers lost their sons who fought in the Turkish military against the PKK. With the increasing international support and public awareness of the demands of the Saturday Mothers and the Peace Mothers, the Turkish state constructed the Mothers of Martyrs discursively in its nationalist propaganda. Additionally, it tries to delegitimize the existence and activities of the Saturday Mothers and the Peace Mothers by positioning the Mothers of Martyrs as the true mothers of the Turkish nation. The Mothers of Martyrs meet every Friday in the cemetery of their sons to support the Turkish army in its armed conflict with the PKK (Gedik, 2013: 43). Recently, the Diyarbakir Mothers emerged in Turkey as a new form of mothers' movement. Based on the claim that her son was kidnapped by the PKK, Hacire Akar went to the office of the Diyarbakir branch of the People's Democratic Party (HDP) which is labeled as a political extension of the PKK/YPG (Halk Koruma Birlikleri in Turkish) by the central government. A week later, other families who share the same suspicion concerning their children's fates started a collective sit-in protest on 3 September, 2019 (<https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/war-on-terror/turkey-must-stand-behind-kurdish-mothers-efforts-to-rescue-their-children-from-terrorisms-claws>). Since then, they continue their sit-ins in front of the HDP's Diyarbakir office. It is very early to analyze the protests of this group because of the limited time since its emergence, but the mainstream media in line with the AKP government and its nationalist allies

support the Diyarbakır Mothers (<https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/war-on-terror/turkey-must-stand-behind-kurdish-mothers-efforts-to-rescue-their-children-from-terrorisms-claws>).

A comparison between the Saturday Mothers on the one hand and the Mothers of Martyrs and the Diyarbakır Mothers on the other shows significant differences among them. Firstly, there is an agency problem in the Mothers of Martyrs and the Diyarbakır Mothers because they are formed with the support of the Turkish state to promote its nationalist discourse. As their motherhood and activism are triggered by the state, they confine the traditional motherhood and womanhood roles constructed by the state and its nationalist discourses. Secondly, as they are formed with the support of the Turkish state, the Mothers of Martyrs and the Diyarbakır Mothers do not conduct their protests regularly, which is unlike the Saturday Mothers who are persistent in their protests and visible in the public space continuously. Thirdly, the Mothers of Martyrs and the Diyarbakır Mothers are very exclusive in their discourses and exclusionary towards other mothers' movements which make difficult to open up a dialogue with other mothers' movements. As a result of these differences, it can be anticipated that the possible feminist and gender implications of the Mothers of Martyrs and the Diyarbakır Mothers would be significantly lower in the long term compared to the Saturday Mothers.

2.2.5 Analysis and Representation of the Saturday Mothers in the Existing Literature

In the existing literature, there are five different perspectives when engaging with the Saturday Mothers and their activities. Firstly, there are descriptive studies and memoirs which focus on the historical development of the movement without

developing any particular argument (Akçam, 1992; Kürüm, 2012; Tanrıkulu, 2003). Secondly, there are studies who engage with the Saturday Mothers from a democratization perspective. From that perspective, it is argued that the silent protests of the Saturday Mothers contribute to the democratization process in Turkey (Göker, 2010: 124). Thirdly, the Saturday Mothers are mentioned in studies which analyze minority rights and state violence against minorities (Budak, 2015; Tambar, 2016). Additionally, some scholars analyze the human rights violations of the Saturday Mothers and classify them as human right activists (Davidovic, 2018; Şanlı, 2018).

The fifth and the most relevant perspective on the Saturday Mothers in the existing literature for this thesis is the gender and feminist perspectives. That perspective can be divided into two subgroups because on the one hand, some scholars argue that the Saturday Mothers can be seen as feminists while, on the other hand, other scholars argue that although the Saturday Mothers cannot be classified as feminists, their movement “changes”, “redefines”, “transforms” “challenges”, or “has the potential to challenge” traditional gender roles which are defined with regard to motherhood and womanhood.

Diner and Toktaş (2010), and Çaha (2011) are the scholars who classify the Saturday Mothers as feminists by analyzing them and their movement under Kurdish feminism. To illustrate their argument, Diner and Toktaş (2010: 48) argue that the Saturday Mothers show the multiple oppressions of Kurdish women under Kurdish feminism. Additionally, Çaha (2011: 446) argues that since Kurdish feminism and the Kurdish national struggle glorify motherhood because of its status as a symbol of the Kurdish nation, the Saturday Mothers are important in the ethnic struggle of Kurdish feminism. In my opinion, more evidence is necessary to prove the

association between the Kurdish feminist movement and the Saturday Mothers.

Although Kurdish feminism may help raising the awareness of those mothers about feminism and feminist demands, the mothers are reported not to associate themselves with Kurdish feminism (Şanlı, 2018: 246). Also, it is important to look from the Kurdish feminists' perspective and to demonstrate whether they support the Saturday Mothers or how they perceive the Saturday Mothers in relation to their feminist struggle.

Although many scholars do not look at the Saturday Mothers as feminists, they acknowledge that the Saturday Mothers and their protests have or can have gender and feminist implications. Baydar and Iveyen (2004; 2006) make the boldest argument and state that the Saturday Mothers “change” the socially constructed public space concept and gender roles since they blurred the line between public and private, they have been politicized through their protests, and they gained political consciousness for their motherhood. Moreover, Aliefendioğlu (2011: 129) claims that the Saturday Mothers “redefine” traditional gender roles in their society since they use motherhood as a way to gain their rights of citizenship. Additionally, Ahıska (2014: 171) argues that after enforced disappearances, mothers generally associated with the Kurdish population became politicized through the very experience of doing politics by creating exceptional zones in the public sphere, which led to a significant transformation of their womanhood and motherhood traditionally have been utilized by nationalists and the Turkish state.

Rather than change and redefinition, some scholars are more moderate in their arguments and use the term “challenge” to analyze gender and feminist implications of the movement of the Saturday Mothers. With the influence of the argument of Baydar and Iveyen mentioned above, Genç-Yılmaz (2014) argues that the sovereign

state and nationalism define the proper roles for mothers, and the Saturday Mothers “challenge” those roles with their struggle because their movement represents a challenge to the assumed association of women with the private sphere or limited participation in the public sphere under the control of the state. Moreover, Karaman (2016: 383-391) argues that the Saturday Mothers and their movement “represent a challenge” to the traditional ideologies about motherhood and womanhood since they blur the line between the private and the public sphere by making the personal political. Thus, she argues that by using motherhood as a strategy to build a secure agency due to how motherhood is perceived as sacred in Turkey, those mothers redefine womanhood and motherhood in the Turkish context by showing that motherhood is not neutral as constructed by state officials and nationalism (Karaman, 2016: 388-389).

In her article, Şimşek (2018: 340-341) supports the argument of Karaman by emphasizing “how the language of maternal suffering transforms the language of ethnic suffering and challenges overall power structures of gender, ethnicity and geographic location in the case of the Saturday Mothers” which transforms the neutrality of motherhood to liberated motherhood. Furthermore, Arat (1999: 375-376) argues that “[t]he ‘Saturday mothers,’ as they came to be known, did not merely adapt the methods of human rights protesters from other parts of the world, but also of feminists. Even though they did not have any links to other women's organizations, they exemplified feminist modes of protest” as “they are willing to collaborate, they face the dilemmas of maternal responsibilities, they have courage to admit fear” (Arat, 1999: 376). Thus, their act posed a “revolutionary challenge” to the traditional maternal role since they get out from their houses by showing their

belonging to the streets and since they made the personal political and they pose a challenge against the state (Arat, 1999: 377).

Göker (2011: 118-124) is the most modest scholar in arguing that the Saturday Mothers both “have potential to challenge” traditional gender roles and to “perpetuate” them. She argues that on the one hand, by confronting the state, blurring the distinction between public and private space, presenting their bodies and emotions in public space and making them political, they have the potential to challenge traditional gender roles. On the other hand, she continues her argument by saying that the Saturday Mothers do not consider themselves as feminists and there is always risk for reproduction of traditional gender roles, so they perpetuate some of the traditional gender roles.

In my opinion, to understand the arguments related to the Saturday Mothers and the possibility of their activities to “change”, “redefine”, “transform”, or “challenge” traditional gender roles, it is necessary to look at how these mothers perceive their motherhood, their womanhood and their activities. Also, I think it is necessary to consider the specific socio-cultural and political context of Turkey in order to understand the activism of the Saturday Mothers. Additionally, in my opinion, the possibility of the relationship between women’s/feminist movements in Turkey and the Saturday Mothers, how they perceive and potentially affect each other should be inquired before establishing an association between them. In later chapters, I revisit these arguments related to the Saturday Mothers and their activities in the light of both my interviews with the Saturday Mothers, members of women’s/feminist organizations in Istanbul and feminist scholars in Turkey, and my review of the *Pazartesi* and *Amargi* journals.

2.3 Methodology

In this part, I first present the research question of the thesis and the nature of the study. Secondly, since the thesis is based on the typology and framework developed by Carreon and Moghadam (2015), I outline their arguments. Thirdly, I illustrate different conceptualizations of maternal activism and develop my own definition of it. In this part, I also clarify what I mean when talking about feminist objectives.

Then, I mention the necessary information for the thesis and how they are obtained and interpreted as a part of the research design. Finally, as most researchers face challenges and difficulties during their studies, I mention some of the limitations of this thesis research.

2.3.1 Research Question and the Nature of the Study

To begin with, the research question of this thesis is drawn from the maternal activism literature in world politics. Although the concept of maternalism emerged during the 1990s to assess the gendered origins of the welfare states in the US and Western Europe, and activism of women emerged because of these gendered origins (Plant & Klein, 2012: 2-6), maternal activism represents a broader set of activities of women mobilized around motherhood discourses in the world politics. Thus, as mentioned earlier, maternal activism became visible in civil wars, intrastate conflicts, revolutionary movements, environmental protests, armament processes, peace movements, human rights advocacy movements, promotion of minority rights, conservative movements, nationalistic programs and national liberation struggles, state-building process and other movements all over the world.

With the increasing activism of mothers, scholars started to analyze specific groups of mothers and their activities in order to understand maternal activism in both

domestic and world politics from gender and feminist perspectives. While some feminist scholars criticize the use maternal activism by women since they perceive motherhood as a source of oppression for women, other feminist scholars appreciate maternal activism because they see it as a source of empowerment for women.

Within this context, since the Saturday Mothers are perceived as maternal activism in Turkey, the research question of the thesis is whether the Saturday Mothers and their protests can be seen as serving feminist objectives in Turkey. When analyzing the Saturday Mothers and their protests, the research is designed to understand what maternal activism is like in Turkey by situating the specific case within the broader maternal activism literature. Also, looking from feminist perspectives to understand the activities of the Saturday Mothers, this research establishes the connection between maternal activism and feminism at the specific level.

Since the main research question of the thesis is whether Saturday Mothers and their protests can be seen as serving feminist objectives or not, throughout the thesis the Saturday Mothers and their activities are analyzed as a case study. As I obtain some of the data by conducting interviews with members of the Saturday Mothers and the HRA, and by participating in the Saturday protests, this thesis is based on field research. Moreover, since the main aim of the thesis is to understand the relationship between the Saturday Mothers and their activities and whether these can be seen as serving feminist objectives, this research is interpretative. Moreover, as indicated in the research question, feminist theories influence the theoretical background of this thesis and are used as interpretative tools throughout the thesis.

2.3.2 Analytical Framework of the Thesis

To demonstrate which mothers' movement can be considered as feminist or not, Carreon and Moghadam (2015) develops a typology and framework in their article "Resistance is Fertile: Revisiting maternalist frames across cases of women's mobilization" by analyzing a variety of cases in which maternal activism are used in different contexts and for different purposes. They develop three factors to understand mothers' activism: (i) the role of women's rights movements and institutions, (ii) whether the movement has ties with the state, government or military, and (iii) the place of feminist values in cases of mobilization (Carreon & Moghadam, 2015: 18-19). On the basis of these three factors, they categorize maternal activism within two categories; maternalism-from-above and maternalism-from-below (Carreon & Moghadam, 2015: 21). While ties with the state, government or military power is important in the mobilization of the former, there are actors independent from state, government or military in the mobilization of the latter, so the former represents the top-down process while the latter represents bottom-up processes (Carreon & Moghadam, 2015: 21). However, despite the existence of different mobilization processes, they acknowledge that both movements can aim to achieve patriarchal or emancipatory goals which are shaped by the ideology of those groups (Carreon & Moghadam, 2015: 21). They continue to argue that activism of mothers can serve feminist goals with regard to women's practical interests, basic needs or strategic gender interests (Carreon & Moghadam, 2015: 21). Importantly, they demonstrate that although some mother activists do not identify themselves explicitly as feminists, they can nonetheless be identified as de facto feminists or "a form of women's collective action" to challenge the subordination of women (Carreon & Moghadam, 2015: 21-22).

Based on this, Carreon and Moghadam develop two main hypotheses. Firstly, it is argued that a mothers' movement is more likely to serve feminist objectives if it is informed by a feminist vision. Secondly, a mothers' movement is considered more likely to serve feminist objectives if it has connections with feminist women's organizations. In addition to those, another hypothesis is that a mothers' movement can serve feminist objectives even if it is not informed by a feminist vision or does not have connections with feminist/women's organizations since they introduce the concept of implicit feminism" or "de facto feminism".

Within this framework, they classify the Saturday Mothers as de facto feminists since they use a strategy of motherhood for mobilizing in public space, they challenge the private/public distinction by politicizing their maternal identities and they challenge patriarchal structures at different levels (Carreon & Moghadam, 2015: 28-29).

Despite their valuable efforts to develop a typology to understand maternal activism and its possible relations with feminism, they analyze the Saturday Mothers only looking at an Amnesty International report published in 1998 (Amnesty International, 1998). However, I argue that this report is not enough to understand the complex socio-cultural, political and ethnic dynamics of Turkey. To classify the Saturday Mothers as de facto feminists, it is necessary to look closer at the political, historical, socio-cultural and ethnic backgrounds of Turkey. Also, not giving attention to the development of independent feminist movement in Turkey since the 1980s creates an important gap when analyzing the activities of the Saturday Mothers and the actual impacts of their activities. Hence, after inquiring the vision(s) that has informed the Saturday Mothers with specific reference to a feminist vision, and the social connectedness of Saturday Mothers with specific reference to feminist/women's organizations, it is meaningful to consider the fact that those are

not necessary conditions for a mother's movement to serve feminist objectives, and it is necessary to devote special attention to actual impact of Saturday Mothers with regard to feminist objectives by making emphasis on the socio-cultural, political, religious, ethnic, feminist and nationalist dynamics of Turkey.

2.3.3 Conceptualizations of Maternal Activism and Feminist Objectives

Before proceeding, it is necessary to clarify what exactly I mean by maternal activism and feminist, because different ways of doing this are predicated on different feminist theories.

In the early twentieth century, to criticize the gendered origins of the welfare states in the US and Western Europe, and to understand women's activism as mothers or using motherhood discourses to show their demands from welfare states, maternalism as an analytical tool which assessed "the gendered origins of the welfare states" in the US and Western Europe emerged (Plant & Klein, 2012: 3-6). Lindenmeyr (1993: 114) argues that demographic changes and decline of birth rates, the existence of a network between middle-class women to reach poor and working-class women, ideologies about the roles of women in private and public spheres, and the nature of the state in a given country contribute to development of maternalism both in USA and Europe.

In the welfare state literature, despite the fact that there are different conceptualizations, maternalism is generally defined as an ideology or a strategy which justifies women's participation to the politics in the public sphere based on their private roles as nurturers or care-givers (Ladd-Taylor, 1993; Uno, 1993; Weiner, 1993).

Although the maternalism concept is used to refer to programs which are designed to improve the situations of mothers and infants and to give reference to activism of mothers who aimed to secure necessary programs for their own and their children's needs, scholars subsequently started to use it to describe activism of mothers different from welfare politics (Plant & Klein, 2012: 5-6). The protests of women based on their motherhood identities spread across the USA and Western Europe and in other areas such as civil wars, intrastate conflicts, revolutionary movements, environmental protests, armament processes, peace movements, human rights advocacy movements, promotion of minority rights, conservative movements, nationalistic programs and national liberation struggles, state-building processes and other political movements all over the world. To understand the increase in mothers' activism around the world, scholars developed the maternal activism concept.

Senem Kaptan (2010: 972) defines maternal activism as the use of motherhood identity by women all around the world to achieve social and political change, justice and peace in their societies. Kim Miller emphasizes that maternal activism encompasses race, class, and ethnicity (Miller, 2010: 12). In a similar argument with them, Mendoza (2016: 1-5) puts emphasis on the uniting potential of maternal activism among women from different classes, races and ethnicities, and argues that it emerges as a result of the experiences of social and political ignorance, economic hardships and physical injuries. She claims that maternal activism refers to (Mendoza, 2016: 1):

The process whereby a woman, or a group, adopts the figure of the mother to make claims on behalf of her sons or daughters. The central aim of maternal activism is to pursue a politics of visibility – a series of actions as well as performances to raise awareness about a particular concern in order to demand peace and or social justice. This politics of visibility is the driving force behind maternal activism and it is deployed through diverse practices, including direct action, public protests, teaching rallies, and press conferences. In this sense, it

is widely recognized that activists' adoption of motherhood is performative, which indicates that maternal activism depicts not a biological experience but rather a public and collective one to bring about social justice.

In her article analyzing activism of African-American and Latino-American women, Naples (1992: 441-442) argues that gender, race and ethnicity broaden the traditional definition of mothering. She demonstrates that a broadened understanding of motherhood shows that mothering practices are not limited to biological or legal mothers, and women who even do not have children use maternal activism to achieve better living conditions for their communities (Naples, 1992: 448-450). In a similar argument with Naples, Danielle Poe (2015: 16-17) argues that activist mothers take their individual and personal concerns and broadens them to their communities in order to achieve social change.

Additionally, Annelise Orleck (1997: 4) argues that some women who are not politically active before their motherhood use maternal activism because of their personal concerns and experiences as mothers, while others who are politically active before their motherhood use maternal activism to show how larger political issues affect lives of children and mothers. She continues to show that maternal activism becomes "an inspiration for and foundation of visions of large-scale social change" (Orleck, 1997: 3).

In my opinion, all the scholarly works mentioned above build their maternal activism conceptualizations based on the old distinction between sentimental maternalists and progressive maternalists introduced by Ladd-Taylor (1993: 110-113). It is clear in their conceptualizations that they intentionally or not treat activist mothers as progressive maternalists because they perceive the aims of activist mothers as the achievement of justice, peace, social or political change. Also, they perceive the emergence of maternal activism as a result of women's own agencies. However, I

argue that it is important to remember that there need not be a direct association between maternal activism, feminism, egalitarianism or peace, because the strategies, purposes and ideologies of maternal activism can change according to the preferences of participants in specific maternal activist movements (Orleck, 1997: 7). Thus, maternal activism can serve for both emancipatory and patriarchal goals, and can be mobilized by women's own agencies or the by state (Carreon & Moghadam, 2015: 21-22). In the light of this criticisms, I conceptualize maternal activism as the mobilization of women who intentionally or not use motherhood discourses to demonstrate their claims in different areas either to change or to sustain the status quo.

Regarding feminist objectives, although there are different arguments for where the inequality between man and woman comes from, what those inequalities are and how to change or challenge them according to different feminist theories and perspectives, I define shared feminist objectives before feminist theories start to differentiate among each other. In this connection, most feminist theories assume that men appear to have more power and privilege than women in all societies, and the most shared feminist objective is to change this unequal relationship between man and woman on the basis of the commitment to the social, economic and political equality of both sexes. Although they have different explanations for the sources of this unequal relationship and different strategies to overcome it, firstly it is necessary to attain equality between men and women. Secondly and related with the promotion of equality between men and women, a concern with women's rights is a shared objective among feminist theories. Women's rights are important to achieve equal rights between men and women, but it also is important to protect some rights more specific to women such as reproductive rights. Thirdly, emancipation is another

common feminist objective among different feminist theories since emancipatory politics lay the heart of feminist politics. Thus, to attain equality between man and woman, improvement of the legal, political, economic and social status of women, enhance opportunities of women for health, education and professional works through empowerment of women, promoting women's rights and emancipation of women are treated as shared feminist objectives throughout this thesis.

2.3.4 Data Collection

The four main sources of data for this thesis are the interviews conducted with the members of Saturday Mothers, the members of HRA in Istanbul, members of women's/feminist organizations in Istanbul and feminist scholars in Turkey; existing literature on Saturday Mothers; my personal observations of Saturday protests; and the *Pazartesi* and *Amargi* journals. All interviews were conducted as semi-structured and in-depth interviews. Although additional questions were asked and the order of questions were changed during the interviews, the interview questions prepared for the Saturday Mothers and members of the HRA are presented in Appendix A, while those prepared for women's/feminist organizations, and feminist scholars are presented in Appendix B and C respectively. Regarding the interviews, despite the fact that I gave priority to interviews with members of the Saturday Mothers for data collection, the interviews with members/representatives of HRA in Istanbul, members of women's/feminist organizations in Istanbul, and feminist academics in Turkey represent complementary data for this study. Additionally, I systematically review issues of the two feminist journals *Pazartesi* and *Amargi* and their perspectives on the Saturday Mothers and their protests to reflect more details about the relationship between the women's/feminist movement in Turkey and the Saturday Mothers, and how feminist circles evaluate their activities. Whenever it is

relevant, I also make use of interview data found in the existing literature to provide supplementary information. This concern particularly Evren Kocabıçak's (2003) master thesis "Locating Thirdspace in the specificities of urban: A case study on Saturday Mothers, in İstiklal street Istanbul", and Ayşem Sezer Şanlı's (2018) doctoral thesis "Gündelik hayatın dönüşümünde bir imkan olarak toplumsal muhalefetin değerlendirilmesi: Cumartesi Anneleri Üzerine bir araştırma".

Additionally, I participated to several Saturday protests between 8th February 2020 and 7th March 2020 as an overt-participant observer to meet members of the Saturday Mothers and the HRA, and to become familiar with and get a better sense of the Saturday Mothers and their protests.

As the main aim of the thesis to uncover whether the Saturday Mothers can be seen as serving feminist objectives in Turkey based on typology and framework of Carreon and Moghadam (2015), the interviews were designed to uncover the social connectedness and visions of the Saturday Mothers by giving specific reference to feminism. To uncover the social connectedness of the Saturday Mothers and the extent to which it included connections to the women's/feminist movement in Turkey, I use the data obtained from my interviews with both the Saturday Mothers and members of the HRA, as the latter is the legal representative of the Saturday Mothers and helps them in their protests. To find out the vision(s) informing the Saturday Mothers and to what extent they have included feminism, I use the data obtained from my interviews with the Saturday Mothers *and* members of the HRA in Istanbul, because it is possible that if the latter has specific agenda for women's right, it is more likely that the Saturday Mothers can be informed by a feminist vision. Additionally, the interviews with the members of women's/feminist organizations in Istanbul and a systematic review of the issues of *Pazartesi* and

Amargin provide additional information for the analysis as their perceptions on the Saturday Mothers have the possibility to shape the social connectedness and visions of the latter regarding feminism. To explore the actual impact of the Saturday Mothers with regard to feminist objectives in Turkey, I use the data obtained from my interviews with the Saturday Mothers, feminist scholars and women's/feminist organizations in Turkey. Also, it is necessary to establish a reference to the particular contexts of Turkey in order to understand how the activities of the Saturday Mothers are shaped and how they are perceived by feminist circles by situating the case within socio-cultural, political, ethnic, feminist and nationalist dynamics in Turkey.

With regard to sampling methods, non-random sampling is used. As I knew from the existing literature and the media that the HRA in Istanbul is the legal representative of the Saturday Mothers, I firstly communicated with the HRA in Istanbul via e-mail. Thus, accidental availability is important to reach members of the HRA. After getting my e-mail, a person from the Association called and informed me that both the Saturday Mothers and members of the Association are very selective for giving interviews because of inappropriate and psychologically damaging questions asked by many students, journalists, writers, media representatives, and scholars. Thus, they wanted to make sure that I would be objective when writing the thesis. On 8th February 2020, I met with the person from the Association after the Saturday protest at the place of the Association in Istanbul, and the person provided me with general information about the Saturday Mothers and their protests. After I explained the aim and nature of the thesis research, the person indicated that they would ask members of the Saturday Mothers to identify who would participate in the study. In line with that, members of the Association discussed among themselves to decide on who

would participate in the study. Thus, snowball sampling was used to recruit participants from the Saturday Mothers and the HRA.

To recruit participants from women's/feminist organizations and feminist scholars, non-random judgmental sampling was used, as I selected participants according to whom I found it appropriate to obtain knowledge from. To reach women's/feminist organizations, I used e-mail and phone calls and for feminist academics, I e-mailed them.

As a result of the sampling process, I conducted semi-structured and in-depth interviews with six female Saturday Mothers who attend the Saturday protests regularly and have participated in the Saturday movement since the beginning. The five face-to-face interviews with Saturday Mothers took place in the houses or workplaces of participants or cafes in Istanbul according to their preferences. One interview was conducted via phone call. Two members of the HRA in Istanbul participated to the interviews. One interview took place at the office of the Association in Taksim and the other was conducted via e-mail in a written format. Additionally, I interviewed two feminist scholars in Turkey. I interviewed one of them at the university where she works and the other sent the answers via e-mail in a written format. Only one women's organization accepted to participate in the study, and I conducted semi-structured and in-depth interview with two of its members in their workplace. Also, as I could not conduct interview with only one women's organization, I systematically review issues of the two feminist journals *Pazartesi* and *Amargi* and their perspectives on the Saturday Mothers and their protests to reflect more details about the relationship between the women's/feminist movement in Turkey and the Saturday Mothers, and how feminist circles evaluate the activities of the Saturday Mothers. The reason to why some interviews were conducted via e-

mail or phone call was the restrictions taken by the government as a result of the COVID-19 situation in Turkey. To protect the confidentiality of the participants, I have assigned nicknames to each one of them, and use these nicknames when referring to their interviews. More information about the participants is presented in Appendix D. The duration of the interviews varied from 30 minutes to 120 minutes, and all of them were conducted between 20th February and 30th April. More details about the interviews can be found in the table presented in Appendix E.

At this point, it is important to remind that the main aim of the thesis is not to create generalizable data, and that the data collected represent only the perspectives, opinions, behaviors and emotions of the participants. Moreover, since different feminist theories are used throughout the thesis, it is important to remind that each standpoint of the participants is valuable to create specific rather than generalizable knowledge.

2.3.5 Limitations of the Research

As mentioned in the previous sub-sections, the necessary data for this research have been obtained from interviews with members of the Saturday Mothers, members of the HRA in Istanbul, members of women's/feminist organizations in Istanbul, and feminist scholars in Turkey. Throughout the data collection process, I faced two main challenges which have limited the research.

The first limitation is about unwillingness and unavailability of participants to conduct interviews. Regarding interviews with members of the Saturday Mothers and the HRA in Istanbul, the participants were precautious and unwilling about my research in the beginning as they have been bothered because of inappropriate and psychologically damaging questions throughout the years. Until they got a sense of

my research and trusted me, I needed to wait and this caused a delay in the data collection process. As participants have other jobs and duties in their private lives, it sometimes became difficult to set an interview date. For the interviews with women's/feminist organizations, it was harder to reach them compared with members of the Saturday Mothers and members of the HRA. Before starting field research, I listed women's/feminist organizations in Istanbul because of my assumption that physical closeness could accelerate the familiarity of these organizations with the Saturday Mothers and their activities. Despite the physical closeness to, familiarity with, and individual support by some of their members to the Saturday Mothers and their protests, only one out of ten women's organization accepted to participate in the study. Two organizations were not actively participating in women's/feminist politics recently and rejected to give interviews because of that. One organization declined the request for an interview because of its specific focus on violence against women. Two others could not accept to participate as they had too busy schedules. The rest did not have or did not want to make any assessment about the Saturday Mothers and their protests. Additionally, the busy schedules of feminist scholars limited me to conduct interviews with them. Thus, only two feminist scholars could give interviews to me. As a result, although the main purpose of this thesis is not to produce generalizable data, reaching more participants would show different standpoints.

The second limitation of this research concerns the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The authorities declared the first diagnosed COVID-19 case in Turkey on 10th March 2020. The face-to-face interviews which I had scheduled for the dates after 10th March according to preferences of the participants had to be canceled. As a result, three out of ten participants from the Saturday Mothers withdrew from the

study. Additionally, I interviewed with one member of the Saturday Mothers, one member of the HRA in Istanbul and one feminist scholar via e-mail or phone call. Furthermore, the Saturday Mothers and the HRA decided to cancel their Saturday protests for a while in order not to risk the health of the participants and the Saturday Mothers have started to conduct their protests in online platforms. Thus, I could not make more observations as an overt-participant observer after 10th March 2020.

2.3.6 Analysis of the Data

The data obtained from interviews are interpreted in the light of the existing literature on maternal activism and feminism. Based on the data obtained from interviews, the arguments in the existing literature are revisited. Moreover, since there are complex qualitative data, some thematic or conceptual categories are used. Since there are different arguments on whether the Saturday Mothers can be seen as serving feminist objectives, I develop three broad categories to organize the data. Thus, it can be argued that the Saturday Mothers are feminists and can be seen as serving feminist objectives; that the Saturday Mothers are not feminists and cannot be seen as serving feminist objectives; and that the Saturday Mothers are not feminists but nonetheless can be seen as serving feminist objectives. Furthermore, to interpret the data, different feminist theories by giving special reference to liberal feminism, radical feminism, Marxist feminism, socialist feminism and intersectional feminism are used to assess whether the Saturday Mothers' movement can be seen as serving feminist objectives. The arguments of feminist scholars who oppose and support maternal activism are revisited when evaluating the actual impact of the Saturday Mothers with regard to feminist objectives.

2.4 Conclusion

I divided this chapter into two parts. The first part showed the literature review for the different conceptualizations of maternal activism, feminists encounter with maternal activism and the Saturday Mothers. The second part of the chapter dealt with the methodology of the thesis including the research question, the nature of the study, the analytical framework of the thesis, the conceptualizations of maternal activism and feminist objectives, and the necessary information, the data collection and data analysis.

For the clarification and explaining the research question of the thesis precisely, I defined maternal activism as the mobilization of women who intentionally or not use motherhood discourses to demonstrate their claims in different areas either to change or to sustain the status quo. Additionally, as feminist objectives can differ from each other's according to the perspectives of different feminist theories, the attainment of equality between men and women, improvement of the legal, political, economic and social status of women, enhance opportunities of women for health, education and professional works through empowerment of women, promoting women's rights and emancipation of women are treated as shared feminist objectives throughout this thesis.

The literature review of feminist IR theories and their perceptions on motherhood in general and maternal activism in particular, and feminists' encounters with maternal activism are important to grasp the theoretical framework of the thesis and further information and debates on this issue by giving specific references to liberal feminism, radical feminism, Marxist/socialist feminism and intersectional feminism will be used in chapter four as interpretative tools to understand the actual impact of the activities of the Saturday Mothers.

As I use the typology developed by Carreon and Moghadam to understand whether the Saturday Mothers can be seen as serving feminist objectives or not, the next chapter focuses on the social connectedness and vision(s) of the Saturday Mothers with particular reference to feminism.



CHAPTER 3

AN ANALYSIS OF THE SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS AND VISIONS OF THE SATURDAY MOTHERS

3.1 Introduction

As the main purpose of the thesis is to understand whether the Saturday Mothers can be seen as serving feminist objectives in Turkey by using the analytical framework and typology developed by Carreon and Moghadam (2015), it is necessary to figure out the social connectedness of the Saturday Mothers in Turkey as well as the visions informing the Saturday Mothers and their protests. Thus, throughout this chapter I reflect the possible connectedness of the Saturday Mothers socially and the possible visions which have influenced the Saturday Mothers and their weekly Saturday protests by using the interviews with Saturday Mothers, members of HRA in Istanbul, and members of women's/feminist organizations in Istanbul. Although the main aim of this analysis is to find out whether the Saturday Mothers are socially

connected to the women's/feminist movement in Turkey and informed by a feminist vision, I include considerations of other possible social connectedness and visions of the Saturday Mothers to indicate that if they do not categorize themselves within the women's/feminist movement and are not informed by a feminist vision, then how do they classify themselves and which visions have informed them and their protests. However, it is important to note that I do not intend to make any conclusive statement about the social connectedness and visions of the Saturday Mothers other than feminism.

I divide this chapter into two parts; while the first part is about the exploration of the social connectedness of the Saturday Mothers in Turkey, the second part deals with possible visions which have informed the Saturday Mothers. The first part on the social connectedness of the Saturday Mothers is composed of two main sections which focuses on the social connectedness of the Saturday Mothers in general and with regard to the women's/feminist movement in Turkey in particular. The first section deals with how the existing literature and the media classify the Saturday Mothers within the Kurdish movement, the human rights movement, the democracy movement and mothers' movements, and how members of the Saturday Mothers see themselves and their movement within these context. The second section aims to understand the possible connectedness of the Saturday Mothers with regard to the women's/feminist movement in Turkey by considering the emergence of the women's/feminist movement in Turkey, the existence or not of a relationship between the women's/feminist movement and the Saturday Mothers, how they perceive each other, and the self-perception of the Saturday Mothers within this context. The second part on the visions of the Saturday Mothers analyzes the

possible existence of a feminist vision among the Saturday Mothers and in their protests and the possible existence of other visions except from feminism.

3.2 Social Connectedness of Saturday Mothers

In their article “Resistance is Fertile: Revisiting maternalist frames across cases of women’s mobilization”, Carreon and Mogdaham (2015: 18-19) argue that the role of women’s rights movements and institutions in relation to mothers’ activism is important to shape the nature of the mothers’ movements regarding feminist objectives. Based on their typology and framework, the first hypothesis which argues a mothers’ movement is more likely to serve feminist objectives if it has connections with women’s/feminist organizations can be drawn. Thus, this part is designed to uncover social connectedness of Saturday Mothers. Although the role of women’s rights movements and institutions, and women’s/feminist organizations is prior in the arguments of Carreon and Moghadam, I firstly explore social contexts other than feminism which Saturday Mothers are classified by scholars and media. The aim of this is to show that if Saturday Mothers do not see themselves within women’s/feminist movement in Turkey, what the social connectedness of Saturday Mothers can be. Secondly, I find out whether Saturday Mothers socially connected in women’s/feminist movement in Turkey.

3.2.1 On the Social Connectedness of the Saturday Mothers in General

As mentioned in the literature review parts in Chapter 2, there are various scholarly attempts to locate the Saturday Mothers and their protests socially within Turkey. These scholarly works as well as news in the media tend to classify the Saturday Mothers and their protests within four broad categories other than the women’s/feminist movement: as a part of a broader Kurdish movement, the

democracy movement, and mothers' movements more generally, and the human rights movement. In what follows, I show what the rationale behind these categorizations and how the Saturday Mothers see themselves in relation to these categories.

The classification of the Saturday Mothers within a broader Kurdish movement is generally derived from the ethnic identity of some of the participants of the Saturday Mothers. It is argued that the Saturday Mothers whose ethnic identities are mostly Kurdish show the multiple oppressions of Kurdish women (Diner & Toktaş, 2010: 48) and represent glorified form of motherhood which is important for the Kurdish national struggle (Çaha, 2011: 446). Additionally, the Saturday Mothers are tried to be marginalized by the governments and the media by classifying them as the mothers of "terrorists" and "separatists" with the argument that they are either the mothers of PKK members or supporters of the PKK.¹ In addition to the ideological motivations of the Turkish state to delegitimize their existence, the Saturday Mothers are often represented or assumed as being the same groups of mothers as the Peace Mothers. Thus, it is thought that Kurdish ethnic identity is important for the mobilization of the Saturday Mothers. For the Saturday Mothers, this classification does not represent the truth and is based on the simple assumption that as the majority of disappearances occurred in the Eastern and Southeastern parts of Turkey where the ethnically Kurdish population is high, all participants are Kurds and they make Kurdish politics (Gülnehal, personal communication, March 12, 2020).

Münevver shows the misassumption by arguing that Saturday Mothers are composed of variety of people from different ethnicities and cultures like a symbol of the ethnic

¹ For this discourse reflected in the speeches of government authorities and the media, see <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/363013/erdogan-cumartesi-anneleri-ve-havalimani-iscilerini-terorist-ilan-etti> and <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/siyaset/son-dakika-bakan-soylu-uyardi-onlari-ac-birakacagiz-2731374>

and cultural mosaic of Turkey, and the main aim is to defend the rights of disappeared persons no matter which ethnicity they had. (personal communication, February 21, 2020). İnci confirms the statement of Münevver and says that “people from different ethnic identities were disappeared, for example, we are Circassian ethnically but my brother was disappeared. We do not have any ideology other than defending the rights of disappeared persons” (personal communication, February 21, 2020). Also, Gizem indicates that:

I am ethnically Kurd, but have never been among the Saturday Mothers and in the Saturday protests because of my ethnic identity. To be a part of the Kurdish movement, it is necessary to prioritize Kurdish identity and make politics based on that, but this is not the case for the Saturday Mothers (personal communication, February 20, 2020).

In addition to the statements of the participants, my personal observations during the Saturday protests reveal that there is no emphasis on Kurdish ethnic identity and such an identity is not a driving force behind the mobilizations of the Saturday Mothers. The second scholarly attempt to classify the Saturday Mothers socially is with reference to the democracy movement. This classification is based on the argument that the silent protests of the Saturday Mothers contribute to the democratization process in Turkey (Göker, 2010: 124). Although democracy and democratization can have different meanings based on different conceptualizations, the Saturday Mothers see their protests as a contribution to democracy in relation to human rights as most of them believe that for meeting the demands of the Saturday Mothers, the existence of democracy based on the supremacy of law is necessary in Turkey (Sevim, personal communication, April 1, 2020). Zülbiye makes the same point by arguing that “if perpetrators of enforced disappearances would be judged as a result of our protests, then this would be a major contribution to democracy in Turkey” (personal communication, March 3, 2020). Additionally, İnci states that “we struggle for

freedom of speech, equality and justice which are the important components of democracy, so our struggle is definitely a democracy movement” (personal communication, February 21, 2020). Also, Aliye says that the Saturday protests make an important contribution to democracy as they are organized as peaceful protests and peaceful civil disobedience (personal communication, February 25, 2020).

The third scholarly attempt classifies the Saturday Mothers and their protests within the human rights movement in Turkey. This classification reflects the struggle of the Saturday Mothers to show human rights violations because of enforced disappearances and to achieve justice by demanding the prosecution of the perpetrators (Davidovic, 2018; Şanlı, 2018). The classification within the human rights movement is the most accepted category by the Saturday Mothers themselves. When I asked how they see themselves within existing social and political movements, all participants whom I interviewed emphasized their aim to defend human rights. Sevim explains the transformation of the Saturday Mothers from victims to human rights advocates by indicating that “when struggling for the truth, justice, remembrance of disappeared people and inhumane treatments, freedom of gathering and speech, and punishment of perpetrators, the Saturday Mothers have become human rights activists” (personal communication, April 1, 2020). Zülbiye shows the importance of human rights and argues that “without human rights, humans cannot be humans. Human rights are fundamental for the existence and survival of people and without them humans cannot be humans. To protect the basic and fundamental rights is the main duty of the Saturday Mothers” (personal communication, March 3, 2020). In a similar argument with Zülbiye, Aliye exemplifies the rights which can be found in their discourses during protests, and

states that enforced disappearances are against the most important fundamental rights, including the right to live and freedom from torture, so the protests and demands of the Saturday Mothers represent the core of human rights (personal communication, February 25, 2020). Additionally, Gizem shows how the universality of human rights is important in the discourse of the Saturday Mothers by saying that:

Our slogan is “never again”. We experienced the violation of our rights and the rights of our loved ones, but there are other people in Turkey and in the world who faced and will face human rights violations. We are not here for only ourselves and our loved ones; we are here for everyone to stop human rights violations. We started our advocacy by defending the most important right which is the right to live for a human (personal communication, February 20, 2020).

In addition to the statements by the participants, it is important to remind the strong link between the Saturday Mothers and the HRA. As a very active organization fighting against all forms of human rights violations, the HRA is the only legal representative and the permanent supporter of the Saturday Mothers. By taking emotional and legal support from the HRA, it is very meaningful to assume that the Saturday Mothers learn how to be human rights activists from the HRA.

The last classification of the Saturday Mothers and their protests is within mothers’ movement. Although there is not much scholarly work specifically considering whether the Saturday Mothers should be classified as a mothers’ movement (except Orhan, 2008 and Göker, 2016), most of the literature depicts the Saturday Mothers as a mothers’ movement. Despite the fact that most of the protesters are mothers, they did not name themselves as mothers, because there were fathers, sisters, wives of the disappeared ones and human rights activists in the protests (Şanlı, 2018: 202-203; Tanrıku, 2003: 280). However, by drawing attention to the similarities with the Plaza de Mayo Mothers in Argentina, the Turkish media and other outsiders labeled

the protestors as Saturday Mothers (Şanlı, 2018: 202). Over time, the Saturday Mothers have accepted this classification by calling and introducing themselves as Saturday Mothers. Gülnihal explains this process by arguing that:

In the beginning of the movement, family members and especially mothers were at the front. Although there were husbands, sisters, brothers, wives and children, I think making the sympathy with a mother and her struggle to find her child affected people emotionally. Also, the importance of women especially mothers in the struggle against enforced disappearances in the world have created the Saturday Mothers as a mothers' movement in the eyes of the media and people. When the Saturday Mothers saw the example of the Plaza de Mayo Mothers in Argentina and other mothers' movement in the world, the acceptance of the movement as a mothers' movement by the Saturday Mothers emerged (personal communication, March 12, 2020).

After the acceptance of being a mothers' movement, the Saturday Mothers developed close relations with some of the mothers' movements elsewhere in the world. By establishing transnational connections, the Saturday Mothers have supported different mothers' movements in the world, including the Plaza de Mayo Mothers in Argentina and the Khavaran Mothers in Iran, by either physically participating to their protests or supporting them by creating a public awareness through public presses or in the social media. Additionally, some members of different mothers' movements joined in the Saturday protests. As a result of these ties and relations, the Saturday Mothers took their place within broader mothers' movements. This can be seen in that although some participants have joined to protests because they were actual mothers and looked after their children as a part of their responsibility, they started over time to defend the rights of all disappeared people as they were also a child of a mother (Zülbiye, personal communication, March 3, 2020; Pınar, personal communication, April 30, 2020). Being connected with broader mothers' movements is also related with the promotion of human rights and democracy during the Saturday protests. As most of the examples of mothers' movements aim to defend

human rights and democracy to achieve their demands, ideas of human right activism and democracy are shared among them.

Mothers and their relationship with their children are important for the start and persistence of the movement, and increased the support for the movement in the beginning by creating empathy for a mother by outsiders (İnci, personal communication, February 21, 2020; Münevver, personal communication, February 21, 2020). However, participants did not choose motherhood as a strategy or a tactic; they rather acted with a humane response that emerged from losing a loved one and turned that feeling into a struggle for truth and justice (Sevim, personal communication, April 1, 2020). Additionally, it is important to emphasize that although other family members, human right activists, and individual supporters have been important for the Saturday protests and the struggle of the Saturday Mothers since the beginning, they have become more important as most of the original mothers died or are now too old to participate in the protests.

3.2.2 The Social Connectedness of Saturday Mothers within a Women's/Feminist Context

As the social connectedness of a mothers' movement within a women's/feminist movement is important to understand whether the former is likely to serve feminist objectives, I examine the emergence and development of the women's/feminist movement in Turkey and the possible connection between the Saturday Mothers and the women's/feminist movement in Turkey to decide whether the Saturday Mothers are connected to the women's/feminist movement socially.

3.2.2.1 The Emergence and Development of the Women's/Feminist Movement in Turkey

Although women's demands to improve their status in society and gain their rights did not start with the establishment of Turkish Republic in 1923 (Arat, 2008; Tekeli, 1993), women and their status in society became more visible with its establishment. In this connection, Arat (2008: 388) argues that "women's struggles for empowerment in Turkey have been intimately linked to the state-initiated modernization process". Tekeli explains the link between the empowerment of women and the state-initiated modernization process by arguing that with the establishment of the Republic in 1923 and reinforcing Kemalist reforms, the ruling class in Turkey tried to show that the new Turkish state had no connection with the old Ottoman state. The improvement of the status and rights of woman with Kemalist reforms demonstrated the end of the Ottoman Empire and its ruling style by legitimizing the new Republican Turkish state (Tekeli, 1993: 28-30). Hence, with the introduction of a civil code in 1926, the right to participate in municipal elections in 1930, the right to elect and be elected to the Turkish National Assembly in 1934, and opportunities for education and employment, women's status improved (Arat, 2008: 391-395). Despite the fact that whether Atatürk liberated women with Kemalist reforms (Arat, 1998: 91) or women demanded their rights and the Kemalist reforms were a response to these demands (Tekeli, 1998: 345) is debated, the alliance between women and the state remained until 1980 because of the overlap of the interests between the two (Arat, 2008: 392-394).

However, state-led feminism had its drawbacks. The first drawback was that the Kemalist reforms did not encompass all women living in Turkey. Unlike their middle-class counterparts, the Kemalist reforms did not affect the status of women living in rural areas until the 1950s and 1960s (Kandiyoti, 1996: 76-77). The second drawback was that the Kemalist reforms improved the lives of women, especially

bourgeoisie women, and made women equal to men only in the public space, so that traditional gender roles within private sphere were reinforced. However, the equality only in the public sphere did not bring real equality between men and women, because women were double burdened because of their responsibilities in the private sphere and could not go beyond their traditional gender roles. Women were attending the public sphere as equal partners unless they hinder their duties in the family life, and the main duty of women was to be a mother which was a pre-request to be a good citizen (Şerifsoy, 2000).

Because of the drawbacks of state-led feminism, some women started to question it. However, these criticisms got strengthened after the military coup in 1980 because “the leftist political activism dismissed any feminist inclination” (Arat, 2008: 396) and women’s struggle was reduced to the class struggle. With the easing of the conflict between leftists and rightists after the military *coup d’état* and the influence of second-wave feminism in Turkey, a feminist movement independent from the state emerged during the 1980s (Arat, 2008: 397). Between 1982 and 1990, small groups of women came together to raise feminist consciousness and improve women’s status (Tekeli, 1993: 31). During the 1980s, important accomplishments of the feminist movement included the organization of the first symposium which supported feminism publicly in 1982; the publication of the first women’s content in journal *Somut* in 1983; the establishment of a women’s book club in 1984; the organization of the campaign to ratify the UN Convention for the Elimination of All Types of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1986; the organization of protests against legitimization of violence against women in 1987; the introduction of 8 March marches; the establishment of the First Feminist Weekend and the First Women Congress in 1989; the introduction of campaigns against sexual and

domestic violence; the establishment of women's shelters; and the idea of opening a Women's Library and Information Center (Tekeli, 1993: 31-33).

The 1990s signified the institutionalization period of the independent feminist movement that emerged during the 1980s (Bora & Günel, 2002: 8). The obligations of the state that emerged within the context of CEDAW and the EU accession negotiations of Turkey accelerated the institutionalization of the feminist movement during the 1990s (Arat, 2008: 399-402). On the one hand, some feminists continued their activism within state channels; on the other hand, others contributed to the establishment of feminist organizations by extracting resources from the state (Arat, 2008: 399). Additionally, new organizations including "the women's library, associations to fight against violence towards women, the women's journal *Pazartesi*, the association to promote women in politics KA-DER, and the women's communication network Uçan Süpürge began acquiring funds from abroad" (Arat, 2008: 400). Thus, the 1990s were characterized by a proliferation of feminist organizations which have focused on specific problems of women. Thanks to these, the feminist movement opened up to more women including those not living in big cities. The establishment of women's study centers and feminist academic programs in universities to promote feminist research and finding was another important characteristic of the feminist movement in the 1990s (Bora & Günel, 2002: 10). Additionally, the emergence of feminist demands for the rights of Islamist women and Kurdish women broadened the feminist movement by including women from different societal segments which were ignored until the 1990s (Bora & Günel, 2002: 8)

However, the inclusion of women from Islamist and Kurdish segments of society to the feminist movement was not a smooth process. Despite the existence of some

criticism among feminists towards Kemalist reforms, and its relation with feminism and the patriarchy; Turkish feminists “intentionally or not followed Kemalist lines” (Yüksel, 2006: 784), which makes the relationship between Kemalism and the emancipation of Turkish women incontrovertible (Yüksel, 2006: 782). Thus, the rise of identity politics pursued by Kurdish women and the criticism of Kemalist secularism by Islamist women have created division and tension among feminists. On the one hand, as an intended or unintended consequence of the Kurdish nationalist movement which interferes to women’s lives and uses women as an object during its struggle and the emergence and development of the Turkish feminist movement in relation to the modernization process of the Turkish Republic in Turkey (Çaha, 2011: 438-439), some Kurdish women have organized as a faction within the feminist movement since the beginning of 1990s. Their initial aim is to show how multiple forms of oppressions of Kurdish women emerged because of “patriarchal tribal system domination in Kurdish culture and imperialist system that the centralist Turkish state has imposed on Kurdish people” (Diner & Toktaş, 2010: 42). Thus, ethnic identity, gender identity, specific patriarchal structure within Kurdish society, and environment of violence and insecurity related to the conflict between the PKK and the Turkish state shape and construct the multiple oppressions of Kurdish women different than Turkish women.

To show their experiences and specific demands different from their Turkish counterparts, Kurdish feminists have mobilized through establishing independent women’s/feminist organizations, associations, and publications since the beginning of the 1990s. With the increasing visibility and actions of Kurdish women, the dialogue between Turkish feminists and Kurdish feminists has developed, but the relationship between them has varied (Diner & Toktaş, 2010: 49). On the one hand,

some Turkish feminists align with their Kurdish counterparts to support the struggle of the latter; others are cautious about Kurdish feminists because of the emphasis of Kurdish ethnic identity and the possibility of a relationship between Kurdish feminism and the Kurdish nationalist struggle (Diner & Toktaş, 2010: 49-50). On the other hand, with the revival of political Islam during the 1990s, Islamist women have started to organize to show their specific demands and to fight against the specific discriminations they experience. They are arguing that “they were made to suffer as the secular and modern worldview was imposed upon them” (Simga & Göker, 2017: 278). By criticizing Kemalist secularism and the gender equality concept, Islamist feminists promote gender justice which is an idea that embraces the difference between men and women and promotes a just and fair distribution of social roles between sexes (Simga & Göker, 2017: 274-275). In addition to the deployment of Islamist women in political parties which promote the ideology of political Islam, the ban of wearing headscarf at universities accelerated Islamist women’s participation in politics (Diner & Toktaş, 2010: 47). Similar to the emergence and development of Kurdish feminism, Islamist feminism has created debate among feminists. While some feminists support the Islamist feminists especially for their fights against the headscarf ban and build cooperation with them to work for the ratification of CEDAW (Simga & Göker, 2017: 280), some other feminists certainly refuse to stand by the Islamist feminists because of the belief that the demands of the Islamist feminists are against the secular establishments of the Turkish state. (Diner & Toktaş, 2010: 52).

3.2.2.2 Uncovering the Connections between the Women’s/Feminist Movement in Turkey and the Saturday Mothers

According to the hypotheses which are derived from the typology and framework of Carreon and Moghadam (2015), discovering the connections between women's/feminist movement in Turkey and the Saturday Mothers is an important element to evaluate whether the Saturday Mothers and their protests are likely to serve feminist objectives in Turkey. When the women's/feminist movement started to develop as an independent movement since 1980s and development to include different groups and perspectives resulting in an enrichment of feminist ideologies and mobilizations in Turkey during 1990s, a possible connection of the movement with the Saturday Mothers and their protests needs an exploration. The interviews with Saturday Mothers, members of HRA in Istanbul, women's/ feminist organizations in Istanbul, and a systematic analysis of the *Pazartesi* and *Amargi* journals help me to discover the possible connections between the Saturday Mothers and women's/feminist organization in Turkey.

During my interviews with Saturday Mothers, I asked each participants about which social groups, organizations, movements and political parties support them and the Saturday protests. Additionally, I asked questions to learn whether any women's/feminist organizations have supported them directly. In response, Gizem says that there is no connection between the Saturday Mothers and women's/feminist organizations in Turkey, and they do not get any institutional support from women's/feminist organizations (personal communication, February 20, 2020). İclal confirms Gizem by arguing that:

There is no support from women's/feminist organizations for the Saturday Mothers and the Saturday protests institutionally, although I should be fair that there were and are still some women, who actively participate to women's/feminist organizations in Turkey, come to the Saturday protests and support the Saturday Mothers (personal communication, February 21, 2020).

From the statement of İclal, it is clear that the existence of women's/feminist activists to support the Saturday movement is valuable for the Saturday Mothers, but this is the individual choice of women's/feminist activists and not representative of a general attitude of women's/feminist organizations in relation to the Saturday Mothers and their protests. İclal continues to argue that:

We do not have a formal request from women's/feminist organizations to support us and Saturday protests, but our struggle for justice for enforced disappearances is societal demand, so we demand support from all societal segments and organizations. Thus, as a constituent of the society, women's/feminist organizations can be more sensitive about our struggle and should have supported us (personal communication, February 21, 2020).

Münevver makes her complaint clearer by saying that:

Unfortunately, we do not take any place in the agenda of the women's/feminist movement in Turkey. I do not understand why women's/feminist organizations are silent about us and why they do not mention the violence which we face during the Saturday protests. We were beaten up by police forces, we were taken under custody violently... That is violence against women. Why do not women's/feminist organizations during 8th March protests remember women who were tortured under unlawful custodies and disappeared after these custodies? It is very sad to see that women's/feminist organizations have nothing to say about us (personal communication, February 21, 2020).

Aliye agrees with Münevver's claim for the necessity of support from women's/feminist organization, and argues that "the lack of support from women's/feminist organizations is a political choice taken on purpose. They want to neglect us, but I think the support from them is necessary because every mother in our protests is woman" (personal communication, February 25, 2020).

In line with the statements by Saturday Mothers, members of the HRA in Istanbul emphasize the lack of regular and institutional support for the Saturday Mothers and their protests from women's/feminist organizations despite the appreciation of individual supports of women who are active in women's/feminist organizations.

Gülnihal explains that:

The main aim of the Human Rights Association is to protect the rights of humans no matter which gender, identity, ethnicity, religion they have. We launched a program to support the rights of LGBTQI+ members in Istanbul when they have faced systematic oppressions. Additionally, we work with Amnesty International and other international human rights organizations to combat gender discrimination. However, we do not have systematic and institutionalized support from women's/feminist organizations in Turkey for the Saturday Mothers (personal communication, March 12, 2020).

Sevim argues for the necessity of support from women's/feminist organizations by indicating that:

While women's/feminist organizations shout the names of women who were murdered by men in 8th March protests, they do not mention the names of women who were disappeared under unlawful custodies. These disappearances of women were the result of violence of men which were fed by the state. When women confronted with state violence, they were discriminated against based on their gender (personal communication, April 1, 2020).

In addition to the interviews with Saturday Mothers and members of the HRA, the interview with a women's organization and the lack of assessments and willingness of other women's/feminist organizations when I requested to conduct an interview with them reveal the lack of connection between the Saturday Mothers and women's/feminist organization in Turkey. I tried to communicate with ten women's/feminist organizations in Istanbul. Except one, the women's/feminist organizations which I communicated with declined the request of an interview by arguing that they do not have any assessments about the Saturday Mothers. Even if some of them are familiar with the Saturday Mothers and individual members of their organizations attend the Saturday protests, they do not want to declare an institutionalized opinion on the Saturday Mothers and their protests by limiting their members' supports as an individual choice. The women's organization that I interviewed has been active for a long time to solve women's problems. The organization is close to communist ideology, because for the opinion of its members,

women face problems because of the existing economic structure and women would be freed with class struggle (Neriman, personal communication, February 28, 2020). As an organization, it is familiar to mothers' movement in Turkey and among the organizers of the mothers' movement in 1975 to stop mothers' pains that emerged because of nationalist attacks on leftists. Regarding their awareness of and support for the Saturday Mothers, Neriman argues that:

Each woman's efforts and work are very important for us. We are aware of the existence of the Saturday Mothers and their struggle. In the beginning of their protests, the period between 1995 and 1999, we supported them actively by sending members of our organizations to the Saturday protests and looking for disappeared people. This was meaningful for us because lots of people who had leftist, socialist, communist, progressive ideologies were disappeared. However, after 2009, we have decided to stop supporting them, because we think that they could not adapt themselves to the changing economic, social and political atmosphere of Turkey, and they have become close to the Kurdish movement in Turkey (personal communication, February 28, 2020).

To trace the possible connection between women's/feminist movement and the Saturday Mothers, an analysis of the *Pazartesi* and *Amargi* journals provides supplementary information. *Pazartesi* is a feminist journal which was published between 1995 and 2005, and its publication can be perceived as a product of the institutionalization period of the feminist movement during the 1990s (Koçali, 2002: 74). In its administrative body, there were women who have been actively involved in feminist politics and the feminist movement in Turkey. Rather than reflecting deep theoretical discussions among different feminist theories, it was designed as a "popular feminist" journal to reach and include all kinds of women and their experiences (Koçali, 2002: 75-76). By establishing a connection among variety of women, the journal aimed to organize collective action which would form a strategy to emancipate women. From the perspective of *Pazartesi*, for the emancipation of women, overthrowing laws, rules, and traditions in the public space which cause the

subordination of women is necessary but not enough, because women irrespective of their specific conditions share the same experience of subordination in their private lives. Despite the lack of specific alignment with a specific feminist theory, *Pazartesi* is in my opinion closer to radical feminism as it can be inferred from the promotion of collective action on the basis of sisterhood and inclusion of the private sphere as a sphere of domination to emancipate women.

Pazartesi was not silent about the Saturday Mothers, their struggle for justice, and their protests. Articles on the Saturday Mothers and their protests were published to show the demands and struggle of the Saturday Mothers, and the main aim of most of these articles were to inform its readers about the Saturday Mothers and their protests. In addition to such informative articles, some writers within the journal assessed the Saturday Mothers and their protests from their feminist perspectives. However, there was no consensus on the direct relationship between the Saturday Mothers and feminist objectives, which can be seen as a reflection of the debate among radical feminists mentioned in the previous sections.

For some writers, including Filiz Koçali (1998: 10-11), the Saturday protests and their struggle for justice empower female participants of the Saturday Mothers in their individual lives by enabling them to do politics and political activism (Deniz, 1997: 10-11). As a result of this empowerment, some participants of the Saturday Mothers have recognized traditional gender roles which oppress them and have dedicated themselves to fight against this oppression (Koçali, 1998: 10-11).

Supporters of the potential for the Saturday Mothers serving feminist objectives would generally classify the Saturday Mothers as anti-militarist, peace, and human right activists whose reflections can be found within feminist circles. Additionally, Filiz Karakuş (1999: 7) argues that it is the duty of Turkish feminists to establish a

dialogue between different mothers' movements in Turkey, including the Saturday Mothers, the Friday Mothers and the Peace Mothers, to achieve more successful peace activism. On the other hand, some writers were cautious for establishing a link between the Saturday Mothers and feminist objectives because of the argument that the use of motherhood and a motherhood discourse during the Saturday protests further the over-association of women with motherhood without any questioning and contribute to confine women to traditional gender roles (Potuloğlu, 1996: 3).

Amargi is another feminist journal in which to trace feminists' reflections on the Saturday Mothers. It was published between 2006 and 2016, and its main purpose was to contribute to feminist theory and politics by producing feminist philosophy and knowledge to challenge patriarchy in every aspect of life including language, art, history, science, and politics (<https://www.catlakzemin.com/15-aralik-2007/>). Like *Pazartesi*, *Amargi* did not align itself with a specific feminist theory, but defined itself as anti-capitalist, anti-militarist, anti-homophobic, and anti-trans phobic. Thus, "co-existence with differences" became the main slogan of *Amargi*. Despite that slogan, some administrative members of *Amargi* quit from the journal by claiming that the journal was not actually recognizing differences; it allegedly tried to pursue liberal political ideology without questioning, which left no space to do feminist politics (<https://www.kaosgl.org/haber/quotfeminist-politika-yapma-zemini-kalmadiquot>).

Despite the existence of awareness, the number of articles as well as their comprehensiveness on the Saturday Mothers and their protests in *Amargi* were less compared to *Pazartesi*. Thus, *Amargi*'s attempts to establish a link between the Saturday Mothers and feminism in Turkey remained very few. In her articles, Zozan Çetin analyzes the pains and sufferings of Saturday Mothers (Çetin, 2015a) and

appreciates the protests of the Saturday Mothers because she perceives their struggle as one against the justice system, which was dominated by patriarchal ideology (Çetin, 2015b). Additionally, Meltem Ahıska analyzes the Saturday Mothers and their familiarity to violence, and argues that they “have transgressed the boundaries of womanhood and motherhood in the private sphere, have even neglected their ‘duties’ in this area and have come out into the public sphere” which leads to the emergence of a new dimension of concept of care including politics and ethics (Ahıska, 2013). Except the writings of Çetin and Ahıska, there was no mentioning of the Saturday Mothers in *Amargi*.

In the light of the analysis of the emergence and development of the women’s/feminist movement in Turkey and the interviews with participants of the Saturday Mothers, members of the HRA and women’s/feminist organizations, it is clear that the women’s/feminist movement in Turkey and the Saturday Mothers emerged and developed separately. Despite the existence of individual feminist activists who actively participate in the Saturday protests, a women’s organization trying to build a bridge between the Saturday Mothers and the women’s/feminist movement, and attempts on the part of some feminist writers and activists in the *Pazartesi* and *Amargi* journals to connect their feminist activism with the Saturday Mothers, they remain as attempts and individual choices of feminist women. Thus, it can be concluded that there is no significant relationship and cooperation between the Saturday Mothers and women’s/feminist organizations in Turkey.

3.3 The Visions of the Saturday Mothers

The second important argument of Carreon and Moghadam (2015: 18-19) in their article “Resistance is Fertile: Revisiting maternalist frames across cases of women’s mobilization” is that it is necessary to look at the place of feminist values in cases of

mobilization on the part of mothers. Based on their work, the second hypothesis is that a mother's movement is more likely to serve feminist objectives if it is informed by a feminist vision. Thus, I devote this part to explore the possible existence of a feminist vision in the Saturday Mothers and their protests. Additionally, I look briefly at whether the Saturday Mothers are informed by other non-feminist visions.

3.3.1 Analyzing the Existence of a Feminist Vision among the Saturday Mothers and in their Protests

As feminist values increase the likelihood of a mothers' movement to serve feminist objectives, uncover the place of these values among the Saturday Mothers and in their protests is necessary. In this connection, I look at how the Saturday Mothers perceive feminism and the women's/feminist movement in Turkey at the beginning. Secondly, I show how the Saturday Mothers understand define feminism because of the idea that without reflecting their definition of feminism, it is hard to figure out whether the Saturday Mothers are informed by a feminist vision or not. Based on their understanding of feminism, I show whether they classify themselves as feminist and the place of feminist values in the Saturday protests. Lastly, I conclude whether the Saturday Mothers can be said to be informed by feminist values.

Regarding the perceptions of the Saturday Mothers and the HRA on feminism and the women's/feminist movement in Turkey, Gizem summarizes the common idea by arguing that:

I think feminism is a loose concept and has a negative connotation in Turkey. When you say feminism to someone or label a person as a feminist, other people are scared of that and say 'Ouch! That's feminist'. I think this is because feminists in Turkey could not explain feminism properly in Turkey. They are seen as man haters (personal communication, February 20, 2020).

Except two, all four participants of the Saturday Mothers and two members of the HRA see the women's/feminist movement in Turkey as an over-prioritization of womanhood and women over manhood, men and other problems. Zülbiye exemplifies this by saying that "I do not know exactly what these feminists want. Should I dump my husband after that age and after these years we shared?" (personal communication, March 3, 2020). Gülnihal, as a human rights lawyer and activist, continues to emphasize that "although I believe in the freedom and rights of women and struggle for them, feminists see woman as superior than man and prioritize womanhood over other things in Turkey from my opinion" (personal communication, March 12, 2020).

Regardless of how they perceive the women's/feminist movement in Turkey, I asked participants from the Saturday Mothers and the HRA to communicate their own definition of feminism. Two participants out of eight indicate that they do not know what feminism means exactly so they cannot define it because of the lack of proper ideas (personal communication with Zülbiye, March 3, 2020 and personal communication with Pınar, April 30, 2020). The rest of them have similar conceptualizations for feminism. Gizem defines feminism as "the idea which promotes equal rights and freedoms for all humans without any discrimination based on gender" (personal communication, February 20, 2020). İclal continues to make emphasis on equality between men and women in terms of rights and freedoms by indicating that "feminism is an ideology which tries to empower women to achieve equal rights and freedoms for man and woman in all aspects of life" (personal communication, February 21, 2020). Aliye has similar ideas and defines feminism as "a struggle to defend the rights and freedoms of women in order to achieve equality among sexes" (personal communication, February 25, 2020). Thus, the stress for

equality between men and women in terms of rights and freedoms are common among participants. Although participants have similar emphasis when defining feminism, their self-classifications as feminist vary. The lack of proper ideas of two members to define feminism is the reasons why they do not classify themselves as feminists. The four members also do not define themselves as feminists, because of their willingness to emphasize human rights rather than putting special emphasis on genders. İclal explains this by arguing that “I cannot define myself as a feminist because rather than struggling only for women’s rights, I prefer to choose to struggle for humanity to achieve human rights for all humans. If humanity will be freed with human rights; so do women” (personal communication, February 21, 2020).

Münevver agrees with İclal by stating that she is not a feminist because she is not interested only in women’s problems; she fights against all human rights violations and believes in the justice for everyone irrespective of gender (personal communication, February 21, 2020). Gülnihal continues that despite the fact that defending the rights of women is important for her as a human right activist, she is not a feminist because she looks at human rights as universal and unitary rather than prioritizing the rights of one sex over the other (personal communication, March 12, 2020). Gizem and Aliye define themselves as feminists because of their struggle for women’s rights to achieve equality between men and women and they indicate that both of them started this struggle within their family lives to arrange equal gender roles among their husbands and children (Gizem, personal communication, February 20, 2020; Aliye, personal communication, February 25, 2020).

Irrespective of how they perceive feminism in Turkey, their definitions of feminism, and their self-classification as a feminist or not, all participants share the same idea that they are not there because of their womanhood; they are participating in the

Saturday protests as a relative of disappeared person or to support relatives of disappeared persons, and the initial aim of the Saturday protests is to struggle for justice for people who were disappeared by force. Sevim summarizes this idea as an observant of the protests and member of the HRA by pointing out that:

The majority of participants of the Saturday Mothers and the Saturday protests are women. Some of them prioritize their womanhood identity and struggle for the rights of women and against patriarchy to achieve gender equality. However, the Saturday Mothers are present in the Saturday protests as human rights advocates who fight for justice for their disappeared loved ones and for all people (personal communication, April 1, 2020).

Münevver's statement exemplifies what Sevim says by indicating that "[b]efore anything else, I am a relative of a disappeared person and I am a human rights defender. We all come together to defend the most basic human right: the right to live" (personal communication, February 21, 2020). İclal agrees with Münevver and says that "I am a mother, a relative of a disappeared person, I am a woman... However, I do not attend to the Saturday Mothers and the Saturday protests because I am a woman; I am there to demand justice for disappeared person" (personal communication, February 21, 2020). Aliye confirms what the other participants say with her statement that although she defines herself as a feminist woman, feminist values are not at the hearth of the Saturday protests because the Saturday Mothers do not fight for the rights of women and gender equality; they have tried to find disappeared people and to gain justice for disappeared people (personal communication, February 25, 2020). Zülbiye argues further that:

I am a mother, I am a woman... As women, we started the Saturday protests. I do not know what feminism is. The thing I know is that the Saturday protests are about humanity. They are about defending justice and the rights of disappeared people. I think that we all should come together as human rights defenders to achieve justice for disappeared people and for all people (personal communication, March 3, 2020).

Based on the interviews and the statements of participants, it is clear that with the exception of two participants out of eight, all participants perceive the women's/feminist movement in Turkey as an over-prioritization of womanhood and women over manhood, men and other problems. With the influence of their perception of women's/feminist organizations, the same six participants define feminism and feminists in Turkey as a loose and misunderstood concept which are seen as man haters. Independent of how they see and understand the women's/feminist movement in Turkey and feminism more generally; except two participants who do not have enough knowledge to define feminism; six participants define feminism by emphasizing the equality between men and women in terms of rights and freedoms. According to their definitions of feminism, only two participants self-classify themselves as feminists. However, whether they see themselves as feminist or not, all participants share the idea that feminist ideas and values are not driving forces behind the Saturday protests, and personal ideas are not shared by all members of the Saturday Mothers except the idea of defending human rights and achieving justice for disappeared people. Thus, despite the fact that feminist ideas and values are influential for some participants and these participants try to achieve feminist goals in their private and public lives, it is clear that a feminist vision is not central in the mobilization of the Saturday Mothers and is not reflected in the Saturday protests. Although the aim is not to make a conclusive statement about a vision informing the Saturday Mothers other than feminism, a vision to defend and protect human rights is a more shared vision among the Saturday Mothers.

3.4 Conclusion

Since the main aim of the thesis is to find out whether the Saturday Mothers can be seen as serving feminist objectives in Turkey based on the typology and framework developed by Carreon and Moghadam, understanding the social connectedness of and vision(s) informing the Saturday Mothers is vital. Thus, throughout this chapter, I uncovered the possible social connectedness of and vision(s) informing the Saturday Mothers by giving specific reference to the feminist movement and a feminist vision in the lights of the interviews with participants from the Saturday Mothers, the HRA in Istanbul and members of women's/feminist organizations.

In the first part of the chapter, I devoted special attention to explore the social connectedness of the Saturday Mothers by analyzing them and the Saturday protests in general and within a feminist context in particular. Considering the emergence and development of the women's/feminist movement in Turkey and the interviews with participants from the Saturday Mothers, the HRA in Istanbul and a women's organization, the unwillingness of other women's/feminist organizations which I communicated with, and an analysis of the *Pazartesi* and *Amargi* journals, it is clear that the women's/feminist movement in Turkey and the Saturday Mothers have emerged and developed separately from each other. The distance between the women's/feminist movement in Turkey and the Saturday Mothers remains and leads to a lack of actual relationship and cooperation between them. Although some individual feminists support the Saturday Mothers by attending the Saturday protests, and some members of the Saturday Mothers being actively involved in the women's/feminist movement in Turkey, a significant relationship between the two is not established. In addition, the participants from the Saturday Mothers and the HRA do not self-classify themselves and the Saturday protests within the feminist movement in Turkey by emphasizing their place within the human rights movement

and their demand for justice for disappeared people and for everyone regardless of their sexes. Hence, it is hard to socially locate the Saturday Mothers within the women's/feminist movement in Turkey.

In the second part of the chapter, I specifically focused on whether the Saturday Mothers and their protests were informed by a feminist vision. I asked questions to participants from the Saturday Mothers and the HRA about how they see the women's/feminist movement in Turkey, how they perceive feminism, and whether they classify themselves as feminists or not based on their definition of feminism in order to understand the possible place of a feminist vision among the Saturday Mothers. It is clear from the answers that ideas about feminism and having a feminist vision vary from participant to participant. Yet, their answers regarding a shared feminist vision among Saturday Mothers and the place of a feminist vision in the Saturday protests are common: despite the existence of feminist vision among some members and the latter's fight for achieving feminist goals, feminist values are not shared by all members of the Saturday Mothers and remain outside the scope of the Saturday protests. The driving force behind the mobilization of the Saturday Mothers is not their identity as women; rather, they are relatives of disappeared persons. Thus, their initial aim is not to solve problems of women and defend the rights of women in order to achieve gender equality; rather, they struggle for justice for and the rights of their disappeared loved ones.

To conclude, the support of individual feminists for the Saturday Mothers and their protests, the existence of members among the Saturday Mothers who are actively present in the women's/feminist movement in Turkey, some participants having feminist ideas and struggling for gender equality in their private lives do not create a significant and shared social connectedness and vision for the Saturday Mothers

regarding feminism. In consequence, it is impossible for me to classify the Saturday Mothers within the women's/feminist movement in Turkey socially and to think that they are informed by a feminist vision. Although I do not aim to make a conclusive statement about the specific social connectedness of and vision informing the Saturday Mothers beyond feminism, their self-classification as connected socially within the human rights movement in Turkey and the vision to defend and protect human rights are most widely accepted among Saturday Mothers.



CHAPTER 4

AN ASSESSTMENT OF THE SATURDAY MOTHERS FROM GENDER AND FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES

4.1 Introduction

As the research question of this thesis is whether the Saturday Mothers can be seen as serving feminist objectives in Turkey, the ultimate aim is to uncover what the maternal activism has been in Turkey by situating the Saturday Mothers as a case study in order to contribute to the literature on maternal activism and its assessments from different feminist theories in general. Since there is no unified single feminist theory, it is hard to make a general assessment of the Saturday Mothers and their possibility to serve feminist objectives in Turkey. Thus, I will use different feminist theories as analytical tools and how they evaluate motherhood in general and maternal activism in particular to assess how the Saturday Mothers and their protests can possibly serve feminist objectives in Turkey in this chapter.

Considering the data obtained through the interviews with members of the Saturday Mothers and the HRA, members of a women's organization and feminist scholars, and systematic analysis of the *Pazartesi* and *Amargi* journals, I will analyze the potential of the Saturday Mothers serving feminist objectives within the analytical

frameworks provided by different feminist theories. Thus, I present different feminist theories and their encounters with the motherhood issue in general and maternal activism in particular based on their main premises in the first part of this chapter. Secondly, based on their main premises and their perspectives on motherhood and maternal activism, I look at how these feminist theories potentially evaluate the Saturday Mothers regarding their potential to serve feminist objectives in Turkey. Additionally, as Carreon and Moghadam (2015) indicate in their typology and framework, even if a connection with women's/feminist organizations and the existence of feminist values can increase the chance of a mothers' movement to serve feminist objectives, a mothers' movement can still serve feminist objectives as these hypotheses are not presented as necessary conditions when evaluating the potential of a mothers' movement serving feminist objectives. To show how a mother's movement can serve feminist objectives when a connection with woman's/feminist organizations and feminist values are missing, it is necessary to evaluate a mothers' movement within the specific socio-political and historical conditions of a given country. Moreover, I think that although considering the main premises of different feminist theories and their evaluation of motherhood and maternal activism is valuable to make analysis, the specific socio-political and historical trajectories of a given country should not be dismissed. The reason to this is that feminist ideologies and movements as well as mothers' movements do not emerge and develop in a vacuum situated outside of the social, political and historical developments of a given country. Making assessments on the potential of the Saturday Mothers serving feminist objectives by situating them within the socio-political and historical trajectories of Turkey do not only provide an alternative perspective for analysis, but also opens up a space to show the possible gender implications of the Saturday

Mothers and their protests at the individual and societal levels even if the Saturday Mothers should not be serving feminist objectives in Turkey more generally. Thus, in the third part of this chapter, I situate the Saturday Mothers and their protests within the socio-political and historical conditions of Turkey in order to make a more meaningful analysis to explore whether the Saturday Mothers can be seen as serving feminist objectives and impact traditional gender roles in Turkey.

4.2 Feminist Theories and Their Encounters with the Motherhood Concept and Maternal Activism

As there is no single and unified feminist theory, in this section I show different feminist theories and perspectives and their assessments of the motherhood concept and maternal activism based on their premises in order to clarify how a variety of arguments emerged because of the diversity of feminist theories. Despite the existence of a general division among feminist theories based on their appreciation or not of motherhood and the use of motherhood for women's mobilization, I think that it is necessary to look at the main arguments and premises of different feminist theories to grasp the rationale behind their appreciation for or criticism of motherhood and maternal activism. Although there are different attempts to categorize and classify feminist theories to show variation among them, I categorize them based on the ideologies that they are influenced by. Thus, throughout this section, I use liberal feminism, radical feminism, socialist/Marxist feminism and intersectional feminism as categories to present their arguments and their encounters with the motherhood concept and maternal activism. Despite the existence of a variety of different feminist theories, I have selected these feminist theories to assess the Saturday Mothers and their protests regarding feminist objectives because they are widely used and hold their significance in feminist scholarship within the

discipline of International Relations (Shepherd, 2010; Tickner, 2001). Although liberal feminism, radical feminism, and socialist/Marxist feminism represent more classical understanding of feminism within the discipline, intersectional feminist theory shows a critical understanding of feminism and possible criticisms against the former perspectives. Additionally, by using intersectional feminist theory, I briefly introduce and show how the logic of intersectionalism works to understand multiple oppressions and different experiences of women as well as different emancipation and empowerment strategies for a feminist struggle, which can be traced further by more critical feminist theories such as postmodern, poststructuralist, and postcolonial feminist perspectives.

One of the earliest forms of feminist theory emerged with the emergence and influence of French Enlightenment ideas. Rooted in liberal political thought and ideas concerning rationality and equality, liberal feminism aims to promote equality between men and women in the public sphere. As the inequality between men and women emerges as a result of lack of equal opportunities between sexes and the existence of legal constraints (Friedman & Metelerkamp & Posel, 1987: 5-6), the establishment of equal opportunities for education, work and legal issues would enable to establish the equality between sexes because of the argument that women have rationality and capacity to learn like their male counterparts. Thus, “liberation of women consists of their freedom to choose their lives, to be able to compete with men on equal terms in the professional and political world, and in the labor market” (Friedman et al., 1987: 5-6).

Despite the promotion of equal opportunities and relations between men and women as well as emancipation of women in the public sphere, liberal feminism has often been silent on traditional gender roles assigned to both sexes in the private sphere. In

consequence, it has contributed to further the artificial division between spheres established by liberal thought and not challenged the association of woman with the private sphere. Thus, the traditional gender roles assigned to both sexes in the private sphere and family life has to a large extent been left remain untouched. It is often accepted that the ultimate duty of women is to be mothers to fulfill their citizenship roles, and men are not encouraged to take responsibility in the private sphere and family life as they are designated as public men (Budig, 2004, p.422). This is clear in the arguments of Mary Wollstonecraft, who claimed that the equal right for education, employment and law is not only necessary for equality between men and women but also makes women “more observant daughters, more affectionate sisters, more faithful wives, more reasonable mothers- in a word, better citizens” (Wollstonecraft as cited in Bryson, 2003: 17-18). Although revisions have been made within liberal feminist theory over time, the private sphere and women’s experiences and oppressions within that sphere still do not get as much as attention as they do within other feminist theories.

Following the realization that equality in the public sphere does not bring actual equality for women, radical feminism emerged during the 1960s to understand the main source of oppression of women (Friedman, et al., 1987: 8). Patriarchy as a form of social system characterized by domination and hierarchy, where individual women is subordinated to individual men by putting men and their privileges at the center, was introduced by radical feminism as a source of women’s oppression (Friedman et al., 1987: 8). As patriarchy is understood to be universal, since all women experience oppression regardless of which class, ethnicity, race and nation they belong to (Bryson, 2003: 163), radical feminism argues that many women’s feelings as dominated by men emerge because of patriarchy which shapes social and political

relations rather than their individual problems (Friedman et al., 1987: 8). Hence, the “personal is political” became an important slogan for radical feminists. They believe that women should unite on the basis of sisterhood, which transcends boundaries of race and class, as a result of their common experience of oppression due to patriarchy (Bryson, 2003: 163). For emancipation, it is necessary to overthrow the existing system of patriarchy and redefine gender relations of power through collective action of women rather than just adding women to the existing system.

Despite the consensus among radical feminists on patriarchy as a source of oppression for women and their ultimate aim to topple patriarchy, the motherhood concept and maternal activism have been subjected to a lot of debate. On the one hand, some radical feminists appreciate motherhood as a source of difference which empowers women. As Adrienne Rich argues, although motherhood in patriarchal societies is oppressive, the creating ability of life through their bodies empowers women (Rich, 1995: 13). On the other hand, others perceive motherhood as a source of oppression. Shulamith Firestone argues that motherhood is a main source of oppression for women, since the different roles of men and women in the reproduction process led to a significant division of labor and power both within families and in societies which privilege men over women (Budig, 2004: 424). Also, Pateman argues (as cited in Neyer & Bernardi, 2011: 165):

The devaluation of motherhood was a consequence of the patriarchal construction of sexual difference. Through the fraternal (social) contract men become equal as members of society. Women were relegated to “nature”, with childbearing and motherhood forming the core of women’s nature. Under such conditions, the relationship between women and men is determined by a sexual contract (most visibly in the institution of the patriarchal marriage contract) which surrenders women’s bodies and offspring to men and to society.

With the increasing revisiting of earlier Marxist/socialist writings from newly emerging leftist perspectives during the 1960s, Marxist and socialist arguments were

adapted in feminist literature. Very rooted in the class struggle understanding of classical Marxism, the Marxist feminist perspective analyzes unequal relations between men and women as well as the oppression of women within the class struggle by arguing that the main source of women's oppression is capitalism (Friedman et al., 1987: 14). By perceiving patriarchy and capitalism as a unified structure that leads to the subordination of women (Bryson, 2003: 210), the liberation of women depends on the class struggle to overthrow capitalism. Unlike its Marxist counterparts, socialist feminists are cautious to separate patriarchy from capitalism and defend the so-called dual-system theory. From a socialist feminist perspective, capitalism only intensifies patriarchy, and neither one can be reduced to the other, since there was and would be patriarchy outside of the capitalist system (Bryson, 2003: 210). Thus, for the emancipation it is necessary to fight against both patriarchy and capitalism (Friedman et al., 1987: 16). Despite the existence of a disagreement between Marxist feminists and socialist feminists on the specific issue of the relationship between patriarchy and capitalism, most of them approach motherhood critically as it is seen to lead to the subordination and exploitation of women by causing the unpaid domestic labor of women and decreasing the chances of women to compete equally marketplace. Women would be emancipated from their subordination and exploitation with a communist/socialist revolution which would enable the collectivization of motherhood and childcare (Bryson, 2003: 123).

In recent years, some feminist scholars criticize existing feminist theories because they ignore the differences among and different experiences of women due to their focus on the experiences of white, middle class, European women. This criticism is prevalent in intersectional feminist theory, which consequently poses a challenge to other feminist theories. Although the very first studies focusing on the importance of

integrative categories including race, class and gender which construct the triple oppressions for and different experiences of women emerged within Black feminist scholarship (Carastathis, 2014: 304), the notion of intersectionality as a metaphor has been introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw with her famous article “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics” written in 1989 within legal studies in the USA (Carbin & Eнденheim, 2013: 234). She explains intersectionality by using the metaphor of traffic and argues that:

Consider an analogy to traffic in an intersection, coming and going in all four directions. Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them. Similarly, if a Black woman is harmed because she is in the intersection, her injury could result from sex discrimination or race discrimination (Crenshaw, 1989: 149).

In her later works, she broadens the categories of intersections by encompassing different categories including colonialism to show multiple and layered oppressions of women (Yuval-Davis, 2006: 96). After the introduction of the concept, feminist scholars use it much in their analysis and contribute to an expansion of the scope of the concept to show how women’s lives are constructed by intersecting and multiple systems of oppressions which cannot be understood only by looking at gender (Carastathis, 2014: 304). Thus, gender, class, race, ethnicity, ability, age, and other social and material divisions are analyzed together as they co-construct each other and multiple oppressions, experiences, and identities of different women (Yuval-Davis, 2006: 1995-200). As its main objective is to highlight the importance of differences among women and their experiences in line with different emancipatory strategies, it brings Black feminist strand and post-modern feminist perspectives including post-structural feminist theory, post-colonial feminist theory, and queer

theory together (Davis, 2008: 70-71). Although its wide usage from different feminist perspectives creates debates on its concrete meanings and definitions, theoretical status, possibility of conducting empirical analysis, and levels of analysis among feminist scholars (Bilge, 2010), these problems “may be the very secret to its success” (Davis, 2008: 69). Hence, intersectionality is defined as the “most important contribution that women’s studies has made so far” (McCall, 2005: 1771). When evaluating the motherhood concept and maternal activism from an intersectional feminist perspective, it is necessary to analyze specific conditions of women which shaped by interlocking structures of race, class, ethnicity, gender, and other social and material divisions. As a result, women’s experiences are derived from their motherhood and the usage of motherhood identity or discourse for the mobilization can create a variety of impacts regarding feminist objectives.

4.3 An Analysis of the Saturday Mothers and the Saturday Protests from Different Feminist Perspectives

Before using different feminist theories as analytical tools for my analysis of the Saturday Mothers and their protests regarding feminist objectives, I think it is necessary to evaluate the potential of the Saturday Mothers and their protests serving feminist objectives on the basis of the conceptualization of general feminist objectives that I illustrated in the methodology part rather than specifying diversified feminist objectives from within particular feminist theories.

Without getting into details on what the inequalities are between men and women, what causes these inequalities, and how to change or challenge those inequalities for the emancipation of women, I define feminist objectives as attaining equality between man and woman, improvement of legal, political, economic and social status of women, enhancement of opportunities of women for health, education and

professional works through empowerment of women, promoting women's rights and emancipation of women as they are shared by different feminist theories before their perspectives start to diversify.

When analyzing the Saturday Mothers and their protests based on my conceptualization of feminist objectives, it is difficult to establish a direct connection between the Saturday Mothers and their protests on the one hand, and feminist objectives on the other. The data drawn from the interviews with the participants of Saturday Mothers, members of HRA and my personal observations during Saturday protests show that feminism and related concerns are not within the agenda of the Saturday Mothers and their protests. Despite some participants of the Saturday Mothers and members of the HRA being aware of gender roles and feminism in their lives, they remain out of context for the struggle of the Saturday Mothers and their protests. Despite the existence of the demands of the Saturday Mothers to achieve equality and justice for all people with the influence of the idea of universality of human rights, there is no specific emphasis on promoting equality between men and women. İclal clearly summarizes the common perceptions among the Saturday Mothers and argues that the main purpose of the protests is not to achieve gender equality and just order between men and women; it is a struggle for equality based on equal rights and justice for all people (personal communication, February 21, 2020). As equality between the genders is not promoted during the Saturday protests, the Saturday Mothers and the movement itself do not have a specific agenda for promoting the enhancement of opportunities of women for health, education and professional works through empowerment of women, and promoting women's rights and emancipation for women. Although improvement of the legal, political, economic and social status of women is not directly promoted and is not the main

intention of the Saturday Mothers and their protests, the very existence of disappearance of and the struggle for justice for their loved ones in the public space can both improve and hamper the legal, political, economic and social status of the Saturday Mothers. However, this indirect connection between the two does not mean that the Saturday Mothers can be seen as serving feminist objectives, though there can be unintended gender implications of the Saturday protests which I discuss in the next section in detail. Hence, I argue that based on my conceptualization of feminist objectives, it is hard to argue that the Saturday Mothers and their protests can be seen as serving feminist objectives in Turkey.

To reveal how feminist scholars in Turkey assess the Saturday Mothers from their different feminist perspectives to some extent, I interviewed two feminist scholars who have familiarity with and knowledge about the Saturday Mothers and their protests. The first feminist scholar interviewed is Gökem and her feminist ideas are close to intersectional feminist theory with a critical analysis. From her perspective, although the Saturday Mothers cannot be classified as feminists and within the women's/feminist movement in Turkey because they do not have feminist agenda, their contribution to the feminist struggle can be discussed theoretically (personal communication, February 26, 2020). She argues that theoretically:

the Saturday Mothers and the Saturday protests are valuable for feminism, because they contribute to increase women's visibility in public space, transformation of motherhood as an identity, belonging and behaviors which generally associated with private space to political space, and questioning the boundaries between public and private spaces (personal communication, February 26, 2020).

She continues to indicate that in practice, if the Saturday Mothers gain awareness for feminism, start to be interested in women's issues, and include a feminist agenda in the protests, it can be said that they can contribute to the feminist movement in Turkey directly (personal communication, February 26, 2020). Additionally, by

deepening her argument, she says that “if individual female participants of the Saturday Mothers would experience individual transformation in their private lives regarding practices of traditional gender roles, then there can be indirect feminist implications of the Saturday Mothers” (personal communication, February 26, 2020). However, she emphasizes the necessity to put a critical distance between feminism and motherhood and gendered construction of motherhood as follows:

If participants of mothers’ movements recognize that their experiences emerged because of their gender, question and criticize the traditional gender roles attributed to them, develop a feminist analysis of motherhood, and transform their motherhood roles from private individual experiences to a feminist care ethics, then mothers’ movements can serve the feminist struggle (personal communication, February 26, 2020).

The second feminist scholar interviewed, Ayşe, also classifies her feminist ideas as being closer to intersectional feminist perspective. Although she does not classify the Saturday Mothers within the feminist movement in Turkey, she believes that “the feminist movement and the Saturday Mothers can nurture each other” (personal communication, April 6, 2020). Similar to Görkem, she argues that:

the Saturday Mothers and the Saturday protests increase the visibility of women who are not participating to politics in the public space before, help women to raise their voices, and reconstruct the traditional meaning of motherhood by using it in public space to create a common identity among women for politics (personal communication, April 6, 2020).

Although the Saturday Mothers and their protests cannot be seen as serving feminist objectives in Turkey based on my conceptualization of feminist objectives in general, different feminist theories would assess the Saturday Mothers and their potential to serve feminist objectives in Turkey differently because of their diversified arguments of what feminist objectives are. To begin with, as the political, economic, and legal equality between men and women in the public sphere is one of the most important objectives of liberal feminist theory, in my opinion, the Saturday protests can serve

that objective by enabling the political and legal equality for its female participants in the public sphere because it creates a space for women in the public sphere to show their political and legal claims like their male counterparts. Despite the preservation and appreciation of traditional gender roles in the private sphere (including motherhood) by liberal feminist perspective, the mobilization of the Saturday Mothers through a motherhood discourse in public sphere can be problematic, because of the belief of a total separation between the public and private spheres. In my opinion, this idea of total separation between spheres and not questioning traditional gender roles in the private sphere are drawbacks of the liberal feminist perspective when evaluating the Saturday Mothers and their protests, because rather than recognizing different emancipation and empowerment possibilities, they sustain the existing gender relations for women.

From socialist/Marxist feminist perspectives, the Saturday Mothers do not serve feminist objectives because regardless of whether the class struggle or fighting patriarchy in line with class struggle are necessary to emancipate women, the Saturday Mothers fight neither capitalism nor patriarchy. Additionally, the maternal activism of Saturday Mothers only intensifies the oppression of women because of their unpaid labor in domestic works which create double burden by combining with their work in the marketplace. Like liberal feminism, I believe that socialist/Marxist feminist theories provide limited frameworks when evaluating the Saturday Mothers, because of their special emphasis on the relationship between capitalism and patriarchy, and the belief of emancipating women through a socialist/communist revolution and the toppling of patriarchy. These lead to a neglect of the interdependent structures of race, ethnicity, gender and class as well as different strategies to emancipate women.

Unlike liberal feminist and the socialist/Marxist feminist counterparts, radical feminist theory is a better alternative for the analysis of the Saturday Mothers as it recognizes the artificial division between the public and private spheres. In my opinion, through mobilizing on the basis of personal problems and pains emerged in the private sphere, and demonstrating those personal sufferings in public space, the Saturday Mothers is one of the most important illustrators of the radical feminist slogan of the personal is political. Additionally, the existence of variety of different women among the Saturday Mothers shows the importance and strength of collective action based on sisterhood which transcends boundaries of race and class. Although the Saturday Mothers and their protests are valuable to show that the personal is political and the unification of women on the basis of sisterhood, they are not serving feminist objectives because they do not struggle for overthrowing patriarchy, which is the ultimate objective of radical feminism. At that point, I think radical feminist theory has two deficiencies when it comes to establishing a link between the Saturday Mothers and feminist objectives. Firstly, it creates a dichotomy between an over-appreciation of motherhood and maternal activism emphasizing the difference of women as mothers on the one hand, and a total neglect of motherhood and maternal activism as a result of the perception seeing motherhood as a source of oppression for women on the other. Secondly, as the most ultimate objective of radical feminism is to overthrow patriarchy by taking direct action against it, the radical feminist perspective neglects different ways of fighting patriarchy and how women from different racial, ethnic, religious, class backgrounds maneuvers within patriarchy to emancipate and empower themselves (Kandiyoti, 1996: 15-16). In my opinion, intersectional feminist theory introduces a more comprehensive perspective for the analysis of the Saturday Mothers regarding feminist objectives

than other feminist theories. As the important objectives of intersectional feminist theory are to include the experiences of women other than white, middle class and European, and to analyze different emancipation and empowerment strategies of women, the Saturday Mothers and their protests are valuable to show the interlocking structures of race, class, ethnicity, gender, and other social and material differences among women. By showing these, the Saturday Mothers can benefit from motherhood as source of power and activism to show their demands and challenge traditional gender roles in Turkish society. Additionally, the intersectional feminist perspective opens up a space for an analysis of a mothers' movement and its possible feminist and gender implications by considering the specific racial, class, ethnic, and gender contexts of individual participants and a given society, and how the intersection of these differences affect the multiple oppressions and experiences of individual participants of the movement.

4.4 Possible Gender Implications of the Saturday Mothers within the Specific Socio-Political Context of Turkey

On the basis of data obtained from the interviews with the participants of the Saturday Mothers, members of the HRA and a women's organization and feminist scholars, as well as the systematic analysis of the *Pazartesi* and *Amargi*, it is clear that the Saturday Mothers cannot be seen as serving feminist objectives. Yet, this does not mean that the Saturday Mothers and their protests cannot and potentially do not have gender implications. To make a more meaningful analysis of the possible gender implications of the Saturday Mothers and their protests, I think that it is necessary to situate the case within the specific socio-political context of Turkey. Understanding and incorporating the specific socio-political context of Turkey is important to uncover possible gender implications, as the former affects gender

relations in Turkey and the possible gender-related outcomes of the Saturday Mothers and their protests. Additionally, I believe in the importance of assessing the possible gender implications of the Saturday Mothers by using an analysis ranging from the societal to the individual level because the possible gender implications of the Saturday Mothers and their protests can vary from one level to another. Thus, rather than making rough and broad theoretical assumptions, I situate the Saturday Mothers within the specific socio-political context of Turkey to evaluate possible gender outcomes of the Saturday Mothers and their protests by specifying these outcomes at the societal and individual levels.

As I classify the mobilization of the Saturday Mothers as an illustration of maternal activism, it is first of all necessary to understand the ideology of motherhood and how it is used and perceived in Turkey. Although the cultural, religious, and socio-political environment of the Ottoman Empire had contributed to the emergence and development of a motherhood ideology, it became very significant with the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923. To signify the foundation of the new state as separate from the Ottoman Empire, Republican elites developed a new nationalism based on Kemalist ideas and reforms. In general terms, Yuval-Davis and Anthias (1989: 7) argue that women often play five major important roles in ethnic, nationalist and state processes:

- (a) as biological reproducers of members of ethnic collectivities
- (b) as producers of the boundaries of ethnic/national groups;
- (c) as participating centrally in the ideological reproduction of the collectivity and as transmitters of its culture
- (d) as signifiers of ethnic/national differences as a focus and symbol in ideological discourses used in the construction, reproduction and transformation of ethnic/national categories
- (e) as participants in national, economic, political and military struggles.

With the exception of the active participation in national, economic, political and military struggles, the biological or cultural roles of women as mothers are emphasized. Similar to these roles in any other ethnic/nationalist discourse, the ideology of motherhood developed by Kemalism in Turkey has assigned similar roles to women as mothers. Although different nationalist ideologies have emerged and developed over time in Turkish political history – including Kurdish nationalism, Turkish nationalism, Islamist nationalism other than Kemalist nationalism – all nationalist discourses use an ideology of motherhood to define the proper gender roles for women and to control them to achieve or sustain their nationalistic goals. As a result, motherhood is appreciated when women obey their roles as defined by patriarchal and nationalist discourses on the one hand, while motherhood is delegitimized through criticisms and marginalization when women raise their voice against dominant patriarchal and nationalist discourses on the other.

Although the ideology of motherhood remains important in Turkish society and politics, and continues to be used discursively by different governments to regulate social, political, and economic relations even today, women entered into public space as women with the emergence of an independent feminist movement during the 1980s. As mentioned in the section “The Emergence and Development of the Women’s/Feminist Movement in Turkey” in Chapter 3, with the increase of feminist activism and feminist consciousness since the 1980s, women have actively been participating in politics to improve their status and rights by conducting organized actions. Thus, thanks to the emergence and development of an independent feminist movement in Turkey, the old distinction between the public and private sphere as well as the association of women with the latter has been blurred. When it comes to the 1990s, the feminist movement experienced an institutionalization period by

benefitting from Turkey's position regarding CEDAW and the EU accession process. Additionally, as a result of the rise of different political ideologies such as Kurdish nationalism and political Islam, the feminist movement in Turkey proliferated during the 1990s to show the demands and rights of women who were ideologically diversified. Hence, with the help of these developments and the feminist struggle during the 1980s and 1990s, women become independent political actors. When it comes to the political and social environment, Turkey was as previously mentioned characterized by political, social, and economic instabilities and increasing unrest and violence during the 1980s and 1990s.

When evaluating the gender implications of the Saturday Mothers and their protests at the societal level, the socio-political context of Turkey should be taken into consideration. Firstly, the Saturday Mothers not only became the most important example of maternal activism in Turkey, but also influenced other women to mobilize around their motherhood identities or discourse to demonstrate their social, political, and economic claims. An increase in women's mobilization based on maternal activism with the influence of the Saturday Mothers is important regarding gender implications in Turkey, because I think that it opens up a space for women to participate in political and social life directly. My intention is not to underestimate and ignore the successes, achievements, and struggle of the independent feminist movement in Turkey, but I believe that there are women who do not want to align themselves with the feminist movement or do not feel included by the feminist movement. Thus, the persistence of Saturday Mothers in their struggle and the existence of a diversity of women from different class, ethnic and socio-political backgrounds within the Saturday protests encourage and provide an alternative way to struggle for those women in their lives.

However, I am skeptical about the arguments which support the idea that the Saturday Mothers blurred the line between the public and private spheres, because this artificial division was already blurred by the independent feminist movement since the 1980s. By providing a space for women to show their specific demands continuously in public space, the Saturday Mothers and their protests increase the visibility of women and include a variety of women from different class, ethnic, socio-political backgrounds to public politics rather than blurring the distinctions between spaces by only themselves.

Secondly, despite the preservation of motherhood as a traditional gender role and the confinement of women to it, I believe that the Saturday Mothers challenge the traditional meaning of motherhood as constructed by the patriarchy and nationalist discourses of the Turkish state. Rather than silently staying within the boundaries constructed by patriarchal and nationalist ideologies, the Saturday Mothers transform their silence to a source of resistance. By opposing enforced disappearances and injustices through weekly protests, the Saturday Mothers form a powerful motherhood figure instead of a totally obedient mother.

Despite these gender implications of the Saturday Mothers and their protests at the societal level, I acknowledge the limits of the Saturday Mothers and their protests with regard to contributing to a significant transformation and emancipation of women from traditional gender roles. As the Saturday Mothers do not prioritize their womanhood identity and do not perceive their experiences and the difficulties they have faced as a result of enforced disappearances as experiences and difficulties that emerged because of their womanhood, women's perspectives and gender-related issues are not prioritized. Because of this lack of prioritization, the Saturday Mothers

and their protests do not establish a source of direct challenge to traditional gender roles.

Regarding gender implications at the individual level, it is clear that the Saturday protests have had gender impacts on the lives of at least some female participants. Firstly, the Saturday protests have enabled female participants to participate in politics in the public sphere regularly and continuously. Although some participants had a political consciousness and awareness before their mobilization, all but one participant started to participate in politics in the public sphere through the Saturday protests for the first time, and all of them indicate that they are not part of any other political and social organization beyond the Saturday Mothers. Secondly, by having contact with other mother's movements around the world, talking at international conferences, participating in meetings of international organizations such as the UN and the EU, the Saturday Mothers have established international and transnational links which have created a chance of participating in international and transnational relations for individual female participants.

Thirdly, in addition to their participation to politics in public sphere, their individual experiences as a result of enforced disappearances of their loved ones have led them to question and establish a link with broader political problems in Turkey. Rather than searching and demanding justice for only their missing relatives, the Saturday Mothers have developed a discourse which supports the rights of all people facing injustices. This helps them to transform their victimhood status into individual activists. Zülbiye expresses this by arguing that:

Before twenty-seven years ago, I was a mother and housewife who stayed at home with my children. I was taking care of them and doing domestic work. My husband was a political person and actively participating in politics. I did not participate to any other organization rather than the Saturday Mothers.

However, something has changed in our lives. I have changed; other mothers have changed during this process. We have started to participate in the Saturday protests and we have started a struggle. As mothers, we support human rights for all people who are facing injustices. We are mothers and as mothers we share the same pains. There are lots of injustices in Turkey. Lots of children and women are killed every day. Soldiers are killed. As a mother, I support and struggle to achieve justice for all of them. Whenever there would be an injustice, we would be there as the Saturday Mothers (personal communication, March 3, 2020).

The participants interviewed by Evren Kocabiçak for her master thesis also reveal this point in their statements. For instance, Birsen Gülünay illustrates her political and social empowerment as follows:

Then, after a long process, I started to be more sensitive about social problems. I mean, I started to comprehend the political situation in Turkey after I talked to people... People do not become sensitive and do not act for anything unless something happens to them. I acted with other people. Because I understood their pains. Their pains were my pains as well. I mean, I started to be with the relatives of the other lost people with the idea that our pains were common (quoted in Kocabiçak, 2003, p.94).

Additionally, for some individual female participants, the Saturday Mothers and their protests have implied some changes in their family lives as structured by patriarchy. In Evren Kocabiçak's master research, Asiye Karakoç says that she did not even talk much in front of men and did not go out unless a man accompanied her until the Saturday protests (Kocabiçak, 2003: 84-85). Similar with Karakoç, Gülsüm who was interviewed by Ayşem Sezer Şanlı for her PhD thesis explains the changes in her family life as follows:

I was a housewife, I was at home... I did not know anything... I was at home in general... When my son was arrested, my world has changed. My husband created problems when I wanted to go to Saturday protests. I tried to do domestic works as much as I could but after my son was arrested, nobody could stop me (quoted in Şanlı, 2018: 190).

Although participation to politics in public sphere regularly and establishing a link with broader political problems in Turkey through the Saturday protests have

contributed to the empowerment of individual female participants and changes in their lives, these do not really contribute to a significant transformation and emancipation from traditional gender roles for individual participants. As Zülbiye states:

I am going to the Saturday protests and doing domestic work in my home at the same time. Sometimes, I felt so tired and wished that somebody else would cook a meal instead of me and I would eat it. I try to handle both the protests and domestic work (personal communication, March 3, 2020).

Fahriye from Şanlı's research furthers the argument of Zülbiye by arguing that:

My family is rural family. I have some awareness but in the end as a rural village's bride, I need to stay at home. However, the anger of a mother, a sister demolishes the world... I have attended to Saturday protests continuously after my brother was disappeared... I have worked at home and done domestic works until the mornings because I do not want that my husband would prevent me to join protests and do not put my children in a difficult situation... (quoted in Şanlı, 2018: 194).

Thus, the Saturday protests enable the empowerment of individual female participants and impact some traditional gender roles while retaining others, which lead to the lack of a significant transformation and emancipation. In my opinion, the reason is that all the participants interviewed indicate that they do not participate in the Saturday protests as woman and do not consider that their problems and struggles emerged because they are women.

These analyses and a consideration of the specific socio-political and historical trajectories of Turkey lead me to question the conclusion and classification of Carreon and Moghadam (2015) with regard to the Saturday Mothers. Although I agree with their arguments on using a strategy of motherhood to mobilize in public space, challenging the distinction between the private and public spheres through politicizing motherhood identity, and patriarchal structures at different levels, these arguments are in my opinion not enough to categorize the Saturday Mothers as de

facto feminists because of two reasons. First of all, the blurring of the boundary between the public and private spheres is not the accomplishment of the Saturday Mothers and their protests by themselves, as the public-private distinction has been already challenged by an independent feminist movement in Turkey since the 1980s. The Saturday Mothers and their protests only contribute to the inclusion of variety of women from different backgrounds that are or could not previously be incorporated by the women's/feminist movement into public sphere. The second point is that despite the fact that the Saturday Mothers and their protests form a challenge against patriarchal structures at different levels – this, whether intended or not – it should be remembered that this is not a direct and unified challenge against all traditional gender roles. Thus, there is a sustainment of some traditional gender roles among individual participants or at the societal level. Hence, rather than seeing the accomplishments of the Saturday Mothers and their protests as de facto feminism and serving feminist objectives, it would in my opinion be more appropriate to analyze them as gender implications (whether intended or not).

4.5 Conclusion

As Carreon and Moghadam (2015) argue that a mothers' movement can serve feminist objectives even if it lacks a connection with women's/feminist organizations and feminist values, I have throughout this chapter tried to show whether Saturday Mothers can be seen as serving feminist objectives in the light of main research question of the thesis. Before using different feminist theories as analytical tools to assess Saturday Mothers and their protests, I uncovered that the Saturday Mothers and their protests cannot be seen as serving feminist objectives because attaining equality between men and women, improvement of the legal, political, economic and social status of women, enhancement of opportunities for health, education and

professional works through empowerment of women, and promotion of women's rights and emancipation of women are not promoted by the Saturday Mothers and are not central at the Saturday protests. Thus, the Saturday Mothers are not feminists and cannot be seen as serving feminist objectives in Turkey.

From a theoretical perspective, different feminist theories have enabled me to assess the Saturday Mothers and their protests. Among different feminist theories, socialist/Marxist feminist perspectives are the most limited ones because of their specific focus on the relation between capitalism and patriarchy and the need for a socialist/communist revolution to emancipate women, which led to neglect of interdependent structures of race, ethnicity, gender and class as well as alternative strategies for the emancipation of women. Although liberal feminist and radical feminist perspectives enable to grasp the potential of the Saturday Mothers and their protests regarding feminist objectives – including women's participation to politics in the public sphere and preservation of motherhood identity for the former, and showing that the personal is political and the strength of collective action on the basis of sisterhood for the latter – both have their deficiencies. While the preservation of the artificial division between the public and private spheres and a neglect of the interaction between them remain drawbacks of liberal feminism, radical feminism suffers from its established dichotomy between over-appreciation and total devaluation of motherhood and maternal activism on the one hand, and its neglect of different possibilities for emancipating women instead of direct action against patriarchy on the other. In my opinion, intersectional feminist theory's emphasis on interlocking structures of race, class, ethnicity, gender, and other social and material divisions opens up for a more comprehensive analysis of the Saturday Mothers and

their protests regarding feminist objectives, as it reminds the importance of specific conditions of participants of a mothers' movement and a given society.

I conclude that the Saturday Mothers are not feminists and cannot be seen as serving feminist objectives based on my conceptualization. With the influence of intersectional feminist theory, I situate the Saturday Mothers and their protests within the specific socio-political context of Turkey in order to explore whether the Saturday Mothers and their protests have gender implications. Not to do rough and general theoretical assumptions, I identified possible gender impacts from the societal to the individual level. At the societal level, by considering the existence of the powerful ideology of motherhood constructed by nationalist and patriarchal discourses, the emergence and development of the women's/feminist movement in Turkey, socio-political developments, I conclude that the Saturday Mothers have influenced other women to mobilize around their motherhood identities or a motherhood discourse to demonstrate their social, political, and economic claims. To illustrate, with the influence of the Saturday Mothers, the Peace Mothers emerged immediately after the establishment of the Saturday Mothers by adapting the mobilization and protest strategies of the Saturday Mothers to show their demands related specifically with their Kurdish identity. Moreover, the Gezi Mothers emerged with the Gezi protests in Turkey in 2013 to demand justice for their children which had died or been killed during the protests. This enables women who do not want to align themselves with or do not feel included by the feminist movement to participate in political and social life directly by creating an alternative way to struggle in their lives. Additionally, I argue that the Saturday Mothers challenge the traditional meaning of motherhood which is constructed by patriarchy and nationalist discourses

of the Turkish state by presenting a form of powerful motherhood rather than a totally obedient one.

At the individual level, I argue that the Saturday protests contribute to the political and social empowerment of individual female participants of the Saturday Mothers by enabling and encouraging them to participate in politics at the domestic, international and transnational levels regularly and continuously, and by making them more sensitive to take actions in connection with broader political problems in Turkey. Additionally, participation in the Saturday Mothers and their protests led to changes in the family lives of some individual female participants and enabled them to challenge at least some of their traditional gender roles.

However, I am cautious not to overestimate these gender implications both at societal and individual levels, because they do not contribute to a significant transformation and emancipation from traditional gender roles for women. Although individual political and social empowerment, questioning of some traditional gender roles within family lives, inclusion of different women to public space through participation in domestic, international and transnational politics continuously and regularly, and encouraging actions for political problems are valuable to reconstruct gender relations in Turkey, some traditional gender roles have been retained, which leads to a lack of significant transformation and emancipation. In my opinion, the reason to the limited impact on traditional gender roles for individual female participants is that all the participants interviewed indicate that they do not participate in the Saturday protests because they are women and do not consider that their problems and struggles emerged because they are women.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Arising as a reaction to the systematic and targeted enforced disappearances that occurred during the 1980s and 1990s in Turkey, the Saturday Mothers have continued their protests on each Saturday to show their justice demands since 27 May 1995 (except for the suspension period between 1999 and 2009). The persistence of the Saturday Mothers in their struggle for a long time and the existence of support from domestic, international and transnational audiences for Saturday protests have led to an increasing literature on Saturday Mothers and their protests from variety of scholarly perspectives.

The mobilization of the Saturday Mothers around their motherhood identities or maternal discourses is unique neither for Turkey nor in world politics. Women from different class, religious, ethnic, and socio-political backgrounds have shown their demands in civil wars, intrastate conflicts, revolutionary movements, environmental protests, armament processes, peace movements, human rights advocacy movements, movement of minority rights, conservative movements, nationalistic programs and

national liberation struggles, state-building processes and other political, social, and economic movements all over the world by using their motherhood identities or discourses. Although the first academic attempts to explain mothers' involvement in political, social, and economic events developed within welfare state politics literature during the 1990s, maternal activism as a literature has developed and been used to grasp different dimensions of women's mobilizations around their motherhood identities or discourses other than welfare state politics. As an example of maternal activism, the absence of an assessment of the Saturday Mothers and their protests in relation to the maternal activism literature triggered me to write this thesis. Thus, the starting point of this thesis is to show what maternal activism has been in Turkey by situating the Saturday Mothers as a case study in order to establish a connection with the general maternal activism literature.

With the window of opportunity created by the decreasing tension between two superpowers of the Cold War and the peaceful transformation to post-Cold War politics, feminist theories have found their place within the discipline of International Relations to bring a "radical reinterpretation of tradition" (Zalewski, 1995: 339) in the field since the 1980s. As a result of the emergence and the development of using gender as an analytical concept and different feminist theories as analytical tools in the discipline of International Relations, the existence of mothers as participants or motherly discourses in the forefronts of different women's mobilizations have started to receive attention from and creating debates among feminist scholars. In line with these developments in academia, the Saturday Mothers and their protests are included in gender-related or feminist writings either as a case study or to make theoretical assumptions. Despite the existence of scholarly works on the Saturday Mothers from gender and feminist perspectives, most of the existing arguments

concerning the Saturday Mothers are too broad to prove and too vague to reach specific theoretical conclusions regarding gender relations and feminist objectives in Turkey.

By drawing on these gaps in the literature, I formulated the research question of whether the Saturday Mothers can be seen as serving feminist objectives in Turkey. As maternal activism and feminist objectives based on theoretical arguments of different feminist theories can be conceptualized differently, I conceptualized maternal activism and feminist objectives to bring conceptual clarity for the research. As a result of revisiting the existing literature on maternal activism, I think that most of the scholarly attempts to establish a conceptualization of maternal activism situate their arguments on the distinction between sentimental maternalists and progressive maternalists as introduced by Ladd-Taylor (1993: 110-113). Thus, most of the maternal activism conceptualizations describe mothers' movements as mobilization organized by women with their own agencies through using motherhood identity or discourse to demand justice, peace, political, social, or economic change. I argue that this conceptualization has limitations because it establishes a direct association between maternal activism, feminism, egalitarianism or peace, and furthers the debate between women as agents or subjects. It is important to remember that ideologies, mobilization strategies, and aims of a mothers' movement can vary according to the preferences of participants of the specific maternal activist movement (Orleck, 1997: 7), and it can serve for both emancipatory and patriarchal goals and be mobilized by women's own agencies or by a state (Carreon & Moghadam, 2015, pp.21-22). By considering these criticisms of existing maternal activism conceptualizations, I broadened the existing conceptualization and defined maternal activism as *the mobilization of women who intentionally or not use*

motherhood discourses to demonstrate their claims in different areas either to change or to sustain the status quo. After selecting the most shared arguments among different feminist theories, I defined feminist objectives as *the attainment equality between man and woman, improvement of the legal, political, economic and social status of women, enhance opportunities of women for health, education and professional works through empowerment of women, promoting women's rights and emancipation of women.* Throughout the thesis, I use these conceptualizations when assessing the Saturday Mothers as a case of maternal activism and their potential to serve feminist objectives in Turkey.

Although there is a vast literature on different women's mobilizations around motherhood identity or discourse, there are not many analytical frameworks which can help to analyze the possible relations between mothers' movements and feminism. Thanks to their analysis of different women's mobilizations based on motherhood identity or discourse in the article "Resistance is Fertile: Revisiting maternalist frames across cases of women's mobilization", Carreon and Moghadam(2015) specified three factors to understand the relationship between mothers' movements and feminism: (i) role of women's rights movements and institutions, (ii) whether the movement has ties with the state, government or military, and (iii) the place of feminist values in cases of mobilization (Carreon & Moghadam, 2015: 19-18). Depending on these three factors, two direct hypotheses can be drawn. The first one states that a connection with women's/feminist organizations increases the likelihood of a mothers' movement serving feminist objectives. The second hypothesis is about the place of feminist values within the mobilization which increases the chance of a mothers' movement to serve feminist objectives. However, the lack of a connection between a mothers' movement and

women's/feminist organizations and feminist values within the mobilization does not mean that a mothers' movement cannot serve feminist objectives, as mothers' movement can be "implicit feminist" or "de facto feminist".

Based on their analytical framework, Carreon and Moghadam (2015: 28-29) classify the Saturday Mothers as de facto feminists with the argument that they use a strategy of motherhood for mobilizing in the public space, they challenge the private/public distinction by politicizing their maternal identities, and they challenge patriarchal structures at different levels (Carreon & Moghadam, 2015: 28-29). To uncover whether the Saturday Mothers really can be seen as serving feminist objectives in Turkey with the influence of the typology and framework developed by Carreon and Moghadam (2015), I set out to explore the existence of a possible relation between the Saturday Mothers and women's/feminist organizations in Turkey and the place of feminist values among the Saturday Mothers and in their protests. Although the typology and framework of Carreon and Moghadam (2015) enable research on maternal activism and the possible relationship between maternal activism and feminism analytically, when classifying the Saturday Mothers as de facto feminists, they obtained the data only from a single Amnesty International report published in 1998 (Amnesty International, 1998), and this led to a neglect of historical, socio-political and feminist dynamics of Turkey. Thus, to reveal a possible relation between women's/feminist organizations in Turkey and the Saturday Mothers, the place of feminist values in the Saturday mobilizations, and the actual feminist implications of the Saturday Mothers, I situated the Saturday Mothers and their protests within the specific socio-political, cultural, and historical context of Turkey. The semi-structured, in-depth interviews with six participants of the Saturday Mothers, two members of the HRA, two feminist scholars in Turkey and two

members of a women's organization, as well as a systematic review of the issues of feminist journals including *Pazartesi* and *Amargi* were used to collect data. To recruit participants from the Saturday Mothers and the HRA, non-random, snowball sampling were used and the members of a women organization and feminist scholars were recruited by using non-random, judgmental sampling. Additionally, my participations in Saturday protests between 8th February 2020 and 7th March 2020 as an overt-participant observer as well as the existing literature have provided supplementary information for the thesis.

Regarding the social connectedness of the Saturday Mothers with a specific reference to a feminist context, despite the existence of some individual feminists' supports for the Saturday Mothers through attending the Saturday protests, individual attempts of a women's organization to build a relation with the Saturday Mothers, and some articles in the *Pazartesi* and *Amargi* journals to inform about and assess the Saturday Mothers from feminist perspectives, these remain as individual initiations and personal choice of some feminist activists. Thus, it is difficult to establish an organized support for and connection with the Saturday Mothers from a women's/feminist movement's perspective in Turkey. From the Saturday Mothers' perspective, individual participants share the same view that the Saturday Mothers and their protests are not part of the feminist movement in Turkey because of their emphasis on human rights and demands of justice for disappeared people and people who face human rights violations without any focus on sex and gender. Hence, the distance between the women's/feminist movement in Turkey and the Saturday Mothers remains untouched and leads to the lack of any actual relationship and cooperation between them.

The main reason behind the lack of an established connection between the women's/feminist movement in Turkey and the Saturday Mothers is the ideological perspectives of women's/feminist organizations in my opinion. With the emergence and development of the institutionalization period of women's/feminist organizations during the 1990s, women's/feminist organizations in Turkey have established a specific agenda which focuses on women's particular problems either by using channels of the state or extracting resources from international organizations. For the organizations using state channels, introducing a direct relation with the Saturday Mothers can jeopardize their status in the eyes of Turkish state, because the latter has been attacking the Saturday Mothers discursively and physically to delegitimize the very existence of the Saturday Mothers and their protests. For other organizations, their specific ideologies and strategies developed to solve women's problems and to emancipate women limit the possibility of establishing a connection with the Saturday Mothers, because the demands of the Saturday Mothers can remain outside of their feminist agendas and strategies. Additionally, the general debate on the value and usage of motherhood and motherly discourses among feminists and different feminist ideologies leads to an unwillingness for a women's/feminist organization to contact or support the Saturday Mothers because of their ideological positions within the debate.

To reveal the possible existence of feminist values within the mobilization of the Saturday Mothers, I asked questions to participants from the Saturday Mothers and the HRA about how they see the women's/feminist movement in Turkey, how they perceive feminism and whether they classify themselves as feminists or not based on their definition of feminism. Despite the answers to what feminism is and whether they are informed by a feminist vision individually differ among the participants, the

common idea is that feminist values are not shared by all members of the Saturday Mothers and remain outside the scope of Saturday protests. I argue that the reason for the lack of a feminist vision within the mobilization of the Saturday Mothers and their protests is that female participants do not prioritize their womanhood identity and rather participate in the protests as relatives of disappeared persons. Thus, their initial aim is not solving problems of women or defending the rights of women to achieve gender equality; rather, they struggle for justice for and the rights of their disappeared loved ones and people who face injustices regardless of their sex and gender.

In the absence of a connection with women's/feminist organizations and feminist values among the Saturday Mothers and within their protests, according to my conceptualization of feminist objectives derived from shared ideas among different feminist theories, it is hard to argue that Saturday Mothers and their protests serve to feminist objectives in Turkey. As a result of the data obtained from interviews with the participants of Saturday Mothers, members of HRA, and my personal observations as an overt-participant observer, the Saturday Mothers and their protests do not promote attaining equality between genders, improvement of the legal, political, economic and social status of women, establishment and development of opportunities of women for health, education and professional works through empowerment of women, and women's rights and emancipation of women directly. Since the demand for justice for disappeared people and people who face human rights violation is the driving force behind the discourse of the Saturday Mothers and their protests, feminism and feminist concerns are not presented as shared ideas on the agenda of the Saturday Mothers and their protests despite the presence of awareness of some participants on gender roles and feminism.

To grasp multiple dimensions of the Saturday Mothers and their protests regarding feminism and the variety of different conceptualizations of feminist objectives, I used different feminist theories as analytical tools in Chapter 4. From the point of view of liberal feminism, although the Saturday protests contribute to political and legal equality of women in public sphere with the creation of a space for their female participants, the mobilization around motherhood identity and discourse can be troublesome because of the belief in a total separation between the public and private spheres and duties associated with those spheres. For socialist/Marxist feminisms, the Saturday Mothers and their protests do not mean much regarding gender and feminist relations because they neither represent a class struggle nor a fight against patriarchy. Despite the appreciation of the Saturday Mothers and their protests by radical feminism because they show the strength of collective action of women based on a sisterhood understanding and a proof of the “personal is political” statement, the Saturday Mothers and their protests do not pose a direct action for overcoming patriarchy. Among the feminist theories used in the study, intersectional feminism introduces a more comprehensive approach to analyze the Saturday Mothers and their protests thanks to its emphasis on how interlocking structures of class, race, ethnicity, and gender impacts gender relations, and different emancipation strategies of women varied according to the different experiences of women.

In addition to the assessment of the Saturday Mothers and their protests based on my conceptualization of feminist objectives and from different feminist theories, I think that a consideration of the specific socio-political and historical circumstances of Turkey is important because both feminism and a mothers’ movement do not emerge and develop outside of the social, political and historical developments of a given country. Thus, I argue that despite the Saturday Mothers and their protests not

serving feminist objectives, there can be intended or unintended gender implications of the Saturday Mothers and their protests at societal and individual levels if a consideration is given to the specific socio-political and historical context of Turkey. By paying regard to the influence of nationalist discourses that emerged during Turkish political history, the presence of a strong ideology of motherhood prompted by both nationalistic and patriarchal ideologies, the emergence and development of an independent feminist movement since the 1980s, and the political, economic, and social turmoil of 1980s and 1990s, I argue that the Saturday Mothers and their protests have an impact on gender relations at the societal level in two ways. Firstly, the Saturday Mothers influence other women to organize around their motherhood identities or discourses to demonstrate their social, political, and economic claims. This is not only important for increasing the visibility of women in the public space, but it also enables women who do not want to align themselves with or do not feel included by the feminist movement to participate in political and social life directly by creating an alternative way to struggle in their lives. Thus, the Saturday Mothers and their protests contribute to the inclusion of variety of women to public and political life. Secondly, I argue that the Saturday Mothers challenge the traditional meaning of motherhood which is constructed by patriarchy and nationalist discourses of the Turkish state. Transforming their silence to a source of resistance and opposition against enforced disappearances and injustices through weekly Saturday vigils, the Saturday Mothers push the boundaries of motherhood ideology and traditional motherhood understanding constructed by patriarchal and nationalist ideologies.

Similar to the societal level, the Saturday Mothers and their protests have an impact on individual female participants regarding gender relations in at least four different

ways. Firstly, they contribute to political and social empowerments of individual female participants by enabling them to participate in and show their demands in the public sphere regularly and continuously in the domestic politics of Turkey. Despite the existence of political awareness among some participants, all but one participant started to participate to politics in public sphere through the Saturday protests for the first time, and all of them indicate that they are not part of any other political and social organization besides the Saturday Mothers and their protests.

In addition to their participation to politics in the public sphere, their individual experiences as a result of enforced disappearances of their loved ones have resulted in individual female participants questioning and establishing links with broader political problems in Turkey. Rather than searching and demanding justice for only their missing relatives, the Saturday Mothers have developed a discourse which supports the rights of all people who are facing injustices. As a result of the emergence and development of inclusivism in their discourses, the Saturday Mothers have transformed their victimhood status into individual activists.

Thirdly, the Saturday protests do not only enable individual female participants to attend to political and social aspects within domestic politics, but they also create an opportunity for individual female participants to engage in transnational and international politics by establishing links with different mothers' movements across the world, as well as international and transnational organizations including the UN and the EU. Additionally, for some individual female participants, participation in the Saturday Mothers and their protests represents a challenge to their family lives which are structured by patriarchy. For some of them, attending to the Saturday Mothers and protests require them to challenge traditional patriarchal family life as a

result of the being active in the public sphere to some extent whether intentionally or not.

However, by considering the specific socio-political and historical trajectories of Turkey, I am cautious not to overemphasize these gender implications both at the societal and individual levels, because Saturday Mothers and protests do not really contribute to a significant transformation of and emancipation from traditional gender roles at either the societal or individual level for women. On the one hand, the social and political empowerment of individual female participants, the transformation from victimhood to activists, the questioning of some traditional gender roles within family lives, the inclusion of different women to public sphere through participation in domestic, international and transnational politics continuously and regularly, and the encouraging actions for political problems are valuable to reconstruct gender relations in Turkey. On the other hand, some traditional gender roles including the confinement of women to motherhood, the lack of a unified challenge towards constructed roles associated with women in the private sphere, not questioning the double burden of both domestic labor and public actions are retained and therefore do not contribute to a significant transformation and emancipation. In my opinion, the reason for not contributing to a significant transformation of and emancipation from traditional gender roles for individual female participants is that all the participants interviewed indicate that they do not participate in the Saturday protests as woman and do not consider that their problems and struggles emerged because of their identities as women.

In the light of the data obtained through interviews and a review of the issues of the feminist journals *Pazartesi* and *Amargi*, I revisited the arguments of the existing scholarly works which evaluate the Saturday Mothers. Although my intention is not

to make any conclusive statements beyond gender and feminist perspectives, among the studies that engage with the Saturday Mothers, the human rights activism perspective (Davidovic, 2018; Şanlı, 2018) is the most accepted categorization by the Saturday Mothers. As the Saturday Mothers show the significant human rights violations emerged because of the practice of enforced disappearances and the denial of them by the state authorities, human rights violations emerged when suppressing the Saturday protests, and their use of the discourse which encompasses all human rights violations other than enforced disappearances, the Saturday Mothers and their protests contribute significantly to human rights activism in Turkey. In relation to human rights activism, the Saturday Mothers show their protests as an important contribution to the democratization in Turkey, because their demands can be met only in a working democracy which believes the supremacy of the law and human rights. Thus, the analysis of the Saturday Mothers and their protests from a democratization perspective (Göker, 2010) is valuable. However, it is necessary to approach the perspective which engages with the Saturday Mothers and their protests in terms of minority rights and state violence against minorities (Budak, 2015; Tambar, 2016), because of the fact that although the Saturday Mothers and their protests are marginalized by the discourses of the state and the media, not all of them have Kurdish ethnic identity and they do not promote Kurdish minority rights during the protests.

Regarding the assessment of the Saturday Mothers and their protests from gender and feminist perspectives, Diner and Toktaş (2010) and Çaha (2011) are the only scholars whose researches classify the Saturday Mothers as feminists, and they do so by establishing a specific link between the Saturday Mothers and Kurdish feminism. My findings contradict with their arguments because in addition to lack of systematic

cooperation and connection between the Saturday Mothers and the women's/feminist movement in general, the Saturday Mothers do not have specific social connections with Kurdish feminism. In my opinion, the lack of systematic connections between them emerged because of the preferences of the both parties. On the one hand, the Saturday Mothers do not want to associate themselves and their protests with any specific ideology to protect the legitimacy of their cause. Thus, some of the participants of the Saturday Mothers who have Kurdish ethnic identity do not attend to the protests as they are Kurds. Furthermore, the Kurdish ethnic identity of some of the disappeared persons are not important during the protests, because the Saturday Mothers are demanding justice for all disappeared persons no matter which ethnicity they had. On the other hand, whether ideological and an intended choice or not, Kurdish feminists do not establish a link with Saturday Mothers for their struggle. Hence, in the absence of an actual and systematic connection between the two as well as the lack of the importance of Kurdish identity and feminist vision for the Saturday Mothers and their protests, it is hard for me to agree with the arguments of Diner and Toktaş (2010) and Çaha (2011).

Although many scholars do not classify the Saturday Mothers as feminists, they acknowledge the gender and feminist implications of the Saturday Mothers and their protests. Baydar and Iyegen (2004; 2006) make the boldest statement on the Saturday Mothers and their protests by arguing that the Saturday Mothers "change" the socially constructed public space concept and gender roles since they blurred the line between the public and the private, they have been politicized through their protests, and they gained political consciousness for their motherhood. Although I agree with the reality of the blurring of the line between the public and the private, the politicization and gaining of political consciousness of the participants of the

Saturday Mothers, these do not represent a significant change at neither the societal nor the individual level.

Similar arguments such as the use of motherhood as a way to gain citizenship rights (Aliefendioğlu, 2011: 129), politicization through the protests (Ahıska, 2015: 171), the blurring of the line between the public and private spaces and the over-association of women and motherhood with the private space (Genç-Yılmaz, 2014; Karaman, 2016: 383-391), showing the powerful motherhood figure in the public space (Şimşek, 2018: 340-341), contradicting with the nationalist discourses of and the policies of the state (Arat, 1999; Karaman, 2016; Şimşek, 2018), and making personal the political (Arat, 1999) were used by scholars to show how the Saturday Mothers and their protests challenge traditional gender roles. Although these arguments are very convincing, they do in my opinion neglect the sustainment of the some traditional gender roles. Additionally, they do not clarify at which levels the Saturday Mothers and their protests present challenges to traditional gender roles.

Among all the scholarly works, I find the arguments of Göker (2011: 118-124) as the most convenient, because she recognizes that while the Saturday Mothers and their protests “have potential to challenge” traditional gender roles by confronting the state, blurring the distinction between public and private spaces, presenting their bodies and emotions in public space and making them political, they “perpetuate” some of the traditional gender roles with the recognition of the risk for reproduction of traditional gender roles in mothers’ movements.

Additionally, these analyses and the consideration of the specific socio-political and historical trajectories of Turkey led me to question the conclusion and classification of Carreon and Moghadam (2015) with regard to the Saturday Mothers. On the one hand, I agree with their arguments on using a strategy of motherhood to mobilize in

public space, challenging the distinction between private and public spheres through politicizing motherhood identity, and challenging patriarchal structures at different levels. On the other hand, I think that these are not enough to classify the Saturday Mothers as de facto feminists for two reasons. Firstly, the distinction between the public sphere and the private sphere has already been challenged by an independent feminist movement in Turkey since the 1980s. The blurriness of the line between the two spheres is not an accomplishment of the Saturday Mothers and protests by themselves; rather, they only contribute to the inclusion of variety of women from different backgrounds who are or could not be incorporated by the women's/feminist movement to the public sphere. Secondly, despite the presence of a challenge to patriarchal structures at different levels whether intended or not, it should be remembered that this is not a direct and unified challenge against all traditional gender roles which can result in a more comprehensive emancipation of women. The Saturday Mothers and their protests still perpetuate some traditional gender roles at different levels. Thus, rather than seeing the accomplishments of the Saturday Mothers and protests as de facto feminists serving feminist objectives, it would in my opinion be more appropriate to analyze them as gender implications (whether intended or not).

As a result of revisiting the existing literature on the Saturday Mothers and their protests, this thesis makes some significant contributions to the existing literature. Firstly, by establishing a link with the broader maternal activism literature in world politics, this study reflects how maternal activism has been in Turkey, as there is a lack of connection with the maternal activism literature when evaluating the Saturday Mothers. Secondly, by using the framework developed by Carreon and Moghadam (2015), this research attempts to understand the relationship between maternal

activism and feminism in a systematic manner in the context of the Saturday Mothers and their protests. Thirdly, by providing an empirical data obtained through a series of interviews and a systematic review of the *Pazartesi* and *Amargi* feminist journals, this thesis enabled a test of the arguments made by Carreon and Moghadam (2015) when classifying the Saturday Mothers. The consideration of the specific historical and socio-political trajectories of Turkey as well as the personal narratives of Saturday Mothers have enabled me to revisit the arguments of Carreon and Moghadam (2015) and show that it is more appropriate to analyze the gender implications of the Saturday Mothers and their protests rather than classifying them as de facto feminists. Additionally, the consideration of the specific historical and socio-political trajectories of Turkey and personal narratives of Saturday Mothers have provided a framework to assess the possible gender and feminist implications of the Saturday Mothers and their protests more systematically. Lastly, by recognizing that some traditional gender roles are challenged while others are sustained, and also specifying the levels of the challenges in question, this thesis prevents the making of broad and fluid arguments when analyzing the Saturday Mothers and their protests in relation to gender and feminism.

To conclude, recognition and prioritization of identity of womanhood and experiences as a woman among participants of a mothers' movement are required to construct the movement as de facto or implicit feminists to achieve intended challenges against traditional gender roles and gender relations in the case of lack of a connection with women's/feminist organizations and feminist values. I argue that if individual female participants are aware of their identity of womanhood in line with their identities as relatives of disappeared people and share their specific experiences, problems and oppressions as women that emerged because of enforced

disappearances, then a mothers' movement can serve feminist objectives or its gender implications would be more transformative and emancipatory both at the individual and societal level. Additionally, women's/feminist organizations should on their part recognize and give consideration to the importance of the specific experiences, problems, and oppressions of female participants of a mothers' movement, and listen to their voices as woman rather than mothers. If they do so, then they can transcend their specific feminist ideological limits and have a chance to include a greater variety of women in their feminist struggle.



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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: AN OUTLINE OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS WITH MEMBERS OF SATURDAY MOTHERS

Part I

1. Demographic identity information questions (name, age, marital status, existence of child and if so how many children, ethnicity, residence, professional occupation, educational level, economic status, relationship with the lost relative)
2. Why did you join Saturday Mothers?
3. How did you join Saturday Mothers?
4. How long have you been part of Saturday Mothers and their protests?
5. Did you ever join a protest or participate in political actions or organizations before joining the Saturday Mothers protests?
6. Have your family, your relatives and others in your immediate social environment been positive/supportive or negative/opposed to you joining the Saturday Mothers protests?

Part II

7. What does Saturday Mothers mean for you?
8. I know that you wanted to use Saturday People at the beginning of the protests but the media and other people called you as Saturday Mothers. Were there any particular reasons to label yourself as Saturday People? Why did you accept Saturday Mothers label for your organization during time?
9. In the protests, are all participants mothers? Does one have to be a mother in order to participate to the protests?
10. Since you are labeled as Saturday Mothers, is being mother important in your actions? Does motherhood have any significance during your protests? Do you think that being mother have provided you any advantages and disadvantages in your protests?
11. What does 'mother' and 'motherhood' mean for you? How could you describe being a mother?
12. In your opinion, how does motherhood differ from womanhood and fatherhood?
13. Did being mother affect your decision to participate to the protests?
14. Has your understanding of motherhood changed throughout protests?
15. As a result of Saturday Mothers' actions, some people in Turkey think that concept of motherhood is politicized. Do you think that your motherhood is political? If yes, to what extent your motherhood is political? If no, why do you think that your motherhood is apolitical?

16. Are you aware of other mothers' movement in the world? If yes, how do you get information about them? What is your opinion about other motherhood movements in different part of the world?

Part III

17. What is your understanding of yourself? Which identity is more important for you? Why do you define yourself? Why is this particular identity more important for you? Have your understanding of who you are changed as a result of participating in the Saturday protests?

18. Has anything in your daily life changed after you began participating in the protests? In which ways has your daily life changed? Has anything in their family life changed after the protests? Has anything in your communal life changed after you and other women in your community begun participating in the protests?

19. What is politics for you? Why do you define politics in that way? Do you think that your understanding of politics changed with the protests? To what extent Saturday protests changed your understanding of politics?

20. Do you think that you are political person? Why and why not? Do you think that your political awareness and consciousness transformed throughout the Saturday protests? How?

21. What does Turkish state mean for you? Why do you think that way? Do you think that your understanding of Turkish state has changed over time? If so, what are the reasons of this changing perception?

Part IV

22. Some academics and the mainstream media consider Saturday protests as a part of the broader Kurdish movement in Turkey? If yes, how are the protests related to the Kurdish movement? If no, what sets the protests apart from the Kurdish movement?

23. Some academics consider Saturday protests as a part of the broader human rights movement in Turkey? If yes, how are the protests related to the human rights movement? If no, what sets the protests apart from the human rights movement?

24. Some academics consider Saturday protests as a part of the broader democracy movement in Turkey? If yes, how are the protests related to the democracy movement? If no, what sets the protests apart from the democracy movement?

25. Some academics consider Saturday protests as a part of the broader women's and/or feminist movement in Turkey? If yes, how are the protests related to the women's and/or feminist movement? If no, what sets the protests apart from the women's and/or feminist movement?

Part V

26. What is the role of Human Rights Association for the activities of Saturday Mothers? What does Human Rights Association mean for Saturday Mothers? In which way does Human Rights Association help and support the protests and activities of Saturday Mothers?

27. Is Human Rights Association only organization which has provided helps or support for the movement? Did and/or do Saturday Mothers get any support from any other political parties, political organizations, and civil society organizations? If

yes, what are those organizations? If no, why do you think that other organizations didn't or don't provide any support for Saturday Mothers' movement?

28. Have Saturday Mothers ever tried to contact any other political parties, political organizations, and civil society organizations? If yes, why did Saturday Mothers contact them, and what was the response?

29. Have Saturday Mothers ever tried to contact any other mothers' movements in different part of the world? If yes, why and how did Saturday Mothers contact them? What was the response?

30. Are they happy or disappointed about the support? Did Saturday Mothers expect greater support and, if so, from which strands of society? Do you think that since the movement is largely composed of women, the movement has got any support or reaction from people? Do you think that if the participants weren't women, the impact of Saturday protests would change?

31. Since Saturday Mothers' movement is largely composed of women, some people can expect that women's and feminist organizations can support your struggle. Were or are there any such organizations which help or support Saturday Mothers protests? Have Saturday Mothers ever get support or reactions from feminist organizations? Why or why not? Is your identity as woman as strong as your identity as mother? Why or why not? Would you describe yourself as a feminist? Why or why not?

Part VI

32. The initial aim of Saturday Mothers was to find your disappeared relatives, and then it aimed to decrease the numbers of disappearances. Bearing the fact that

Saturday mothers cannot still overcome the injustices which they have faced, are there any other reasons for them to continue Saturday sit-ins?

33. Do you think that in the future, the demands and aims of the movement would change and expand to cover other issues?



**APPENDIX B: AN OUTLINE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS WITH MEMBERS
OF WOMEN’S/FEMINIST ORGANIZATIONS IN ISTANBUL**

Part I

1. When was the organization founded? During which period the organization has been active?
2. What were the main objectives when the organization was founded? Have these objectives changed over time? If there have been any changes in objectives, what are these changes and what were the main reasons of that change?
3. Does the organization have any associations with other political parties, political organizations, other feminist/women’s organizations, civil society organizations, social movements or specific segment of the society? If so, could you describe the association with that specific party and why is that specific party important ally for you? If no, what are the possible reasons for this lack of association?
4. Could you describe this organization as a feminist organization or is it an organization which has women agenda? (If it is described as feminist organization, I can ask whether a specific strand of feminism is close to the organization’s ideology) What are the reasons of your classification of the organization?

Part II

5. How well do you know the Saturday Mothers and their activities?

6. Based on your knowledge, do you think that the Saturday Mothers can/should be considered as part of the feminist movement or broader women's movement in Turkey? If yes, then how? If no, then why not? And, if no, which other movement(s) in Turkey would you consider the Saturday Mothers to be part of?

7. Irrespective of the Saturday Mothers being part of the feminist/women's movement or not, do you think that their activities can serve the struggle for women in Turkey in one way or another? In other words, how do you conceive of the Saturday Mothers and their activities from a feminist or women's perspective?

8. What do you think about the Saturday Mothers' use of motherhood identity in their protests? Do you think that it has made any difference for their protests?

9. Have your organization ever been contact or support Saturday Mothers and their activities? If yes, what kind of support or contact does the organization make? What are the sources of this contact/support or lack of contact/support to them?

Part III

10. More generally, what is your view on maternal politics and/ or use of motherhood identity in politics in Turkey?

11. Have you ever supported to or reacted against any mothers' movement in Turkey? Have you ever tried to contact any mothers' movement in Turkey? What are the sources of that support or reaction?

12. What is your view on maternal politics and/or the use of motherhood identity in politics more generally?

13. For your opinion, is there any relationship between feminism and mothers' movement? If yes, what is the relationship between them? If no, why do they separate from each other's?



**APPENDIX C: AN OUTLINE OF INTERVIEWS QUESTIONS WITH
FEMINIST SCHOLARS IN TURKEY**

Part I

1. Demographic identity questions (name, age, residence etc)
2. How long have you been living in Istanbul?
3. During 1990s, were you residing in Istanbul?
4. Would you describe yourself as a feminist scholar in the academia and be part of feminist movement in Turkey? If yes, which feminist strand is close to you?

Part II

5. How well do you know the Saturday Mothers and their activities?
6. Based on your knowledge, do you think that the Saturday Mothers can/should be considered as part of the feminist movement or broader women's movement in Turkey? If yes, then how? If no, then why not? And, if no, which other movement(s) in Turkey would you consider the Saturday Mothers to be part of?
7. Irrespective of the Saturday Mothers being part of the feminist/women's movement or not, do you think that their activities can serve the feminist struggle in Turkey in one way or another? In other words, how do you conceive of the Saturday Mothers and their activities from a feminist perspective?

8. What do you think about the Saturday Mothers' use of motherhood identity in their protests? Do you think that it has made any difference for their protests?

Part III

9. More generally, what is your view on maternal politics and/ or use of motherhood identity in politics in Turkey?

10. What is your view on maternal politics and/or the use of motherhood identity in politics more generally?

11. In your opinion, what is the relationship between maternal politics and feminism

**APPENDIX D: PERSONAL INFORMATION OF PARTICIPANTS FROM
SATURDAY MOTHERS AND HUMAN RIGHTS ASSOCIATION IN
ISTANBUL**

Name of Participants	The reason of participants attending Saturday Mothers	Age of participants	Professional occupation of participants
Gizem	As a daughter of a disappeared person	33	PhD candidate
Münevver	As a sister of a disappeared person	44	Unemployed
İnci	As a sister of a disappeared person	63	Retired teacher
Aliye	As a sister of a disappeared person	45	Employee of a civil society organization
Zülbiye	As a mother of a disappeared person	71	Housewife
Gülnehal	As a member of Human Rights Association	55	Lawyer
Sevim	As a member of Human Rights Association	57	Economist
Pınar	As a wife of a disappeared person	70	Housewife

**APPENDIX E: DETAILS OF INTERVIEWS WITH PARTICIPANTS FROM
SATURDAY MOTHERS AND HUMAN RIGHTS ASSOCIATION IN
ISTANBUL**

Name of Participants	Date of Interviews	Type of Interviews	Place of Interviews	Duration of Interviews
Gizem	20 February 2020	Face to face	A café in Istanbul	47 minutes
Münevver	21 February 2020	Face to face	The workplace of the participant's friend	60 minutes
İnci	21 February 2020	Face to face	The workplace of the participant's friend	45 minutes
Aliye	25 February 2020	Face to face	The workplace of the participant	40 minutes
Zülbiye	3 March 2020	Face to face	The house of the participant	46 minutes
Gülnihal	12 March 2020	Face to face	The workplace of the participant	95 minutes
Sevim	1 April 2020	Via e-mail	-	-
Pınar	30 April 2020	Via phone call	-	30 minutes