BEING A MOTHER AND A REVOLUTIONARY: EXPERIENCES OF MOTHERHOOD AMONG REVOLUTIONARY WOMEN IN 1970s-80s TURKEY

by

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis aims to explore different meanings attached to being a “revolutionary mother” by women who identified as “revolutionaries” in the 1970s and 1980s. Based on a close analysis of in-depth, semi-structured oral history interviews with women who were both revolutionaries and mothers, as well as women who became mothers after the 1980 military coup, this research focuses on how motherhood narratives reconfigure the revolutionary narrative. Being a revolutionary and a mother has meant dealing with a gendered division of labor both at home and within revolutionary political organizations. This research aims to complicate the meanings of personal and political, public and private through the narratives of revolutionary mothers. The literature on motherhood and political activism has focused on either mothers’ peace politics, or women’s “entrance” into the public sphere through motherhood. The memories and struggles of women who identified as “revolutionaries” in the 1970s and 1980s have been either totally invisible or marginalized in public debates, as well as in the academic literature. Narratives of motherhood have constituted a significant layer of silence within this larger invisibility. Women who were mothers participated in revolutionary movements, or they became mothers during their years of political activism. This research seeks to fill a gap in the literature by analyzing the experiences, memories and contemporary reflections of women who were mothers and politically engaged revolutionaries in the 1970s and 1980s. This study argues that “revolutionary mothers” (re)constructed contested meanings of being a revolutionary and a mother, and shows how discussion of motherhood expands our understanding of revolutionary history in Turkey.

ÖZET

ANNE VE DEVRİMCİ OLMAK: 1970’LER-80’LER TÜRKİYE’SİNDE DEVRİMCİ KADINLARIN ANNELİK DENEYİMLERİ

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Anahtar sözcükler: *annelik, devrimci hareketler, politik aktivizm, sözlü tarih, toplumsal cinsiyet*

Bu tez 1970’ler ve 1980’lerde kendini devrimci olarak tanımlayan kadınların “devrimci anne” olmaya yükledikleri farklı anlamları incelemektedir. Anne ve devrimci olan ya da 1980 askeri darbesinden sonra anne olmuş kadınlarla yapılan derinlemesine sözlü tarih mülakatlarının yakın analizinden yola çıkan bu çalışma, annelik anlatılarının devrimci anlatıyı nasıl yeniden şekillendirdiğine odaklanmaktadır. Devrimci ve anne olmak kadınlar için hem ev içi hem de devrimci siyasi örgütler içi iş bölümüyle başa çıkmak anlamına geliyordu. Bu araştırma devrimci annelerin anlatılarından yola çıkarak kişisel-politik, kamusal-özel ayrımlarını karmaşık hale getirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Annelik ve politik aktivizm literatürü ya annelerin barış politikaları üzerinde ya da kadınların annelik ile kamusal alana girişlerine odaklanmaktadır. 1970’ler ve 80’lerde kendini “devrimci” olarak tanımlayan kadınların deneyimleri kamusal tartışmalarda ve akademik literatürde görmezden gelindi ya da marjinalleştirildi. Annelik anlatıları da bu görünmezliğin içinde önemli sessizliklerden biriydi. Anne olan kadınlar devrimci hareketlere katıldılar veya aktivizm yaptıkları dönemde anne oldular. Bu çalışma 1970’ler ve 80’lerde anne ve devrimci olan kadınların deneyimlerini, anılarını ve günümüze ait fikirlerini inceleyerek literatürdeki boşluğu kapatmayı hedeflemektedir. Bu çalışma, “devrimci annelerin” devrimci ve anne olmayı yeniden tanımladıklarını ve Türkiye bağlamında devrimci tarihi anlamak için annelik anlatılarının önemini göstermektedir.

To all revolutionary women who have been inspiring me.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 2010, I attended my mother’s symbolic university graduation ceremony. She had graduated from Gazi University in 1980. The last two years of her university life were full of boycotts, demonstrations, and conflicts due to the increasing politicization in Turkey. After 30 years, my mother’s friends from university organized a symbolic ceremony for their cohort. She introduced me to her female friends who used to be leftist leaders of the faculty. I was quite surprised to hear that there were leftist women who were active during the 60s and 70s. Until then, I had only been exposed to the stories and images of male activists such as Deniz Gezmiş and Mahir Çayan. The women I knew were either identified as lovers, sisters or mothers. This lack of knowledge resulted in a growing curiosity about women’s experiences of leftist activism. What were the reasons for this lack of knowledge? The 1960s and 70s had seen a rapid growth in youth movements and leftist politics, with widespread support coming from different parts of the society. Women were active participants of these movements. Yet, their contributions and witnessing had not been a part of the subsequent historiography.

When I decided to work on revolutionary/leftist organizations of the 60s and 70s, I started by reading testimonies in order to expand my research questions. The first book I read was *Bir Dönem İki Kadın Birbirimizin Aynasında* (2011) by Oya Baydar and Melek Ulagay where they transcribed their own dialogues on what they had remembered and witnessed. The book was an intimate account of two friends sharing their memories and critical reflections with each other. They were both criticizing the gendered politics of the left, power relations within leftist groups, and, most distinctively, they were talking about everyday life.

Within the everyday life narratives, motherhood was being mentioned. Oya Baydar remembered:

> "We are talking; but when we look from today one gets surprised how we lived or decided to give birth. When you are living in it everything is so natural, life goes on. What was happening was really worse, and scary. I mean the decision to give birth was something insane, but I still gave birth" (Baydar and Ulagay 2011, 314).

As I was reading this book, I was particularly struck with the way Oya Baydar remembered how her activism and motherhood intersected. Being a mother and a revolutionary created certain anxieties and hopes for her, underscoring the contradictions of everyday life and revolutionary activism on the basis of motherhood. What made her look back at those years from today, and see giving birth as something both natural and insane? Why did looking from today bring motherhood into her narrative? What has changed in her perspective about being a revolutionary and a mother that made her realize becoming a mother was both insane and natural? Her narrative was a starting point for me to analyze how motherhood and revolutionary activity intersected, and created certain tensions.

1.1.Purpose of the Study

This research focuses on narratives of motherhood of "revolutionary women." Throughout the thesis, I use the term "revolutionary women" to refer to women who became politically active and identified themselves as "revolutionaries" in the late 1960s and 70s. They were members of the leftist/revolutionary organizations of the 1960s and 70s. This thesis tries to address several questions regarding revolutionary women's experiences as revolutionaries and their narratives of motherhood: How did revolutionary women experience motherhood, and later remember their involvement? In a context where motherhood and being revolutionary were seen as two distant subject positions, how did women negotiate the boundaries of both and form new subjectivities out of these two positions? How did they experience these new subjectivities? How do their motherhood narratives reconfigure, challenge, and reiterate revolutionary narratives? What does being a revolutionary and a mother concurrently tell us about the "patriarchal institution of motherhood"? "Revolutionary" and "mother" are two concepts that are loaded with contested meanings, and this research tries to understand what kinds of meanings women have attributed to these concepts, and how revolutionary mothers have negotiated the meanings attributed to motherhood and being revolutionary through the years.

Based on the analysis of in-depth, semi-structured oral history interviews and testimonials published by revolutionary women, this research aims to analyze "various experiences of motherhood from the perspective of mothers themselves and to place those experiences at the center of feminist theory and research" (Brush 1996, 430). Bringing the scholarship on motherhood and "political activism"[1] together, this thesis addresses several questions. What are the different ways in which the leftist women who took part in the leftist organizations in the 1960s and 70s define motherhood? What did it mean to be "revolutionary women" and where did motherhood stand in this definition? How did they transgress the boundaries of "traditional" or "appropriate" motherhood? How did the leftist parties, organizations, ideologues define "revolutionary womanhood", and was motherhood a part of the definition? In what ways, did their political activism appear as an "obstacle" to their mothering or vice versa? What were the "requirements" of being revolutionary and what were the "duties" of motherhood? What kind of tensions did women face and what kinds of contradictions or compromises arose from these tensions? What kinds of feelings were attached to the experience of motherhood and its (potential) tensions with revolutionary activity? By asking these questions, this research tries to make sense of the connections between motherhood and political activism based on the narratives of revolutionary women. In what ways does political activism redefine motherhood, and vice versa? How do activist mothers reiterate and challenge the existing approaches to the patriarchal institution of motherhood?

Specifically focusing on the experience of revolutionary women in Turkey, the previous questions can be reorganized a such: How do revolutionary women challenge, remember, and re-conceptualize the revolutionary narrative through remembering and narrating their motherhood experiences? By asking these questions, this research aims to contribute to the feminist literature on motherhood, and mothering practices, focusing on the ways in which political agency and maternal agency are performed together. By bringing these two together, this research problematizes the gendered politics of leftist activism, and the patriarchal institution of motherhood.

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[1] I would like to open a bracket about the usage of "political activism" in this study. My interviewees did not use the term activism to define themselves, but rather the term militant or revolutionary. These terms were also analyzed under the heading of "political activism" within the academic literature. I will be referring to different usages in the following sections, in detail.

As such, this thesis analyzes how personal motherhood narratives of revolutionary women reinterpreted the revolutionary narratives and retold revolutionary history. Revolutionary narratives have typically included stories of heroism, leadership, struggle, ideology, critique of capitalism and state, and disappointment as a result of disintegration of the left in Turkey. Starting with the 2000s, revolutionary women started to share their narratives of the revolutionary struggle, and their sharing in various different ways introduced a critique of gendered politics within the leftist organizations that they were part of. They were talking about the gendered division of labor, policing over their sexuality, and how they were negotiating these politics. It is this particular critical literature that lies behind my interest in the subject. The fact that revolutionary women shared and were sharing their experiences was really important for me, because most of the time they complemented interviews through introducing different perspectives. In a way, sharing narratives through various means defines the basis of this research. I wanted to address how oral and textual sources constructed the revolutionary narrative in different ways, and why sharing through one of these means was so important. Revolutionary women who were and became mothers during the 1970s and 80s introduced another aspect to this critique through their responses to my questions and through writing their motherhood experiences which this research will address in detail.

1.2.Historical Background on Women’s Participation in the Leftist Movements in the1960s and 70s

The historiography of the leftist movements in this land goes back to trade unions and associations in the Ottoman empire. Starting from the 1920s, leftist ideology spread, with the effects of the 1917 October Revolution. The Turkish Communist Party (TKP) was founded in 1920, and was shaping the leftist politics untill the 1950s (Akal 2011). During the 1960s several other leftist organizations were founded. such as the Turkish Labor Party (TİP) and the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey (DİSK). Furthermore, late 1960s were also the times of student mobilization, as was the case in other parts of the world. Many students left TİP, and followed different ideological paths, which resulted in emergence of many different revolutionary/leftist organizations. In 1968, Turkey was witnessing an increasing student mobility, from both high schools and universities. which was interrupted by the 1971 military intervention (Mater 2009). Many of the leftist organizations were closed down, leftist activists were incarcerated, and leftist youth were executed. Nevertheless, 12 March 1971 military intervention did not stop people from getting organized, and started a new generation of leftists. The generation of ’78 idealized the role of the ’68 generation, and the heroic imagery of previous revolutionaries caused a greater commitment, and generated new meanings (Ciliv 2002). The closed organizations were re-established, or clandestine struggle began. During the 1960s and 70s, leftist organizations were a significant aspect of politics in Turkey, with students forming the main body of their constitution. This time the 12 September 1980 coup disrupted the growing body of leftist politics.

A significant number of women, mostly high school/university students, government and factory workers, were members of these leftist organizations. In the late 1960s the number of women in revolutionary organizations were relatively limited when compared to the 1970s (Mater 2009). Like their male comrades, they were taking part in all aspects of their organization, and actively working for the revolutionary ideal which was to achieve classless, equal society. Although, they were willing to take part in all aspects of this struggle, they were blocked by the gendered division of labor within the organization. Women were participants in the discussions about what the revolution entailed; they were working as couriers, handling logistical issues, conducting workshops and propaganda work in neighborhoods, preparing and selling organizations' magazine, as well as going for titling[2] at nights. Nonetheless, the leadership positions were not available for women in most of the organizations, which meant that the decision making mechanisms were excluding women. Furthermore, most women were excluded from learning defense mechanisms, or anything related to the use of arms. They were not equals, because there was a gendered division of labor, which also continued at the homes of revolutionary partners, where revolutionary men and women lived together. Nurten Tuç elaborates more on this gendered division of labor:

> "I was asking the male friends at the party 'Why are your close female friends or partners not here?' They were proposing two justifications. 'We do not want our wives to be in the same group as fraction', and there were so many male friends working at the party full time. Women were also full time workers outside the party, earning money. Think, there were also children to take care of. Party members were regularly taken under custody. They were telling me one of the partners should stay out. They were saying these, but it could have been men who were waiting at home, while women were working for the party. Yet, it never happened" (Akkaya 2011, 76).

This gendered division of labor as remembered by Nurten Tuç, was both reproducing sexism, and at the same time giving new meanings to the "traditional" gendered family roles. Women were both earning money, and conducting political activities outside their homes which was not part of the definition of the "traditional" family, where women would only take care for the children. This complex relationship between the gendered division of labor and the politics of public and private was part of the memories which will also be discussed in the following chapters.

Theoreticians were also predominantly male revolutionaries. Women were only allowed to join as activists, but not as theorists. In addition, there was no independent "women's agenda"; and "feminism" was regarded as a bourgeois ideology. The class struggle came before "women's agenda," and the class was seen as the source of women's oppression. Necmiye Alpay explains this as follows:

> "Feminist theory was seen as one of the bourgeois ideologies among 60s socialists. Both anarchism and feminism. These two were means of struggle of bourgeoisie, we thought so. We were staying away from feminist theory and practice" (Akkaya 2011, 169).

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[2] Titling was an act of writing slogans on walls or spaces available at outdoors, on streets. Some of the slogans were "Revolution is the only way/*Tek yol devrim,* or Say No to Fascim/*Faşizme Hayır."*

Revolutionary Women's Union (DKB), Progressive Women's Association (İKD) and Revolutionary Women's Association of Ankara (AKD) were women's revolutionary organizations formed in the 1970s. There is very little information about the Revolutionary Women's Union which was founded by Suat Derviş[3] and Neriman Hikmet[4] in 1970. The two were taken into custody several times. Right after the 1971 military intervention, the organization closed down (Saygılıgil 2014). AKD, which later turned into the Federation of Revolutionary Women's Associations (DKD/F) was founded in 1978 (Keşoğlu 2007). Ayşegül Devecioğlu lists the organizations' commitments as follows:

> "We opened literacy and stitching courses in neighborhoods. We included many women to our struggle. We took doctors, brought medicine. We organized panels, seminars to bring women outside the neighborhood into our discussions. We founded research groups for women's problems like kindergarten. We published monthly journals. We were also actively joining the campaigns against fascism." (Kaktüs no:3 1988, 26).

The İKD was one of the most widely known women's organizations of the time, for which we access to more written information. The İKD was founded in 1975, and led by women from the TKP. Yet, İKD functioned independently from TKP, and by 1979, it had 15 thousand members, and 33 branches (Mater 2009, 117). They published a journal called *Kadınların Sesi,* as well as actively organized women in neighborhoods. Additionally, the organization started campaigns such as; "Day Care in Every Neighborhood, and Work Place" and "Extension of Maternity Leave," organized the walks of March, the 8 held various events, opened literacy courses, similarly to the AKD, formed solidarity with workers, and started a campaign called "Evlat Acısına Son/Stop Mothers' Pain" to bring attention to murders (Akal 2011, 229). They were focusing on the issues of women and mothers, which will be discussed in detail in the following chapters. Through the İKD's campaigns we can make sense of how revolutionary organizations were approaching motherhood, and how the organization was trying to fill in the gaps by addressing women's issues. Eventually, the İKD was closed down, alike other political organizations of the time, after the martial law was declared in 1979. In her dissertation, Birsen Talay Keşoğlu (2007) also mentions some other revolutionary women's organizations between the 1975-1980, such as the Democratic Working Women's Union (1979), and the Revolutionary Eastern Women's Association (1978), however, a very limited amount of information can be found today (175-178). The existence and struggle of these women's organizations are important to understand in order to comprehend how feminism gained intense support after the 1980 coup, as well as how women dealt with their own personal politics.

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[3] Suat Derviş was a journalist and an author. Her works translated to other languages from Turkish.Her close friend Neriman Hikmet and herself started the Revolutionary Women's Union. See also; Saygılıgil 2014.

[4] Neriman Hikmet was born in 1912. She was a journalist. She was a very close friend of Suat Derviş, and together they have founded Revolutionary Women's Union. See also; http://bianet.org/biamag/kadin/111287-doneme-tanik-bir-yasam-neriman-hikmet access date 29.07.2016.

The coup in 1980, September 12 had changed leftist politics drastically. The regime started s closing down all the political organizations, and their members were put into prison. Torture under custody and in prison was used widely. It affected the whole society, causing constant fear and oppression. The violence initiated was gendered, and resulted in traumatic memories. Those revolutionaries who could escape from prison, continued their activities clandestinely, which was called "illegal life/*illegal yaşam*." They continued to publish journals in their homes, held small meetings, and carried on their revolutionary activity in "invisible" ways. As part of this major crackdown, all the archives were burnt, leaving a breach in collective memory. There are striking statistics[5] that show how the 12 September coup affected the society at large, but here, rather than the numbers I will emphasize the struggles, resistances, and tensions through oral and written narratives.

1.3.Theoretical Overview

1.3.1. Feminist Literature on Motherhood/Mothering

This research derives its motivation from the feminist motto of "the personal is political." Both motherhood and being a revolutionary stand in the intersection between the personal and the political. They can be tied very much to the individual, but at the same time have political meanings and consequences. Being a revolutionary can be seen as a political action, but it is also very much personal in its experiences and articulations. Together, -being a mother and a revolutionary- they blur the lines of what is political and what is personal. Motherhood is also political in the sense that; the meanings and practices attributed to motherhood constrain women to the private sphere, but at the same time nation-states construct women as the mothers, as bearers of future citizens. Motherhood is loaded with political meanings. The very fact that motherhood is consecrated by several social movements is a sign of the political aspects of motherhood (DiGiovanni 2012; Aslan 2008).

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[5] http://bianet.org/biamag/siyaset/4547-sayilarla-12-eylul-askeri-darbesi access date 18.07.2017.

Taking as its starting point the above-mentioned feminist motto, the theoretical space for the questions I raise has been paved by the feminist movement itself. Ellen Ross (1995) argues that during the rise of the second-wave feminism most of the frequently debated policy issues were related to motherhood: abortion, pregnancy, child care, maternal care, to name a few. Adrienne Rich was one of the first theorists who tried to understand motherhood through a feminist perspective in her book *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (1976; 1995). For her, motherhood has two different sides; "the *potential relationship* of any woman to her powers of reproduction and to children, and the *institution*, which aims at ensuring that that potential -and all women- shall remain under male control" (1995, 13). On the one hand, motherhood is quite central to some women's subjectivities as an experience; and on the other hand, as an institution motherhood is both controlled, and regulated through patriarchy. Rich writes:

> "My individual, seemingly private pains as a mother, the individual, seemingly private pains of the mothers around me and before me, whatever our class or color, the regulation of women's reproductive power by men in every totalitarian system and every socialist revolution, the legal and technical control by men of contraception fertility, abortion, obstetrics, gynecology, and extra uterine reproductive experiments- all are essential to the patriarchal system, as is the negative or suspect status of women who are not mothers" (1995, 33-34).

By emphasizing diverse experiential aspects and socially constructed institutional aspects of motherhood, Rich also criticizes the "naturalist" approaches to motherhood. Furthermore, she does not only focus on the controlled patriarchal institution of motherhood, but also on how the experiences of nurturing and maternal work can empower some women. When her book first came out, Rich's arguments were labeled as "radical" in the background of motherhood being often articulated as one of the most sacred aspects of femininity. Adrienne Rich opened up a new debate on motherhood, which has since been picked up by other feminist theorists. Her theoretical contribution enables us to think about motherhood as a complex phenomenon and analyze it through a perspective where discourses, ideologies, and experiences of motherhood coexist.

Adrienne Rich’s contributions to the motherhood literature was important due to her emphasis on maternal voice and agency which provided a critique of child-centered perspectives in understanding motherhood and resulted in increasing academic interest on motherhood (Hirsh 1981; Daly&Reddy 1991; Ross 1995; Kawash 2011). During the mid-1990s, as Ross also argues, motherhood studies in academia were dragged from the margins to the center. This time the interest was on “hidden mothers and their silenced voices” (Ross, 1995, 402). In the course of the 1990s, reproduction rights, child care rights, representation of motherhood in literature, art, and cinema, miscarriages, state, nationalism, and their relation to motherhood became the central areas of study (Ross 1995; Brush 1996). These studies emphasized the experiential aspect of motherhood, as well as theorizing how motherhood is constructed through certain symbols and discourses. Some feminists, like Patricia Hill Collins (1987), criticized theories of motherhood on the basis of their “racial bias.” Collins draws our attention to the different ways in which black women experience and understand motherhood. Sexuality was also introduced to the discussion of motherhood where lesbian mothers’ experiences were brought to the front. The spectrum of motherhood studies diversified in the 2000s. New reproductive technologies, religion, migration, and queer approaches to mothering have begun to be analyzed with intersectional perspectives. Ethnicity, age, class, and sexuality have gained importance in studies of motherhood. Since the 2000s, a key concern has been to understand how different subject positions affect conceptions of motherhood (hooks 2007).

This research also follows and tries to add new questions to these theoretical contributions in motherhood studies. How has feminist theory approached motherhood and mothering practices? When did feminist theory fall short of addressing motherhood? While studying motherhood, is it possible to create a balance between experiential and institutional motherhood? How can feminist movements continue drawing attention to the political aspects of motherhood from an intersectional perspective? In the next section, I refer to the intersectionality between political activism and motherhood, and how it has been studied in academia.

1.3.2. Political Activism and Motherhood

The key concepts in the literature on political activism and motherhood have been maternal activism/activist mothering (Naples 1992)[6], and peace activism[7]. Focusing extensively on the distinction between public and private spheres (Werbner 1997, Taylor 1997, Bejarano 2002), this literature mostly appears in studies of Latin American mothers' movements, particularly the Plaza de Mayo Mothers. Yet, it has been expanding with increasing movements started by mothers all over the world. Bejarano (2002) argues that "the mothers in each country acted collectively to transfer empowerment from private sphere of citizenship reserved for mothers and housewives to the public sphere of motherist activism" (126). The idea that motherhood is used strategically to act in public spheres for justice and peace is commonly mentioned in the literature. This particular literature underlines the relationship between public and private extensively, and how maternal activism blurs the lines of each sphere.

The literature on motherhood and political activism theoretically focuses on feminist politics of motherist movements, distinction between public and private, and the ways in which mothers adopt conventional and unconventional methods of activism. Another discussion within the literature is about the feminist politics of maternal activism. Some feminist scholars regard mothers' movements as part of feminist movements. For example, Janice Nathanson (2008) claims that maternal activism has a feminist agenda based on three premises. She writes:

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[6] Maternal activism, can be defined as "… women around the world have used their identities as mothers to strive for social and political change, and engage in maternal activism to seek justice and reestablish peace in their society" (O'Reilly 2010, 972). Maternal activism can be a result of political violence. Some other cases maternal activism can start from any campaign regarding mothers' issues.

[7] Maternal theories that discuss peace activism, focus on nurturing, love and affection of mothers. They stress that these characteristics must be utilized in politics in order to achieve peace. Sara Ruddick writes extensively on the relationship between peace activism and motherhood. O'Reilly summarizes her thoughts as such: "While individual mothers may be violent, Ruddick asserts that the demands of preservative love and the mandate to foster growth are incompatible to war; rather, the honoring of maternal practices, such that they become dominant forms of thought within the nation-state, would go a long way toward implementing nonviolent solutions to the injustices warriors claim as the precipitants of war" (O'Reilly 2010, 1090).

> “Does maternal activism, in fact, promote a feminist agenda? […] it does on three counts. First, it exemplifies the very core of feminist ideology -that the personal is political. Second, it helps to negate essentialist notions of motherhood by transforming views of it from an “isolating or individualized experience … (to) … the inspiration for and foundation of visions of large-scale social change” (Orleck 3). And third, whether intended or not, it upsets traditional gender and power relations” (244).

According to some scholars, maternal activism reiterates patriarchal notions of motherhood. They underscore that for some activist mothers, activism creates an extensive burden because they continue maternal work at home. Diana Taylor (1997), for instance, argues that the Plaza de Mayo mothers “have not altered the politics of the home” (192). She suggests that performance of motherhood can help us make sense of motherist movements’ contradictions regarding feminist politics. Plaza de Mayo mothers both agitate and protest as mothers which have been part of the performance of motherhood where “they manipulated the images that previously had controlled them” (195). Although the literature extensively deals with how women make sense of political activism, there are few studies that focus on meanings of being a mother for activist women themselves. Yet, women’s experiences and narratives of motherhood who were in political organizations are not addressed extensively. The literature underlines the distinction between public and private, but does not direct questions about the women who have already been occupying the public sphere through their political activities. Sometimes assuming that women became politicized through mothering can disregard women’s enactment of public citizenship prior to their maternal activism. The lack of attention to mothers who participate in revolutionary, radical leftist organizations also risks ignoring the gendered experiences of motherhood for activist women, and how motherhood shaped and reconfigured their activisms.

There are also studies which contribute to the feminist literature on motherhood through analyses of revolutionary or militant women. Morey and Santos (2014) look into the participation of mothers in revolutionary movements such as Nicaragua’s FSLN (Sandista National Liberation Front), Chile’s MIR (Revolutionary Left Movement), and Argentina’s Montoneros, based on analysis of several testimonial writing. They also stress how the female guerrilla figure is imagined in revolutionary politics, and how the images helped to create “a mythical mother of the revolution” (65). In that sense, their study focuses on how the connections between the historical mother figure and the contemporary revolutionary mother were made in that particular cases. Gina Herrmann (2003), through her article “Voices of the Vanquished: Leftist Women and the Spanish Civil War” investigates “the mutually influencing subject positions of militant and mother, and how, in turn, these positions determine the generic status and the potential transgenerational transmissibility of the life stories” (18). Based on oral history interviews with militia women who fought against Franco’s regime, her research aims to see how revolutionary and mother subject positions have influenced each other. Herrmann also focuses on the post-memorial inheritance, and how transfer of political values has been established between militia women and their children. The studies in question discuss how two contested subject positions interacted with each other, which is also the aim of this thesis. This thesis derives both methodologically, and theoretically from the above-mentioned studies. Oral histories, and testimonials are widely utilized in these studies because of years of invisibility. Furthermore, these studies stress the importance of women themselves defining maternal and political agency, as opposed to their depiction by the revolutionary organizations or the state (Morey&Santos 2014).

Lisa Renee DiGiovanni (2012), and Silvia Rosman (2003) discuss militancy and motherhood through aesthetic productions in Latin America. DiGiovanni tries to understand the contested meanings of militancy and motherhood through a documentary filmed by witness Carmen Castillo called *Calle Santa Fe.* Silvia Rosman (2003) looks into a novel titled “El Dock,” and discusses meanings of becoming a mother for militants. Both articles investigate how complexities of memories of revolutionary mothers have been aesthetically represented. DiGiovanni limits her analysis to a single autobiographical film produced by a witness, which shows complexities of gendered revolutionary selves. Her emphasis on the representation of gendered revolutionary selves is quite important because the analysis of aesthetic productions about revolutionary movements usually drop out the gender dimensions. DiGiovanni focuses on how gendered memories of revolutionary activism are represented visually and discusses how such aesthetic works break silences over revolutionary motherhood, while also functioning as archives and testimonials. DiGiovanni, like Herrmann, argues that the children are bearers of their mothers’ political narratives where they acknowledge the gendered difficulties. Rosman achieves connecting motherhood and militancy through a close analysis of a novel. She focuses on the concept of "self-sacrifice" which both militancy and motherhood share within their public definitions. According to Rosman, through the narration in the novel, "self-sacrifice" is being transformed to will to life for the "sake" of revolution and motherhood. Her analysis of self-sacrifice through its metaphorical and literal meanings in relation to motherhood and militancy is a significant contribution.

Another thought provoking study belongs to Celia Hughes (2014), who traces the memories of motherhood and revolutionary activism through letters between two radical leftist women in Britain. Letters show how female solidarity was achieved through the discussion of everyday performance of motherhood and revolutionary struggle. Again her study combines oral history interviews and textual material. She points out the female solidarity among revolutionary mothers. The last study that I will focus here, is Patricia Melzer's (2015) book *Death in the Shape of a Young Girl: Women's Political Violence in the Red Army Faction.* In this book, she analyzes women's participation to the Red Army Faction in West Germany in the 1970 and 80s. She particularly mentions motherhood in terms of "women's decisions either to leave behind their children when going underground or to terminate pregnancies" (74). In this study, motherhood identity in consciously denied by radical leftist women. Revisiting their decisions, Melzer challenges the ideological construction of motherhood as women's primary identity.

All these studies reflect upon certain silences and memories about being a leftist/militant/revolutionary and a mother. They stress the importance of oral histories and testimonial accounts, aesthetically produced or not. Furthermore, some of them refer to the transmission of memory of political values to the next generations, and how gendered memories are transferred. Another striking common point about these studies is that they pay less attention the role of the other caregivers, such as the father, and division of labor within the revolutionary family. This research will try to provide insights about how the revolutionary family and the gendered division of labor are constructed in 1970s and 80s

Turkey. Similar to other studies, this thesis also focuses on mothers' own reflections and memories. Lastly, all studies, including this thesis, underline a very significant aspect of being revolutionary and mother: the tension between collective and individual selves. For instance, Morey and Santos (2014) refer to collective revolutionary mothering where revolutionary mothers care for all the children. This thesis refers to similar concepts and tensions in the case of revolutionary mothers in Turkey. Revolutionary women were mothers while they were members of revolutionary organizations, and at the same time they were mothers right after the 1980 coup which resulted in an intensive political violence. This thesis aims to contribute this growing body of literature, by analyzing oral histories and testimonies of revolutionary women and their reflections on motherhood and activism.

1.3.3. Politicization of Motherhood in Turkey

In Turkey, too, there have been political movements started by mothers, with a focus on motherhood. Saturday Mothers/People in Turkey, influenced by Plaza de Mayo mothers, started to gather in 1995 on İstiklal Street to ask for the whereabouts of the disappeared, for an end to state violence, and, later, for the trial of responsible people for disappearances and deaths. The mobilization of mothers and the gendered aspects of the vigils have been subject to academic inquiry. Although there were fathers, and other loved ones, why mostly mothers initiated such public protest is one of the questions raised in the scholarship. Zeynep Gülru Göker (2011) tries to expand the definition of the "political" through a close examination of the silent vigils organized by the mothers. She argues that the Saturday vigils brought everyday emotions to the public sphere, where mothers turned their emotions and bodies into political tools. Ahıska (2006) approaches Saturday Mothers' mobilization through the feminist debates around "care." She states that Saturday Mothers redefined the politics of "care" against the revolutionary violence of the state. Mothers not only "cared" about their biological children, but for all the disappeared children. Peace Mothers who gathered around the demand of peace between the Turkish army and PKK were another example of mobilization and politicization of motherhood in Turkey. Politics of motherhood has its own limitations, and the cases in Turkey are no exception. Saturday Mothers both created a space for themselves through motherhood, but at the same time they were accused of being “bad mothers” because of their children’s politics against the state, as well as their own politics against the state. Peace Mothers were also labeled as “bad mothers” in the eyes of the state, they were mothers of the guerrillas, and could not raise “appropriate citizens”. Özlem Aslan (2008) underlines how sharing narratives publicly acted as political tools for Peace Mothers, like the silent vigils of the Saturday Mothers. The literature on Saturday People and Peace Mothers remain to have political significance and relevance. Saturday People try to expand their politics for all human rights violations, forming national and international alliances with other human rights movements. As the war in Turkey continues, we definitely need their knowledge of resistance.

The literature on Saturday Mothers is growing, however there are very limited studies conducted on motherhood activism prior to Saturday Mothers. Gözde Orhan’s (2008) master’s thesis is one of the detailed studies on motherist movements in Turkey, from “*Evlat Acısına Son*/Stop Mother’s Pain” campaigns to Peace Mothers. She argues that motherist movements embraced motherhood, and feminized the public sphere. In her study, she specifically focuses on mothers movements before and after 1980 coup. The “*Evlat Acısına Son*” campaigns were organized by İKD members in 1976, and continued in the following years, to draw attention to political murders. Emel Akal (2011), in her book *Kızıl Feministler* also mentions these campaigns. Gözde Orhan (2008) argues that mothers embraced motherhood as a “natural” phenomenon, and identified motherhood as/ “creating life” against the destroying character of “fascism” (50). Another movement that she analyzes is mothers who were organized against the military regime. Mothers gathered in front of prisons to see their children, and to draw attention to human rights violations within prisons. They followed legal procedures, split up and shared the works, and formed solidarity. Burchianti (2004), in her study of maternal memories, looks into how mothers’ movements transformed their politics to “fight against unemployment, poverty, and state-sponsored violence” (135). This was also true for mothers’ movements in Turkey. The efforts and organization of mothers in the 1980s to see their children in prison led to the establishment of the Human Rights Association in Turkey. Tuğba Demirci’s (2016) recent study on human rights activism and motherhood focus on the collective and personal histories of activist mothers against military regime, like Leman Fırtına. A very recent book published in Turkey, called *Bizim Gizli Bir Hikayemiz Var "Dağdan Anneliğe Kadınlar"/ We Have a Secret Story "Women from Mountains to Motherhood"* by Berivan Bingöl (2016), consists of interviews conducted with former PKK guerrilla women who became mothers after their disunion from the organization. This shows that there exists a growing interest on the politics of motherhood in Turkey. For this thesis, the literature on mothers' activism is quite central because they address the intersections of motherhood and political activism. They also refer to public perceptions, media coverage, but most importantly the maternal agency in conducting political activism in Turkey.

When we turn to the literature on gendered memories of revolutionary women in 1960s and 70s, and in the post-coup era, there are several published researches, articles, and unpublished theses. *Kızıl Feministler* by Emel Akal (2011) is one the earliest studies about revolutionary women. In this research Akal conducts oral history interviews with members of İKD which she was also a member of. She argues that İKD was a feminist organization, and examines activities, campaigns, and women's issues back then. Her study is very central for this thesis for two main reasons. First, İKD was a women's organization where mothers took part, and their magazine *Kadınların Sesi* had issues focusing on motherhood. These accounts are important to understand how revolutionary women's organizations approached motherhood. Second, with Akal's study, the intersections of leftist politics and feminism in Turkey became visible. The silence over women's organizations prior to 1980s feminist movement has been broken down with studies like Akal's, and with other studies which focus on Ottoman feminisms (Çakır 2007; Berktay 2001). Akal's research makes us to ask questions about other women's organizations at the same time, and makes us aware of the lack of archives and narratives about these organizations. In another study, Birsen Talay Keşoğlu (2007) tries to address other socialist women's organizations between 1975-1980, arguing that women's sections in leftist organizations like TSİP and TİP remained limited in terms of taking initiatives and hesitated to pronounce the term feminism. Her study is important because she conducted interviews with women who tried to form women's sections within leftist organizations, which remained on the margins of historiography. She mentions that socialist women had never felt the need to question the gendered division of labor.

However, my interviews and analysis show that some women questioned, or at least talked about their efforts to bring questions about the gendered division of labor both at the organization and at home.

Serra Ciliv's (2002) study on Alevi leftist women introduces the concept of "intersectionality" to this literature. She conducts life story interviews with four women, and "aims to situate layers of meaning, myth, ideology, and activity -the symbolic world- of these women within the historicity of the '70s left" (iii). Furthermore, she looks into the changing subjectivities, ruptures and continuities before and after the emergence of 1980s feminist movement for these women. Her study, by focusing on four women's life stories, and introducing intersectionality, opens a discussion for my questions regarding the layers of silences. Being an Alevi revolutionary has its own vulnerabilities which are experienced differently by each woman, like being a revolutionary mother has its own. Halavut (2008) calls this "the narratives of the margins" (97).

Within the literature, the gendered experiences of political violence, and solidarity formations against political violence of the 1980 coup regime have also been studied. Meral Akbaş (2011), for instance, has conducted research with women who used to be revolutionaries, and imprisoned during 1980 coup in Mamak Prison. In her book, she argues that laughter was a coping mechanism for revolutionary women in prison, and underlines the solidarity formed by women inmates. Her book opens up a new space of discussion about the political violence during 1980 coup in prisons, and introduces gender as a category of analysis. Bürge Abiral (2016) through a reading of women's testimonies of incarceration during the 1980s shows how hegemonic discourses like respectable femininity and national security left out narratives of sexual violence. She argues that resistance is shared very often where narratives of vulnerabilities remain on the margins. Abiral criticizes Akbaş's work on the ground that she generalizes experiences of women in Mamak prison. She argues that not all women experienced prison, and solidarity within the prison on the same levels. Furthermore, Abiral also argues that Akbaş essentializes womanhood through treating laughter and creativity as something inherent to women. Both studies shape the discussion in this thesis. On the one hand, motherhood was narrated through creativity, but on the other hand not all women could form solidarities with other revolutionary women during their pregnancies and mothering. In that sense, women also shared stories of vulnerability. Furthermore, motherhood was mentioned by women in cases of political violence and torture. Sexual violence as claimed by Abiral (2016) remained on the margins of the narratives. However, throughout the research process revolutionary women openly told me their own reasons for sharing resistance stories. This is why I argue that their own reasons for sharing and not sharing should be taken into consideration, after all it is their own strategy to cope and struggle against official historiography of the 1980 coup. This is why these two studies are very central for this research. In the case of motherhood (a concept where heroism and vulnerability are two main discourses) experienced by revolutionary women, resistances and vulnerabilities are constantly negotiated narratives, and not two opposing extremes.

Connecting feminist curiosity with political activism and motherhood studies, this research opens up a discussion on revolutionary history and motherhood. It aims to fill the gaps in the existing academic literature in Turkey as well as the international literature. First, it aims to contribute to the emerging literature on the experiences of revolutionary/militant women, and theorize the intersections and contradictions of the two subject positions "revolutionary" and "motherhood." Second, it seeks to address to the gap in the literature on Turkey, regarding motherhood, political activism, and the gendered memories of leftist politics. I introduce motherhood as a category of analysis for the literature about revolutionary women in the 1960s and 70s. I try to make sense of motherhood and being revolutionary within the historicity of 70s leftist politics, 1980 coup, and politics of motherhood at the time. This research will expand this line of inquiry by adding motherhood to the frame. As there was no single experience of the coup, there was no single experience of womanhood and no single experience of motherhood. This research aims to complicate the meanings of personal and political, public and private through the narratives of revolutionary mothers. It seeks to fill a gap in the literature by analyzing the experiences, memories and contemporary reflections of women who were mothers and politically engaged revolutionaries in the 1960s and 1970s.

1.4.Methodology

This research combines oral history interviews and textual analysis. Between December 2015 and April 2016, I conducted interviews with ten "revolutionary" women who were mothers before and after the coup. They were in-depth, semi-structured, open-ended oral history interviews. I had a list of questions with me, but the interview process itself shaped my curiosity and questions. I took that list with me, since some of the interviewees asked for it, saying that they did not want to speak about "irrelevant details." During the interviews, I mostly did not intervene, simply asked a question and listened to them. Every interview was unique. I used a digital recorder to save the interviews. I took the permission of the interviewees, and none of them had drawbacks about recording. Some of them said "no problem, everybody knows everything these days." Throughout the thesis I use pseudonyms for eight of my interviewees. Only for Günseli and Ayşen, I use their own names because they have already shared their memories through publicly available memoirs, and they gave permission. During the introduction, I was asking whether they would like to choose a pseudonym for themselves, but none of the interviewees gave me a name, so I decided on the names. After recording the interviews, I did the transcriptions myself. Four of the interviews took place in İzmir either at homes, or offices of my interviewees. The rest of the interviews were in İstanbul. The interviews lasted from 1 hour to 3 hours. I reached my interviewees through the snowball method. I was introduced to Damla, the first interviewee, through a relative of mine. Damla introduced me to Selen, and the interviews expanded. Since I was also digging into the textual material available, I reached Leyla and Ayşen -who were both writers- through their information available on the internet. Most of the time I could access interviewees through the introduction of former interviewees. However, in the cases where I directly reached my interviewees, it was the topic itself that helped generate access. The fact that we were going to talk on memories of motherhood did not scare off my interviewees, in fact many remarked that they found it quite interesting and necessary to share these experiences. When I talked to them first on the phone, after introducing myself I explained my topic in detail, which often created an enthusiasm and willingness to meet me.

I think this enthusiasm of the interviewees regarding the topic was an important aspect of this research.

All the women that I met were identifying themselves as revolutionaries. Their family backgrounds varied, as well as their economic, and educational status. Not all the interviewees talked about their occupation, Damla, Selen, Hazal, Çiçek, Fatma, and Hale were active in Progressive Youth Association (İGD). I have mostly talked to İGD members, and this was a result of the snowballing method. Meral was from the Worker's Party of Turkey (TİP) and, later, the Progressive Women's Association (İKD). Ayşen did not want to identify her organization. Leyla took part in All Teachers' Union and Solidarity Association (TÖB-DER), and Günseli was a member of People's Liberation Army of Turkey (THKO). My interviewee's years of birth varied from 1948 to 1963. They talked about having started to identify themselves as revolutionaries either at high school or at university. They all stated that they were married to a "revolutionary man" whom they were in love with. Some continued their marriage, and some got divorced. Although I did not ask questions directly about their jobs, some of them mentioned how hard it was to obtain a profession after the coup which affected their future lives. All of them, except Hale said they are no longer active in a political party, but mostly as independent activists, or through NGOs. I would like to continue with the details of the interviewees' personal histories.

Meral, Günseli and Leyla gave birth in mid and late 1970s. They identified themselves as being part of the 68' generation. They were in revolutionary organizations when they gave birth. I met Meral at her house, she was coming from a talk. Her father was a gynecologist of a small town, and her mother was a history teacher. She had mostly identified herself with her father, and told me that she had promised herself that she would not mother like her mother. She had two children. Meral, like Günseli and Leyla used to be a teacher. She talked about her students' position in 12 September, how they protected their parents as a child of 12 September. Similar to Günseli and Leyla, state officials asked Meral to give names of the students who were in revolutionary activity, or they asked the same thing for fellow colleagues. Meral refused to report back to state officials which made her realize she could no longer survive at public school. She opened her own preschool, and has continued her professional career as school executive for many years, and worked on educational practices. After retirement she continued her struggle through civil society organizations. She has married twice. After saying this, she underlined that the reasons for divorce (even though I did not ask) had nothing to do with division of labor in the family. She repeated several times that their marriage was based on sharing. Günseli was also a teacher at a public school. She participated in the organization while she was at university, and continued afterwards. Like Meral, several times she mentioned her marriage was based on equal sharing and understanding. Meral had to quit being a teacher. She did not mention anything about her occupation afterwards, but I have learned that she worked in several non-governmental organizations. After many years, she decided to write a memoir, and share her exchange of letters with her son and parents while she was in Mamak Prison. Leyla was also a teacher in a small province. When she refused to report about revolutionary students, she was exiled. She could not continue teaching. Like Günseli, she did not give any information about what she had done after to earn income. Yet, she mentioned during these exiles she got divorced from her husband. She later on published novels, memoirs, research books on 12 September, and she was quite active feminist circles in her city. Leyla was the only women who identified herself as a socialist feminist which made me think about revolutionary women's identification with feminism. When we met, she signed her books for me, and was actively working in a women's organization.

Damla, Çiçek, Fatma, Hazal and Ayşen gave birth to their first children during the years between 1982 and 1984, when they were in their early twenties. Ayşen gave birth when she was in Metris prison. My interviewees made a difference between having children before the coup and after the coup. Those who had children after the coup said there was no longer an organized left, and they were running away from the police. Nevertheless, they were continuing their revolutionary activities clandestinely. When I asked about their clandestine activities, they all said they continued being revolutionaries at homes. This is why their narratives were still relevant, and told another aspect of revolutionary narrative which was continued clandestinely after 1980. Damla's siblings were also revolutionaries. She told me that her brother had to run away to Europe, and his children remained with his parents for more than ten years which affected Damla as well. She was politicized when she was in high school, like Fatma, Hale, Selen, Ayşen, Çiçek, and Hazal. Damla was one of the women who got divorced from her revolutionary partner. Although our interview was on motherhood, Damla wanted to talk about what happened afterwards which affected her economically. She told me that it was quite hard to obtain an occupation. She told me she could only "obtained" a profession after 1985, and worked in private business. For her, the university education was not necessary. The revolution came first. She accused the leadership of the organization for this lack of guidance. When we met, Damla told me she was no longer involved in any kind of organization. She said that she is no longer political. Yet, she shared her enthusiasm with me regarding the Gezi Movement. Fatma, Çiçek, and Hazal were still married to their revolutionary partners. They all mentioned poverty and conservativism in their families. Fatma and Çiçek did not mention anything regarding their employment. Hazal told me that she completed her university degree many years after the coup, and started working with her husband as a personal treasury officer. They were also not active in any kind of political party or organization.

Selen and Hale gave birth in late 1980s when the circumstances were relatively settled. Their narratives are also included in this research because first, they were explaining to me why they did not have children right after 1980s, and how their reactions were like against their friends who were mothers at that time. Secondly, in late 1980s they were still identifying themselves as revolutionaries, and their decisions to have children were showing certain parallels with other women. Selen also could not find job easily afterwards. When we met, she was recently retired, and she was quite active finding new hobbies for herself, as she put it. Hale completed her degree in cinema studies. When we met she was working in a civil society organization that works with children. Throughout the chapters, I talk more about my interaction with my interviewees and reflect upon our interviews in detail. The impact of mothers' participation in the revolutionary movements are represented, as Morey and Santos (2014) argue throughout several testimonies and oral histories that expose the complexities, ambivalence, trauma, and creativity of being a revolutionary and a mother.

The textual analysis in this thesis is comprised of several published testimony collections and memoirs written by "witnesses" who were revolutionaries in 60s and 70s. In this part, in order to limit my analysis, I only included testimonies that directly addressed motherhood experiences. By examining the narratives of motherhood in these books, I wanted to see the differences between the oral and written narratives. They enriched my analysis of the oral narratives, and proved how diverse motherhood narratives are. One other question I explore as I review this literature is when women speak about motherhood. In other words, even when the research does not focus on motherhood, what kinds of questions or issues trigger women to speak about their motherhood experiences. I analyzed different reasons why women choose to share their experiences of motherhood, or not. And for women who choose to share their motherhood experiences, what does it mean to write, and for whom do they write? In the following section I would like to discuss how the interviews made me think more about the different usages of words such as “militant,” “revolutionary,” “activist,” “organized,” and “political.”

1.4.1. Oral History, Subjectivity, and Temporal Dimensions

“As the term itself implies, oral history is a specific form of discourse: history evokes a narrative of the past, and oral indicates a medium of expression” writes Alessandro Portelli (1998, 23). The interviews that I have conducted were oral histories that specifically focus on narratives of motherhood and revolutionary selves. They were also selected parts and reorganized autobiographies of revolutionary women. What I would like to do here is to discuss oral history as a theoretical and methodological tool, and focus particularly on the question of subjectivity and temporality. Here, I would like to dwell upon two fundamental works: Alessandro Portelli’s “Oral History as Genre” (1998), and Luisa Passerini’s *Autobiography of a Generation: Italy, 1968* (1996).

Oral histories help to bring the past to the present, mobilize memories, and also have the capacity to transform the personal into political with a special emphasis on history. In terms of my research field, oral history gains particular significance for understanding how women were both revolutionaries and mothers, because we do not have enough written accounts by revolutionary mothers. Oral histories also say several things about the moment of the interview. They create a relational field of witnessing in the sense that the listener also becomes a witness to what she has heard. Pollock identifies oral history as a particular kind of performance which is "a *critique* of defining discourses; a *poeisis* of mutual change; a reparative *intervention;* and a *translation* of the relationship between the teller and listener into that between multiple listeners across boundaries of time and place, such that all are induced into performing a new/renewed ethic of imagination and action" (Pollock 2008, 128). The characteristics of oral history, as discussed by Pollock, show significant resemblance to testimonial literature. Sharing memories via oral history produces the hope that they will lead to "examination and self-examination," or critique and reflexivity like testimonial writing, and will allow us to "come out to the other side" (Pollock 2008, 129).

For this research in order to make sense of a political and historical processes I wanted to conduct analysis through personal narratives. In historical texts, what one encounters are the years of foundation for leftist organizations, the leaders of political parties, disagreements within leftist circles, and the heroic imagery of certain leftist leaders. With this research, I wanted to focus on gendered experiences, and introduce another layer of personal narratives by specifically working on motherhood. Oral history is one of the methods that enables the researcher to see shifts between personal and political in the narratives. As Portelli (1998) argues, "oral history expresses the awareness of the historicity of personal experience and of individual's role in the history of society and in public events" (26). Through my oral history interviews, I wanted to locate motherhood experiences in their own historicity, but at the same time I wanted to see how revolutionary mothers shaped and reconfigure the revolutionary narrative which they were a part of.

Oral history provides a space for both the researcher and the interviewee to be "attentive to contradiction, ambiguity, and paradox" by "allowing … insights into the complexity of their subjectivity" (Joan W. Scott in Passerini 1996, xii). For this research the contradictions, paradoxes, and complexity of subjectivity were quite relevant. I was asking questions about motherhood which some of the women had never pondered in relation to revolutionary narrative. In my research experience, the process of oral history was creating a space for discussion of being a "revolutionary mother." Both Portelli and Passerini draw our attention to the process of the oral history interview. Portelli specifically discusses the positionality of the oral historian. He argues that oral history forms a different form of authority where the "interest" of the researcher derives the motivation of the interviewees to talk. He writes:

> "In oral history, however, the process of legitimation is more complex. Typical beginnings, such as, 'I have nothing to say', or even 'What do you want me to say', may be coy maneuverings, but they may also indicate that the narrator feels entitled to speak only because you ask me to (and, often, I will say what you want to hear)" (1998, 29).

My interviewees also formed very similar sentences. They talked about politics of their organizations. They talked about certain important figures, and provided a chronological order, but for some of my interviewees my interest on their motherhood experiences opened a new space of discussion and sharing for both of us. As Portelli suggests, oral historians "bring to the interview an agenda of their own, which is constantly renegotiated in the course of the conversation" (Portelli 1998, 30). In this research, my interest in motherhood made my interviewees think about the possible overlaps between being a revolutionary and being a mother, but each interviewee interpreted possible connections through their own subjective position, as well as mine. This brings our attention to the temporal dimension of oral history, and narratives.

Passerini (1998) claims that "memory speaks from today" (23). For her, the autobiographical memory divides between past and present. It is today's reflection that speaks about the past, and it is present subjectivity of the narrator that talks about the time being narrated. This is why she considers her interviews as "a brief pausing to reconsider the past, memory, narration, and biography reconnect with one another for a moment" (1996, 154). James A. Winders (1993) similarly argues that "we operate at the intersection of multiple temporal modes:" "the lived time of one's daily existence, the time of our memory, […] and lived time, of our unconscious mind, a time of dreaming, involuntary memory and repressed drives" (28). The oral history interviews with revolutionary women included all these temporal dimensions. Keeping in mind this temporal dimension is quite important, because the analysis could only be meaningful by acknowledging that our interviews were part of the present reflections of the memories (Pena-Marin 1993).

1.4.2. Contested Meanings and Connotations

One of my concerns while preparing the interview questions was about the politics of naming. I was hesitant to use the word “militant,” although I saw that the testimonial books that I read used the word extensively. The reason for my hesitation was the recent connotations of militant, a synonym for “terrorist” in the mainstream media. I thought that starting with the word militant may distance my interviewees. However, the very first interview proved me wrong, and Damla corrected me by saying “These days you are using activism, but we were militants.” Similar reflections continued in other interviews. Another very explicit change of meaning was related to the terms “political” and “organization.” Sometimes throughout the interviews, I was asking whether they think that the meaning of political has changed or not throughout the years, and sometimes this change was embedded in their narratives.

The last challenge I witnessed was about the meaning of the term revolutionary, especially when I put “revolutionary” and “mother” together. When people asked me about my thesis topic, I used the shorter version, “revolutionary motherhood.” If the person who was asking this question was a mother, they would immediately reply: “Aha, that’s me.” So the word revolutionary did not evoke a leftist revolution. Through the years, the meaning of revolutionary in the context of motherhood had almost turned into “survival as a mother.” While I was doing my literature review, I saw various employments of “revolutionary motherhood.” For example, Pacino (2015) uses “revolutionary motherhood” to understand how the Bolivian revolutionary government reformed motherhood in 1950s and 60s, “as a state-sponsored maternalism during the context of revolution” (Carreon&Moghadam 2015, 22). In some other cases the word revolutionary was used not in a literal sense, but, similar to its meaning embedded in the “Aha, that’s me,” to connote a more “discursive and visionary” way that refers to “continuing struggle for change” (Carreon&Moghadam 2015, 27), and caretaking. In the case of revolutionary women in Turkey, it is more ambiguous. The revolution did not happen, and the maternalist discourses of the governments have typically been right wing, and pronatalist. The leftist discourse on motherhood was only available in leftist theory books. There was no independent motherhood agenda of the left, as in the case of Bolivia. I argue that the “revolutionary motherhood” of my interviewees was in between these two different uses. In a sense they were revolutionaries of an unrealized revolution, and at the same time they were seeing themselves as strugglers for change as mothers. This is why throughout the thesis, I will be referring to these two different meanings attached to “revolutionary motherhood,” and discuss the ways in which the two different meanings coexist in revolutionary women’s narratives.

Throughout the research process, there occurred several challenges about the interchangeable usage of revolutionary, militant, and activist. Although interviewees were using revolutionary and militant interchangeably, they were not using activist that often. It was as if referring to a generational gap. This showed the ways in which their use of language differed from present terminology around political activity. This kind of difference was also reflected in academic articles. All the academic literature that I have used in this research uses political activism as an analytical term. They do not touch upon the differences in the meanings attached to militancy and activism. If they do, they take militancy as synonymous with armed struggle. Petra Rethmann (2006) similarly argues that the theme of militancy did not receive much attention among cultural historians who also work on the ’68 movements. This lack of attention to the historicity of these terms has created a problem in terms of this research because the women I have interviewed neither use the term activist for their political identification nor do they refer to armed struggle. This is why, throughout the thesis, I reflect on the different uses of militancy, activist, and revolutionary. The difference between revolutionary and militant was more explicit for some women, but still they used these words interchangeably. Revolutionary was referring to their ideal of revolution as socialists, or communists. However, militancy combined revolution with daily political activity. In order to make sense of the contexts in which the term militant is used, I will try to situate the term militancy in history and culture.

Raymond Williams (1976) in his book *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* argues that the word militant in English has been used as “dedicated activity” in religious terms till 19th century rather than emphasis on military sense. During the 19th century, the religious meaning was altered to incorporate social activity. In the 20th century, the uses of political militancy have moved towards industrial militancy (290). When searched in online Oxford Dictionaries, this definition of the term “militant” appears:

> “The root of militant, Latin *miles* soldier’, is shared by military (Late Middle English), militate (late 16th century) originally ‘serve as a soldier’, and militia (late 16th century). For most of its history the main sense of militant has been ‘engaged in warfare’, but from the late 19th century militant has particularly meant ‘aggressively active in pursuing a political or social cause’. In Britain the ‘Militant Tendency’ was a Trotskyite political organization which published a weekly newspaper, *Militant,* between 1964 and 1997”[8]

When the word activist is searched, the definition is as follows: “A person who ‘campaigns’ to bring about political or social change.”[9] Based solely on these definitions, a militant is perceived to be an aggressive actor for a social cause, but activists peacefully campaign for social change. The word militant also has different connotations in the context of Turkey. Throughout the 1960s and 70s, the word militant was used to define “dedicated activity.” Together with the emergence of revolutionary organizations that support armed, guerrilla struggle the uses of the word militant included people who use arms. The connotations of the word militant altered with the Kurdish guerrilla struggle, and organizations like Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front (DHKP-C). Being a militant in the public culture, and in the mainstream journalism is associated with terrorism. Interestingly, the Turkish Language Institution’s website offers more definitions about the word militant, and defines activist as a person who is effective[10]. For militant the definitions include an active member of a political organization, a person who works for the success of an idea and perspective, and a person who struggles through illegal means, and use of force[11]. The term activist is a more recent term in that sense, and subject to change like militant. The term revolutionary seems to fade away with the dissolution of the Soviet Union as the hopes for revolution can no longer be sustained. Nevertheless, the way in which women in this research defined themselves were shaped by their past subjectivities, and narration of those subjectivities in the present. In line with the widespread use of political activism as an analytical concept in the existing literature, throughout the thesis, I will use political activism as a general analytical concept to define revolutionary women's engagement in politics while being attentive to these different uses and connotations, as well as to women's own self-definitions.

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[8] http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/militant access date 04.09.2016.

[9] http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/activist access date 04.09.2016.

[10] http://www.tdk.gov.tr/index.php?option=com_gts&arama=gts&guid=TDK.GTS.57cdafdfd1bb73.78973018 access date 04.09.2016.

[11] http://www.tdk.gov.tr/index.php?option=com_gts&arama=gts&guid=TDK.GTS.57cdafd3e57f52.78578296 access date 04.09.2016.

Another important distinction for my interviewees was between being a member of an organization seen as political and not being organized perceived as less political. *Örgütlülük*[12] was defining their revolutionary activity back in late 1960s and 70s. When the 1980 coup closed all political parties and organizations, their political activity was decreased, and their political spaces started to be very limited. This limitation did not vanish immediately. For many years, gathering or organizing were precluded. This is why being a part of an organization meant being political. The women who gave birth after the 1980 coup told me that they were still revolutionaries clandestinely, but they thought their experiences are not valuable for me because they were not organized which also meant they were not political "enough." Hazal, before our interview, told me that after 12 September, she was not organized/*örgütlü*, and she cannot provide insights about being a revolutionary mother. I told her that every narrative is valuable for me, and asked whether she was conducting revolutionary activity at home, limited or not. She said, "Of course, I was still a revolutionary." Yet, due to their previous *örgütlü* position, they were living as "illegals." Revolutionary women's experiences, and memories who gave birth after the coup were very important in that sense. They had become mothers in very complicated times. Furthermore, their experiences were different than the revolutionary women who gave birth earlier in the 1970s in the sense that they were not isolated, and those women who gave birth in the 1970s had difficulties within their organizations. Here, it is possible to make the distinction between the physical activities, and symbolic values of being a revolutionary. However, it seemed to me that the women I interviewed, in their definition of revolutionary, prioritized being a member of an organization. When I asked them about their present political engagement, most of them said they are not members of an organization, but are political. As if they were thinking that I was asking them about their political organization. They told me that current political organizations do not represent their will. They thought that I asked for a political affiliation. Also when I asked them about their children and whether they are political or not, some of the women answered that they are not members of a political organization. It is important to see how their perspective on being organized has shaped their thoughts on motherhood as a political experience. In this section, I have discussed the different meanings attached to terms such as militant, revolutionary, activist, and organized, and how these meanings are contextualized and contested. In terms of this thesis, the politics of naming has been a major challenge, as well as constituting an important learning.

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[12] The term *örgüt* in Turkish refers to organization. However, it has negative connotations where radical organizations that use violence are also called as *örgüt*, and the term is mostly associated with leftist organizations.

1.4.3. Positionality and Reactions to Research

In this section, I would like to write about the positionality of the researcher and the interviewee. First of all, studying motherhood as a young graduate student made my interviewees see me not as an expert, but as a "daughter." I think one of the reasons for this perception had to do with their revolutionary discourse. Selen saw me as a young activist to whom she can transmit experiences and knowledge, as in the "ideal relationship between mother and daughter." Being a daughter is a position where "mother" can keep secrets, keeping certain topics out of discussion, and also establishing a different kind of power relation. I realized at some point I have also internalized this position of the daughter, which was reflected in my initial writing. Due to that specific form of power relation between us, I was avoiding criticism. Another topic that is mostly kept out of discussion between daughters and mothers is sexuality. I never felt that they did not want to talk about sexuality, but some women did which made me think of their relationship with their own daughters. What kind of a daughter I was?

Every day language, especially in relation to leftist and feminist terminology, has shaped another aspect of the interviews. We were using the same concepts, and our choice of words were close to each other. The discourses that we shared helped us throughout the interviews. However, as I discussed in the earlier section there was also a generational gap in terms of certain words like militancy.

Me being young was the most repeated conversation of the interviews. My interest in the topic was creating a surprise, as well as sympathy. I was feeling anxious to say something wrong, or that they will understand my lack of knowledge. However, the fact that their children and myself more or less belong to the same generation, they were aware of our problems, and conditions. This awareness was also creating the surprise because they were thinking that our generation do not really care about the past. Sometimes they were complaining about their children's political involvement, or its lack. Fatma told me that her children never wanted to get involved with an organization. Nevertheless, their approach to my lack of knowledge was never hierarchical. As I mentioned earlier, they were recommending books, films, and other relevant sources. I never got the sense that they were not trying to "teach" me, but it was obvious that they wanted this research to change small things and that they were interested in helping me explore my curiosities. I remember when I met Çiçek, I pronounced one of the revolutionary organizations' name wrong. She laughed, and corrected me, but did not try to teach or judge. Their authority in our interviews was coming from their knowledge because they were there, and they were constantly theorizing about their past, as well as the future. Sometimes, I was making some arguments, and they were agreeing with me, and thanking me for my comments. Hale and Ayşen were interested in 12 September films. In our interviews, I told how I felt after watching the 12 September films, and they told me that my feelings were accurate, and commented on my feelings.

There were certain topics they were mentioning before the interview. Some of my interviewees asked about my parents' organization, assuming that my parents were also revolutionaries. When I answered that neither of them involved in political organizations, they were wondering about my involvement with such a topic. Another question that some of my interviewees asked to me was about Sabancı University, and politics of the university.

I was being honest with them about the general apolitical structure of the university, but at the same time I was telling about our initiatives within the university. We were talking about conditions in private universities, and about general educational problems in Turkey. At first I thought coming from a private university may affect their conception of my politics, but from our talks it was the opposite.

I have received several immediate reactions about the topic. I was introducing the subject of my study as the intersections between being revolutionary and being a mother. Most of my interviewees wondered whether I had chosen the topic, or whether it was imposed on me by a professor. When I mentioned that it was my own interest, that was received with enthusiasm and excitement. For some of my questions about motherhood, love, and marriage women stated that they have never thought about it. Especially, when I asked about motherhood some of the interviewees got distracted, or ended their words with a different topic of discussion. This actually happened very often. Sometimes they wanted me to repeat the question, or asked whether I was able to get the answer or not. They all shared the anxiety about speaking to the point. For example, Selen felt bad that she spoke so long. At the end of the interviews, I wanted them to tell anything they wish. Usually, they were ending their words like; "I hope it was useful for you," or "I hope I could give the right answers." I thought this was an anxiety, and repeated that everything they shared was valuable for me. Overall, the reactions were very much positive. It was not me asking the questions, but interacting and sharing mutually.

1.4.4. Research Process

When I first started the interviews, politics in Turkey ware in a big turmoil, which has continued into my writing period. As I worked on the thesis in July 2016, an "attempted coup" caused many deaths, and unprecedented fear and anxiety among everyone. I was trying to make sense of what was going on, and I realized at the same time I was trying to make sense of a previous coup, and how women survived traumatic experiences. How does one can make sense of any form of violence? I thought we could only make sense of our efforts to understand violence. This thesis is a result of those efforts both to understand violence, and to imagine a politics of peace.

The research process was definitely affected by what was happening in Turkey, and in the world. On some occasions, I delayed conducting interviews because I was experiencing fear and anxiety due to ongoing explosions in Turkey. My interviewees were also affected by these, and were constantly discussing the atmosphere of war in Turkey. They were stressing that these were the result of the 12 September regime. Yet, they were not hopeless. Nevertheless, I wonder how would their reactions be against the recent developments, including the attempted coup on 15 July. This was yet another coup that they were witnessing. I refer to other interactions between myself and interviewees in the following chapters. However, it is important to mention the general circumstances where this research is produced. The context that we are experiencing affects our ways of being, and writing.

1.5.Thesis Outline

In the second chapter, I present how revolutionary women narrated motherhood and the revolutionary struggle. I look at them as two distinct narratives, because the revolutionary women that I have interviewed were presenting motherhood and revolution as distinct narratives to me. In the third chapter, I try to understand how motherhood narratives opened cracks in the revolutionary narrative. Through revolutionary women's motherhood narratives, the "coherent" revolutionary narrative was undergoing various changes, and certain repetitions. I examine those specific narratives in the third chapter. The fourth chapter, by problematizing textual and oral sources about 60s and 70s revolutionary struggle, investigates how motherhood is narrated differently in texts, and how revolutionary women have shared their experiences. In conclusion, I revise my research outcomes, and propose directions for further research.

CHAPTER 2

GENDERED MEMORIES OF BEING A REVOLUTIONARY WOMAN AND NARRATING MOTHERHOOD

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter, based on the revolutionary women's narratives, I analyze how maternal and revolutionary narratives are constructed. I look into different meanings attached to maternal and revolutionary selves. While doing so, I adopt Judith Butler's (1988) theory of performative acts which will enable me to see the relationship between narrative and performance. Both motherhood and being revolutionary consists of performative acts which reflect the social and cultural meanings attributed to them. The word performative refers to socially constructed, and embodied practices and discourses "built and enforced by means of 'performance'" (Schechner 2013, 151). Performative acts are "instituted through stylized repetition of acts, manners of doing, dramatizing, and reproducing. […] They are "historical situations rather than natural facts" (Butler 1988, 519-521). Pollock (2008) argues that performative acts constitute two divergent performances "… cultural performances – the enactment in rites, rituals, and ceremonies of normative values and selves – but also the embedded performances of culture: the processes by which normative values and selves are made, even minutely crafted" (121). Both being revolutionary and motherhood consist of these performative acts in the lived experience of the everyday (Davis 2008). Kinser et. all (2014) use performative approach in motherhood studies and analyze "mothers' micropractices/microperformances to discover how these helped to shape individual, familial, and social meaning. […] and how maternal identity is performatively constituted through the multiplicity of ways that people mother beyond biological ties" (3). Performative approach provides us the means to analyze motherhood and being a revolutionary as something constructed in time through performance, as well as narrative.

Several questions occupy significant place throughout the chapter: What did it mean to be a revolutionary for women? What did it mean to be a mother? Was it possible to think these two together? How did women remember motherhood that was experienced during the times of extreme political violence? How did witnessing to 1980 coup affect their ways of narrating their memories of becoming a mother? What did they remember in particular? How did motherhood create differences in terms of experiences among revolutionary women? Where did motherhood stand in revolutionary narrative?

This chapter starts with a focus on the meanings attributed to being revolutionary and the revolutionary narrative. I discuss how revolutionary narrative was gendered, paying close attention to the discourses on love, marriage and motherhood. The second part is on motherhood narratives of revolutionary women. How do revolutionary women remember and narrate their motherhood experiences? Most of my interviewees repeatedly mentioned motherhood as a ‘natural’ experience. So, dwelling on their narratives, and how they used the word ‘natural,’ I open up a conversation about the tensions and contradictions that arise from discourses around ‘natural motherhood.’

2.2. Remembering the Revolutionary Selves, Who Were the Revolutionary Women?

What does revolutionary narrative include? Before moving onto specific themes that define revolutionary selves, I would like to certain themes that I came across throughout the research process that I think revolutionary narrative includes. Of course each person has his/her own revolutionary narrative which I focus in the following sections, however I wanted to provide a sense of repeated themes in revolutionary narrative based on testimonials, research books, *Encyclopedia of Socialism and Social Movements* (1988, vol. 7), and oral histories.

First of all, the revolutionary narrative of 60s and 70s mostly refer to the students' movements, their accomplishments, and their failures. The separation among leftist organizations, and their ideological differences are narrated quite often. Leadership is also criticized, or admired through certain revolutionary narratives. The heroic imagery of male leaders is also quite central. Especially certain names who were killed and murdered are remembered through their leadership roles, and through sacrificing themselves for the cause. The revolutionary narrative chronologically refers to '68 protests, the state of emergence came after the protests, the execution of revolutionaries in 1971, emergence of new factions throughout the 70s, the emergence of Kurdish revolutionary organizations, the workers' movements and strikes, Kızıldere 1972, the increasing political tension between left and right, and before and after 1980 coup. The chronology is mostly complemented with history, biography of parties and leaders. When we look into the pages of *Encyclopedia of Socialism and Social Movements* which was published in 1988, we saw a very male-centered visual representation of the revolutionary narrative. The biographies of former revolutionaries that are included within the revolutionary narrative, all belong to male leaders. Women whose photographs are included are just presented with their names, but there is no biography that focuses on revolutionary woman.

When we look into all these narratives we see a romanticized narrative where the critique of the organizations is missing in certain narratives. The romanticized revolutionary narrative tells the story of strength, emancipation, solidarity and equality among revolutionaries. Commitment and collective belonging are usually part of the revolutionary narrative. This picture that I drew is so big, and does not really capture the personal narratives. Being aware of this problem, I wanted to show how the public image of revolutionary narrative looks like in memoirs, in research books, in publications, and in media which does not necessarily include revolutionary women as actors. This revolutionary narrative is challenged, reconfigured, reinterpreted, and reiterated by revolutionary women on many grounds which I discuss in detail in the following chapters.

2.2.1. “Being in Life/Hayatın İçinde Olmak”: Meanings of Being Revolutionary

Çiçek was a member of Progressive Youth Association/*İlerici Gençler Derneği* (İGD). She was in youth politics, and had become politicized when she was in high school. I was introduced to her through Selen, and she accepted to meet me. We conducted our interview at Çiçek’s house. After our discussion about politics, she brought several books, and recommended them to me. Çiçek was one of the women who had had to live an “illegal” life for many years. At the time when we met she told me that she took part in an oral history project, and conducted interviews with former İGD members. She was quite familiar with the methodology, as well. While she was in İGD, she got injured due to an explosion in İGD’s office which shaped her future perspective a lot. When I asked her what her main revolutionary activities were; she replied “we were mostly doing educational work.” For example, they had initiated a campaign against racism in textbooks. When I heard about this campaign, I got so excited which she also realized. “Yes, we were doing such ‘progressive’ things,” she said. I felt the need to express my feelings. The part that excited me was how they continued to produce politics out of their spaces of repression, while at the same time maintaining the greater ideal of “revolution.” Then, she defined being revolutionary as “being in life” which was complicating the revolutionary narrative which told to struggle for the greater cause of revolution.

> “Being a revolutionary means being in life. You should be a successful student, you have no other choices…Being together was going to increase our strength, but ultimately revolution was the thing that would change people’s lives radically. So, the thing that I have called ‘a sense of justice’ was going to spread to all people, equality was going to spread to all people. Being a revolutionary was such an emotion for us. It was something essential, it was the normal. We could not be something else, it was not possible. Our route, our way was that, and we took that road.”

I remember very concretely the moment when Çiçek defined what being revolutionary mean to her. I was affected by it. I kept reminding her words to myself. The present political circumstances were always part of our interviews. On the day of the interview, when I entered Çiçek’s living room, the TV was on, and the news was about the dismissal of several academics for signing the “Declaration of the Academics for Peace”. For a while, we talked about this current political oppression against academics, and the war in Turkey. My dream has been to become an academic, and I was pretty affected by what was going on. When Çiçek defined being a revolutionary as being in life, it gave me a huge motivation and support. Her words made me think about how I define my activism within academia. Being in life meant constant struggle in every aspect of life; whether it be school, whether it be family relations at home; every site is a possible space of activism. If you are a high school student, you can turn your educational process into a space of activism where you would feel you are in life.

Moreover, “being a revolutionary as being in life” means revolutionary activity can take “normal” and routine forms in the course of everyday life. This idea was also quite present during the other interviews. Ayşen told me that during those years she would participate in every demonstration and event. Even their walks from school to home were part of their revolutionary activity. Damla remembered that due to encounters and attacks of nationalists they were constantly organizing, making plans before leaving the school, creating another way of exit each time. All of my interviewees drew my attention to the highly politicized environment of Turkey. “Politics was rushing, everything was happening suddenly and quickly/*Politika çok hızlı akıyordu*”, Çiçek said to me. In this political environment, being a revolutionary was something they normalized in their lives which was visible in Melek Ulagay’s narrative where she saw revolutionary activity as part of everyday routine:

> “I was married, and continuing my studies at the university… I was leaving home early in the morning for school, from there I was going to “Turkish Left/*Türk Solu*” magazine office, from there I was running to “Worker-Peasant/*İşçi-Köylü*” office in Alibeyköy” (Baydar&Ulagay 2011, 111).

Of course, it was not unique to Çiçek, Ayşen or Melek Ulagay. Many women saw revolutionary struggle as part of their everyday lives. Selen expressed this as; “Our lives were revolution, itself,” as if she was referring to discursive and visionary meaning of revolution. This sentence was uttered when we were talking about her mother’s reactions to her participation in leftist politics. For Selen, convincing her mother was a revolutionary act:

> "We explained what we were doing to our mother. If she did not understand, we showed. We showed the associations that we were going. We curbed her fears. In this sense, this was a militancy."

I met Damla through a relative of mine. I called her, and she said we can meet at a café. The interview with Damla was the first formal interview that I was going to make. Damla was also a former İGD member. While she was pregnant, she and her husband lived an illegal life where they had to change houses constantly. She said to me that she became a mother at a really young age. The interview with Damla was quite emotional, because some of my questions on motherhood made her stop, and wait before an answer. Damla talked about her anxieties about her children very openly. She remembered a moment when she saw her daughter carrying a green flag that they made at kindergarten at the age of six. When Damla saw the flag everything breaks apart for her. She said I did not want my children to face what I have witnessed. "The only thing I felt was fear, and I decided not to tell her, and I wanted to protect her," she said to me. As I argued in the introduction, I did not know how women would react to the word militant due to its negative connotations today. I was deliberately using the word activism, and Damla corrected me by saying:

> "You call it activism today, but those days we were calling ourselves militants. We were living like militants."

On the one hand, she was making me aware of her identification, on the other hand again she was also emphasizing that their lives were not separated from militant activity. Here, the word like is also important because it shows revolutionary women had the ideal image of revolutionary which they aspired to, and they were trying to become like them.

As women were living their lives like militants, they were also defining and redefining meanings of being revolutionary. Commitment, hope, and collectivity were some of those meanings. Being a revolutionary was something defined through these concepts. Revolutionaries must have been against all kinds of injustices. They must have had the feeling of justice. They were against the system. They supported equality and freedom for all. Although these were characteristics of a revolutionary self, there was a division between "true" and "fake" revolutionary. Those who were courageous enough to fight on the front, who were standing still in their ideological stand were the "true" militants. Selen was referring to militancy, and I asked her “who was the militant,” she remembered details about the status of “professional revolutionary.”

> “We also had something called “professional revolutionary.” If people went to prison, and came out; they became “professional revolutionaries.” That was also one of our biggest aims. There was a discourse on becoming a professional revolutionary.”

Although my interviewees used the words militant and revolutionary interchangeably, there was a difference between the two in term of intensity of conducting politics. Emel Akal (2011), defines militancy as such: “… there were militant women who had no occupation other than being revolutionary. These women had advanced theoretical background, and named as ‘professional revolutionaries’ within the Leninist terminology” (203). According to Akal, the difference between a revolutionary and a militant was the idea of “practice.” Militancy required conducting practical revolutionary activity in everyday life, and working for the organization 24/7. Another aspect of becoming a “professional revolutionary” was leaving all the economic and social privileges aside for the sake of the revolution.

Revolution is often identified as a radical change for the whole society. It requires committed revolutionary selves. Revolutionaries are asked to be committed to the cause. Commitment is subjectively constituted. For Günseli commitment was for equality of all:

> “Being a revolutionary for me was risking death for the sake of equality, people’s wealth. It was just that. I am ready to die, and I want emancipation for my people. I want everyone to be equal and free. It was that general and rough, but also I had such a sincere emotion.”

Melek Ulagay remembers the executions of Deniz Gezmiş, Yusuf Aslan and Hüseyin İnan, and her words underline another aspect of revolutionary feelings that came up with commitment, especially about pain and sorrow:

> “I remember feeling really bad and sad, but we tried to face what happened without collapsing. We devoted ourselves to this road, these things will happen. We got used to the idea that we will put up with this pain, so that we do not allow ourselves to become exhausted” (Baydar&Ulagay 2010, 226).

Although the commitment was individually decided, revolutionary self is constructed in terms of collectivity. Celia Hughes (2014) calls this “an emotional paradox”. In her article, where she analyzes motherhood and activism of radical leftist women in the1970s, she formulates this question to clarify what she means by the “emotional paradox” of leftist activist culture of the1970s: “what did it feel like to be a revolutionary female subject, on the one hand committed to an activist politics that demanded the subordination of self to external struggles, and, on the other hand, a self-reflective, internally centered being?” (877). This collectivity was mostly shaped by sharing, solidarity, or living as communes. What was happening to the individual selves? The revolutionary identity was creating tensions between collective and individual belongings. Oya Baydar explains one of the tensions as following:

> “One’s own identity seems like melting down in organizational structure. Furthermore, you believe that it should be like that, and it is a revolutionary virtue. Even though you see yourself right, detaching, and leaving the organization are like betrayal” (Baydar&Ulagay 2011, 189).

In *Sokak Güzeldir 68’de Ne Oldu?* (2009), Çimen Keskin Turan says that she does not remember herself dreaming individually. Dreaming is something both very personal and political. Collective dreams, dreaming about revolution were coming before one’s own individual aspirations. Dilvin Altınakar Semizer writes that women in the same ward saw similar dreams in their sleeps.

> “It was our common dream. The one who saw it in her sleep would start telling it immediately: ‘We were all inside. Suddenly, we heard voices. We ran to window, and saw people coming towards us as masses. They are shouting revolution has happened. As revolution happened, we also start shouting in happiness.’ […] It was like that; our common dream which we imagined collectively” (Mamaklı Kadın Yazarlar Grubu 2011, 115).

Collective belonging and identification created some problems for revolutionary women, especially after the coup. Ayşen writes these sentences in her book *Postal and Patik* (2011):

> “What I am going to do now, how will I live? Are my feelings the main reason behind the discussions about individualism after 12 September? How am I going to be an individual without being individualist? I was not able to develop this side of me when I was in the revolutionary struggle” (142).

Damla said that she felt so alone immediately after the coup, because all her friends were either running away, or were in prison. This caused a radical change in their lives. Besides, Damla and Selen both felt resentment about not going to university, or not acquiring a profession. They told me that they were deeply committed, and they were not thinking of themselves as independent individuals. Selen told me:

> “*Örgütlüyüz*/We were organized, but there was a need to channel that organization’s power. The revolution did not happen; it could have happened. We will need human power after the revolution. In my opinion, there was a really big mistake. In that period, organized individuals faced quite a lot difficulty, because they could not study, they could not receive education, they did not have a profession. I am one of them. You were living an illegal life for years, and you

> don't have a profession. When we started a legal life, we realized there is no occupation. How am I going to feed myself?"

Lastly, frequent expression of "hope" was something that testimonies and interviews share. Hope was seen essential to revolution, as well as any type of resistance. This was something that my interviewees also bring to the present. Füsun Özbilgen remembers those days as following:

> "We were living with hope thinking that revolution will happen. One day we will wake up and see revolution has happened already. We assumed like that" (Sağır 2015, 26).

For revolutionary women, hope helped them to bear witness to ongoing political violence. They continued their struggle with the support of hope discourses. Ayşen told me that throughout the years she learned that she should remove hopelessness from her repertoire. She also told me that their revolutionary hopes were not utopias. Her words made me think about the relationship between hope and resistance. Could we claim that "when there is hope there is resistance"? Günseli, in her book, writes that her hopes were making her feel like bending the iron. Also, in our interview, she said to me that she loves her resistance, and her struggle is the only thing that keeps her alive. The relationship between revolutionary hope, and motherhood hope is worth to think about which I will address in the following chapter in detail.

In this section, I tried to show how revolutionary women create their own revolutionary narratives. Their own personal narratives both clash and complement the existing and other revolutionary narratives. For instance, collective belonging and commitment were criticized by revolutionary women.

2.2.2. Being a Revolutionary Woman: Gendered Constructions of the Revolutionary Self

The lives of revolutionary women were surrounded by revolutionary, and performative acts. Adjacent to organizational activities like titling at nights, or organizing within neighborhoods, they also had to perform the role of the "ideal revolutionary woman". I use the verb perform, because being a revolutionary was something internalized both through embodying performances, intellectual readings, and discussions. All these performances were gendered, like gender itself (Butler 1999). Latife Fergan recalls how socialist men defined “revolutionary woman”:

> “We must be both revolutionary and free. Being a revolutionary woman meant rasping your femininity, acting and dressing like men, and not being emotional” (Akkaya 2011, 53).

Certain revolutionary activities were reserved only for male comrades, especially in the higher ranks within the organization. All of my interviewees acknowledged the gendered nature of politics within their political organizations. In the interviews, they were critical of gendered practices. Nonetheless, they always emphasized that they gained such a critical perspective after the coup when there was no organization left to participate in. Most of them started their narratives with a disclaimer; “of course, it is only now that I am aware of this”. Harshly criticizing every aspect without acknowledging gains would mean reducing and trivializing women’s resistances and subjectivity in those years, according to my interviewees. This is why they wanted to explain starting with such sentences.

This section is on gendered constructions of leftist politics in detail, because they are closely related to how women perceived their own motherhood, and how they remember their motherhood. In what follows, I scrutinize how women remembered and narrated their experiences related to sexuality, femininity, love, and marriage.

Sexuality, flirting, and relationships were neither part of the political agenda of the times, nor part of the everyday conversations between revolutionaries, as my interviewees said to me. Furthermore, with the aim of feminist questioning of leftist politics of 60s and 70s, Gülfer Akkaya (2011) asks several questions to her interviewees on their perceptions of love, sexuality, and flirting when they were in the movement, and now. The published interviews in her book also suggest that women were not talking about these openly. Class struggle was above everything else. Women were thinking about sexuality, and love, however they were not sharing with their friends. Hazal and Selen told me that they did not talk about any kind of love relationship. Çiçek very similarly mentioned that their agenda totally excluded such topics. Selen was surprised by my question about whether they were having conversations about love or not. She said:

> "I do not remember talking with female friends about love or marriage. Never… I realized this when you asked me. I have never spoken to anyone about these. It is very interesting, I received requests for dates/*arkadaşlık teklifleri aldım*, but rejected all of them. Being a militant was one of the reasons for my rejection."

In her interview with Nadire Mater, Işık Alumur also states that:

> "I was smoking Samsun in secret. Everybody was smoking Birinci. It was not nice to smoke expensive cigarette like Samsun. Flirts happened behind doors. It was not allowed. A revolutionary cannot flirt, or sleep. There was such a pressure" (Mater 2009, 144).

Ayşen told me that they suppressed their feelings, and they were self-censoring themselves. They mentioned it was something that they witnessed and experienced, but they have never spoken about it. They knew about the intimate relationships between revolutionaries, but acted as if they are unaware. This was actually a moral code for being revolutionary. If you are a "good revolutionary," you should not speak about these, and pretend that you have never seen. Hazal remembered how she was condemned when she asked to a friend whether the two revolutionaries were lovers, or not. Ülker Akgöl's narrative is also explanatory of this moral code among revolutionaries.

> "We were not living romantic relationships for all the world to see. Everybody knew about them, but no one talked. We did not hold hands, or snuggle. It was not appropriate for revolutionaries. Romantic relationships were defined as 'little bourgeois habits'. That is why we were asked to have secret relationships." (Sağır 2015, 149).

Appearance and dress codes constituted an important space of intervention, and part of the performative acts of being revolutionary. They were deeply gendered. Women were expected to wear clothes which were perceived as masculine, like pants, parkas, and wide shirts. Gina Herrmann (2003) claims that wearing pants helped militant women expand their physical sphere of existence. According to Selen her clothes allowed her to create a certain image on the street. Also, Çiçek emphasized the practicality of the pants. Yet, in our conversations they also underlined that this was an expectation from them. My interviewees talked about at least one incident where they witnessed an intervention to women's dressing and style coming from male comrades.

> "The year was 1977. One of our friends brought two of her female friends to our office, and showed them around. One of the girls wore a sleeveless dress with

> flower patterns. Right after, I was told: ‘Tell that friend, the next time they cannot come like this.” (Çiçek).

Ayşen writes about her regret for criticizing one of her friends due to her clothes. This was an internalized practice for some of the women, as well.

> “One day Hilal hang her undershirt to blower after work-out. We all criticized her very harshly. How come she could hang it while there were still marks of her nipples on the athlete. This might cause the soldiers to perceive us as ‘more’ woman. We are women, but we should not be reminding this through our clothes and behaviors” (Göreleli 2011, 133-134).

The idea that soldiers could perceive revolutionary women as “more” women due to their clothes points to another gendered performance. Revolutionary women were trying to desexualize themselves, to neutralize their femininity. Gülseren Pusatlıoğlu remembers her efforts as follows:

> “I was wearing my father’s shirts, because I liked his. One other reason for wearing shirts was my efforts to neutralize my gender. We did not want our body parts to be seen. We were all wearing shirts on top of pants. We rarely wore skirts, although I liked wearing them. […] Once, I had to go on a vacation with my family. I did not want to go, because of my responsibility towards my revolutionary friends. […] The seaside was like a torture. I was someone who was trying not to swim, and wearing long shirts. Our understanding was like that, due to the anti-fascist struggle we were losing our friends, and it was a huge responsibility” (Akkaya 2011, 324).

Jülide Aral’s narrative is quite parallel:

> “First, our miniskirts started to stretch, then we gave up wearing make-up. More and more we became militant, and genderless” (Mater 2009, 115).

The two terms that mark the desexualization of relations in the movement are “*yoldaş*/comrade” and “*bacı*/sister”. Ayşe Kadıoğlu (1998) argues that the use of these terms were results of internalized sexism. They were seeing women as dangerous sexual objects. She concludes that revolutionary movements were denying women’s sexuality via adopting these terms.

> “12 September deleted names from our memories. If you ask me to count names, I cannot. We had a ‘*bacı*-yoldaş’ relationship. Men call all their woman comrades *bacı*. We called them yoldaş. Some factions used ‘hoca’ which was used both for male and female. Every faction created a language to neutralize gender. Since we were *bacı*, we did not have names. *Bacı* do this, *bacı* do that” (Akkaya 2011, 329. Narrative of Gülseren Pusatlıoğlu).

Names are part of history, and *bacı* is marking a history of silence. Women's names were erased through using a desexualizing term. This use of language has contributed to the eradication of the female revolutionary subjectivity.

When women first participated in a leftist organization, their family relations were the main obstacle for their revolutionary activity. Gülseren Pusatlıoğlu, brings up this kind of limitation to revolutionary activity. According to her, "some women find freedom in marriage due to family pressures and prohibitions" (Akkaya 2011, 325). Marriage was another performative act defined within the revolutionary self.

> "Coup years… I was not thinking of getting married at all, but my father did not allow me. I will marry a revolutionary man, and play the role of the revolutionary/*devrimcilik oynayacağım*. Friends introduce me to a guy. He seems nice, I said let's get married. Anyway the coup came, we could not play the role of the revolutionary/*devrimcilik oynayamadık"* (Hazal).

Hazal's word play between playing revolution and playing house is important for the discussion about how some revolutionary women approached marriage. Playing house is a child's game which is usually played by girls. In this game a married couple must exist. The wife owns the kitchen as the mother of the children, and takes care of guests. We never see the husband, probably he is at work, and the goal is to live happily ever after in a warm home. This game reinforces both heteronormativity and heterosexuality. Hazal changed the word house to revolution, in her version of the game they were both going to be revolutionaries, and they were going to resist together as a married couple. In Hazal's narrative, 12 September both spoils the game and affects Hazal's dreams about resistance, since the coup alters their lives suddenly, and radically. An illegal life required new strategies, and TKP's central decision making branch adopted an action which was a very negative decision related to women. They tied woman, especially married woman, to man in the hierarchical structure of the organization.

Hazal and I met in her office, but then we decided to conduct our interview at a nearby café. She seemed shy at first, and before starting she said "that's all I have witnessed, which is nothing painful compared to others." She was also a İGD member and had met her husband during revolutionary activism. At some point, they heard that his husband was in the "wanted" list, and started to change places, and cut all their communications with their families. Hazal had to live an illegal life for many years, but for the first three years she did not leave home out of fear. It meant a total isolation for her and her daughter. She told me how she was also reporting to her husband in the organizational hierarchy:

> "My partner became my "sorumlu/sponsor", but I did not know. I was working as a courier, I was carrying stuff. My partner says 'you will meet this person', I go. After a while, insurrections began. Why is this process like this? This will be carried; this package will go. I don't know what's in the package. Once, I met with a female friend. I don't know if I can recognize her if I see her now. We poured out our feelings to each other, she also came as a courier. We shared our discomfort with each other; always husbands became chiefs for their wives, women cannot do what they want, kind of…"

This practice isolated revolutionary women, and reconstructed the woman-house image and binary.

> "I was also tied to my husband, and it was such a heavy situation. I was working independently till then. We thought marriage would free us, but suddenly we realized that we were confined. It was such hard times; I was not able to see anyone. I sent a written message. They replied to my message by saying "someone will meet you in 3-4 months' comrade. Women were confined to homes in that time, because women were actually protecting the core members of organization against outside" (Çiçek).

Gülseren Pusatlıoğlu says that women had to accept these practices, and that they often regarded them as part of the revolutionary duty (Akkaya 2011, 326). Sometimes these practices were applied overtly. Necmiye Alpay points to that overtness:

> "After our marriage my husband did not want me to attend meetings. If he told me verbally, I was going to oppose. Rather he was not telling me when and where the meetings were happening. I found out after the meetings. My husband was pushing me towards home through these mechanisms. […] I felt resentment. Of course it was personal, it was not about womanhood" (Akkaya 2011, 170).

For the women who were living an illegal life, the meanings of marriage altered, and they criticized organizations for applying such a practice. On the other hand, for Ayşen marriage meant something different, but pretty much reflected the leftist discourse:

> "We were discussing 'The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State' (laughs). In the groups that I was in, the mentality was like: We are together in every cause, except lover's cheek. Of course, it was monogamy. Family was feudal. Sometimes people who were not lovers were living together based on comradeship."

As marriage was discussed in terms of its possible contributions to revolution, motherhood was also discussed within marriage, for the sake of the revolution, or as in

Ayşen's words as a luxury. She thought it was such a pleasant feeling that they should not talk about it when there was so much pain to think about. Selen remembered that they were referring to mothers as supporters of revolution who went to factories, and distributed handouts. Fatma remembers motherhood as something that she was scared of due to their lack of knowledge about sexuality:

> "I had a romantic relationship at that time with my current husband, but it was something childish. We did not hold hands. He had run away from someplace else, and did not have a place to stay. He was staying with bachelor friends. He asked me to stay with them, and I stayed forever. My marriage happened like that. We did not know what is contraception. Besides we could not start a sexual life. What will we do, will I become pregnant? I guess, we did not question these things. There was always a lack of sexual drive. I was scared to get pregnant before marriage which came from my past. Will I lose my virginity? You experience so many contradictions, but at the same time you stay with the same person in the same house. There was a dilemma."

This dilemma was something that revolutionary women often struggled with. On the one hand, the revolutionary woman was expected to be free sexually, and on the other hand their sexuality was policed through clothing and using the words calling women *bacı/yoldaş* both by their male friends and by the society. These struggles were built on virginity most of the time. Ümide Aysu says for her the virginity was one of the controversial topics (Akkaya 2011, 202). Sexuality was something again discussed within the marriage to avoid policing over the female body. When women became mothers, they were again desexualized. Leyla's narrative was interesting in terms of how sexuality and motherhood came together. Leyla is an author. She has several published novels, and researches. I saw her narrative in a book, and found her contact information available online. She agreed to meet me. During her years of activism, she had two little children. She was telling me the process of her divorce from her husband, and I asked whether anyone from the organization said something against this divorce. She said that she never found the courage to share what has happened back then in her novels, but wanted to share it with me[13].

> "The organization asked why we needed to divorce. You are both revolutionaries, have children, and a nice marriage, you have the same ideals why you are getting a divorce? The only reason for getting a divorce for a revolutionary family is betrayal. You could only divorce if one of the partners has cheated. When I said my love was over, they treated this as a doomsday. Those days were really hard for me. My partner utterly changed as well. […] The organization isolated us for

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[13] Leyla made it very clear that I can share her narrative within the thesis.

> a while. […] We never told what was happening between revolutionary couples. We were only seeing revolutionary faces. After my divorce, I realized these things."

Yet, most of the time motherhood was something that women's revolutionary organizations were discussing. Sometimes they were mentioning motherhood as a matter of personal choice. Nilgün Yurdalan as a former İKD member recalls that "there were women who did not want to marry, or have children" (Akkaya 2011, 286). İKD was creating a space for women to discuss motherhood as a choice. In other occasions, they were indicating collective functions of motherhood, and creating campaigns predicating on motherhood, like the "Evlat Acısına Son" demonstrations.

This section aimed to understand how revolutionary women constructed their own revolutionary narratives with a specific focus on certain themes, especially gendered politics of revolutionary organizations both in everyday life and in decision-making processes. Revolutionary women speaking, and remembering from today narrated their memories as a form of "awareness" of the unequal treatment that they have received back then. Through our encounter with an oral history interview, revolutionary women could reflect upon their ways of resisting to gendered constructions of the revolutionary narrative. Furthermore, the gendered constructions of the revolutionary selves were affecting women's understanding of motherhood. There was not a prevalent agenda or discourse on motherhood that revolutionary organizations adopted, motherhood was on the margins. In the next section, I analyze the motherhood narratives of revolutionary women.

2.3. Remembering Motherhood

In this section, I outline meanings attached to motherhood and how these meanings were remembered, and narrated. Here, I dwell upon the feminist theories of motherhood. I ask the question, what does it entail to remember one's own motherhood. The meanings attached to motherhood varied in each interview, however certain understandings were repeated by revolutionary women. Memories of motherhood are shaped by several conditions. First of all, the ideologies of motherhood affected revolutionary women's perspectives about motherhood. By ideologies of motherhood, I mean the discourses, practices and expectations about motherhood between 1970s, 80s and present shaped by the society and the state. Furthermore, how the sex/gender system (Rubin 1975)[14] were constructed within the organization is crucial to understand women's narratives on motherhood. The available technologies of motherhood[15] of the time, as well as today, affected revolutionary women's memories of motherhood. Motherhood is an institution in that sense controlled and maintained by a patriarchal economy, but also an experience (Rich 1995). So it is not only about gendered structures that define motherhood, but also about how women themselves defined motherhood, and remembered their experiences. This section addresses the maternal subjectivity of revolutionary women, juxtaposed with contrasting meanings that revolutionary women shared with me as motherhood narrative.

2.3.1. Narratives of Pregnancy

During the interviews, in order to understand how revolutionary women remembered their motherhood experiences, I would often ask "what did motherhood mean to you in the midst of revolutionary activity?" While I was writing the thesis, I realized that remembering motherhood was actually remembering pregnancy, the technologies of motherhood, and how women managed to "survive" as revolutionary mothers in 1970s and 1980s. This also showed that my question which tried to establish relationship between motherhood and revolution was alien to some of the women. This research focuses on a certain period of time (70s&80s),

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[14] In her article "The traffic in women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex" (1975) Gayle Rubin defines sex/gender system as such: "… descriptions of the part of social life which is the locus of oppression of women, of sexual minorities, and of certain aspects of human personality within individuals. I call that part of social life 'sex/gender system,' for lack for a more elegant term. As a preliminary definition, a 'sex/gender system' is the set of arrangements by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity, and in which these transformed sexual needs are satisfied." (159).

[15] By technologies of motherhood I refer to any kind of technology available to perform motherhood/mothering. From how unavailability of diapers, child care publications and knowledge which includes psychological well-being of both mother and child, and also the reproductive technologies available at the time. Fatma, for example, mentioned how she did not know how giving birth looks like. "I had a pain. I immediately said I am giving birth on the 5th month. I went to a clinic; I was afraid to go to hospital since I am wanted. Then, I did not know when I was going to give birth. Doctors were measuring our bellies with a tape."

and how they are remembered; so when I asked questions about motherhood, pregnancy was the first thing that most of the women remembered.

Narratives of pregnancy are also narratives about mothers' perceptions of their bodies. What comes out from most of the narratives is that the process of pregnancy is one of the ways in which women talked about their bodies, and in some cases challenged the notion of pregnant body. Revolutionary women as conferred in the first section of this chapter told me that they "suppressed their sexuality," which included suppression of thoughts about their own bodies. Likewise, the belief that the pregnant body cannot "function normally' in the society" (O'Reilly 2010, 1020) is challenged through some revolutionary women's narratives, but at the same time it was reproducing the image of ideal revolutionary where a revolutionary must always stand still, and be strong in any case. Leyla told me that a revolutionary woman must be strong, and that she should live her pregnancy without any pains, or food craving. Leyla's narrative was reflecting the tensions between performing the "ideal revolutionary woman," and the discourses on pregnant female body which is expected to rest in bed.

Günseli told me her memory about how her pregnant body and revolutionary self were in tension, and how she was trying to bypass the discourses on pregnant body:

> "One day I was so tired, and had a huge belly. I was coming from a meeting, and stopped by to one of my friends' home. I was both hungry and tired. I knocked the door. They were at home, both teachers. They were surprised to see me. They invited me in. Male friend gave a pouf for my feet, and a pillow for my back. We had our own redlines due to revolutionary consciousness, and I said why do I need a pouf. 'Don't you see your face, and feet?' he said to me."

Pregnancy, too, was affected by revolutionary discourses. Leyla and Günseli negotiated the two subject positions, and talked about their memories of pregnancy in their own way. In that sense, it was interesting to see the connections between being revolutionary and pregnant, which seemed like two contradictory terms.

Ayşen was pregnant when she got caught, and sent to Metris prison. I also reached her through her information available online. We met at her office. I was very excited to meet her, because she wrote her experiences of being a revolutionary mother, and published them as a memoir. In her memoir, she writes about her pregnant body, and how difficult it was to be pregnant in a prison extensively.

> "I needed to go to toilet frequently due to my pregnancy I was knocking the door. Sometimes they were allowing me, sometimes not. When the doors were open, I was running to toilet" (Göreleli 2011, 26).

She shares her memory of how she was taken to hospital for labor, again her pregnant body becomes visible through her narration and writing.

> "I was trained beforehand. I knew how to switch handcuffs from back to the front, but with my huge pregnant belly it is impossible" (Göreleli 2011, 56).

For women, who did not plan to have a baby, pregnancy was a moment of shock in those circumstances. My interviewees expressed how they felt lots of anxieties. Most of them were running away, and changing places when they found out that they were pregnant. Fatma's narrative of pregnancy was explanatory of those anxieties. I met Fatma, through Selen's introduction. We met at her sister's house where three generations of women were at their regular sisters meeting. I met with Fatma's two sisters, her daughter, and her niece. They were all very excited as I was too, but the solidarity within the house calmed me down. We drank coffee together, and they all told me how they became part of the leftist struggle, and what they had witnessed. They all thanked me for bringing this experience to the front, and also agreed to meet at 8 of March celebrations. Fatma was a member of İGD. Her family was very conservative which caused her to leave home, and got married with her leftist comrade. Fatma was very funny, she ridiculed herself. She remembered small details. She said to me the night of birth was like how it was presented in Babam ve Oğlum (2005)[16]. She said that it was her story that was on the movie. Fatma and her husband also could not find a car to reach hospital at the night of the birth. She remembered that they saw a police car, and in addition to the pain, she experienced the fear of getting caught. They finally found a taxi, and Fatma had a painful delivery. She remembers her shock after finding out about the pregnancy through these words.

> "I fainted, and people near me helped. I was going to a relative, and when I arrived I told her that I fainted. She said you are pregnant. When she said that everything was torn apart. I did not want to accept it. She insisted. When my husband came home that day, I said I have great news for you. His face also

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[16] Babam ve Oğlum/My Dad and my son is a film which depicts what has happened behind the 1980 coup, and how it affected certain lives. The film starts on the day of the coup, where a couple is in search of a car to go to hospital since the wife was about to give birth.

> changed drastically, I never forget. We had never thought about it till that moment. When people told us that we will be a mother and a father we were devastated. What will we do now? We went to the doctor to confirm pregnancy. I started to think about how I will bear torture as pregnant. It was the only fear that I was feeling. How I will resist torture if I get caught pregnant? I had never thought about how and where I would raise this child. I only had such a fear until I gave birth. After birth, I started to feel the anxiety of getting caught. I have a child what will happen to him if I get caught" (Fatma).

Pregnancy was about women themselves, about their own well-being, their feelings and anxieties, although the sources of anxieties may seem as child's well-being. Even though the anxieties, the process of pregnancy empowered some women in several ways. For Ayşen, the feeling of loneliness disappeared with pregnancy.

> "I got married in August. Then 12 September came. We were all ruined, after 12 September I found out that I was in the 'wanted' list. After I learned that, I also found out that I was pregnant. In those circumstances while I was hiding, bringing a baby to the world was something like throwing an unborn living being into an adventure. At the same time, I thought I cannot sacrifice. He was my baby; I will take care of him even if I am alone. Even if I die, I will try to make him live. These feelings gave me the courage to run and hide, but I could only run away till my seventh month. When I got caught the only worry I had was about my baby. There are lots of responsibilities, but on the other hand you are carrying a life (inside yourself) and it was another responsibility."

There was a very limited knowledge available to pregnant women. During pregnancy, women maintained revolutionary principles through reading, and applying available knowledge which empowered them in a different way. This time it curbed their loneliness. Especially for women who were running away, and living an illegal life. They had no family members, or friends to share their anxieties with, or receive advice. They utilized their revolutionary self which taught them to read everything.

> "I did not know what motherhood was like. When I was working at *Beyoğlu*, I was buying this one magazine called "My Baby/*Bebeğim*." I do not know whether it still exists or not. At the time it was the only one and it was very expensive. It had a shiny cover. I looked carefully to the magazine. There was an article on how to give birth at home if you have nobody. I tried to memorize that part because I had no one, we also did not have telephone at home. I conditioned myself to give birth alone. Also it had a section on "what to bring with you to hospital?" A radio, a camera, notebook and pencil. I arranged everything except a camera. I was dreaming of a lovely hospital, and a smooth birth. What was I experiencing, where was I living, and what was that magazine telling me? Yet only that magazine gave me courage to give birth" (Fatma).

Ultimately, I think it is important to once again underline the context in which I have conducted these interviews. Revolutionary mothers were part of a society with increasing risk perception and fear due to both global and local conflicts and wars. Their anxieties may have been increased, and they continuously reminded me that the current situations are much more difficult to handle, and stressed the several functions of social media (Villalobos 2010), and government technologies. Even though they were not witnessing directly what they witnessed in 1980s, they were exposed to every kind of political violence and catastrophe through social media which increases and affects their remembrances and narratives regarding their anxieties about their children.

2.3.2. Motherhood as "Natural" and "Spontaneous"

One of the most debated topics in motherhood studies is about how women strategically construct and express maternal narratives, and maintain "meta-narratives" that shape cultural and social knowledge (Miller 2005). Biology/nature is one of the "meta-narratives" that shape motherhood narratives. Whether being a mother is a 'natural' phenomenon which is triggered by hormones at a certain age, or it is a matter of choice (or a constructed discourse through the "illusion" of choice), and a gendered social construct. Elisabeth Badinter (2011) draws our attention to the emergence of naturalism, and its effects on the discourses of motherhood. "Law of nature and biology are adapted to 'scientific' discourses on motherhood which resulted in accusation of mothers who do not follow naturalist arguments like maternal instinct" (38). Today motherhood/mothering, due to the efforts of feminist and queer literature and movements, has largely been detached from discourses of nature. The naturalization of motherhood is problematized on many grounds. First of all, it dictates becoming a mother for every woman, and, as such, generalizes and homogenizes the experiences of motherhood. It idealizes motherhood as a proper form of womanhood, and women who "fail" to become mothers (Hirsh&Spitzer 1993), or disagree with motherhood by choice are isolated and stigmatized, especially in societies where pronatalism exist (O'Reilly 2010). Eventually seeing motherhood as a natural given expands the jurisdiction of militarism by reproducing the essentialist gender roles.

Naturalization of motherhood also requires women to mother intuitively which puts their "femaleness" into question (Miller 2005). Badinter (2011) argues that:

> "Indeed, there are not two ways to experience motherhood; contrary there is an endlessness which precludes talking about an instinct grounded on biological determinism. The ways in which a woman experiences motherhood are dependent on her personal and historical history. Although no one denies the complexity between nature and nurture, motherhood hormones, the impossibility of defining motherhood behavior peculiar to human kind weakens the concepts instinct and woman's nature" (Badinter 2011, 61).

In order to support her stance on biological motherhood, Badinter gives the example of breastfeeding, and asks "if breastfeeding is the factor that initiates maternal bonding, what happens to maternal bonding of women who never breastfeed? Do they love their children less than the mothers who breastfeed?" (2011, 60). Motherhood was also seen as an oppressive mechanism for women which is provided by domestic caregiving labor. However, not all women understand motherhood as an oppressive experience. The narratives get complex when women embrace 'natural' discourses on motherhood. What were the reasons for maintaining biological discourses on women? What kinds of questions can we ascertain from the narratives of women who claim motherhood as a natural phenomenon? Is it possible to utilize those discourses for deconstructing homogenizing discourses of motherhood? What does 'natural' refer to in the context of a memory narrative?

Almost all the revolutionary women I interviewed defined motherhood as something 'natural.' I was asking the question of what motherhood meant to them, and I was getting the answer: "It was natural for me." I wondered what 'natural' meant for them, because all of them were critical about motherhood roles, practices, and ideologies. On the one hand they were speaking of maternal instinct, hormones, and feelings; on the other hand, they were mentioning unequal power relations that arise because of motherhood. I also questioned myself about my expectations from revolutionary mothers. Was I expecting them to use certain feminist terminology on motherhood? Or would defining motherhood as "natural" make one anti-feminist? Was I expecting these women to identify as feminist mothers? Was I expecting some form of consistency from them? In any case, it seems quite important to deconstruct the concept of 'natural' in their narratives to see how they are combining, negotiating, and reconstructing both the critique of motherhood and biology of motherhood.

Narratives are full of inconsistency, contradictions, and tensions, including motherhood narratives. It would be problematic to both claim revolutionary mothers' ideas on motherhood as being biologically determinist and also to dictate certain feminist understanding of motherhood into their narratives. This section looks into those contradictions and tensions, focusing specifically on the term "natural." What kinds of contributions can we make to feminist criticism with opening natural into discussion?

The women I interviewed gave birth to their children mostly in their 20s. For some, it was unexpected, and for others it was a planned process. As I indicated in the first section, motherhood was not something that women talked among each other. It was not something that they were thinking about in relation to choice, and revolution for some women. By choice, I mean the right to choose becoming a mother, or not. This is why it was natural for them. Hale, Çiçek, Ayşen and Hazal explicitly conveyed that motherhood was not something that they could conceptualize at the time. They were young, and did not think about motherhood intellectually. Hale told me that her decision to have children was not a result of intellectual thinking process. "You fall in love, make love, and have children, it was that simple." For Hale, "natural" referred to the emerging biological consequences after making love. Yet, she did not really say anything regarding her recent views on becoming a motherhood. Meral stressed how hormones triggered her:

> "Becoming a mother is such a nice feeling. Your hormones compress you, and biologically you want to become a mother. This is not a myth."

On the one hand, Meral was generalizing this hormonal aspect of motherhood. She saw motherhood as something every young woman aspire to, as a result of biological evolution. The choice aspect of becoming a mother did not shape their experiences, like Leyla's narrative: Also, they did not problematize the structural and economic conditions in which women "choose" or "not choose" to give birth.

> "Some of our friends decided not to have children, but I was seeing this as a betrayal to your natural structure. Maybe, my opinion could be criticized. I was seeing giving birth as natural. I was opposing having cramps, of craving food. Pregnancy never limited my actions. I considered motherhood in its own naturalness."

Unlike Leyla, for some revolutionary women not becoming a mother was a choice. Nurten Tuç explains how she got an abortion:

> "I decided on my own. In those years' abortion was illegal, but I found some friends, and had an abortion" (Akkaya 2011, 74).

Gönül Dinçer who was an İKD member also emphasized her choice for not having children as such:

> "I did not give birth. My partner wanted to have children, but I rejected the idea. Children were condemning women. I realized one the reasons for women's oppression was child care" (Akal 2011, 206).

There exists a tension between women who saw giving birth as a "natural" process which will contribute to revolutionary cause, and women who saw giving birth as a choice. Here, I would like to refer to feminist critique of the discourse of "right to choose." Feminists criticized the discourse of "right to choose" on several grounds. They emphasized that for some women choice is not possible due to economic and social conditions. Furthermore, it is quite problematic, because it opens the discussion of "responsibility" (Luthra 1993).

Some women told me that motherhood was 'natural' for them, because they learned to perform it either at an early age while taking care of the siblings, or imitate what they saw from mothers around themselves. What was 'natural' was not the motherhood, but the mothering practices which actually they learned to perform.

> "Motherhood… Instinctively, I raised my children. I was the eldest children in the family, I was mothering my siblings. Due to that I have never faced difficulty in raising my child in terms of nutrition and health" (Hazal).

> "Motherhood was a natural thing for me. It was not something planned. That was something that I have seen from my mother. Women had one in their belly, one in their hands and one on their arms" (Fatma).

The way in which Hazal and Fatma defines their ways of learning to mother are actually things that young girls are expected to perform. Taking care of the younger siblings is seen as an early practice to motherhood, and pretty much socially and culturally constructed which they acknowledge, but not necessarily name as a social construct. Instead, Hazal names it as 'maternal instinct'. Maternal instinct "refers to the belief that good mothers intuitively or instinctively understand the exact nature of their children's needs and the best way to meet them, and represent this special capacity as biologically determined" (Tucker 2010, 304). Feminists who disagree with the myth of maternal instinct claim that rather than being a biologically determined phenomenon, maternal instinct is a "state that arises from the way that girls are socially and culturally conditioned to be mothers" (O'Reilly 2010, 351).

It is important to mention women's access to, and knowledge about birth control, and abortion[17]. Fatma told me that she had no idea about birth control. The lack of knowledge about birth control was one of the reasons why women conceived of their pregnancies/motherhood as spontaneous/unplanned. The fact that they have never thought about it was also shaping this idea of spontaneity. Gülseren Pusatlıoğlu talks about her knowledge about abortion as follows:

> "When I got pregnant, we did not want the children due to several anxieties. We were living illegally, we could get caught, we could be imprisoned, we could not raise a child in these circumstances. Abortion was not legal. It required the signature of the prospective father. We were living illegally, and did not know a doctor who makes abortion surgery in healthy conditions. Later on, we found a doctor. […] The doctor told me about the possibility of not being able to have a child afterwards. This made me change my decision, and I gave up having an abortion" (Akkaya 2011, 334).

İKD's journal *Kadınların Sesi* included several issues on abortion, and expecting a baby, but still they were quite limited (Akal 2011, 177).

Lastly, I want to mention how women criticized motherhood both as an experience and an institution. It was part of their politics of motherhood, and how they remembered having a child at the time. Damla identified motherhood as something contradictory, which includes coexistence of happiness and devastation at the same time which is also studied as "ambivalence of motherhood" (Brown 2010). This was one of the frequent expressions, and acknowledgement which also meant revolutionary women deconstruct their own motherhood. They also associated motherhood with hierarchy and power. Meral linked her revolutionary perspective with her critique of motherhood, but at the same time she told me that mothers who exercise authority over their children are not happy mothers. She seemed to value her ways of mothering against other mothers:

> "I think mothers who try to be power over their children are unhappy. Of course, as a Marxist I am against of all kinds of power. This is a very political argument about motherhood. A revolutionary is a revolutionary if she can apply those values to her life. Why did 68 generations, our generation fragment, because they tried to own the power."

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[17] More details on abortion in Turkey: http://bianet.org/bianet/bianet/139903-turkiye-de-kurtajin-kisa-tarihi, access date 29.06.2016.

Günseli criticized “traditional” motherhood, and defined it, as owning the child as parents own property. She then defined her understanding of motherhood as “caring for the future’s symbol [children].” Günseli’s own criticism had also an embedded valuing of her own ways of being a mother. They were representing their ways of mothering creates a more “healthy” relationship with their children. Furthermore, by criticizing the “other” ways of mothering, they were also referring to their own mothers and their ways of mothering.

Throughout this chapter, I tried to analyze the meanings attributed by revolutionary women to motherhood and to being revolutionary separately. One of the reasons for this separation was the content of the interviews themselves. I was first asking about how they defined being revolutionary, what were their revolutionary activities, and then I was asking about motherhood. When I was asking about the connections between the two, the narration was often paused, and some interviewees asked for some time to think. They were not necessarily thinking these two terms in relation to one another. For the women who were identifying as revolutionaries, revolution and being a revolutionary meant commitment on different levels. Being a revolutionary was something closely related with being in life, and producing life. It shaped women’s everyday lives in the 70s and 80s. The everyday lives were also shapted by gendered performances. Revolutionary organizations had gendered practices, and these affected women’s contemporary reflections on their subjectivities back then. Revolutionary women’s revolutionary subjectivities consisted of the leftist discourses on collectivity, and their own individuality. Being a revolutionary was something that they were living with, it was an integral part of all aspects of their life. So was motherhood, but there was no space for their motherhood experience in revolutionary activity and discourse. They identified motherhood as a “natural” process, and mostly spoke on their memories of pregnancy. For some women, when they were experiencing pregnancy and motherhood it was hard to conceptualize what they were experiencing. The next chapter will address how revolutionary women’s motherhood narratives help reinterpret the revolutionary narrative.

CHAPTER 3

NARRATIVES OF BEING A REVOLUTIONARY MOTHER: RECONSTRUCTING THE REVOLUTIONARY NARRATIVE THROUGH MOTHERHOOD SUBJECTIVITIES

> *"For me, being a mother means giving gratuitous efforts. Being a mother is like being a revolutionary. Revolutionaries are ready to give their lives for an equal and just living. They do not ask to become minister from this system. Being a mother is being a revolutionary. It means giving without taking" (Günseli).*

3.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on how revolutionary women reconstructed revolutionary narratives thinking through their motherhood experiences. I would like to provide a context about certain questions I asked my interviewees in order to make sense of how they construct their revolutionary subjectivity. Usually I was first asking about meanings of motherhood, and then about where motherhood stands (or stood) within their revolutionary struggle. The rest of the conversation evolved from what they wanted to share, as well as my own curiosities. Sometimes, I was asking about their anxieties, or sometimes about reactions towards their decision to have children.

As I mentioned earlier, for some revolutionary women, motherhood was something that they had never talked about, or conceptualized before our interaction. This is why two sets of questions are central in the context of this research. One of them is about how interviewees conceived both individual and collective memory of before and after 1980 coup, and the other one is how our (myself and revolutionary mothers) positionality towards current social and political discourses on motherhood and feminism shaped our encounter, and the narratives[18]. Begona Aretxaga (1997), in her book *Shattering Silence Women, Nationalism, and Political Subjectivity in Northern Island*, defines her research as a dialogue, and writes:

> "In Belfast, I could not escape that forgotten history, full of silences, gaps, gestures, and repressed memories, at once personal and collective. I could not because the people I worked with were trying to make sense their own history, and to understand them, I had to make sense of my own. The story of this book is the product of that -sometimes confusing, sometimes insightful- dialogue" (22).

What Aretxaga defined as dialogue is also true for this research. Most of my interviewees thought of motherhood in the context of September 12 political violence or their revolutionary activism for the first time. They were trying to make sense of their own memories while they were trying to answer my questions. This was one of the reasons for their surprise and excitement towards my research questions. I was also trying to make sense of my connection to their stories, my academic and activist intentions, and furthermore my will to work on motherhood. In that sense, this research is a form of dialogue.

Selen was one of the two women who had children in late 1980s. The interview with her was very insightful. She had been living an illegal life, and decided to give birth when everything became "settled" for her and her partner. The interview with her helped me to see something different. Selen shared very openly how she remembered her reactions towards her pregnant revolutionary friends. She identified her reactions as a contradiction.

> "Two of my friends got pregnant. I said to one of them: Do not be ridiculous, it is not a proper time to have children. She had an abortion. Another friend of mine gave birth, even though I was tough on her. We were still working for the organization, we needed their labor. She decided to give birth. These were my first reactions years ago. I was looking to the issue with militant eyes. Later on, I thought about it. I was criticizing gendered politics within the organization, at the same time as I had such a sharp stance against pregnancy. It was such a contradictory behavior, but unfortunately I did that."

Through discussion of motherhood and pregnancy, Selen realized throughout our oral history interview that her reactions were contradictory. Through our dialogue, she, self-reflexively, criticized the very gendered narrative (the control over the female body, sexuality, and motherhood) of revolutionary movements, and also herself who was a member of these movements. She reconstructed her own revolutionary narrative through this process of sharing. The contradiction that Selen felt was not unique to her. One of the former İKD members, Saadet Arıkan Özel, remembers their reactions to pregnancies within the organization. On the one hand, such experiences created an "awareness" for women, but they failed to develop politics out of this experience due to the seeming contradictions between socialist leftist politics and "bourgeoisie" movement feminism.

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[18] There are two central narratives in this thesis; one belongs to interviewees, and the other one is mine, the thesis itself. My positionality towards current social and political discourses is also very important to see how my subjectivity is integrated into this thesis.

> "Our bureau had a problem of 'pregnancies.' We had our general meeting, and selected our new administration. After the congress, we found out that the four women out of seven were pregnant. A chill ran down my back. I responded quite harshly. I said 'Why did you join the administrative board, knowing that you are pregnant?' Out of thousand members we elected seven, and four of them were pregnant! What will happen to our works? That was the first thing that I thought of. I asked what will they do. […] After all, was İKD not defending getting rid of child care and housework for women? One friend said she will have an abortion, but later on gave birth. […] We conducted our campaigns together with these children. Carried our works to houses, and gave feeding, and peeing breaks. Of course those, revolutionary fathers did not pay attention to childcare. Most of our members had fights with their husbands over childcare. I remember very concretely that we said 'Let husbands care.' Some women were successful in convincing their husbands to take care of the children, but through their personal efforts. İKD could not develop politics out of this, and left members alone, and contradict with them" (Akal 2011, 208).

These narratives are some examples of how revolutionary women reflected upon the relationship between motherhood and revolutionary struggle from today. Their present reflections were shaped by their current political subjectivities which both continues to be part of the revolutionary narrative, but at the same time challenges it. What might be the reasons for such reflections? Also, one can argue that reconfiguring revolutionary narrative through emphasizing everyday experiences might expand our critique and understanding of the revolutionary activism. Thinking about motherhood, for example, in this case made some revolutionary women criticize the very central structures of revolutionary movements. As a member of women's organization (İKD) Arıkan Özel reconstructed and challenged their own understanding at the time about revolution being the most important goal. Apparently, not all revolutionary women see the revolutionary ideal as their priority, and becoming a mother was one of the spaces where women expressed their different priorities.

Moreover, Selen’s narrative made me think of how revolutionary motherhood-based subjectivity is visible in her current mothering practices. Hale’s narrative was also very insightful in that sense. She became a mother in late 1980s like Selen. I met Hale through Damla. Hale was a social worker, especially working with children. Hale was one of the women who continued to be in leftist political parties as a member after the coup[19]. She told me that she never conceptualized her activism as being divided into phases, like before the coup and after the coup, which was also reflected in her narrative. Hale was still defining herself as a revolutionary mother. When I went back, and examined the transcripts of the interviews, I realized that all my interviewees were identifying themselves as revolutionary mothers by using different words, or phrases. Hale told me about her struggle with her son’s school teachers. The definition of being a revolutionary is constantly in process, affected by the meanings attached to it both in the past and in the present. At the same time, my research suggests that motherhood/mothering becomes redefined just as the concept of revolutionary gets redefined. These are processes which are affected by current social, economic, and political contexts, and individual’s own histories. This is why they are performances in progress performed differently by each revolutionary mother. As I argued in the first chapters, motherhood experiences are infinite, so are the narratives. There exist similarities, differences, resemblances, and commonalities, yet there is no single experience or performance that defines revolutionary motherhood. It is in this vein that I would like to borrow Morey’s and Santos’ (2014) conceptualization of “redefining militant mother(hood)s” (71) to make sense of revolutionary mother subjectivities. Their emphasis on redefining is also worth underlining, because these multiple subjectivities are in a constant process of negotiation and redefinition. Revolutionary women, with our without our interaction "redefine revolutionary mother(hood)s."

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[19] The rest of my interviewees said that they do not really find an organization which will be a space for their opinions. They were continuing to be political in several ways Damla, Fatma and Hazal were politically engaged with the current discussions through social media, but they did not identify any organization or project that they were in. Selen was working independently for an opposition party in the elections without becoming a member. She said she wants to work in local organizations. They were working on an oral history project with Çiçek. Meral is actively working in a nongovernmental organization, as Günseli. Ayşen was trying to collect and write more on 12 September. Leyla is part of a women’s organization, and actively writing on 12 September. I was also asking questions about their children’s ways of being political. Most women told me that they are not organized/*örgütlü*. They were perceiving my question whether I am asking their children are in active politics. I thought this was about their past understandings of the political, and also about the current accusations against their generation for raising “apolitical” children. Çiçek, told me that her protective behaviors led her son to be less involved with politics. I asked her opinions about the changing definitions of being political. She then told me that her son is not political according to the definition before 1980. Revolutionary women were bringing their past conceptions to the present on the idea of political, and their definitions were affected their mothering towards their children. Fatma shared her anxieties with me about her children taking part in illegal organizations. Some of my research participants underlined these anxieties framed the ways in which they transmitted their memories of revolutionary struggle to their children. Some consciously decided not to share, and some shared on and off when a story appears.

The reason why I underscore context and positionality is related to revolutionary women's acknowledgement of the contradictions of being a mother and a revolutionary. At the time of the interview, both Selen's, and Saadet Arıkan Özel's narratives were shaped by feminist discourses on motherhood, family, and childcare, and how they position themselves within these discourses. Revolutionary mothers were mentioning feminist discourses on motherhood, since Turkey is a context where mothers and motherhood are targeted frequently[20]. They were criticizing, and arguing against discourses of the state on motherhood. It was all of these discourses, practices, and experiences of both past and present that made revolutionary women remember and theorize on how motherhood was linked to their activism/militancy. On the other hand, in our conversations we have never referred to Saturday Mothers' activism. Only once, it was mentioned, and Günseli showed me the book on "12 September Mothers Documentary[21]" where mothers of the revolutionaries were interviewed. Why was the relationship between motherhood and activism so abstract for revolutionary women?

In this chapter, I argue that being both a revolutionary and a mother are constantly being re-membered, redefined, and reconstructed. I discuss several intersections and contradictions arising from narratives of being a revolutionary and a mother which at the same time reconstruct the revolutionary narratives. There are several intersections that I locate throughout this chapter. One of them is about the revolutionary women's approach to hope. Both becoming a mother and getting ready for a revolution are discussed with reference to "hope." The last intersection that I examine is not a direct intersection, but a subtler one. Being a mother generates tensions between the maternal self and the societal expectations, like the revolutionary self experiences tensions between collective and individual commitment and belonging.

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[20] While I was conducting this research, motherhood was again a topic of mainstream media after Erdoğan's speech. While we were talking with my interviewees, our exchange of ideas was at some point touching to Erdoğan's discourses on motherhood. From 3 children, to "fitrat/creation" argument. These were affecting my interviewees, and they were really angry about the fact that their motherhood was being controlled by the government. Nevertheless, Erdoğan gave another speech while I was writing this research: "A woman abstaining from motherhood for 'working' actually refuses her womanhood. This is my sincere thought. A woman refusing motherhood, refusing to manage household faces the threat of losing her freedom no matter how successful she is in the business world. She is half, she is lacking (…) Producing, being in every area of life is definitely not an obstacle before motherhood. We've made important regulations to promote especially the motherhood of working women. We've realized those during our governmental term. We've put many opportunities into effect from leaves of maternity, parental and breast-feeding to flexible working and kindergarten obligation. The technological facilities enable our women to carry out many tasks from their home, near their children. However, I strongly reject the business world to substitute motherhood". Source: http://bianet.org/english/women/175534-erdogan-woman-refusing-motherhood-is-half , access date 22.06.2016.

[21] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fasiz3xIkmk, access date 05. 09. 2016.

The contradictions and tensions discussed in the interviews were mostly about childcare and the gendered division of labor within the revolutionary family. Most of the revolutionary women named what happened as a contradiction of the revolutionary ideology, because they were advocating for liberation on every aspect of life, but at the same time remaining silent about the emancipation of women from exploitative aspects of everyday life, especially in family relations. The consequences of such a contradiction were causing some revolutionary women to feel guilty about their mothering. For some women, looking from today, this caused them to later engage with feminist politics, and identify as feminists. Nevertheless, my research participants have talked about their own ways of challenging the gendered politics and decisions of the revolutionary organizations, the gendered division of labor at home, and child raising practices. In the last section I refer to their current mothering practices.

3.2. Politics of Hope

The discourse on life was strongly attached to hope according to revolutionary mothers. Beginning from the first interview, I started to think about hope as an emotion, and a discourse. There were two processes in the background that shaped my thinking around hope. First, during the time of my research, Turkey was going through war and political violence which imposed strong limitations on oppositional politics. Second was about my personal politics on hope. For me, hopelessness was more predominant than hope. In the past year, I often found myself questioning the possibilities for hope and hope itself. While I was being quite hopeless, the revolutionary mothers whom I was talking to were expecting peace and equality. I felt that I was in between hopelessness and hope, but still when I was thinking about hopelessness I was hoping for more hope. The fact that all the revolutionary mothers I met were not letting go of hope was quite striking. They were continuing their struggle with the hope that a livable and alternative future will come. I realized they were also remembering their pregnancies, and later on motherhood as a possible source of hope. As I mentioned briefly in the first chapter, imagining that the revolution will happen one day was also a possible source of hope, for most of the revolutionary women. Creating sources of hope seems to be a crucial aspect of revolutionary mother subjectivity.

Sara Ahmed (2004) writes extensively on how hope is located within feminist politics. She combines political activism and hope together, and explains their intersections. She starts with the argument that politics and hope are inseparable from each other. As stated by her:

> “Politics without hope is impossible, and hope without politics is a reification of possibility (and becomes merely religious). Indeed, it is hope that makes involvement in direct forms of political activism enjoyable: the sense that ‘gathering together’ is about opening up the world, claiming space through ‘affective bonds’ (Roseneil 1995: 99). Hope is crucial to the act of protest: hope is what allows us to feel that what angers us is not inevitable, even if transformation can sometimes feel impossible. Indeed, anger without hope can lead to despair or a sense of tiredness produced by the ‘inevitability’ of the repetition of that which one is against” (184).

For revolutionary mothers, “the Turkish state” was the source of anger. They had a strong belief that they can create an alternative form of politics, and expressed their hope for that alternative way of life, which they identified as revolution. According to Sara Ahmed, this kind of an expression is a political action at present. Hope, for the revolutionary mothers, continues to be a form of political action. Furthermore, hope was not only reserved for revolution. They found hope through their pregnancies, and later on through their revolutionary mothering which were both aimed at changing the present political status quo. In the revolutionary ideal, “hope is represented as a collective project for change” (Ahmed 2004, 185); in the domain of motherhood “it is an individual’s hope that can keep the future open” (Ahmed 2004, 185).

Mothering a child with revolutionary ideals meant continuing politics, because children can keep the future open to alternative politics. They can be the carriers of that hope.

Revolutionary mothering is seen as a political action in that sense. Hope emotionally combines the revolutionary and maternal selves, and turns revolutionary mothering into a political act. Günseli (2011) turns her revolutionary motherhood into a politics of hope for the future:

> "We were revolutionaries who were committed to a cause. We were facing threats against life, and fascist violence. Our son, who was unaware of the world's and this country's realities, our children should not grow in a system where exploitation, oppression, competition, individualism, alienation proceeds. It was our duty to present a liberated future, and humane living conditions for them" (10).

Ayşen (2011) writes these sentences in her book:

> "My baby… You are still with me. You are kicking my belly, as if you are saying that you are next to me. After these though days, I feel the happiness of life" (14).

For Ayşen, the hope was embedded within her. Her baby was the hope, and that was creating strength for her to cope with prison's conditions. Hope for coping the consequences of revolutionary struggle, and hope for creating a revolutionary ideal for the future, they were both politics of hope for some of the revolutionary mothers.

3.4. The Emotional Paradox of Revolutionary Self and the Ambivalence of Motherhood: Tensions between Expectations vs. Reality

There existed a connection between ambivalence of motherhood which is caused by patriarchal expectations from mothers, and the emotional paradox caused by expectations from an ideal revolutionary. The expectations from a good mother and a good revolutionary framed the narratives of revolutionary mothers, and some of them underlined the emerging tension between those expectations and "realities." Revolutionary women were expected to act collectively, yet as mothers they were expected to care for their children individually. The tensions again arouse from the collective-individual binary.

Ivana Brown (2010) defines ambivalence of motherhood as following:

> "As social actors, mothers may experience ambivalence because of conflicting social norms and expectations about what it means to be a mother. Standards of mothering, understanding childhood, relationships between mothers and fathers, the role of the extended family and community in childrearing, participation of

> women in the labor force, and family economic resources are among the social and cultural factors influencing mothers' experiences of motherhood" (123).

Here, in this section, I do not focus on what kinds of ambivalences emerge, but rather what are the dynamics that shape these ambivalences and their memories. Revolutionary women were expected to be good mothers, and when they could not match the expectations they were judged by society based on their mothering practices. These were tied to the collective-individual tension, because they were expected to mother individually, and revolutionize collectively. Günseli writes in her book that she received comments about the way she should mother which suggested that she should leave revolutionary activity. Oya Baydar, also remembers how her mother forced her to stop activism when she found out that Oya Baydar would have a child. These judgements were not limited to friends and family, but also when they were taken into custody or prison, the 12 September regime used motherhood as way of torturing revolutionary mothers. In our interview, Günseli told me that she was threatened by the soldiers based on her motherhood. They threatened to bring her son into the room while she was being tortured. These judgements, and expectations of being a "good" mother and a "good" revolutionary created the feeling of ineligibility.

Hale, Günseli, Meral and Leyla referred to a similar tension and feeling caused by revolutionary mothers' subjectivity. Hale's narrative is informative in that sense:

> "This one thing was very painful for me. I am socialist, and I care about all those starving around the earth, but I do not have the power to feed three cats on the street. I have a child who is commended to me. If I cannot protect her/him from this social nonsense what will I protect? What have I served? What has my militancy served?"

Morey and Santos (2014), point out that militant mothers share an ethos where they mother in a communal sense; for all the children and for a new generation of children. This communal sense of mothering was a result of expectations from mothers to care individually. For Günseli, "motherhood was everywhere. It was recognizing the children on the street whose shoes were slashed." The level of inequality, and the fact that all children should be in equal conditions were clashing with each other. Meral shared quite similar views. When I met Meral, she was coming from a meeting. She was the oldest among the women I have interviewed. She was still active in nongovernmental organizations, and rushing through the meetings. She has never stopped being a revolutionary and activist. Meral was a teacher, and she was working in a low-income neighborhood which made the tensions for her visible at work. As a revolutionary they were expected to mother all the children, be it at school or on the street. They were expected to mother in a communal sense. Nevertheless, the children at home asked for individual care and support, for which they often had no support. Like motherhood, care as a practice was a space where women reiterated and challenged the revolutionary narrative. On the one hand, they reiterated it because they wished to care collectively, but on the other hand they emphasized its impossibility through their own experiences as revolutionary mothers. In the next section, I refer to care in detail.

3.5. Gendered Division of Labor and Care Politics: Mothers and Revolutionary Women as Primary Caregivers

Andrea O'Reilly (2010) suggests that motherhood still "functions as a patriarchal institution that is largely impervious to change because it is grounded in gender essentialism, a gender ideology that establishes a naturalized opposition between public and private spheres" (367). Revolutionary movements and organizations often supported the belief that mothers should continue their political activity in the private sphere which naturalized the distinction between public and private. As revolutionary women's narratives suggest, marriages or becoming a mother often confined women to the private sphere. Especially for women who were illegal and running away, it was difficult, because they could not see or contact anyone except their partners, some comrades, and children. However, unlike the movement leaders, and decision-makers; revolutionary women did not take the public-private dichotomy for granted. Fatma said she was leading an illegal life, yet "we continued revolutionary activity from home." She did not define it as active participation in the struggle, but said that she was still a revolutionary. She was trying to publish for the organization from home.

> "I was working clandestinely. It was not an active struggle. We were publishing at houses, engaging in discussions. Those are different, active struggle is different. I was a revolutionary, but there were no spaces for active struggle. We could handle things from home" (Fatma).

Politics within home meant living "illegaly" where publishing activities, meetings, and protecting "wanted" revolutionaries were conceived as revolutionary activities, especially after the martial law. My research participants identified this as a period where political action was very limited. They did not necessarily talk about this process as part of their revolutionary struggle, because for them being revolutionary meant being on the streets, or within the neighborhoods. Men also had to be active from the home. Their masculinities were also policed at that time according to Çiçek's narrative. Çiçek told me that her husband had to leave home in the morning, and come back in the evening. They had to perform requirements of being an "ideal family" not to draw attention, and get caught. She told me that she was telling the neighbors that her husband works as a marketing expert. She was choosing this occupation for her husband because marketing experts could travel for weeks. This also shows how it was different for men.

The unequal division of labor within the family was mentioned by all my interviewees, and in testimonies these narratives were quite frequently remembered. Childcare was not only a feminist struggle, but also a leftist struggle which Marxist thinkers paid attention to. The Marxist texts were extensively read by revolutionary groups in Turkey. Günseli writes that she really admired this line of thinking.

> "What I remember concretely is what I read on childcare from Lenin. I think it was in the book "Women's Liberation." In that section, childcare, cleaning, baking, elderly care were defined as state's responsibilities" (Kaya 2011, 36).

In the course of this research, I wondered whether leftist organizations in Turkey were constructing any discourse about the gendered division of labor at home, the so called "private" and bourgeois sphere (Ciliv 2002). Of course, gendered division of labor was not only limited to the home. Revolutionary women were also seen as the primary caregivers of the organization. They were given the duties of protection, camouflage, and nurturing. As Ümide Aysu remembers, "We were carrying food to prison every day, as if it was our natural duty" (Akkaya 2011, 198).

> "Within illegal conditions, women had the duties of couriering, or they stayed home. Their duties were checking security points or carrying publications. They are all risky duties. I am not saying men were not doing these jobs, but mostly women were assigned these kinds of jobs" (Selen).

Especially, when the revolutionary mothers were going out for courier duties it acted as a camouflage but did not necessarily provide safety for them.

> "After 12 September, women were used as camouflage. We are a good family, husband-wife, children kind of a position. Women were also used as give-and-take businesses within the organization. Maybe the word used is too harsh, women did these voluntarily. For example, I was de facto taking part in the

> distribution of Kurtuluş Magazine. Our kids with us, we were arranging meetings, and delivering the magazines to their places with other women" (Akkaya 2011, 335).

Hazal was one of the couriers, and she was taking her daughter with her; "I was not seeing anybody. I was illegal. I was taking my children with me, and we were meeting at a park. For several times I made couriering like that." Why was it women, especially mothers who were couriering? What does this gendered practice tell us about the conceptualization of public and private by revolutionary movements?

I was told that revolutionary women's struggles and oppositions at home with their partners were invisible most of the time. It was either discussed within women's organizations like İKD, and if it was, it was not voiced as a campaign. Gönül Dinçer makes a self-criticism about their reactions towards the gendered division of labor at homes.

> "[…] We could not defend the idea both publicly and privately that men should share the housework sufficiently. We did so when it directly affected our work, in particular incidents. We did not include this in our agendas, this is one of our biggest failures" (Akal 2011, 257).

Moreover, revolutionary women's complaints were transmitted to the organization via their husbands. It was not seen as an urgent agenda. Gülseren Pusatlıoğlu mentions this.

> "Under 12 September conditions, women were not able to see each other. We could only see comrades who were living in our house. It was hard to reach a fifth, fourth person. If we had any complaints, we were telling that to our husband, comrade. After that it depended on them to tell or not. […] We found out that many women's organization experienced similar problems" (Akkaya 2011, 335).

Revolutionary women tried to change these kinds of practices. In any case, the efforts of revolutionary women to add sharing the work at home, reporting to husbands, women's rights within the organization, and women's positions in the hierarchy of the organization to the agenda must be seen as a feminist act of resistance which created a relationship between the personal and the political. Gülseren Pusatlıoğlu narrates two memories about their complaints which came from women within their organization.

> "The increasing complaints resulted in a group meeting which focused on women's issues, I guess, in '83. Regarding our complaints, many progressive decisions were made at that meeting. These were; 'assaulting women is a crime within the organization, initiating political workshops for women […], also

> helping women at home.' Although this aimed to decrease women's burden at home, it could not extend from helping to sharing" (Akkaya 2011, 335-336).

Selen told me about her article which criticized the gendered division of labor within the organization.

> "[Revolutionary] Husband conducts organization businesses, comes home, sleeps, gets up, and leaves. Wife feeds her baby, and cleans the house to show to the outside that they are a traditional family. I wrote an article deriving from these problems. I wrote about how women were treated as secondary citizens. I wrote that women were not part of the decision making mechanisms, and it was read on TKP's radio. For a week, this article was read, and created a serious debate."

These challenges against the gendered division of labor within organizations were really important, and must be part of the narratives of leftist struggle in Turkey. They are part of the revolutionary narrative. These complaints were voiced before, and after the coup. Before the coup, mostly the position of the women within the organization was raised a criticism, particularly their decision making powers, their role in revolutionary activities, and women's general participation to the organization. After, the enactment of martial law, and post-coup era issues that were raised started to concern politics within home, regarding couriering, or being left out from the meetings. The reason for this change was that women had to conduct revolutionary activity at home, within limited, and illegal conditions. Adrienne Rich (1995) argues that "child-nurturing function does not follow a 'natural' division of all labor" (113). Revolutionary women narrate a similar argument through their emphasis on their struggle back then. Selen reflected on this, and how she refused the gender role imposed on her;

> "We rented a house. We were cleaning, and my partner came and asked whether he can help or not. I said what does it mean to help. This is my duty, and you will help me. Why this is my duty? This is for the house, and I started doing it. I will do some, and you can continue. He was surprised. He said I have never looked to the subject from this angle. No one is looking to the issue from an angle, as if its natural, and how we learned from our parents. My partner was supportive, but for most of the couples it was quite hard to break these."

Leyla's decision to divorce was a result of similar problems that came from the division of labor at home.

> "I remember that; I was doing the housework, going to school, caring for the children, and performing revolutionary activities/*devrimcilik de yapıyorum*. I started saying 'what are you doing?' to my husband. When you start saying these kinds of things, you have lost your love. I said, I can live by myself, and demanded a divorce."

Another aspect of childcare was about the perceptions regarding revolutionary women. Revolutionary mothers were thought to be "bad mothers," because they were inside revolutionary activity, neglecting childcare. They were also thought as "bad revolutionaries," because they were limiting their militancy with childcare and housework. These kinds of accusations not only come from the outside, but also from their closed ones. Günseli (2011) writes:

> "Some of you may say, as you were loving your child so much why you did not stay at home, and played with the state, and witnessed so many things. After all, some circles men and women judged us by saying; "why you had a child, seeing that you were engaged to death, and in love with life." (41).

Sometimes, for some revolutionary women these accusations turned into feelings of guilt caused by patriarchal pressures of motherhood ideologies (Green 2004; Morey&Santos 2014). Through referring to the gendered division of labor and its relationship with motherhood and care, revolutionary mothers were criticizing the private-public dichotomy, and rather narrating their own negotiations of performing motherhood and revolutionary in both spheres.

Fiona Joy Green, in her article "Feminist Mothers: Successfully Negotiating the Tensions between Motherhood as 'Institution' and 'Experience'" (2004), contends that feminist mothers apply certain strategies that overcome patriarchal expectations from ideal motherhood. She identifies several strategies based on interviews with feminist mothers. I would like to adopt and criticize these strategies in my analysis of revolutionary women's strategies coping with ideal motherhood. Through adopting these strategies, revolutionary mothers redefined both revolutionary struggle, and their own motherhood. They also aimed to make small changes within their environments. They did not challenge the patriarchal motherhood, but they developed certain strategies to make sense and reconfigure their revolutionary motherhoods. Sometimes they reproduced the "ideal motherhood" image, but still these were defining their own maternal subjectivities.

One of the strategies is to accept single mothering, or mothering alone, and taking motherhood out of the family. Ayşen told me that she knew she was going to raise her children alone which indicated her strength. Leyla also mentioned single mothering. For both of them, this was a conscious decision:

> "Everybody struggles in different ways. I was rebellious. When I first got pregnant, I said to myself that I will bring this child into world as a revolutionary mother. Having a father or not was irrelevant."

Ideal motherhood operates through the discourse of "ideal family." Some revolutionary women saw single mothering as a source of strength. On the one hand, this was a mechanism of coping, but at the same time it was referring to another aspect of ideal motherhood which asked mothers to stay strong all the time. This was also compatible with the revolutionary narrative. Yet, women mentioned this as part of their own maternal subjectivity.

Other strategies are embodied in mother-child relationship. Raising a child who is aware of any kind of injustice, and exploitation is another way to cope with the tensions between revolutionary ideology and motherhood. Challenging the hierarchy of motherhood, and providing an equal decision making structure within the family is another way of feminist/revolutionary mothering defined by Green. Meral and I had a long conversation on power and motherhood. For her, mothers who use power over their children were unhappy. She raised her children being aware of power relations, and inequalities among society. Through this maybe, Meral was distancing herself from the ideal motherhood, but at the same time through criticizing other motherhood practices she was creating her own ideal motherhood. It was problematic in the sense that she saw her way of mothering as the "ideal" one. Green (2004) writes:

> "Bringing issues of poverty, consumerism, and environmental devastation to the attention of children is another way of explaining the complex way in which oppression works. Shopping for groceries brings about conversations on the politics of boycotting products from particular countries because of environmental destruction, the exploitation of migrant labor or oppressive political regimes. These teachable moments are used by feminist mothers whenever and wherever they arise" (134).

For Hale using "teachable moments" were also functioning as a transformative intervention for her children's environment (134). Hale remembered how she intervened to her child's learning processes at school.

> "I never think that I am special, or my child is special. On the contrary, I think what happened to us happens to everyone in the world. Where I connected being

> militant and mother… They teach children to fight back when someone hits them. I have never experienced such a thing, but I was sure of this, and established my relationship with his teachers accordingly: I am a socialist, and you cannot do the same things to my children whose mother is not a socialist. What I mean, I intervened to interference of the teachers. […] For example, they were teaching "*öcü/*bogy" at school. I intervened to these kinds of practices both at school, and outside" (Hale).

Hale was trying to apply her revolutionary ideals to the domain of motherhood. In a sense, she was continuing her revolutionary activism. Although, Hale was applying "teachable moments" to cope with the tensions arising from being a revolutionary mother, she was like Meral creating her own ideal motherhood. One can ask why these strategies are important if they were still reproducing the ideal motherhood in certain different ways. I believe motherhood consists of very complex experiences, and cannot be analyzed without the ideologies and discourses surrounding it. This is why it is important to see how mothers still perform their own maternal subjectivity within or without the boundaries of ideal motherhood. Revolutionary women adapted their revolutionary discourses to their mothering practices, and this time they mothered with or without the discourses that define ideal revolutionary. One should in the end also remember, these narratives are part of the present discourses, and also part of our interaction through oral history interview.

Deborah Dinner argues;

> "Political theorist Nancy Fraser argues that by translating needs into rights, social movements challenge the boundaries between domestic, economic, and political spheres. Feminist rights claims politicized the issue of childcare in ways that challenged the legal and social boundaries between family, market, and state. Rights consciousness enabled feminist activists to imagine alternative social and political realities as well as the place of childcare in those social transformations" (2010, 578).

Revolutionary mothers through facing the gendered division of labor, especially on childcare started to negotiate with feminist claims, and as Dinner mentions, started to imagine alternative social realities including revolution and equality between all genders. Some of my interviewees told me they started reading about feminism, and questioned the gendered division of labor when they were inside the organization. Some other revolutionary mothers said that their encounter with feminism was through acknowledging the unequal distribution of labor in childcare. Ümide Aysu says;

> "We thought that after the revolution, socialism will save women. I did not realize till the 90s that everything was different within the house. I realized only the equality for outside could be achieved by equality for inside. I thought not recognizing this earlier was my fault" (Akkaya 2011, 208).

Like Ümide Aysu, encounter with feminism happened through childcare for Mukkaddes Erdoğdu Çelik;

> "I faced with the women's issues when I decided to give birth to my daughter in '87 fall. Women were questioning themselves, but men were doing nothing. I was talking with my male comrades that we shared everything till then about the childcare, and how we were going to raise this child. I was naïve to say, we will raise her like your children. I was expecting a collective answer. Yet, women were providing childcare. Men were leaders, they have lots of responsibilities. They said that it was my own personal problem. When they said that I felt a very deep inequality" (Akkaya 2011, 268-269).

In the next section, I will refer to revolutionary mothers' continuing struggle.

3.6. Continuing Struggle and Maternal Politics

All the women I interviewed were continuing their political struggle one way or another. Günseli was an active member of an organization. She was participating in every event of her organization. She was very cheerful. She hugged and kissed me, and said "this is who I am, I adore youth." I will never forget Günseli's smile, and love of life. For Günseli, being a mother was not even close to an experience of oppression. She told me how she adores her grandchildren, and all children. Similarly, Ayşen's motherhood was a reason for happiness. All of my interviewees associated motherhood with joy and creativity, while some women also emphasized its oppressive aspects. Green (2004) writes:

> "Adrienne Rich is the first person to have acknowledged that motherhood is a complex site of women's oppression and a potential location for women's creativity and joy" (125).

This section revolves its arguments on this complex site of motherhood where, oppression, creativity, and joy coexist. Fatma told me one of her memories which made them laugh. Fatma was doing make-up at home to cheer up her son.

> "I was loving my son; I was doing make up for him. I realized he looked at me carefully when there was make up on my face. I started exaggerating make up. Maybe it was funny for him" (Fatma).

Fatma was creating a moment of joy for herself, and for her son. Through these moments she was also coping with her loneliness and isolation. She was finding something to play with through forming a close and fun relationship with her children. Similarly, Günseli and Ayşen were creating small gifts for their children when they were in prison. They were seeing motherhood as a space of creativity where they can create for both themselves and their children.

On the other hand, narratives of distance mothering, isolation, and loneliness accompany narratives of struggle. For many women, the illegal life did not last one or two years. The cases against them were dropped in the late 1980s, which meant their illegality was sustained for many years. Fatma could not believe she was getting rid of all the cases against her after years;

> "I was sought by the police till '88 or '89 when communism propaganda was no longer a crime. Of course, it was not automatic. You still need to go and remove it. My lawyer said 'they can take you, get ready'. I said goodbye to my son, and left him with my mother" (Fatma).

The illegal life meant isolation for women. They were not seeing anyone. It was quite traumatic for Hazal, as she told me.

> "For three years, we did not leave home. We did not see anybody; we did not even go to grocery store. When my older daughter reached to 3, I started working. I was feeling suffocated at home, and we were having financial problems. A kindergarten near our house was searching for staff. I applied, and started working there. They also accepted my daughter, and I worked there for three years. That placed really healed me, because I was about to forget speaking"

Isolation was not easy for both women and children. Hazal felt guilty about living in isolation for many years, because of the effects on her daughter. She told me that her daughter's traumas in early ages affected her professional life. On the one hand, she "idolized stereotypical role of mother" (Green 2004, 128), but on the other Hazal turned this into a space for resistance where she started working, and earning her life. Damla, also remembered one time how she was terrified when she saw the *muhtar* of the neighborhood on the door, because he might ask for a residence permit. Isolation came along with constant fear of getting caught. Selen mentioned about the safety problem, and criticized illegality based on these grounds:

> "One of the most important things is that we were alone. We only communicated with our husbands, or our sponsors. Think this; there is an organization meeting at our home. I am the outside face of the organization, and working at an organization through my husband's connection. They are telling me to prepare home for the meeting. What does it mean? Go to the other room when the door's

> bell rang. I do not know who came, and this is called security. Now, I am thinking about this. Someone came to our home, how I am affected by this. If our house is busted after that man leaves, even if they torture me I have nothing to say. Where is my security? I felt so bad, and started going to neighbors" (Selen).

Not only motherhood was turning oppressive, but also the decisions of their revolutionary organizations were doubling the negative consequences for women. Hazal told me that she used to go to a cold room to breastfeed her children, while the male comrades where occupying the room with heat. After remembering this, Hazal got angry, and said she would never allow such a thing to happen again.

Throughout the interviews, all my interviewees generated a silence over their own narratives, by trivializing their own experiences of motherhood. Gina Herrmann (2003) adverts similar types of comments from her interviewees. She states that most of her interviewees excused themselves when they had nothing interesting left to tell, or ended oral narratives after describing daily life within the organization. Herrmann thinks that these were codes of privacy which they want to remain private, as well as, "the desire to remain allied with collective modes of self-understanding and self-representation" (23) to cope with the memories of years of loneliness and inner exile. Her arguments were also valid for my research. Revolutionary mothers spoke less about motherhood, but more on revolutionary memories. This was also due to being familiar with the narratives of the revolutionary struggle through their current activism. There was much more available literature on gendered experiences of the left for building narratives. There was a hierarchy of narratives in that sense which invalidated motherhood experiences. It was like the idea of "professional revolutionary," as if their stories are much more valuable to share, because they were "more" revolutionary. Hazal who never had a prison sentence, saw her motherhood experience as less traumatic.

> "Well, I do not know. I am thinking that I had a very comfortable life, compared to women who witnessed torture in Mamak Prison" (Hazal).

Fatma told me that her life is so simple compared to the people who witnessed, and survived torture. Also when I asked Ayşen about her book, she used similar sentences;

> "When you are writing your memories one asks to herself: Who am I? Why am I writing these? Who cares about my memories?" (Ayşen).

This kind of self-trivialization was creating a silence. The reasons behind this silence must be different for each woman. However, we can still ask these questions about their silence. Was it a continuum of not telling/sharing their stories, as a revolutionary virtue/*devrimci erdem*? Did women consider motherhood as a less political subject, compared to torture? These silences would mostly appear when the conversation was on motherhood. For women, witnessing political violence could easily be narrated, but a conversation on being a revolutionary mother was shaped by silences.

CHAPTER 4

WITNESSING, SHARING, AND WRITING EXPERIENCES OF MOTHERHOOD BY REVOLUTIONARY WOMEN

4.1. Introduction

Revolutionary women have not only witnessed political violence, but they have also shared their testimonies through several media of memory such as literature, visual arts[22] and cinema[23]. This chapter focuses on written media through which revolutionary women have shared motherhood experiences, analyzing published oral history interviews, collective testimonial writing, and two memoirs that particularly speak of revolutionary motherhood: *Postal ve Patik: Metris'te Her Mevsim Kış* (2011) by Ayşen Göreleli, and *Bir Annenin Kaleminden: Mamak Cezaevi'nden Oğula Mektuplar* (2011) by Günseli Kaya.

The interviews, that I have conducted, comprised of moments of mutual sharing. I was also sharing my own personal history. By all means, there were moments of silence, and fragmentations within the narratives, yet I never felt reluctance about accepting my request for an interview. I would like to consider these interviews, not as interviews that “I” have conducted, but as “our” moments of sharing. Moreover, we often expressed how thankful we were to each other. I was very thankful to all my interviewees, as well as those women who have shared their testimonies publicly. Those narratives opened a space for more learning and exploration on the topic[24]. I was happy to meet previous “activist” generations, learn from their experience, and listen to their narration and ways of resistance before and after 12 September regime.

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[22] Alime Mitap is a painter/witness who produces paintings about 12 September and women http://www.alimemitap.com access date 14.07.2016, Also Sanki Eşittik (2011) as a project included both filming the interviews, and an exhibition consists of photographs of women who participated the project http://www.cnnturk.com/2012/kultur.sanat/kitap/02/28/sanki.esittik.cezayir.salonda/651027.0/index.html access date 14.07.2016.

[23] See also, *Eylülün Kadın Yüzleri* (2014) documentary film directed by A. Ayben Altunç http://bianet.org/bianet/toplum/155055-12-eylul-hikayelerini-kadinlar-anlatacak access date 14.07.2016.

Women that I have met in person were also ending their words with thankfulness. When I first spoke with Ayşen on the phone, she got so excited, and wanted to meet the next day. Our e-mail exchange with Meral was quite similar. Damla frequently asked me how am I doing throughout the research process. Most of the time either in the beginnings or endings we were talking about how our encounter generates spaces for sharing, and remembering. I was happy to hear those comments, but at the same time I was wondering despite all the discourses on revolutionary women’s silence, what was the reason behind our reciprocal efforts to create spaces of sharing. How have decades of silence transformed into spaces/moments of sharing? What had prevented revolutionary women from sharing, and scholars for researching for so many years? Julie Peteet (1997), scholar working on Palestian mothers’ activism, theorizes about the act of witnessing and the process of sharing. She writes:

> “Bodily interference and a running commentary were combined with the act of witnessing. Witnessing itself was a form of political practice, not a private, solitary act. What was witnessed was then told; it circulated through networks of kin and friends in the daily routine of receiving and making visits. On occasion, it was told to the foreign journalists or researchers and thus became part of a body of knowledge. (…) Telling was a way of taking back the violence inflicted upon them and working it creatively. As a means of constructing a historical narrative, one that had meaning within the community as well as on an international stage, it was an intervention. Mothering, writ large, and its associated tactics of intervention as community defense and resistance, were later deployed to argue for women’s rights” (Peteet 1997, 123).

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[24] I do not mean to say those who does not agree to talk publicly do not survive, or do not ask for justice. On the other hand, their positioning against public sharing allows us to ask several other questions about the remaining silence, as well as meanings of sharing for an individual. I do not want to underestimate their agency, as well as contribution.

According to Peteet, “telling” can be a stance against violence. Telling transforms not only the body of knowledge available, but also the reasons for acting together. Since revolutionary women’s motherhood narratives were something academic literature did not survey, there was a limited body of knowledge on relationships between revolutionary activism and motherhood. I hope our moments of sharing with revolutionary women will contribute to the emerging body of knowledge about revolutionary history in Turkey, like it did in the Palestinian mothers’ case. Peteet (1997) approaches sharing acts of witnessing from their collective functions for the movement. Dori Laub (1992), as a trauma therapist and a scholar, suggests a more individual explanation, and identifies telling as a need. “The survivors did not only need to survive so that they could tell their story; they also needed to tell their story in order to survive” (78). The act of witnessing, the act of telling, and the act of remembering through various means turn into ways of survival (Pollock 2008, 133). One must open a bracket here, and also ask, how we can read act of silence, and act of not sharing as ways of coping mechanisms.

Deriving from these theoretical contributions to witnessing, testimony and trauma literature, this chapter asks the following questions: Can we read ‘moments of sharing memories of political activism and political violence’ as an act of resistance? How do they transform the personal into political, or vice versa? What kinds of mediums are available for witnesses to express themselves? How do witnesses position themselves towards their targeted audience?

In this chapter, first, I explain certain characteristics and functions of testimonial literature, and distinguish between genres of collection of testimonies, oral history and memoir. I address the question of advantages and disadvantages of utilizing certain genres. I also analyze the motivations for sharing memories for revolutionary women. This chapter examines how and when revolutionary women mention motherhood in testimonial writing different than oral history; what silences they shared, and how the reception is perceived.

My interview questions were directed towards my intention to understand how women remembered being revolutionary mothers. The testimonial literature that I analyze here, does not necessarily focus on motherhood, but it does get covered in varying degrees. The very last section of this chapter, based on analysis of two memoirs, addresses how the authors have given meaning to writing their experiences on revolutionary motherhood. Overall, I intend to discuss the emerging intersections between writing, motherhood and activism. How did revolutionary mothers frame their narratives in memoirs and in oral accounts? Do these moments of sharing challenge and expand definitions of political activism and its relations with motherhood? Do moments of sharing, testimonial literature and "mommy memoirs" challenge patriarchal discourses on motherhood? In what ways do they reiterate them? How do witnesses reflexively think about their positionality when they are sharing their memories?

4.2."Moments of Sharing:" Oral History, Collection of Testimonies and Memoirs

I must state that from the beginning of this research testimonial literature played an important role in constructing my research questions, as well as diversifying the narratives of revolutionary motherhoods. Most of the books in this literature are published oral history interviews[25] conducted with revolutionary women, consisting of consecutively arranged interviews. Portelli (1998) distinguishes these kind of books from an individual life story. These collections are organized by the interviewer, sometimes based on specific themes, and are usually a "series of monologues" (35). There are also a few books which are collections of testimonies[26] written by the witnesses themselves. These are usually collective works where revolutionary women have come together to write their experiences on collective witnessing. The two written accounts are memoirs[27] written by revolutionary mothers. They were all published during the 2000s, especially after 2010[28]. These were the only books that I could find on the topic during the research process. There is also fiction that narrates the stories of the before and after 12 September, and experiences of revolutionaries which I would like to analyze the theme of motherhood in detail with another research.

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[25] *Sanki Eşittik:1960-70'li Yıllarda Devrimci Mücadelenin Feminist Sorgusu* (2011) by Gülfer Akkaya, *Bizi Güneşe Çıkardılar* (2015) by Aysel Sağır, *Üç Dönem Üç Kuşak Kadınlar: Demir Parmaklıklar Ortak Düşler* (2005) by Mukkaddes Erdoğdu-Çelik, *Sokak Güzeldir: 68'de Ne Oldu?* (2009) by Nadire Mater, *Bir Dönem İki Kadın Birbirimizin Aynasında* (2011) by Oya Baydar&Melek Ulagay. We can also include published academic studies to this list such as: *Kızıl Feministler: Bir Sözlü Tarih Çalışması* (2011) by Emel Akal, and *Mamak Kitabı: Biz Bir Orduya Kafa Tuttuk Arkadaş* (2011) by Meral Akbaş.

[26] *Tanıklıklarla 12 Eylül: Kadınlar Anılarını Paylaşıyor* (2010) by Kadın Yazarlar Derneği, *Kaktüsler Susuz da Yaşar: Kadınlar Mamak Cezaevini Anlatıyor* (2011) by Mamaklı Kadınlar Kitap Grubu, *Ve Hep Birlikte Koştuk: Bir İKD Vardı* (1996) by İKD members, and *Ateşe Uçan Pervaneler: Devrimci Yolcu Kadınlar Anlatıyor* (2015) by Kader Çeşmecioğlu.

[27] *Metris'te Her Mevsim Kış: Postal ve Patik* (2011) by Ayşen Göreleli, and *Bir Annenin Kaleminden: Mamak Cezaevi'nden Oğula Mektuplar* (2011) by Günseli Kaya.

Testimonial literature has been defined by George Yudice as:

> "an authentic narrative, told by a witness who is moved to narrate by the urgency of a situation (e.g., war, oppression, revolution, etc.). Emphasizing popular oral discourse, the witness portrays his or her own experience as a representative of a collective memory and identity" (cited in Gugelberger&Kearney 1991, 4).

I have extensively used such testimonial literature for this research. The before and after of the 12 September regime is the urgent situation in Yudice's definition, where political violence and oppression were prevalent in Turkey. Novels, autobiographies, memoirs, poems and several other genres that take 12 September as their subject can be categorized as testimonial literature[29]. This body of work has also been called "resistance or resource literature," since it intends to resist against states' practices of forced amnesia (Gugelberger&Kearney 1991; Göğercin Toker 2014). As textual forms of sharing which are publicly available, testimonial literature expands our body of knowledge, as Juliet Peteet (1997) has claimed, keeping memories alive, and allowing witnesses to reach wider audiences (Hernandez&Torres 2006). Testimonial literature creatively mobilizes witnesses' memories, and turn them into collective memory. Personal becomes political through testimonial literature. Yet, they do not necessarily share the same narratives and discourses, and different genres within testimonial literature function in various ways, and sometimes they silence or open very different perspectives.

In addition to all these characteristics, Morey and Santos (2014) mention one more significant function of testimonial writing that they have found meaningful in making sense of how women negotiated the difficulties of militancy and motherhood in Latin America. They note that "… testimonial writing offers a forum for women to theorize the motivations and the consequences of their roles as revolutionaries" (71). The idea of theorizing one's own witnessing through testimonial literature is crucial to address for the case of revolutionary women's testimonial writing where we observe an increase especially in textual publications after almost 30 years of repression. More than that, creating a forum to theorize one's own revolutionary struggle and subjectivity becomes further critical for revolutionary women because during the 1960s and 70s, theorizing ideas for the revolution was mostly performed by male revolutionaries. The emphasis on theorizing was something that repeatedly appeared in narratives. I suggest that testimonial writing with its function to create a forum for theorizing provides both a critical lens for understanding power and gender relations within leftist movements, and is one of the forms which we can analyze female subjectivity that becomes visible through narrative/textual form. Gülseren Pusatlıoğlu recalls her writing experience in her leftist organization before the coup as follows:

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[28] The reason for an increase in publication of memoirs and testimonies could be related to the ongoing discussion about the trial of people who staged the 12 September coup back in 2010s.

[29] I could have just simply avoided any categorization, but this categorization is useful to avoid power dynamics within literature which sometimes does not count testimonial literature as equally important works for literature (Göğercin Toker 2014).

> "I took my first article -which was about sexism- to a friend in the writing committee. There was a note inside the article that mentioned the interrelation between capitalism and patriarchy. The male comrade was among our theoreticians. He disagreed with the note. My theoretical background was not enough to back my argument against him. He said that he did not like my article, and mauled me with his words. Yet, I insisted that I wanted my article to get published. It was published" (Akkaya *2011, 339).*

Her narrative is a reflection from today about the gendered practices of revolutionary organizations of the past. It both talks about the gendered nature of theorizing within leftist organizations, and women's struggle against it - in this case, successfully. In the book, this quote appears under the subtitle "looking at ourselves from our perspective/kendimize kendi gözümüzden bakmak" which suggests a challenge to years of theorizing from others' (men's?) perspective. The preface of *Tanıklıklarla 12 Eylül* opens up a similar discussion where women claim their narratives:

> "We as women from every age, from a country that experienced three visible, infinite invisible military coups wanted to share our memories. Wanting them to be permanent, showing ourselves as the owners of the narratives that are auricular, facing taboos are an act, a stand against militarism and any kind of violence" (Kadın Yazarlar Derneği 2010, 11).

They define their act of writing against militarism and violence, because through generating testimonial literature they expose the political violence caused by militarism of 1980 coup.

In the following paragraphs, I would like to distinguish those different functions of different genres of testimonial literature: a published oral history book[30] which is only a collection of interviews, an oral history academic research where interviews are conducted by the researcher, and memoirs written by witnesses themselves. I would like to problematize authority, voice, anonymity, content and reception. Ultimately, all of these forms turn into a written text, but they are results of distinguishable processes.

One can start with the question of how authority is shaped in an oral history[31] which is "being a 'text' in the making" (Portelli 1998, 24), and in a memoir. Portelli (1998) argues that:

> "… oral history begins in the orality of the narrator but is directed towards (and concluded by) the written text of the historian. Oral narrators are aware of this written destination, and bear it in mind as they shape their performance; on the other hand, the task of the oral historian is to write in such a way that readers are constantly reminded of the oral origins of the text they are reading. In the end, we might define oral history as the genre of discourse which orality and writing have developed jointly in order to speak to each other about the past" (25).

Oral history has a different authority which comes from the oral aspect of it. In a memoir, the authority is in the author and the witness of memories. The author of the memoir knows what he/she is going to write about. However, in the case of oral history "by opening the conversation, the interviewer defines the roles and establishes the basis of narrative authority" (Portelli 1998, 28). On the other hand, this authority of the interviewer is broken through the narrative of the oral narrator which is reflected through the written text. This is why I wanted to emphasize that sometimes my questions were alien to the interviewees. The moment of our encounter and my questions have shaped this oral history research, making it important for me to reflect on the process of the interview as I analyze the narratives. On the other hand, although revolutionary women did not take part in the writing of the research, they also exercised certain authority by deciding on what they want to share and not share with me. In a memoir, these processes are not transparent, and depends on the authors' presentation and self-reflexivity. One last point about authority should be made about the difference between academic oral histories and popular "collections" prepared by the subjects themselves or by independent researchers. In oral histories conducted for academic purposes there is also an effort to establish scholarly authority (Portelli 1998), which can have various implications. The audience in each case is different. In academic work, the audience is more typically defined as the academic community, whereas in more popular collections, the audience is more diverse and usually includes the subjects and their communities as well.

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[30] From now on, I would like to call these books as "collections" in order to avoid repetition, and confusion.

[31] Here, I also include "collections."

The discussion on authority brings us to another issue concerning "voice." Whose voices are heard, or represented in different genres, and whose voices are silenced or missing? The published oral history interviews typically integrate both the researchers' perspective, and witnesses' narratives, creating multiple "voices." The "collections" are often assembled and edited transcriptions of interviews presented as monologues. Researchers frame the interviews with their own set of questions, and most of the time in the preface they express their own reasons for creating such a work. In these "collections" most the time the readers are denied the details, positionality and questions that were directed to the interviews. We sometimes guess the content of the question either from the sub-title, or from the answers that starts with repeating the question. As readers, we are denied the full list of questions, or any details about the positionality of the participants and their interaction with the interviewees. Researchers' motivations for creating such a forum of sharing must also be taken into consideration while analyzing oral history texts. This is why in the following sections I also refer to researchers' motivations for collecting the narratives of revolutionary women. The voice in the memoirs belong to the authors themselves, and the "credibility" of the narrative is established through their narrative.

Furthermore, voice is not necessarily presented through "real names" of the authors. In "collections" and memoirs very often authors or participants use their "real names," and they become public personas. In the case of the oral history research most of the time pseudonyms are used for ethical purposes, to preserve anonymity. The fact that oral narrator knows that she will be anonymous may create a comfort for the narrator, and also the knowledge that the audience of the work will be limited (to academic community, for instance) may create a sense of relief for some oral narrators, especially when the topic is a sensitive one. Moreover, being a public persona may create certain drawbacks in the sharing certain processes.

Oral history includes many genres; “many stories or anecdotes may have been told many times within a narrator’s immediate circle” (Portelli 1998, 24), but in oral history the content of the narration is decided simultaneously in the process of the interview, with the question and the presence of the interviewer. “Collections” also involve a very similar process, and they are also based on “a theme”, like prison experiences, belonging to a same organization, or reflections on feminism. Memoir on the other hand is a process where the author can project her memories in a more “coherent” way which would also involve long thinking processes. For this research, this was particularly pertinent to my question about the relationship between motherhood and the revolutionary self. Many interviewees found it hard to immediately relate the two. The women who wrote memoirs where sometimes repeating what they wrote to me. In oral history, the narrative is often less coherent compared to the memoir this is why Portelli (1998) draws our attention to shifts “between performance-oriented *narrative* and content-oriented *document*, between subject-oriented *life* story and theme-oriented *testimony*” (26).

In terms of reception and audience, memoirs and “collections” have a very different audience compared to oral history research. Oral history research often produces knowledge for academic purposes, and the audience will remain very limited for two reasons; language barriers and interest. On the other hand, a published memoir or a book from a “famous” publishing house will receive more readers, at least in the case of Turkey. When we look into the books that I have included here, the situation is quite similar. It is easy to find books that are published by *Can Yayınları* or *Ayrıntı Yayınevi*. However, the other books remain on the margins. In order to find these books, you have to make an online search among second hand booksellers. For example, I could not find Günseli Kaya’s book for a while, and the university library could only find a copy at any library, including the national library in Ankara. My research started about five years after the publication of the books I mention here, but when I make an online search about them, only a few “marginal” websites have interviews with the authors. Mainstream media still has not acknowledged their existence. Reception of these books is important to discuss both to their audience, and their functions in terms of collective remembrance. Being aware of these genre differences I would like to focus on the act of writing in the following sections.

4.3.Motivations for Producing Testimonial Writing

Almost all the women I interviewed told me that they have bits and pieces of writing somewhere about their lives as revolutionaries. Three of my interviewees were attending creative writing workshops, and four of them had published books about 12 September. This common ground on act of writing was interesting, and made me think about the possibilities that oral and written forms of expressions create in discussion of memories of political activism. Çiçek saw writing as a voice.

> "I strongly suggest everyone to write without any literary anxieties. In order tell what has happened in that period we should write, even if it is in the form of testimony. Otherwise, what has happened will remain in silence."

Selen was also going to a literary workshop, and she thought only through writing the experiences can pass to next generations. Necmiye Alpay sees writing as the only viable way to understand the complexity of their experiences.

> "While I am talking to you, I feel discomfort due to the knowledge of how limited my sayings are. Though the length of this talk will not sweep away those limitations. There is a huge gap between truth's complexity and language's and narrative's possibilities. Only literature can grasp our complexity as humans. (…) I also write my own memories time to time. (…) Thank you for doing such a research, and for listening to me" (Akkaya 2011, 179).

It may be that oral and written forms of expressions refer to complexities of the experiences. Why did women find writing their testimonies crucial? What were the other motivations behind their writing?

Revolutionary women and the researchers who have traced narratives of revolutionary women express their desire to share what has happened in the 1960s and 70s in various ways. The necessity to construct a relationship between the past, present and future is one of the stated reasons. For instance, Aysel Sağır traces the stories from a picture taken in Sağmalcılar prison in 1972. She finds women, who mostly belong to the 68' generation, in the picture, and interviews them. She expresses her motivation as follows:

> "When past meets with present moments and today, it does not just elude from its ghosts, but also fulfills its half side. At the same time, past sorely needs today's

> perspective. Today needs yesterday in order to walk strongly towards tomorrow" (Sağır 2015, 16).

Gülfer Akkaya (2011) states her own reasons for conducting interviews with revolutionary women as follows:

> "Conducting this research does not mean looking at Turkey's yesterday for me. When I first started, I thought so, but I was wrong. During the course of the research, the state violence I witnessed proved that cruelty did not remain in the past. It showed that like previous generations, today we are living under the same cruelty" (13).

Bringing past, present and future together means a lot to understand today's political violence which my interviewees also underlined several times. For Mamaklı Kadın Yazarlar Grubu, the relationship between past, present and future meant communicating with future generations.

> "We wanted you to see the light in our eyes, to hear our songs and marches… We wanted to make a note of our memories from 31 years ago, and wanted to transfer those experiences to the next generations" (Mamaklı Kadın Yazarlar Grubu 2011, 11).

Oya Baydar and Melek Ulagay (2011) use the mirror as a metaphor to explain this will of communicating pasts to future.

> "There are thousands, ten thousands of people who experienced similar things like us, or even heavier developments in this country. As we spoke to each other's mirror/*birbirimizin aynasına,* we wanted to open another road. (…) Ours is a start, the mirror where we reflect the past is our mirror. We hope this will continue, and others will pass on their own mirrors to our history" (12).

Women also told me that they shared their narratives to provide more accurate representations about revolutionary women's agency and resistance. When I asked Günseli about how she decided to write, she said revolutionary women were depicted as masculinized, sullen and desexualized. She wanted to show that these were not reflecting the truth for some of the women. These narratives were resembling the narratives of heroism, and romantic aspect in revolutionary narrative, because most of the time discourses on victimization and suffering was ruled out. Yet, they did not focus on individual resistances, but on collective ones which emphasized solidarity among revolutionary women (see also Abiral 2016). Both Çiçek and Ayşen drew my attention to traumatic effects, and how they choose to talk and write about trauma.

> "Of course, 25 years have passed. We no longer tell our stories in a depressed, pessimistic mood. It is a mode of resistance. For each of us who witnessed that process, a little move was a resistance against power and state. That is our sustenance. This is what allows us to speak today like that" (Çiçek).

> "Maybe after 15-20 years we have works related to the coup. We could come to the point to write, and be healed. We are not a stone, a rock. We are humans. We were wounded, traumatized. That is because years after we could produce works in every aspect of art" (Ayşen).

Ayşen stated her thoughts about the reasons for years of silence, and how she decided to write her memories as an exposure.

> "Our generation (revolutionary 78s) do not like talking about pain. Furthermore, they saw it as a revolutionary virtue. I think this was the reason why there were a silence about torture. Now, we are writing about it, not as an emotional abuse, but as an exposure of events. I was sharing mostly the nice things, nice emotions. I was talking about those. I was so encouraged by my loved ones to write."

For some women contributing to women's historiography was essential. Not all women identified their contribution as feminist, but all of them believed that it was for women's cause. Kader Çeşmecioğlu, for instance, writes about wanting to share the history of Dev-Yol from women's perspectives.

> "… if we do not listen to history from women, it will always be partial, and it wil be impossible to see the whole. Women have not only revealed their own lives, but also shouldered their families' and partners' struggle" (Çeşmecioğlu 2015, 9).

Nilgün Yurdalan, in *Sanki Eşittik (2011)* concludes her words to Gülfer Akkaya with these sentences:

> "We were almost made to forget Suat Derviş, like in the past, women's history cannot be hidden. No force can stop us from writing this past, because we write our own histories, and we damage that official, patriarchal history. We are writing an alternative history. This is what you are doing" (Akkaya 2011, 229).

Similarly, Gül Erdost expresses her feelings to Mukkaddes Erdoğdu Çelik as follows:

> "Last year, at the exhibition held by 78's Association, I saw many photographs of men, including İlhan. Yet, there were no photographs of women, as if no woman died in this country during 12 September. Not only death, women are not remembered when they are alive. Women's historical secondary status is still in force. This is why I find your work to be really important" (Erdoğdu-Çelik 2005, 302)

Revolutionary women wrote and continue to write their experiences within the limits of certain genres. I reflected on their motivations because I realized most of the women referred to writing as a forum where they can share anything about their witnessing.

4.4.Revolutionary Motherhood in "Collections"

The interviews that I personally conducted were centered on making sense of revolutionary motherhood, and my questions directly addressed motherhood. On the other hand, in testimonials, experiences of revolutionary motherhood were shared in certain moments. When and how did revolutionary women mention their experiences of motherhood in testimonials? What aspects of motherhood did they mention, and what aspects remained untouched?

While I was reading testimonies, I came across mentions of motherhood in the flow of certain narratives. In these narratives, revolutionary women often remember their motherhood when they are describing the conflicts and expectations between everyday life and militancy. Obviously, there were tensions between everyday responsibilities of mothering, and responsibilities asked by the revolutionary cause. This kind of narrative was much more visible in testimonies. My interviewees rarely referred to such conflict, because of the division between *örgütlü mücadele/*organized struggle and *illegal mücadele/*ilegal struggle which was discussed in chapter 2. When mentioned, they did not see it as an obstacle to their activism. On the other hand, in “collections”, Füsun Özbilgen, for instance, complains about time limitations.

> “Compulsorily, we started to work, find jobs, and set up a house. Thereby, we could not shove off to demonstrations and university. You are going to work, handling house duties, and taking care of children… So, no time left for activism” (Sağır 2015, 29).

On the other hand, Kamile Yılmaz complains about the reactions against her efforts to balance everyday responsibilities and activism.

> “We started TÖBDER in our province. I was the only woman among founders. Time to time, I was paying the price for this. I was taking my baby to the meetings, which was found odd by my friends” (Kadın Yazarlar Derneği 2010, 268.)

The expectation from revolutionary women to balance their mothering and activism was creating pressures. Through testimonies women could discuss the reasons of these pressures, and confront with the patriarchal expectations of motherhood.

In these narratives we encounter motherhood within the framework of torture under custody. Like Fatma, testimonial writers who were pregnant when they were being searched by the police shared their fear of torture in their narratives. Dilek Türkan remembers how she had to mention about her pregnancy while she was taken to custody. On the one hand, revolutionary women wanted to preserve their "revolutionary virtues", and did not want to ask for special treatment. Yet, they feared that their babies could get harmed. Both Dilek Türkan and Ayşe Miçoğulları state that they waited till the last moment to share the knowledge about their pregnancy.

> "The tension was increasing. I thought they would behave more deliberate if I tell them that I am pregnant" (Sağır 2015, 103).
>
> "I did not want to admit, but I knew I was going to talk when they [the police]arrived. I am pregnant and scared. I cannot bare torture. When they became tough, I put forward my only trump: 'I am pregnant.' 'How many miscarriages have happened here? You are young you will try again.'" (Kadın Yazarlar Derneği 2010, 201-202).

For Esra Koç the fear was stemming from something else:

> "Finally, we got caught on 5th of October 1982, Yenimahalle. Police made my son Mehmet say the place of the guns by playing a gun game with him. I was terrorized with the fear of torture to my son. When we left my son to a relative, I was taken to torture, but I was so relieved" (Mater 2009, 166).

Like Esra Koç, Nebihe Karasu redefined the meaning of torture for her.

> "Before entering torture rooms, I felt torture already. Seperating life from the body must be something like that. Was there a torture beyond being drawn apart from my six years old Ahmet, and little Uğur?" (Kadın Yazarlar Derneği 2010, 184).

The missing/*Özlem*, consequences of separation due to imprisonment, or becoming political refugees were also narrated by women. Revolutionary women had to leave their children with their grandparents, or sometimes small children had difficulties remembering their mothers after months of failure to see each other. Sometimes the prison administration was blocking all visiting days which was increasing mother's missing/*annelerin özlemi artıyordu*. İkbal Kaynar chooses to write about this in *Tanıklıklarla 12 Eylül* (2010): "Ozan no longer recognizes me, he is looking wildly to me" (187). Oya Baydar (2011) who had to flee to Germany remembers what kinds of mixed feelings she had when her son arrived months later from Turkey, and how she could not recognize her son (353). Through these narratives of *özlem* vulnerabilities are also got mentioned. Besides, women also narrate their experiences as transformative for themselves, for their families, and for the children. Revolutionary mothers were not only "tellers of suffering," (Peteet 1997, 123), but also narrators of hope, joy, solidarity and resistance (Akbaş 2011, and see also Abiral 2016). One the joyful memories was told by Alime Mitap:

> "My mother found a way to let Ertan in to the ward. Those moments, were unforgettably beautiful moments…We gathered around Ertan. He was one and a half years old. He was so cheerful" (Çeşmecioğlu 2015, 23).

I am discussing prison narratives in detail through memoirs. One of the narratives which belongs to Meral Bekar in *Kaktüsler Susuz da Yaşar* (2011) attracked my attention. She writes about her bunk mate who gave birth in Mamak, and about their friendship. Their friendship was not only coming from being two revolutionary women in the same ward, but also from motherhood. She writes:

> "Sexual harassment during torture sessions... Practices which caused her to be ashamed of her femininity and sexuality… Wounds and breaks in her spirit… Nights after nights she shared everything with me without any secrecy… Yet she was silent about her baby who was taken away immediately after the birth… Maybe it was the silence of being away from her baby which she gave life to… Maybe it was the unbearableness of her pain… Maybe it was a result of not being able to experience motherhood… I don't know. I could not ask… I could not touch that huge silence… I was afraid to open her wounds…
>
> (…)
>
> Maybe this baby, that I have never seen, never sucked his mother's milk… I did not know… How was the baby taken away from her mother? I could not learn. How was my friend feeling? I could not ask.
>
> (…)
>
> I was a mother… I was detached from my daughter… She was too, from her baby who she gave birth to in prison… She was my bunk mate… A woman after childbirth who is facing torture… A tortured pregnant woman… A tortured baby…" (Mamaklı Kadın Yazarlar Grubu 2011, 60-61).

This particular piece was among the most explicit narratives about being a revolutionary mother in prison. It talks about sexual harassment, and motherhood at the same time. The unfinished sentences, triple dots, make the reader uncomfortable. They underline the emotional difficulty while narrating such a memory. Furthermore, such a narrative seeks justice, and targets perpetrators. On the one hand, acknowledges silence with respect, on the other, aims to break through silence, even in the form of half sentences. Here, again vulnerability and resistance is (re)negotiated through the narration of revolutionary struggle and motherhood. I would like to end this section with another question. I realized revolutionary women did not touch on how they shared their experiences with their children. Why did revolutionary women rarely mention how and when they share their experiences with their children?

4.5.Memoirs of Motherhood and Revolutionary Activism

While collecting literature for this research, I came across two memoirs written by revolutionary women; Ayşen gave birth in Metris prison, and Günseli had a 2.5-year-old child while she was in Mamak prison. Finding out about these two books excited me, and enriched my curiosity about meanings of writing revolutionary motherhood. What did it mean to write revolutionary motherhood? I was lucky to reach Ayşen Göreleli, the author of *Postal be Patik* (2011) ¸and Günseli Kaya, the author of *Mamak Cezaevi'nden Oğula Mektuplar*. We conducted interviews, and I could ask more questions about their reasons for emphasizing revolutionary motherhood in their memoirs. When I asked Ayşen, why she decided to write her memories of motherhood, she replied: "Because it was our story. Yes, the narrative focuses on me, but I tried to depict us, our conditions in prison, and being a mother." Günseli told me that writing that book was an obligation for her towards her son.

Postal ve Patik (2011) consists of Ayşen's memories of Metris prison. There is a chronological order in the narrative which starts with Ayşen's arrest when she was 7 months pregnant, and ends with getting out of prison. The narrative structure in this memoir is only disrupted with poems before each chapter. The poems are usually introductions to the following memory. Ayşen states in the preface that she wrote this book for her children.

> "Many years have passed. Memories which I doubted their accuracy, memories which remained on my mind… I kept a book, and started to write for my children's dowry chest/*çeyiz sandığı*. I remembered as I continued writing. I wanted to share as I remembered. Not to forget more, to face with myself once again, and not to forget 12 September which is still not accounted for…" (Göreleli 2011, 9).

Mamak Cezaevi'nden Oğula Mektuplar (2011) is a memoir which combines memories from Mamak prison, and letters from mother to son. Letters can be found in scanned versions, and they are presented after Günseli's memories about the letter which provides context for the reader. Günseli was exchanging letters with her mother who was taking care of her son. The letters coming out of prison were subjected to censor, and sometimes owners of the letters were not sure whether they reached their loved ones. Günseli's parents kept all the letters, photocopied, and archived them. After 30 years, Günseli decided to turn these "archives" into a memoir. There is a chronological order like Ayşen's memoir which we understand from the dates on the letters. The narrative, as I noted above is supported by letters.

> "The collections in this book are documenting how a young, 78' generation revolutionary woman comprehends and has experienced motherhood. It is a tangible document of a revolutionary mother's feelings of missing towards her children; anxieties over her son's personal and spiritual development, responsibilities; and fuss to reach her children from distance" (Kaya 2011, 7).

Maternal experience has been on the margins of literature for many decades. When it did appear, it was not from the perspective of the mother. The motherhood ideology was dominating these works which identifies the mother as primary caregiver, self-sacrificing, and the expected of home. The maternal subjectivity was missing in most of works. Joanne S. Frye (2010) problematizes the lack of narrating maternal subjectivity by asking these questions: "Why do we so rarely hear the voices of mothers in narrative form? Why is it that even women who are both mothers and writers are unlikely to portray mothers as active subjective presences?" (187). Motherhood literature, especially what is named as "mommy memoirs" (Brown 2010) challenges motherhood ideologies, and provide several answers to Frye's questions.

Motherhood literature takes "motherhood experiences and opinions about mothering in contemporary society from the perspective of mothers as writers" (Brown 2010, 124). "Mommy memoirs" is a subgenre of motherhood literature which includes nonfictional narratives of mothers. Mommy memoirs mostly consist of narratives of ambivalence, expectations from motherhood, or transformation processes of pregnancy and mothering. I argue that both memoirs that I examine here can be categorized as mommy memoirs. They are written from the perspective of the mother, and explanatory of different maternal subjectivities. At the same time, they initiate a different form of mommy memoirs which contains political activism in their narratives, and remembering of different motherhood technologies. Joanne S. Frye (2010) argues that "mommy memoirs" add different perspectives to the "old question of maternal silencing (191). These two memoirs written by revolutionary mothers break that silence. However, that does not always mean that they do not operate through certain silences which we should be aware of.

Both memoirs were framed by ongoing negotiations and dialogues between the revolutionary and maternal selves. Revolutionary ideals, hopes, disappointments, and virtues were reflected on motherhood narratives, and anxieties, ambivalence, and joy of motherhood were reflected on revolutionary selves. Ayşen writes these sentences to explain her feelings about getting caught during pregnancy.

> "I was taken from political bureau in Gayrettepe to prosecution in Selimiye. My mind is so complicated. I cannot define my feelings. I am tired. Nervous. Nonetheless, I have a weird happiness inside me that accompany acrid taste" (Göreleli 2011, 13).

Like previous sentences, Ayşen's happiness about her pregnancy is interrupted with political violence that came along with 12 September.

> "…I was going to be a mother! Could life give a better present? But, it was 1980, and September. Only those who experienced would know what it means. We were going through difficult times" (14).

As discussed above writing creates a forum for reflexivity. Through these memoirs we can also read reflexive and critical opinions of revolutionary mothers about revolutionary ideology. In Metris prison, like Mamak soldiers were walking around with "Everything is for nation/Her şey vatan için" slogans. Ayşen recalls, one time during these walks she murmurs "Everything is for Eren (her son)!"

> "I got quiet with friends' judgmental looks. At that moment, the idea that "everything is for Eren" was harming my revolutionary identity. I don't think so" (76).

For Günseli, the attachment to revolutionary identity was much more visible, and includes less details about revolutionary movement. Günseli mostly remembers ideals, and emotions attached to being revolutionary which she did not question through the memoir. This time letters were reflexive of what was happening within prison, and how Günseli made sense of herself as agent in her role as mother and revolutionary. Although letters were space for interior self-reflection (Hughes 2014), Günseli had to negotiate between her emotions and censorship forced by prison administration. She provides context for not being able use certain words in her letters which also tells a lot about prison conditions. They were forbidden to read books or newspapers time to time. Günseli's account show us in what conditions they mothered. On the one hand there was a wish to communicate through letters, on the other political violence was evident.

> "Instead of using words: exploitation, socialism, labour, struggle, organization etc, I used indirect expressions in letters. This was due to anxiety whether my letters will arrive its place or not" (Kaya 2011, 7-8).

These memoirs problematize the official historiography of 12 September and the revolutionary narrative. Writing of the maternal narrative not only opens a space for reflection and social criticism, "challenges existing cultural definitions and practices related to motherhood" (Brown 2010, 137), but also reproduce child-centric perspectives on motherhood together with gender norms, and heteronormativity. The last section of this chapter examines these certain representations of motherhood. I suggest that criticizing gendered division of labor, writing on distance mothering as a transformative experience, and mentioning several moments of revolutionary women's solidarity are ways in which these memoirs rewrite the revolutionary narrative. At the same time, they continue to function within the limits of patriarchal motherhood as they are centered on the child's wellbeing more than mothers'.

From the very beginning Günseli writes how mothering was not exhausting for her due to equal division of labor within family. Making the equally shared parenting visible through writing is a way of showing patriarchal motherhood can be altered where mothers are not the only caregivers. Throughout the memoir we see similar narratives on equal division of labor in letters to her son. In one of the letters, Günseli copies penguin pictures from a textbook available to use in prison. In her letter she writes a story for her son, about a penguin who initially was selfish, but later learns how to act collectively. This story that Günseli wrote is also representative of her revolutionary identity, and her perspective pervades her mothering. She writes:

> "7.02.1983; Penguin turns to his friends and says: I made a mistake, and behaved wrongly. I have only thought about myself, I am a bad penguin. Please forgive me, I am so embarrassed. His friends forgave him. They started to live together. They were staying at the same house. They were hunting fish together, and eating together. One of them was bringing the wood, other was emptying the bins, and the other one was cleaning. If there was a sick penguin he was sleeping; those who are thin were doing less work, and eating more They were happy together,

> and they were no longer afraid of anything. They realized “many hands make light work/birlikten kuvvet doğar.” (Kaya 2011, 62).

Secondly, both Gülşen and Ayşen narrate distance mothering as a transformative experience, different than patriarchal motherhood which expects 24/7 physical mothering. “Each motherhood memoir, in one way or another, seeks to “unmask” motherhood: to speak honestly, authentically of what it means to become and be a mother” (O’Reilly 2010, 209). Both memoirs in question also “unmask” motherhood, and the revolutionary ideology. They write about the idea that a woman can mother her children from distance or outside “home”, or a woman can perform motherhood without breastfeeding, or changing diapers. Günseli uses letters as mediums for communicating her son. Through letter writing she performs motherhood. Throughout the letters she wonders about her son’s relationship with elders, with peers, his teeth health, and being left-handed. In one of the letters Günseli asks these questions to her mother:

> “Let’s move onto things that I really wonder. (…) What kinds of toys does he like? Does he just play with them, or try to understand how they have been made? Does he try to assemble, disassemble, or reassemble? How does he behave towards new people? Does he wait to meet, of act and find out about their reactions? How does he react to new objects? Does he show any behaviours like not sharing, or glorification? How does the react towards electronical gadgets? (…) Maybe, I ask so much, but I find these questions necessary for children’s development (Kaya 2011, 20).

Ayşen points out distance mothering different than Günseli since her children was a baby when they were separated. The needs of her children were different. Her son needed breastfeeding, or changing diapers. When Ayşen realizes that her trial will take longer than expected, she decides to send her son outside, and gets ready for distance mothering. They ask for teat, and write a petition to prison administration to buy a teat which requires so much bureaucratic procedures in that conditions. Later, they prepare him for ready food. Ayşen defines these processes as follows: “There was no fire, no oven! But we have infinite creativity and patience” (Göreleli 2011, 80). Another thing that was mentioned in Ayşen’s memoir was about mothering to younger women in the ward. The youngest of the ward wants to call Ayşen mother which allows Ayşen, in her words, to feel motherhood again. Through writing about this memory, Ayşen not only shows alternative ways to coping distance motherhood, but also challenges understandings of biological mothering.

Solidarity within prison was something that shapes revolutionary women's narratives. Solidarity was something associated with creativity in memoirs. This solidarity also contained parents, and relatives outside. One may argue that the solidarity within prison generated a feminist ethics of care where the responsibility of care shared equally, and creatively. In one of the letter, Günseli mentions how her friends in prison tailored pants for her son. "Friends here made the pant for Metin, out of their love for Metin and other Metins" (Kaya 2011, 27). Ayşen tells a similar solidarity:

> "One day I was walking in the ward, and said 'Friends I will give birth soon.' Everybody was caught in a fuss. Everybody started to stitch baby clothes out of their pajamas, undershirts, and so on with their hands" (Göreleli 2011, 50).

The solidarity among revolutionary women generates an environment of trust, and safety. The writing of these solidarity narratives is important for creating a feminist historiography. Writing motherhood and sharing oral histories also alternates motherhood discourses, and does not limit mothering to biological mothers, and women.

Although revolutionary women in certain ways alternate definition of patriarchal motherhood, they also reproduce it. All the narratives above are centered on children's needs. Also, motherhood as a "natural" process is not challenged by the authors at all. Furthermore, they also reproduce the general revolutionary discourse in their silence and trivialization of desires, emotions and sexuality, in general.

In this chapter, I argued that sharing narratives of revolutionary motherhood mobilizes memories, and turns personal into political, and vice versa. I examined textual material, and focused on two memoirs in detail. In their introduction to *Textual Mothers/Maternal Texts: Motherhood in Contemporary Women's Literature* (2010), Elizabeth Podnieks and Andrea O'Reilly contend that maternal texts reflect political, personal and creative narratives of mothering and being a mother, and unravel multiple subjectivities of women and spaces of life. Following their argument, I also wanted show how revolutionary women narrated their revolutionary and maternal subjectivities. As a result, they enrich and multiply women's historiography. They intervene to the existing forms of literature on revolutionary struggle. I would like to conclude with Günseli's last sentences from her memoir.

> "I tried to depict the profile of a revolutionary mother who was in MAMAK prison with what has remained. It was a period when emotions and belief met, anger and patience meld, and love and hope was blended. Any narrative will be half in reflecting our lived realities" (Kaya 2011, 114).

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

During the 1960s and 70s, revolutionary organizations and leftist activism were significant aspects of politics in Turkey. Furthermore, 12 September 1980 coup, which aimed to put an end to the existence of revolutionary organizations and lives, continues to shape Turkey's past and present collective memory. Many people were members of these organizations, and they defined themselves through this revolutionary identity. Women were volunteers and militants of revolutionary organizations. Yet, it is argued in this thesis, that little is known about people's, especially women's, experiences of revolutionary politics during these decades. Oral history has therefore been employed as the primary methodological tool. In this research, based on oral history interviews and textual material, I tried to analyze how focusing on narratives of motherhood could help us reinterpret and reconfigure revolutionary narratives. I focused on gendered experiences of political activism and political violence through personal narratives of revolutionary women who became mothers in 1970s and 80s.

In a context where motherhood and being a revolutionary were seen as two different subject positions, I analyzed the dynamics that connect the two in terms of the meanings attached to them by the women who participated in this research. Being a revolutionary was defined as a commitment, while motherhood was possibly seen as a "distraction" against this commitment for achieving the "revolutionary ideal." Being a revolutionary was further associated with masculinity unlike motherhood, which is the "ultimate" experience of womanhood in the gender hierarchy. Revolution involved certain types of negotiations that required the use of violence, which was again considered contradictory with motherhood, a term heavily associated with "peace making" and nurturing. This thesis argues that not only did revolutionary mothers experience tensions aroused by these assumptions and associations, but also that they challenged the idea that assigned being a revolutionary and a mother two different subject positions. They redefined both terms by sharing their narratives through textual, oral and sometimes visual mediums.

Sharing was key to this research as it would not have been not possible to carry it out if women had not wanted to share their narratives with me and with the public. It was also essential to my methodology which combined textual analysis and oral history. Focusing on the specific question of how revolutionary mothers reinterpreted the revolutionary narratives through their motherhood narratives helped me compare and contrast different genres of sharing narratives, and their limits and openings. I argue that the characteristics of these genres deeply affect silences, ruptures, fragmentations and repetitions in the narratives of revolutionary mothers as well as the “openness” of these narratives. Oral history interviews draw our attention to the positionality of the interviewee and the interviewer. I suggest that, for this particular research, oral history has created a simultaneous process where women could relate to being a mother and a revolutionary at the same time. On the other hand, testimonials and memoirs have been important means of mobilizing memory, problematizing the official historiography of 12 September and leftist activism, and a way of turning personal into political and vice versa. I argue that both oral history interviews and textual materials generate a framework for theorizing both for revolutionary women and researchers. This framework also allows for critical self-reflection as noted throughout the interviews and is seen in textual materials. I hope this framework contributes to the general body of knowledge about revolutionary history and women’s role in that particular history.

Through revolutionary women’s narratives, this thesis shows that the politics of naming is very important in understanding revolutionary history. Different meanings attached to the terms “militancy” and “activism” points to an understanding that takes “activism” for granted. I have discussed the ways in which these concepts have been redefined in different contexts. Revolutionary motherhood, for example, refers both to revolutionary activity and to survival of mothers.

In the second chapter, I examined the way revolutionary women constructed their own narratives of motherhood and being revolutionaries. For revolutionary women, there is no difference between everyday life routine and the revolutionary activity. Being a revolutionary has shaped every aspect of their lives. The distinction between political activism and personal life is very much blurred and is even treated as non-existent by some revolutionary women. This intense connection between everyday life and revolutionary activity calls for redefining and negotiating the meaning of being a revolutionary. The revolutionary narrative does not appear a distinct narrative in the life course. Commitment, hope, and collective belonging are the most repeated themes of the revolutionary narrative, but women's understanding of these themes through the revolutionary discourse vary. For some women, commitment means exchanging life with death, while for others it means withholding the sadness and anger caused by deaths, especially when they lost their "comrades." I argue that the kind of commitment which defined the revolutionary self is subjectively constructed and holds a different meaning for each revolutionary woman. The sense of collective belonging is another aspect of the revolutionary narrative. Much like commitment, collectivity constituted a subjective experience for every woman. Throughout the research, narratives that reflected on the meaning of collectivity appeared to be the most controversial and contradictory ones. Looking back now, I see that most of the revolutionary women criticized the imbalance being a revolutionary created between collectivity and individuality. According to my interviewees, collective belonging was always in tension with one's own subjectivity and left no room for criticism or individual existence. Revolutionary narrative was mostly supported by discourses of hope.

Revolutionary self has been a gendered construction. The reflections of the interviewees were examples of such gendered construction. Most of them told me that they realized this after the coup when there were no organizations left to participate in. Revolutionary women's sexuality was policed both by the society and by their leftist organizations. The moral code of revolutionary organizations involved not speaking openly about flirting, love, marriage or sexuality. This moral code was internalized by some revolutionary women as well. When internalized and quietly accepted, moral codes would turn into oppressive mechanisms for some women. Both motherhood and marriage were discussed in terms of their contribution to the revolution. As they narrated these gendered constructions, they also touched upon how they came to realize and became aware of the gendered nature of revolutionary politics. Some women told me it was right after the 1980 coup while others said it was during their clandestine lives where they had to run away from the police. It was also the case that getting married and becoming mother were creating cracks in the hierarchical order of the revolutionary organizations. Although there were women's revolutionary organizations they were not able to respond to specific issues related to motherhood. Nevertheless, I argue that the existence and struggle of these women's organizations are important for understanding why and how feminism gained intense support after the 1980 coup and also how women dealt with their own personal politics.

This thesis claims that the gendered constructions of the revolutionary selves affected women's perceptions about their motherhood. The fact that there was no separate agenda or discourse on motherhood was also significant in terms of understanding revolutionary women's motherhood narratives. There was no visible, or coherent, motherhood narrative within revolutionary organizations in the 70s and 80s. This is why it took several decades for women to start narrating and discussing their motherhood experiences. In the context of our interview, talking about motherhood was alien to some women. Sometimes the revolutionary narrative would pervade the motherhood narrative and at other times motherhood remained a separate agenda, causing narratives to be fragmented and ruptured. The most "coherent" narrative on motherhood involved defining motherhood as something "natural." Still, the "coherency" was an illusion, because each woman defined "natural" in their own peculiar way. By discussing the idea of "natural" for revolutionary women, I wanted to show how narratives of motherhood were affected by "meta-narratives" like the narrative of biology. I tried to understand the dynamics that made revolutionary women use the term "natural." The idea of "choice" was important in this sense. Motherhood as a "choice" was distant to some revolutionary women, and they did not problematize the concept of "choice." For some women, it was something they learned and performed, which was why it was "natural" to them. Access to contraception and abortion were also part of the discourses on "natural" motherhood. The first chapter analyzes revolutionary and motherhood narratives as two distinct stories. Although revolutionary women were mothers, for some of them the connection between the two was made possible only after my encounter with them. I believe this reveals how revolutionary women saw motherhood and being revolutionary as two distinct subject positions. For some women, the connection between the two was clear, but others made the connection during the interview. This also shows their position vis-a-vis the politicization of motherhood. Some women did not think motherhood as a political category, and talked mostly about their personal history as a revolutionary.

The third chapter elaborates on the way narratives of motherhood open cracks in, reconfigured, reinterpreted, and reiterated the revolutionary narrative. Through the individual narratives involving tensions, contradictions, and coexistence, this study shows that there is no single experience or performance that defines revolutionary motherhood. Every interview and every account of oral history described the experience of being a revolutionary mother in a different way, be it a painful or a joyful one. One of the learnings of this research has been that motherhood, as experienced by revolutionary women, consists of negotiated narratives of resistance and revolution, of struggle and vulnerabilities.

As the concept of revolutionary is redefined, motherhood/mothering is also redefined. I realized that through different expressions, my interviewees were identifying themselves as revolutionary mothers.The revolutionary self and the maternal self often intersect through the emotion of hope. Revolutionary women hold on to a kind of self-generated hope in order to continue their struggle. They “have created lives” by becoming a mother, and those lives themselves have become the source of hope to survive. I suggest that for revolutionary mothers, the emotion of hope brings the revolutionary and the maternal selves together, and turns revolutionary mothering into a political act. Raising a child who would be familiar with “revolutionary hope” is seen as a political act that transmits the hope of creating an alternative life to future generations.

Throughout the research process, I realized that the most frequent kind of tension expressed by my interviewees was between the individual and the collective self. While women as revolutionaries were expected to act collectively, as mothers they were expected to care for their children individually. The tension was most visible when women mentioned their will to care for all children collectively. This created a sense of ineligibility and guilt for some women. As a revolutionary mother, they wanted and expected themselves to care for all children, but their sphere of influence - as well as the practicality of this expectation - was limited, which caused them to feel guilty.

For revolutionary mothers, the gendered division of labor was a source of problem both within their organizations and with their partners. Very often, the gendered division of labor at revolutionary organizations continued at home. Before and after the coup women's struggle at home were visible most of the time, yet their efforts to raise any concerns were silenced either by their partners or by the members and leaders of their organizations. After the coup, for women living under illegal circumstances the silence continued because they had no one except their partners to share the difficulties they faced. I argue that women's efforts to change the gendered division of labor both at home and at the organization should be a part of the narratives of the leftist struggle, like the "heroic" imagery of the leftist leaders.

Motherhood is a complex site where oppression, creativity, and joy coexist. This complexity was also reflected through the revolutionary mothers' narratives. The recognition of this complexity through the narratives of motherhood led to the reconfiguration of the revolutionary narrative, which has previously denied the existence of certain emotions. Women have experienced the joy of having children and connecting with someone new. Yet, due to their ambivalent "illegal" condition, they faced a lot of anxiety. For some women, revolutionary motherhood involved carrying out mothering practices from a distance as was reflected in their sharing and writing. We cannot argue that women challenged the patriarchal understanding of motherhood, but they developed certain forums, channels, and strategies to make sense of their own revolutionary and maternal subjectivities.

In our interviews, revolutionary mothers spoke less about motherhood and more about their memories of being a revolutionary. This was also because of their familiarity with narratives of revolutionary struggle in their current activism. There is significantly more literature available on gendered experiences of the left for building narratives. On can talk about a hierarchy of narratives, through which the experiences of motherhood are typically invalidated. It seemed as though their stories would be worth sharing only if they excluded motherhood, a "personal" experience that took away from the "professional" experience of being a revolutionary. In order to make sense of revolutionary history and revolutionary narratives, I argue, it is essential to look into personal narratives. Motherhood, an unexplored personal experience within the revolutionary narrative, opens up new discussions. As oral history interviews and textual material open up a new ground for theorizing the personal in the political, this thesis is part of those new possibilities and channels for discussion.

I would like to conclude my discussion by mentioning a few questions for further inquiry. This thesis focuses on revolutionary motherhood, yet I think it is also important to analyze how revolutionary fatherhood is constructed. Often, fathers were missing in the picture. In what ways did they father or how did they feel about their partners' efforts to juggle everything at once? Another area of inquiry could be the women who decided to remain childfree. Why did they not want to have children during the period of political struggle and violence, and how do their decisions back then affect their perspectives today? How do they make sense of "life" and "choice"? What about women who decide not to have any children after facing the coup, which was often experienced as a trauma? Should the literature on motherhood and political activism address their narratives? What are the ways in which their narratives can become a part of the historical narrative of political struggle and change? This research is a continuation of previous researches, and a small step towards future ones. I hope that through this modest step we can expand our questions and curiosity towards experiences of motherhood and political activism.

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Bu mülakat Sabancı Üniversitesi Kültürel Çalışmalar programında yapılacak yüksek lisans tezinin parçasıdır. Bu çalışma 1960'lı ve 70'li yıllarda sol aktivizm yapmış, 1970'li ve 80'li yıllarda anne olmuş devrimci kadınların annelik deneyimleri üzerine yoğunlaşmaktadır. Çalışmanın amacı; darbe öncesi devrimci mücadelede kadınların yaşadıklarını anlamak, kadınların sol harekete katılımını hafıza çalışmaları açısından değerlendirmek, kadınların gündelik hayat deneyimleri ile aktivizm deneyimleri arasındaki ilişkiyi anlamak, mücadele yıllarında anne olan solcu kadınların deneyimine ve yaşadıklarına kulak vermek ve özellikle annelik ve devrimci kimlikliklerinin kesiştiği ve çatıştığı noktaları göstermek. Bu araştırma kapsamında görüşme yapacağım kişilerin verdiği bilgiler sadece master tezim için kullanılacaktır. Görüşme süresince alınan ses kaydı yine akademik amaçlar doğrultusunda alınıp, görüşme sonrasında sadece araştırmacı olarak benim tarafından dinlenecektir. Çalışmama katıldığınız için teşekkür ederim.

1. Öncelikle ben sizin hikayenizi ve deneyiminizi dinlemek istiyorum. İsterseniz sol mücadele ile olan ilişkinizden başlayabiliriz.
2. Bir kadın olarak sol örgütte yer almak sizin için nasıl bir histi? Genç bir kadınsınız ve bir yandan aktivistsiniz, bunları yaşarken ne hissediyordunuz?
3. O dönemlere geri dönüp baktığınızda nasıl anımsıyorsunuz? Nasıl hatırlıyorsunuz? En çok aklınızda kalanlar neler? Kendinizi nasıl görüyorsunuz?
4. Kadın erkek ilişkilerine nasıl yaklaşılıyordu? Evlilik, bekaret, kadın cinselliği gibi konular nasıl tartışılıyordu? Siz bu tartışmalar ilgili ne düşünüyordunuz ya da ne hissediyordunuz?
5. Aktivizm yürüttüğünüz örgütte anne olan kadınlar var mıydı? Annelik üzerine tartışmalar yürütülüyor muydu? Anne olan kadınlara karşı hatırladığınız farklı bir tutum var mıydı? Sizin annelik ile ilgili olan yaklaşımlarınız nasıldı? Aktivizm yıllarınızda anne olmayı düşünmüş müydünüz? Darbe öncesi anne olsaydınız farklı bir deneyim olur muydu sizin için? Anne olmayı hayal etmiş miydiniz? Annelik sizin için ne anlama geliyordu? Anne olmak dendiğinde size ne ifade ediyordu?

6. Anneniz devrimci olmanızla ilgili ne düşünüyordu? Bu konuda anneniz olan ilişkinizi ve çocuğunuzla olan ilişkinizi düşündüğünüzde neler düşünüyorsunuz? Özellikle siyaset yapmak açısından baktığınızda.
7. Yaşadıklarınızı başkalarıyla paylaştınız mı? Kimlerle paylaştınız? Bu konuda paylaşmak istemediğiniz şeyler oldu mu?
8. 2000’lerde deneyimlerini yazan kadınlar oldu. Siz bunları okudunuz mu? Ne düşündürdü ve hissettirdi bunları okumak size? Sizde yazmayı düşündünüz mü? Yazacak olsanız kimin için yazmak isterdiniz?
9. Anne olmanız bu hikayeleri paylaşıp paylaşmamak istemenizde sizce etkili oldu mu?
10. Sol aktivizm içinde olmak sizin için ne demekti? Genel olarak o dönemki aktivizm hayatınızı nasıl etkiledi?
11. Devrimci olmak ne demekti?
12. Devrimci olmak kadınlık ve annelik üzerinden tanımlanıyor muydu?
13. Devrimci kadın dendiğinde neler anlaşılıyordu?
14. Devrimci olmak ve anne olmak dediğimde siz ikisi arasında ne gibi bağlar kuruyorsunuz? O dönemi hatırladığınızda aklınıza neler geliyor? İkisini tanımlayan ortak kavramlar, ortak duygular düşünebiliyor musunuz?
15. Annelik ve devrimcilik bir araya geliyor mu sizce? Ne zaman geliyor ya da ne zaman gelmiyor? İkisinin en çok çatıştığı alanları hatırlıyor musunuz?
16. Sizin için fedakar anne olmak ya da fedakar devrimci olmak arasında bağlar var mı? Siz fedakarlık hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?
17. Devrimci olmak hayatınızın er alanını etkiliyor muydu? Farklı yaşadığınız alanları var mıydı? Anne olan kadınlar için bu ayrım belirgin miydi?
18. Darbe hayatınızı nasıl etkiledi? Daha sonra aktivizme devam ettiniz mi? Anne olmanızın ve aktivizme devam etmeniz arasında bir bağ var mı sizce? Gelecek nesiller için bir şeyler yapmak, daha yaşanabilir dünya hayali kurmak üzerine düşündüğünüzde. Darbe sonrası bu kadar emeğin, mücadelenin unutulması hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?

APPENDIX B: PROFILE OF THE INTERVIEWEES

Name	Length of the Interview	Date of the Interview	The Place of the Interview	Organizations	Years of revolutionary activity	Years of giving birth to their first child
Damla	2 hours	09.11.2015	İstanbul	İGD	1976-1982	1983 (post-coup)
Selen	3-4 hours	04.01.2016	İstanbul	İGD	1977-1980	Late 1980s (post-coup)
Hale	1-2 hours	11.01.2016	İzmir	İGD	1976	1989 (post-coup)
Leyla	2 hours	12.01.2016	İzmir	TÖB-DER.	1970s	1974-1978 (before coup)
Günseli	1-2 hours	13.01.2016	İzmir	TÖB-DER, THKO	1970s	1970s (before coup)
Fatma	1-2 hours	06.02.2016	İstanbul	İGD	1978	1984 (post-coup)
Hazal	1 hour	08.02.2016	İstanbul	İGD	1978	1982 (post-coup)
Çiçek	1-2 hours	10.02.2016	İstanbul	İGD	1978	1983 (post-coup)

Ayşen	2-3 hours	22.02.2016	İstanbul	No mention	1970s	1982 (post-coup)
Meral	2 hours	13.03.2016	İzmir	TSİP, İKD	Late 1960s and 70s	1974 (before coup)

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