

**TRANSGENDER SUBJECTIVITY: NARRATIVES ON THE SELF, THE OTHER  
AND THE NATION**

**ONUR CALAP**

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Onur Calap

and have found that it is complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
and that any and all revisions required by the final  
examining committee have been made.

Committee Members:

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Asst. Prof. Murat Ergin

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Asst. Prof. Deniz Yüksek

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Asst. Prof. Özlem Altan Olcay

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP**

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Onur Calap

## ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes how transgender individuals living in the cosmopolitan city of Istanbul make sense of their gender formation processes. Through the subjective narratives of 11 pre-op MtF transsexuals and 10 homosexual cross-dressers, I argue that there are diverse ways of explaining one's gender subjectivity that defeat the classifications of the medical field. However, their perceptions of each other feed upon the conventional images of femininity and masculinity. While the cross-dresser informants perceive transsexuals as individuals born into the wrong body, for the transsexual informants the gender subjectivity of cross-dressers proved to be unexplainable. As a general pattern, the transsexual informants tried to distance themselves from the cross-dressers because the latter group is associated with sex work. This study also sheds light upon the both groups' narratives on the encounters with four institutions; the family, the military, the medical field and the nation state. These narratives revealed that these encounters culminated to uneasy and disruptive impacts on the self-images of the both groups. Their narratives demonstrated a multifarious pattern depending on political activism and ethnicity. In both groups, those who participated in the LGBTTT movement and those who identified themselves as Kurdish provided subversive narratives on current political debates. Within the complexity of political fabric of Turkey, this study shows that the oppressed groups tend to transgress the limits of the national ideal only through the space created by political activism. Moreover, incorporating the questions of transgender and ethnic identities in understanding the way the discourses of nationalism operate, this thesis contributes to the literature on gender and ethnicity studies.

**Keywords:** Transgender, transsexuals, cross-dressers, gender formation, subjectivity, nationalism, LGBTTT movement, Istanbul, Turkey.

## ÖZET

Bu çalışma, İstanbul’da yaşayan trans bireylerin toplumsal cinsiyet oluşturma süreçlerini nasıl anlamlandırdıklarını analiz etmektedir. Erkeklikten kadınlığa geçiş yapacak 11 transseksüel’in ve 10 homoseksüel CeDe’nin (travesti) anlatılarından yola çıkarak, kişinin toplumsal cinsiyetini anlatılaştırmasının medikal sınıflandırmaları geçersiz kılan birden çok yolu olduğunu iddia etmekteyim. Ancak, bu iki grubun birbirlerini algılayış şekilleri geleneksel kadınlık ve erkeklik tasvirlerinden beslenmektedir. CeDe görüşmeciler, transseksüel bireyleri yanlış bedene doğmuş kişiler olarak görürken, transseksüel görüşmeciler CeDe bireylerin toplumsal cinsiyetlerini anlamlandırmada zorluk çektiklerini belirttiler. Transseksüel görüşmeciler, CeDe bireyler seks işçiliği ile bağdaştırıldığı için, aralarına mesafe koymaya çalıştılar. Bu çalışma aynı zamanda iki grubun da anlatıları üzerinden aile, askeriye, sağlık kurumlarıyla ve ulus devletle karşılaşmalarına ışık tutmaktadır. Bu anlatılar, kurumlarla karşılaşmaların grupların kendilerini algılayış biçimleri üzerinde huzursuz edici ve yıkıcı etkileri olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Grupların anlatıları bu konumlandırmanın çeşitli şekillerde politik aktivizm ve etnisiteye bağlı yapıldığını ortaya koymuştur. Her iki grupta da LGBTT hareketine katılanların ve kendilerini Kürt olarak tanımlayanların anlatıları güncel politik tartışmalar üzerine söylemleri ters yüz edici niteliktedir. Türkiye’nin karmaşık politik dokusu göz önüne alındığında, bu çalışma, ezilen grupların sadece politik aktivizm tarafından açılan alan vasıtasıyla milli ideallerin ötesine geçme eğiliminde olduklarını göstermiştir. Ayrıca, milliyetçi söylemlerin nasıl işlediğini anlama açısından trans ve etnik kimliklerle ilgili soruları da dahil eden bu çalışma toplumsal cinsiyet ve etnisite çalışmaları literatürlerine de katkıda bulunmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Trans kimlik, transseksüeller, CD bireyler, toplumsal cinsiyet oluşumu, öznellik, milliyetçilik, LGBTT hareketi, İstanbul, Türkiye

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“...After completing the necessary interviews and psychological tests Altay was asked for a family meeting. He told them that he hasn’t come out to his parents...but they said ‘it will do no harm; we have to ask them about your development...’ I appeared before a committee... They started by asking me to tell them about my homosexuality... I pointed out that I supported Mehmet Sevigen when he presented a parliamentary question against Aliye Kavaf who stated ‘homosexuality is a disorder.’ Then they asked ‘don’t you think that it is a disorder?’ I said ‘no.’ They said that they evaluated disorders here. I said ‘we might have to call it a disorder for the sake of the procedure but I know that it is not a disorder.’ I think that they wanted me to call myself sick....Maybe they are trying to push me more because I am not effeminate enough”<sup>1</sup> (İnce, 2012).

The quote above is a frustrating news report about Altay, a homosexual individual who claimed to be subjected to contempt and humiliation as he was going through the routines of the medico-military examination to be exempt from the military service. Altay is a 25 year-old journalist who received a “fit to serve in the military” report from the military committee because the military experts did not detect the diagnostical criteria of homosexuality in his statements and behaviors. However, experts diagnosed him with “neurotic personality disorder” because of his uncooperative attitude. İnce (2012, p.5) describes the consequences of this medical procedure, which is not uncommon for other homosexual and transgender individuals, with the following words: “he [Altay] is faced with a tremendous amount of psychological torture and intimidation policy.” He also points out the narrow-mindedness of the medical authorities with regards to gender identities and attributes

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<sup>1</sup> “...Gerekli görüşmeleri ve psikolojik testleri tamamlandıktan sonra kendisinden ‘aile görüşmesi’ istendi. Altay, ailesine açık olmadığını... belirtmesine rağmen doktorların ‘Bir şey olmaz, gelişimini sormamız lazım’ dediler... Bir kurulun önüne çıktım. ‘Eşcinselliğini anlat’ diye başladılar... Aliye Kavaf’ın ‘Eşcinsellik hastalıktır’ beyanına karşı Mehmet Sevigen’in soru önergesi verme sürecinde destek olduğumu belirttim. ‘Sence hastalık değil mi?’ dediler. ‘Değil’ dedim. ‘Biz burada hastalıkları değerlendiriyoruz’ dediler. Ben de, ‘Prosedür gereği hastalık demeniz gerekiyor olabilir, ama ben hastalık olmadığını biliyorum’ dedim. Sanırım hasta olduğumu söylememi istediler... Belki de yeterli kadar kadınsı değilim diye zorla yollamaya çalışıyorlar.”



their prejudice to his own gender characteristics by saying that if he was more like a “woman” they would not cause any trouble.

Transgender individuals experience a great degree of marginalization and discrimination in Turkey not only compared with conforming but also with non-conforming sexualities and gender identities. Gay, lesbian or bisexual individuals, even if they come out of the closet, do not automatically reveal their sexual desires or preferences to the outside world and do not undertake drastic alterations on their bodies. However, cross-dressers and transsexuals are more conspicuous in everyday life because their sexual preferences are tacitly associated with the gender identities they perform. They transgress the taken-for-granted binary gender norms and are seen as a third gender lingering between man and woman. What is more, in order to achieve this transgression they make temporary or permanent alterations on their bodies. Cross-dressers and transsexuals are more likely to face discrimination due to their appearance, lifestyles and occupations. Neither group complies with the designated norms defined by the conventional and legal practices, not only in terms of their gender identities but also in terms of the sex work in which most of the cross-dresser informants are involved. In both instances, the majority categorizes them as abnormal and deviant outcasts. However, there is a difference between transsexuals and cross-dressers in terms of the duration and degree of discrimination and oppression they face. Although both groups suffer from the practices implemented by the institutions of the state, in the end, transsexuals achieve reconciliation with the requirements of the gender regulatory mechanisms after the SRS and become in tune with binary gender codifications. However, this is not the case for cross-dressers.

Categorizing and defining non-conforming gender identities and sexualities is a problematic enterprise. In the second chapter, I present the definitions of heterosexism,

heteronormativity and patriarchy with regards to their interactions with the four institutions; family, military, medical field and the nation state, furthermore, reflect on nationalism and gender to show the intersecting lines that are very much related to my study. I also provide a detailed literature review on transgender identity formation and explain the concepts of transvestism and transsexuality which are defined with precision by the medico-scientific literature. However, for the sake of reflecting the positionalities of the transgender informants, I use the term CD (cross-dresser) in place of the term “transvestite” because, rather than the term *travesti*, my informants prefer to use the term *CeDe* which is free from negative connotations. I keep using the term transsexual except for when referring to the interviews in which the informants used some different terms to define their gender identities. Therefore, throughout this study, the term cross-dresser refers to homosexual individuals whose biological sex is male and who wear clothes associated with the opposite sex. The term “MtF pre-op transsexual” refers to individuals whose biological sex is male and who have not had a sex reassignment surgery (SRS) for transition yet but have been or will be on hormone replacement therapy (HRT). However, this term also includes individuals who are not planning to undergo such a surgery but define themselves as transsexual or transwoman. I refrain from using medical precision in keeping these categories intentionally ambiguous in order to reflect transgender individuals’ lived experiences.

While the second chapter deals with the theoretical backbones of these issues, the third chapter provides the methodological approach I utilized in my study. It aims to explain the research technique and point out the rationale for the choice of the in-depth interview method together with participant observation for data collection. It presents detailed information regarding all the procedures from establishing contacts to conducting interviews. It also points to the procedural steps before and after the interviews in terms of recording, data preservation and ethical concerns.

The fourth chapter concentrates on the historical processes through which the concept of transgender is legally and medically approached in the world and in Turkey. In addition, I present the political background of the Gay and Lesbian movements and Transgender movements. As the initial point of the analysis, I start with the emergence of various concepts such as transvestism (cross-dresser), transsexuality and homosexuality in the medical language and I discuss the way in which the terminology employed by the medical authorities sets the limits for the recognition of transgender groups in the social and political sphere. Thereafter, I narrow down the discussion to the case of Turkey and explicate the implications of the laws and regulations introduced by the legal authorities on the status of transgender groups especially after 1980.

The reason why I chose the quote in the beginning of the introduction is because I think that it manifests the backbone of this study: transgender identity formation and transgender individuals' interactions with various institutions. Until recently, the lived experiences of transgender individuals have been studied from the perspective of medico-scientific research (Turan, Eşel, Dündar, Candemir, Baştürk, Sofuoğlu & Özkul, 2000). Medical approaches tend to conceptualize the transgender phenomena from the perspectives of psychoanalysis which portrays non-conforming gender identities as abnormalities and focuses on therapeutic techniques to “cure” these problems (Fausto-Sterling, 2000). However, the main concern of my study is to understand the way transgender individuals construct their own gender subjectivities rather than making use of medical classifications. Therefore, my research is in line with the recent social scientific studies which focus on the narratives of transgender individuals and analyze how they make sense of their own gender identities (Akın, 2009). In the fifth chapter, I analyze the narratives of the cross-dresser and transsexual informants in the way they revealed their gender subjectivities and then investigate the difference between the narratives of these two groups in terms of how they articulated the

subjectivities of each other. I concentrate on the narratives of the informants to understand if and how they positioned themselves within the binary structure of gender codifications. The transsexual informants define their transsexuality as a gender identity with references to womanhood while the cross-dresser informants define themselves with their sexual orientation (i.e., homosexuality) and do not see cross-dressing as a crucial step in the articulation of their subjectivities. The narratives of both groups showed that their subjective sense of gender identity changes throughout their gender formation processes only to be fixed in the adulthood. This indicates that gender identities are not fixed entities; those who define themselves as homosexuals might come to identify themselves as cross-dressers or transsexuals later. However, at some point there seems to be a closure when individuals feel that they found the “appropriate” definitions for them.

The narratives of the transsexual informants indicate that they utilize a hierarchical nature of the representations when it came to the articulation of the gender position of cross-dressers. They position themselves higher up in this hierarchy than cross-dressers stating that CDs cannot perform the ideals of femininity as well as they do. To them, cross-dressers occupy a hazy space between ‘real’ man and ‘real’ woman, failing to fulfill the demands of becoming neither of them. Therefore, they point out that they could not understand what kind of gender representation cross-dressers have. However, the CD informants saw transsexuals as people who want to be a woman. They did not have any difficulty articulating the gendered positionalities of transsexuals. In relation to this, I found that the transsexual informants point to more instances in which they engage with their environments than cross-dressers do. This way, the transsexual informants claimed to overcome the exclusion from the public sphere and demand a space with their new gender identity. They challenge much more to the expectations of the society by going out, socializing with their friends and involving in different job sectors. However, the narratives of the cross-dresser informants revealed that

they live in a more secluded way and their access to public life is limited to their close surroundings. Some of them do not go out much and some others leave home mostly for job purposes. People they meet are some certain individuals such as their customers or associates.

The research conducted on the interaction of the transgender individuals with the institutions of family (Polat, Yüksel, Dişçigil, & Meteris, 2005), the military (Biricik, 2009) and the medical field (Akın, 2009) point out that these institutions in Turkey reproduce and project the naturalized binary codifications of gender identities and hold a discriminative attitude towards transgender members by imposing social and legal sanctions on them. In addition, I also analyze their encounters with the nation state as the fourth institution which produces discourses of nationalism. In the sixth chapter, I dwell on the narratives of the cross-dresser and transsexual informants and analyze how they construct their identities in relation to the regulations upheld and enforced by these institutions and investigate how they reproduce the gender norms accordingly. As the first insight of my analyses, I found that the quality of the transsexual informants' relationship with their families depends on their transition process. As they get closer to womanhood, they claim that the chances of improving their relationship with their parents increase. However, the CD informants do not point to have that kind of opportunity. Their narratives indicate that in many cases they are irreversibly excluded from the family circle. Second, my preliminary hypothesis was that the transsexual informants would justify their exclusion from the military through the lenses of their transition to womanhood. However, I did not find any difference in the narratives of the transsexual and CD informants about their encounters with the military. Both groups claim that the military, rather than recognizing their different gender subjectivities, classify them as homosexuals. As Connell (1995) argued, the military position those outside the realm of hegemonic masculinity, thus, consider them failed men. Third, the narratives of the transsexual informants reveal an ambivalent relationship towards medical authorities. On the

one hand, some of them claim that the therapy sessions provided them with a space where they meet other transsexuals and exchange information and experiences. They also argue that the medical assistance they received in their transition process informed them about the bureaucratic and medical technicalities of the HRT and SRS. Most importantly, at the end of the medical assistance, they are recognized as woman by law. On the other hand, some of them argue that they lack ability to resist the power of medical authority. They very often feel the need to act like the doctors and the psychiatrists wanted them to act so that they can get permission for HRT and SRS. The CD informants' contact with medical authorities is very limited. They sometimes seek for psychiatric consultancy to have access to hormones, but most of them have other resources for hormones and administer them to their bodies by themselves. The reason behind this is that they do not want to be regarded as sick people by doctors and find the medical field very heterosexist and discriminatory. The medical field fits these individuals into the fixed categories and overlooks the diversity which transgender individuals express. However, the fluid nature of gender subjectivities cannot be translated into the medical terminology. This indicates that all the diagnostical classifications fall short of making sense of the diversity of gender subjectivities. The common ground both groups meet is the fact that their encounters with the institutions are fraught with difficulties. From the narratives of the informants, we can see that all the four institutions perceiving both groups as deviant or sick to be cured at best operate within a heteronormative and heterosexist framework.

Analyzing the narratives of these two groups is significant to understand the way other gender subjectivities outside the scope of the binary codifications position themselves within the discourses of nationalism reproduced by the ideological tenets of the nation state. The reason why I integrate the nation state as the fourth is that although in the literature we can find limited interest (Nagel, 1998; Waetjen, 2001; Anand, 2007) which problematizes the

relationship between nationalism and gender, scholars tend to explain the issues through the lenses of conventional gender dichotomies and analyze the subjectivities of manhood and womanhood based on their sex differentiation. Therefore, there is a gap which has to be filled regarding the theoretical framework which incorporates transgender and nationalism and which takes into account the complex nature of gender identities from the perspective of discourses of nationalism.

The main concern is to analyze the narratives of transgender individuals to see whether they reproduce prevalent discourses of nationalism in Turkey. To gauge the ideological positions of transgender informants, I presented them two controversial debates in the Turkish context and asked them to explain their viewpoints. The first debate, which helped me to contextualize the discourses of nationalism in Turkey, is the role of militarism. The followers of the LGBTTT movement are generally critical of the militarism embedded in the Turkish society. The second issue has to do with debates around Kurds in Turkey. Transsexual and CD individuals establish connections between the discrimination they are subjected to and those of minority groups in general or the Kurdish people in particular. The narratives revealed that regardless of the difference in the expressed gender subjectivities between the transsexual and cross-dresser informants, the ethnic identity and LGBTTT political activism emerged as an important factor in the articulation of these two subjects and in the way they opposed the discourses of nationalism.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to provide literature reviews for three points with the aims of setting up a theoretical structure for my analyses, showing from which literatures my questions stemmed and addressing how my findings can be situated within them. First, I present a literature review problematizing transgender identity formation processes and the classifications theorized by researchers in order to explain differences between transsexuals and cross-dressers in the way of realizing their gender subjectivities and differing perceptions about each other. This section indicates the complicated nature of gender subjectivities and the limitations of the dichotomous gender codes. Second, I give a summary of the literature that deals with the heterosexist/heteronormative structures of the four institutions, family, military, medical authorities and the nation state in order to point out their impact on the lived experiences of the informants. I focus on the literature of nation state in connection with gender identities and sexualities. The purpose of this section is to anchor my study on the question of institutions and to show the gaps in the literature regarding the relationship between the discourses of nationalism and non-conforming gender identities in the world and in Turkey.

### **I. Transgender Phenomena and Gender Subjectivity**

Although I use the terms cross-dresser (CD) and transsexual to refer to the informants, we should keep in mind that I use them for the sake of clarity when I make references to two different groups in my study. Other than that, the transsexual informants actually use various terms to describe their gender subjectivities depending on the stage of transition they are in such as; *trans*, *kadın* (woman) or *trans kadın*, (transwoman) used by those who have been on HRT; and *trans birey* (transperson), *travesti* (transvestite) or *CeDe* (CD: cross-dresser) used



by those who are at the early stages. The cross-dresser informants use the terms *eşcinsel* (homosexual), *trans birey* (transperson) or *CeDe* (CD) to describe their gender subjectivities. Two points should be made here: First, the demarcated categories determined by psychoanalytical and medical fields fall short of explaining the diversity of the transgender phenomena and articulating their subjectivities. Second, despite the insufficiency of these terms, the informants also try to make sense of their gender subjectivities and sexualities with the help of them. This process is more like an adoption of the available explanations rather than fixating themselves in those categories.

In this study, I take the term subjectivity in a Foucauldian and Butler's sense. I consider subject positions of transgender individuals produced by the discourses and practices to be imbued with ambiguities. These subject positions are produced in response to or in interaction with power relations, nationalist and medical discourses. However, different from identity formation, subject positions are never fixed. They can change depending on the time and space. Therefore, subjectivation points to a paradoxical process which leads to the subordination of the individual while providing channels for the very same individuals to become a self-conscious subject (Butler, 1997, p.83). These discourses open up a space for the intelligibility of the subjects and they strive to reach that level by acting upon those discourses. Therefore, at this point it is essential to integrate the Foucauldian perspective of subjectivation which is shaped by both the disciplining structures of the state institutions and the productive power relations between the subject and the discourses (1979b). A good example to this process can be the medical enterprises which pathologized the transgender body through scientific and psychoanalytical discourses. These medical analyses solely based themselves on deductive reasoning which means that the researchers developed some certain categories in order to encapsulate different gender identities and then strove to fit these

different gender identities to them in order to confirm their hypotheses. The theoretical outlines of their research paradigms rested on the assumption that gender roles, sexualities and gender identities alternated between the predetermined binary gender codes of manhood and womanhood and the only way of explaining the transgender phenomena was by drawing an analogy similar to these codes. As a disciplinary practice, medical explanations label transgender individuals as abnormal, while enabling them to produce their gender subjectivities within the boundaries of the discourses.

Transgender identities are regarded as pathological cases within the title of “gender dysphoria” with reference to Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) whose first and second editions were published in 1952 and 1968 (Grob, 1991). Instead of trying to understand the lived experiences of these individuals and the development of their gender subjectivities through the interaction with the discourses and the practices of the institutions and the society, they are marked as abnormal and in need of rehabilitation. Butler (2004) reflects on this dilemma of the medical stigmatization of transsexuals and cross-dressers in the medical field. She states that, on the one hand, some transsexuals accept and even believe the diagnosis of the medical authorities so that they have access to the medical and hormonal treatments in order to achieve their transition. But doing this, they also have to acquiesce to the pathologizing classificatory system of the very same medical authorities and prove that they fit the criteria of the gender identity disorder. On the other hand, cross-dressers, some other transsexuals or individuals with non-conforming gender identities might defy the categories of the DSM in order to be accepted in non-pathological ways.

The prevalent tendency in the feminist and transgender literatures is to approach the lived experiences of transgender individuals from the bifurcation of authenticity and artificiality. A feminist activist, Janice Raymond’ book titled *The Transsexual Empire: The*

*Making of the She-Male*, published in 1979, was like a manifestation of the theoretical discordance between feminism and transsexuality. She encapsulated the rhetoric of the medico-psychiatric authorities to assert why transsexuals do not belong in the feminist movement. She regarded transsexualism as a disorder and claimed that transgender identities reinforced the imposed binary gender categorizations by forming their bodies in conformity with them. Therefore, her view of transgender subjectivity was based on inauthenticity which, she argued that, transgender body seized the real womanhood and reduced it to an artefact (Heyes, 2003). However, the transgender academics approached this essentialist concept of authenticity from the perspective of gender construction rather than relying on the fictionality of the sex. They stated that the transgender subjectivity is constructed through the paradigms of masculinity and femininity. Therefore, despite the efforts of transgender individuals to bring their sex into conformity through HRT and SRS, it was actually the essentiality or authenticity of gender which they wanted to acquire (Sellberg, 2009).

Butler (1990) offers an insight to the discussions of authenticity and fictionality by deconstructing the concepts of gender and sex as stable categories; instead she introduces the mechanism of gender performativity which refers to repetition of some certain acts to achieve gender. To her, gender is nothing more than adopting repetitive behaviors, styles or codes which in the end naturalizes and normalizes the binary codifications of man/woman, masculine/feminine or homo/heterosexual and gives them an essence (Poggio, 2006). However, while opening up a liberatory space in the theoretical discourse for the transgender performative acts through which transgender body is situated, Butler's theory falls short of explaining transgender subjectivity. This is due to the fact that the concept of performativity defines the construction of transgender body through repetitive acts, thus, it does not offer a

discursive area which would differentiate transgender body from other gender subjectivities (Prosser, 1998).

Another post-modern approach to transgender subjectivity is provided by West and Zimmerman (1987). They consider gender as a “doing” which refers to the construction of the gender subjectivity through everyday interaction. They claim that people adopt some certain attitudes and activities in conformity with their sex. In addition they state that other people define the gender of an individual more than the person does herself or himself. In this case, society is the determining agency which assigns transsexuals and CDs to their roles and the social interaction with other people defines the limits within which they are allowed to express their gender identities. Butler’s analysis differs from that of West and Zimmerman in that they were still acknowledging an essential presence of male/female sex difference while Butler pointed out that even sex was socially constructed and based on performativity. Schrock, Emily and Margaret (2009) reflect on the performativity of the desired gender subjectivity by transsexuals during their transition process and come to the conclusion that when they achieve to perform womanhood in public, they gain self-confidence through adapting to new situations with new strategies and use their agencies to manage their emotions to have a smooth transition from manhood to womanhood.

Kulick (1998) analyzes the ambiguity in the elucidation of the gender subjectivities of Brazilian transvestites in a stark opposition to the western European binary discourse of gender. He claims that Brazilian transvestites consider themselves neither really men nor women. The formation of their gender identities is very much imbued with the representation of the body and the sexual practices which go beyond the limits of binary understanding of gender. My study also adopts this kind of research paradigm and engages in an inductive reasoning in order to see what kind of mechanisms the pre-op MtF transsexual and self-

identified homosexual cross-dressers internalize to make sense of their own gender roles, sexualities and gender subjectivities. My concern is not to validate any predetermined categories established by the medical models in the beginning. Rather, I intend to shed light on the narrations of the informants and point out general patterns that I encountered throughout my interviews.

This study integrates the argument made by Kaufmann (2006) who makes a theoretical distinction between the accounts of transsexual and cross-dressers. He claims that transsexuals overcome the ambiguity imposed by the uncertainty of their gender until after they undergo SRS. He states that the accounts of transsexuals give the impression that their lived experiences take refuge in the constructed binary codes of gender identity. This means that, in the end, they choose one of the gender identities formulated with dichotomies such as man-woman, male-female and masculine-feminine. However, this does not apply to cross-dressers because although some of them have permanent modifications made on their bodies, they do not undergo SRS in order to acquire the physical characteristics of the opposite sex. In this study, I also elaborate on the positionalities of the CD and transsexual informants and whether they imagine a hierarchical category between them in their narratives. As Roen (2002) argues, different from transgender groups whose aim it is to deconstruct the binary categories, transsexuals do not automatically undertake such a political attitude because they transition from one normative gender to another; thus, reaffirm the validity of binary gender formulations. In line with this argument, although they are considered to be non-conforming gender identities, transsexuals position themselves as aligned to the ideological and practical constituents of imposed binary gender codes in order to explain their subjectivities and distance themselves from cross-dressers. In line with the assertion, I argue that transsexuals articulate their current gender identity like a transition period in the end of which they bring

their sex into conformity with their gender by both acquiring the gender norms assigned to women of birth and undergoing SRS together with hormone replacement therapy. Therefore, they assign an inferior position to cross-dressers by considering their gender performance as a failure to situate themselves in the binary codifications of the gender system. Therefore, I assume that in the narratives of the transsexual informants, cross-dressers' adoption of the behaviors and norms socially associated with women will be more situational and contingent.

Another point of departure of this argumentation is the analysis of the term hegemonic masculinity coined by Connell (1995). He argues that masculinities are constructed in such a manner that there is always a hierarchical pattern; hegemonic masculinity being at the top of the hierarchy while homosexuality being at the bottom. He also maintains that hegemonic masculinity rests on heterosexuality. What it means is that hegemonic masculinity is not only about the dominance of one masculinity over others or competition between different manifestations of masculinities in the social fabric but it also paves the way for the formulation of 'real' and proper womanhood in the society by epitomizing the boundaries of expectations from each gender identity. In this regard, I argue that the transsexual informants also make use of such a hierarchical reasoning and although they have not undergone SRS yet, they regard themselves as heterosexual women-to-be, thus, position themselves higher up in the hierarchy than cross-dressers. Another basis of my argument is the fact that while transsexuals are able to enjoy their rights if they conform to the norms of the binary sex divisions, this is not the case for cross-dressers (Atamer, 2005). Thus, by achieving the same social rights that are granted to men and women by birth, the articulation of gender formation process experienced by the transsexual informants will have more of a means-to-an-end analysis which will terminate in the realization of womanhood with both SRS and acquisition of a new I.D. All in all, I find it very relevant and important to analyze how the cross-dresser

and transsexual informants relate their lived experiences, what kind of strategies they employ when they elaborate their gender identities and sexual orientations, whether they feel any ambiguities regarding the embodiment of their genders, and if so, in what ways they find solutions or compromises.

Ekin (1993) develops a grounded theory to analyze the practices of cross-dressers and transsexuals. These practices situate them within the continuum of femaling processes with varying degrees depending on their different preferences, tastes and class positions. Ekin concludes that femaling processes of cross-dressers and transsexuals are personal and subjective, therefore, cannot be translated into medical and psychoanalytical diagnostic classifications based on the binary codes of homosexuality/heterosexuality or male/female. In this study, I also generate this kind of viewpoint and analyze the gender formation processes of the cross-dresser and transsexual informants through their lived experiences and their subjective positionings. However, this study goes a step further to understand how far the adoption of medical and psychoanalytical discourses has an effect on the gender identities articulated by the informants because Ekin does not take into account the level of interaction transgender individuals are engaged in with their social environments and with other each other. Besides, his analysis cannot go beyond the constructions of binary paradigms because he explains the gender performances of transsexuals and cross-dressers as long as they adopt manning and femaling practices assuming that those practices belong to two different sexes. Therefore, I also investigate the way the cross-dresser and transsexual informants make sense of the gender identities of each other. The reason behind this comparative method is that separately the informants might point out subjective positionings outside the sphere of medical and psychoanalytical discourses; however, they might feel the need to make use of them when it comes to expressing how they perceive the gender subjectivity of each other.

In line with these analyses, I also take into account the performativity acted out by the transgender informants to come out to public as a woman. I think that this viewpoint will provide some insight regarding the transsexual and CD informants' subjectivities which they express about each other. Since the pre-op transsexual informants are going through the process of transition to womanhood, the public appearance as a woman will be a corner stone for their complete transformation with make-up, clothing and feminine manners. For example, for transsexuals, public appearance with women's clothes is only one of the steps for realizing womanhood and in this period some of them regard themselves as cross-dressers. Although, the CD informants adopt similar strategies to perform their gender identities in public, their performances are complete in themselves which means that these strategies are not transition paths at the end of which they are transformed to be a woman. Therefore, I argue that transsexuals may consider CDs to be psychologically or emotionally stuck in the middle of their transitions and may feel the need to put a distance between their own gender subjectivity and that of CDs.

However, according to Cromwell (1999, p.12) no matter how long a transsexual lives with her new gender identity, she is always in a precarious situation because as soon as her gender history is found out there is the risk of being marginalized and invisible again. Gagné and Tewksbury (1998) also make a similar argument and state that coming out to public as a transsexual or CD is not a smooth process for these individuals. It is fraught with dangers which might compel them to resort to various strategies such as conforming to manhood or womanhood in certain circumstances due to self preservation pressures arising from psychological, emotional and economical safety. This compulsion, on the other hand, calls for approaching the issue from a different perspective. I also take into account the environmental variables affecting the performativity of the informants. I expect to find that the CD



informants will exhibit some behaviors that are associated with masculinity in order to overcome environmental limitations while I think that the transsexual informants will be more careful not to exhibit such behaviors or adopt masculine styles or norms considering the fact that they put enormous amount of effort to transition to womanhood. In addition, I argue that the transsexual informants will be very much in concern with constructing their new gender identities in relation to how other people see themselves. They will challenge more to open up a space in the public sphere in order to be accepted by woman. However, I think that the interaction of the cross-dresser informants with their environments will be more limited and they will establish a safe haven for themselves within their close circles by avoiding transgressing gendered expectations normalized by the society.

## **II. Heterosexism and Heteronormativity: Family, Military, Medical Field and the Nation State**

In the first part of this chapter, I examined the subjectivities of the informants on individual level. In this section, I analyze it on institutional level. I provide explanations for basic concepts I used in this study and point out the intricate relationship between the practices of the four institutions in line with heterosexist and heteronormative articulations and the subjectivities of the informants.

Heteronormativity is a term used to describe the cultural, social and institutional systems which categorize gender and sexual identities into hierarchical dichotomous codes as man superior to woman and as heterosexuality superior to homosexuality. It is an ideology that upholds heterosexuality as the normal sexual orientation and patriarchal family traditionalism as the correct way of relationship between a man and a woman. With its implicit moral values, it views gender identities in accordance and complementary with male-female biological binary (Oswald, Blume & Marks, 2005; Battle & Ashley, 2008).

Heterosexism, on the other hand, is a system of stigmatization, discrimination and prejudice against homosexuals, bisexuals and transgender persons on the presumption that heterosexuality is the normal sexual orientation and superior to homosexuality and bisexuality (Herek, 1996). As Peterson (1999) argues heterosexism refers to the process in which heterosexuality is considered to be the normal and natural way of identity formation with hierarchical dichotomies. This normalization includes the recognition of heterosexual desire, male-female biological difference, and male/masculine, female/feminine couplings as the only legitimate configurations that can be adopted by people and constantly redefines the boundaries of dichotomies such as men/women, masculinity/femininity, normal/abnormal. Thus, heterosexism is not only about the socially acceptable sexual act or preferences but it is also about the institutionalization of these premises under the scrutiny of the state institutions. Therefore I addressed the concepts of heterosexism and heteronormativity separately because I think that they have different impacts on the functioning of the four institutions I analyzed in this study.

First I investigate the attitudes of the informants' families towards their gender identities which define and limit the boundaries of how they articulate their subjectivities. I argue that family is a heteronormative institution which takes heterosexuality for granted and disapproves of homosexual and transgender identities. I also argue that the transsexual informants have less problematic relationships with their parents because at the end of the transition process they will be recognized as woman, therefore they will turn into bodies subsumable into the heteronormative values of the family.

In order to analyze medical discourses, I concentrated on the inherent relationship between the portrayals of the regulative practices within the social fabric and the way they are appropriated and utilized within the structure of the military in Turkey. Therefore I am

interested in how medico-military practices to which the informants are subjected have an effect on their gender subjectivities. I argue that the military in Turkey is a heterosexist institution which discriminates homosexual and transgender persons by taking homosexuality as a psychosexual disorder and so does not allow them to serve in the army. Furthermore, I argue that military staffs also internalize heterosexist practices and consider transgender and homosexual individuals undesirable. Third I focused on the narratives of their encounters with medical authorities in the informants' civil life. Transsexuals are in constant communication with medical authorities due to the fact that they need medical assistance and permission in order to achieve transition. However, the interaction of the cross-dressers with the medical authorities is more limited to occasional needs for assistance due to health problems or access to hormone therapy. However, in some cases cross-dressers might also seek for HRT or SRS. I argue that medical field operates within the paradigms of heterosexism. This does not mean that all practitioners in the medical field implement discriminatory practices against transgender persons; however, the medical field approaches the issue of transgender phenomena through the lenses of psychoanalysis which pathologizes non-conforming gender identities and operates with the purpose of "curing" these problems. At this point it is important to emphasize that when one studies heteronormative and heterosexist discourses, one can analyze how these discourses come out and become apparent by looking at the daily workings of the state institutions and the expressions made by the people who take position in them. Therefore, even though agents who maintain and reproduce the fundamentals of an institution do not engage in this process consciously, the basis of existence of the institution is more than the active participation of the members who compose it. I think that this is very much related to what Foucault describes (1979) as the internal discourses of institutions. Thus, discrimination of military, for example, is more than the discrimination conducted by military staff. In the same vein, the discriminative and indifferent legal stance towards

transgender people reflects an institutionalized policy rather than personal decisions of judges. Though Foucault was mainly talking about the education system I assume that we can apply this to the family, military, medical field and the nation state in Turkey which are founded on heteronormative, heterosexist discourses.

### **A. Family as a Heteronormative Institution**

In the heteronormative thinking normal means heterosexual and heterosexual means normal (Sumara & Davis, 1999). In the beginning of the chapter, I argued that the family in Turkey is a heteronormative institution which upholds mechanisms of heterosexuality and patriarchy. These patriarchal relationships are embedded in this structure which also puts women to a suppressed position while safeguarding the privileges of men. Binary gender codes are taken for granted in child raising practices and any deviancy from those codes leads to discrimination and exclusion. Therefore, family serves as a mediator for the heterosexist articulations of the state apparatus which gives parents the task of heterosexual upbringing of prospective citizens and inculcating them with the ideals of the social order which rests on patriarchal and authoritarian foundations. Butler (1997b) claims that family is a social regulation mechanism to reproduce heterosexual citizens. The binary reproduction of gender is considered to be a very important step in making sure that heterosexuality is the naturalized and acknowledged norm for the perpetuation of the family institution. As Kitzinger (2005) points out, this process does not consist of consciously implemented strategies assumed by parents. However, its ubiquity stems from the very fact that heteronormative social order is taken for granted as the only way of making sense of the family structure and so heteronormativity is reproduced through ordinary interactions between institutions, parents and their children. Battle and Ashley (2008) also argue that the social policies implemented by laws and regulations function as gatekeepers for the maintenance of heteronormative

family structure. The patriarchal and heteronormative codes define the limits of women's subjectivities and assign them to an inferior position where they are recognized only as mothers who are supposed to raise their children in a heterosexual family environment (Butler, 1997; Johnson, 2003). We can say that the heteronormative values and codes are also prevalent in the family structure in Turkey. Kandiyoti states that women in Turkey engage in different forms of patriarchal bargains which shape their subjectivities and open up spaces for resistance against dominant male oppression in Turkey. However, these strategies remain temporary and ineffective in the long run and women retrieve back to define their subjectivities through dominant patriarchal discourses (1988).

I think that the most tangible form of heteronormativity operative in the family structure can be observed in the laws and regulations which define the legitimacy of this institution. For example, Article 41 of the Turkish constitution states that “1) the family is the foundation of the Turkish society and based on the equality between the spouses. 2) The State takes necessary measures and establishes the necessary organization especially for the protection of the mother and the children and for the family planning education and its implementation in order to ensure the peace and prosperity of the family.”<sup>2</sup> As we can see in this article, what is referred to as “family” is composed of heterosexual couples and it is automatically associated with procreation under the presumption of heterosexual intercourse. In the second item, women as wives turn into mothers and they, together with children, are seen as persons in need of protection. Although this might seem like a positive discrimination, this protection is given for the perpetuity of the family rather than as a necessity for the implementation of universal rights to all citizens regardless of their gender identities. This

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<sup>2</sup> “1) Aile, Türk toplumunun temelidir ve eşler arasında eşitliğe dayanır. 2) Devlet ailenin huzur ve refahı için özellikle ananın ve çocukların korunması ve aile planlamasının öğretimi ve uygulanmasını sağlamak için gerekli tedbirleri alır, teşkilatı kurar.”

means that the faith of women is interlocked with only childrearing practices defined by the state authorities. In addition, the lack of any reference to alternative familial bonds besides the heterosexual one implies that the state does not in any way recognize the rights of gender identities who do not conform to the imposed binary codes.

The permeation of the heteronormative gender structuring can also be detected in the Article 40 of the Turkish Civil Code which deals with the legal framework of transsexuals. It approaches the transgender issue from the “trapped in the wrong body” discourse and rests on binary sex classification system which assumes one gender for one sex. Thus, it recognizes only heterosexual men and women who fit in this classification system. In order to be eligible for the legal right to go through HRT and undergo SRS, Article 40 requires a transsexual individual to be deprived of her reproductive capacity and unmarried which can be translated as forced divorce and forced sterilization (Ataman, 2011; p.132). This regulation inevitably has repercussions in the lives of transsexuals. It means that transsexuality is not recognized by law as a gender identity, a transsexual cannot live her gender identity without submitting to forced divorce and sterilization and she cannot enjoy her rights unless she undergoes SRS. What is more, heteronormativity finds its embodiment in the marriage which makes apparent the *boundaries of exclusion* and *bodies of pathology* (Battle & Ashley, 2008). Denying transsexuals their right to get married means that the heterosexist structure of the medico-legal practices finds this kind of marital arrangement unacceptable because this structure assumes the superiority of heteronormative nuclear family established only by the wedlock of a heterosexual male and a heterosexual female. Therefore, the boundaries of laws and regulations exclude transgender individuals from the heteronormative values of the family structure. In addition, the requirement of forced sterilization aims to make sure that when a transsexual assumes a new gender identity, the transition process should definitely finalize

with SRS. For example, a non-operative self-identified MtF transwoman cannot have a child with a woman. The mentality behind this denial of transsexuals their reproductive rights is that the heterosexist discourse operative in the medico-legal fields intends to prevent any kind of deviancy that might impinge on the taken-for-granted heteronormative image of the family. It wants to maintain the exalted superiority of the nuclear family structure which is considered to be the foundation of the Turkish society while reproducing and promoting prejudices and discrimination against transsexual people by making them more susceptible to social marginalization and exclusion. This way, family is instrumentalized as an institution which excludes transgender individuals and creates bodies of pathology unless they acquiesce to forced sterilization and SRS which are the prerequisites for marriage.

To reiterate my point, heteronormativity naturalizes the constructed dualism in binary distinctions within gender and sexuality. Doing this, it stigmatizes non-conforming gender identities and sexualities. I argue that family structure in Turkey operates as a reflection of the heterosexist institutional techniques which inevitably exclude and discriminate transgender persons because transgender body does not fit in the heteronormative image of the family. This prejudice and stigmatization are also reinforced by family members and they also see their transgender or homosexual children or relatives as deviants who bring shame on them. This, in turn, causes transsexuals and cross-dressers to suffer a great deal from this on-going marginalization.

As the family institution reproduces the heterosexist discourses, I expect to find that in the narratives of the informants' gendered experiences, the exclusion from family circle will have a great impact on their transition to or coming out with their new identities. I also think that the pressure of the heteronormative family structure on the informants will show some differences because scholars argue that transsexuals who receive parental support are less

likely to develop psychological or mental problems and go through their transition more smoothly (Fee, 2009). However, not all transgendered people have an unconditional support from their parents due to the stigmatization and the disapproval of the society (Polat et al., 2005). While some of transgendered people are at least tolerated within the confines of the family, this tolerance works in both sides. The transgendered people who live with their families are subjected to patriarchal pressure because the family itself reflects the societal biases when they are faced with the fact that their children do not conform to the gender norms and values of the society. Coupled with the lack of healthy information regarding the issue received by the family members, some other transgendered individuals are devoid of familial support and vulnerable to moral and religious sanctions that result in being shunned by the society (Polat et al., 2005). The transsexual informants I interviewed are also going through their transition and will become woman after HRT and SRS and, in the end, will be recognized as women by the laws. This means that they will conform to the imposed binary gender categories and may be accepted by their families after their transition. Therefore, the marginalization they are subjected to may not be as severe as the one experienced by the cross-dresser informants. I argue that the transsexual informants will have less problematic relationships with their parents because at the end of the transition process they will turn into bodies subsumable into the heteronormative values of the family. However, the cross-dresser informants are homosexual males who wear women's clothes. Therefore, they in no way fit in the heteronormative family structure because, first of all, homosexuality in males is seen as an insult to the patriarchal and masculine image. Second, the adoption of feminine codes of behaviors or styles by males is condemned. Third, in contrast to the transsexual informants, the cross-dresser informants do not attempt to change their gender or sexual identities and so they are regarded as threats because they constantly transgress the imposed the binary gender codes taken for granted by the society.



## **B. Military as a Heterosexist Institution**

In order to be exempt from military service in Turkey, homosexual or transgender individuals, allegedly, have to provide military medical authorities with photographs during sexual intercourse in which they are in passive role, have to go through rectal examination to prove that they had anal sex, appear before a committee consisting of military medical experts to display their effeminacy and homosexuality and take psychological tests to determine their “psychosexual disorder.” Biricik (2009) borrows the concept of patriarchal bargain to analyze transpersons’ interaction with military medical authorities and claims that different strategies are employed by these individuals to convince military doctors that their gender roles or identities fit the pathologizing diagnostical categories. These strategies include looking more feminine, talking in a more feminine way or wearing flamboyant clothes. He argues that military medical authorities reproduce hegemonic masculinity by imposing humiliating practices on homosexuals and transgender persons and excluding them as unfit for the military service. From this point, we can argue that some subordinate gender identities are stigmatized and marginalized due to inconformity with the hegemonic masculinities. In this cluster, we can find women, homosexuals, transsexuals and cross-dressers. Together with the heterosexist and heteronormative practices of four institutions and their impacts on the subjectivities of transgender individuals, I also try to incorporate two more concepts to the discussion; hegemonic masculinity and patriarchy. I think that heterosexism is an integral part of hegemonic masculinity because the former has practical implications on the regulations of the state institutions which we can see the reflections of male-dominated way of thinking. Therefore, these regulations are the products of hegemonic masculinity discourses which prevent the recognition of transgender persons, discriminate them and regard them as a threat to the social fabric and to the idealization of heterosexuality. I also think that the concept of

patriarchy is also relevant to the discussion of transgender issue because these hegemonic masculine discourses are basically formulated by men. However, these discourses have more repercussions on social life than functioning in state institutions which pass laws or enforce regulations. Created by the male dominated system these discourses are infused into the way people understand social order and the functions of those institutions. Therefore, they are accepted and reproduced by the society regardless of gender. Consequently, in Turkey, when we talk about heterosexism or heteronormativity we should take into account these two other concepts as well.

I argue that the military in Turkey is structured on the premises of heterosexism in such a way that appropriate gender performances are expected of both men and women to act out. Women are simply domesticated and aggression legitimized in the military is inculcated to men (Goldstein, 2001) while transgender individuals are completely stigmatized due to their non-conforming gender identities. According to Cohn (1998), military is an institution which provides an appropriate environment for men to realize and practice heterosexual masculinity by creating intense bonds between them leading to the exaltation of heterosexual desire as the norm and exclusion of homosexuality as something aberrant. Therefore, one of the salient visions of the nation-state projects is the formulation of the heterosexist ideology normalized and perpetuated by the state institutions, especially in the military, in order to exclude non-heterosexual identities (Peterson, 1999).

The political structure of Turkey is a male dominated arena which reinforces the formation and maintenance of a society controlled by a patriarchal and militarist state ideology embedded in the institutions (Baba, 2011). Based on heterosexist discriminatory regulations, as Ataman (2011) argues, the main purpose of the Kemalist view of ideal citizenship was to establish heterosexuality as the norm in order to create ideal male and

female citizens and suppress other non-conforming gender identities. Male citizens in Turkey are subjected to compulsory military conscription by Turkish laws. Women, on the other hand, are exempt from this duty. However, as Ülker (2010) points out, this exemption does not stem from a struggle put up by women in Turkey, it is rather due to the fact that Turkish military is a heterosexist institution which does not consider women worthy of participating in this duty. Military in Turkey also does not recognize “conscientious objection” as an individual right (Bozkurt, 2012) because it comes into conflict with the hegemonic masculinity discourse operative in the institution.

Altınay (2004) addresses the concept of hegemonic masculinity in the heterosexist military by pointing out that doing military service in Turkey gives men the opportunity to prove their manhood and failing to fulfill this task leaves them vulnerable to condemnation and belittlement. Strength of the military in Turkey goes hand in hand with the creation of the image of ideal male citizens who are expected to be sexually active masculine militarized heterosexuals. This leads to discrimination and exclusion of homosexuals and transgender individuals on the grounds that they do not fit the criteria of the ideal citizenship and that they damage the image of the army (Harris, 2011). A very specific example to this situation comes from the study conducted by Biricik (2009). He analyzes hegemonic masculinity in connection with military-medical discourse in Turkey. He states that the military-medical gaze operates as a proxy for the determination of the ideal and unwanted citizens by making homosexual and transgender individuals obtain a “rotten report”<sup>3</sup> to prove their unfitness for military service. As we can see here, hegemonic masculinity is an additional dimension to the operation of heterosexism in the military. We can say that heterosexism has a gender and it is

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<sup>3</sup> Çürük Raporu: In order to be exempt from military service, one must obtain a medical report from a health council in an educational and research hospital. This report is called “çürük raporu” in Turkish. The word “çürük” corresponds to the words feeble, useless, waste or trash in English.”

a masculine heterosexual male who creates a hierarchy and positions himself as the dominant, assigns women to the private sphere and excludes homosexual and transgender individuals due to their inconformity with the imposed binary gender roles. Therefore, in this study, heterosexism also includes the concept of hegemonic masculinity. In this line, I analyze the subjectivities constructed by the informants who are subjected to heterosexist practices in the military. Both transsexuals and cross-dressers have to go through a painful experience of proving their “psychosexual disorder” to the medical authorities to gain exemption from the military service. They are examined by doctors and then appear before a military committee composed of experts for an investigation. My contention is that both transgender groups are critical of the discriminatory practices of the military and its medical regulations which act out the heterosexist practices to determine ideal and unwanted citizens. However, the narratives of both transgender groups might reveal different subjectivities from each other. The transsexual informants I interviewed are going through a transition to womanhood; therefore, while being denied military service, they might justify this by positioning themselves with the imposed binary codes of gender. This means that they might come to terms with the regulation which denies women military service and claim that since they are going to be women and be recognized by the state authorities as such, the regulation also applies to them. In line with this argumentation, I think that the cross-dresser informants will be much more critical of the heterosexist regulations of the military because within the binary gender system, they constitute a more unintelligible space and thus a bigger threat to the image of masculinity and heterosexuality of the military.

### **C. Medical Field as a Heterosexist Institution**

The medical discourse is based on heterosexist paradigms in that transgender individuals are regarded as deviant bodies which have to be cured. Irving (2008) claims that

doctors and psychotherapists are the executors of the imposed gender model and with this authority they establish enormous amount of control on their patients. This does not mean that medical practitioners in hospitals or healthcare organizations have prejudices against transgender individuals, — for some this might be the case though — rather; historically the legal foundation of the medical field entails the adoption of imposed binary gender model (male or female) to make sense of the transgender phenomena. However, doing this, the medical field pathologizes these gender identities with categories such as previously “gender dysphoria,” later “gender personality disorder” and “transvestic fetishism.” Although the main reason behind this categorization is to define the “true” transsexuals so that they can receive medical assistance and undergo surgical operations (Lev, 2005), the medical language reveals an essentialist attitude towards transgender individuals. It assumes that there are two sexes and two genders and that male corresponds to man while female corresponds to woman despite the fact that there is a wide range of definitions employed by transgender persons to identify themselves outside the sphere of pathologizing underpinnings of the medical field. In line with this, Cromwell (1999) argues that this medical approach leads to the emergence of “trapped in the wrong body” discourse which is imposed on transsexuals and in the end, adopted by most of them to make sense of their conditions. This inevitably results in a focus on curative and diagnostic steps which finalize with HRT and SRS.

When analyzing transgender phenomena, the classifications became more intricate and strove to encompass all non-conforming gender identities with various terminologies in the medical field. However, they also assumed the universality of the concepts in order to apply them to these gender subjectivities. Femininity and masculinity were used as taken-for-granted concepts which were automatically ascribed to biological traits of femaleness and maleness. What is more, rather than taking into account the constructed nature of the gender roles, they

made use of this dichotomy to explain transgender phenomena. The important point here is that some certain behaviors, preferences and roles undertaken by transgender persons were encoded and using these codes scholars created categorical personalities which showed deviances from the norms. Another problem with these analyses was that while their results implied fluidity and variety in terms of gender representations and had the potential to point out the vanity of restricting sexuality and gender into heterosexual/homosexual and male/female dichotomies, they insisted on utilizing categories which were frozen in time and space and did not take into account how these individuals defined themselves through their lived experiences.

In the clinical literature that aims to understand transgender phenomena, we see the immersion of sexual orientations, sexual acts and gender identities altogether to explain transgender phenomena. The important point of these analyses is the use of the terms in a pathologizing way. In fact, all the terminology and explanations regarding transgender persons operate within the biological and psychoanalytical fields. Supposedly related issues such as sexual orientation or unconventional sexual acts are overemphasized.

However, all in all, the definitions and terminologies do not do much to clarify the intricate aspects of transsexuality and cross-dressing act. The first reason why I focused on categorical explanations regarding sexual orientations and gender identities of cross-dressers and transsexuals was to emphasize how it seems to be a futile endeavor to utilize diagnostic terminologies in order to come up with explanations for these gender roles and confine this issue of such complexity into a couple of classifications. The second reason is to point out another problem with the medical researches; they look at these gender identities through the lenses of pathology instead of focusing on their social constructedness within the social worlds of transgender persons and exploring their perspectives in realizing their gender

identities with their own agencies. Another shortcoming of these scientific endeavors is that scientific articulations are never independent of the political and social atmospheres at the time they were introduced to the medical field and they are, most of the time, too narrow-scoped to bring into question the dichotomous gender system but instead strive to explain these two transgender groups by utilizing the paradigms of the same taken-for-granted male/masculinity and female/femininity binary systems developed by western scientific discourses (Ekins, 1993).

Although DSM IV diagnoses cross-dressing as “transvestic fetishism” and regards cross-dressers as heterosexual males who wear women’s clothes for sexual and erotic motives, there is a considerable amount of cross-dressers who define themselves as homosexual. Homosexual cross-dressers have shifting identities varying from feminine to masculine, they have less intense urge to cross-dressing than other transsexuals and heterosexual transvestites and some of them might want to transition through SRS and HRT (Person & Ovesey, 1994; Bullough & Bullough, 1997). According to Doorn, Poortinga and Verchoor (1994), the difference between transvestites and transsexuals is that the former puts emphasis on their gender identity and associate their cross-dressing habits with sexual motives while the latter gives prominence to their cross-gender identity but do not associate cross-dressing with sexual or erotic desires. I find this differentiation useful for my study because I also addressed the subjectivities of homosexual cross-dressers in terms of their gender formation processes. Based on my preliminary interviews I argue that a similar pattern exists in the narratives of both groups in that the transsexual informants express their subjectivities through soon-to-be-acquired “womanhood” while the cross-dresser informants express their subjectivities through their sexual orientation; homosexuality. Langevin (1985) also claims that as some transvestites get older, erotic and orgasmic needs resulting from

fetishistic cross-dressing diminish. However, gender needs fulfilled by the adoption of the opposite gender role remain intact; therefore, they prefer to undergo SRS. Although the cross-dresser informants do not state this kind of inclination to have SRS, some of them point out that they have considered undergoing SRS but due to various concerns they did not follow through. Therefore, I also find this differentiation put forth by Langevin relevant to my analysis.

Hines (2007a) also criticizes that the scientific endeavors take too much liberty in articulating gender subjectivities of transgender persons by focusing solely on any kind of sexual “abnormality” to understand them. Consequently, these categorical differentiations are not empirical but based on presumptions the researchers formulated about what is or should be associated with the stereotypes in their minds. As a counter example, we can see the phenomenon called *Berdache*, the Native American term used to designate cross-dressers. These individuals are considered to have great spiritual power which gives them a high position and their homosexuality is not marked as an important difference in their society. However, as Fee (2009) argues, the ethnographic studies conducted on this group tried to explain it through the lenses of western binary thinking.

The scientific researches on transgender phenomena conducted more recently carry the same medicalizing connotations and approach the issue in a pathologizing way (Keller, 1999). This tendency is also apparent in Turkey. For example, the study conducted by Turan et al. (2000) focus on chromosomal abnormalities that they think might lead transsexuals to develop gender identity disorder. In the study conducted by Yüksel, Kulaksızoğlu, Türksöy and Şahin (2000) we can easily observe how theoretical restrictions of the medical field operate in the scientific field and how researchers have recently started to acquire a more critical appreciation of the complexity of the transgender phenomena. They argue that we



have to acknowledge the fact that it is not only medical and psychological aspects which should be focused on but that we also have to take into account the sociopolitical realities as essential determinants in understanding the lived experiences of transgender individuals.

At this point, this part of the study also adopts the discourse analysis conducted by Hines (2007a) to understand the informants' subjectivities which challenge the medical model of transsexualism as a disorder. He argues that there is a tendency in the medical field to reduce the complexity of lived experiences of transgender individuals to emotional or psychological disorders. When they express the feelings of loneliness, anxiety or depression, the medical authorities automatically associate them with their condition of being transsexuals. I argue that the interaction with medical authorities have different impacts on the experiences of both transgender informants. I claim that although both the transsexual and CD informants will criticize the practices of the medical authorities, I expect to find that the transsexual informants focus more on the curative aspects of the therapy sessions, HRT and SRS. However, I think that the CD informants keep a distance from the medical authorities as much as possible and are more critical of its pathologizing language. I also argue that in some situations transsexuals construct different subjectivities by utilizing various terms to define their own gender subjectivities instead of the ones employed by the medical field. On the other hand, when it comes to medical assistance such as HRT and SRS, the informants feel obliged to define their conditions through medical discourses and focus on its rehabilitative mechanisms. In order to receive treatments, they have to submit to various physical and psychological evaluations and prove to their doctors that they are exhibiting all the diagnostic criteria defining "gender identity disorder." In the end of this process they have to acquiesce to the medical requirements which reinforce cultural gender stereotypes. Therefore, I expect to find that some of the informants internalize this medical gaze which

restricts them to the heterosexist categories and try to finish their transition with as little harm as possible. As a repercussion of this process, I expect to find that the interaction with medico-legal fields have an ambivalent psychological impact on their well-being.

#### **D. Transgender Identities and the Discourses of Nationalism**

As I pointed out in the introduction chapter, the literature of nationalism addresses either positionality of men and women within nationalist discourses or the utilization of those discourses by the state institutions as a unifying and exclusionary principle. Therefore, I think that there is a gap in the literature with regards to where transgender individuals stand vis-à-vis nationalist discourses and whether their narratives reveal statements which can be read through dominant nationalist perspectives produced by the institution of the nation state. In order to investigate the way informants perceive nationalism, I made use of two issues; militarism and the Kurdish issue. I think that these issues enabled me to put the concept of nationalism into a context so that the informants could make more concrete articulations with reference to them.

This section also intends to point out the connections between the concepts of nationalism and heterosexism, patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity because I think that the transgender subjectivity of the informants is an important factor which might determine the limits of their positionality within those discourses. As Nagel argues (1998), the construction of masculinities feeds into the construction of nationalism. By the invention and domination of nationalist discourses together with institutionalized masculinities, men are assigned to be the protectors of the nation state which is explained by feminine terms such as “motherland.” This way, femininity or womanhood is interlocked in the perpetuity of the nation state, thus, bound to the chains of nationalist masculinity and cherished motherhood. Waetjen (2001) also describes the ideological linkages between nationalism and the construction of gender

positions in a society. She asserts that the constructed gender dichotomies such as male-female, femininity-masculinity facilitate the differentiated roles given to men and women in a society. This gender formula provides men with the task of modernizing the political, economic and social fabric while it gives women the task of maintaining and exalting the traditional codes of the society. As can be seen, the literature basically addresses the utilization of nationalism in the way of constructing heterosexual bodies that will abide by the requirements of the social engineering projects of a nation state. At this point, we can claim that transgender individuals are excluded from the goals of these nationalist projects due to the fact that they in no way conform to the ideal images of man and woman. The literature of nationalism and gender does not take into account the subjective meanings people attach to those discourses. Therefore, I think that the analysis of the narratives of the transgender informants shed light on the possible different ways through which they incorporate, reproduce or challenge the discourses of nationalism.

Before I go into a discussion of militarism, it is important to clarify the difference between the concepts of military and militarism. Military, as the organization of the armed force of the state, feeds upon existing gender dichotomies. For example, Anand (2007) maintains that the discourses of masculinity and nationalism are generated by the state through the military in India. Nagel (1998) makes a similar argument about the use of violence and claims that since nation-state building project requires armed conflict with other states, nationalism has an organic relationship with military power. However, even though the concepts of military and militarism are interconnected, the latter does not merely indicate to an organization of armed force which is controlled by the state. Militarism, as an ideology, goes beyond the military purposes of a state for undertaking wars. It penetrates into the daily workings of the civil society by transforming the perceptions and actions in line with the

military mentality and ways of thinking (Vagts, 1937 as cited in Kancı, 2008). Mann (1987) also approaches the concept of militarism in a similar vein by explaining it as something more than the institutional system of war-making. To him, militarism is a concentration of social practices which normalizes the way in which armed violence is regarded as a desirable social activity. Cock (1994) adds the dimension of gender into the discussion of militarism by addressing the concept of militarization as a process of mobilization of resources for war. She states that militarization utilizes the traditional gender roles and reproduces them within the lines of masculinity and femininity by assigning the title of protector to men and the protected to women at the times of war. I think that militarism as an ideology also maintains this system of reproduction and constantly feeds it even in the absence of a war. Altınay (2009) explains militarism as the exaltation of the values and practices as regards the army and military and their dissemination to all spheres of life. She follows the argument of Üstel (2004) who claims that the social engineering project, which started with the second constitutionalist period (1908), embarked upon the mission of creating a militant citizen in Turkey based on three axes; patriotism, duties owed to the state and constant national mobilization mentally perpetuated against imagined enemies. In her analysis, Altınay (2004) points to the ideological connection between militarism and nationalism in Turkey by indicating that after the 1930s the myth of army-nation was inculcated to the citizens through the education system. This way, the dominant Turkish culture was delineated with reference to essentialist military values, normalization of military violence against imagined enemies and nationalism. Kaplan (2002) also argues that the military in Turkey assumed the role of creating a nationalist society with constant reference to Atatürk nationalism after the 1980 coup.

I think that the most salient nationalist arguments come to surface through the Kurdish issue. This subject operates as a mediator through which political alignment or polarization is

crystallized in Turkey. I will give brief background information about this issue and relate it to the current political atmosphere in which nationalist discourses are shaped. After the establishment of the Turkish Republic, the new political and bureaucratic elite denied the existence of Kurds as an ethnic group and ignored their demands for recognition and basic rights (Yeğen, 2011). In order to build a homogenous nation state, the non-Turkish populations, including Kurds were aimed to be Turkified. As a consequence of these practices, Kurdish language was banned, Kurdish names were changed to Turkish and any traditional practices associated with Kurdish culture were restricted (Kadioğlu, 2007: 289). Various Kurdish revolts took place during the Republican era such as The Sheikh Said rebellion of 1925, the Zilan massacres of 1926-1931, Ağrı Uprising of 1927-1930 and the Dersim revolt of 1938 which were quenched by the Turkish Republic (Romano, 2006: 32). However, these revolts were more of a religious and tribal reaction rather than having nationalist motives (Bruinessen, 1992). Kurdish movement culminated in an armed conflict with the establishment of PKK under the leadership of Abdullah Öcalan in 1973 and strove to gain a legitimate position in the political sphere through democratic channels the following decades (Romano, 2006). With the 1980 coup, most leftist groups were crushed and Kurdish movement received a major blow. In 1982, a referendum was held for the new constitution and the political power was much more centralized to make sure that Kurdish movement would not stand up on its feet again (Bruinessen, 1994). After the coup, Turkey witnessed the institutionalization of autocratic militarism as a defense mechanism against the growing Kurdish movement. This led to the infusion of militarization to every segment of the society and the channels of political communication crystallized around this subject (Jacoby, 2005). In the 1990s, although there was a hope of paradigm change in the way the state mechanism approached the Kurdish question with the recognition of the Kurdish reality in the statements of Süleyman Demirel, the then prime minister, and Turgut Özal, the then president of the

Republic, it did not take long to go back to the policies of repression and violence. Pro-Kurdish political parties were closed down and representatives elected from those parties were arrested and put into prison (Yeğen, 2011). In 1999, Abdullah Öcalan was captured and brought to Turkey. In the last two decades, the state policies softened a little bit with the recognition of Turkey as a candidate for EU membership and some steps were taken by AKP government to settle the Kurdish question. However, PKK and the Turkish state are still in war and the violence and oppression against Kurdish people are still continuing.

While the violence and oppression against Kurdish people still continue so does the guerilla war between the state and PKK. There are various opposing debates on the issue and as to how to solve it. In the early years of the Republic, the dominant discourse maintained an absolute denial, arguing that there were no Kurds in Turkey and those who define themselves as Kurds were actually Turks (Bruinessen, 2000). Yeğen (1999) argues that after this initial phase, in 1960s the issue was reframed again. This discourse approached the Kurdish issue from an economical perspective. According to the discourse of the 1960s, the source of the problem resided in the underdevelopment and the lack of education in the Kurdish regions, and it could be solved by the state's taking initiative in removing the backwardness of the region. However, Yeğen also points out that in this programme, the discourse of nationalism is also apparent in the sense that it maintains the unity of the nation and the centralization of the state power. As I mentioned in the previous paragraph, during the 1990s, with the start of the guerilla war between the PKK, the issue began to be rephrased as a problem of terrorism. Today, as Kirişçi and Winrow (1997) point out, even though the Kurdish issue is analyzed from the perspective of the rights and freedoms of a people who have long been ignored and suppressed, it is still considered a primarily military problem that threatens the territorial unity

and security of Turkish republic and a harsher military intervention is suggested as the only way to diffuse the threat of PKK.

As we have seen above, the issues of militarism and debates on the Kurdish issue are closely intermingled with the nation-building project and the reproduction of the discourses of nationalism are attached to it in Turkey. Therefore, I argue that my informants' narratives on two issues will bring insights on their positions vis-à-vis the discourses of nationalism because this nation-building project not only strives to achieve a homogenous population consisting of Muslim Turks but also aims to designate its citizens as gendered subjects and assigns different responsibilities to them as suggested by Nagel (1998) and Waetjen (2001). Thus, if this nation-building project aims the creation of ideal citizens based on the normative heterosexual values and excludes non-conforming gender identities (Ataman, 2011) and if this image of the ideal citizen is not only based on heterosexual values but also on nationalist ideals (Altnay, 2004), then where would transgender individuals stand vis-à-vis the discourses of nationalism? Would they completely oppose to the values of nationalism since they are excluded from this project? Would they, in any way, try to come to terms with these ideals in order to become "proper" citizens and if so would there be any difference between cross-dressers and transsexuals?

My initial argument was that the transsexual informants would position themselves more in line with the discourses of nationalism than the CD informants do. The basis of this tentative argument was that since they want to reach a womanhood accepted by the norms and values of the society, they might feel the need to align themselves also with the dominant discourses regarding these two issues so that they would conclude their transition more smoothly. However, as I explained in the sixth chapter, upsetting the binary gender codes is not necessarily followed by a politically conscious identity (Nagoshi & Brzuzy, 2010). My

analysis suggested that the issues of political activism and ethnicity should also be taken into account in order to grasp the complexity of the relationship between nationalism and gender.



### CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The theoretical basis of this study called for a methodological endeavor which would enable me to grasp the complexity of these phenomena and provide me with an insider's understanding of the informants' social worlds, actions, and views (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Qualitative research requires the researcher to study a phenomenon in its natural setting and make sense of it with regards the meaning people being studied attach to it (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). I employed the qualitative methodology for four reasons. First, I intended to achieve in-depth information with a naturalistic and interpretative approach to actions, views and values. Second, my intention was to underline the subjectivities of the informants which defy the taken for granted assumptions and norms. Third, the questions I posed involved participants from a closed-knit community whose answers would be personal. It also required social and interpersonal interaction because the information I was seeking was not readily reachable. Fourth, the subject matter did not allow coming up with a solid theory without entering the field. Therefore, an inductive inquiry had to be undertaken and the tentative hypotheses had to be modified over the course of the data collection process as the interaction with the informants developed more and new perspectives were introduced into the research paradigms by them. For example, my initial hypothesis about the articulation of the nationalist discourses was that the narratives of the transsexual informants would carry more nationalist tones compared to those of the cross-dresser informants. However, after I established connections with the transsexual and cross-dresser individuals who actively participate in the LGBTTT movement and/or define themselves as pro-Kurdish, my field reminded me that my research setting is an ethnically diverse metropolitan city. Therefore, I modified my hypothesis and added the LGBTTT political activism and affiliation with the pro-

Kurdish politics as important dimensions which determined the perceptions of the informants drastically regardless of the difference between their gender identities.

As data collection method I used the semi-structured in-depth interviewing technique because I intended to get a grip on the self-reflection and positionality of the informants with regards to those three questions I stated in the beginning of the chapter. I have five reasons for using in-depth interview technique. First, it enables the researcher to construct a systematic pattern out of his/her own commonsense explanations and points out the theoretical limitations of them. Second, it provides the researcher with the necessary tools to reach the level of knowledge hidden behind the mundane articulations in order to actively make sense and interpret the perceptions, views and actions of participants. Third, it helps the researcher to situate himself/herself into the social world through which he/she can see into the different ways of meaning-making processes adopted by informants (Johnson as cited in Gubrium & Holstein, 2002). I think that the in-depth interview technique was very helpful to make the underlying mechanisms visible during this process. Fourth, when we look at the literature there is a gap regarding the analysis of different representations of transgender individuals in Turkey. Most of the research that deals with this subject approaches it from a medical perspective and analyzes these gender identities by associating them with personality disorders, depression or traumatic experiences. However, my concern was to listen to their gender formation processes embedded in their life stories without utilizing any medical paradigm. Fifth, although we can find some recent studies conducted on the nature of contact between transgender individuals and the institutions, this area still remains to be understudied. Besides, my purpose was not to elaborate on the oppressive and discriminatory practices enforced by the institutions per se. I was particularly interested in understanding how transsexuals and cross-dressers position themselves within these practices and in what way they differ in making sense of the heterosexist and heteronormative operations of these

institutions. Therefore, different from the legal studies which problematize the rights of transgender individuals with respect to the prospects and limitations of the laws, I focused on subjectivities of the informants and how they articulated their own conditions. I considered in-depth interview the most suitable technique of data collection to deal also with the different aspects of nationalist discourses because two approaches are observed in the literature. The first one focuses on how nationalist discourses are utilized by state apparatus or institutions and they are studied in connection with representations of manhood and womanhood. These studies reflect on how nationalist ideologies operate within the paradigms of masculinity and femininity and assign these traits to people, nations or states. For example, sometimes a nationalist ideology upholds masculinity traits and makes use of them to define the relationship between the state and its citizens while regarding other nations or states as “feminine.” The second approach focuses on gender differences vis-à-vis nationalist discourses, that is, it makes the analysis of the difference in the internalization of nationalist ideologies between men and women. These studies take these concepts for granted without questioning what manhood and womanhood stand for in different social settings. In this situation, all that is needed for differentiation between them is the biological features of an individual to which the state of being a man or a woman is assigned and then elaborate the different norms and codes of nationalist discourses realized by them. The reason why I chose to conduct this study on the subjectivities of MtF pre-operative transsexuals and homosexual cross-dressers is that I had already personal connections with some of the informants. My cross-dresser friends were all homosexual individuals who were involved in sex work. I also had a couple of transsexual acquaintances who I had met in different occasions. Therefore, it was much easier for me to get in touch with these small close-knitted communities. My friends helped me a lot to establish connections with the other informants by vouching for me and explaining to them that I, as a friend of them, was a trustworthy person with good

intentions. Throughout our daily interactions based on friendship, I had the opportunity to get a sense of how they perceive their gender identities and in what way they approach political issues. Therefore, I established my research questions according to combination of the prior information and observations.

In this study, I took the transvestism (cross-dressing) and transsexuality as gender identities in itself without deconstructing the comprehensive diagnostic classifications made by the medical field. I only made use of them in order to point out the difference between these two groups; cross-dressers as individuals who wear the clothing of the opposite sex and transsexuals who are on HRT and will undergo SRS. Apart from that I only took into account the categories the informants used to express their own gender identities. This is especially the case for the transsexual informants. They consider themselves to be a homosexual cross-dresser, a heterosexual woman, a transwoman or a woman depending on how they define their gender identities during the course of their transitions. However, different from the medical category which defines cross-dressers as heterosexual individuals, the informants define themselves as homosexual.

Besides, I did not intend to investigate what kind of roles nationalist discourses cast for transgender individuals. I was interested in what ways the informants made sense of these discourses and inquired if they spoke within them to express their political views. Finally, in line with the premise of the qualitative methodology locating the observer into the world to better understand hidden meanings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), another advantage of the in-depth interview technique was that I had the opportunity to check the validity of the hypotheses in my mind which I formulated through my participant observations in certain social settings as well.

In order to check the validities of my tentative hypotheses, I conducted preliminary in-depth interviews with 2 cross-dressers and 2 transsexuals between the July and August, 2011. I conducted these interviews without tape recording to check if there was any logical flaw or missing points in the construction of my subject matter and also to see if the informants were willing to talk to me about sensitive subjects. My first concern was to gain their trust and make them feel comfortable in terms of the sincerity, harmlessness and the good will of the questions I asked and of the research in general. Throughout the conversations, I took some notes about the points I found relevant to my research. With this information at hand, I went over my questionnaire to check to see if they were capturing the essence of the information that I would like to obtain. On the basis of these interviews, I had the chance to modify some of my questions and detect the important issues that were relevant to the informants and my research. For example, when I posed the question “what are your thoughts on the militarism in Turkey?” I noticed that the question was biased in the sense that it was presupposing that militarism existed in Turkey. Another problem with this question was that the informants did not have a clear idea about the difference between the military and militarism. Therefore, when I moved onto the questions on nationalism they thought that I was asking for the same answers they already gave. Therefore, instead of posing this question directly, I brought up this subject when we talked about military and the Kurdish issue. Another point which drew my attention in the preliminary interviews I conducted with the cross-dressers was the fact that the demands of their customers had a much more impact on the way they constructed their subjectivities than I thought it would. Actually, what I had in mind was an unproblematic linear process in which due to their homosexuality and cross-dressing habit, they had no other choice but involve in the sex work. However, I realized that in order to maintain their presence in the sector, they had to keep up with their “transvestic” appearance. Therefore, I also added this dimension into the formal in-depth interviews. The first thing I

noticed during the interviews was that the informants were very much willing to talk about their lived experiences and daily practices. Secondly, they showed variations in terms of expressing their gender identities or sexual orientations. Thirdly, nationalist feelings and ideas occasionally came to surface. Therefore, based on the preliminary interviews, I developed some concrete understandings as to in what order I should pose my questions and how I should tackle the problem of honesty and sincerity during the formal in-depth interviews. One of the important criteria which determined the quality of my interaction with the informants and thus of my interviews was the fact that I had to develop friendship with them by first finding third parties to vouch for me. The reason behind this was that I was looking for sensitive information regarding personal life experiences and political views. Therefore, without a reference from a third party, some of the informants were reluctant to talk to me about their private lives and other sensitive issues. But when I established connections through third parties who would inform the informants about the nature of my research and my intentions beforehand, they were much more straightforward in the expressions of their personal feelings and perspectives. Thus, I employed a nonprobability random sampling, namely snowballing technique, to establish contacts with the informants because I was interested in transgender groups to which access was harder than having access to any other group in the population. The reason behind this is the socioeconomic facts overwhelming the lives of these people that force them to get stuck in their close circles and prevent them from being receptive and open to their environment. For this reason, I assumed that transgender individuals who are exposed to same kinds of life conditions would have contacts with each other. With the snowball technique, I was able to reach as many transsexual and cross-dressers as possible. The advantage of this technique was that since I was interested in the gender formation processes of transgender individuals, the perpetuation of heteronormative and heterosexual norms on them and their political views with respect to nationalist

discourses, it allowed me to contact the prospective informants that would be helpful or relevant to my research quest.

In September 2011, I started to establish connections with the informants through third parties. In order to have access to them, first I contacted an activist transgender individual who participates in a nongovernmental organization. She asked me to write down a summary of my research topic and email her. And then she forwarded my email to the LGBTT groups. From those groups, I received a couple of positive responses stating that they would like to participate in my research. That is how I got in touch with Özge. With her, I went to the hospital where therapy sessions take place. She introduced me to her MtF pre-op transsexual friends before the therapy sessions which they have been attending regularly. I was not allowed to attend the sessions as an observer; therefore, I arranged a time and a different location for an interview with the ones who seemed willing to participate in my research.

The first time I went to the hospital, Özge was only one of many who were standing at the door of the hospital waiting for the therapy session to start. Some were dressed in women's clothes and makeup while some others seemed to have put the complete transition off until after the surgery. As they were waiting, they were smoking their cigarettes and talking about the possible complications of the surgery, side effects of the medicines and craftsmanship of some certain doctors who create miracles with male body and turns it into a woman. Among the crowd, a couple of teenagers drew my attention. They could not have been more than eighteen years old. They were chatting and making obscene jokes about some certain butchers who do a terrible job and make a mess of the genitals. Yet, some others kept their distance from the crowd and seemed like they wanted to get this therapy over with as soon as possible. Most of them appeared to be unbothered by my presence but as I started to talk to them and explained the purpose of why I was there, I realized that it invoked a

considerable amount of uneasiness and suspicion. It was not directed at my personality or the way I behaved or spoke. It was completely directed at my title “researcher.” Not only were they reluctant to talk to me about my research but also developed a negative attitude towards the very fact that I was interested in doing a research about them. Some of them admonishingly told me that all the research conducted about them did not do them any good. They did not improve their lives or make them more visible in the eyes of the public. At last my friend, Özge, came to my rescue and explained to them that these kinds of research were important in the way that, though slowly, they would raise awareness about them and get across what they go through in their lives to the public and make it known to them. However, after a couple of meetings, the tension gave way to cordiality. However, one point that puzzled the informants was why I, as a heterosexual male, was interested in conducting a research on transgender issue. Before or after some interviews, they asked me about my sexual orientation and wanted to find something that would lead to this kind of quest. I sincerely answered all the personal questions they posed and revealed to them whatever they wanted to know about me. I emphasized that as a graduate student, I wanted to conduct this research because I found it important to make their voice heard in the academic sphere and that as a leftist heterosexual man in Turkey; I found it politically necessary to be concerned with raising the awareness of the public regarding the difficulties they, as transsexual individuals, encounter.

Before conducting the in-depth interviews, I gave the consent form to the informants in order to inform them about the content of the research and their rights. I asked them to read the form carefully and ask me any questions about the research or the interview. I also explained verbally the purpose of the research and why I wanted to interview them. I told them that their participation was voluntary. I informed them that in the case of resigning from participation, the information obtained from the interview or participant observations would



not be used in the research, shared with the third parties and the record and the notes would be deleted irreversibly. I made it clear to them that their identities would be kept confidential and any kind of information that would reveal their identity would be omitted from the study. I also gave some background information about myself to eliminate possible reserve or anxiety they might feel as I turned the friendly conversation into a formal interview with the appearance of tape recorder and notebook. If the prospective informant accepted the terms and conditions concerning the details and purpose of the study, I started the interview. At the end of each interview, I asked the informants if they could refer to anybody who might want to participate in the study. This way, I could establish contacts with more informants and besides I minimized the trust issue since they would vouch for me and inform their friends about the content of the research. After I established some new contacts, I set a date and location to their convenience to conduct more interviews. After each interview, I designated different numbers for the informants with the date when the interview took place. I transcribed the whole recorded conversations and wrote down my notes in word files separate for each informant. I coded the interviews according to their similar patterns of reasoning, description of the experiences they encountered and the contraries or dilemmas they revealed. I kept all the transcription and the word files hidden in my computer to be deleted irreversibly in the end of the study. During most of the interviews, the informants were very responsive to my questions. They did not feel any reservation in revealing me their identities stated in their I.D. or their real identities chosen by them. However, I designated pseudonyms for all the informants to keep their names confidential in this thesis. I also paid attention not to choose any pseudonyms similar to or associative with their I.D. or self-assigned names.

After the preliminary interviews, I gathered data from the subject population consisting of 21 participants. I conducted in-depth interviews with 10 homosexual male cross-dressers and 11 pre-op MtF transsexuals who live in İstanbul. 4 transsexual and 4 cross-

dresser informants participate in the LGBTTT movement. 2 transsexual informants and 2 CD informants defined themselves as Kurdish and they all are politically supporting pro-Kurdish parties, currently BDP (Peace and Democracy Party) (see table 1). The transsexual informants are MtF pre-op individuals between the age of 20 and 35. They all participate in the therapy sessions which take place on a specific date every month. Some of them have been on hormone replacement therapy (HRT) and will undergo sex reassignment surgery (SRS) while some others are going through the stage of psychological counseling. Most of them are engaged in various occupations and freelance work. Four of them have affiliation with or active participation in the LGBTTT movement. They are politically active, very much abreast of current social and political issues; they take part in demonstrations and write in LGBTTT magazines or websites. The rest of the transsexual informants do not actively participate in the LGBTTT movement. Although they are in connection with those groups through their friends, they keep a distance from these groups or have no interest in partaking in them. I conducted the interviews mostly in their places or locations of their choosing.

I contacted the cross-dresser informants always through third parties with snowballing technique. The age range of the cross-dresser participants is between 20 and 40. They are all biologically male and identify themselves as homosexual individuals. Two of them cross-dress occasionally while the rest wears women's clothes constantly. Except for one of them, they all are engaged in sex work. Compared to the transsexual informants, they live more secluded and are harder to get in touch with. I conducted the interviews mostly in their places or at a place of their friends. Only one interview took place in a park.

It is important to keep in mind that the group I was interested in constitutes a small segment of the society in Istanbul. And it is more of a concern of this study to highlight specific processes rather than applying the findings to the general population. Therefore, in

terms of transgender identity formation and the perception of dominant political discourses, I can say that the patterns I reached in this study may be limited to the cultural, social and political atmosphere of Istanbul. Different from other cities, Istanbul is a cosmopolitan city which has received immigrants of various backgrounds and from every corner of Turkey. Therefore, the living conditions of the transgender informants I contacted may be drastically different from those who live in other cities. In terms of cultural factors, what I observed was a constant mixture and immersion of identities with each other. Kurdish cross-dresser sex workers talk about the Kurdish problem with Turkish cross-dressers. They use *Lubunca* jargon composed of the words taken from Armenian, Kurdish and Turkish which to an outsider is impossible to understand. Trans individuals who participate in the LGBTTT movement criticize other trans persons for not supporting their cause. However, this does not mean that we cannot make any generalizations out of this study. Quite the contrary, the subject matter of this research does not confine itself only to the subjective positionings of the individuals in question. It also problematizes the functioning of the upper structure that defines and determines those subjectivities. The family, the military, the medical field and the nation state are the overarching mechanisms that I deal with in the sixth chapter. Therefore, taking into account the overwhelming impact of those structures on the lives of transgender individuals, I think that we can make some insightful generalizations about the fundamentals on which those institutions are founded.

## CHAPTER 4: MEDICOLEGAL AND POLITICAL HISTORY OF TRANSGENDER

There has been a huge amount of scientific endeavors taken up by researchers in order to explain the complicated phenomena of transsexuality and transsexuals. At the end of the nineteenth century, the scientific field that examined the sexuality of the transgendered bodies was in its infancy. The sexologists of the period addressed the issues of transvestism and transsexuality and tried to make sense of them by reflecting on the case studies of trans people who claimed to belong to the opposite gender and lived that way (MacKenzie, 1994). However, most of them did not have the means of explaining the complex nature of transsexuality or transvestism and considered them to be different types of homosexuality (Currah & Minter, 2000). In the 1860s, the theory of “uranism” developed by Karl Heinrich Ulrichs put forth the concept of the third sex which, according to the theory, was composed of people who had a different gender incompatible with their sex. Ulrichs made use of this description to explain the nature of homosexuality and stated that it was a hereditary condition which the soul of every individual was hermaphrodite in nature, therefore, sometimes a man might have a woman’s soul and vice versa (Hall, 2010).

Another important sexologist who made theoretical associations between homosexuality and transsexuality was Krafft-Ebing. The first examples of the scientific descriptions of transsexuality emerged in the case studies discussed in his famous book *Psychopatia Sexualis* (1886). Krafft-Ebing developed the theory of inversion according to which he defined cross-dressing as “*metamorphosis sexualis paranocia*” which, in today’s language, can be defined as transsexuality (Bullough, 1975; Breger, 2005). However, different from Ulrichs who did not see homosexuality or transsexuality as a perversion, Krafft-Ebing defined transsexuality as a sexual perversion and moral insanity (Bullough & Bullough, 1993; MacKenzie, 1994).

The scientific analysis of the sexologists at the time was based on the anatomical and somatic methodologies. They were establishing a discursive terrain where the gender identities which did not conform to heterosexual sexual desire started to be classified and paired with pseudo-scientific categories such as *psychic hermaphroditism* corresponding to today's concept of bisexuality or *viraginity* and *gynandry* to today's homosexuality (Beemyn & Eliason, 1996). Clearly, these endeavors paved the way for the development of the modern definitions and articulations of dichotomies such as perverse/normal, femininity/masculinity and man/woman. This could be considered a big rupture in the implications of the scientific studies on human sexuality, because, beginning from this period, sexual acts were not only temporary behavioral representations of the inner desires but they were also the reflections of identities embedded in the bodies of those people categorized and classified by the very same medical field. However, as you will see, the scientific explanations for these two gender identities (transsexuality, transvestism) are various, sometimes overlapping and sometimes mutually exclusive. Yet, there does not seem to be a consensus regarding the terms and categories stressing where exactly these gender identities correspond to in the literature.

In 1910, the term "transvestite" was coined by Magnus Hirschfeld. As a cross-dresser himself, Hirschfeld distinguished the sexual orientation from gender identity by pointing out that a transvestite is not necessarily a homosexual but can have a heterosexual, bisexual or asexual orientation as well. Thus he paved the way for the differentiation of heterosexual cross-dressers from homosexuals and the discussions on transgender identities and sexual orientations came to the forefront of public and scientific debates (Bullough & Bullough, 1997). However, although Hirschfeld stated that some of the transvestites he knew had the desire to change their sex, he could not develop a theoretical difference between transsexuals and transvestites (Bullough & Bullough, 1993; Meyerowitz, 2001). But, contrary to Krafft-Ebing's contention that transvestism was one type of homosexuality, Hirschfeld argued that

transvestism was a completely independent phenomenon resulting from different biochemical manifestations of hormonal processes in the body (Hausman, 1995).

In the early twentieth century, there were two schools of thought regarding the origin of transsexuality. On the one hand, the field of psychiatry developed a more conservative approach towards transsexuality, pathologizing transsexuality and labeling it as a disorder originated from the deteriorating impacts of traumatic experiences in childhood (Califia, 1997). On the other hand, biological theories, making use of the discoveries in the field of endocrinology which determined the functions of the male and female hormones and their presence in both sexes, introduced the theory of bisexuality claiming that there were no strictly defined boundaries between maleness and femaleness and that everybody had, more or less, a bisexual nature, transsexuals constituting only one extreme (Matte, 2011). For example, Hirschfeld and Uldrich were the proponents of this approach with their concepts of “third gender” and “sexual respectively intermediary” respectively upheld the explanation that gender was like a continuum on which the anatomical structure of a person assigned him or her to a gender orientation (Meyerowitz, 2001). In the 1930s, the pioneers of the field of sexology contributed a lot to the scientific analysis of the transgender identities and made them visible in the eyes of the public by introducing various terms to the literature and popularizing them. What is more, some sexologists at the time, such as Hirschfeld, were not only preoccupied with the clarification of the technical and medical terminology for the transgender phenomenon. They were also involved in the political movements of the period to bring recognition and equal rights for these groups as well. In fact, it was Hirschfeld who led the sex reform movement of the early twentieth century with the motto “through science to justice.” One of his most important contributions to the sexual reform was to establish the Institute for Sexology/Sexual Science in 1919. In this institute, they organized lectures, compiled archives, offered counseling for transgender individuals who wanted to change their

sex and during the 1930s sex change experiments were undertaken in this institute (Weiss, 2008; Matte, 2001). What is more, the discoveries in the field of endocrinology in the 1920s and 1930s led to a breakthrough in the surgical and hormonal technologies laid out before transsexuals who wanted to undergo SRS the first of which dated back to 1912 performed in Germany (Dasti, 2002).

Another important figure in the field of medical profession who tackled with the question of developing a theory of transsexuality with sexologist parameters was Havelock Ellis. He coined the term “eonism” which referred to the phenomenon of transvestism of Hirschfeld (Meyerowitz, 2002). However, he criticized the theoretical underpinnings of Hirschfeld’s categorization. He claimed that Hirschfeld oversimplified the gender identification process of cross-dressers by construing it as some kind of homosexuality and trying to explain the difference with only one of its constituents; dressing like the opposite sex (Hausman, 1995). His analytical structure took transvestism one step further and opened up a space for a theoretical differentiation of transsexuality. He pointed out that cross-dressing is a phenomenon that can also be observed in heterosexual individuals. Therefore, for some heterosexual people, the urge to dress like the opposite sex is only for pleasure with no further innate inclination, however, for some others, this urge is more like an identification process in which people who perform such acts are sexually attracted to the same sex and, furthermore, feel the need to adopt the gender representations displayed by the opposite sex (Crozier, 2000). Yet, it was again Hirschfeld who coined the term “psychological transsexualism” in 1923 for people who cross-dressed in the clothing of the opposite sex not only for pleasure but for the desire to identify with the opposite sex (Weiss, 2008)

Throughout the late 1940s and 1950s, Kinsley’s scientific interest in cross-dressing and transsexuality garnered a lot of attention from the academic fields of sexology,

psychology and psychiatry (Meyerowitz, 2001). He developed a behaviorist approach which he claimed that sex differences were based on psychological conditioning. Kinsley embarked on conducting a wide scale study but the political atmosphere in the U.S.A. at the time was not convenient for the advance of such a scientific endeavor; due to the pressures of political conservatives and right-wing fractions press, the fund of the research was withdrawn, therefore, the study had to be aborted (Mackenzie, 1994). Also the 1940s and the 1950s witnessed the nascent development of homophile movements organized with the aim of promoting for the improvements of the regulations and laws regarding homosexuality and for changing the perception of the public towards homosexuals because during that period homosexuality was considered to be a stigma and a “sickness of mind” (Weiss, 2008). Hence, a local and non-confrontational collective identity of gays, lesbians and transgenders started to develop in urban settings. Therefore, the actions undertaken by these collective units of the 1950s remained to be local and informative (D’Emilio 1983). They mainly concentrated on education to raise awareness for homosexuals in the society. Therefore, they could not organize themselves in a more international and wide-scale (Weeks, 1989). Just like homosexuals, transgender groups of 1950s were also taking initiatives to be recognized and regarded as part of the society they lived in; however, they also did not have enough organizational power to claim their rights openly from the state (Matte, 2001).

What brought transsexualism and transgenderism to the attention of the American culture was the public appearance of Christine Jorgensen in the 1950s. He underwent a SRS in Denmark and when she went back to the United States she received a great deal of attention and was welcomed as a “transvestite with sex change surgery” (Bullough, 1975). However, the very same year when Jorgenson’s fame reached its peak, Harry Benjamin publicized and popularized the term “transsexual” in his books. This way, the condition of transsexuality as a gender identity was introduced to the medical field (Ekins, 2005). In the



1960s, the publications of Prince, a cross-dresser, and of Harry Benjamin became very influential in the emergence of cross-dresser and transsexual organizations (Bullough & Bullough, 1993). In fact, Benjamin, an activist for transgender rights, invited Hirschfeld to the United States to give lectures on transsexuality and transvestism (Matte, 2001).

However, Jorgenson struggled a lot to make sure that her condition was to be seen different from homosexuality which during that period was a stigma and regarded by the public as a sickness of the mind (Weiss, 2008). The reason behind this public opinion was that even though the theoretical explanations put forth by the sexologists were dominant in the academic community, the psychoanalytical interpretations of sexuality were more prevalent in the medical field in the 1950s and 1960s. In addition, a very important development took place within this decade; it was the medicalization of transsexuality. Before the 1960s, sexologists were trying to come up with theoretical explanations to delineate hormonal or gonadal mechanisms underlying transsexuality and transvestism. Yet, they failed to find satisfactory medico-scientific evidence that would reveal the mystery of these gender identities so they ended up regarding these two transgender groups as subtypes of homosexuality. In the 1960, transsexuals earned recognition from the psychiatric authorities that categorized them as different from homosexuals and cross-dressers. So, at last, they ridded themselves of being labeled as homosexuals and had the legal rights to undergo SRS and receive hormonal treatments. However, with this new legal and social position, transsexuals started to put a distance from other gender variant identity subcultures such as homosexuals and cross-dressers and launched their own advocacy which saw a decline in the next decade (Meyerowitz, 2002).

With the medico-scientific terminology, psychologists and psychoanalysts labeled transvestism and transsexuality as a sexual abnormality, including a schizophrenic process, or

as a *neurosis of an exhibitionist nature* (Meyerowitz, 2001). They assumed that all these sexual deviations resulted from psychopathological conditions experienced during childhood (Lev, 2005). We can see the reflection of the psychiatric dominance best in the classification of gender identities as disorders in the DSM (Grob, 1991). In the 1960s, Harry Benjamin popularized the term “transsexual” in the medical field and offered different etiological diagnosis for transsexuals and transvestites (Ekins, 2005). He sees a continuous relationship between them and specifies a latent transsexual type of transvestite which has no fetishistic motives and exhibited gender incongruence for a long time. One of the most important features of cross-dressing is fetishism which refers to sexual arousal and erotic motives triggered by wearing clothing socially assigned to the opposite sex.

Another important turning point in the scientific area was the emergence of behaviorist school of thought in the United States in the 1960s. This approach opposed to the biological and psychoanalytic explanations of gender which were dominant in Europe and claimed that gender was a socially constructed identity. This theoretical shift was adopted as a reference point for the political justification of the feminist movements in the 1960s and 1970s (Meyerowitz, 2001). What is more, the terminology of the sexology started to be assumed by the Gay and Lesbian political movements and the medical classifications were appropriated in order to fight for the rights and recognition of gender groups during the early 1970s (Adam, 1995). In line with this, the 1970s was the period when considerable amount of transsexual autobiographies started to be published and circulated which meant that public interest and awareness were also growing (Matte, 2001). Besides, the political and scientific endeavors carried out by the feminist scholars and sexologists in the 1970s established theoretical formulations to differentiate sex and gender as separate entities (Dewey, 2010). When Virginia Prince coined the term “transgenderist” his purpose was to differentiate heterosexual men who dressed in women’s clothing but did not seek for a sex change through SRS from

transsexual men and women and homosexual cross-dressers. This way, he wanted to put an end to the stigmatization of gender identities and normalize “transgenderism” in the sense of the term he used (Valentine, 2007). Today “transgender” is used as an umbrella term including all different gender identities that do not conform to the conventional binary notions of sex. In the 1970s it acquired a political connotation in the works of feminist scholars who utilized the term for a theoretical stance against discrimination and oppression imposed upon transgender groups (Wilchins, 1997).

On the 28<sup>th</sup> of June, 1969 the Stonewall riots took place in New York. Drag queens, cross-dressers, transsexuals, gays and lesbians came together to fight back the discriminatory and oppressive attacks of the state which allocated tremendous amount of resource to eliminate these gender variant groups. These riots turned out to be the most momentous event that led to the emergence of the gay and lesbian movements and triggered other groups to league together for the same purpose (Arriola, 1995). Gay Liberation Front and the Gay Activists’ Alliance were very actively involved in the issues of employment discriminations, hate crimes, the rights of expressing one’s sexual identity with legal impunity and the abolishment of the “sodomy law” which regarded the sexual acts of the same-sex individuals as a crime (Egan & Kenneth, 2005).

In 1973, “homosexuality” was removed from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders II with the efforts of the Gay, Lesbian and bisexual political movements at the time. However, in 1980 transsexuality was added to the DSM III as a “gender identity disorder” due to the fact that transgender political movements were not as organized as other groups and the number of the clinical research conducted was too scarce to form a common scientific understanding regarding transgender identities (Cole & Meyer, 1998). The main concern regarding the medicalization of transsexuals and cross-dressers in the DSM was to

define the legal contours of eligibility of the “true” transsexuals for medical assistance and surgical operations (Lev, 2005). The DSM IV, which was published in 1994, pathologized transsexuality by labeling it as a “gender identity disorder” and outlined the conditions of transsexuality as identification with another gender, incompatibility with the assigned sex of birth and the desire to live as a member of the opposite sex as a result of HRT and SRS. It also outlined the diagnostic criteria for “transvestic fetishism” under the title of “Paraphilias and Sexual Disorders” (“Transvestic fetishism,” 2011). Regarded as a psychiatric disorder, whose symptoms correspond to *heterosexual males who have sexually arousing fantasies, urges, or behaviors involving cross-dressing (wearing female clothing),*” (“Gender identity disorder,” 2011) the definition of transvestic fetishism in the DSM IV, ironically, resembles the term “transgenderist” coined by Prince who wanted to establish a clear distinction separating heterosexual cross-dressers from transsexuals and homosexuals (Dewey, 2010).

During the 1960s and 1970s, the civil-rights movement started to be a significant driving force which paved the way for the transformation of the gay and lesbian activism to full-fledged international organizations of gay-rights and second wave feminism supporting anti-war demonstrations, African American Civil Rights Movement and the Third World liberation (Adam, Duyvendak & Krouwel, 1999, p. 32). However, by the end of the 1970s, the gay and feminist movements operated as professional institutions which silenced the voice of the grassroots groups. They assumed the spokespersonship of the gays and lesbians and positioned themselves as the dominant representatives in the political sphere (Bernstein, 1997). One of these grassroots movements was that of transgender people who actually played a very decisive role and took the lead in the Stonewalls riot. However, contrary to their contribution to the acknowledgement and improvement of the gay and lesbian movement, they ended up being excluded from the struggle and their demands were considered to be

unrelated to the liberation of gays and lesbians (Minter, 2000). Therefore, feminist movements were challenged by working-class women lesbians and gays of color, cross-dressers, transsexuals and drag queens on the grounds that the political representations they upheld had white-middle class characteristic (Reid-Pharr, 1993). Another criticism to gay and lesbian movements was that they were claimed to have a collective identity with distinct group boundaries and assumed social, cultural and political rights like minority groups do. Therefore, instead of deconstructing the imposed binary classifications of heterosexuality/homosexuality, normal/deviant which assigned them to a marginal position in the first place, they tried to come to terms with these binary codes and create for themselves a normalized space within them (Gamson, 1995).

In 1979, Standards of Care (SOC) was published. The purpose of this protocol is to assist transsexuals medically and psychologically in their transition and this is the protocol which is used as a reference point all over the world (“WPATH,” 2012). Therefore, in parallel with medicalization of transvestism and transsexuality, 1970s was the period when legal-medical standards and clinical guidelines were introduced for transpersons who wanted to receive hormone replacement therapy and undergo sex reassignment surgery. At this period, the medico-scientific field embarked upon the venture of classifying transgender bodies and brought forth various theoretical categories to verify the difference within and between transsexuals and cross-dressers; such as nuclear transvestite, marginal transvestite and nuclear transsexual (Buhrich & McConaghy, 1977), homosexual transsexualism and transvestic transsexualism (Person & Ovesey, 1974a, 1974b), and nonmasochistic and masochistic transvestism (Money & Gaskin, 1970–1971).

Beginning in the early 1980s, the transgender movement came into view as an indirect response to the gay and lesbian movements which refused to represent transsexual or cross-

dresser communities and make their rights a priority (Minter, 2000). Transgender movements did not have a voice in the feminist movements as well because transgender identities were complicating the theoretical infrastructure of the feminism which was based on the criticism of the inequality between men and women, thus, acknowledging the dichotomous codification of gender automatically. However, transgender identities disrupted the imposed categorization of male and female and introduced a more fluid form of gender expression thus undermining the collective identity resting on the representation of woman(hood) oppressed by man(hood) (Monra & Warren, 2004). The transgender movements though abounded in conflicting political stance, mainly focused on the legal recognition of equal civil rights, of their gender and of their right to make official changes in their birth certificates and to marry in the acquired gender (Dasti, 2002). As a result of the momentum the movement gained in the early 1990s, the first International Conference on Transgender Law and Employment Policy was held in 1992 to discuss the legal and social rights of the transgender people in order to claim a different position from that of defined by the medical authorities, for example, in the DSM IV (Stryker, 1998; Lombardi, 2001). In line with the power gain of the transgender and other gender variant groups in the social and political spheres, queer theory received a prominent ground in the academic circles. Not content with the theoretical and political bottleneck of the feminist movements, queer theory, as a poststructuralist approach, provided an opportunity for articulating the complexities of the oppression transgender individuals are subjected to and an alternative strategic approach without falling into the traps of heterosexist or patriarchal constituents of gender paradigms (Gamson, 1995). Therefore, unlike the early gay and feminist movements embarked on resistance within the exclusionary social and political structures of heterosexual hegemony, queer theory subverted the stabilized nature of gender identities and embraced the struggle of all non-heterosexuals (Oswin, 2008). Thus, “queer,” a derogatory word used for homosexuals, were reclaimed by people with non-conforming

gender identities and turned into an umbrella term including all political activism that objects to the imposed gender classifications and pathologizing knowledge production undertaken by the medico-scientific and political authorities (Baba, 2011). Reflection of this paradigm change in the social movements was the formation of the LGBTTT (Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transvestite) organizations. Unlike the earlier decades which witnessed the exclusion of transgender identities from gay and feminist liberation movements, the LGBTTT aimed at the integration and collaboration of the gay and feminist activism with the social, legal and cultural struggle set out by transgender individuals (Stone, 2009). One of the most important achievements of the LGBTTT movement has been the paradigm change in the way of how non-conforming gender identities and sexual orientations were seen by the medical and political authorities. They started to be analyzed through the lenses of heterosexism, therefore, instead of stringent medico-legal categories based on mental health or childhood traumas, the focus shifted to the oppressive and discriminatory heterosexist regulations which marginalized these gender expressions and sexual orientations (Kitzinger, 2005).

The conflict between the medico-scientific fields and the academic community was very much order of the day in the 1990s and 2000s. On the one hand, medical authorities were occupied in establishing clear-cut boundaries between different gender identities. But instead of revealing the socially constructed basis of those gender identities, they developed a new regulatory authority through medical endeavors which ended up defining scientifically proven acceptable and naturalized sex and gender systems while reducing nonconforming gender identities to disorders. This way, they took the lead in paving the way for dichotomies such as normal/abnormal (Fausto-Sterling, 2000). On the other hand, during these two decades, feminist theoretical analysis of sexual identity and gender were developed as opposed to scientific truths which strove to assign everybody to the categories of male or female (Foucault, 1980).

Some feminist theorists challenged the essentialist perspectives which derived the analogy of the dichotomous nature of the biological sex (male, female) and assumed the same unproblematic binary codes operating in gender identities (Connell, 2002). Errington (1990) claimed that by separating sex from gender and considering the latter to be socially constructed, we assumed the former to be of natural. In this line, Butler (1993) placed the sex and gender distinction under scrutiny with her reflections on the conditions of intersex people to whom the medical authorities offered a solution by literally assigning a sex. She argued that even the category of “sex” should not be considered outside the sphere of social construction and seen more natural and objective than gender. Deconstructing the binary codes of sex and gender and indicating that those are socially constructed entities, these feminist theories opposed to the male dominance in the social and political sphere justified by the natural superiority of masculinity over femininity. However, some feminist theorists, while regarding gender as socially constructed, retained the essentialist nature of sex in order to establish a common ground for the empowerment of women (Nagoshi & Brzuzy, 2010).

On the one hand, the position of transgender identities, especially transsexuals, in these theoretical interpretations became problematic because deconstructing gender and sex left no space for the articulation of the lived experiences of transsexuals and, thus, their gender identity turned out to be more indecipherable than it was before. On the other hand, keeping the sex as a natural binary assigned them to the category of women, yet, due to the biological limitations, they were never considered a real woman. What is more, as Bettcher (2010) points out, some feminist theorists turned a blind eye to the experiences of transsexuals and accused them of being traitors or pretenders on the grounds that MtF moved from one sex to another easily and benefitted from their new identity as “real woman” without burdening themselves with the problematic binary sex codes which oppressed women. In connection with the tension between the feminist theories and the question of the positions of



transgenders, another important development of this period was the emergence of queer theory which criticized the limitations of the feminist theories such as essentialist understanding of sex, heterosexual assumptions and ignorance of transgender identities (Sreerekha, 2008). In 1990s, the repercussions of these theoretical analyses in the social sphere took a concrete form with some transgender people embracing their gender identities as transsexuals or cross-dressers and repudiating the medico-scientific categorizations which label them as deviant or abnormal (Beemyn & Eliason, 1996).

In the early 2000s, queer theory made its mark in the conceptualization of sex and gender identities and addressed the limitations of both feminist theories and transgender theories. Even though the plurality and fluidity of gender identities were acknowledged within the formulations of the transgender theory, it presumed the existence of the binary gender codification (Hausman, 2001). Roen (2002) claimed that transgenderism transcended the either/or dichotomy and positioned itself in the neither/nor dichotomy which meant that the gender identities of transsexuals or cross-dressers did not have to come to an end within the binary of male/female gender identity, rather, it was the subjectivities of each transperson rejecting this binary and locating him/her outside of it. Another theoretical point of view regarding transsexuality was put forward by Tauchert (2002) who argued that the lived experiences of transsexuals should also be taken into account when it comes to bodily and biological limits that define the extent to which these people can realize their gender identities. However, this time, rather than addressing the naturalized binary codifications of maleness and femaleness, the effect of social constructions on the body comes to forefront of the analysis of sex and gender.

The International Congress on Transgender Law and Employment 1995 put forth fundamental criteria defining the rights of transsexuals such as *rights to freedom from*

*psychiatric diagnosis based on gender identity and to appropriate medical care, the right to equality of employment, the right to freedom from harassment and abuse, the right to self-expression and rights to relationships and parenthood (Monro & Warren, 2004, p.350).*

On the basis of the Matrimonial Causes Act 1973 in England, the marriage was considered legal on the condition that it was between male and female partners. Therefore, the application by a transsexual to get married would be denied even if he or she underwent SRS (Cowan, 2005). Gender Recognition Act that came into effect in England in 2005 moved away from emphasizing “sex” to “gender” by repealing the requirement of SRS for the recognition of a transsexual individual legally. This legislative change was implemented by the British government in compliance with the European Convention on Human rights. According to the change in the law, a person who wants to change his/her sex in the legal documents and birth register has the right to apply for it without having to undergo SRS (Sharpe, 2007). A similar regulation was also implemented in Spain with the passage of the Law of Registration of Rectification of Sex in 2007 which gave transsexual people the right to change their names and sex written on the legal documents such as their I.Ds or birth certificate (Platero, 2008). With the amendments in the Canadian law, a pre-op. transsexual person can marry a man but her birth register is not changed in conformity with her new identity and the marriage is considered to be a same sex marriage according to the laws (Cowan, 2005).

Sirman (1989) divides feminist movement in Turkey into three periods. The first period was initiated by the Young Turk bureaucrats who were influenced by the western ideas in the middle of the nineteenth century for the purpose of revitalizing the Ottoman Empire. Their main concern was to introduce the administrative, legislative and educational reforms to bring the Empire into the echelons of western powers. Doing this, they assigned women the

role of wives and mothers who had to be educated. The second wave of feminism, called as state feminism, took place during the early years of the Turkish Republic. This time, the role assigned to women was patriotic wives and mothers who were supposed to produce and educate new generations in the same way. Under the banner of Kemalist ideology, newly established Republic undertook the modernizing mission to create educated and secular Turkish men and women. However, as Ataman (2011) points out, the Kemalist view of ideal citizenship was based on heterosexist codifications of the nationalist ideology, that is, the purpose was to make sure that heterosexuality would be perceived as the norm and other gender identities and sexual orientations strictly excluded from the public sphere.

In the 1970s, there were two public figures that were the epitomized representations of transvestism and transsexualism in Turkey. The first one was Zeki Müren, who is still considered Turkey's "sun of art," used to be a lead singer and appear in nightclubs in queer-like clothings, jewellery, high-heels and sometimes mini shorts. Bülent Ersoy has been on media coverage for more than four decades in Turkey. Behind her celebrity lie two reasons. Firstly, she is one of the few singers who come to mind when talking about the icons of the Turkish music industry. She displays a unique characteristic on TV such as her conservative political stance with radical statements from time to time and her claim about her deep knowledge about Turkish classical music which she never shies away from showing off. Secondly, she is one of the first Turkish men who underwent a SRS and, though denied at first, applied to the Turkish courts for legal recognition of her new identity as a woman in 1981. Although Müren and Ersoy challenged the conventional gender dichotomies with their gaudy public appearances and were admired and listened to by many, the social and political circumstances were not very bright for transgender community in the late 1970s (Cingöz, 2007). It was during the administration period of the CHP government (Republican People's

Party) when the brothels were shut down and the transgender community was under a tremendous amount of oppression and discrimination with no job opportunities or any kind of financial support (Altınay, 2008).

After the 1980 military intervention, there has been an increasing opposition, in the societal sphere, against the definition of citizenship constructed by the nationalist Kemalist ideology and backed by the military regime. Ethnic, religious and gender identities which did not conform to the Turkish-Sunnite-heterosexual triumvirate of ideal citizenship started to make their voices heard and claim their rights (Ataman, 2011). The third feminist movement emerged after the 1980s corresponding the time when Turkey, just like many other countries, went through the same global wave of democratization process together with the liberalization of market economy. Influenced by the western feminism, they challenged the state-sponsored ideologies which put women into an inferior position to men. They organized meeting, founded associations and led campaigns against the discrimination and battering of women.

After the coup in 1980, the military regime introduced a ban, in 1981, on male singers who dressed in women's clothes on the stage. What the military intervention added to the policies of CHP government was to increase the intensity of the discriminative and oppressive policies against transgender people with the closing down of the brothels and banning transgender people from entertainment business (Altınay, 2004). Therefore, it is not surprising to see that before 1980s, Turkish Civil Code lacked in its entirety the judicial parameters which defined the legal status of transgender groups in Turkey (Atamer, 2005).

Bülent Ersoy was one of those who were drastically affected by this ban. Thereafter, she went to London and underwent SRS. However when she came back, another legal obstacle was laying before her; the laws did not allow her to document her new gender

identity in her birth register. After a 7-year long legal struggle, she achieved her objective (Akin, 2009). The first important legislative regulations concerning the legal situations of transsexuals were added in the Turkish Civil Code in 1988 (Altınay, 2008). According to the new regulations a person who had undergone a SRS had to obtain a medical certificate proving that he or she changed his or her sex in order to demand the necessary changes be made in his/her birth register. They had the right to obtain a pink (for women) identity card in replacement of blue (for men) (Robert & Kandiyoti, 1998). According to the Article 29 / 2 Paragraph: (Additional Paragraph: 04/05/1988 – 2444/2. Art.);

The necessary correction in the birth certification for sex change after birth is undertaken on the condition that it is documented with a medical board report. Regarding the suits filed in this matter, if the person who changed his/her sex is married, the spouse is also informed and, if they have children, the same court designates to whom the custody of the children shall be given and on the date when the sex change decision is finalized, marriage is automatically dissolved<sup>4</sup> (Bozoğlu, 2009).

Although the changes brought into force in the Art.29 of the Civil Code was a progress for the recognition of transsexuals and for the improvement of the process of the entry of the new identity in the birth register, it had serious deficiencies with regard to the specification of the conditions for surgery. There were not clear criteria that defined the prerequisites or the features of an individual to be given the right to undergo such a surgery. Thus, any physician had a free hand on deciding who was or was not eligible for the surgery (Yüksel, Kulaksızoğlu, Türksoy & Şahin, 2000). The lack of sufficient clinics and facilities for the psychiatric assessment and the management plans for future adaptation of these individuals to the society was a big handicap for their well being (Atamer, 2005). What is more, the haphazardness and the uncertainty in the assessment of the eligible candidates created a flaw

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<sup>4</sup> Madde 29 / 2 fık: (Ek fıkra: 04/05/1988 - 3444/2. md.) “Doğumdan sonra meydana gelen cinsiyet değişikliğinin asgari sağlık kurulu raporu ile belgelendirilmesi halinde nüfus sicilinde gerekli düzeltme yapılır. Bu konuda açılacak davalarda cinsiyeti değiştirilen kişi evli ise, eşe de husumet yöneltilir ve aynı mahkeme, varsa ortak çocukların velayetinin kime verileceğini de tayin eder, cinsiyet değişikliği kararının kesinleştiği tarihte, evlilik kendiliğinden son bulur.

in the implementation of the laws and this situation led to the potential of malpractice and left the candidates vulnerable in the face of medico/bureaucratic procedures which, in the end, the arena became open to illegal forms of surgical operations for profit (Robert & Kandiyoti, 1998). Of course, another important point of the Article 29 is that the law does not recognize the marital status of transsexual people and in the case of a SRS, the transsexual people lose their rights which they obtained through marriage. The question of the custody of the children was also not specified clearly in the law. Considering the negative attitude of the law towards SRS which automatically rules for the dissolution of the marriage, I think that, under these circumstances, the silence of the law reveals its position to the judges regarding the custody of the children.

In the way of improving the laws and regulations in parallel to the structural changes to adapt to the EU standards, in 2002, the civil code was amended and included more specific legal parameters in the section Art.40 TCC regarding the legal status of transsexuals; defining the judicial criteria for the validation of the conditions prior to a surgery, issuing a court approval for undergoing the surgery and the bureaucratic procedures for effectuating the official changes in the birth register (Ataman, 2011).

Article 40 of the Turkish Civil Law numbered 4721: A person who wants to change his/her sex can demand permission for the sex change from the court by applying to the court in person. However, for the permission to be issued, the person in question should be above the age of eighteen and not be married. Furthermore, the person should have a transsexual nature and document that sex operation is necessary for his/her mental health and that he/she is permanently deprived of reproductive capacity with a formal report received from a health council in an educational and research hospital<sup>5</sup> (Bozođlu, 2009).

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<sup>5</sup> Cinsiyetini deđiřtirmek isteyen kimse, řahsen bařvuruda bulunarak mahkemece cinsiyet deđiřikliđine izin verilmesini isteyebilir. Ancak, iznin verilebilmesi iin, istem sahibinin onsekiz yařını doldurmuř bulunması ve evli olmaması; ayrıca transseksüel yapıda olup, cinsiyet deđiřikliđinin ruh sađlıđı aısından zorunluluđunu ve üreme yeteneđinden sürekli biçimde yoksun bulunduđunu bir eđitim ve arařtırma hastanesinden alınacak resmi sađlık kurulu raporuyla belgelemesi řarttır.

As can be seen, different from the regulations that were carried out in European countries, the United States and Canada, laws and regulations in Turkey define transsexuality through the lenses of medical authorities which diagnose it as a disorder (Madeira, 2002). The Turkish law is strictly based on binary sex classification system which automatically assigns a gender to a person socially and culturally associated with the sex of his or her birth, therefore, recognizes only men and women who live up to this classification system. Although the amendments in the Civil Code is a step forward, according to the article 40, SRS is still a necessary process for transsexuals to be legally recognized as male or female and, what is more, it entails forced divorce and forced sterilization which is against the human rights (Ataman, 2011).

In parallel with the international transgender activism that gained a momentum after 1990s (Hines, 2007a), foundations of the LGBTTT movement in Turkey started to be laid in the same period. In 1993, *Lambda Istanbul* was founded and, the same year, wanted to hold a pride conference in Istanbul but the governor banned it on the pretext that these kinds of occasions did not fit the traditional values of the Turkish society, thus, it might get undesirable reaction and cause social unrest (Ataman, 2011). In 1994, *Kaos-GL* (gay, lesbian) organization was founded in Ankara. They started issuing a periodical handling the subjects of heterosexist policies, exploitation of the capitalist system and discriminatory regulations directed at individuals with different ethnicity, gender and religion (“Kaosgl Tarihçe,” n.d.). In 2006, *Pink Life LGBTTT* organization was established in Ankara. This was the first association which dealt with prejudice, discrimination, hate-crimes, police violence and ostracization especially transpersons are subjected to. They developed projects to raise awareness and earn legal recognition for transpersons and sex workers (“Pembe Hayat Tarihçe,” n.d.). *SPoD* (Association for the Study of Social Policy Gender Identity and Sexual

Orientation) was founded in Izmir in 2011. This organization collects data and works towards the elimination of all kinds of discrimination, social exclusion and sexual orientation or gender identity-based violence. For this purpose, they concentrate on the development and introduction of economic and social rights (“SPoD Biz Kimiz,” n.d.). Black Pink Triangle is another LGBTTT organization which was founded in Izmir in 2009. They are also involved in advocating the rights of LGBTTT individuals and combating discrimination (Siyah Pembe Üçgen, 2012).

Though the LGBTTT movement progressed at a fast pace, public opinion about LGBTTT individuals did not improve much in Turkey. They are still subjected to ostracization and regarded, by many in the society, as mentally ill at best (Salo & Anmeghichean, 1997). The situation is actually the same when it comes to the legislative and political sphere. LGBTTT issue remained to be one of those which the governments were always reluctant to enforce reformative regulations on (Ungar, 2000). Although homosexuality was never criminalized in Turkey, there is no reference to sexual orientation in the laws (Akın, 2009). Therefore, LGBTTT individuals are still devoid of many legal rights that will protect them from discrimination, hate-crimes and state violence. In an interview conducted in 2010, Aliye Kavaf, the state minister responsible for the affairs of women and family, employed the medical discourse common in the 1950s and 1960s by stating "I believe homosexuality is a biological disorder, a disease. I think that it needs to be treated"<sup>6</sup> (Bildirici, 2010). Beyoğlu Public Prosecutor's Office filed a lawsuit, in 2005, on Lambda Istanbul LGBTTT Solidarity Association on the grounds of the Turkish Civil Code, Article 56/2 which states that it is forbidden to establish an association that violates the laws and morality, and of the article 41 of the constitution which states that family is the foundation of Turkish society and based on

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<sup>6</sup> “Ben eşcinselliğin biyolojik bir bozukluk, bir hastalık olduğuna inanıyorum. Tedavi edilmesi gereken bir şey bence.”



equality between spouses (Söyle, 2009). Again, the same year, Kaos-GL faced a closure case on the same grounds. Ankara Governor's Office lodged a complaint against the association claiming that it violated the moral values and family structure. In 2006, another closure case was opened against the *Pink Life*. The association was charged with violating law and morality. Another LGBTT organization, *Black Pink Triangle Association of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Research and Solidarity against Discrimination*, faced the same legal threat in 2009 ("LGBTT faces closure," 2009). The authorities attempted to close down the association on the same grounds; moral values and family structure, on the basis of a complaint lodged by the Izmir Governor's office (Amnesty International, 2010). As a result of the complaint filed by Bursa Governor's office, the *Rainbow Association of Assistance and Protection of Transvestites, Transsexuals, Gays and Lesbians and the Promotion of their Cultural Activities*, was closed down in 2011 over allegations that prostitution was being conducted there and it violated moral values and the laws (Bursa Gökkuşuğu Derneği, 2011).

However, cross-dressers in Turkey find themselves in a more inferior position because not only are they not legally recognized by the laws and their living conditions are hindered but also by the very same legal regulations implemented by the state officials or the police (Örer, 2009).<sup>7</sup> Cross-dressers that live in certain neighborhoods are seized and taken into custody, sometimes twice a day, and left no choice but to pay the fine again and again. During the custody they are physically assaulted, exposed to humiliation and insults. In order to encourage this illegitimate regulation, the police are given bonus that is exchanged to premiums after they manage to fine 100 cross-dressers or transsexuals. Lombardi (2001) states that the economic discrimination is highly associated with the violence transgendered

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<sup>7</sup> According to a news report, the police in Ankara and Istanbul fine the cross-dressers on the ground that they breach the "Law on Misdemeanours Orders" (LMO). The title of the news is telling to capture the tone of the value given to the seriousness of the matter. It reads "capture the transvestite and grab the bonus." Again with that kind of title, the display of the cross-dressers is reduced to something to be ridiculed and to have fun with. But in reality, there is a serious transgression conducted by the police which are against the constitutional rights.

people experience. The lack of employment protections and of legislative arrangements hinders the chances of transgendered people to be integrated into the society and the economic production. Another regulation that shapes the connection line of cross-dressers with the legal authorities is “law on the Powers and Duties of the Police (LPDP)” because most cross-dressers have no choice but engage in sex work. Although sex work is not a criminal activity according to the laws in Turkey, cross-dressers are subjected to discrimination because the law allows only women to engage in sex work (Taşcıoğlu, 2011).

## **CHAPTER 5: GENDER FORMATION PROCESSES OF MtF PRE-OPERATIVE TRANSSEXUALS AND HOMOSEXUAL MALE CROSS-DRESSERS**

This chapter has three objectives. First, it aims to outline the gender formation processes the CD and transsexual informants experience starting from their childhood up to the present. Second, I employ a comparative analysis to point out the difference in the narratives of the informants in terms of how they articulate and make sense of gender identities of each other. Third, I intend to indicate the environmental effects on the gender formation processes of the informants and manifest the different relationship they construct with public sphere. I will present excerpts from the interviews and also make use of my observations to expand on my analyses. Since I have kept in touch with the informants after the interviews and been to various occasions together, I also had the opportunities to get some feedback about the interviews from them, to gain more insight regarding their thoughts and reevaluations and to validate the patterns I came across during the data collection and analysis processes.

### **I. The gender subjectivities of the transsexual informants**

The most salient characteristic of the transsexual informants' narratives is that they all refer to their early years of childhood when their realization of a body-sex conflict comes to surface. Between the ages of 4 and 7 is the period when they claim that there was something wrong with the way they felt about their gender and the bodily features they had. Semra, a 27 year-old transsexual who has been on HRT for two years and will undergo SRS very soon, states that:

I knew that I wanted to be a woman since childhood, since early ages.  
I mean, I had that feeling inside me back then. Every time I woke up,

there was this void inside me but I also knew what it was, I mean, I knew what caused it.<sup>8</sup>

Another informant, Özge is a 25 year-old transsexual who began HRT a couple of months ago, also relates her childhood in a similar way and defines her situation as not being able to find peace between her body and her feelings. She explains this as follows:

It was like being in limbo. I was very unhappy and restless. I was feeling as if this body did not belong to me or I did not belong to this body and I started to feel this from early childhood on. But, of course, it was difficult for me to explain this back then.<sup>9</sup>

All the narratives of the informants emphasized the innate nature of gender and that it was predetermined before they were born. Therefore, the beginning of the gender formation process was linked to a biological essence and it emerged in the early ages. Pelin, 26, articulated it as;

I was a woman in my mother's womb. I mean it was determined back then. It does not matter what people call me, transsexual or something else. I am a woman.<sup>10</sup>

Berna is a 32 year-old pre-op MtF transsexual waiting for more than a year to undergo sex replacement surgery (SRS). She has been having hormonal treatments more than a year and attending therapy sessions. She also states that:

I don't want to say that I feel like a woman, then it becomes something subjective, I mean, I feel it but it is not related to feelings, I have a woman's soul.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Daha çocukluğumdan beri, çok küçük yaşlarımdan beri, kadın olmak istediğimi biliyordum. Yani bu his hep vardı içimde. Her gün uyandığında içimde bir boşluk ama ne olduğunu da biliyorum yani neyden kaynaklandığını.

<sup>9</sup> Arafta kalmak gibi bir şeydi. Çok mutsuz ve huzursuzdum. Bu beden bana ait değil ya da ben bu bedene ait değilim gibi hissediyordum ve bunu çok küçük yaşlardan itibaren hissetmeye başlamıştım ama tabii o zaman bunun açıklamasını yapmak zor.

<sup>10</sup> Ben daha annemin karnında kadındım, yani o zaman belliydi bu, kim bana ne derse desin, transseksüel falan, benim için fark etmez. Ben kadını.

<sup>11</sup> Ben kendimi kadın hissediyorum demek de istemiyorum o zaman göreceli bir şeymiş gibi oluyor, yani hissediyorum ama bu bir hisle ilgili değil. Ben bir kadın ruhu taşıyorum.

As can be seen in Berna's narrative, transsexuality is beyond a subjectivity defined by feelings but it is something that can be explained with reference to womanhood embedded in the soul. They point out that womanhood was always present in them but it did not find its correspondence on their bodies. Asude states that:

My purpose with this surgery is not to be a heterosexual woman. I already am a woman. At least, that is how I see myself. I just want to have a more livable life and be inconspicuous when I go out.<sup>12</sup>

However, as Cromwell (1999) argues, this feminine essence discourse conceptualized as "trapped in the wrong body" is actually a matter of speaking utilized by transsexuals.

Throughout the interviews it comes to surface when I ask the informants what being a real woman means. At that point, the constructed nature of womanhood becomes apparent and the informants point out that they constantly strive to achieve the womanhood in their minds. Yet they argue that there is always a difference between this womanhood in their minds and "a real woman." Berna claims that:

I generally let it run its course... I don't act like Bülent Ersoy does. I mean, being a transsexual woman is different from being a heterosexual woman. You have to see yourself in the position of a transsexual woman, you have to position yourself like that but what Bülent Ersoy does is trying to be a heterosexual woman. This is just like a four-legged animal imitating the gait of a two-legged animal. Why would you act like someone you are not?<sup>13</sup>

Although at some point this difference implies an inferior positionality, they narrate their gender subjectivities in such a way that they see themselves in a more advantageous position since not only do they have to deconstruct imposed binary codes but also earn their womanhood or their new gender subjectivity through a struggle. Hale, 33, defines this as:

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<sup>12</sup> Benim amacım heteroseksüel bir kadın olmak değil bu ameliyatla. Ben zaten kadını en azından ben kendimi öyle görüyorum. Sadece saha yaşanabilir bir hayat istiyorum ve dışarı çıktığımda fark edilmem istiyorum.

<sup>13</sup> Ben genelde doğal akışı içinde geçiriyorum. Bülent Ersoy havasına bürünmüyorum. Yani transseksüel kadın olmak başka bir şey, heteroseksüel kadın olmak başka bir şey. Senin kendini transseksüel kadın konumunda görmen, öyle konumlandırman lazım ama Bülent Ersoy'un yaptığı şey heteroseksüel kadın gibi olmaya çalışmak. Bu dört bacaklı bir hayvanın iki bacaklı bir hayvan gibi yürümeye özenmesi gibi. Sen kendin olmadığın şeye niye özeniyorsun ki?

After all, a transsexual woman does not have a uterus, I mean we do not have the chance to give birth and become a mother. We do not go through that process. So there is a difference. Of course our past is different. A transsexual woman goes through a lot of difficulties. Heterosexual women also go through enormous amount of difficulties in the patriarchy but a transsexual woman goes through different problems. So this is a plus; we become a different woman.<sup>14</sup>

Sevil, 20, also describes her gender formation process in parallel with the struggle she puts up against norms and values dictated on her and she claims that this struggle helps transsexuals gain more insight about their own subjectivities.

It definitely helps a lot to improve our viewpoint. We have to go one step further than a heterosexual woman who lives in the web of values because we constantly have to go through a process of questioning. We live a problem with ourselves, with society and with values and we address them. This requires a certain struggle.<sup>15</sup>

As can be seen in the quotes above, the transsexual informants make a firm stance when it comes to the image in their minds regarding their sex. They claim that they knew that they wanted to be a woman even from childhood. But when it comes to womanhood, the image in their minds is different from the one imposed by the binary gender codes. Therefore, what they struggle for is not just modifying their bodies and souls to come to terms with the image of woman in biological terms. They are aware of the fact that biologically they will never be able to achieve to be a “real” woman. However, they construct alternative subjectivities and make sense of their gendered identities in terms of different womanhood. Doing this, they challenge the assumption put forth by second wave feminists (Bettcher, 2010) who accused transsexuals of simply aligning themselves within the binary sex and gender codes. Another

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<sup>14</sup> Sonuçta transseksüel bir kadın rahme sahip değil yani çocuk sahibi olmak gibi bir şansı yok. Bir anne olma şeyini yaşamıyorsun. Arada bir fark var yani. Tabii bir kere geçmişiniz farklı. Transseksüel kadın bir dünya sıkıntı içinden geliyor. Heteroseksüel kadın da ataerkil düzen içinde çok sıkıntı yaşıyor ama bir transseksüel kadın çok daha başka sorunların içinden geliyor. Böyle bir artı bir şeyi var; daha farklı bir kadın oluyorsun.

<sup>15</sup> Bakış açısını geliştirme açısından bir şeyler kattığı kesin. Bu örülü değerler içinde yaşayan heteroseksüel bir kadından daha bir adım öne gitmek zorunda kalıyorsunuz zaten. Çünkü sürekli bir sorgulama süreci yaşamak zorunda kalıyorsunuz. Kendinizle, toplumla, değerlerle bir sorun yaşıyorsunuz, bu sorunun üzerine gidiyorsunuz. Bu da belli bir mücadele gerektiriyor.

important point I detected in the interviews is that the transsexual informants make use of different terms to describe their gender subjectivities and do not make much reference to their sexual orientation but when they do it, it shows variation depending on at what stage they are in their transition. For example, Gamze, who started HRT a couple of months ago, states that:

Gamze: In university, I came to the point of accepting the fact that I am homosexual. I still am actually.

Onur: But you regard yourself as a woman.

Gamze: Yes, I see myself as a woman but at the moment I look more like a transvestite. I like men sexually but right now I have that kind of image in my mind.<sup>16</sup>

As you can see, the terminology Gamze uses contradicts the psychoanalytical categories because the hormones she takes up has not shown their effects on her body yet and therefore, even though she describes her gender identity as a woman, she considers herself to be a homosexual. Another issue we can see here is how transvestism is regarded as a transition period for transsexuals. Semra, on the other hand, states that:

I am a heterosexual transsexual. I like men and this has been the case since I was a child. Back then I used to define myself as a homosexual, I mean, I looked like that but I knew that this was something temporary. I mean I will be a complete heterosexual woman after the surgery.<sup>17</sup>

Heterosexuality and homosexuality find temporary connotations within the lived experiences of the informants depending on the stage of transition they go through. In these narrations, I find similarities with the articulation of West and Zimmerman (1987) who defined gender formation as a “doing” constructed through daily interaction. The transsexual informants

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<sup>16</sup> Gamze: Üniversite yıllarında eşcinsel olduğumu artık kabul etme noktasına gelmiştim. Şu an da öyleyim aslında.

Onur: Kendini kadın olarak görüyorsun ama?

Gamze: Evet kadın olarak görüyorum ama şu an daha çok bir travesti gibi bir halim var. Erkeklerden hoşlanıyorum cinsel olarak, ama şu an kendi kafamda böyle bir imajım var yani.

<sup>17</sup> Ben heteroseksüel bir transseksüelim. Erkeklerden hoşlanıyorum ve bu küçüklüğümden beri böyleydi. O zamanlar kendimi homoseksüel olarak tarif ediyordum yani öyle görünüyordum ama bunu geçici bir şey olduğunu biliyordum. Yani ameliyatla beraber artık tam anlamıyla heteroseksüel bir kadın olacağım.

adopt the gender codes and norms of “womanhood” day by day and build their own gender identities on them. Therefore, sexual orientation shows variations in parallel with the stage of transition they are in at the moment. What is more, the daily interaction with other transsexuals is very important for gender construction. They constantly exchange information with each other regarding everyday activities, the way they dress, the hormones they use and the possible consequences of SRS. However, different from Butler’s deconstruction of sex and gender (1990), the transsexual informants always take sex for granted which means that they assert that they were born as male, yet, it was their sex which did not match their feelings or souls.

I think that another turning point in the realization of their transgender identities by the informants is choosing a new name for themselves. In some of the interviews, when I asked the informants their names, they asked me which of their names I wanted to learn; the names their parents gave them or the names they chose for themselves. This tendency was more apparent in the younger informants because I think that they are in the beginning of their transition and still getting used to seeing themselves in the new identities they are establishing. For example Melis, a cross-dresser, uses her both names depending on the situation. She says that when she meets new people from the trans community, she uses her self-assigned name but when she meets people in other settings, she introduces herself with the name given by her parents. Actually, as she establishes a good rapport, she comes out to these people and asks them to address her with the name she assigned for herself. I also observed a similar attitude with Özge who is a transsexual. When we first met, she automatically introduced herself with both her names and left it to me to decide which one I wanted to use. This indicates the similarity in the process of transition from one identity to another in both the transsexual and cross-dresser informants.



## II. The gender subjectivities of the cross-dresser informants

The main difference between the transsexual and cross-dresser informants is that the latter always define themselves as homosexuals and when we talk about their gender identities, they refer to their sexual orientation constantly. The important point here is that they do not focus on their cross-dressing habit as something important which has a deep impact on how they feel about their gender identities. For most of them, cross-dressing is imbued with sexual motives which give them sexual pleasure or comfort. The aspect of pleasure is more important for the younger cross-dresser informants while the aspect of comfort is more important for the older informants. This is similar to the explanation of Langevin (1985) who argued that as cross-dressers get older erotic motives behind cross-dressing wanes while adoption of the gender codes remain intact. However, they also point to their childhood when they claim that there was something wrong with their feelings. For example Banu, 34 year-old, states that:

Banu: I had realized that there was something wrong with me since elementary school. I mean, in terms of my feelings, I liked men and this feeling is inside me. That is why I think that this is by birth, I mean homosexuality.

Onur: Why do you wear women's clothing?

Banu: I feel more comfortable this way, I don't know, I like it this way.<sup>18</sup>

On the other hand, Ceyda, 22 year-old, states that cross-dressing leads to a great sexual arousal for her and when she wears women's clothes during sexual intercourse, it makes the act more pleasurable. However, when I ask if it has anything to do with wanting to be like a woman, she claims that it is more than that.

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<sup>18</sup> Banu: Ben ortaokuldan beri bende bir şeylerin yanlış olduğunu anlamıştım. Yani hislerim açısından, erkeklerden hoşlanıyordum ve bu yani insanın içinde olan bir his. Ben o yüzden bunun doğuştan olduğunu düşünüyorum, yani eşcinselliğin.

Onur: Peki neden kadın kıyafetleri giyiyorsun?

Banu: Böyle kendimi daha rahat hissediyorum, bilmiyorum, böyle hoşuma gidiyor.

Ceyda: I used to get dressed like this very rarely back then, I mean during sexual intercourse. For two years I have worn these kinds of clothes more often.

Onur: Does this have more to do with sexual act?

Ceyda: Yes, it gives me a great pleasure during sex. I like it very much when I see myself like that and feel that way.

Onur: Do you feel like a woman?

Ceyda: No, it is something else than feeling like a woman. For one thing, I find woman body; actually, I find female genitalia disturbing.<sup>19</sup>

Melis, 25 years old, also makes an interesting argument about her sexual orientation and its relationship with the idea of being a woman. When I ask her if she has ever considered undergoing SRS, She responds to it as:

Of course I thought about whether I was a transsexual or not. But then, I thought that if I had the operation, the pleasure I got from sex would diminish, I mean I have sex with men and I enjoy anal sex. But, if I have operation, then it is a different thing, then you become a woman, you have a vagina. I did not want that.<sup>20</sup>

As can be seen in the narratives of Ceyda and Melis, cross-dressing does not have a direct relationship with the desire to be a woman or to realize womanhood. Although some cross-dressers prefer to undergo SRS and transition to a woman, most of the informants do not like the idea of having a woman body because first they think that they will lose their source of pleasure if they undergo SRS, second they remark that female genitalia is not appealing to

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<sup>19</sup> Ceyda: Önceden çok nadir giyinirdim böyle, yani özellikle seks sırasında. Son iki yıldır daha sık giyiniyorum bu tarz kıyafetler.

Onur: Peki daha çok seksle mi ilgili bir şey?

Ceyda: Evet, o sırada çok büyük bir zevk veriyor. Kendimi o şekilde görmek ve hissetmek çok hoşuma gidiyor.

Onur: Peki kadın gibi mi hissediyorsun kendini?

Ceyda: Hayır, kadın gibi hissetmekten daha başka bir şey bu. Bir kere kadın vücudunu, aslında kadınlık organını rahatsız edici buluyorum ben.

<sup>20</sup> Tabii transseksüel olup olmadığımı çok düşündüm. Ama sonra eğer ameliyat olursam seksten aldığım zevkin azalacağını düşündüm, yani, ben erkeklerle beraber oluyorum ve anal seksten zevk alıyorum. Ama ameliyat olursam bambaşka bir şey orada artık kadın oluyorsunuz, vajinanız oluyor. Ben öyle bir şey istemedim.

them. All the informants stated that they had heterosexual intercours with women before they fully acknowledged their homosexuality and some indicated that they developed an aversion against female genitalia. This means that transgender identity formation does not follow a linear path from transvestism to transsexuality as Buhrich and McConaghy (1977) argued. This process is more complicated than they assumed. However, the informants' narratives show similarity with the interesting points put forth by Kulick (1998) who found that transvestites in Brazil do not formulate their gender identities and sexual orientation within the paradigms of binary codes. In addition, he asserted that his informants claimed that they have found female genitalia unattractive or even repulsive. The difference between the subjectivities of the transsexual and cross-dresser informants resembles the theoretical assumption outlined by Verchoor (1994) who argues that cross-dressers emphasize their sexual orientation and associate cross-dressing with erotic and sexual motives while transsexual emphasize their gender identity but do not associate it with cross-dressing. To them, cross-dressing is only one of the steps of transition and a leap forward in realizing womanhood in their mind. As Kandiyoti (2002) points out, the fact that some cross-dressers claim to have considered undergoing SRS and transitioning to "real" woman while others asserted a clear aversion from that kind of bodily modification indicates that cross-dressers construct their gender subjectivities in a fluid continuum depending on the negotiations they engage in with the bodily and social opportunities or obstacles before them.

In line with the theoretical framework of this study, the question womanhood remains to be a moot point in the analysis of the interviews that I conducted with the cross-dresser informants. The most crucial point of the ambiguity stems from the fact that the binary codes of gender expression and gender roles fall short of accounting for the preference of cross dressing. The informants do not explain their preference for cross-dressing from the

viewpoint of the taken-for-granted compatibility between the sexual orientation and gender identity. Ordinarily, with this compatibility, one is expected to develop a harmonious appearance that will go together with one's internalized gender role. However, this lack of compatibility is only surprising when we apply the same logic to every individual without questioning the compatibility itself. Thus, cross dressing turns out to have different meanings in the formation of their gender identities. I have found out that the expected references to womanhood seem to lack in the vocabulary of the cross-dresser informants when they define their gender positions. Womanhood is manifested as a continuum in which they position themselves in parallel within the limits of their bodies. This limitation serves as a key factor in the formation and expression of their gender identities. Since, they also agree to the societal norms that define what a woman looks like or should look like; they refrain from living up to those expectations fulfilled by "real" women. Doing this, they strive to create a space for them to be recognized as who they are. This becomes very apparent when I ask the question "do you feel like a woman when you wear women's clothes?" As a response to this question, the informants give conflicting answers as;

Gülşah: My concern is not to be a woman or being regarded as a woman. I like these clothes, for one thing, I feel comfortable. I want to go out like this...<sup>21</sup>

Dilara: No, I don't feel like a woman, I am what I am on the inside, I express this as such. When people look at us, they say it, I mean, actually, it becomes clear that we are different from women of birth.<sup>22</sup>

Yasemin: This is different from feeling like a woman, for one to feel like a woman, one has to be a woman with everything one has; the way one walks, the way one feels, one's manners. I, for example, don't have such a thing.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Gülşah: Derdim kadın gibi olayım, insanlar kadın zannetsin beni değil. Bu kıyefetler hoşuma gidiyor, bir kere kendimi daha rahat hissediyorum. Böyle dışarı çıkmak istiyorum...

<sup>22</sup> Yasemin: Hayır, kadın gibi hissetmiyorum, ben içimde neysem oyum, bunu da bu şekilde ifade ediyorum. Zaten bize bakanlar, zaten diyorlar, yani hani, doğuştan kadınlardan bir kere farklı olduğumuz belli oluyor.

<sup>23</sup> Dilara: Kadın gibi hissetmekten farklı bi şey bu, insan kendini kadın gibi hissetmesi için her şeyiyle kadın olmak zorunda; yürüyüşün, hislerin, ne bileyim, tavrın. Bende mesela öyle bir şey yok.

As we see in the statements above, some cross-dressers do not try to achieve their transition to become a woman or live a life within the boundaries of womanhood. They express their genders that cannot be explained with reference to imposed codes of gender roles. They do this also by acknowledging the limits of womanhood; physically and emotionally. To them, being a woman or being regarded as a woman requires different sets of skills acquired and performed. And they do not intend to internalize those skills or suffer from the lack of them. However, during some interviews with the cross-dresser informants, they related similar points to transsexuals. For example, Zuhâl, 28, made a very clear statement when I asked her the same question:

Onur: Do you feel like a woman when you wear women's clothes?

Zuhâl: There is such a thing in my mind. I mean, when I look in the mirror, I see myself as a woman and this gives me the feeling of thing; a pleasure. But I don't have that kind of thing to be a woman. I mean I don't have the intention of being a woman with everything it has.<sup>24</sup>

However, the main driving forces that lead them to the cross-dressing are homosexual desire and feminine manner. From the early onset of their lives, between the age of 10 and 12, they state that they felt attracted to men and they had sexual fantasies in which they had homosexual intercourse. However, these fantasies did not involve specific male partners; it is rather more like a blurry male figure with a male organ. As the years pass, the male figure becomes more discernible and may be someone from their immediate surroundings. In the fantasies, they mostly take the passive sexual role and imagine the male partner penetrating them.

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<sup>24</sup> Onur: Kadın kıyafetleri giydiğinde kendii kadın gibi mi hissediyorsun?

Zuhâl: Öyle bir şey var kafamda. Yani, aynaya baktığımda kendimi kadın gibi görüyorum ve bu bana bir şey duygusu veriyor; bir haz duygusu veriyor. Ama kadın olmak gibi bir şeyim yok. Yani her şeyiyle kadın olmak gibi bir niyetim yok.

Feminine manners are also apparent in the early ages before puberty. Most of the informants remember their parents' reactions to their feminine behaviors and relate in what ways they were different from their same-sex peers. It comes out mostly as attempting to dress their mothers' or sisters' clothes, wanting to play with toys for girls, preferring to spend time with the opposite-sex peer groups. However, some of the informants do not present any stories regarding early onset of feminine behaviors. They claim that there were just like any other boys and were able to socialize with them easily. They do not recollect any memories in which they were scorned or insulted either by their parents or their peer groups due to their feminine behaviors. The reason behind this lack of feminine manners might be that these informants belong to low SES background and it might have been difficult for them to come to awareness about their feelings or the environment they grew up might have been discouraging for nonconforming expressions. Therefore, they might have been more wary of the way they expressed their feelings. The same mechanism of withdrawal is also noticeable in the accounts of transsexuals. However, their stories show some differences in terms of how they felt about the inhibited atmosphere in which they were raised. They state what they went through in their childhood in a more traumatic way and present more details about it which I will go into detail in the next chapter.

A very interesting point that has to be added here is that the cross dressers' perspectives of their own sexual orientation show consistency throughout their lives. They never report having second thoughts about the focal point of their desire and their position in that desire. They never feel doubts about the fact that they are homosexuals. They do not report any discomfort with their bodily configurations, any wish to make drastic alterations on their bodies except for the modifications led by hormones. However, some of them consider undergoing SRS, or state that they thought about it before but due to lack of money or some

other concerns such as fear of losing the ability of having orgasm, deformation of their bodies, they did not follow through.

However, homosexuality does not automatically assign cross dressers to the “passive role,” the penetrated, in the sexual act, and their partners to the “active role,” the penetrator. What this means is that, although cross dressers have sexual intercourse with male partners, they sometimes undertake the active role. What is more, cross dressers do not consider their male partners to be heterosexual men. They maintain that those male partners are either homosexual who do not dare come out of closet or cross dressers who are afraid of living their true identities.

From this viewpoint, we can claim that gender identities of the cross dressers and their sexual expressions do not coincide with each other and the diversity in the sexual act does not hinder their perceptions of themselves. What is more, this diversity indicates that cross dressing, as an act, is not necessarily related to the inconsistency between the gender identification and the biological sex. Some of the informants point out that they derive pleasure from undertaking the active role in the sexual act. However, all the informants but one engage in sex work and most of them state that they would normally prefer to have the passive role in the sexual act, but, due to the demands of their clients, they have to take on the active role. They note that they find it incomprehensible to be asked to penetrate to a man who looks like a heterosexual male from the outside. This perception is very similar to what Dozier (2005) points out regarding the gender organization of the interaction preceding the sex of birth. We can see that the sexual orientation has an important role in the way the cross-dresser informants define the gender of their customers. Taking further from this point, I asked the informants how their clients defined them, as a woman or a man, and I received some interesting answers such as:

Elif: My *kolis* (clients) are particular people. They know me, have my phone number, I mean they know what I am, but it's for sure that they don't see me as a woman; otherwise, they would hook up with woman, why would they come to me then? They come to me because they want something different. Some of them are married, they have wives and children but they obviously cannot satisfy some things.<sup>25</sup>

Zuhal: In truth, it is clear how they see us; we are both a man and a woman. Just take a look at women around you, they all are small and feeble but we are not like that; we take care of ourselves with our make-up and perfumes and whatnot. We are more woman than a woman; I mean we have also a plus (penis).<sup>26</sup>

Banu: We have both of it honey. We are women when necessary and men when necessary. Let me tell you this; if the wives of these *pöçüks* (passive male with heterosexual appearance) knew what they did, they would divorce them, if they only knew what goes on behind four walls... In truth, they couldn't tell who is woman who is man.<sup>27</sup>

In these responses, we can see that cross dressers define their position superior to women in some senses. Especially, sexual act, active or passive, gives them power which they enjoy performing over women. They, in a way, make use of the advantage of having a biological male body while at the same time providing their clients with a womanhood which biological women cannot. Therefore, womanhood is considered to be a continuum whose limits are determined and defined by the conscious effort made by the cross dressers. It also shows that they can fiddle within this continuum to exert more womanhood or less depending on the situation they are in. This, I think, what makes them feel like they are superior to biological women who are not able to adjust, so to say, the degree of womanhood due to the lack of control over it. Thus, it might be suitable to say that this ability to reposition themselves

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<sup>25</sup> Elif: Benim koliler (müşteriler) belirli kişilerdir. Beni bilirler, telefonum vardır onlarda, ne olduğumu bilirler yani, ama kadın olarak görmedikleri kesin, yoksa kadına giderler, bana neden gelsinler ki? Geliyorlar çünkü farklı bir şeyler istiyorlar, bunların kimisi evli, çocuk çocuk sahibi herifler, ama bir şeyleri doyuramıyorlar demek ki.

<sup>26</sup> Zuhal: Vallahi, nasıl gördükleri belli, hem kadını hem de erkek. Bir bak bakalım şu etrafındaki kadınlara, küçük, çelimsiz. Ama biz öyle değiliz, kendimize bakıyoruz, makyajımız, kokumuz falan. Kadından daha çok kadını. Ama bizim bir de artımız (erkek cinsel organı) var yani.

<sup>27</sup> Banu: Biz de ikisi de var canım. Yeri geldi mi kadını yeri geldi mi erkek. Bu pöçüklerin (heteroseksüel görünümlü pasif erkek) karıları bir bilse neler yaptıklarını boşarlar, sana o kadarını söyleyeyim. O dört duvar arasında ne olup bittiğini bir bilseler... Kim kadın kim erkek anlayamazlar vallahi.



within the continuum empowers cross dressers in the way of defining their sexual expressions and gender identities different from biological women, yet explicable with references to them. A further point that is worth taking into account is that according to the informants' understanding of womanhood, the concept of biological sex is also imbued with societal connotations that set the limits of sexual practices. Although they do not tend to define their cross dressing activities in relation to womanhood, they have the tendency to interpret their sexual acts and practices in line with the categories of biological sexes. The same continuum within which they locate themselves depending on the situations, the sexual act itself becomes only explicable with the terms man and woman. Their statements swing back and forth on this continuum, which means that, they sometimes use the language of manhood and sometimes the language of womanhood. Despite the fact that they never ossify their positions, they also focus on the end points of this continuum and keep designating their places according to those end points. When they take the role of an active partner, they consider themselves to be the male partner in the sexual act, while, when they take the passive role, they fashion themselves as female partners in the sexual act. Therefore, although their gender identities and their sexual orientation do not overlap with each other, their sexual practices only become intelligible when we decode them within the binary gender system. To my opinion, this use of binary gender system makes sense because the cultural and social codes are already prefigured and so they also use those codes when they define their sexual experiences.

However, apart from keeping a distance from womanhood, some of the informants openly take an inferior position when they claim their position in the face of it. They, in a way, express their failure to comply with the norms and expectations which women can perform without any difficulty. I think that this inferior position is not solely the result of the biological factors such as women's ability to give birth or having slimmer bodies but also the

result of binary gender system which fails to classify cross-dressers as neither woman nor man, thus, this inability is also reflective on the cross-dressers themselves.

### **III. Not Woman Enough**

In this section, I address the question of “how do transsexuals and cross-dressers define each other?” The importance of this question lies in the fact that, as you saw in the previous section, these two transgender groups make sense of their subjectivities in various ways; however, there is no information in the literature about the way in which they position each other and what kind of perspectives they make use of to explain each other’s gender identities or sexual orientations. The most striking pattern I detected in the interviews and during different occasions I have been to with the transsexual informants was their tendency to use degrading and sometimes derogatory languages when they talked about cross-dressers. However, I did not detect the same tendency in the narratives of the cross-dresser informants when they addressed transsexuality. This attitude towards cross-dressers differed depending on whether the transsexual informants were politically active in the LGBTTT movement or not. For example, Asude, 33, who does not participate in the LGBTTT movement, made the harshest criticism against cross-dressers by stating that:

Those who you call CD only appear at night. You can find them only in front of bars. You cannot see them in the morning. For one thing, they know neither how to make up nor how to walk like we do. With lopsided make-up on their face, they barely stand on high heels. If I walked together with a CD on the street and if the police stopped us, they would address me as “lady” but God knows what they would call her.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Senin CD dediklerin ancak geceleri ortaya çıkar. Onları ancak barların önünde bulursun. Gündüz göremezsin. Bir kere onlar ne makyaj yapmasını bilirler, ne yürümesini bilirler bizim gibi. Yamuk yumuk makyajlı, topukluların üstünde zar zor dururlar. Şöyle bir CD ile ikimiz sokakta yürüsek, polis durursa, bana hanımefendi derler ona ne derler Allah bilir.

When I asked Özge and Pelin what they thought about cross-dressers and how they defined them, they gave very similar answers by stating that:

Özge: Among the ones called transvestites, there are those who are on the way to transsexuality or those who may be doing this job due to economic reasons. There might be [transvestites] from every walk of life. I don't see transvestism as a separate gender identity. It is as if they live in a state of uncertainty.... After all, I will also have to live like a transvestite because my breasts will develop and I will have to go through a transvestite stage.<sup>29</sup>

Pelin: They are defined as people who like wearing the clothes of the opposite side but at this point I cannot comprehend it, I mean I can't understand it. I mean I don't see transvestism as a separate gender identity. It is more of a transition period but they could not complete it or don't want to complete it.<sup>30</sup>

As you can see from these three quotes, there are two main reasons why transsexuals strive to put a distance from cross-dressers. First and the most important reason is that the social position of CDs deters transsexuals from being associated with them. Cross-dressers mostly have to engage in sex work as a source of income because they are excluded from other job opportunities due to their non-conforming gender identity and sexual orientation. There is also a great prejudice against cross-dressers in the society fostered by the media and this prejudice reproduces intolerance against them. Therefore, people make a direct association between prostitution and cross-dressers. This is very apparent in the statements of Asude and Özge who automatically explained the gender identity of CDs by connecting it to work-related activities. Actually, when I was interviewing Asude, she insistently refused to acknowledge cross-dressers as a separate gender identity and told me that what I was referring to as CDs were actually drag queens who acted like women for entertainment purposes. She

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<sup>29</sup> Travesti denen kişiler arasında transseksüelliğe doğru giden travestiler var ya da sırf ekonomik nedenden bu işi yapıyor olabilir. Yani her kesimden [travesti] olabilir. Travestiliği ayrı bir cinsel kimlik olarak görmüyorum. Belli bir belirsizlik halinde yaşıyorlar sanki....Sonuçta ben de belli bir süreç ameliyat olana kadar travesti olarak yaşamak zorunda kalacağım çünkü göğüslerim çıkacak ve mecburen bir travesti dönemim olacak.

<sup>30</sup> Pelin: Karşı tarafın kıyafetlerini giymekten hoşlanan olarak ifade ediliyor ama ben bu noktada pek algılayamıyorum, anlayamıyorum yani. Travestiliği ayrı bir cinsel kimlik olarak görmüyorum. Daha çok bir geçiş döneminde ama o geçişi tamamlamamışlar ya da tamamlamak istemiyorlar.

also added that the last “T” which stood for transvestites in the LBTT movement is not as commonly used as it was in the past because “transvestites” are not considered belonging to the movement. Therefore, not only did she avoid having anything in common with CDs but also put them into an inferior position by claiming that I could find transsexuals actively participating in every segment of life but that it is not the case with CDs. The second reason of this negative perception against CDs is that transsexuals cannot figure out the gender position of CDs because to them, cross-dressing is only one of the stages of transition to womanhood and it precedes or follows HRT and SRS. Therefore, they think that cross-dressers are stuck in their transition due to their personal choices or socioeconomic reasons. The reason behind this assumption might be the imposition of binary gender codes. Transsexuals strive a lot to adopt the gender codes of womanhood to complete their transition, so, according to them the only intelligible way of forming a gender identity is transforming into one of the two sexes; male or female. Although their articulation regarding their own gender identities show variations, they, at the end, tend to identify themselves by making use of binary gender paradigms. However, the existence of cross-dressers operates as a threat to this identification because transsexuals share some similarities with cross-dressers but try hard to go beyond them. As you can see in the narrative of Özge, she regards cross-dressing as a compulsory period in her life which she has to experience and in the end, she will leave it behind and become a woman. Another reason of this intelligibility is, I think, homosexuality. Transsexuals have an uneasy relationship with their sexual orientation depending on which stage of transition they are going through. For example, Özge has a boyfriend and she explains their sexual act as homosexual because she has not started HRT and undergone SRS yet. Therefore, being in the passive role in the sexual act and having a penis compel her to define herself as homosexual. However, she says that after the SRS, she will become heterosexual. Again, homosexuality seen as only a transitional stage in their transformation is

considered to have a very definite role in the gender identities of CDs. These similarities and overlaps make the transsexual informants feel the need to dissociate themselves from CDs.

When it comes to the narratives of transsexual informants who are actively participating in the LGBTTT movement, we can see that their attitudes and opinions about cross-dressers differ greatly. First of all, they approach the question from social and economic perspectives and do not problematize the gender identity or sexual orientation of CDs as a point of departure. They establish a connection with them and claim that the essence of the problem is the societal prejudice and discrimination against transgender persons. For example when I ask Gamze how she defines cross-dressers, she states that:

As far as I spoke (with cross-dressers), they don't have the desire as we do, I mean, becoming a woman through operation but it might also be the case. To me, what is important is that they should be able to live in the society without being excluded. I mean we are struggling for this purpose.<sup>31</sup>

Nesrin reveals that their advantageous position in the society arises from the fact that the SRS will endow them with certain rights to enjoy; however, cross-dressers are under constant threat of institutional and societal pressure. However, instead of distancing herself from cross-dressers, she empathizes with them and acknowledges the difficulty of their conditions:

Nesrin: In truth, I define them however they define themselves. What kind of outfit a person wears or what she does with whom is none of my business. Most of us are having the same problems as they are; such as humiliation, nonrecognition. What they face is actually worse than what we face. We obtain some of the rights after surgery but their situation is a lot worse.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Benim (cross-dresser'lar ile) konuştuğum kadarıyla çoğunda da bizimki gibi bir istek yok. Yani ameliyatla kadın olma gibi ki bu da olabilir. Önemli olan bana göre, toplumda dışlanmadan yaşayabilmeleri. Yani biz bunun mücadelesini veriyoruz.

<sup>32</sup> Nesrin: Vallahi onlar kendilerini nasıl tanımlıyorsa öyle tanımlıyorum. Benim için bir insanın kılık kıyafeti ya da kiminle ne yaptığı hiç ilgilendirmez. Çoğumuz onlarla aynı zorlukları çekiyoruz. Aşağılanma, yok sayılma gibi. Onları bizimkinden daha da kötü aslında. Biz şimdi ameliyattan sonra bazı haklarımız oluyor ama onların durumu daha kötü.

Sevil is a Marxist activist who has been in the LGBTTT movement for a long time, makes more of an encompassing analysis going beyond the problematization of transgender identities and ties the fate of all minority groups who face marginalization to each other in order to find a solution.

Whoever defines them whatever, what is important is not to be oppressed because of your identity. This includes Kurds, Alevis, homosexuals, CDs. We should find a common ground and end this injustice and ostracization in this system.<sup>33</sup>

As you can see, the main concern of the transsexual informants who take active role in the LGBTTT movement is to erase exclusion and stigmatization all the oppressed groups face. They do not regard cross-dressers as people who failed to fulfill womanhood or achieve their transition completely. Rather they focus on the rights and objectives to be able to manage to create a social and political arena so that everybody can live without facing marginalization.

#### **IV. Trapped in the Wrong Environment**

Another dimension to gender identity formation is the degree to which transgender persons interact with their environments and how much they can participate in public life. At this point, there is a difference between the transsexual and cross-dresser informants in the way that the former constantly challenge the limited access opportunities and try hard to open up a niche and claim their positions in the society while the latter construct close-knit communities and try not to transgress the boundaries of their immediate surroundings. One of the reasons behind this is that the transition process undertaken by transsexuals requires them to adjust not only to the modifications on their bodies but also to social life with their new identities. Therefore, they regard this adaptation as one of the essential steps in order to achieve a complete transition. The second reason is that transsexuals are engaged in various

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<sup>33</sup> Kim nasıl tanımlarsa tanımlasın önemli olan kimliğinden ötürü ezilmemendir. Bunun içine Kürdü, alevisi, homoseksüel, CD'si, hepsi girer. Ortak bir paydada buluşup bu sistemin içindeki bu haksızlığı ve ötelenmeyi sonlandırmak gerekir.

occupations which enable them to establish professional and friendship ties with other people more easily than do cross-dressers. However, for cross-dressers, social life is always imbued with constant stigmatization and exclusion. That is why their interaction with the outside world is limited to their close surroundings and they avoid any kind of contact that might put them into a difficult situation or induce potential danger. Interestingly, the difference between the informants finds contradictory repercussions in their lives. The transsexual informants may feel more vulnerable to humiliation and verbal abuse than the CD informants do because they constantly feel the need to challenge the perceptions of the public. On the other hand, the CD informants articulate a much confident attitude towards their environment because they position themselves in a buffer zone which is as impervious as possible to any interference from without. However, socialization and public appearance are very frustrating for transsexuals as well, therefore; they develop a self defense mechanism that will help them stand clear of any potential danger which their presence might invoke but this depends on the stage of transition they are going through. The transsexual informants who are at the early stages of their transition are more cautious about the extent of interaction with their surroundings and tend to keep out of any unpredictable conflict with the society. However, the ones who have made headway in their transition with HRT and the adoption of the womanhood codes feel more confident and establish various social ties without the fear of stigmatization.

For the transsexual informants, the perception of other people about them is very important. As I pointed out earlier, the construction of their womanhood goes hand in hand with how other people see them and what they think about their gender. Interestingly, they make this point when I ask them what exactly changes after they undergo SRS. For example,

Özge reveals how important it is for her to be considered a woman by other people in order to be accepted in the society.

Onur: Will you define yourself as a heterosexual after the surgery?

Özge: In a way, my gender will be perceived as “woman” and I will be regarded as a heterosexual woman as far as possible from outside. After all, you want to reach the appearance of a woman accepted as normal as far as possible because being known as a transsexual woman might in some way bring negativity upon you.<sup>34</sup>

Berna, who explained her feelings by making a reference to the idea of “woman’s soul”, also made a similar statement when I asked her to elaborate on what she thought about SRS.

Onur: Is the purpose of having operation to eliminate the disparity between the soul and the body completely?

Berna: Of course, it is already your gender which creates this disparity. In some way, people look at your biological sex and they think that you need to live that way so you live according to your biological sex but your gender does not match the quantitative identity you have.<sup>35</sup>

The level of relationship the transsexual informants establishes with their environment depends on which stage of transition process they are in at the moment. The ones who have not gotten on HRT yet or at an earlier stage feel very self-conscious when they are in public and try very hard to avoid any social contact that might put them in jeopardy. They are always careful not to go to some certain parts of the city where their presence might not be welcome, they choose their clothes very carefully so as not to draw any attention and mostly prefer crowded places to commute so that they can mingle easily. On the other hand, the transsexual informants who have started HRT and thus developed female figures are more comfortable

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<sup>34</sup> Onur: Peki ameliyattan sonra sen heteroseksüel diye mi tanımlayacaksın kendini?

Ozge: Bir şekilde, toplumsal cinsiyetim kadın olarak algılanacak ve dışardan mümkün olduğunca bir heteroseksüel kadınmış gibi algılanacağım. Sonuçta bir transseksüel kadın olduğunun bilinmesi bir şekilde size karşı olumsuzluklar getireceği için siz mümkün olduğunca normal kabul edilen kadın görünümüne kavuşmak istiyorsunuz.

<sup>35</sup> Onur: Ameliyat olmak bu ruhla bedeninin uyumsuzluğunu tamamiyle ortadan kaldırmak için midir?

Berna: Tabii, bu uyumsuzluğu yaratan şey zaten sizin toplumsal cinsiyetiniz. Bir şekilde sizin biyolojik cinsiyetinize bakıp o şekilde yaşamanız gerektiği düşünüldüğü için siz biyolojik cinsiyetinize göre yaşıyorsunuz ama toplumsal cinsiyetiniz sizin taşıdığınız cinsel kimliğinizle uyumuyor.



with the way they look and the way other people perceive them. They feel more undisturbed by other people's gazes because as the hormones they receive kick in, their perception in their minds about their own bodies also improves immensely and, therefore, they exert much more effort to catch up with the bodily transformation by performing their self-identified womanhood in public. For example, Semra is a 27 year-old transsexual who will go undergo SRS in a couple of months, claims that she feels very relaxed and enjoys socialization when she goes out because she is considered a complete woman by the public and so no one harasses her because of her condition. She points to the comfort she feels after the HRT in terms of the quality of her interaction with her environment as such:

Onur: How is your relationship with your environment? How is your circle of friend?

Semra: Of course, staying away from my old circle and from my family had an advantage. Besides, my body has started to develop at great speed with the hormone therapy, therefore, I feel good as an individual or in terms of friendship, socialization. Of course I still have difficulties but at least the social pressure decreased. This comfort is very important. Now I can frequent places which I used to feel uneasy to go to before. I have friends around me who know about my situation and support me.<sup>36</sup>

Asude makes a firm assertion about her position in the society and describes it like a battle at the end of which she was the victorious: she states that:

I have struggled very hard to come to this position. When I was young, I used to refrain from communicating with people, from wandering the streets or going to a place to sit and, I went through a lot of trouble. But I am comfortable now. I live my sexual identity as I

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<sup>36</sup> Onur: Çevrenle ilişkin nasıl? Arkadaş çevren nasıl?

Semra: Tabii eski çevreden ve aileden uzak olmanın bir avantajı oldu. Bir de hormon tedavisiyle birlikte vücudum inanılmaz hızla gelişmeye başladı, o yüzden, bireysel anlamda ve arkadaşlık, sosyal anlamda kendimi iyi hissediyorum. Tabii yine çok zorluklarla karşılaşıyorum ama en azından sosyal baskı çok azaldı. O rahatlık çok önemli. Önceden tedirginlikle gittiğim yerlere artık daha rahat girip çıkıyorum. Durumumu bilen ve destek olan arkadaşlarım var etrafımda.

please, and no one can clam up. I have the right to these streets as well as anyone and I have forced my way in.<sup>37</sup>

Sevil is a 20 year-old informant who started attending therapy sessions a couple of months ago. Her physical properties are not apparent enough to reveal her transgender identity. She implements some small and temporary modifications on her body such as stuffing cotton pads in her brassiere, sticking her penis between her thighs with a duck tape or wearing a light make-up on her face. However, the use of these temporary modifications depends on the level of interaction she will engage in, people around her and the places she will go to. For example, when she came to the interview, she was dressed in a t-shirt and trousers with no make-up on her face. She looked like a young slim male person without any sign of transsexuality. Since I was a complete stranger to her, she did not want to run the risk of allowing any comment or interpretation that I might fashion in my mind or state to her face. However, when she was expressing her thoughts regarding her environment and how she generally felt about it, it was clear that she was very self-conscious and cautious because she said that she made those modifications from time to time but without them, she, nevertheless, attracted attention and so felt inhibited and keyed up. But, actually, there was no any apparent mark that would give away her transsexuality. She stated that:

My relationship with my environment is limited for now. Due to my condition, I do not have much chance to socialize. For one thing, I cannot go anywhere I want to or whenever I want to. There is this constant fear and anxiety that someone will make a comment or pick on me because I look a bit like...I mean, I draw attention and people keep staring at me because my hair is long, I look feminine but my body is not so yet. But I have to overcome this slowly. Therefore, I go out as much as I can to gain self-confidence.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Bu pozisyona ulaşabilmek için çok uğraştım. Gençken çok çekiniyordum insanlarla iletişim kurmaktan, sokaklarda dolaşmaktan veya bir yere gidip oturmaktan ve çok sıkıntılı durumlar da yaşadım. Ama artık rahatım. İstedğim gibi cinsel kimliğimi yaşayabiliyorum, kimse de gıkını çıkartmıyor. Bu sokaklar herkesin olduğu kadar benim de hakkım ve bu hakkı söke söke aldım.

<sup>38</sup> Sevil: Çevremle ilişkim şimdilik kısıtlı. Durumumdan ötürü çok fazla sosyalleşme imkanım olmuyor. Bir kere istediğim yere istediğim saatte gidemiyorum. Devamlı bir korku, bir endişe oluyor; birisi laf atacak, sataşacaklar diye çünkü şu an biraz şey görünüyorum yani dikkat çekiyorum, saçım uzun, efemine görünüyorum ama

As you can see from the quotes above, the ways the transsexual informants position themselves in the society change according to the level of transition they undertake. The more they acquire female bodily features, the more confident they feel in developing new ways of interaction and establishing ties with their environment. In addition, they consider fitting into society be an important indication of the completion of gender formation process.

For the cross-dresser informants, socialization is mostly restricted to their close environment which is impermeable to too much unpredictability and change. They mostly befriend people from the same profession and prefer to spend time together in places they are accepted as who they are or prefer to commute between work and home at certain hours without engaging in any kind of interaction apart from their customers.

Zuhal: I have some certain friends that I meet. They are also from our profession. Other than that, I do not have much thing, I mean, communication with people. It is mostly clients; after all I meet them at certain places. Other than that, there are some places we hang out but we are not that thing, I mean, we are not very open.

Onur: Why are you not very open?

Zuhal: The curious, blaming eyes from around, verbal abuses...After a certain point, it wears away one's soul. You get tired of it rather than feeling sorry. As soon as you go out, you feel the eyes on you and this is very exhausting. Think of it this way, you go out with a couple of friends of yours, men already approach you, for the thing, you know, (they ask) 'how much is it?' such and such.<sup>39</sup>

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vücutum öyle değil henüz. Ama bunu yavaş yavaş aşmam gerekiyor. O yüzden elimden geldiğince dışarı çıkıp kendime güvenimi kazanmaya çalışıyorum.

<sup>39</sup> Zuhal: Belirli görüştüğüm arkadaşlarım var. Yine bizim meslekten. Onun dışında çok bir şeyim yok, yani iletişimim yok insanlarla. Çoğunlukla müşteri olur, zaten onlarla belirli yerlerde buluşuruz. Onun dışında ara sıra takıldığımız yerler var ama çok da şey değildir yani, çok açık değildir.

Onur: Neden açık değilsiniz?

Zuhal: Etraftan gelen meraklı, suçlayıcı bakışlar, sataşmalar... Bir yerden sonra insanın ruhunu aşındırıyor. Üzmekten de öte yoruluyorsunuz. Bir kere dışarı çıktığınız an devamlı bakışları üstünüzde hissediyorsunuz ve bu çok yıpratıcı. Bir de düşün, birkaç arkadaşınla çıkıyorsun, zaten erkekler hemen yanına geliyor, şey için, işte ne kadar falan diye (soruyorlar)?

As you can see, Zuhâl's account reflects her feeling of learned helplessness. She sounds like she gave up on trying making herself accepted among the society and instead withdrew into her shell by clinging to her immediate surroundings.

Yasemin: Everybody knows me in this neighborhood. I go out, I buy meat from my butcher, I buy cigarettes from the grocery store, no one says or does something wrong. I have a very good relationship with all of them. They ask how I am and treat me kindly. I come and leave home whenever I want to, my neighbors haven't even once complained.

Onur: Do you ever go out to socialize with other people?

Yasemin: Very rarely. I mostly prefer sitting at home and watching TV. I find comfort at home. I only go out to work at night and come back towards morning.<sup>40</sup>

Yasemin, 29, also reveals the same frame of mind when it comes to social interaction practices she utilizes. However, instead of expressing an inhibition due to the destructive nature of the public interaction, she focuses on her social ties she established with her immediate surroundings and emphasizes the advantages she receives with this kind of socialization technique. However, her statements also signify the public life as a demarcated space with clear-cut borders defining the limits of her interaction with the outside world and this interaction is mainly work-related. When I wanted to conduct an interview with Dilara, 26 year-old, she postponed the appointment twice and changed the meeting place each time. First, she wanted me to go to her place and then she called and said that she was busy. The same thing happened the second time. When I contacted her for the third time, she said that she wanted to meet at a friend's place. When I went to meet her, there were a couple of CD individuals and an elderly gay man who lived with them. When I introduced myself to them they gave a cold shoulder and acted with suspicion towards me. However, after an hour of

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<sup>40</sup> Yasemin: Bu mahallede beni herkes tanır. Dışarı çıkarım, kasabımdan etimi alırım, bakkaldan sigaramı alırım, kimse de ters bir şey yapmaz, söylemez. Hepsiyle ilişkim gayet iyidir. Hal hatır sorarlar, kibar davranırlar. İstedğim zaman girip çıkarım evime, komşularım da hiç bir gün bir şey dememişlerdir.

Onur: Peki sosyalleşme için hiç dışarı çıkar mısın?

Yasemin: Çok nadir. Çoğunlukla evde oturup televizyon seyretmeyi tercih ediyorum. Huzur buluyorum evde. Sadece iş için gece çıkarım sabaha doğru dönerim.

chatting, the atmosphere turned friendlier and I had the chance to interview her. This experience also told me something about how cross-dressers limit their access to the social life which was supported by Dilara's statements when I asked her relationship with her environment:

I don't go out much. We sit with friends, spend some time. We get together at someone's place. We generally get together at my place, my place is more central. Other than that, we don't have much thing, I mean, connection with the outside.<sup>41</sup>

Consequently, most of the cross-dresser informants establish connection with the outside world through their profession and it takes place especially at night. They generally develop a good rapport with their clients with phone number exchange and getting to know each other after a certain point, however, they sometimes find themselves in difficult situations because they get attacked by people on the street or the police threaten them with violence so that they would be obliged to pay them a certain amount of money, sometimes even sex service, as bribe. Therefore, different from transsexuals, for cross-dressers the interaction with the outside world does not get better and better as it becomes more frequent. Quite the contrary, it proves to them that they will always be in the marginalized position due to their transgender identity associated with their profession.

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<sup>41</sup> Çok fazla dışarı çıkmam. Böyle arkadaşlarla otururuz, vakit geçiririz. İş olmadığı zaman birisinin evinde toplanırız. Genellikle ben de toplanırız, benim evim daha merkezi bir yerde. Onun dışında pek bir şeyimiz yok, yani dışarıyla bağlantımız.

## CHAPTER 6: FOUR PILLARS OF HETERONORMATIVITY AND HETEROSEXISM

### I. Family narratives

In the previous chapter, I analyzed the transgender formation process on the individual level. In this chapter, I intend to relate this process to the four institutions which have a great impact on the lived experiences of the informants. I start the chapter with the analysis of the family and then the military, the medical field and lastly the nation state. I argue that the family in Turkey is an institution which upholds and reproduces heteronormative discourses and therefore, parents' attitudes towards their transgender children reflect the tenets of those discourses. This means that they do not approve of their children's transgender identity or sexual orientation; they do not give emotional or financial support to them in order to realize their transitions or live in their true identities, they drive them apart from their close environment and force them to move to another city. All these punitive solutions have a very harmful impact on the lived experiences of the transgender informants. Most of them suffer from very heavy depression and attempted suicide more than once.

Pelin: As you cannot live your own identity, it piles up in you and some commit suicide, some other leave their families behind and go away. If they leave at that period; in high school, university or at the age of 17, 18 or 19, there is a chance of ending up on the streets, I mean, prostitution.

Onur: Have you ever thought about it (leaving your family)?

Pelin: I thought about leaving, moving away but I went to the other way, I mean, to depression, I have attempted suicide for a couple of times.

Onur: How many times did you attempt suicide?

Pelin: I think three times. Of course, it didn't result in death but even though there is nothing wrong on the outside but I might have had some damage on the inside because things you did not expect to

happen somehow permeated into your life. When you cannot live your life like you want to, life has no meaning.<sup>42</sup>

As I pointed out in the previous chapter, moving away from parents' side is one of the most important steps in the informants' lives. However, as I bring up the subject of family, most of them feel very frustrated or dejected due to the fact that accepting themselves as who they are cost them being excluded from their families. The major reason for this exclusion is homosexuality. Although feminine behaviors are apparent from childhood, parents tend to avoid them or discourage their children with punishment. However, when the informants reach puberty, homosexual desire comes to surface. When they tell this to their parents almost all of them face a very negative reaction from them. Some of them do not even reveal this to their parents yet they hear it from third parties and again their reaction becomes very negative and discouraging. For example, Gamze states her confrontation when she reveals her situation to her parents as:

My parents already knew that there was something wrong with me but they ignored it until I thought like 'I have to tell them, I mean I could not take it anymore and told them but their reaction was horrible. After all, I knew that they would not take it normally but they reacted in a very rough way. They said 'you are sick, go and get some treatment.'<sup>43</sup>

What Gamze's parents told her is a very common reaction most of the transsexual informants received when they confided in their mothers and fathers. They mostly relate their condition

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<sup>42</sup> Pelin: Kendi kimliğinizi yaşayamadıkça içinizde birikiyor birikiyor ve kimisi intihar ediyor, kimisi ailesini bırakıp gidiyor. O dönemde bırakıp giderse, lise son, üniversite 17,18,19 yaşlarında, daha kötü yollara düşme ihtimali oluyor yani orospuluğun.

Onur: Sen düşünmüş müydün (alieni terk etmeyi)?

Pelin: Ben ayrılmayı düşündüm, uzaklaşmayı düşündüm ama ben öbür tarafa gittim. Yani, depresif noktaya gittim, intiharlar falan oldu.

Onur: Kaç kere kalkıştın intihara?

Pelin: Sanırım üç kez. Tabii ölümle sonuçlanmadı ama şu an ortada bi şey yok belki ama bir hasarını taşıyor olabilirim çünkü olmadık şeyler bir şekilde hayatınıza sinmiş. İstedığınız gibi yaşayamayınca bir anlamı kalmıyor hayatın.

<sup>43</sup> Ailem zaten bende bir gariplik olduğunu biliyordu ama görmezden geldiler uzun bir süre ta ki ben artık 'söylemek zorundayım' diye düşünene kadar yani artık dayanamıyordum ve söyledim ama tepkileri korkunç oldu. Sonuçta biliyordum doğal karşılamayacaklarını ama çok sert tepki gösterdiler. 'Hastasın sen, git tedavi ol' dediler.

to their parents as homosexuality. Parents consider this an abnormality that has to be treated as soon as possible. Some of the informants attribute this reaction to the ignorance of their parents and claim that if they had been informed about it earlier, they would have given different reactions and been more supportive. Another important issue is the difference between the reactions given by fathers and mothers. The informants' narratives point out that the tendency of their fathers to their condition is mostly denial, anger or even violence. For example, Özge states that:

To begin with, I do not have a contact with my father; I mean he doesn't talk to me. I have tried many times, asked my mother to mediate but it did not work. That is why I feel very bad. Yet only if they knew what I have gone through... This being the case, one starts to blame oneself. What could it be that I have done that they cut off their communication with me; is this (her transgender identity) such a bad thing?<sup>44</sup>

This only makes sense when we take into account the operation of heteronormativity within family. Fathers regard their son's confession as an insult to their own manhood and as a threat to their position in the patriarchal system. First, having a homosexual son casts a doubt on the parental skills of mothers and fathers, especially, in the heteronormative system; sons are expected to take their fathers as role models. Therefore in this situation fathers' manhood is called in question. Second, sons are considered to be the leader of the family after fathers but a homosexual son disrupts this normative expectation and proves himself to be incapable of assuming that role in the eyes of the father. In addition, social pressure is also very significant in the reactions of fathers because if their sons' homosexuality is heard by other people, they fear that it will tarnish the reputation of their family. Therefore, they object to it very harshly and mostly cut their communication off with their sons.

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<sup>44</sup> Bir kere babamla görüşmüyorum yani o benimle konuşmuyor. Çok denedim, annemi araya soktum ama o da işe yaramadı. O yüzden tabii çok kötü hissediyorum kendimi. Oysa ki bir bilseler neler yaşadığımı... İnsan bu sefer kendisini suçluyor. Ne yapmış olabilirim bu kadar beni hayatlarından çıkaracak kadar, bu kadar mı kötü bir şey bu (trans kimliği)?



However, parents' reactions also show variations depending on the stage of transition their sons are going through. Even though, they do not accept the reality of their children's homosexuality and react in a negative way in the beginning, when the child moves away and begins her "treatment" by consulting to medical field, the tension between the child and her parents defuses a little bit because parents come to terms with the fact that their position will not change the condition of their son and also think that their son comes to terms with the fact that her condition needs treatment. In addition, as the transition progresses, the transsexual informants also lay hopes on the ultimate transformation which will take place with HRT and SRS. Therefore, most of them expect to make up with their parents after undergoing those procedures as soon as possible. For example, Asude describes this process as such:

Asude: When my parents heard of it the first time, they were very sorry and a tension grew between us. At first they did not want to accept it, they were angry, swore at me, especially my father was very angry during that time. They sent me here because otherwise my staying there would cause them trouble.

Onur: When did you get here?

Asude: I was 19. Later on, my parents realized that this was something from God. They came to visit me from time to time and as they saw the changes I've had, they got used to it. My breasts had developed and I had a body of a woman. That is why they are more understanding to my condition now.

Onur: How do they see you now?

Asude: They had a son, now they have a daughter. But of course it will be sorted out completely after the surgery.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Asude: Ailem ilk öğrendiklerinde çok üzüldü ve gergin bir durum oldu aramızda. İlk başta kabul etmek istemediler, kızdılar, sövdüler, özellikle babam çok sinirliydi o dönem. Beni buraya yolladılar, orada durmam hani onlar açısından sıkıntı yaratacağı.

Onur: Ne zaman geldin buraya?

Asude: 19 yaşındaydım. Daha sonra ailem de anladı ki yani bu Allah'tan bir şey sonuçta. Ara sıra ziyaretime geldiler ve bendeki değişikliği gördükçe alışmaya başladılar fikre. Göğüslerim çıkmıştı ve bir kadın vücuduna kavuşmuştum. O yüzden şimdi çok daha anlayışlılar benim durumuma karşı.

Onur: Şimdi nasıl görüyorlar seni?

Asude: Erkek çocukları vardı şimdi kız çocukları var. Ama tabii ameliyatla tam olarak hallolucak.

As you can see in Asude's account, as the transsexual informants get closer to their full transition to being a woman, in some cases, their parents' approach to them improve positively. Another reason behind this tendency is that as the transsexual informants take cognizance of their true identity, they also bring it to their parents' attention and raise their awareness on the issue of transgender subjectivity. Of course, behind this progress lies the fact that the gender identity of the informants will conform to the normative binary gender codes. Thus, for a family, having a transsexual son who will become a woman is much more favorable than a homosexual child because in the end, they will be able to make sense of their son's gender identity within the limits of heteronormative discourses. Besides, the fact that a transsexual's new gender identity will be recognized by the state institutions and she will have the right to get married and start a family also provides parents with the assurance that their son will stop transgressing the binary codes and will be able to be defined within them.

However this situation is quite different for the cross-dresser informants. Their relationships with their families are very problematic and most of them have severed all their ties with their parents or talk to them very rarely when an extraordinary situation arises such as the death of a family member. Other than that, they all live far away from their families and their parents do not have or do not want to have any idea as to how their children get by in life. What they face is a total exclusion from the family circle and lack of any kind of emotional or financial support which is exacerbated by the family members harassing them from time to time. It goes without saying that main reasons behind this are that the CD informants but one engage in sex work regarded as immoral, they all define themselves as homosexual regarded as deviant and they wear the clothing of the opposite sex regarded as abnormal. All these three points minimize their chances of being accepted by their parents and having a healthy relationship with them.

Dilara is 26 years old and has been in sex work for almost 8 years. She has worn women's clothing since she left her home town when she was 17 years old. She has defined herself as homosexual since she was in high school and as a result she was subjected to humiliation and exclusion by her parents and siblings. When I ask her the reaction of her parents to her homosexuality, she halfheartedly describes the situation as such:

Dilara: They hurt me a lot. I haven't been able to go and see my home town even once since I was 17 years old and no one shows concern for me. This is a terrible thing; people who you call mother and father for years turn their back on you. They don't call and ask how I am, they don't care.

Onur: Why do you think they assume such an attitude?

Dilara: I don't know; ignorance or fear or whatever it is.<sup>46</sup>  
Ayşe, 27 year-old cross-dresser, states that she also does not have much connection with her parents but that it is her choice. The reason behind this choice is that she does not want to give that kind of burden to her parents since they live in an environment which these kinds of behaviors are not tolerated. Later she tells me that she is Kurdish and her parents already had too many difficulties in their lives to be able to deal with her transgender identity. She states that:

I came to Istanbul at an early age and after I got here I started to live with my homosexual identity. I don't know if my family knows but I don't go to see them. I talk to them on the phone. I don't want them to know, I don't want them to deal with this too. They are ignorant people, they don't understand it, and I thought that there was no point in making them sorry unnecessarily.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Dilara: Beni çok kırdılar. 17 yaşımdan beri bir kere gidip görmedim memleketimi, gidemiyorum. Kimsenin de arayıp sorduğu yok. Berbat bir şey bu, yıllarca anne, baba dediğin insanlar bir anda sırt çeviriyor sana. Arayıp sormuyorlar, ne haldesin ne yapıyorsun, umurlarında değil.

Onur: Peki neden böyle bir tavır takınıyorlar sence?

Dilara: Artık cahillik mi desem, korku mu desem neyse ne.

<sup>47</sup> Ben erken yaşta geldim İstanbul'a ve geldikten sonra da eşcinsel kimliğimle yaşayama başladım. Ailem biliyor mu bilmiyorum ama ben çok gidip gelmiyorum. Telefonla görüşüyorum. İstemiyorum bilmelerini, bir de bununla uğraşmalarını istemiyorum. Cahil insanlardır, anlamazlar, gereksiz yere üzme gerek yok dedim.

Ceyda is 22 years old and studies university. She is the only informant who is not in sex work. She walks the streets with women's clothes and accessories comfortably and socializes with as many people as possible. She says that her parents are relatively open-minded people and do not judge her for being homosexual but she never goes to see them as who she really is; she wears men's clothes when she visits them in their home town and there is some kind of a "don't ask, don't tell" situation going on between them. She states that:

I do not place a heavier burden than they can handle. It already took them some time to accept my homosexuality. So, if I appear before them like this, they feel very sorry. Especially, my father gets sorry very much, you know, in these situations, fathers become more intolerant and rigid. That is why I hide my CD condition from them; they do not have to know about it anyway.<sup>48</sup>

As you can see, even if the parents acknowledge their children's condition, their attitude towards homosexuality and cross-dressing depends on the extent to which they have to confront them. Ceyda understands this limitation and therefore hides his cross-dressing act from his parents because that might jeopardize his already fragile relationship with them.

The main difference within the cross-dresser informants in making sense of their parents' negative attitude towards their transgender identity is very much related to their participation in the LGBTTT movement. It emerges as a significant departure point when it comes to articulating the heteronormative discourses operant within the family structure. Although all the informants report that they feel very frustrated and helpless in the face of destructive attitude assumed by their parents, the ones who have active participation in the LGBTTT movement can make clearer explanations regarding the possible reasons behind this exclusion and tie it to the patriarchal and heteronormative structures of the family institution. Therefore instead of blaming their parents they analyze the situation in a more analytical

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<sup>48</sup> Kaldırabileceklerinden daha fazlasını vermiyorum onlara. Zaten homoseksüelliğimi kabul etmeleri zaman aldı. Şimdi karşlarına bu şekilde çıkarsam, çok üzülürler. Özellikle babam çok üzülür, biliyorsun, bu durumlarda babalar daha bir anlayışsız olur, sert olur. O yüzden CD halimi onlardan saklıyorum, zaten bilmeleri de gerekmiyor.

perspective. They point out that their marginalization by their own parents is a result of the exaltation and reproduction of heterosexuality by the media, the education system and by all state institutions. For example, Gülşah explains her parents' attitude as:

They also are not aware of the pressure which made them who they are. They grew up in patriarchal values; they internalized them. Wherever they turn, they see the exaltation of heterosexuality; in their own families, in the media, in the education system. That is why they look askance at it when they face this kind of situation, they don't know how to deal with it.<sup>49</sup>

Melis is a 25 year-old cross-dresser who has been actively participating in the LGBTTT movement for 4 years. When I ask her why her parents reacted in a negative way to her transgender identity, she adopts a very compassionate language and summarizes the embedded codes of heterosexuality with the way they operate within the family institution.

It will sound weird but I feel very sorry for my parents. Everything they have is restricted; their expectations from me, their opinions, even their affection are determined by the system. Think about it, they cannot even show unconditional affection to me because they have to see me as a fagot. That is how they were taught. 'if your son is not having sex with women, he is queer, gay, pansy. This is how heterosexuality is embedded and infused everywhere. Marry a woman, insult her, beat her, join the army and die, but never be gay. But it is how it goes; you become a person of where you are born. Heterosexism has been penetrated into the veins of this country.<sup>50</sup>

In line with this, I should point out that in the last couple of years; there has been some improvement in the familial perception of transgender individuals. For example, LISTAG/LGBTTT Families Istanbul Group was established in 2008 with the aim of supporting and informing families with transgender members. In this group, some parents openly stood

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<sup>49</sup> Onlar da farkında değil nasıl bir baskı sonucu bu hale geldiklerinin. Ataterkil değerlerin içinde büyümüşler; onları özümsemişler. Nereye dönüp baksalar heteroseksüelliğin yüceltildiğini görüyorlar; kendi aileleri, medya, eğitim sistemi. O yüzden böyle bir durumla karşılaştıklarında tabi ki olumsuz bakıyorlar; nasıl başa çıkacaklarını bilmiyorlar.

<sup>50</sup> Kulağa garip gelecek ama ben aileme çok üzülüyorum. Her şeyleri sınırlandırılmış, benden beklentileri, görüşleri hatta sevgileri bile sistem tarafından belirlenmiş. Düşünsene şartsız sevgi bile sunamıyorlar çünkü beni ibne gibi görmek zorundalar. Öyle öğretilmiş onlara. Oğlunuz kadınlarla yatmıyorsa nonoş, ibne, top. Böyle gömülmüş bu heteroseksüellik, nüfuz etmiş her yere. Bir kadınla evlen, aşağıla, döv, askere git, öl, ama sakın ibne olma. Ama nerede doğarsan oranın insanı oluyorsun işte. Heteroseksizm damarlarına işlemiş bu ülkenin.

by their trans children, joined Trans Pride demonstrations with them and took active role to eliminate discrimination and ostracization against trans individuals (Listag/ Lgbtt Aileleri, n.d.). This shows that there is a nascent paradigm change in the heteronormative structure of the family adopted by some parents and improvement in their perceptions. Although none of the informants' accounts revealed such an improvement in their families yet, I think that it is worth noting that with the participation of the informants in the LGBTTT movement, the strict and exclusionary practices of families might also give way to a more open-minded and inclusive attitude.

## **II. Narratives on the encounters with the Military**

The second issue I analyze in this chapter is the impact of the heterosexist practices implemented by the military. The military in Turkey excludes homosexual and transgender individuals on the grounds that they do not fit the criteria of masculinity defined by medical and psychiatric evaluations. They are subjected to humiliating examinations and interviews to prove that they are not suitable for the military service. When I ask the informants about their experiences of the discriminatory practices of the military, they all relate very unfortunate and disturbing situations they found themselves in. The most traumatic impact of the military medical procedures is the feeling of helplessness in the face of senseless bureaucratic formalities based on obsolete medical and psychoanalytical foundations. Similar to Biricik's findings (2009), the informants also make temporary modifications on their appearance and behavior depending on what is expected of them during those examinations and interviews conducted by a military committee. One and only source of information they have is other transgender or homosexual individuals who have gone through the same process before. Hale is a transsexual who explains the strategies she employed during examinations and the committee interview as:

Hale: You get some information as to what you will face there. You ask your friends and they warn you and say ‘do this, don’t do that.’

Onur: Like what?

Hale: For example, you definitely have to be feminine. I, for example, was not this feminine but my friends said ‘if you go there like this, they will draft you.’ That is why I behaved in a more feminine way that day and pinned some more jewellery on me. It really worked because on the report they gave me stated ‘effeminate behaviors were observed.’<sup>51</sup>

As you can see, the military medical discourses even define the criteria of abnormality and set the limits of acceptable standards so as to prove your unfitness to the institution. Therefore, Hale was obliged to pretend to be more feminine and more flamboyant than she was. In a way, the military gives transgender individuals no other chance to assume that inferior position before the medical gaze and dictates them to fulfill the requirements they want to see in a transgender individual. This, of course, shows the main governing idea of discourses. They infuse in the lived experiences of transgender individuals and leave no space for authenticity.

Arzu is a 28 year-old cross-dresser who had a similar experience with the military medical authorities and despite being warned beforehand, she assumed that the medical staff had a robust scientific frame of mind which would scrutinize her condition elaborately. But as she states, this was not the case:

They sent me to a couple of different places so that I could get my rotten report because they were not sure about it. But my friends had warned me before. Of course, back then I was sure about my homosexuality but I did not wear women’s clothes or make-up much, I mean from time to time. In fact I thought that it would not be their concern. I mean, I thought that my homosexuality had nothing to do

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<sup>51</sup> Hale: Nasıl bir şeyle karşılaşacağına dair az çok fikrin oluyor. Arkadaşlarına soruyorsun onlar da uyarıyor; ‘şöyle yap, şöyle yapma’ diye.

Onur: Ne gibi?

Hale: Mesela, muhakkak efemine olmak zorundasın. Ben mesela o kadar da kadınsı değildim ama arkadaşlar, ‘böyle gidersen alırlar seni askere’ dediler. Ben de o gün biraz kadınsı davrandım işte ve biraz daha taktım takıştırdım. Gerçekten de işe yaradı, çünkü verdikleri raporda yazdılar: ‘efemine davranışlar gözlemlendi’ falan diye.

with me wearing women's clothes. But I realized that it was not the case. They asked exactly these questions such as 'do you wear women's clothes? Do you have effeminate behaviors?' Then I figured it out, of course; their concern is to put me into the image in their mind and then of course I replied 'yes' in other things [examinations].<sup>52</sup>

The military in Turkey insists on evaluating non-conforming gender identities according to the DSM III. What the military-medical authorities want to observe is not a genuine expression of identity, all they seek for is conformity with the heterosexist norms, if that is not the case, it should be conformity with pathologizing criteria outlined by DSM III which diagnoses homosexuality as a "mental disorder." This means that the informants work hard to prove that they lack mental health and necessary masculinity so that they are granted exemption from the military service. What is also unfortunate for the informants is that they are confronted with such an apathetic and brutal treatment of the military at a very sensitive stage of their transition. For example, Banu, a cross-dresser, explains the situation as:

I was at the age of 18 or 19. I moved away from my family and that environment. Of course, I was not studying. I reached the draft age. A letter came from the military. I went there to be examined, to be exempt from the service. But until then, I had never had a sexual intercourse. I had not gone all the way with a man. Of course, they did not believe me, there is this thing composed of military staff; committee. I told them that I was homosexual but there was no evidence. They examined me [but] there is nothing. I, myself, still could not figure out what I was back then and they asked for evidence. They asked for some photographs. It is a terrible thing; that was how I had my first sexual experience.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Beni bir kaç yere daha yolladılar çürük raporu alabilmem için çünkü ilk başta emin olamadılar. Ama arkadaşlarım uyarıyordu daha önceden. Tabii o zaman eşcinsel kimliğimden eminim ama kadın kıyafetleri, makyaj falan gibi şeylerim pek yok, yani arada sırada. Zaten onların derdi de o değil diye düşündüm. Yani, eşcinsel olduğumu kanıtlamamla hani kadın kıyafeti giymem falan alakası yok diye düşündüm. Ama meğersem, işler öyle değilmiş. Bana kurulda gayet bu soruları sordular işte; 'kadın kıyafetleri giyiyor musun?', davranışlarında efeminelik var mı?' gibi sorular. Ben de o zaman çaktım tabii; bunların derdi kafalarındaki o şeye oturtmak beni. Ben de tabii hep 'evet' diye cevap verdim daha sonraki şeylerde [examinations].

<sup>53</sup> 18, 19 yaşındayım. Ailemden, aile ortamından uzaklaşmışım. Tabii okumuyorum, askerlik yaşı geldi. Eve kağıt gelmiş askeriyeden. Ben de gittim, işte muayene falan olacağım, muaf olmak için. Ama o zamana kadar benim daha hiç şey ilişkim olmamış. Hani bir erkekle tam sonuna kadar gitmemişim. Tabii inanmadılar bana, o askerlerden oluşan bir şey var komite. Eşcinsel olduğumu söyledim ama kanıt yok. Muayene ettiler [ama] hiçbir şey yok. Ben daha kendim ne olduğumu çözemedim, onlar benden kanıt istiyor. Fotoğraf istediler. Çok berbat bir şey; İlk cinsel deneyimim böyle oldu işte.



Nesrin, a 26 year-old transsexual, shares with me the conversation she had with the medical doctor who examined her 6 years ago. The things the doctor told her was so disturbing that she remembers them almost word by word:

The doctor told me ‘you are sick, my son, the likes of you come here, get their report then do you know what happens? They become prostitutes. Go and do your military service like a man, get your discharge papers, then go and get some treatment. You are confused. Find yourself a girlfriend, do whatever you want to, be a man. What are you going to do by becoming a woman, are you going to get married and have children?’<sup>54</sup>

If we break down this homophobic and heterosexist piece of advice given by a doctor to Nesrin, we can see various elements operating within the military-medical discourses. First of all, he associates transgender homosexuality with sickness; this way he reproduces the discriminatory essence of the societal fabric which justifies the exclusion of homosexuals as sick people in need of treatment and homosexuality as a temporary aberration from the heterosexuality which is the only normal way of sexual orientation. Second, he automatically connects transgender identity with prostitution and manifests the social and economic barriers which do not leave any other opportunity for transgender individuals but survive through sex labor. Third, he regards Nesrin’s sexual orientation and transgender identity as incompatible with the requirements of the military service and suggests that she be drafted so that she can become a real man. Fourth, he implies that her transition will always be incomplete since she will not be able to have children even though she gets married; therefore, not only does he ignore the multifarious nature of gender identities but also reveals his opinion about women by reducing their position in the society to only wives and mothers.

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<sup>54</sup> Doktor bana ‘sen hastasın oğlum, senin gibiler geliyor buraya, alıyorlar raporu sonra ne oluyor biliyor musun? Orosu oluyorlar. Git adam gibi yap askerliğini, al tezkereni, sonra git tedavi ol. Senin kafan karışmış. Bir kız arkadaş bul kendine, ne yapıyorsan yap, erkek adam ol. Kadın olup ne yapacaksın, evlenip çocuk mu yapacaksın?’ dedi.

The only difference I detected between the narratives of the transsexual and CD informants is that the former feels very disturbed by the fact that the military medical gaze does not bother to scrutinize the theoretical difference between these two groups; therefore, it regards transsexuals also as homosexuals with women's clothes. However, the transsexual informants do, in no way, want to be addressed as CD or homosexual. This means that the military lumps these two different transgender persons together and stigmatizes them as deviant, abnormal and unfit. The transsexual informants' concern about being seen as CD stems from the fact that when they apply to the conscription offices to be exempt from the military service, the examinations they undergo serve the purpose of diagnosing them as homosexuals. However, in their minds, they do not consider themselves homosexuals or rather they think that their sexual preference is not related to their demand of exemption. For example, when the military medical staff demanded Özge that she go rectal examination, she relates how she felt as such:

I already knew what their concern was, they will carry out a rectal examination, and they will check if I had sexual intercourse in the passive role. How ugly this is, how humiliating! Yet my concern is not about me being homosexual, I have already gone through this problem, my concern is to undergo operation and become a woman, but this disgusting treatment they deemed proper...No matter what you feel, no matter how you see yourself, their mind is, excuse my language, focused on my ass.<sup>55</sup>

The quote below is an excerpt from the interview I conducted with Berna in which she describes how she was presumed to be involved in sex labor and was stigmatized as an inferior being by the military doctor who examined her. However, what we also see in the statement of Berna is the distance she puts between herself and "transvestites."

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<sup>55</sup> Biliyordum zaten dertlerinin ne olduğunu, rektal muayene yapacaklar, bakacaklar pasif şekilde ilişkiye girmiş miyim diye. Ne kadar çirkin bir şey, ne kadar aşağılayıcı! Oysa ki benim derdim eşcinsel olmam değil, zaten yıllarca bu dertle uğraşmışım, benim derdim ameliyat olmak ve kadın olmak, ama bana reva gördükleri bu iğrenç muamele... Sen ne hissedersen hisset, kendini nasıl görürsen gör, onların aklı, afedersin, götüne kaçmış.

I went into the examination room and in there something happened that troubled me. Right in there I was hurt a little. As soon as I entered there, the doctor asked me “why do you do this job (prostitution)?” He sees it like a profession, I mean, he makes an association with the transvestites he sees on TV and thinks that I also do it as a profession.<sup>56</sup>

As I pointed out earlier, the transsexual informants feel very bothered when they are associated with or mistaken for cross-dressers. Although they also find similarities between their own gender identities and those of cross-dressers, they seem to develop a defensive attitude against any kind of subjectivity which will present them as cross-dressers. I think that behind this defense mechanism lies the fact that transsexuals already suffer a lot for who they are or who they want to be, therefore, they do not want to be subjected to more discrimination and marginalization as a result of being considered cross-dressers. This only increases their burden because cross-dressers are mostly stigmatized as prostitutes and held in contempt. I also think that the gender performativity of cross-dressers is also leads to the detachment of transsexuals from them. As I analyzed in the previous chapter, during gender formation process, transsexuals strive to construct a solid ground for their identities through adoption and internalization of various norms and codes of conduct practiced by women. For this matter, they want to form their subjectivities in such a way that they will be impervious to any kind of suspicion or ambiguity. However, the presence of homosexual cross-dressers creates a problem for the definability and recognition of transsexuals because they feel in danger of being mistaken for them at face value. Therefore, this tendency of distancing themselves from cross-dressers is also apparent in the articulation of the heterosexist practices of the military institution which diagnoses both these transgender identities as homosexuals and marginalizes them.

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<sup>56</sup> Muayene odasına girdim ve işte orada bir sıkıntı yaşadım. İşte orada onurum biraz incindi. İlk girdiğim anda doktorun bana sorusu; “bu işi niçin yapıyorsun?” Bunu direkt bir meslek olarak görüyor yani televizyonda gördüğü o travestilerle vesaire öyle bir çağrışım (yapıyor) ve bunu benim bir meslek olarak yaptığımı sanıyor.

Throughout the interviews, I did not find a difference in the transsexual informants' narratives which would justify their exclusion from the military within their subjectivities in relation to womanhood. This is due to the fact that when they received "rotten report" from the military medical authorities, they were not fully aware of their own transsexual identities. Most of them stated that they defined themselves as homosexual at that time. In addition, under the oppressive bureaucratic mechanism of the military, revealing their transgender identity would not improve their situation because the main concern of the heterosexist structure of the military is to weed out the "rotten" homosexuals from the "fit" heterosexuals based on the imposed binary gender paradigm.

The political engagement of some of the self-identified Kurdish informants is another dimension that is worth noting here. When I asked about their encounters with the military medical authorities, they related very interesting statements which differentiated their positionality from the rest of the informants. They approached the subject not from their transgender identity per se but also from their lived experiences of politicization due to their ethnic background. For example, throughout the interview I conducted with Zeynep who is a 33 year-old self identified Kurdish transsexual, she did not seem very interested in the questions I posed about the transgender formation process she went through. However, when the subject came to the military, she was very attentive and pointed out her opinions very clearly:

We already went through the worst. For one thing, as Kurds, there is nothing left we did not suffer from. We met it (the military); they destroyed and burned down. There are a lot of people who went to the countryside (joining the PKK). Think of it now; you are both Kurd and a *trans*. You go to the office (draft office). They check your I.D., you are finished there.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> "E biz zaten çekmişiz, çekeceğimiz kadar. Bir kere Kürt olarak zaten bu askerden çekmediğimiz şey almadı. Küçük yaşta tanıştık zaten; yıktılar, yaktılar. Bizim ailede dolu zaten kırsala giden. Şimdi bir de düşün; hem

Ayşe is a cross-dresser informant who also defined herself as Kurdish. Her statement was also very similar to that of Zeynep. She pointed out that her ethnic background exacerbated her situation in the military because her being Kurd played into the hands of the military officials who already have a discriminatory attitude towards homosexuals. She suggests that:

Ayşe: I am Kurdish. You are an educated person; you know what is going on in this country. We did not have a normal childhood anyway. I tell these things to other trans people but I don't know how much they understand. I don't know what you think about it but we are in a more difficult situation.

Onur: In terms of what, can you explain it more?

Ayşe: You go there (draft office), you are already a potential terrorist in the eyes of them; there is this constant suspicion. On top of it, you go there as a homosexual, it is more of a thing.<sup>58</sup>

Melis, a self-identified Kurdish who participate in the LGBTTT movement, also gave a similar reaction when I asked her contact with the military authorities. She articulated her opinions through her ethnic identity together with her transgender identity. She stated that:

Melis: I would not set foot in there (draft office). Once they oppressed me because I am Kurdish and then they oppressed me because I am *trans*. I already hate it but I was forced to go there. Otherwise, [I would not go] at any price.<sup>59</sup>

As can be seen in the quotes above, ethnicity also appeared as an important factor in the narratives of the informants. Their perception of the military was inevitably shaped by the fact that they were Kurdish trans individuals. Their interaction with the military was much more problematic considering the fact that they were regarded as potential terrorists or unreliable

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Kürtün hem de trans'sın. Gitmişsin şeye, şubeye (askerlik şubesi). Adam zaten bakıyor senin nüfus cüzdanına, orada bitmişsin."

<sup>58</sup> Ayşe: Ben Kürdüm zaten. Sen okumuş insansın, bilirsin ne olup bittiğini bu memlekette. Biz zaten normal bir çocukluk geçirmedik ki. Burada bizimkilere de anlatıyorum ama ne kadar anlarsa artık. Sen de ne düşünürsün bilmem ama bizim durumumuz daha da zor yani.

Onur: Ne açıdan, biraz açar mısın?

Ayşe: Oraya gidiyorsun, bir kere zaten potansiyel teröristsin onların gözünde bir kuşku falan var hep. E bir de gidiyorsun eşcinsel olarak, daha bir şey sonuçta.

<sup>59</sup> Melis: Ben zaten oraya adımımı atmazdım. Kürt olduğum için bir kere ezdiler sonra trans olduğum için ezdiler. Nefret ediyorum ama mecbur gittim. Yoksa katiyen [gitmezdim].

citizens at best. In addition, their homosexuality weakened their position more because they were aware of the heterosexism operating in the military. That is why they were much more critical of the military which discriminated them on the grounds of both their ethnic background and trans identity.

### **III. Narratives on the encounters with the medical field**

As the last aspect of my analysis, I examine the medicolegal structure to which all the transsexual informants are compelled to resort in order to receive the necessary permissions to have HRT and undergo SRS. The CD informants' contact with medicolegal fields is mostly sporadic and depends on the type of modifications they want to make on their bodies. Some of them consult to psychiatrists and physicians to have access to hormones which will result in irreversible changes on their bodies. Some others come into contact with underground sources and obtain hormones with their own means and use them without any professional consultancy.

The main purpose of the therapy sessions in which the transsexual informants participate is to understand whether they will be able to adjust to their new identities they wish to transition to. The sessions are conducted as one to one or group therapies. If a transsexual passes the tests and examinations she receives a report from endocrinology and starts the HRT under medical supervision. Those who want to have MtF transition receive estrogen hormone. The amount and the frequency of the estrogen intake depend on the biological and hormonal characteristics of a transsexual determined by the prior examinations. At the end of the HRT, a transsexual applies to the Court of First Instance with the reports she receives from the psychiatry and endocrinology services. Based on the article 40 of the Turkish Civil Code, the applicant must be unmarried and devoid of reproductive capacities. If

the applicant meets these prerequisites, the court grants the permission for SRS. The permit is valid only for a certain period of time and if the applicant does not undergo SRS during this period, the permit loses its validity. The transsexual informants do not have very clear information regarding the coverage of the SRS by the state insurance. Some of them claim that normally the insurance is supposed to cover all the costs of HRT and SRS, however, for the last couple of years the state has avoided compensating the SRS although it is officially defined as a medically necessary operation. Therefore, they are preparing themselves financially to be able to bear the costs of the operation. In addition, they want to make sure that the SRS is handled by skilled surgeons; therefore, they tend to appeal to private surgeons instead of the ones who work in state hospitals.

One of the most important effects of medical discourse on transsexuals' gender formation process is that it creates an immense confusion in the way they make sense of their transgender identities. All the medical terminology addressing their condition exacerbates their already fragile perceptions of themselves. Being the sole competent authority, medical experts cause the informants to feel very helpless because even though this interaction is a compulsory process in which they are supposed to be informed about the technicalities of their own identities, they always confront a discrepancy between their own subjectivities and the imposition of the medical discourse. What is more, they always feel insecure about this information flow because they are positioned to be passive receivers of that medical knowledge and do not have much opportunity to reject what they are told. I detected this concern mostly during my participant observations. The informants were constantly in need of reviewing the diagnostical statements their therapists explained to them. They were always asking each other questions about the HRT and SRS. What is more interesting are the conversations held between the transsexuals who are at the latest stage of their transition and

the ones who have started the therapy sessions recently. The latter were always asking for advice about in what way they have to respond to the questions the therapists ask. Most of the informants were complaining about the slowness of the process so they wanted to know what they should do to speed it up so that they can start with the HRT as soon as possible. These conversations especially take place as we wait for the therapy session to start. They form small groups of close friends and discuss the best strategies to employ in order to prove to the doctors that they are ready to move onto the next stage of consultancy. As I pointed out earlier, the medical language leaves the informants confused about their perceptions of their own gender identities. From the beginning, the informants get the sense of the purpose of the psychological and medical treatment because all the procedures imply that their condition is an abnormality or disorder which has to be treated. However, they are very uncomfortable with this diagnosis because they are already regarded as sick by the society and when the medical discourse makes use of diagnostical classifications with scientific contours, they also start to consider their own condition as an uneasy procedure which has to be gotten over with as soon as possible so that they will be cured. For example, Asude states that:

Asude: We are the only ones who know what kind of difficulties we go through. This is a torture that lasts for years, a mental torture. They make you crawl until you become as they want you to be. There is no any other choice, we have to. We do not have any power in our hands. You are going to say 'agreed!' to whatever they say.

Onur: They explain to you, they inform you, don't they?

Asude: How much ever they think is necessary; and if you understand it. It is just a doctor-patient relationship. They hold the power. You cannot do anything about it.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Asude: Ne sıkıntılar çekiyoruz, bir biz biliriz. Yıllarca süren bir işkence, ruhsal işkence. İstedikleri gibi olana kadar aylarca süründürüyorlar. Başka çare yok, mecbursun. Herhangi bir güç yok elimizde. Ne derlerse amenna diyeceksin.

Onur: Açıklama falan yapıyorlar, bilgilendiriyorlar sizi, değil mi?

Asude: Ne kadar lüzumlu görürlerse; onu da anlarsan. İşte hasta doktor ilişkisi, güç onda. Senin elinden bir şey gelmiyor.



Asude describes her interaction with doctors like an unequal relationship resting on doctors imposing their authority on transsexual individuals and determining the level of information that is supposed to be shared with them. This is similar to the way Irving (2008) explains the position of medical figures when it comes to dealing with the gender identity disorder which the transsexual informants allegedly suffer from because he claims that the medical experts have a predetermined image in their minds based on binary gender norms through which their treatment techniques and their approach to transsexuals are codified. In addition, Asude's claim that the information flow is most of the time asymmetrical indicates that the medical experts tend to establish an authoritative system of knowledge in which they hold the key position. They decide which information can be or should be shared with their patients. One of the repercussions of this attitude is that the informants are deprived of the essential means to comprehend the steps of the medical procedures. That is why they constantly seek for the recommendations of other transsexuals who have already gone through the same process. As regards the implementation of the binary gender codes, Semra makes explanatory remarks when I ask;

Onur: How do doctors see you, as their patients or as women?

Semra: I was surprised when I heard about this therapy thing, I mean I was happy. I said 'at last, there are some people in this world who will understand us.' Scientific stuff, experiments and such, just like in movies, but that was not like that at all. It is a state hospital, and the staff, how shall I put it, they do not open your mind. In their minds...I mean they are the reflections of the society, they are lay people who you see outside. They have a thing in their minds, a schema like man-woman. There are also us, the men who want to be a woman. That is how they look at us. I think that some of them do not even understand why we want this kind of thing (transition).

Onur: What is it that is problematic?

Semra: For one thing, okay we were born as males, but there is a different thing here, right? We also know that we will not be able to be a woman completely; I mean we are transpersons. Even if we undergo operation or have hormone therapy, we will always... I will

always define myself as a transperson. But in their minds, there are many schemas, steps. [In the eyes of the doctors] we sometimes become transvestite, sometimes homosexual, and sometimes transsexual, in the end a woman. I am whatever I am. That is the limit of their viewpoint.<sup>61</sup>

In this conversation, Semra complains about the deficient perception of the experts regarding their transgender identity. As she points out, the title of “scientist” creates some expectations for the informants thinking that they will be treated within reason; however, the medical experts fail to acquire a more critical approach to the transgender phenomenon because they are stuck in the binary gender codifications and cannot analyze the informants’ conditions through a more critical perspective. Inevitably this leads to a disappointment in the informants. In addition, the problem with the scientific categorizations is also apparent in her narrative. The terms such as transvestite, homosexual or transsexual create confusion for the informants who have already been suffering from the ambiguity of their position within the binary gender system. As I stated earlier, the subjectivities of the informants present multifarious identities constructed with their lived experiences such as their childhood, interaction with their environment and other people. However, the medical discourse operates in a vacuum and brushes off these subjectivities with its supposedly objective nomenclature of diagnosis. This way, it suppresses these subjectivities by prescribing a technical pathologizing language which warns the informants that their subjectivities cannot find any voice within the medical discourse. This suppression also forces the informants to resort to

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<sup>61</sup> Onur: Doktorlar sizi nasıl görüyor, hasta olarak mı, yoksa kadın olarak mı?

Semra: Böyle bir terapi şeyinden haberim olduğunda çok şaşırılmışım, sevinmişim yani. Hah dedim bizi anlayacak birileri var şu dünyada. Böyle bilimsel şeyler, işte deneyler falan, filmlerdeki gibi, ama hiç de öyle değil. Devlet hastanesi, çalışanlar da nasıl söyleyeyim, çok böyle hani zihin açmıyorlar. Onların kafasında da, ya toplumun yansıması onlar da dışarda gördüğün insanlar. Kafalarında bir şey var şema var hani kadın erkek diye. Bir de biz varız, kadın olmak isteyen erkekler. Öyle bakıyorlar bize, sanırım kimisi hala anlam veremiyor niye böyle bir şey istediğimize.

Onur: Nedir peki sorunlu olan şey?

Semra: Ya bir kere, tamam erkek doğmuşuz da, burada başka bir şey var ama değil mi? Biz de biliyoruz tam olarak kadın olamayacağımızı, yani biz transbireyleriz. Ameliyat da olsak, hormon tedavisi de görsek, biz her zaman,.. Ben şahsen kendimi hep transbirey olarak tanımlayacağım. Ama onların kafasında bir sürü şema, aşamalar. [Doktorların gözünde] Kimi zaman travesti, kimi zaman homoseksüel, kimi zaman transseksüel, he en sonda da kadın oluyoruz. Ben neysem oyum. Bakış açısı bu kadar.

various strategies in order to get round the medical and bureaucratic labyrinth as Pelin points out:

Pelin: In one-to-one interviews, of course, you do not always reveal your exact feelings, ups and downs and concerns. We already know the questions they are going to ask and they tell us how to respond to them and so I answer accordingly. You grow tired of it as the months pass. All I want is to start the hormones and undergo surgery. Apart from these interviews, I mean of course they help, but, let me put it this way, their only concern is to bring you into conformity with the society.

Onur: In what respect?

Pelin: I mean, when you go out, you have to know those things; how you should behave, the way you talk, the way you walk. I mean they try hard in order for you to be a woman.

Onur: Does this create a problem?

Pelin: Yes, of course it does. They are actually more concerned about other people than they are about us. I mean, they make you harmless to the society.<sup>62</sup>

Her account suggests that the medical treatment transsexuals receive is always fraught with various preconceived notions of therapeutic concerns, male-female dichotomy and societal prejudgments. The medical heterosexist discourse assumes the task of modifying transgender body in such a way that it will be in conformity with the expectations of the society. The routine controls, examinations, group therapy and individual interviews serve the purpose of familiarizing transsexuals with the normative values which they have to adopt. All these procedures which approximately last two years move transsexuals to another phase; it is the

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<sup>62</sup> Pelin: Birebir görüşmelerde tabii her zaman tam olarak ne hissettiğinizi, gelgitlerinizi, işte endişelerinizi falan söylemiyorsunuz. Sorulan soruları zaten önceden arkadaşlardan biliyoruz ve nasıl cevap vermemiz gerektiğini falan söylüyorlar, ben de ona göre cevap veriyorum. Aylar geçtikçe zaten bir yılgınlık geliyor. Tek istediğim bir an önce hormonlara başlamak ve ameliyat olmak. Onun dışındaki görüşmeler yani tabii faydası olmuyor değil ama, şöyle söyleyeyim, tek dert sizi topluma uyumlu hale getirmek.

Onur: Ne açıdan?

Pelin: Yani işte sokağa çıktığında o şeyleri bilmek, nasıl davranman gerektiği, konuşma tarzın, yürüyüşün falan. Yani kadın gibi olmanız için uğraşıyorlar.

Onur: Peki bu sıkıntı yaratıyor mu?

Pelin: Tabii yaratıyor. Senden çok aslında diğer insanları düşünüyorlar. Hani dışarı çıktığında diğer insanları rahatsız etmeyecek hale getiriyorlar.

granting of the permission for the HRT. Of course, all the transsexual informants wait for that permission so that they can at last have the chance to realize bodily modifications which they have been expecting to see since childhood. However, in order to proceed to the stage of HRT, transsexuals have to go through a lot of mentally and psychologically painful experiences. Furthermore, medical interference does not do away with depressive moods and suicidal tendencies the informants find themselves in, quite the contrary, it exacerbates their conditions. Many of them feel very depressed and helpless during the medical treatment.

Another problem the transsexual informants encounter during the therapy sessions, especially in one-to-one sessions, is the tendency of the experts to associate their feelings and behaviors always with their transsexuality. This is exactly what Hines (2007a) points out in his study. Whatever transsexuals state or do a bit outside the accepted norms, the psychologists analyze them through pathologizing labels. For example, Hale shares with me a very similar experience she had during a one-to-one therapy session;

I was very pleased to hear that there was such a thing; I mean, you can attend therapies, they inform you about the treatment, I liked it very much. I attended the group therapy a couple of times when I first started it. I think it was a couple of months since I started it. Later on, one-to-one therapies started. But the psychologist..., back then, I had many problems, a lot of problems were spinning around in my mind; this was something anyone could have. The doctor told me something like ‘your attitudes are rebellious; you are in an aggressive mood. He found a defect immediately just because I am a *trans*. I told him that I had some difficulties those days. He told me that ‘I was uncooperative and that my aggressive attitudes were dominant.’ Then he admonishingly told me something like ‘where do you think you live, rebelliousness is not a good thing in your condition.’<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Böyle bir şey olduğunu duyunca çok sevindim; işte terapiye katılabiliyorsun, tedavi için bilgilendiriyorlar falan, çok hoşuma gitmişti. İlk terapiye başladığımda grup terapisine girdim birkaç kere. Terapiye başlayalı birkaç ay olmuştu sanırım. Daha sonra birebir terapi başladı. Ama psikolog..., o zamanlarda başka başka dertlerim var, kafamda bir ton sorun dönüyor, hani herkeste olabilecek bir şey bu. Doktor bana ‘senin tavırlarında isyankarlık var, agresif bir yapıdasın’ gibi şeyler söyledi. Sırf trans’ım diye hemen bir sakatlık buldu. Ben de bu aralar bazı sıkıntılarımın olduğunu falan söyledim. O da işbirliğine açık olmadığını, agresif tavırların baskın olduğunu falan söyledi. Sonra azarlarcasına bana ‘sen hangi ülkede yaşadığını zannediyorsun, senin durumunda bu kadar isyankarlık iyi değil’ gibi şeyler söyledi.

Özge also makes a similar statement about the attitude of the medical experts towards her emotions. She says that she always felt lonely because she could never have the chance to live her true identity. However, when she attended her first one-to-one therapy session, the psychologist described her condition solely with pathologizing language and he did not take her painful experiences into account. She suggests that:

I already knew that I was in depression and I have felt this way for years. But this is not related to my trans identity. Societal pressure and lack of understanding pushed me to this situation. But that psychologist diagnosed me with depression and he said it in such a way that it was as if it was the transsexuality that was causing it. But it has nothing to do with it. It is as if he did not know what we went through. I felt like as if I was beamed up there, as if nothing happened in my life but I fell into depression just because I was a transsexual.<sup>64</sup>

Yet, their perceptions of the medical field are not all negative. Some of the informants also emphasize the fact that without this medical assistance, they would be completely lost because there is no any other institutional mechanism which pays attention to their condition and assist them in the way of realizing their transition. It is especially true for the ones who did not receive any support from their families or their close environment. For this, medical experts also suggest that they establish new contacts and make new friends as their transition brings out apparent bodily transformations through HRT. For example, Hale states that after she began therapy sessions, she realized that the womanhood she wanted was far more difficult to achieve than she assumed it would be. Therefore, she claims that the psychiatric and medical assistance enabled her to be more realistic and patient during her transition process. She explained this with an anecdote:

There was a dress I liked very much in a shop, in its window. I spared no expense, entered in and bought it. I also got it wrapped as if it was a gift. Then I got home, I was thinking, I will wear make-up, shave,

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<sup>64</sup> Ben zaten biliyordum depresyonda olduğumu ve bunu yıllardır hissediyorum. Ama bu durum benim trans kimliğimle alakalı değil ki. Toplum baskısı, anlayışsızlık beni bu duruma itti. Ama o psikoloğ daha ilk görüşmemizde bana depresyon tanısı koyuyor ve hani öyle bir söylüyor ki bunu bana, sanki transseksüel olmam buna yol açıyormuş gibi. Oysa ki ne alakası var? Sanki neler yaşadıklarımızı bilmiyor. Böyle şey gibi hissettim hani sanki ben oraya ışıldandım, sanki hiçbir şey olmamış hayatımda da en sırf transseksüelim diye depresyona girdim.

put on the dress and stand before the window and see in the mirror that beautiful woman image in my mind. But, you know, I stood before the mirror, how to put this, there was a world of difference between the image in my mind and what I saw in the mirror; my shoulders, the way the dress looked on me, my gazes... Then I realized that this (transition) was not something that was going to happen right away.<sup>65</sup>

Another advantage of this medical assistance is that it brings many transsexuals from different backgrounds all together. This way, they have the opportunity to socialize and exchange information with other transsexuals. As I mentioned earlier, before and after the therapy sessions, they get together and discuss the possible effects of HRT and SRS. They share with each other the complications and irreversible changes that will have drastic consequences on their psychology and their bodies. They talk about surgeons who do brilliant job on genital reconstruction surgery. This way, they get a chance to catch up on new developments in SRS and better hormone replacement drugs put on the market. Of course, in relation to these, the cost of the surgery and of all other supportive treatments is also an important matter which they talk about.

When it comes to the implementation of the Article 40 of the Turkish Civil Code, the transsexual informants regard the latest regulation that was put into effect in 2002 as a progress due to the fact that they have at least gained some recognition from the state and found a legal ground to make their voice heard. Before 2002, the legal and medical procedures were haphazard and based on subjective opinions of the judges and the medical experts. But today, together with the regulations made in line with the E.U standards, the bureaucratic and medical procedures are more organized and accessible. However, the legal

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<sup>65</sup> Çok hoşuma giden bir kıyafet vardı bir mağazada, camında. Paraya kıydım girdim, aldım. Bir de hediye diye hani paket yaptırdım. Sonra geldim eve, zannediyorum ki, böyle makyaj falan yapacağım, tıraş olacağım, kıyafeti giyip geçeceğim aynanın karşısına. Çok böyle kafamdaki o güzel kadını göreceğim. Ama işte yaptım bu her şeyi, geçtim aynanın karşısına, böyle nasıl desem, kafamdaki görüntüyle karşımda gördüğüm arasında dağlar kadar fark var; böyle omuzlarım, elbisenin duruşu, bakışlarım falan. İşte anladım ki bu (dönüşüm) öyle hemen olacak bir şey değil.

approach to transsexuals is still limited and confined to the area of therapeutic management.

Gamze clarifies the situation when I ask her:

Onur: Do the regulations in the laws have a positive effect on your life?

Gamze: Apparently it is better than in the old days. I mean, I started the treatment 1.5 years ago. The ones who had treatment way before say that it is better now. But of course, the biggest problem is that it is limited. The things, the changes are still related to our condition being regarded as sickness. It is about doctor-patient relationship. I mean, we are patients in their eyes and they give you your rights as a patient, I mean some part of them.<sup>66</sup>

What Gamze suggests is that the laws do not address transsexuals as citizens. They are rather concentrated on defining the boundaries of their medical needs by taking them into a legal frame so that medical authorities will be able to cure them and reintroduce them to the society as individuals who do not transgress the binary gender codes anymore. This means that the regulations actually are concerned with the rectification of gender identity disorder which transsexuals suffer from and pave the legal and medical ways in order to turn them into normal bodies that can be explained through binary codifications of gender and sex. The point Gamze focused on finds its repercussions in the other spheres of social life. The regulations in the legal field which deal with the medical treatment of transsexuals fall short when it comes to difficulties and injustices the informants face in their daily and professional lives. The best example to this is the legal struggle Özge has launched against the company which fired her when they found out that she was undergoing medical treatment for transition. She filed a suit against the company on grounds of violation of her rights. However, the legal process is very slow and she is not sure whether the court will find the company guilty because the laws

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<sup>66</sup> Onur: Yasalardaki değişikliklerin olumlu bir yansıması oldu mu hayatında?

Gamze: Öncesine göre daha iyiymiş. Yani ben 1,5 sene önce başladım tedaviye. Çok daha önce olanların dediklerine göre çok daha iyiymiş. Ama tabii ki en önemli sorun sınırlı olması. Yapılan şeyler, değişiklikler yine bizim durumumuzun hastalık olarak görülmesiyle ilgili. Hasta-doktor ilişkisi ile ilgili. Yani onların gözünde hastasın ve hasta olarak haklarını veriyorlar, yani bir kısmını.

regulating employment are not very clearly stated and do not address transsexuals' situation. These being the case, medical experts also warn transsexuals about the possible difficulties and discriminations they will have to confront in their professional lives such as being denied some job opportunities or losing their current jobs due to their transition. Therefore the informants have to come to terms with the fact that their exclusion from and stigmatization by the society will be an integral part of their lives throughout their transition process that will last for years. This means that, apart from dealing with the burdensome stereotypical categorizations of the medical field whose requirements they are expected to fulfill without questioning, their fragile psychological moods are also in constant danger of being debilitated by the negative attitudes and discriminations they are faced with due to the lack of necessary regulations in laws which are supposed to protect their rights as citizens. However, most of the legal problems they encounter owing to their transgender identity disappear when they undergo SRS because they acquire a new I.D. as a female and have their official records changed according to their new identity. Therefore, they are officially recognized by the state institutions as women and obtain all the rights women of birth enjoy.

However, for the cross-dresser informants, this kind of acquisition of legal rights is not possible because they do not receive any treatment under the supervision of the medical authorities that will finalize with the transition to woman. Their contact with those authorities is solely based on access to HRT. As Martin and Yonkin (2006; p.112) argue, SoC (Standards of Care) which outlines the criteria and the provisions for the accessibility to the hormones does not address transpersons who do not seek for SRS. Therefore, the current medical regulations leave cross-dressers in an uncertain situation. As I mentioned before, DSM IV is taken as a reference for the diagnosis of cross-dressers as individuals suffering from "transvestic fetishism." The first problem with this diagnosis is that this category refers to



heterosexual cross-dressers, thus, the informants are outside of this categorization. The second problem is that this categorization pathologizes these transgender identities and approaches them from a therapeutic perspective. However, some of the informants consulted psychiatric services and after going through some tests and interviews, they proved to be suffering from “transvestic fetishism” and gained access to hormones. Yet, I also conducted interviews with some cross-dressers who obtained and self administered hormones that are available on the black market. The main reason behind this choice is that they do not want to have anything to do with the medical intervention of the doctors and experts. Zuhâl, one of those who administered hormones by herself, explains her attitude towards medical authorities as such when I ask her:

Onur: Why didn't you receive professional help and started taking hormones by yourself?

Zuhâl: I don't see myself sick. I don't want the identity I chose to be seen as sickness. I don't have anything that needs to be treated. That's why I didn't want to get mixed up in such things. Therefore, I, by myself, made my body like I wanted it to be together with the help of my friends.<sup>67</sup>

Her statement suggests a stark difference between the attitudes of transsexuals and cross-dressers in terms of how they situate themselves in the face of medical regulations. Even though the transsexual informants criticize heterosexist discourses operant in the medical field, they acquiesce to the demands of the doctors and psychiatrist so that their transition is actualized as smoothly and fast as possible. However, the cross-dresser informants construct more insubordinate subjectivities and reject the pathologizing categorizations of the medical discourses. Ceyda does not have drastic modifications on her body. She tells me that she sometimes makes temporary changes to look more feminine but adds that she will start taking

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<sup>67</sup> Onur: Neden profesyonel yardım almadın da kendin hormon almaya başladın?

Zuhâl: Ben kendimi hasta olarak görmüyorum. Seçmiş olduğum kimliğin de hastalık olarak görülmesini istemiyorum. Tedavi edilecek bir şeyim yok. O yüzden hiç bulaşmak istemedim öyle şeylere. O yüzden de kendi kendime, arkadaşlarımın da yardımıyla, istediğim hale getirdim vücudumu.

hormones when she feels mentally and psychologically ready to handle the permanent changes that will appear on her body. She also makes a similar statement like Zuhul but she is aware of the irreversible negative effects of the self-administration of hormones:

Onur: will you administer hormones by yourself?

Ceyda: This subject annoys me. I feel like I cannot take that risk. Therefore, I will have to get professional help I guess and this is very annoying. I don't understand why I have to get treatment. If there is someone who is bothered by my sexual identity, they should go and receive treatment. This is shameful; someone sees my identity as a sickness. I am homosexual and CD, that is it. Other than that I cannot stand doctors looking at me like I am sick.<sup>68</sup>

Another reason why the informants administer hormones by themselves is that, as sex workers, they have to satisfy the demand of their customers who find cross-dresser body with developed breasts, tight hips, less body hair and a penis sexually arousing. For example, Banu explains why she carried on with the self administration of hormones even though she wanted to take some time off from them due to their side effects:

Banu: I was already taking hormones recently when I started this profession. Then, of course, you cannot stop taking them that easily just as you like. Now, my customers are certain types and they come to me because they prefer me. But if I, now, stop taking hormones, they will stop coming too. For one thing, they prefer, these breasts, lips, hips, and you know, with everything it has, they prefer this body. That is why you have to act according to whatever the demand is. There are some others like me. In fact they want to take a break, or you know, they suffer a lot from these hormones but they continue taking them; so as not to lose their customers.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Onur: Kendin mi uygulayacaksın hormonları?

Ceyda: O konu işte canımı sıkıyor. O riski göze alamam gibi geliyor. O yüzden profesyonel yardım almak zorunda kalacağım galiba. İşte bu da can sıkıcı. Neden tedavi görmem gerektiğini anlamıyorum. Benim cinsel kimliğim kime rahatsızlık veriyorsa onlar gitsin tedavi görsün. Bu bana o kadar ayıp geliyor ki; benim kimliğimi birileri çıkıp hastalık olarak görüyor. Eşcinselim ve CD'yim; bu kadar. Onun dışında doktorların falan bana hasta gibi bakmasına dayanmam.

<sup>69</sup> Banu: Ben bu mesleğe başladığım sırada zaten yeni yeni alıyordum hormon. Sonra tabii, bunu istesen de öyle kolay kesemiyorsun almayı. Şimdi benim müşterilerim belirli tipler ve bana geliyorlar çünkü beni tercih ediyorlar. Ama ben şimdi kesersem hormon almayı, onların da ayağı kesilir. Bir kere göğüslerin, dudakların, kalçan, ne bileyim, işte bütün her şeyiyle bu vücudu tercih ediyorlar. O yüzden de ne talep oluyorsa ona göre hareket etmek zorunda kalıyorsun. Benim gibi başkaları da var. aslında biraz ara vermek istiyorlar, ya da ne bileyim, çok şey sıkıntı çekiyorlar bu hormonlardan ama devam ediyorlar almaya; müşterilerini kaybetmemek için.

Therefore aside from their own choices, the CD informants feel obliged to continue with the intake of hormones even though they show some negative reactions on their bodies. This means that, the construction of their transgender identities is inevitably connected with their chances of protecting their positions in the market and it is shaped by the demands that come from their customers. We had a very similar conversation with Yasemin who has been taking hormones for more than 10 years. She has been in sex work for about 9 years and just like Banu, she points to a similar concern about the hormone intake and making temporary or irreversible modifications on her body. During the interview, she states that:

Yasemin: Normally, I don't like dressing up and putting on make-up that much. I like being as however I am in my daily life; a t-shirt, a track suit. I normally put something on and go out. But when I go out to work at night, I am dressed up in more attention-grabbing, eye-catching clothes, I put on make-up. Because that is how they want it. They already find anything other than this at home.

Onur: So, it is because your customers want to see you like that.

Yasemin: Of course. This is my bread and butter, I have to. Otherwise they would not even look at my face.

Onur: So, do you take hormones for the same reason?

Yasemin: The first time I started it, I wanted to have a feminine body. But after I started this job, I make money out of it, with this body. Otherwise I would not want to continue [hormone intake] this long. For example, sometimes I feel bad, tired, depressed. But I have to, I mean, there is no any other way. You will give what they want otherwise you go hungry.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Yasemin: Normalde o kadar süslenip makyaj falan yapmayı sevmem. Ben daha çok böyle günlük halimle olmayı seviyorum. Bir tişört bir eşofman, normalde üstüme bir şey geçirip çıkarım dışarı. Ama geceleri işe çıktığımda daha dikkat çekici, hani göze çarpan kıyafetler giyiyorum, makyaj yapıyorum. Böylesini istiyorlar çünkü. Öbür türlüünü zaten evde buluyorlar.

Onur: Yani müşterilerin seni böyle görmek istediği için.

Yasemin: Tabii. Ekmek parası, mecbur artık. Öbür türlü suratına bakmazlar.

Onur: Peki hormonları da onun için mi alıyorsun?

Yasemin: İlk başladığımda kendim istedim yani kadınsı vücuda sahip olmak için. Ama bu işe girince, bundan para kazanıyorum, bu vücutla. Yoksa [hormone almaya] bu kadar devam etmek istemezdim. Bazen mesela çok kötü hissediyorum kendimi, halsiz, depresif. Ama mecburum yani, başka yolu yok. İstediklerini vereceksin, yoksa aç kalırsın.

From here we can come to the conclusion that regarding the gender formations of the cross-dresser informants, socioeconomic factors play a crucial role in determining the limits of the womanhood according to which they make modifications on their bodies and performance they realize in their lived experiences. Different from the transsexual informants who are basically less inhibited by their social status in terms of embarking on a long-lasting transition process composed of mental preparations and bodily modifications, the gaze of the customers of the cross-dressers has a decisive effect on the perceptions of their own gender identities. This, in a way, leads the CD informants to become distant from how they want to make sense of their own subjectivities. The prefiguration of what is demanded by customers becomes an important mode of subjectivity they construct in their professional lives. As Kandiyoti asserts (2002), through the negotiations with the limits and opportunities of the bodily and social structure, the gender subjectivities of cross-dressers are in a way based on temporary modifications and situational performances rather than an inner desire to experience womanhood from the beginning. The piece of womanhood the customers of the informants want to find in their bodies defines the borders of how far they go in order to approach or realize that womanhood. This is very much related to what I pointed out in the previous chapter when I argued that cross-gender identity does not automatically carry the connotations of womanhood. This means that cross-dressers' experiences may very well be limited to their own articulation of homosexuality and cross-dressing for sexual arousal. However, when the socioeconomic factors come into play, an inevitable association between their transgender identity and womanhood is foregrounded.

#### **IV. Narratives on the Encounters with the Nation State**

As a result of the interviews I conducted, I shifted the focus of this chapter from a simple differentiation between the subjectivities which transsexual and cross-dresser

individuals construct within the nationalist discourses to taking into account the factors of participation in the LGBTTT movement and ethnic background. In the beginning, my assumptions were operating through the binary codes of manhood/womanhood and so I was expecting to observe that transsexuals would be more in favor of nationalist discourses which define a specific position to women and womanhood. What I mean is that transsexuals always try hard to align themselves with binary gender codes. Since they strive to overcome the gap between their transgender identity and the expectations of the norms and values dominant in the society, I expected to find that they would incorporate the nationalist discourses which would enable them to be reintroduced to the limits of the “ideal” citizen. This argumentation was also apparent in the criticism brought by the second wave feminists to transsexuals on the grounds that they were reproducing the binary gender codes by modifying their bodies (Heyes, 2003). Transsexuals have the opportunity and desire to undergo SRS together with hormone therapies, and in the end; they can achieve their transition as a woman recognized by the state institutions and enjoy their rights while cross-dressers do not go through such a transition in the end of which they are legally recognized. Quite the contrary, they are constantly subjected to discrimination and brutality. Therefore, I had reached a tentative argumentation that because of this difference between the gender formation paths of these two transgender groups, transsexuals would be less critical of the nationalist discourses and feel more aligned with them than do cross-dressers. Contrary to my assumption, the articulation of and alignment with the nationalist discourses did not reveal any difference between the transsexual and cross-dresser informants. From each group, I encountered expressions of nationalist views when I brought up the subjects of militarism and the Kurdish issue. However, the most important factors which determined their varying positionalities were their political engagement with the LGBTTT movement and the ethnic background (i.e., Kurdishness).

The transsexual and cross-dresser informants who had affiliations with or direct participation in the LGBTTT movement approached these subjects very critically and expressed views that could be regarded as openly anti-militarist, anti-statuesque and defying the dominant discourses of nationalism on the Kurdish issue. On the other hand, the other transsexual and cross-dresser informants who did not have direct participation in the LGBTTT movement made statements which were very much in line with the discourses of nationalism. At this point, it is noteworthy including the term “coming out” used by Ertetik (2010) in order to understand the underlying mechanism of this differentiation on the basis of political activism. Coming out is a concept referring to the psychological process in the end of which a homosexual, bisexual or transgender person voluntarily discloses his/her sexual orientation or gender identity and start living accordingly (de Monteflores & Schultz, 1978). However, Ertetik analyzes the process of coming out in a wider perspective and focuses on the changes in the attitudes of these individuals towards the LGBTTT movement. He claims that coming out does not remain limited as an individual act but also turns into a political act and broadens the perspectives of these individuals towards the LGBTTT movement. This perspective is also very much related to what Nagoshi and Brzuzy (2010) argue about the transition transsexual individuals go through. They claim that subverting the dichotomous gender codes does not automatically bring along a politically conscious identity that challenges the conventional norms and values. I think that this point of departure is very relevant to my findings regarding the difference in positionality between the transsexual and cross-dresser informants. In contrast to the unitary constructions of identities undertaken by the state institutions imbued with nationalist commitments, the formation of multiple identifications is always dynamic and contextual. This means that these identities reconfigure themselves and resist the conventional projects of citizenship that are shaped and naturalized in the gendered binary codes of man/woman and femininity/masculinity (Peterson, 1999). At this point, I think that the

resistance the informants put up to nationalist discourses is very much determined by the process of coming out as a political act.

In some interviews, I brought up the subject of nationalism by first asking the question “what, in your opinion, does nationalism mean?” to which many of the informants who did not have any affiliation with the LGBTTT movement replied in a similar way. The first pattern that came forward was what Bora defined as Atatürk nationalism. Most of the informants state that they are nationalists formulated by the Kemalist ideology. As Bora pointed out, Atatürk nationalism is an uneasy synthesis of French style of citizenship based on territoriality and essentialist cultural identity outlined by Ziya Gökalp. This uneasy coalescence also emerges in the articulation of the informants regarding nationalism. Therefore, in line with the Atatürk nationalism defined by Bora as culture, nation-state and military focused, the informants’ perceptions of nationalism were based on mostly cultural identity rather than ethnicist connotations. Another dimension to the integration of culture to Atatürk nationalism is that it is mostly outside the domain of politics and only focused on expressions of cultural activities as long as they are not a threat to the unity of the nation-state. Semra, a transsexual, states that;

Semra: Perception of nationalism has varying tones. There is such a thing as Atatürk nationalism and there is an entirely ethnicist nationalism.

Onur: How do you define yourself?

Semra: Of course, my perception of nationalism is closer to Atatürk nationalism. My viewpoint, my ideology is; my country, land, my nation and human. My opinion is that being Turk or being Kurdish should not be a priority for some things. I mean, in its own right, it is nice that cultural differences exist and are cherished, traditions or food cultures etc. In that sense, a concept of nationality is nice but, apart from that, I am against the perception of nationalism which excludes

some people while holding some others in high esteem. There shouldn't be such a perception of nationalism.<sup>71</sup>

In another interview, the informant, Pelin, a transsexual, expressed her views on nationalism with also reference to Atatürk and culture. She pointed out that Atatürk nationalism has nothing to do with race. In a way, she draws the conclusion that it is this type of nationalism which makes the formation of a common culture possible in this country.

Onur: What do you mean by Atatürk nationalism?

Pelin: I mean, Atatürk nationalism is not based on race but completely based on culture, it is a nationalism based on common past. On these lands, people who live in this country share a common culture, nationalism within the context of culture, that is, nationalism where Turks and Kurds live together.<sup>72</sup>

I observed a similar line of thought in another interview I conducted with a young transsexual, Hale. She was very a shy and reserved person who insisted on meeting me in a public place. At first she did not want to talk about these issues on the grounds that she did not know much about these things and said that she did not give much thought to them.

Hale: What comes to my mind when called nationalism is patriotism; the love one feels for one's country and for the people who live in that country. After all, it stems from Atatürk's principles, I mean, as a common thing, it is the result of the love for Atatürk. It is to meet in a common ground and live accordingly regardless of language, religion, and race.

Onur: How do you define yourself?

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<sup>71</sup> Semra: Milliyetçilik algısı ton ton fark ediyor. Bir Atatürk milliyetçiliği diye bir şey var, bir tamamen etnik milliyetçilik var.

Onur: Sen kendini nasıl tanımlıyorsun?

Semra: Benim milliyetçilik algım daha çok Atatürk milliyetçiliğine yakın tabii ki. Benim o yöndeki bakışım, ideolojim; vatanım, toprak, milletim, insan. Türk olmak, Kürt olmak bunların bir şeylere öncelik olmaması gerektiği düşüncem. Kültürel olarak bir şeylerin farklı olup yaşanması, gelenekler veya böyle yemek kültürleri kendi içinde bunlar hoş yani. O manada bir milliyet kavramı güzel ama onun dışında bazılarını öteleyen, bazı kesimleri el üstünde tutan milliyetçilik algısına karşıyım. Böyle bir milliyetçilik algısı olmaması lazım.

<sup>72</sup> Onur: Atatürk milliyetçiliği derken ne demek istiyorsun?

Pelin: Yani Atatürk milliyetçiliği ırka dayalı bir milliyetçilik değil de, tamamen kültüre dayalı, ortak geçmişe dayalı bir milliyetçilik. Bu topraklarda, bu ülkede yaşayan insanların bir şekilde ortak bir kültür ediniyorsunuz, kültür bağlamında bir milliyetçilik yani Türk'ün ve Kürd'ün beraber olduğu bir milliyetçilik.



Hale: I love Atatürk. Now we hear on the news these days; Dersim events and such. He also made mistakes but after all he established this country. Therefore, in this respect, I consider myself a nationalist. I think everybody, Turks, Kurds, who live in this country, should be able to live with their own culture without discrimination. I mean, that's what the principles of Atatürk stand for.<sup>73</sup>

In the articulations of Atatürk nationalism which the informants defined themselves, we can see how subjectivities are produced as a response to and through interaction with the discourses. The informants reinterpreted the Atatürk nationalism and attached different meaning to it rather than internalizing the language of the discourse.

As a second point of the analysis, I started by posing questions addressing the concept of militarism. The informants from both groups clustered around two tendencies depending on their political activism in the LGBTT movement. The ones who do not have any direct affiliations with the movement reflected conventional discourses which underpin the protection of the country from foreign forces, the necessity of having a strong army against subversive activities of oppositional religious or insurgent groups and the embedded codes of nationalism which give priority to the perpetuity of the nation state and ignore the demands of minorities by demonizing them. As I mentioned earlier, as soon as I addressed the issue of militarism, the informants analyzed it by making references to the Kurdish issue which has been the focal point of attention of the politics of the Turkish Republic for 30 years. The cross-dresser and transsexual interviewees revealed similar argumentations about the nationalistic claims as we talked about militarism in general and the military service in

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<sup>73</sup> Hale: Milliyetçilik denince vatan sevgisi geliyor aklıma. Bir insanın ülkesini sevmesi, o ülkedeki insanları sevmesi. Sonuçta Atatürk'ün ilkeleriyle, yani ortak bir şey olarak, Atatürk sevgisinden kaynaklanıyor bence. Dil, din, ırk gözetmeksizin herkesin ortak bir paydada buluşması ve ona göre yaşaması.

Onur: Sen kendini nasıl tanımlarsın peki?

Hale: Ben Atatürk'ü severim. Şimdi yeni yeni çıkıyor ya haberlerde, Dersim olayları falan onun da hataları vardır ama sonuçta bu ülkeyi kurdu. Ben o yüzden kendimi o açıdan milliyetçi görüyorum. Bu ülke üstünde yaşayan insanlar, ne olursa olsun, Türk'ü, Kürd'ü ayırım gözetmeden kendi kültürüyle yaşayabilmeli bence. Yani Atatürk'ün ilkeleri bunu gerektiriyor.

particular. For example, one of the informants, Özge, a transsexual, states that militarism is a necessary mechanism due to the current political atmosphere in which PKK is a threat to the public security and thus the Turkish state has to use its armed force against it.

Onur: Was it your gender identity because of which you did not want to do military service or was it your antimilitarist attitude?

Özge: I don't have an antimilitarist attitude. I am not too platonic in that sense. I am not dreaming of fantastic worlds. I am more of a realistic person. Antimilitarism can exist in an ideal world. But I find it necessary. I mean, in a real life, it is a must. In an ideal world, you can dream about it; no soldiers, no borders, the whole world united like one country, no wars between people, no one needing armament against each other, no military service. But there is also this dimension of reality. There is a history. To be realistic, militarism is necessary for another 100 or 200 years under the current circumstances.<sup>74</sup>

In another interview, the informant, Elif, a cross-dresser, expresses an uneasy nature of her positioning in the face of the forced military service. She states that:

On the one hand I know that these are all a part of the same system; it is all a part of the male-dominated system. On the other hand, I am thinking 'what is the alternative?' What can we put in place of it so that there won't be such a thing as military service? I suffered a lot. I tried so hard to take that pink discharge papers. You appear before a committee. They all are men. They expect you to prove that you are not a man. You have to convince them that you are not a man. It is a troublesome process. But on the other hand, we know the current situation which Turkey is in. It is a constant battle ground and therefore some kind of force is necessary.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Onur: Sen sadece cinsel kimliğinden dolayı mı askerlik yapmak istemedin yoksa antimilitarist bir tavrın olduğu için mi?

Ozge: Antimilitarist bir tavrım yok. O yönde çok platonik değilim. Fantastik dünyalar kurmuyorum. Ben gerçekçiyim biraz daha. Antimilitarizm bir şekilde ideal bir yaşamda olabilir. Ama militarizmi ben gerekli buluyorum. Yani gerçek bir yaşamda militarizm olmadan olmuyor. İdeal bir yaşamda idealini kurarsınız bunun; hiç asker olmasa, sınırlar olmasa, bütün dünya bir ülke gibi olsa, insanlar arasında savaş denen bir şey olmasa, hiç kimse kimseye karşı silahlanma gereği duymasa, hiç askerlik diye bir şey olmasa. ama bir de işin gerçek boyutu var. Bir tarih var. Gerçekçi olmak gerekirse şu anki şartlarda bir yüz yıllık ikiyüz yıllık şartlarda gelecek içinde militarizm gerekli bir şey.

<sup>75</sup> Bir yandan biliyorum aslında aynı sistemin parçası bunlar. Hep erkek egemen bir sistemin parçası. Öbür taraftan düşünüyorum bunun alternatifi nedir? Bunun yerine ne olacak ki askerlik gibi bir şey olmasın. Bana çok sıkıntı çektiler. Çok uğraştım pembe tezkere almak için. Bir kurulun karşısına çıkıyorsunuz; hepsi erkek. Ve kanıtlamanızı bekliyorlar işte erkek olmadığımızı. İkna etmeniz gerekiyor. Sıkıntılı bir süreç ama öte yandan da baktığın zaman Türkiye'nin durumu belli. Sürekli bir savaş ortamı ve güvenlik için de bir güç gerekiyor.

In these expressions of militarism lies an important characteristic that I observed in the interviews. Even though there were some critical statements that could be analyzed outside the nationalistic, male-dominated or hegemonic discourses, the informants who do not participate in the LGBTT movement see the case of Turkey as an exception and try to rectify their claims or mitigate the repercussions of their statements by point out that external powers are always vying with each other to dominate these lands and so “we” have to be cautious and prepared against such endeavors.

Onur: Was it your gender identity or antimilitarist attitude because of which you did not want to do military service?

Dilara: Now I know why you have asked this question. Yes, I know that military service is a male dominated thing. I have gone through the same difficulties; I mean not to do my military service. But, after all, it doesn't matter if it is a man or a woman, I mean; you know the story of *Nene Hatun*. If a war breaks out today, men and women altogether resist it. But I am talking about such a war like Independence War, not being the pawn of the States or the West.

Onur: But this institution does not accept you like this. They want you to be like a woman. I mean, they want you to prove to them that you are not like a man as they want you to be so that you will not do military service.

Dilara: That's something different. I am against this too. What they did to me was of course very ugly and humiliating. But I am not talking about that. What I am talking about is the army protecting its people. Otherwise, what they did to me was their own misbehavior. I always have discussions with my friends about this issue. They think that I am wrong but I don't know.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Onur: Sen sadece cinsel kimliğinden dolayı mı askerlik yapmak istemedin yoksa antimilitarist bir tavrın olduğu için mi?

Dilara: Şimdi niye sorduğunu anlıyorum bu soruyu. Evet, askerlik erkek egemen bir şey. Ben de yaşadım o sıkıntıyı, yani gitmemek için. Ama erkeği kadını fark etmiyor sonuçta. Hani o Nene Hatun hikayesi var ya. E bugün de aynı şekilde savaş olsa kadını erkeğiyle hep beraber bir karşı duruş sergileriz yani. Ama bu tabii kurtuluş savaşı gibi bir şeyden bahsediyorum yoksa Amerika'nın Batı'nın şeyliğini yapmak için değil, maşalığını yapmak için değil.

Onur: Ama seni askerlik kurumu böyle kabul etmiyor. Orada senden kadın gibi olmanı, istedikleri gibi bir erkek olmadığımı kanıtlamanı istiyorlar ki yapmayasın.

Dilara: O ayrı bir şey. Ona ben de karşıyım. Tabii, bana yaptıkları çok çirkin ve aşağılayıcı ama ben ondan bahsetmiyorum. Benim bahsettiğim ordunun, yani bir ordunun kendi halkını koruması. Yoksa orada çalışanların terbiyesizliği yani bana yapılanlar. Bu konuyu hep tartışırım arkadaşlarımla. Bana yanlışsın diyorlar ama bilmiyorum.

As soon as Dilara, a cross-dresser, maintains that the army is necessary, she feels the need to point out that she has difficulty agreeing with other transgender individuals about this issue because she reads the history from the discourse which presents the establishment of the Turkish Republic as a struggle of independence put up by Atatürk and the military power under his command.

Asude: I have some ups and downs about this issue but I do not want to embrace PKK. Because do we have the right to take up arms to claim our rights? Sometimes we find ourselves in such a situation in our relationships. We are right but we act in such a way that we turn wrong. I think that is what PKK corresponds to. It may be defending something right but by taking up arms, it did wrong back then. In this context, I can never embrace PKK. I support Kurdish people's rights. I voted for BDP so that they could be in the parliamentary even though I don't agree with them much. But I cannot support PKK because it is a violent organization. We discuss this among ourselves, I mean; in the Lambda, I don't agree with others at this point. They kind of have the tendency to legitimate PKK but I am against this. After all, it is also militarism which means they (members of the Lambda) embrace militarism while opposing it.<sup>77</sup>

Asude approaches the Kurdish issue in a different way from the dominant discourses. Instead of justifying the Turkish state's resort to the use of force, she deals with the problem from the aspect of legitimacy of violence. This way, not only does she criticize the PKK but also the attitude of the Turkish political sphere towards the Kurdish issue. This is also a good example to how discourses are reinterpreted by subjects whose positions are defined by the discourses but also provide them with opportunities to construct their own subjectivities.

Yasemin: Don't tell me these leftist things, I am getting pissed off. I have heard enough of antimilitarism and whatnot; no guns, there should be peace. These are nice talks but empty talks. For one thing, there is a war going on in this country, a war. The country will be split

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<sup>77</sup> Asude: Ben bu konuda çok git gel yaşıyorum kendi içimde ama PKK'yı kucaklamak istemiyorum ben. Hak aramak için silahlanmak hak mıdır gerçekten? Bireysel ilişkiler yaşarken düştüğümüz bir konum vardır; haklıyızdır aslında ama öyle bir çıkış yaparız ki haksız konuma düşeriz. PKK bence ona denk düşüyor. Sen belki haklı bir şeyi savunuyormuşsun ama eline silah almakla yanlış bir şey yapmışsın zamanında. Bu bağlamda PKK'yı bir yanda asla kucaklayamam. Kürtlerin taleplerine hay hay yaşayabilsinler BDP'nin düşüncelerim çok örtüşmese de mecliste olması için oy verdiğim oldu ama PKK'yı asla şey yapamam yani çünkü şiddet şeyi bir örgüt sonuçta. Onu kendi aramızda çok şey yapıyoruz yani Lambda vesaire bu noktada diğer şeylerle anlaşılamam pek. Onlarda biraz daha PKK'yı meşru bir zemine çekme hali var ben buna karşıyım yani. Sonuçta o da bir militarizm. Sen de o zaman militarizmi kucaklamış oluyorsun diğer yandan militarizme karşı görüşler var.

and parceled. What is it, freedom, equality? I am talking about Kurds. I have a lot of Kurdish friends. You know what they say; Özal was also a Kurd. So it's happening. Which language are you going to learn? You already speak your own language. There are lots of enemies around. Of course, you should have cannons and rifles.

Onur: So, why don't they let you serve in the military as who you are?

Yasemin: It is not only the military which doesn't let me in; we can't even get on a bus. These are two different things.

Onur: How are they different? Aren't they both discriminations?

Yasemin: One of them is a state institution defined by laws. It says "only men will serve in the military."

Onur: So what are you?

Yasemin: I am homosexual.<sup>78</sup>

Yasemin, a cross-dresser, had expressed her fervent views about militarism earlier and made it very clear to me that militarism or armed force is the reality of life and that we should learn to live with it. As she makes these statements, she speaks the language of nationalist discourses which define the boundaries between "us" and "them" very clearly. However, while doing that, she insists on differentiating the military from the rest of the state institutions and sets aside the excruciating experiences she had and humiliating attitude she received. At this point, the term hegemonic masculinity coined by Connell (1995) can be illuminative. He claims that masculinities are layered in a hierarchical pattern and hegemonic masculinity is always in a contextual relationship with heterosexuality which in turn puts homosexuality at the bottom of the gender hierarchy. Therefore, we can see the internalization

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<sup>78</sup> Yasemin: Hiç bana böyle solcu şeylerle gelme, sinirim kalkıyor. Antimilitarını da duyduk, bilmem neyini de duyduk. Silahlar olmasın, barış olsun. Bunlar böyle güzel laflar ama boş laflar. Bir kere bu ülkede bir savaş var savaş. Ülke bölünecek, parselleyecekler. Neymiş özgürlükmiş eşitlikmiş. Benim bahsettiğim Kürtler. Benim bir ton Kürt arkadaşım var. Diyorlar ya Özal da Kürtmüş. Oluyormuş işte. Hangi dili öğreneceksin. Zaten konuşuyorsun kendi dilini. Etrafında bir sürü düşman. Tabii ki silahın topun tüfeğin olacak.

Onur: Peki seni neden almıyorlar askere bu şekilde?

Yasemin: Beni sadece askere değil, otobüse bile binemiyoruz biz. O başka o başka.

Onur: Nasıl başka? Ayrımcılık değil mi ikisi de?

Yasemin: Birisi onun devlet kurumu. Kanunla belirlenmiş. Sadece erkekler yapacak diyor.

Onur: Peki sen nesin?

Yasemin: Ben eşcinselim.

of this subordination in the way Yasemin puts her homosexuality forward as an uncontested character equated with inferiority and positions herself as a “failed man” through the lenses of the military (Goldstein, 2001). Coming to terms with the fact that she is deprived of the right to serve in the military due to her homosexuality, she shows us that, according to her, the right holder of the militaristic feelings is entrenched in the binary nature of gender identities.

Heterosexual man is the ideal type for the representation of the military and, therefore, she, in a way, draws a parallel between heterosexuality and hegemonic masculinity.

I conducted interviews with transgender individuals who participate in the LGBTTT movement consisting of 4 cross-dressers and 4 transsexuals. When it comes to their articulations of nationalism in relation to militarism and the Kurdish issue, they show stark differences from those of the informants who do not participate in the LGBTTT movement. They approach these subjects more critically and take into account the political and historical conditions when they analyze the normalization of the values of militarism embedded in the society and cultural and economic factors behind the Kurdish movement. For example, when I ask Arzu, a cross-dresser, what she thinks about nationalism, she suggests that:

Arzu: I find any kind of nationalism dangerous and harmful. Especially, there is a very strong vein of nationalism and this is the case for both sides. I mean the leftist, the rightist; unfortunately they always meet in a common ground.

Onur: What do you think this is due to?

Arzu: It is the history of this country. From the moment it was established, a heavy nationalism was imposed on people; you will be Turk, you will be a Muslim. Others do not have the right to speak. They silence those who say different things, who think different things. Therefore, I find this, Turkish nationalism, very dangerous.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Arzu: Her türlü milliyetçiliği tehlikeli ve zararlı buluyorum. Özellikle Türkiye’de çok milliyetçi bir damar var ve bu her iki tarafta da böyle. Yani, solcusu sağcısı maalesef hep bir ortak noktada buluşuyor.

Onur: Bu neyden kaynaklanıyor sence?

Arzu: Bu ülkenin tarihinden kaynaklı. Kurulduğu andan itibaren ağır bir milliyetçilik empoze edilmiş insanlara; Türk olacaksın, müslüman olacaksın. Onun dışındakilerin hiçbir söz hakkı yok. Farklı bir şey söyleyeni, farklı bir düşüneni susturuyorlar. O yüzden ben bunu, Türk milliyetçiliğini çok tehlikeli buluyorum.

As can be seen in Arzu's statements, she holds the fundamental principles which the Turkish Republic was established on as the guilty part in the construction of a nationalist community which excludes and marginalizes the minority groups. This way, she makes a historical analysis and criticizes the execution of "othering" practices of the nationalist discourses. From that point further, I asked her what she thinks about militarism in Turkey to which she replied as;

In this country, nationalism goes hand in hand with militarism which is a heterosexist structure; military and actually other institutions are always built upon masculinity and heterosexuality. You know it too, that is why we are excluded from every sphere of the society and the politics. As an institution, actually, during the AKP government, some things happened, I mean, for the purpose of weakening the power of the military but militarism is still prevailing in the same way. There is this entrenched culture as 'militarized society,' 'every Turk is bornsoldier,' and this is constantly fostered.<sup>80</sup>

The important point of this statement is that Arzu makes the theoretical difference between the military and militarism which is very crucial for understanding the ubiquitousness of nationalist discourses operative in the society. As a general attitude of the Turkish society, the militarized ideas and resort to violence are always justified when the political arena reaches an impasse. In addition, historically, this explains why the society is not very willing to reckon with its past. Irrespective of having a strong army or organized military structure, militarism has more to do with the inculcation of ideologies upholding anti-democratic and anti-humanitarian measures against any kind of threat from within and from without to the perpetuity of the nation-state paradigms. Regarding nationalism, Melis, self-identified Kurdish in the LGBTTT movement, also makes an important comment on how it is propagated and reproduced by the state and by the media. She states that:

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<sup>80</sup> Bu ülkede milliyetçilik militarizmle kol kola gidiyor hep, hem de heteroseksist bir yapı olarak; askeriye ve aslında diğer kurumlar da hep erkeklik ve heteroseksüellik üzerinden bunu inşa ediyor. Biliyorsun sen de, biz de o yüzden toplumun, siyasetin her alanından dışlanıyoruz. Kurum açısından da aslında AKP döneminde bir şey oldu, hani askerin gücünü kırma açısından ama militarizm aynı şekilde devam ediyor. Askerleşmiş toplum, her Türk asker doğar gibi çok yerleşik bir kültür var ve bu devamlı besleniyor.

Nationalism is the greatest trick pulled on the peoples of this country and the state of the Turkish Republic is the one which executed this. They ignored the whole history and taught people a made-up history in schools. And of course, inevitably, people are uninformed of the real history; they think that all these lands belong to Turks and the rest of the people are either guests or intruders. Media is also backing this up. They start feeding this vein as soon as a problem occurs; they provoke people.<sup>81</sup>

Zeynep is another transsexual informant who defined herself as Kurdish. She also participates in the LGBTTT movement. She is very sensitive to the issue of nationalism and from her own experiences she suggests that she developed awareness about this issue:

This is the reason of all the things that happened to us. Bombs fell down on our heads; people we know were kidnapped and killed. We have seen a lot of it. Of course, when I saw these things with my own eyes, I asked myself ‘what is behind this cruelty?’ It is nationalism that is behind this. It does not matter which side this nationalism belongs to.<sup>82</sup>

When I ask Berna what she thinks about nationalism she states that she used to consider herself a nationalist person before she started participating in one of the LGBTTT groups. She points out that before being politically involved in the movement, her perceptions of the world were too limited to comprehend the working mechanisms of the oppressive system which marginalize all people who do not conform to the socially accepted norms and patterns of thinking or acting. She suggests that:

I was raised in a nationalist family and to be honest I was thinking that everybody was Turk and Muslim until the ages of mid-twenties. I mean, I had heard about Kurd, atheist or Alawites but I had never thought about it. But after I arrived here, I was involved in the movement and then I understood what was what. I realized how

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<sup>81</sup> Milliyetçilik bu ülkenin halklarına atılmış en büyük kazık ve bunu da gerçeğeştiren Türkiye Cumhuriyeti devleti. Bütün bir tarihi yok sayıp insanlara atmasıyon bir tarih öğrettiler okullarda. E tabii kaçınılmaz olarak insanlar da gerçek tarihten habersiz, zannediyorlar ki bu topraklar sadece Türklerin geri kalanlar ise misafir ya da işgalci. Medya da buna arka çıkıyor maalesef. Az biraz sorun olduğunda milliyetçi damarları okşuyorlar; insanları galeyana getiriyorlar.

<sup>82</sup> Başımıza gelen şeyler hep bundan geldi. Kafamıza bombalar mı yağmadı, tanıdıklarımız kaçırılıp öldürülmedi. Çok şey gördük biz. Ben bunları birebir görünce tabii insan soruyor kendisine; ‘nedir bu zulmün sebebi?’ Bunun arkasında da işte hep milliyetçilik var. Ne tarafın milliyetçiliği olduğu da önemli değil.



nationalism sets people against each other and how it is manipulated by some. Unfortunately, I saw how the oppressed watch for an opportunity to oppress each other. Of course, I encountered this first in the military; how this insensitive, fascistic structure treated us as if we were not human. And then of course I learnt a lot about the Kurdish problem.<sup>83</sup>

As you see in Berna's self reflection, she considers her participation in the LGBTTT movement to be a very important turning point in her life. Having the opportunity to socialize in a politicized atmosphere, she acquired some skills to critically analyze not only the reasons behind the oppression on her own transgender identity but also the political and social variables which shape her lived experiences in a wider perspective.

As a second point, I raised the question of Kurdish issue and asked the followers of the LGBTTT movement their opinions and what kind of political stance they take on it. Zeynep, a self-identified Kurdish, presents a very objective and critical explanation for the issue. She makes associations with the discrimination they, as transgender persons, face with the one Kurdish people encounter in every walk of life by claiming that:

What the Kurds are going through is a historical problem. The promises given while the country was being established are taken back and the Kurds are expected to Turkify. Of course, it is going wrong. Today, I support the struggle the Kurds put up. I support the struggle of every segment of the society which is oppressed; the Kurds, the Alawite, the worker, the women. What oppresses us also oppresses them; this nationalist, racist, heterosexist system.<sup>84</sup>

In this respect, the viewpoint of Gamze, a self-identified Kurdish, is also worth mentioning.

She criticizes the Turkish state with its strictly nationalist character and argues that the

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<sup>83</sup> Milliyetçi bir ailede yetiştim ve açıkçası 20 yaşlarına kadar herkesin Türk ve müslüman olduğunu düşünüyordum. Yani duymuştum tabii Kürt ya da ateist, alevi gibi şeyler ama hiç üstünde düşünmemiştim. Ama buraya geldikten sonra hareketin içine girdim ve işte o zaman neyin ne olduğunu anladım. Milliyetçiliğin insanları nasıl birbirine düşüren bir şey olduğunu ve birileri tarafından nasıl kullanıldığını gördüm. Türkiye'de maalesef ezilenlerin de nasıl birbirini ezmek için fırsat kolladığını gördüm. Bununla tabii ilk olarak askerlik şeyinde karşılaştım; duyarsız, faşizan yapının bize nasıl insan değilmiş gibi davrandığını. Sonra tabii Kürt sorunuyla da bağlantılı çok şey öğrendim.

<sup>84</sup> Kürtlerin yaşadığı tarihsel bir sorun. Ülke kurulurken verilen sözler bir bir geri alınıyor ve Kürtlerin Türkleşmesi bekleniyor. Tabii hesap tutmuyor. Bugün Kürtlerin hakları için verdikleri mücadeleyi destekliyorum. Ezilen her kesimin mücadelesine destek veriyorum; Kürdü, alevisi, işçisi, kadını. Bizi ezen neyse onları da aynı şey eziyor; bu milliyetçi, ırkçı, heteroseksist sistem.

Turkish Republic always needs enemies to be able to stand on its two feet because by its very nature it has always operated between the exclusionary paradigms of creating “us” and “them.” She suggests these points by stating that;

Gamze: I think that Kurdish problem is actually a Turkish problem.

Onur: In terms of what?

Gamze: This country had been hunting for enemies since it was established. It is looking for an enemy constantly and creating an “other” constantly. For example, the first one was the Armenians. Now I look at the streets full of empty houses. I asked myself ‘who did they belong to?’ They were Rums’, Jews’, and Armenians’. First they made the Armenians enemies. They have gone, now we have become enemies. Behind this lies creating an “other.” They create a nationalist society by creating other [and] emphasizing Turkishness.<sup>85</sup>

As can be seen from all these narratives, the followers of the LGBTT movement are much more critical of the nationalist ideologies embedded in the Turkish society and their repercussions in the political arena. They make more exhaustive analysis about the current social and political issues that have impact on the lives of the oppressed groups in Turkey. They do not differentiate their own lived experiences from those of the Kurdish people in the present and those of the Armenians that were exterminated from these lands. Due to their participation in the LGBTT movement, they have developed more sensitivity to the pressures of the current nationalist and discriminatory discourses that shape the perceptions of the majority. They point out that they gained insight into how these discourses block the opportunities for establishing understanding between people. Moreover, these discourses prevent the oppressed people from meeting in the common grounds to construct an all embracing social and political structure incorporating different thoughts and ideas without the

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<sup>85</sup> Gamze: Bence Kürt sorunu aslında Türk sorunu.

Onur: Ne açıdan?

Gamze: Bu ülke taa kurulduğundan beri düşman avında. Devamlı kendisine düşman arıyor ve devamlı bir öteki yaratıyor. İlk mesela Ermenilerdi bunlar. Şimdi bakıyorum şu sokaklara boş boş evler. Ya dedim ‘bunlar kimindi böyle?’ İşte Rum’un, Yahudi’nin Ermeni’nin. İlk Ermenileri düşman yaptılar. Onlar gitti, şimdi biz düşman olduk. Bunun arkasında işte o öteki yaratma var. Ötekini yaratıp kendi Türklüğüne vurgu yapıp milliyetçi bir toplum yaratma var.

fear of being marginalized, discriminated or punished. Another important factor that determines the political tone of the informants is their ethnic background. The Kurdish informants seem to develop an inevitable sensitivity due to the fact that they were much more exposed to the on-going war between the Turkish state and PKK, therefore, they established a direct connection between their lived experiences of exclusion due to their ethnic background and their transgender identities.

## CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

The gender identities of transsexuals and cross-dressers have always been a conspicuous and controversial issue not only in the medico scientific field but also in the perceptions of the society they live in. The literature that tries to shed light on the transgender phenomena set forth diagnostical classifications according to which transsexuals and cross-dressers are regarded as individuals who suffer from “gender personality disorder” and “transvestic fetishism” respectively. Although the new perspectives provided by the social sciences and the nascent LBTT movement around the world and in Turkey make efforts to give insights on the subjective experiences of transgender individuals (Irving, 2008; Stone, 2009), the issue remains to be explored by taking into account the dynamics of different contexts. In this thesis, I intended to go beyond the paradigms of medical discourses based on binary gender formulations and focused on the subjectivities of the informants depending on their own narratives. Moreover, I intended to understand their subjective experiences regarding their encounters with the four main institutions whose practices and regulations seem to reproduce heterosexism and heteronormativity in Turkey (Polat et al., 2005; Biricik, 2009; Akın, 2009). The narratives of the transsexual and cross-dresser informants revealed that not only do they follow different paths in realizing their own gender identities, but also their perceptions of each other manifest variations depending on the binary gender codes. However, both groups indicated that their encounters with these institutions are fraught with tensions because of their heteronormative and heterosexist practices.

As another main point of analysis, I tried to understand where transsexuals and cross-dressers stand vis-à-vis the discourses of nationalism. As I had explained in the second chapter, studies of nationalism usually focused on the positions of men and women assigned by these discourses; therefore ignored the subjectivities of other gendered groups. Moreover,

in the nation-building process, these groups have been excluded since in the imagination of the Turkish Republic, the “proper” citizens who were to hold up the ideals of the nation were heterosexual men and women. My analysis revealed that there is not a single pattern, but a complex system that fed upon other issues such as ethnicity and political activism through which transsexual and cross-dresser informants positioned themselves vis-à-vis the discourses of nationalism.

The narratives of the transsexual and cross-dresser informants regarding their sexual identity formation processes indicated that even though both groups tried to achieve a “feminine” look, they provided different explanations for this effort. The transsexuals referred to an inner urge to make their bodies reach conformity with the image of womanhood in their minds. However, doing this, their narratives addressed a difference between the womanhood they want to transition to and the “real womanhood” seen as an ascribed property that comes by birth. Emphasizing this difference accounts for the fact that in reality the transsexual informants do not aspire to acquire the womanhood which is explained through binary gender codes. Rather, their aim is to selectively adopt and internalize various fragments of this real womanhood which will fit the image they want to see themselves in. The cross-dresser informants, on the other hand, exclusively defined themselves as homosexuals and stated that their cross-dressing habit mostly stands for the purpose of sexual arousal. For the CD informants, womanhood does not have a direct impact on the way they define their gender identity. Besides, even though the bodily transformations they undergo are remindful of a womanhood they seem to want to achieve, they do not have the intention of realizing such a goal. An important point that came to view was regarding the use of hormones. Some CD informants claimed to keep using them mostly for their customers because, due to the demand of the market, they feel obliged to keep up with the image of “a woman with a penis.”

Therefore, even though, the permanent or temporary modifications on their bodies arise from the drive for sexual pleasure and arousal, the demand from their customers also requires them to hold onto the “transvestite prostitute” image.

The narratives of both groups indicated that the gender identity differences between them were in relation to the way they interacted with their environments and the way they constructed their social ties. The main difference was that the transsexual informants saw the interaction with their environments as a constant challenge which they have to accomplish in order to fully transition to womanhood because their concern is to be recognized and accepted by the society with the new gender identity they will obtain. However, the CD informants’ narratives suggested that they preferred to construct close-knit social ties around them and stay within the confines of that circle as much as possible.

Interestingly, the narratives revealed that the way the transsexual and CD informants perceive each other heavily depended on a heteronormative understanding of gender. The transsexual informants exhibited negative attitude towards the gender representation of CD individuals blaming them for either failing to transition to womanhood or for not having the means to realize it. However, the CD informants stated that the transsexuals were born into the wrong body so they were actually women, thus, when it comes to the articulation of transsexuality, they did not have difficulty explaining the transsexuals’ gender identity. I think that this also stems from the same paradigmatic opportunities laid before the transsexual informants. This means that when the gender binary discourses are more apparent, the CD informants were able to define transsexuals as “individuals who desire to be women,” however, the very same discourses did not allow the transsexual informants to make sense of the gender identity of CD individuals.

The informants' narratives ascertained that their encounters with the family, the military, the medical authorities and the nation state mainly generated uneasy and even traumatic feelings for them. To begin with, all the informants' relationship with their family was highly problematic; and none of them had an intimate relationship with their families. However, the main difference between the experiences of the transsexual and CD informants is that the narratives of the former pointed to a feeling of hope that reconciliation will be possible when they inform their parents that they seek for professional assistance by attending therapies and in the end will become a woman through the HRT and SRS. For the CD informants, however, the situation was much more complicated because not only do they define themselves as homosexual but also do not seek for any therapeutic assistance to recover from this "disorder." Added to this is also the cross-dressing habit which makes their position in the eyes of their parents more challenging and inconceivable. Therefore, most of the CD informants do not have any communication with their parents.

In terms of the informants' contact with the military, they all relate very critical statements and argue that what they went through was one of the most traumatic experiences they have ever had in their lives. The reason behind this is that they are forced to undergo humiliating and long-lasting bureaucratic procedures, interviews and examinations. All these serve the purpose of proving to the military authorities that they are not fit for the military service because of their sexual orientation. Contrary to my tentative argumentation, I did not detect any difference between the narratives of the transsexual and CD informants in the way they explained their exclusion from the military. I had expected to observe that the transsexual informants would justify their exclusion on the grounds of womanhood they want to achieve. Therefore I thought that they might use this justification to normalize their unfitness just like women of birth not being accepted in the military. However, there was no

such a tendency in their statements. This is due to the fact that the medico-military expertise does not take into consideration the mechanisms underlying the difference between the gender identities of transsexuals and cross-dressers. Even though they utilize the clinical diagnoses of gender identity disorder for transsexuals and transvestic fetishism for cross-dressers, both transgender groups are also diagnosed as individuals who suffer from psychosexual disorder; homosexuality. This means that the medico-military basically focuses on the sexual orientation of the candidates and uses the criteria of heterosexuality and homosexuality to determine whether the candidates are fit for the military service in Turkey. In addition, the informants encountered the treatment of the military when they were 18 to 21 years old. At those ages, transsexual informants claimed that they were aware of the fact that their gender identity did not match their sex; however, they could not quite make sense of what they were at the time. Therefore, most of them claimed to have defined themselves as homosexuals rather than transsexuals.

The impact of the medical field on the gender formation process of the transsexual informants is very drastic. The first repercussion observable in their narratives is the confusion they develop when they want to define themselves with their own subjectivities. The informants use different terms to describe their gender identities such as *trans*, trans person, transsexual, transwoman. In addition, some of the informants define themselves as women regardless of their sex and bodily properties. However, the medical authorities diagnose them with gender personality disorder and tell them that after the HRT and SRS they could be regarded as women. Some other informants expressed that they felt very uncomfortable with the imposition of medical prerequisites on them such as the examinations, group therapies which they have to endure before they acquire the permission for starting HRT. They, looking for a way out, always seek for the advice of other transsexuals so that



they can speed up the process and undergo SRS as soon as possible. Actually, even though some of them stated that the therapies and medical assistance were helpful, they, lacking any say or power during the whole process, were also mostly critical of the rigid structure of the medical discourses which see transsexual as “sick people who have to be cured.” For the CD informants, the interaction with the medical authorities is based on their needs of HRT. But most of them do not seek for such a consultancy because they do not want to be treated as abnormal. Therefore, they resort to alternative sources to obtain hormones and they administer them by themselves without any professional assistance.

The positions of the informants in relation to nationalist discourses operative in Turkey revealed that the issue was much more complex than I initially assumed it was. My preliminary argument was that transsexuals would be less critical of the nationalist ideologies and ideas on the grounds that they would align themselves more with the position of women assigned by those discourses and so they would justify their own transgender subjectivities by accepting those discourses more readily. The interesting point that emerged in the interviews is that, contrary to my tentative argumentation, not the gender identity that one expresses, but the participation in the LGBTTT movement was the main determining factor in the way they interpreted the two issues; militarism and the Kurdish issue. Therefore, political activism cut across the gender identities and showed that regardless of the identifications of transsexuality or CD, the followers of the LGBTTT movement were very much critical of the militarism embedded in the Turkish society. They made associations between their own lived experiences of nonrecognition and those of minority groups or the Kurdish people. However, the informants who do not participate in the LGBTTT movement were pretty much reproducing the nationalist discourses on militarism which operated through the paradigms of security, perpetuity of the nation state and the accusation of the foreign powers for the

troubles Turkey encounters today. When it comes to the Kurdish issue, they again were in line with the nationalist claims and did not take into account the historical and political factors through the lenses of human rights. Rather, their arguments revolved around the common arguments infused into the fabric of the daily political language. However, it should be noted that the narratives of self-identified Kurdish informants should be seen as exceptions, because they suggested that their political activism and consciousness had already taken its current shape even before their coming out and their participation in the LGBTTT movement. They argued that Turkish nationalism and the tabooed issues around it were already challenged by them because of the exclusion they have been faced with as a result of their Kurdishness. All in all, in the light of my findings regarding their positions vis-à-vis the discourses of nationalism, the informants' narratives did not show any variation in terms of their different subjectivities of gender identity, but other factors like political activism and ethnicity played central roles. Thus, my analysis showed that coming out and embracing a gender identity which does not conform to the social norms and values do not automatically manifest political consciousness that subverts other tenants of ready-made political convictions. It is rather related to the process of gaining a critical insight through political activism which enabled the informants to make analysis outside the strict paradigms of embedded nationalist discourses.

An important point that I find very worthy of noting is the political alliance of the LGBTTT movement with the Kurdish movement in the last couple of years and the ramification of this alliance in the narratives of the informants. Especially the self-identified Kurdish informants talked about how Kurdish movement put the issue of transgender rights into its agenda and helped the voices of transgender individuals to be heard on the political sphere. As I pointed out in the methodology chapter, this study concentrates on a specific time and context in which transgender individuals make sense of their subjective experiences and

the social world in which they live. Thus, it was not a coincidence when my self-identified Kurdish informants mentioned and appreciated the alliance between the Kurdish and the LGBTT movements. Today, regarding the recognition of trans individuals, the Kurdish movement seems to have the intention of embracing all the oppressed groups and fighting for their rights to be guaranteed in the new constitution which will be written by the consensus of all the political parties in the parliamentary and the first draft is expected to take its final form by the end of 2012. During the initial discussions held by the Parliamentary Constitutional Reconciliation Commission, the representatives of BDP and CHP were the only ones who demanded that the “Sexual Orientation” and “Gender Identity” be written in the new constitution. Moreover, the representatives of BDP participated in the Gay Pride Parade that was held on the 1<sup>th</sup> July.

One of the limitations of this research is the probable problems that might arise due to the socioeconomic factors that make it harder for me to gather much information from cross-dressers with different backgrounds. Most of the cross-dresser informants live in a closed-knit community, however, they keep talking about some other cross-dressers who live in certain areas of İstanbul where it is almost impossible to go and get in touch with them. Because of my limited access, there might be many other variables in question that I did not think of taking into consideration. And those variables might complicate the working of the tentative theoretical assumptions I laid out in this study.

Another limitation of this study can be said that due to the scope of the field study, it falls short of analyzing the subjectivities of the informants in terms of their positions in the social stratification. The field study did not provide me with satisfactory data to integrate the class and status as important factors which might determine the variation in the subjectivities of the informants.

Taking into account the complexity of the social and political fabric of Turkey, I think that this study sheds some light on how individuals analyze and articulate the dominant political discourses depending on their overlapping identities. It is their experiences of being regarded as others by the dominant ideology that lead them to transgress the limits of the national ideal and empathize with other oppressed groups. This study, in addition, also shows that political activism creates such space and those who do not or cannot enter this space tend to reproduce the very same system that causes their own victimization.

This study, I believe, also contributes to the literature of gender and ethnicity studies by focusing on various issues such as the impact of some fundamental institutions that help the maintenance of hegemonic heteronormative and heterosexist order on the subjectivities of transgender individuals. Incorporating the question of *trans* and ethnic identity into the analysis, this study indicates to the complex system through which subjectivities are reproduced.

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<b>TABLE 1</b>						
Pseudonym	Age	Gender Identity	Occupation	Education	LGBTT	Ethnicity
Arzu	28	Cross-dresser	Sex Work	High School	Y	Turkish
Ayşe	27	Cross-dresser	Sex Work	Elementary	N	Kurdish
Banu	34	Cross-dresser	Sex Work	High School	N	Turkish
Ceyda	22	Cross-dresser	Student	University	Y	Turkish
Dilara	26	Cross-dresser	Sex Work	Unknown	N	Turkish
Elif	40	Cross-dresser	Sex Work	High School	N	Turkish
Gülşah	23	Cross-dresser	Sex Work	High School	Y	Turkish
Melis	25	Cross-dresser	Sex Work	Elementary	Y	Kurdish
Yasemin	29	Cross-dresser	Sex Work	Elementary	N	Turkish
Zuhal	28	Cross-dresser	Sex Work	High School	N	Turkish
Asude	33	Transsexual	Real Estate Agency	High School	N	Turkish
Berna	32	Transsexual	Costume Designer	High School	Y	Turkish
Gamze	26	Transsexual	Consultant	University	Y	Kurdish
Hale	33	Transsexual	Office Girl	High School	N	Turkish
Hülya	35	Transsexual	Hair Dresser	Elementary	N	Turkish
Nesrin	26	Transsexual	Tourism	University	Y	Turkish
Özge	25	Transsexual	Part-time Photographer	University	N	Turkish
Pelin	26	Transsexual	Unemployed	High School	N	Turkish
Semra	27	Transsexual	Unemployed	Unknown	N	Turkish
Sevil	20	Transsexual	Student	University	Y	Turkish
Zeynep	33	Transsexual	Costume Designer	High School	N	Kurdish