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LOCAL PEOPLES' PERCEPTIONS ON SYRIAN REFUGEES IN TURKEY

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LOCAL PEOPLES' PERCEPTIONS ON SYRIAN REFUGEES IN
TURKEY: THE CASE OF 'GÜN' GROUPS

A Master's Thesis

by

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Ankara

July 2018



To my mother and Aslihan

LOCAL PEOPLES' PERCEPTIONS ON SYRIAN REFUGEES IN TURKEY: THE
CASE OF 'GÜN' GROUPS

The Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences

of

İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University

by

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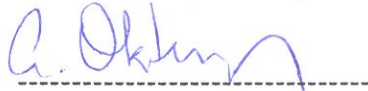
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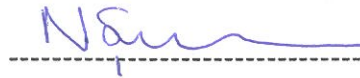
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ABSTRACT

Local Peoples' Perceptions on Syrian Refugees in Turkey: The Case of 'Gün'
Groups

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This study mainly investigates the perceptions on Syrian refugees in Turkey, as one of the host countries. It does so by focusing on the case of the perceptions of the local population in Mersin, a city which received a substantial number of Syrian refugees in Turkey. The research is based on the analysis of data from five "gün" groups in Mersin, which consist of occasions of females of different age and socio-economic backgrounds on a fairly regular basis. In the context of this study, the discourses of the 'gün' participants will be analyzed, and the common patterns revealed in the 'gün' groups' discourses as prejudiced perceptions, stereotypes and hearsays, scapegoating, 'us' vs. 'them' and discriminative discourses will be emphasized. The study concludes that the discourses of the 'gün' members reveal marginalization and discursive exclusion of the Syrian refugees. It underlines the function of the 'gün' occasions as "building blocks of society" in identity (re)formation of the Syrian refugees in everyday life. The study also draws the conclusion that marginalization and exclusion are stemming from lack of interaction, cultural differences, language obstacle and lack of trust towards the Syrian refugees.

Keywords: Discursive Exclusion, ‘Gün’ Groups, Identity Formation, Marginalization, Refugees.



ÖZET

Türkiye’deki Yerel Halkın Suriyeli Mültecilere Dair Bakış Açıları: Gün Grupları
Örneği

Mete, Hatice

Yüksek Lisans, Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi Bölümü

Tez Danışmanı: Doç. Dr. Saime Özçürümez

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Bu çalışma, misafir ülkelerden biri olan Türkiye’deki Suriyeli mültecilere dair bakış açısını araştırmaktadır. Bunu, çok sayıda Suriyeli mülteciyi misafir eden Mersin’deki yerel halkın bakış açısına odaklanarak gerçekleştirmektedir. Araştırma Mersin’deki farklı yaş gruplarından gelen ve sosyo-ekonomik geçmişe sahip kadınların düzenli aralıklarla biraraya gelmesinden oluşan beş gün grubundan elde edilen verilerin analizine dayanmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın bağlamında gün katılımcılarının söylemleri incelenecek ve gün gruplarının söylemlerinde ortaya çıkan ortak bağlantılar olan önyargılı bakış açılarının, basmakalıp inanışların ve söylentilerin, ‘biz’ ve ‘onlar’ söyleminin, günah keçisi haline getirmenin ve ayrımcı söylemlerin altı çizilecektir. Çalışma gün katılımcılarının söylemlerinde ötekileştirme ve dışlayıcı söylem ortaya çıktığını özetlemektedir. Aynı zamanda, bu çalışma Suriyeli mültecilerin kimliğinin (yeniden) inşasında gün gruplarının fonksiyonu olan toplumu inşa eden bloklar olduğunun altını çizecektir. Çalışma ayrıca ötekileştirme ve dışlamanın sosyal etkileşim eksikliği, kültürel farklılıklar, dil engeli ve güven eksikliğinden kaynaklandığı sonucu çıkarmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Dışlayıcı Söylem, Gün Grupları, Kimlik İnşası, Mülteciler, Ötekileştirme.



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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

“The problem is solved in their country, why don’t they leave Turkey? Someone shared it on social media; I liked it a lot: Our boys are going to die by fighting for Syria, Syrians are coming here to constantly reproduce.”

—Banu Hanım, From the Group of Parents

One of the most pressing concerns of the policy makers, academics and the public which engage with questions of forced migration is the increasing numbers of refugees due to the humanitarian crisis in Syria. Neighboring countries like Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey have become host countries to millions of Syrian refugees who escaped from war, violence and persecution. The concerns over Syrian refugees have become even more pressing for host countries with increasing stay of a large number of refugees. Social, economic, political and demographic impacts of hosting Syrian refugees, as they were underlined by aid-agencies’ and NGOs’ reports, have been increasing and diversifying with social unrest and hostility in local communities (AFAD, 2014; Akgündüz, van den Berg, & Hassink, 2015; Cagaptay & Menekşe, 2014; ICG, 2018; MAZLUMDER, 2015). In regard to these reports, this research seeks an answer to the question: How are Syrian refugees perceived in Turkey, as one of the host countries? In doing so, it focuses on the case of the perceptions of the local population in Mersin, a city which received over 208 thousand of registered Syrian refugees in Turkey.

The trigger behind conducting a research to learn about perceptions of local people in Turkey is the representation of Syrian refugees in media. As illustrated by the quote from Banu Hanım, a ‘gün’ participant, at the beginning of this chapter that media, especially social media, has been effective in shaping perceptions of local people in Turkey. The media coverage on Syrian refugees are mainly referring to increasing crime rates and criminal incidents like rape, sexual harassment and theft and murder¹, child beggars² and child brides³, and to Syrian refugees who “are not fighting for their country” (Özdil, 2017). There are some other reporting borderlining hate speeches⁴ published in the media as well. The report (2017), named Media Watch on Hate Speech: January-April 2017, monitored hate speech in national and local newspapers in Turkey. According to this report, 472 out of 1,910 columns and news reporting religious and ethnic groups in Turkey targeted Syrian refugees residing in Turkey. Such media reporting have raised the need to conduct research into the question of what are local peoples’ perceptions on Syrian refugees at the beginning of this study.

The research is based on the analysis of data from five “gün” groups in Mersin, which consist of occasions of females of different age and socio-economic backgrounds meeting on a fairly regular basis. This research has the potential to offer significant insights on perceptions about Syrian refugees in Turkey for the following reasons: firstly, since the conflict in Syria has been continuing for the last eight years and does not seem to come to an end soon, a successful integration of Syrian refugees into host communities is more important than ever. Secondly, unceasing

¹ See (Aydm, 2016).

² See (Syrian Child Refugees in Turkey, 2015).

³ See also (Avcı, 2014; Pitel, 2017).

⁴ See for an example of hate speech (Önder, 2017).

duration of the stay of the Syrian refugees in host countries has led to an evolving social unrest in local communities. Finding out the perceptions of local people about the Syrian refugees would provide not only crucial information about the roots of evolving social unrest in local communities but also social impacts of hosting Syrian refugees in Turkey. The literature on perceptions towards Syrian refugees in Turkey is limited focusing mostly on the perceptions reflected in media and NGOs' projects on learning local peoples' perceptions (Göker & Keskin, 2015; Doğanay & Keneş, 2016; MAZLUMDER, 2015; SGDD, 2011; Yaylacı & Karakuş, 2015). Through scrutinizing the perceptions of local people in Turkey, this study intends to contribute to the literature of forced migration and reactions of local communities.

Finally, conducting research on perceptions of 'gün' groups would reveal their function as "building blocks of society" which have hitherto received limited attention in the literature (Ekal, 2006; Khatip-Chahidi, 1995; Sonmez, Argan, Sabırlı, & Sevil, 2010; Wolbert, 1996). The study particularly focuses on 'gün' groups because through these dedicated social occasions, women create a social/public spaces other than household/private spaces for social interaction. In this social space, women function as key agents, rather than being subjects, of (re)formation and diffusion of collective knowledge (Barroso & Bruschini, 1991) which reciprocally (re)shape perceptions about members of out-groups in society. The gender dimension is crucial in this research. The main rationale behind focusing on women instead of men is that women are expected to be more sensitive and tolerant towards social issues related with refugees and minorities, and less selfish (Eckel & Grossman, 1997b) and 'egalitarian', meaning that women have 'more of interest in justice and equality' (Andreoni & Vesterlund, 2001), and more altruistic (Vanmey, 2004) than men. The gender dimension in terms of selflessness and sensitiveness for

topic of refugees and minorities triggered to focus on mainly women. Regarding the ‘gün’ notion, in the group setting regardless of size, women, coming from different socioeconomic backgrounds, interact with each other, share their experiences, and tell their stories; these interactions in turn create a certain power which can define social rights and privileges, trigger processes of change, and shape the social discourses and norms of our lives. Within the context of ‘gün’ setting, group members dialogically interact with one another, and this dialogical interaction, in the shape of everyday conversations, does not only draw social boundaries, like marginalization and social exclusion, between in-group members and out-groups members but also (re)constructs multifaceted and moving identities of the out-group members in everyday life. Discursive social power the ‘gün’ groups hold in everyday (re)production of marginalization in society and in identity (re)formation of the out-groups/Syrian refugees has not been recognized before in the literature. With all these reasons listed, the research aims to make a contribution not only to forced migration literature by focusing on perceptions on Syrian refugees in host communities but also to literature on ‘gün’ meetings by analyzing them as a case study.

The research on perceptions towards of local communities towards the refugees is essential since the conflict in Syria entered its eighth year, and it has not been possible to see the light at the end of the tunnel until now. Triggered by the Arab Spring in Tunisia and Egypt, nationwide protests against the government have turned into a long-lasting armed conflict in Syria (İçduygu, 2015). On 15 March 2016, UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi stated that “Syria is the biggest humanitarian and refugee crisis of our time, a continuing cause of suffering millions which should be garnering groundswell of support around the world” (UN,

2016). As of April 2018, 6.6 million Syrians internally displaced⁵ and over 5.6 million have been fled from Syria since 2011 (UNHCR, 2018). While Jordan and Lebanon are among the countries that have a high number of Syrian refugees⁶, Turkey has been the host country to the highest number of Syrian refugees which is over 3.5 million officially registered Syrian refugees as of June 2018 (see Appendix A for more information on the estimated number of displaced Syrians in 2017) (UNHCR, Syria Regional Refugee Response, 2018). As the conflict in Syria goes on and with no light at the end of the tunnel, the number of displaced person, and in line with this increase, growing concerns over the refugee crisis have been escalating not only for the international community but also for host countries over the years. Conducting a research related with perceptions on Syrian refugees and gaining knowledge on the degree of the refugees' integration have become more crucial.

In addition, the Syrian refugees' legal status has been problematic and heightened the growing social unrest in local communities in Turkey. The Turkish immigration policy was in a wave of transition when the Syrian crisis had emerged. From the early 1920s to the early 1980s, flux of immigration had consisted of "Turkish descent and culture"⁷, mostly from Balkan countries, as a result of the nation-building process of Turkey (İçduygu, Toktaş, & Soner, 2008). Even though Turkey is signatory to the 1951 U.N. Convention on the Status of Refugees ("Geneva Convention") and its 1967 Additional Protocol, Turkey retains a geographical limitation only for those who flee from Europe and pursues a two-tiered system for

⁵ For more information on the conflict displacement figures on Syria see also (IDMC, 2018).

⁶ While there are 986,942 Syrian refugees in Lebanon, 666,113 refugees are residing in Jordan (UNHCR, Syria Regional Refugee Response, 2018).

⁷ According to the 1934 Turkish Law of Settlement of 2510, persons of Turkish origin and person attached to Turkish culture were welcomed to settle in Turkey (The Turkish Law of Settlement, 1934).

asylum seekers (UNHCR, 2009). Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Turkish immigration and asylum policy had started to change with a mass influx of asylum seekers and refugees from Iran, Iraq and Bulgaria, Albania and Bosnia owing to political turmoil in the Middle East and Eastern Europe after the collapse of communist regimes (Kirişçi, 2003). 1994 Regulation on Asylum was introduced in order to make the refugee rights clear while it preserved the geographical limitation determined in the 1951 Geneva Convention.

As a result of attempts to meet the requirements for the EU accession, Turkey had slowly enlarged its asylum and refugee policy outside of Turkish descent and culture during the late 1990s and 2000s. With Turkey being a country of transition, and with the effect of increasing number of refugees and asylum seekers, especially from Syria, 1994 Asylum Regulation was replaced by the Law on Foreigners and International Protection which passed in April 2013 and started to be implemented in 2014. The Law aimed at building an efficient and effective immigration and asylum policy in regard to integration of immigration into Turkey, removal of “Turkish descent and culture” principle in immigration policy and improving the conditions of asylum seekers and irregular immigrants concurred with the UNHCR (İçduygu, 2015). The Syrian refugees are under the legal protection of this law. In addition, for the registered Syrian refugees, Turkey adopted a new regulation named Temporary Protection Regulation in 2014 as setting out certain regulations and procedures for settlement. Main principles of this regulation are open border policy for Syrian refugees, no forcible returns (non-refoulement) and registration of the refugees, and providing support for the refugee camps in Turkey (Özden, 2013). The open border policy of Turkey changed in 2015, and Turkish government is currently granting limited access for the seriously injured asylum seekers between the Syrian and

Turkish border (HRW, 2016). Since the beginning of the refugee flows towards Turkey, refugee camps equipped with clinics and schools were immediately built in Gaziantep, Kilis, Şanlıurfa and Hatay with first refugee flows on 29 April 2011 (see Appendix B for more information on Syrian refugee camps and provincial dispersion of Syrian refugees in these cities). As for the refugees outside of camps, around 94% of Syrian refugees are residing outside of the camps in Turkey with restricted but increasing access to basic needs and job opportunities (European Commission, 2018). Regarding the support provided outside of the refugee camps, the registered Syrian refugees have free access to all health-care services. For the basic and emergent health-care services, the Syrian refugees are able to be given medical treatment and medication without paying any additional contribution, and the cost of this health-care coverage will be paid by the AFAD⁸ (Erdoğan, 2015, pp. 93-94).

With granted temporary protection status, the Syrian refugees' official status has become "guests" rather than "refugees". Not granting refugee status to the Syrian refugees is legally problematic in the sense that their official status have become precarious and their legal rights are ambiguous. As Özden explained that "the Turkish state has not carried out a policy towards Syrians based on a discourse of rights, but rather one based on "generosity"" (2013, p. 5). Turkey's resilience on sociopolitical inclusion of the Syrian refugees into local communities is socially puzzling as well. Such a temporary status along with Turkey's resilience on inclusion have fed the growing negative public perception against the Syrian refugees in that the notion "guest" implies an interim position, and generous hospitality has raised the

⁸ The Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD) was formed with the Law No.5902 passed in 2009 and working under the Prime Ministry. It is the sole authority on the management of emergencies and disasters along with providing humanitarian assistance at the international level. It is one of the agents that enables for the Syrian refugees regular access to healthcare, education, housing and counseling (AFAD, About Us, n.d.)

concerns about allocation of resources and over limits of this hospitality in public in Turkey (Dinçer, et al., 2013).

1.1 Objectives

The subject to be examined in this thesis is the perceptions of the ‘gün’ participants⁹ towards the Syrian refugees in the case of Mersin. This thesis aims to find out implications about the integration and social inclusion of the Syrian refugees in host countries. There are a number of reasons of conducting a research on perceptions towards the Syrian refugees and choosing Mersin as a case study. First of all, the perceptions towards Syrian refugees in Turkey requires in-depth analysis because there has been an increasing impact of Syrian refugees on host countries as the conflict in the region becomes a long-term issue (Achilli, 2015; Dahi, 2014; Ostrand, 2015). Even though Turkish government’s attitude regarding the refugees was welcoming and warm at the beginning of the refugee inflows, along with the financial costs of improving the conditions of the refugees, Turkey is now facing the social, economic, and ethnic, political and demographic effects of the refugees in local communities (Cagaptay & Menekşe, 2014; İçduygu, 2015). With the increase in Syrian refugees’ population, social tension and hostility towards the refugees has been escalating, especially in the cities where there is a high Syrian population density (see Appendix B for population density) (MAZLUMDER, 2015). A report, named Effects of the Syrian Refugees on Turkey (Orhan & Gündoğar, 2015), is based on extensive field research consisting of interviews with Syrian refugees living in Turkey, academics, local people, NGOs, businessmen and local authorities. The report investigated social, economic and political, and safety problems related with

⁹ The notion ‘gün’ will be explained in detail under the Chapter III: Tiny Publics.

living with the Syrian refugees in Turkey. The report listed social effects of refugee inflows in Turkey as:

“Differences in cultures, languages and life styles make social integration more challenging. Polygamy among local communities is spreading as a result of an increase in divorce rates. Child labor is spreading. A suitable environment for ethnic and sectarian polarization can be observed as present. Uncontrolled urban development is on the rise. In some bordering cities, there has been disturbance due to changing demographics” (Orhan & Gündoğar, 2015, p. 7).

As a result of the social impacts listed above along with increasing political and economic impacts, the social tension has been growing in the cities where there are high numbers of Syrian refugees residing. Learning local peoples’ perceptions about the refugees would provide crucial implications about the roots of the growing hostility and social unrest.

Second of all, as the adjustment processes of the Syrian refugees continues to be problematic in host cities, the problems related with integration have also been growing over the years. Stein (1981) explained the pattern of adjustment of the refugees over the years in four stages that within the first few months after the refugees’ arrival, there would be a confrontation of losses, i.e. social status, income, culture, identity, customs and traditions, by the refugees; in the second stage, within one to two years, the refugees would attempt to recover their losses and adjust to the new identity and new culture present within host communities. In the third state, after four or five years of their arrival, a considerable part of adjustment in terms of learning the local culture and language would be achieved. This third stage is crucial since if the adjustment process fails, the refugee may give up on the attempts for adjustment. And in the last stage, the refugees would achieve a definite stability and an integration into local communities (Stein, 1981, p. 326). Regarding the social

context in terms of integration, even though majority of the Syrian refugees in Turkey have been living outside of the camps, and many of them have almost completed the third stage, social inclusion, the literature indicates that adjustment and integration into local culture have not been achieved yet (Tunç, 2015). Moreover, since the conflict and violence in Syria do not seem to come to an end soon, it is verisimilar that the duration of the many Syrian refugees' stay will be long-term in order to refrain from violent attacks in Syria. Considering the high possibility of long-term stay and lack of integration between the Syrian refugees and local communities, local peoples' perception towards the Syrian refugees in Turkey deserves attention in the social science. Understanding the reasons behind the lack of integration is only possible through scrutinizing local communities' perception at this stage.

Thirdly, Mersin is selected as a case study in this thesis because it is among the top ten cities hosting Syrian refugees in Turkey (see Appendix C for the dispersion of Syrian refugees under the Temporary Protection Status among the first ten cities). Mersin has underwent domestic inflow of immigrants in the 1990s with the effect of Gulf War, and social and political circumstances in the Eastern Anatolian and South-Eastern Anatolian parts of Turkey (Güneş, 2013). According to the data provided by the Turkish Statistical Institute in 1997, Mersin was ranked as the fourth city receiving internal immigrants in Turkey (Sağlam, 2006). The city has also attracted a considerable number of Syrian refugees with its low cost of living and trade opportunities for high-income business groups like merchants and investors with its harbor and its easy access to the Mediterranean Sea (Orhan & Gündoğar, 2015). As of June 2018, the total number of Syrian refugees residing in Mersin is 208.334 which consists of 11.6% percent of the total population in the city (see

Appendix D for more information on the dispersion of Syrian refugees under the Temporary Protection Status by cities in Turkey). Even though Syrian refugees have dispersed all over Mersin, even in some small villages that are close to city-center, the most populated districts with Syrian refugees are Mezitli, Pozcu and Akdeniz in Mersin. While Mezitli and Pozcu are largely populated with middle and high-income households along with high-income Syrian refugees, Akdeniz, on the other hand, is one of the districts that host low-income Syrian refugees. The ‘gün’ groups, the group of kinswomen, the group of hemşehriler, the group of parents are largely living in Mezitli and Pozcu districts, while the participants of the group of friends and acquaintances are mainly from Akdeniz district in Mersin. The location of the groups show that the ‘gün’ participants had been encountering with Syrian refugees in their everyday lives.

In short, this study aims to identify the perceptions of local people about the Syrian refugees in the case of Mersin, and to find out certain implications about the roots of social unrest and lack of integration in host communities. By focusing on discourses of local people, which are ‘gün’ groups in our case, the study would not only reveal local peoples’ perceptions but also the question of where these perceptions are stemming from.

1.2 The Literature Review

This section reviews the studies on identity formation through discourses and also the literature on Syrian refugees in Turkey. The section will indicate that while the existing literature on identity formation and discourse analysis have been growing, they largely overlook the identity formation of the refugees in host

countries. In regard to literature on Turkey, there is a gap in the literature on identity formation of Syrian refugees residing in Turkey. The section concludes by revealing the necessity of conducting research on scrutinizing identity formation of the Syrian refugees in Turkey.

Upon looking at the identity formation through discourses, the studies on social sciences have been focusing on the relationships between politics, ‘people’ and media. The literature on this relationship reveals that there is not any exact answer for who has impact on who and to what extent these impacts are managed but the discourse analysis is one school of social sciences that attempts to analyze these interchangeable relationships among media, ‘people’ and politics (Wodak, 2002). The literature on discourse analysis conceptually focuses on the relationship between the Self and the Other in terms of power and inequality in language in regard to identity formation. Zellig Harris (1952) was the first scholar that used the term *discourse analysis* in the literature. What Harris aimed at discourse analysis is beyond looking at sentences, and it is about finding out the underling equivalences within a text. While Harris related discourse analysis only with written texts, the literature developed into what a discourse is about and whether language is beyond just analyzing sentences. Michael Stubbs’s work on discourse analysis (1983) provided the development of this school by including verbal discourses along with written texts under the discourse analysis but the author also made a distinction between written texts and spoken texts, i.e. textual record of speech or conversion, in regard to their differences in terms of social interaction (Stubbs, 1996; Stubbs, 2001a). While in the literature, spoken texts are perceived as incomplete and ambiguous in analyzing discourses (Garfinkel, 1972), written texts are also taken as

misleading in understanding the discourses (what the parties talked about) (Widdowson, 2004, p. 11).

As the discourse analysis literature develops, so are the notions of political discourse (Martin Rojo & Van Dijk, 1997; Van Dijk, *Political Discourse and Racism: Describing Others in Western Parliaments*, 1997; Van Dijk, *What is Political Discourse Analysis*, 1997), media discourse (Bell & Garrett, 1998; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Helleiner & Szuchewycz, 1997; Schmidtke, 2008; Van Dijk, 1985; Van Dijk, 2002), racist discourse (Essed, 1997), and populist discourse (Hawkins, 2009). Discourse is also formed through the conceptual discussions on ethnicity and racism (Dei, 1997), culture, ideology (Van Dijk, 2005; Van Dijk, 2006), and marketing (Hoechsmann, 1997), gender (Rimstead, 1997) and identity (Hajdukowski-Ahmed, 2008; Neumann, 1999; Wodak, Rudolf, Reisigl, & Liebhart, 1999).

In terms of the relationship between identity and discourse, Michel Foucault has a different sense of discourse as he regarded discourse both verbally and textually as 'discursive practices' where knowledge is formed (Foucault, 1972). Foucault emphasized discursive practices in relations to power, knowledge and subjectivity in that as the discourse which is inserted as an integral part of knowledge and culture (Hall, 1992) generate power, the Self becomes the subject of formation and reformation through discursive power (Foucault, 1977; Foucault, 1980; Foucault, 1983). Teun A. Van Dijk further explored the relationship between identity formation and discourse by focusing on the social power relations between the domain of dominance over immigrants, refugees or minorities (Van Dijk, 1991; Van Dijk, 1993; Van Dijk, 2003). What divides Van Dijk's from Foucault is that while

Foucault focused on the identity formation of the Self, Van Dijk underlined how the Self shapes the identity of the Other.

There has also been a growing literature on Syrian refugees in Turkey in diversified topics like education (Bircan & Sanata, 2015; Yavuz & Mızrak, 2016), economic impact of the refugees (Akgündüz, van den Berg, & Hassink, 2015; Bahcekapili & Cetin, 2015; Ceritoglu, Yunculer, Torun, & Tumen, 2017; Tumen, 2016) and outcomes for health sector in Turkey (Büyüktiryaki, Canpolat, Dizdar, Okur, & Şimşek, 2015; Yurtseven, Özcan, & Saz, 2015). Even though field research conducting interviews with Syrian refugees and local people living in refugee populated cities has been increasing in the literature (Alpak, et al., 2015; Baban, Ilcan, & Rygiel, 2017; Güçer, Karaca, & Dinçer, 2013; Özden, 2013), the literature is still limited, especially in terms of the issues related with integration and social inclusion of the refugees into host cities. In terms of the perceptions towards Syrian refugees in Turkey, the literature consists of newspaper coverage of Syrian refugees (Doğanay & Keneş, 2016; Yaylacı & Karakuş, 2015), and research on how identities of the Syrian refugees are formed in Turkey has been limited with aid agencies' and NGOs' reports in the literature. This thesis contributes to the literature of forced migration by scrutinizing the perceptions of the 'gün' members towards the Syrian refugees and giving implications about how identities of the Syrian refugees are formed in the case of Mersin.

1.3 Methodology

The primary sources used in this study are the participant observations gathered in five different 'gün' groups. The collected data consists of forty-five

participants, in total, who are local women residing in Mersin. Data collection for this study began at the beginning of November 2017 and continued through the end of December 2017. The researcher's positionality in this research was being a female and a local person (Mersin). Being a female enabled the researcher to participate in 'gün' occasions. Even though there are rare 'gün' occasions that include males as well, all of the 'gün' occasions that were attended consisted of only females, so being a female provided to conduct a research on these 'gün' groups. Being a local person enabled the researcher to found a rather trustable relations with the participants since kinship (hemşehrilik¹⁰) is one of the significant networks in Turkey. The affiliations the researcher made through friends and acquaintances living in Mersin enabled to be invited into aforementioned 'gün' meetings. Since the 'gün' occasions are limited with members only, without such local affiliations, it would not be possible to make a participatory research on the 'gün' groups. Consequently, being a local person enabled to access to affiliations like acquaintances and friends living in Mersin and made it easier to create a snowball sampling in the field for this study as participation is restricted with the 'gün' members.

Data collection was in the form of participant observation. Verbal consent for inclusion of their comments verbatim in this study was taken from all the participants at the beginning of all the gatherings, and all the participant observations have been anonymized. The topic of Syrian refugees was introduced by the researcher at the beginning of the participant observation. After asking their opinion about Syrian refugees, the conversations rather went spontaneously and were directed by the participants. In addition to that, for the sake of preserving the participants' privacy,

¹⁰For more information see (Aktaş, Aka, & Demir, 2006).

all the participants' names, mentioned under Chapter IV, are supplemented by pseudo-names which are provided in Appendix E.

A certain degree of the conversations have been transcribed more or less accurately. Yet, because the context of this research was in a group setting and the participants were talking on their natural setting as the 'gün' setting, there were cases that needed to be analyzed more carefully. Conducting a participatory observation provided the researcher to deconstruct some nonverbal aspects like body language, eye contact, intonations, and facial expressions which is one of the strengths of this research. Since the participant observations were in Turkish, there was a necessity of translating transcripts from Turkish into English. There were some Turkish idioms that were hard to translate. Hence, the translated examples provided in Chapter IV will be solely correspondences to the original transcript.

Another limitation of the methodology concerns the data collection stage. Even though these participant observations had performed in an undirected and rather spontaneous way, they are not as spontaneous as everyday conversations. During the participant observations, people may give the desired answers to question asked (Van Dijk, 1984). That is the case especially when there are questions involved about refugees and minority groups in society. The aim of observing people in the context of 'gün' is to provide the participants as much a natural environment as possible to socially interact and communicate with one another. We will assume that their usual group interaction would provide a window of spontaneous conversations as close to as everyday conversations. Yet, at the same time, since ethically it is not possible to record them without their permission and without directing our conversions on refugees, the topic of Syrian refugees was introduced at the beginning of all gatherings.

The study uses critical discourse analysis for the analysis of the data collected. The critical discourse analysis acknowledges ‘a direct link between discourse and society (or culture)’ (Van Dijk, 2014, p. 121). Wodak and Meyer (2009) listed several dimensions that are in common in critical discourse analysis as:

“An interest in the properties of ‘*naturally occurring*’ language use by real language users (instead of a study of abstract language systems and invented examples); a focus on *larger units than isolated words and sentences* and, hence, new basic units of analysis: texts, discourses, conversations, speech acts, or communicative events; the extension of linguistics *beyond sentence grammar* towards a study of action interaction.” (p. 2, original emphasis).

In addition to Wodak and Meyer’s dimensions, Van Dijk (2003) also defined the dimensions of critical discourse analysis by focusing on the discourse, power and access in that power is created through social interactions of groups, not individuals. Van Dijk mainly focused on the social power in relationship with discourse and power which was described that:

“Social power is defined in terms of the control exercised by one group or organization (or its ‘members’) over the actions and/or the minds of (the members of) another group, thus limiting the freedom of action of the others, or influencing their knowledge, attitudes or ideologies” (p. 84).

In line with these dimensions, this study attempts to capture ‘naturally occurring’ conversations in everyday life by the ‘gün’ participants as local people. Instead of analyzing word to word or sentence to sentence, discourses of the ‘gün’ members on Syrian refugees occurred in the context of ‘gün’ will be analyzed under the Chapter IV. The properties of ‘gün’ context (gün setting, participants and circumstances which will be provided in Chapter III) identify the authority of the discourse in relationship between between the Self/’gün’ participants and the Other/Syrian refugees. The critical discourse analysis, in this study, provides the discursive power dimensions of this relationship between the Self and the Other.

In the next chapter, theoretical approach of this study which is based on identity formation in everyday life will be the main focus. By touching upon the discourses of the ‘gün’ members, firstly, this study attempt to explain Bakhtin’s dialogical approach in identity formation. Secondly, the nature of the prejudice will be explained, and finally, the theoretical base of externalization and othering with subheadings of discursive exclusion and stereotyping will be represented.



CHAPTER II: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

People flee from flood, persecution, war, violence and poverty. Masses of people have been displaced and have become under the risk of poverty, homelessness, of living in a country with a different language and a different culture. In encounter with a new culture and language, the question of identity, especially for the ones who resettled in a host country, is particularly salient and challenging not only for uprooted people but also for the local communities of the host countries. Every new place and circumstance has an impact on refugees' identities. Multidimensional challenges stemming from living in new and different location and situation peculiarly (re)form refugees' identities, agency, living conditions and sense of self (Hajdukowski-Ahmed, 2008).

This chapter focuses on theoretical approaches that explains the link between language and power and authority, and the importance of context and discourse. Notably, it aims to integrate Bakhtin's dialogical approach to language, and van Dijk's theory on context and discourse to the question of how identities are (re)shaped in everyday life. Along with the dialogical approach, the chapter expands upon the nature of prejudice and exclusion and othering through discursive exclusion and stereotyping. While Chapter IV will illustrate the stereotyping, biased perceptions, hearsays, 'us' vs. 'them', scapegoating and discrimination in the 'gün' members' discourses on Syrian refugees in Mersin, this chapter will particularly

show how these discourses are crucial in (re)forming Syrian refugees' identities, their agencies and their position of self in everyday life.

The crux of this chapter is that existing theoretical and conceptual approaches largely underlines the significance of political discourses¹¹ like parliamentary discourses¹², the rhetoric of institutional policies¹³, discourses in the press¹⁴ in their relations with exclusion, othering and racism. While all these studies are equally important in understanding the politics of identity and exclusion, how identities of refugees are (re)formed through perceptions of native population in everyday life is needed to be highlighted since identity shaping is a continuous *durée* that contains not only political, institutional and the media discourses but also everyday discourses. In our case, the subjects of identity formation are local women who are living with the refugees. These women holds a crucial social power in shaping the refugees' identities through their discourses even if they are not aware of this power of impact.

Within the context of the 'gün' meetings, through interacting with each other, telling their stories and hearsays and sharing their experiences, these local women create social power which define social rights and privileges, trigger processes of change, and shape the social discourses and norms in our lives. As these tiny publics function as building blocks of society, the 'gün' groups are crucial players in forming formal and informal hierarchies, and shaping opinions about refugees in society even though they are tiny. So this chapter aims to show that the verbal discourse used by

¹¹ See (Van Dijk, *Political Discourse and Racism: Describing Others in Western Parliaments*, 1997).

¹² See also (Rojo & Van Dijk, 1997).

¹³For further information see (Carbo, 1997).

¹⁴ See also (Szuchewycz, 1997).

the ‘gün’ members in order to explain their perceptions about Syrian refugees living in Mersin is crucial. Through the language they use, certain words they choose to use and stories and hearsays they tell in everyday life, these women are shaping the refugees’ identities in society.

In the following part, the theoretical approaches of Bakhtin’s dialogical approach and van Dijk’s explanation on the relationship between context and discourse will be discussed in detail. Then, conceptual approaches of the nature of prejudice and exclusion and othering will be explained.

2.1 Bakhtin’s Dialogical Approach

Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin is one of the important Russian intellectuals of the twentieth century. The main locus in his works is language in that Bakhtin mainly focuses on the concept of language in novels. Even though he is well-known with his works on literature, mainly novels, and linguistics, he also made contributions to philosophy, cultural theory and what Bakhtin called ‘philosophical anthropology’ (Dentith, 2005). The main emphases in Bakhtinian thought are language, dialogues and utterances in that utterances between participants of a dialogue are important regardless of whether they were spoken or written. Although Bakhtin had never used the term “dialogism”, his thinking is conceptualized as dialogism, which becomes a theoretical approach, in the literature. In Bakhtinian terms, language is talking to somebody or talking to one’s own inner self (Holquist, 1981). According to Bakhtin, language is not a static, unchanging and passive concept; on the contrary, it is an evolving, changing and developing notion as long as it is alive. As Bakhtin explained language that:

“What we have in mind here is not an abstract linguistic minimum of a common language, in the sense of a system of elementary forms (linguistic symbols) guaranteeing a *minimum* level of comprehension in practical communication. We are taking language not a system of abstract grammatical categories, but rather language conceived as ideologically saturated, language as a world view, even as a concrete opinion, insuring a *maximum* of mutual understanding in all spheres of ideological life. Thus a unitary language gives expression to forces working toward concrete verbal and ideological unification and centralization, which develop in vital connection with the processes of sociopolitical and cultural centralization” (1981, s. 271, original emphasis).

The concept of language is evolving in the sense that every discourse hides various intentions and capabilities, and multiplicity of meanings that even the spoke person may not be aware about. Bakhtin approaches language not in linguistic terms but rather as a social phenomenon in that form and content in a verbal discourse contain multiple social voices along with a wide range of interrelationships and links between utterances (Bakhtin, 1981). The language operates in our everyday life and becomes meaningful once it starts to be used for interaction with one another. According to the dialogical approach, every utterance, which can be literary or can be a thought and an everyday conversation directing to another person, is social and has an expression of meaning in considerations of power and authority (Good, 2002).

Bakhtin’s thought contributes to our understanding of identity that he puts so much emphasis on dialogue because the Self is dialogic and can never be self-sufficient in construction of identity (Holquist, 2002). The other is necessary for identity construction in that through language and interacting with one another, identity is shaped (Taylor, 1994). Dialogism provides us a space where there is a discursive relationship between the Self and the Other shaped by factors like religion, race, location, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and culture which are effective in power interrelations. Identity construction is constantly shaping and moving by a

dialogic encounter with another discourse (Hajdukowski-Ahmed, 2008). A dialogic approach enables us to understand that these multifaceted and moving identity construction is crucial in grasping a refugee's encounter with multicultural contexts, a different language, and a new location. Being in flight or being in resettlement, different circumstances, different living conditions, living with a different culture, all these changes lead to formation of different and unsettling power relationships for the refugees.

Even though Bakhtin's dialogical approach recognizes the gravity of language and the dialogical interaction in understanding power relationships, dialogism is not solely enough to fathom identity formation in the context of everyday life. Teun A. van Dijk (Van Dijk, 2009) introduces a new theory of context by explaining indirect relationship between society and discourse. He presents the link between language and society which is a contribution to Bakhtin's dialogic approach. The main focus in his theory is showing how social contexts influence the link between text and talk. Context has been a fundamental topic in the branches of social sciences such as social psychology, linguistics, discourse analysis and cultural studies. While social scientists have paid attention to texts and talks, Van Dijk (2009) underlined that contexts of language use that have been largely ignored or undermined in social sciences.

The notion of context and its relation with language are varied in the study of social sciences. On the one hand, the context may be attributed as "verbal context" and interchangeably as used "co-text" by focusing on preceding sentences or turns within a conversation. The discourse or conversation are not taken as the main unit of analysis in such studies (Van Dijk, 2009). On the other hand, the term may refer to "social conditions" of a discourse or a certain condition that the text or talk is taking

place by examining whens, wheres, hows and whats (Holstein & Gubrium, 2007). Van Dijk (2009) takes the latter approach and defined the term “context” as a selection of “the relevant environment of language use” (p. 3) in communicative occasions. While there is a link between discourse and context, according to Van Dijk, contexts do not directly affect the way the discourses are produced. Representation of the context in discourse production is subjective in that each participants of a social occasion concludes different versions of the occasion even though they attend the same occasion.

Van Dijk’s emphasis on the relationship between context and language use is a main concern for this thesis since the discourses of the ‘gün’ members had taken place in a special context, the ‘gün’ occasions. As it will be precisely explained in Chapter III: Small Groups as ‘Tiny Publics’ that small groups create an action of arena where socialization takes place and they operates as “building blocks of society”. Within the group setting, by socially interacting with one another, by sharing their experiences, personal stories and hearsays, and by building dialogs, small groups can shape culture, social norms and identity.

The relevant environment of ‘gün’ context is described as a social occasion that a group of women informally gathers to spend time in the company of each other. They hold regular afternoon meetings in a rotating basis, and interact with one another primarily face-to-face. These regular meetings and face-to-face interactions are the relevant properties of the ‘gün’ occasions. While these meetings are social occasions that provide a social space to communicate and to interact, social properties of the ‘gün’ as meeting in a rotating basis, contributing a certain sum of money and interacting face-to-face are not directly associated with “the cognitive processes of discourse production and understanding” (Van Dijk, 2009, p. 4) . In that

sense, the context of the ‘gün’ occasions is subjective. There are a variety of roads in approaching the notion of ‘gün’. While it has been contextualized as one of the rotating savings and credit associations¹⁵, in this thesis, these meetings were subjectively contextualized as a social space where everyday reproduction of marginalization and identity formation take place. In addition to this context, van Dijk (2009) emphasized that categories such as age, kinship, status, gender, intimacy, ethnicity or gender are relevant properties in discourse production. In line with this relevance, contexts of the ‘gün’ groups in terms of age range, intimacy, and in one case, ethnicity will also be provided for each group under Chapter IV.

Sure enough, it is important in which context we talk as well as what we talk about so both the discourse and context are crucial. The ‘gün’ groups functions as ‘tiny publics’ that create a space of action where social interaction operates. By sharing daily news, hearsays, personal stories and issues in their lives and by discussing social, financial and political issues that they encounter in their daily lives, the ‘gün’ members form a communicative situation where they found a discursive relationship. Within the social and situational context of ‘gün’, the members are in a dialogic interaction where their talk on Syrian refugees lead to identity formation even if they are not aware of the fact that they, as the Self, have a social and situational power over the Other, the refugees.

Consequently, the ‘gün’ occasions indicate a case of everyday reproduction of marginalization of Syrian refugees in society. How the members think and talk about the refugees every day and “how they persuasively communicate their ethnic attitudes to other members of their own group” (Van Dijk, 1987, p. 7) are crucial in understanding this reproduction in everyday life. It is also equally important a fact

¹⁵ See (Khatip-Chahidi, 1995).

that “everyday experience is a continuous *durée*” (Van Dijk, 2009, p. 9), starting from waking up to falling asleep. In the context of group setting, we only captured the moment the ‘gün’ members interact with each other in two to three hours span. To be able to grasp the identity formation in everyday life and everyday reproduction of marginalization, we focused not only on members’ personal opinions but also on their issues, stories and hearsays in our discourse analysis.

In the following part, the main focus will be the nature of prejudice. By looking at the roots of prejudgment in attitudes and beliefs, we will be able to understand deeply how the ‘gün’ members’ prejudiced perceptions shape the Syrian refugees’ identities in everyday life.

2.2 The Nature of Prejudice

Prejudice, biased perceptions and discrimination are rapidly spreading issues all around the world. With increasing international migration, these issues have been challenging the tolerance and interaction between local people and immigrants. When a new group, like a refugee group or an ethnic minority group, starts to live with the majority group, the majority group talks about the new group. Through mass media, rhetoric of institutional policies, political discourses and textbooks and everyday talk, prejudiced beliefs and attitudes are formed and diffused (Van Dijk, 1984). Everyday talks of small groups yield ‘anchorage’ points for shaping and reproduction of values, beliefs, attitudes and habits and opinions. Interacting with one another, individuals continuously beget behavior patterns and shared ideas (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1964). These networks of interpersonal relationships are one of the

anchorage point of identity formation of refugees through prejudiced attitudes and beliefs.

Gordon W. Allport, (1954) whose book *The Nature of Prejudice* is accepted as one of the most foundational works in social psychology (Dovidio, Glick, & Rudman, 2005), defined prejudice with a cognitive approach as:

“An aversive or hostile attitude toward a person who belongs to a group, simply because he belongs to that group, and is therefore presumed to have the objectionable qualities ascribed to the group.” (p. 7)

Even though it is implicitly stated by Allport (1954), this hostile attitude called prejudice usually reveals itself in interacting with members of excluded and out-groups like minorities and refugees. The prejudice may rise out of personal characteristics or conditional factors. The hostile attitude can be directed towards a member of excluded group or whole group. Van Dijk (1984) paid attention to another side of prejudice that:

“It is not merely a characteristic of individual beliefs or emotions about social groups, but a shared form of social representation in group members, acquired during processes of socialisation and transformed and enacted in social communication and interaction. Such ethnic attitudes have social functions, e.g. to protect the interests of the ingroup. Their cognitive structures and the strategies of their use reflect these social functions” (p. 13).

Stereotypes as a cognitive and social notion consist of wrong beliefs or biased perceptions about a member of an out-group or towards whole group or nation. According to Allport (1954), there is a relationship between categorization and prejudice in that the nature of prejudice has two components as an attitude that is in favor or disfavor of the excluded group; and it must include over-generalized beliefs, such as being good, bad, filthy or lazy. Without those beliefs, the attitude could not

be sustained for a long time. The attitude may reveal itself as overtly as in discourses or as covertly as a gesture or an intonation.

In the case of overtly prejudices, people may act out their prejudice as anti-locution, avoidance, discrimination, physical attack and extermination (Allport, 1954). Anti-locution is a form of negative attitude towards person or group by expressing their anathema freely and making negative remarks without directly talking at the prejudiced person, community or group. It may in the form of hate speech or a joke about ethnicity or gender. Avoidance, in other words social exclusion, includes avoiding a member or whole members of the outsider groups; and even though it does not aim at harming on the prejudiced people, it can indirectly lead to social exclusion of these groups. The third stage is discrimination that is excluding the bearer of prejudice from services, social and political rights, and opportunities of taking a job or a scholarship, and some other privileges. Segregation and apartheid are two forms of discrimination. In physical attack, prejudiced attitude turns into a violent act against the prejudiced people in the form of ejecting from a neighborhood, vandalizing or destroying the properties of excluded groups. Extermination covers majorly or entirely destruction of the excluded groups through lynching, ethnic cleansing and pogroms as in the Rwandan Genocide and Srebrenica massacre (Allport, 1954, pp. 14-15).

Anti-locution can reveal itself in the form of discursive exclusion—in other words verbal rejection—stereotyping and everyday stories in exclusion and othering of outsiders. Discursive exclusion of an outsider group is crucial in bonding and strengthening solidarity among the in-group members as in the case of the ‘gün’ members. Allport (1954) defined an in-group as “members of an in-group all use the term *we* with the same essential significance” (p. 31, original emphasis). The division

between the in-group and the out-group discursively manifest itself in the terms “we” and “they”. In addition to discursive exclusion, stereotyping enables the dominant groups to categorize and in self-fulfilling prophecies for the outsider groups. Everyday stories and hearsays are also a significant part of identity shaping enabling people to create stereotypes, categories and prejudices on the outsiders. In the following part, I will explain exclusion and othering of outsider groups by focusing on discursive exclusion and stereotyping.

2.3 Exclusion and Othering

The terms *Self* and *Other* have their roots back in ancient times even though they have recently been used by the social scientists. There is a distinction between the “external Other” and the “internal Other”. While the “external Other” refers to the people that the Self recognizes differently, the “internal Other” implies the subconscious, a stage of the Self (Riggins, 1997). In this part, the term other is referring to the external Other. In multicultural societies, the relationship between the Self and the Other becomes inevitable. Arnold Krupat (cited in Caws, 1994, p. 374) claimed that in multicultural societies the order is instructed as where there is a dominant culture that has defined an “Other” and “different” of minor and inferior culture so that the dominant culture can declare its superiority and majority over the minority culture. To be able to exist and fulfill itself, the Self requires the Other (Langer, 1981).

In his study of the Conquest of America: The Question of the Other, Todorov introduced three facets of the link between the Other and Self: knowledge, the degree to which customs, traditions and history is known by the Self about the Other; social

distance between the Self and the Other; and value judgments, good or bad, that the Self preserves towards the Other (cited in Riggins, 1997, p. 5). Negative value judgments, lack of knowledge and high social distance usually lead to the lack of interaction between the Self, which is the dominant culture in our case, and the Other, the minority groups.

“I” and “you”, “we” and “they”, “us” and “them” are the most used pronouns in drawing a boundary between the Self and the Other. The term “we” may imply a majority group or whole population, while the bearers of exclusion are minority groups or refugees in society. The boundary between “we” and “they” marks the exclusion of the Other. Throughout the dialogical experience and in the course of life, the Other encounters with the Self which becomes agency of identity shaping of the Other. The Other as the subject is continually created and recreated as “they” and “them” by the Self (Bhabha, 1994; Said, 1978; Spivak, 1999). The process of drawing the boundary between “we” and “they” is called as othering.

In his study of identity formation, othering and agency, Jensen (2011) describes othering as “discursive processes by which powerful groups, who may or may not make up a numerical majority, define subordinate groups into existence in a reductionist way which ascribe problematic and/or inferior characteristics to these subordinate groups” (Jensen, 2011, p. 65). The subordination of the Other becomes legitimate and rightful through these discursive exchanges. The identity of subordinate groups are formed and reformed in the gaze of the powerful groups. In terms of the relationship between the concept of othering and identity shaping, there are two overarching points as: firstly, the formation of identity is related with the holders of power in which the ones who have more power are the identity shaper; and secondly, the identity formation lies in the discursive relations between the Self

and the Other (Jensen, 2011). The concept of othering in this part is based on this discursive understanding of the Self and the Other, and the significance of power holders. In the following part, I will throw light on the discursive exclusion of subordinated groups in relation with agency and identity.

2.3.1 Discursive Exclusion

Central to the concept of discursive exclusion is the recognition of agency in shaping identity in everyday life (Essed, 1991). Discursive exclusion can be achieved by pointing out the differences of age, race, religion, culture and gender between the Self and the Other. The powerful groups in society, which may be in numbers or in power of impact, are the agents in identity formation of the subordinated groups who are the subjects in the process. On the one hand, the Other may be subordinated as perceived differently as exotic and fascination of the Other (Said, 1978), on the other hand, differentiation and exclusion can be carried out by perceiving the Other as passive and weak (Spivak, 1985). In this perception which also reflects the perception of the 'gün' members, the agents are the centre, superior and has the upper hand defining the Other while the bearers of othering are constructed and reconstructed as inferior. As Bakhtin (1981) made an emphasis that language plays a crucial role in the discursive processes of identity formation. Through discursive processes, the subordinated groups' identities are not only shaped but also symbolically differentiated in everyday life.

The discursive experience of the Other consists of the delimitations on what the Other does and what We do not do, who all of Them are and who We are not, and what the Other should do and what We should not do (Pred, 2000). The division

between “we” and “they” is constructed through emphasis on cultural differences as “we”, civilized and cultivated culture, and “they”, uncivilized and primitive culture (Baumann, 2006). Another emphasis is on how “they” are morally inferior, and how “we” are superior and benevolent. Being majority in terms of the numbers in population or in terms of holding certain political, social or economic power provide another ground for drawing a boundary in that there is also a mark by the “we” as outnumbered, citizens of the country and the rule maker while “they” as minority, illegitimate and obedient of the rules in society. These identity markers are the main instruments of drawing the discursive boundaries between “we” and “they” and of shaping the Other’s identity.

2.3.2 Stereotyping

In addition to discursive exclusion, another component of exclusion and othering is stereotyping of the Other, i.e. out-groups. Stereotypes are the traits that comes one’s mind instantaneously upon thinking about the groups or nations (Stangor, 2016). Stereotypical characteristics of the Other, which may be accurate depictions of the Other or not, are constructed by the superior groups. Stereotypes are iterative and contradictory in that an image of the Other, like Muslims and Jews in Europe, in the eyes of the Self is both unstable and inconsistent (Riggins, 1997). Stereotyping the Other is another way in drawing exclusive boundaries between the Self and the Other. It makes it easier to differentiate and dehumanize the Other, and to justify social exclusion in everyday life.

Lippmann (1922) was one of the earliest scholars who paid attention to stereotypes on shaping public opinion in that culturally formed stereotypes provide

mental ‘pictures’ about other people in our mind, and in a way they provide a roadmap on how to perceive others’ actions. While he provided the basis for stereotypical beliefs, new paradigms in cognitive analysis approach have emerged over the years by putting emphasis on group notion in stereotyping (Fiske, 2000; Pettigrew, 1958), and the nature of prejudice and stereotypes (Allport, 1954). On the one hand, there are several approaches among social scientists that affiliate prejudice and stereotypes with authoritarian personality and authoritarian regimes (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950); on the other hand, there are scholars who underlines the relationship between scapegoating and stereotypes which ‘functions socially as a unifying and cohesive means for phatic communion’ (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, p. 20), and strengthening the bond among group members and marking the out-groups (Quasthoff, 1978; Quasthoff, 1989; Van Dijk, 1984).

One of the problematic side of the stereotyping is that although some stereotypes are based on one’s own observation or social interaction, most of the stereotypes are formed by hearsays, personal stories and the media¹⁶. ‘People ‘imagine situations’, and form group schemata’ (Van Dijk, 1984, p. 33) and deal with the excluded groups. Discursive interaction through hearsays, gossips and stories lead to formation and reformation of stereotypes. Since ‘ideas, engulfed by an overpowering emotion, are more likely to conform to the emotion than to objective evidence’ (Allport, 1954, p. 22), prejudiced feelings usually coincide with these hearsays and stories in everyday life. These ‘imagined’ stereotypes provide the prejudiced person a rationalization of negative attitudes, prejudices and discrimination towards the out-groups.

¹⁶ For more information on the role of the media see (Helleiner & Szuchewycz, 1997; Menz, 1989; Van Dijk, *Mediating Racism: The Role of the Media in the Reproduction of Racism*, 1989).

Another problematic side of stereotyping is making generalizations about the whole group or nation. What Lippmann (1922) associated stereotypes with a picture in our head is categorization of other people. *Over-categorization*, or in other words over-generalization, is one of the inevitable process of the nature of stereotyping. However, not all prejudiced perceptions are over-categorization. Although there is not a causal relationship between over-categorization and stereotyping, it fulfills a basis for expectations of excluded groups (Stephan, Ybarra, Martinez, & Tur-Kaspa, 1998). Allport (1954) regarded categorization and prejudice as a normal process of interaction between in-groups and out-groups, and defined five important characteristics of over-categorization and simplification as:

“(1) It forms large classes and clusters for guiding our daily adjustments. (2) Categorization assimilates as much as it can to the cluster. (3) The category enables us quickly to identify a related object. (4) The category saturates all that it contains with the same ideational and emotional flavor. (5) Categories may be more or less rational” (pp. 20-22).

Over-generalizations are problematic because the traits about out-groups are attributed to the whole nation or whole group, and they usually are negative, inconsistent and biased and unfair. In an encounter with the Other, the Self utilizes from harboring categories and generalizations. Even if stereotypical categories contradict with evidence, people tend to rely on their prejudiced perceptions because of its psychological cost (Evans & Kelley, 1991). Since “people more quickly recognize stereotypic terms preceded by other stereotypic labels and terms, primed both unconsciously and consciously” (Fiske, 2000, p. 307), it is so hard to change stereotypical images in one’s mind.

To sum up, this chapter explained the relations between language, power and authority, and the significance of context and discourse in identity formation. The

dialogical approach provides an understanding of multifaceted and moving identity construction and an acknowledgement of the cruciality of power relations between the Self and the Other in this discursive identity construction. By integrating Bakhtin's dialogical approach to language and Van Dijk's theory on discourse and context, the theoretical base of how identities are (re)formed in everyday life was highlighted. It was underlined that the identities of the Other are shaped by the Self in the context and discourses of everyday life. Through the dialogical approach, it was underlined the nature of prejudice, social exclusion and othering, and stereotyping through discourses which are based on dialogical interaction of the Self with one another and an everyday reproduction of marginalization and identity formation. Discourses among the Self/in-groups along with prejudiced perceptions, stereotypes towards the Other/out-groups are formed and reproduced by hearsays, gossips and the media. Such discursive interactions in everyday life lead to social and discursive exclusion and othering.

In the next chapter, 'gün' notion along with five case studies of 'gün' groups will be explained. The function of 'gün' groups as 'tiny publics' where discursive interaction operates will be underlined in order to show that these 'gün' groups are one of the holders of power and authority in (re)formation of identities of the Other.

CHAPTER III: SMALL GROUPS AS ‘TINY PUBLICS’

Societies are a complex web of large numbers of people that engage with one another in overlapping and interlocking forms of relationship (Sawyer, 2005). One of these interlocking forms is the aggregation of persons into small groups within the complex configurations of society. Small groups, from friendships, families, and discussion groups to church groups, athletic teams and fantasy role playing gamers¹⁷, both fit into and bind individuals together to constitute society. In different branches of social science like psychology and sociology, a great deal of attention has been paid to small groups with varying degrees of aspects (Aries, 1982; Aries & Johnson, 1983; Bales, 1950; Collins, 2004; Fine, 2012). In the literature, a great deal attention has been paid to how and to what extent group members communicate¹⁸ and the effect of small face-to-face groups on members’ attitudes and opinions¹⁹.

The broad nature of small groups’ literature has resulted in greatly differing definitions of this notion. One of the most minimal definitions in the literature is that a group comes together for a common purpose, includes at least three members, and generates interactions among its members (Benard & Mize, 2016, p. 294). Broadening studies on groups have identified additional functions, which include

¹⁷ For more information about fantasy role-playing games, see (Fine, 1983).

¹⁸ Bales, Strodtbeck, Mills, & Roseborough (1951) searched for problem-solving through channels of communication in small face-to-face groups by observing inter-communication in various groups.

¹⁹ Festinger, Back, Schachter, Kelly, & Thibaut (1950) looked into belonging to a group and establishing uniformity within group.

shaping the broader social discourse, creating bridges to the larger public²⁰, and igniting social movements²¹, and sustaining inclusion or exclusion of certain groups, like immigrants, into the receiving countries²². Fine (2012) defined a “small group” as an “aggregation of persons who recognize that they constitute a meaningful social unit, interact on that basis, and are committed to that social unit. ...participants recognize that they have interests in common and share a history” (p. 21).

With the addition of these features, it has been acknowledged that small groups have a distinctive place in shaping identity, culture, and social norms. They are an important part of social life as they create the arena of action where socialization operates, and function as the building blocks of society (Benard & Mize, 2016; Fine, 2012). In the group setting regardless of size, group members interact with each other, share their experiences, and tell their stories; these interactions in turn create a certain power which can define social rights and privileges, trigger processes of change, and shape the social discourses and norms of our lives. Fine (2012, p. 1) paid particular attention to the notion of the group, considering them as ‘tiny publics’, not only a basis for social and cultural capital, a guarantor of identity, and a ground for social affiliations but also a supporting ground to create an impact on other groups or to inform broader social discourse.

Small groups are ‘tiny publics’ in the sense that while groups and local communities are tiny relative to mass public, they are also publics themselves with their linkage to civil society and with their power to shape social standards and norms (Fine, 2012). Hence, they not only reflect the voices and peculiarities of their

²⁰ For a detailed information about church groups’ serving as bridges see also (Lichterman, 2005).

²¹ For more information, see (Polletta, 2002).

²² For more information on immigrant associations see (Ozcurumez, 2009).

members but also generate allegiances to larger groups and to society as a whole. It is the interaction with each other and with other individuals and groups in society that creates the action spaces which provide a basis for shaping identities, social discourses, and personal affiliations. Interactions are not necessarily face-to-face or long lasting but can be temporary and even online as in fantasy role playing games²³. Members can interact with each other by sharing their personal problems, domestic issues, or just their daily activities and common interests (Aries & Johnson, 1983).

Moreover, groups are heterogeneous entities that contain the different personalities of members in their dedicated gatherings. With the guidance of cultural understandings, small groups create an arena for socializing where communal norms and expectations are formed. Through their power to form these, small groups can create social movements that trigger changes and become a vehicle of social control and change in society (Polletta, 2002).

Furthermore, culture is the most important feature that provides signals and symbols to adjust group boundaries for members. As Fine (2012) stated that:

“Culture shapes group identity and cohesion, and in turn groups develop their simultaneously unique and borrowed culture through the interaction of participants. Providing frameworks of interpretation and extending personal epistemic schemas into shared understandings, groups are where enactments happen. Thoughts and behaviors become “extra-personal,” and the socialness of the world is created” (p. 5).

Cultural signals provide a road-map for group members on how to define their group and how to approach strangers, as well as how to interact with them. By generating solidarity and cohesion among group members, culture enables group members to create and apply group boundaries (Lamont & Molnár, 2002). Members perceive

²³ See also (Fine, 1983).

strangers by recalling symbols and cultural signals of group membership regardless of how their interaction proceeds. Benard & Mize (2016, p. 311) also underlined that social boundaries are usually reinforced by groups through the establishment of positive and negative stereotypes towards out-groups that can operate as a basis for group cohesion.

There is also the other side of the coin. Just as small groups can serve to form and enlarge social norms, control, and shared understandings, they can also generate conflicts, resistance, social exclusions, and segregation, especially for the ones who not included in these groups or communal circles; in other words, the outsiders (Collins, 2004; Fine, 2012). Their function as the building blocks of society grants small groups a constructive power in the formation of formal and informal hierarchies, and shaping an opinion about others in society even though they are tiny. One of the predominantly targeted groups for social exclusion and segregation are minority groups and immigrants, since they are considered to belong to a culture other than the one which shapes the main group's identity. Social exclusion can be in one form at the micro level of the individual's encounter with exclusion or another at the macro level with a group's exclusion. Thus, even tiny groups have two reciprocal and contrasting effects on society; as building blocks of society and as a powerful catalyst for segregation and social exclusion. Keeping these functions in mind, in the following part, I will explain 'gün' groups as a certain type of tiny groups that have existed in Turkey for around fifty years (Khatip-Chahidi, 1995). Along with an elaboration of their origins and social and financial functions in society, five different 'gün' groups that I have attended and observed as my case study will be described in detail.

3.1 'Tiny Publics': 'Gün' Groups

As mentioned in the previous part, small groups are very diverse in their own essence and reason to be. There are groups that come together for the purpose of solving a problem such as executive boards, planning groups, and seminar groups or for training purposes like study groups. This variety also includes large numbers of small groups in which interactions and members' interpersonal relations occur in a more personal way than merely solving a problem or training (Bales, 1950). These groups include families, church groups, social clubs, and small associations of various kinds. Members of a small group may essentially interact with one another through face-to-face meetings or occasionally via other contact-mediated methods such as cyber communication as seen in fantasy role-playing gamers' meetings.

Goffman (1967, p. 144) explained three basic interaction types that characterize face-to-face encounters in small groups: social occasions, gatherings, and encounters or engagements. A social occasion is an event that has a specific time and place of occurrence; occasions are informal and looked forward to. A gathering implies two or more persons gather in a social situation where any new person that comes to the gathering becomes a member of it. Encounters or engagements take place in an environment of mutually affirmation regarding verbal exchange. The crucial point for such interactions is that people in an encounter or an engagement are not only present for one another but also directly interact with each other by engaging in talk.

Considering Goffman's classification of interaction units, there is a special *social occasion* in Turkey known as a 'gün' which literally means *day* in Turkish. A 'gün' is a social occasion on which a group of women informally gather to spend time in the company of one another. They hold regular afternoon meetings on a

rotating basis, and interact with one another primarily face-to-face. The term *rotation* pinpoints each member's turn to hold the meetings and to receive their lump sum of contributions. This closed circle continues until each member has held a meeting. After completing the rotation, they can either break up the circle or start over the round again. They usually come together once a month even though there are also 'gün' groups which gather every other week until each member has hosted. The dates and places of the meetings are decided by members either prior to the next meeting or at the beginning of their round of rotation, and members greatly look forward to these meetings.

The 'gün' groups are usually composed of around ten to fifteen women though the number of members varies depending on the participants who contribute their share of money or gold without actually hosting a meeting. These 'gün' groups can consist of approximately twenty or more women. In one of the 'gün' meetings that I attended, although the 'gün group' consists of twenty-two members and has been meeting for three years now, only ten to fifteen women actually interact face-to-face while the other members do not participate in the meetings, and only contribute their share of money. While some of these women are not able to attend because their husbands do not allow them to, some others are not able to make it because they work outside the home; still others regard the 'gün' associations only as rotating savings and credit associations (ROSCAs). Detailed information about ROSCAs will be provided in the following pages.

Women usually attend multiple 'gün' rotations depending on their household income and the availability of time to host their 'gün' guests. The 'gün' circles can

consist of a group of friends, close neighbors, and colleagues²⁴ who are medium to long term acquaintances. The age range of ‘gün’ members can also vary, in that while there are groups that involve solely urban retired women, middle-aged and young women also seem to be fond of the ‘gün’ meetings both to keep their consumption under control and to make friends. Some of the members’ middle-aged daughters can also attend these meetings with their mothers even if they do not contribute money or gold.

‘Gün’ groups are one of the well-known and significant women’s associations that bring women together and enable them to socialize with one another, especially in urban parts of Turkey. Even though ‘gün’ meetings have traditionally taken place in members’ houses where hostesses receive their guests in their salon²⁵, currently there is a new trend to meet outside and to hold the meetings in a restaurant or café. The main reason behind this trend are that some women now have paid jobs and prefer holding their meetings outside since it is more practical and less time consuming for them. In addition, some of the ‘gün’ members are just find it easier to meet outside instead of spending hours and hours to clean their houses and prepare dishes for their ‘gün’ guests, even if they are housewives.

The ‘Gün’ occasion differs from other face-to-face interactions—i.e., gatherings and encounters in that it has some specific features that are based on a ‘verbal contract’ (Eroğlu, 2010, p. 470). The number of women in such groups is fixed at least for one round of rotation. It is thus an exclusive social occasion and recruiting new members is rare. Since it is a space of interaction in which women

²⁴ For detailed examples ‘altın günü’ consisting of colleagues, friends and neighbors in Northern Cyprus, see also (Khatip-Chahidi, 1995).

²⁵ In some traditional Turkish houses, there are two different rooms as living room and salon. Salon is accepted as the best part of the house and guests are usually received in this part, while living room is used by family members to spend their time at home.

can share their personal problems and family issues, a certain level of trustworthiness and creditworthiness is forged among its members. Thereby, new members are accepted only after the approvals of the ‘gün’ women or through the reference of trustworthy member, even though there is no set of written customs and rules, no membership list, and no special admission ceremony (Wolbert, 1996).

Moreover, as the ‘gün’ members follow a rotating basis in which each participant hosts a ‘gün’ occasion, each woman contributes a certain amount of money. The contribution is usually in Turkish currency although in some gün groups, members can also contribute in other currencies like the Dollar or Euro or even non-currencies like a certain amount of gold coins. After forming a group, its members decide on how much each member will contribute at each occasion. The lump sum is given to the hostess of that particular ‘gün’ occasion. Money and gold coin contributions by ‘gün’ members make them an example of a rotating savings and credit association (ROSCA)²⁶, created by women both to save money²⁷ and as a proportion of their income²⁸.

3.2 The Origins of the Gün Association

The term ‘gün’ has been used interchangeably with ‘altın günü’ (gold day), ‘paralı gün’ (money day), ‘şeker günü’ (sugar day), and ‘kabul günü’ (reception day

²⁶ Ardener (1995, p. 1) defined ROSCA basically as “an association formed upon a core of participants who make regular contributions to a fund which is given in whole or in part to each contributor in turn”.

²⁷ Eroğlu (2010) also pointed out that Turkish rotating savings and credit associations, known as the ‘gün’, can act as a self-welfare instrument to develop financial discipline and resistance towards their consumption.

²⁸ In Khatib-Chahidi (1995)’s article, the author emphasized the importance of the ‘altın günü’ associations in Northern Cyprus to counteract the effects of high inflation for Turkish Cypriot women.

or invitation day) in the literature (Ekal, 2006; Khatip-Chahidi, 1995; Ozbay, 1999; Sonmez, Argan, Sabırlı, & Sevil, 2010; Wolbert, 1996). ‘Altın günü’ (gold day) and ‘paralı gün’ (money day) are certain types of ‘gün’ occasions whereby, as mentioned, women can contribute in the form of a certain amount of non-currency gold coin or a predetermined sum of money. The ‘şeker günü’ is a less well-known occasion where the Turkish Lira is again the lump sum but with a conversion based on sugar prices of 50 or 100 kg (Eroğlu, 2010, p. 471). On each occasion, a certain dealer obtains the certain price and divides it by the number of ‘gün’ members to be able to decide the amount of contributions. The main aim in this occasion is to accommodate price increases and provide each member an equal opportunity to buy the same amount of sugar (Eroğlu, 2010). The ‘kabul günü’ was originally held by upper class townswomen, but has become an institution of urban middle class women for leisure purposes (Sonmez, Argan, Sabırlı, & Sevil, 2010; Wolbert, 1996).

At the end of the sixties or the beginning of the seventies, the ‘kabul günü’ became an institution for creating informal relations, socialization, integration, and reintegration²⁹; it was not until the eighties that the ‘gün’ came to exist in its present-day form for middle class women in Turkey (Wolbert, 1996). I prefer using the term ‘gün’ to refer to this women’s association since as a result of rising gold prices, most ‘gün’ groups, even those of urban middle class women, can no longer contribute with a certain amount of gold coins, and instead they collect a sum of money. In addition,

²⁹Even though since the sixties ‘kabul günü’ (reception day) was functioned solely as an institution for the informally practice of reciprocal visits and as a leisure activity, Wolbert (1996) showed that the ‘kabul günü’ was a key to reintegration for the migrant Turkish women who have returned from Germany. These migrants were different in their neighbors’ eyes in that *Almanyalı* (German) was a label that shows that these immigrant women did not belong there. The ‘kabul günü’ was served as a way to reintegrate with their neighbors, to maintain good social relations with people in one’s own vicinity, and to provide a space to open up.

as stated above, since it came into being in the eighties, ‘gün’ has become a term that is more commonly used by women in their everyday speech.

Even though ‘gün’ and ‘kabul günü’ had been used interchangeably in the literature, ‘gün’ meetings have been different than ‘kabul günü’ meetings. The ‘gün’ was a meeting of a sturdy group of urban middle class women and later became a rotating savings and credit association for *gecekondu*³⁰ households as well. Over the years, the ‘gün’ has turned into a round of rotations rather than reciprocal visits of urban upper class women as a leisure activity as was originally the case for ‘kabul günü’ (Eroğlu, 2010). It serves a financial role in urban low-income women’s lives in that it provides the discipline needed to resist consumption. Thereby, the ‘gün’ associations can be understood as a ‘forced savings mechanism’ for *gecekondu* households to save a proportion of their income (Eroğlu, 2010, p. 470).

Hence, the role of informal financial credit and rotating savings associations is one of the attractive points of the ‘gün’ for low-income urban households. Some housewives in the ‘gün’ groups may finance their contributions through their housekeeping money or by directly demanding it from their husbands. Rotating savings can provide some financial independence from their husbands for these women, especially by allowing them to save their housekeeping money and use it as a way to support household income (Khatip-Chahidi, 1995, p. 250). Instead of borrowing money from a formal institution or an acquaintances, the ‘gün’ funds can enable women financial independence to spend on household needs or personal needs.

³⁰ Gecekondu originally refers to squatter housing which was resulted by Turkey’s agricultural transformation, high population growth rates, and internal migration from rural areas to big cities starting from the late 1940s (Şenyapılı, 1982). Gecekondu households largely gained official status in the 1980s. Squatter areas comprise a considerable part of the population in big cities, such as Ankara, Istanbul, and Izmir, in Turkey.

In addition to its informal financial role as a rotating savings and credit association, Wolbert (1996) attributed to the ‘gün’ meetings an important role as an instrument of integration among women and segregation against men³¹ in the construction of urban social networks, defining them as “not only [reproducing] the segregation between the male and the female world, [but also erecting or opening up] social borders traversing this demarcation line of society” (Wolbert, 1996, p. 188). So while the ‘gün’ can draw a social border between the female and male domains in society, integration and social inclusion among different women can also be achieved through these meetings.

The main reason for this segregation is that the ‘gün’ meetings are generally reserved exclusively for females in Turkey. However, there are some cases that include the male domain within ‘gün’ groups as Khatip-Chahidi (1995, p. 247) stated. There is one case of a gender mixed meeting in Northern Cyprus where a group of retired army officers and their wives had their ‘altın günü’ in the local officers club. Eroğlu (2010, p. 467) also expressed in her research that the majority of the observed ‘gün’ meetings were all-female, and the ratio by which both spouses have a separate or joint membership is only two out of fifteen households. What usually occurs is that when the ‘gün’ occasion takes place in the host’s house, her spouse will leave the home to pass his time in the coffee-houses or card shops if he is not already at work. Since the ‘gün’ occasions are reserved predominantly for women, they can create a center for women’s public and social lives separate from their husbands (Marcus, 1987, p. 123).

³¹ For more information about the isolated female domains from male domains in Turkey see (Marcus, 1987).

Moreover, the boundary between the male and female domains can be a precondition for becoming involved in a 'gün' among some groups. The discretion of their members can be so crucial that violation of the discretion rule can lead to the exclusion of a member. Wolbert (1996, p. 195), for instance, gave one case of exclusion that she experienced in a meeting she attended. A neighbor of a member of this meeting had been excluded from this group when it became common knowledge among the members that this woman would tell everything that they had spoken about to her husband. In cases where a member breaches the necessary discretion, group members stop making any social calls to these women, and cut their social interaction which leads to social exclusion.

Furthermore, even though the 'gün' can function as a social association for integration and socialization, it can also serve as an instrument of segregation among women for different reasons. Even though some women do not want or need to be a part of the 'gün' groups, they feel obliged to join them so as not to be excluded from their social circle of friendship or their neighborhood. Moreover, the 'gün' meetings require a financial commitment that not every housewife can handle for every occasion. Not being able to contribute for an occasion may lead to feelings of embarrassment and shame generated from the idea of default (Eroğlu, 2010, p. 467). Due to the monetary costs and to avoid embarrassment and shame, some women may prefer not to join the 'gün' associations and are thus excluded from their neighborly or friendly meetings.

As 'gün' occasions have been providing an arena of social interaction, they have had a distinctive place in shaping identity, culture, and social norms in Turkey. These occasions allow women not only to share their daily news, personal stories, and issues but also to discuss the social, political, and financial problems that they

encounter in their everyday lives. With their personal stories, hearsays which are stories that they hear from their friends, neighbors, and acquaintances, and their dialogs with other ‘gün’ members, members shape one another’s perceptions in their interaction with other people. Members perceive strangers by recalling the symbols and cultural signals of their group membership regardless of how their interaction actually occurs. As underlined above, Benard & Mize (2016, p. 311) pointed out that social boundaries are usually reinforced by groups by establishing negative and positive stereotypes towards out-groups that can operate as a basis for group cohesion.

‘Gün’ groups are an important part of social life in Turkey as they both create an arena of action where socialization and cultural signals operate, and also function as a building block of society. In a group setting, regardless of its size, members interact with one another after having created their comfort zone as trustworthy and familiar. These group interactions create a certain degree of power that can construct social rights and privileges, trigger processes of change, found formal and informal hierarchies, and shape the social discourses, norms, and identities in our daily lives. The cultural signals formed by ‘gün’ groups are thus road-maps for members in their encounters with outsiders.

As it was pointed out earlier, just as small groups can bring about social cohesion and build bridges in society, they can also lead to social exclusion and segregation towards certain groups in society. Some of the predominantly targeted groups are minority groups and migrants since they are considered to belong to a culture other than the mainstream. Keeping this social power of constructing identity and social discourses in mind, and in that light examining the considerable number of Syrian refugees who have settled in Turkey, it is important to scrutinize what

women's perception in the 'gün' groups is in regard to these Syrian refugees. To be able to learn their ideas on this topic, I attended five different 'gün' groups in Mersin, and in the next section, I will explain these five cases of the 'gün' groups in detail. The rationale behind the group names mentioned below is that they reflect the affiliations on how 'gün' groups feel about themselves and how they affiliate one another.

3.3 Five Case Studies of 'Gün' Associations

3.3.1 The Group of Neighbors

This group has seven members ranging in age from 21-50. The members of this 'gün' association are all neighbors who live in and around a large block of flats in the same housing estate. The group was brought together by a local hairdresser whose shop and house are also in the same estate. Other members include a lawyer, a college student whose mother is also a member of this 'gün' association, two housewives, a music teacher and an insurer. Each member, except the hostess, contributed 20 Turkish Liras per 'gün'. This small sum was chosen due to the budgetary constraints of the members.

The refreshments, prepared and served by the hostess, were typical Turkish food called *kısır*, along with savory and sweet biscuits and one sweet cake followed by Turkish tea and Turkish coffee. *Kısır* is the only main course prepared by every group member. It was mentioned by group members that *kısır* is chosen as the only

main course because it is easy to prepare, especially for those who have paid employment³².

Occasions are held approximately every Friday in the evenings to accommodate the members who work during the day. Even though there was no fixed time limitation, the occasion lasted approximately three hours. Some women brought their children as well, who played in living room together while the guests spent their time in the salon. The collection of the money is held at the end of the occasion, and is given to the hostess. Several of the members mentioned that they are also members of other 'gün' groups and attend these 'gün' occasions instead of just contributing their share of money.

3.3.2 The Group of Kinswomen

This group originally started to get together nine years ago but because some group members moved to another city, they stopped gathering two years ago. In 2017, this association of twelve women aged 49-70 started to meet again in Mersin with the addition of some new members. Some of the group members or their husbands are originally from the same village of Mersin. They are the group of kinswomen because apart from their common location, they are all relatives, in one way or another bonded to each other with blood ties. Four of the members are primary school graduates, one has secondary school degree, five are high school graduates, and one has a university degree. While eight are housewives, three are retired and one is a company manager.

³² *Kısır* consists of bulgur, tomato or pepper paste, and some vegetables. Since none of these items need cooking or boiling, and after mixing all the ingredients properly, it is ready to serve, Turkish women usually find it easy to prepare.

Each member except the hostess contributes 100 Turkish Liras per ‘gün’. The group gathers once in a month. The refreshments, prepared and served by the hostess and her domestic worker after serving Turkish coffee, consisted of some typical Turkish foods like the Turkish type of ravioli called mantı along with a diet salad for a member who is trying to lose weight, followed by Turkish tea and a syrup-soaked pastry, chocolate cookies, and a semolina dessert served with ice-cream. The occasion lasted approximately three hours, and began at 2 o’clock in the afternoon.

3.3.3 The Group of ‘Hemşehriler’³³

This group consisted of 13 women who reside in Mersin in the age range of 52-66. The common point that brings these women together is that either they or their husbands are originally from the same town, called Islahiye, which is in the southeast part of Turkey in the province of Gaziantep. They have been gathering for nine years now every other month. Instead of arranging their rotation at the beginning of their new circle, they are doing a lottery at the end of each meeting in order to decide who will be hosting the next ‘gün’ meeting with the exception of those who have hosted a meeting previously. The amount contributed by each member is 100 Turkish Liras for each ‘gün’ meeting. Members of this ‘gün’ association consist of two women retired from the post-office, five housewives, one teacher and five women retired from the court office.

The refreshments, prepared and served by the hostess after serving Turkish coffee, consisted of some typical Turkish foods like kısır, some boiled vegetables along with a traditional Turkish dish called sarma, followed by Turkish tea, a type of

³³ The term of countrymen/townsmen (hemşehri) refers to the bond among people originating from sharing the same city, region or village. For more information on hemşehri notion, see (Aktaş, Aka, & Demir, 2006; Caymaz, 2005; Özkiraz & Acungil, 2012).

baklava named sari burma, and a chocolate cake. The hostess received her guests in her living room as she doesn't have a separate *salon*. This occasion lasted around three hours.

3.3.4 The Group of Friends and Acquaintances

This 'gün' group originally consisted of twenty-two women even though only approximately ten to fifteen of them get together during the 'gün' occasions while others participate by contributing their share of money. The age range is between 46 and 65. The common point that brings them together is that the members of this group are all belong to an Arabic-speaking community of Turkey and all the members can speak Arabic fluently. The group consists of acquaintances and friends. They prefer to gather outside instead of hosting their members in their houses as they find it more practical to gather outside and more enjoyable to taste different restaurant dishes. They have been gathering for three years.

At the 'gün' occasion that I attended, only six of them were present, and they met outside to eat seafood on one of the many boats that have been converted into a seafood serving restaurant in the port of Mersin. They gather twice in a month and on every occasion the number of members present varies. Among the present members, four are primary school graduates, one is a secondary school graduate, and one graduated from a vocational high school. All six members are housewives. Two of the members occasionally help their husbands who are small business owners. They follow a rotation even if not all of them gather and interact face-to-face. Each member contributes to 100 Turkish Liras on each occasion. This occasion lasted around two hours.

3.3.5 The Group of Parents

This group consists of seven women in the age range of 49-65. They have been gathering for twenty-one years. At first, they started to contribute a golden bracelet for each occasion. Because of the relatively tight budgets of the members, they are now contributing 100 TL once a month. They are the group of parents because their children were all in the same class during primary school. As they got to know each other during parent-teacher meetings in their children's first grade, they decided to hold the 'gün' meetings twenty-one years ago. Six of the members are housewives, while one is a retired primary school teacher. One is a primary school graduate, five are high school graduates, and one graduated from university.

The refreshments at this occasion was prepared and served by the hostess after she served Turkish coffee. The refreshments consist of a Turkish dish that is well-known in the south part of Turkey called *batırık* (bulgur-pepper patties), savory and sweetened pastry along with brownies served with Turkish tea. The guests were received in the salon instead of the living room as it was a special occasion for the hostess. The occasion lasted around three hours. Two members' daughters were also present at this occasion even though they do not contribute financially. The meetings are mostly held at members' houses, but they occasionally hold their meetings at a prearranged restaurants as well.

3.4 The Significance of the 'Gün' Groups

This study focuses on the 'gün' participants' discourses and claims that the 'gün' groups are significant to conduct a research on since they (re)produce cultural

and social norms, (re)form perceptions about the out-group members and (re)generate conflicts, resistance and social exclusion in society. As it was underlined above that ‘gün’ groups who are a part of ‘tiny publics’ produce allegiances to larger groups and society, along with reflecting the peculiarities and voices of their members. The ‘gün’ members socially interact with one another by sharing their personal problems, domestic matters and their daily activities. Through interacting with one another, these ‘gün’ members generate social spaces where (re)production of communal norms and expectations take place in society.

In addition, the ‘gün’ groups are heterogeneous entities which accommodate different personalities of members in their dedicated social occasions. In the social spaces generated by the ‘gün’ occasions, cultural signals developed through the members’ interaction sustain a road map on not only defining their groups’ identity and shaping group cohesion but also identifying the out-group members. In this social space where the ‘gün’ members’ “thoughts and behaviors become “extra-personal” (Fine, 2012, p. 5), social boundaries and shared understandings are (re)shaped. Perceptions of the ‘gün’ members about the out-groups, regardless of the fact that they are positive or negative, function as a basis of the ‘gün’ groups’ cohesion. With their perceptions and stereotypes towards the Syrian refugees, the ‘gün’ groups create a social boundary between the local community and the Syrian refugee community. This social boundary serve as one of the grounds for these ‘gün’ groups’ cohesion.

Just as the ‘gün’ groups, who are providing power of connections in shaping communal norms and expectations and in drawing social boundaries, they generate marginalization and social exclusion towards the out-group, aka the Syrian refugees in this study. These ‘gün’ groups function as “building blocks of society”, and hold a

constructive social power in formal and informal hierarchies toward the out-group members. Discursive interaction among the members create this social power, and it also shape public opinion towards the Other/the out-group in society even though they are tiny in size. By sharing experiences, personal stories or hearsays about the out-group, the ‘gün’ groups (re)form the identities of the out-group. Negative perceptions toward the out-group can lead to social exclusion and marginalization of the out-group members. Social exclusion of the ‘gün’ members can be in the form of exclusion of an individual member of the out-group at the micro level or the out-groups’ exclusion at the macro level.

The literature on the ‘gün’ groups has only consisted of the role of ‘gün’ occasions as informal financial credit and rotating savings associations in urban low-income women’s and their role as an instrument of social inclusion and integration among different local woman, and as drawing social boundary between male and female domains in society. However, their function as “building blocks of society”, producing communal norms, (re)forming identities of out-groups’ members, and the social power they hold by generating social spaces in shaping identities of not only in-group members but also out-groups members have never been studied in the literature. The discursive power the ‘gün’ groups hold in forming formal and informal social hierarchies and in marginalizing the out-group members had never been revealed before. This study perceives the ‘gün’ groups as one of the ‘tiny publics’ and the potential they hold in providing not only a ground for social affiliations but also a social arena for creating an impact on the members of out-group and forming the broader social discourse towards the out-group. Considering these groups’ reciprocal effects on the out-group in society, this study acknowledges

the significance of the 'gün' groups in comprehending the perception on refugees by the native population.



CHAPTER IV: MARGINALIZATION OF SYRIAN REFUGEES BY THE ‘GÜN’ GROUPS

This chapter will present analyses of how Turkish women in these different five ‘gün’ groups perceive the Syrian refugees in Mersin. These analyses resulted in a number of common perceptions about Syrian refugees. What drawn my attention during the ‘gün’ occasions is that their perceptions reflect the marginalization of Syrian refugees. Marginality refers to a state of being socially, culturally, legally, politically and financially excluded, unequal and unprivileged. Marginalization of refugees living in host countries can take place in three forms: it can be in the form of exclusion from rights and privileges offered by the host country or being singled out by humanitarian aid organizations; being excluded or discriminated by the host society; exclusion of oneself from the host society (Grabska, 2006). This chapter analyzes the data collected through participant observation to examine the perceptions of the ‘gün’ members towards the Syrian refugees in the case of Mersin. The data suggests that there is a marginalization of the Syrian refugees by the ‘gün’ members in the form of social exclusion and discriminative behavior revealed in the discourses of the members. It also suggests that marginalization stems from lack of integration and interaction in that language and lack of trust seems the biggest obstacles for social inclusion, along with biased perceptions and prejudices held by each communities.

When asked about their opinions about living together with the Syrian refugees, how they perceive their settlement in Mersin, and whether they have Syrian

refugee neighbors or friends that they interact with, the answers were substantially negative. Even though there are ‘gün’ members who have Syrian neighbors living next to each other; only one of them could speak Arabic, interact with her neighbor. Syrian refugees are blamed for economic stagnation, youth unemployment, poverty, and being one of the main sources of inequality (İçduygu, 2015), not fighting for their country and instead choosing to run away from it, and a disturbance in the ‘gün’ members’ daily lives and a reason of terrorist bombings in Turkey. For instance, Fadime Hanım, one of the participants in the group of neighbors, explained her disturbance in regard to rising unemployment levels because of Syrian refugees as:

“Unfortunately while the most indigent Turkish citizens, who are dependent on daily earnings, cannot find a job, Syrians work at everywhere on half pay; they earn a living without entitling to be in the labor power. They are exempted from taxation. The employers prefer hiring two Syrians instead of taking out social insurance and paying 2000 Turkish Liras for one Turkish employee”.

Another participant, named Zerrin Hanım, in the group of hemşehriler underlined her discomfort for living with Syrian refugees as:

“In Greater Eid³⁴, they [Syrian refugees] are going to Syria in convoy³⁵. The ones who go to visiting their families should not be allowed to turn back to Turkey. Bombings and terrorists are coming with Syrian families into Turkey. These terrorists crossed the borders together with these Syrians. If they are able to visit their relatives and families in Syria, they should not turn back to Turkey. If there is a war in there, how come they can go to Syria, and if there is no war, why would they come back here? My son cannot find a job for three months after graduating from the university. Because they are working lesser wages, there is no job for us”.

³⁴ Greater Eid is also called the “Sacrifice Feast” or “Eid al-Adha”. It is one of the Islamic holidays and a religious ritual celebrated around the world each year by sacrificing an animal which is usually a sheep.

³⁵ This participant is referring to thousands of Syrian refugees return home from Turkey for Greater Eid in in 2017. After spending their holiday in their homeland, Syrians refugees were able to return Turkey safely. For more information see (Salako, 2017).

While presenting their negative perceptions, the women at ‘gün’ groups utilized from a number of strategies that are stated by van Dijk (Van Dijk, 1997; Van Dijk, 2006). In analyzing the discourses of the ‘gün’ members, these strategies provide the main structures of discourse analysis. The main strategies occurred in discourses of the ‘gün’ members are positive self-presentation, negative other-presentation, implying *our* ‘good’ actions and *their* ‘bad’ actions, selection of positive words and active sentences for *us* and negative words and passive sentences for *them*, and denial of racism (Van Dijk, 1997; Van Dijk, 2006). Van Dijk (1997) analyzes political discourses of parliamentary debates of the 1980s and early 1990s in Germany, the Netherlands, Great Britain, France and the U.S. House of Representatives about race and ethnic relations, refugees, immigrants and minorities. A number of characteristic strategies used by politicians are also the strategies used by the participants of the ‘gün’ groups for their negative perception towards Syrian refugees. Positive self-presentation appears in Günay Hanım’s discourse, from the group of *hemşeriler*, as self-glorification of Syrians that:

“Earlier I used to take pity on them [Syrian refugees] a lot, especially during the period that they were unemployed. I did whatever it takes to help them. I donated them a house, all of my household furniture, even my bed and my quilt. But after hearing the stories and the ugliness of what they have done...Right now I don’t even donate my old furniture. Instead of donating them, I throw them to garbage”.

The references to her donations and giving her own furniture at her house are signs of her positive self-presentation. It is the self-glorification of this participant for poverty of the Syrian refugees. In regard to negative other-presentation strategy, Van Dijk (1997, p. 36) stated that “positive self-presentation often functions as a strategic disclaimer that introduces sequences of negative Other-presentation”. In the discourse stated above, while there is a positive self-presentation of herself, there is

also a negative light for Syrian refugees by underlying their ‘unworthiness for donation as a result of ‘ugliness of what they have done’.

Moreover, one of the participants, Münevver Hanım, from the group of friends and acquaintances, who can speak Arabic, explained that even though she has Syrian neighbors and have good relations with her neighbors, the reason for this good relationship stems from her goodness. The only person, according to her statements, who chose to get in touch with her Syrian neighbors is this participant although majority of her neighbors can speak Arabic properly. It is because of the lack of trust towards the Syrian refugees that Münevver Hanım’s neighbors do not interact with their Syrian neighbors. This is another example of positive self-presentation of the participant in that it is only because she is a good person that she has good relations with her Syrian neighbors.

Denial of racism is another strategy used by the ‘gün’ members. Van Dijk (1997) pointed out that it is crucial to ensure that such negative discourses and cognitions are not perceived as racist, biased or prejudiced. Denial of racism usually takes place as “we are not against them [immigrants, minorities] but...” As Bilgin Hanım from the group of neighbors stated that:

“To be able to create a common ground for them [Syrian refugees] to live together, all of them needs to be placed in refugees camps together. I don’t want them to be in my social arena. I am not a racist person; I am one of the people who are extremely against racism. But their intervention into my whole social life, shrinking away from them on the streets at night and being afraid of them at times or warning my son to be careful about them have been disturbing me”.

It is obvious from this participant discourse as ‘I am not racist...but...’ that while the disclaimers positively present themselves and deny being racist as a strategy, they are actually racist or biased.

Positive self-presentation, negative other-presentation and denial of racism are among the major strategies of statements and cognition of the ‘gün’ members on Syrian refugees in Mersin. It is impressive to see that the major strategies, listed in van Dijk’s chapter, used by politicians in parliamentary debates on ethnic affairs in Western Europe and North America are so much alike the major strategies used by the ‘gün’ members in a small town of Turkey. While overall aims and functions of these parliamentary talks are to legitimate and sustain white group dominance, overall goals of these strategic arguments by the ‘gün’ members are to marginalize and socially exclude the Syrian refugees by justifying themselves through positive self-presentation, negative other-presentation and denial of racism which are also the same strategies that politicians in parliamentary debates utilized.

In analyzing discourses of the ‘gün’ members on Syrian refugees in Mersin, four different types of common reflections have emerged in terms of marginalization and exclusion of the refugees. These practices are stereotyping, biased perceptions and hearsays; marginalization through ‘us’ vs. ‘them’; scapegoating; and discriminative behavior. In the following parts, I will explain these four reflections by exemplifying them through discourses of the ‘gün’ members and by analyzing the strategies, as listed above, occurred in their discourses in detail.

4.1 Stereotyping, Biased Perceptions and Hearsays

The data indicates that discourses by the ‘gün’ members on the Syrian refugees reveal stereotypical content and approach. The stereotype is defined as a construction of a picture inside the head and making generalizations about the groups in question (Lippmann, 1922). It is a generalization or belief about an outsider group,

usually an ethnic group, concerning a trait attribution (Brigham, 1971). Awareness of discrete groups, in our case the discrete group is Syrian refugees, and attributing traits are two most common characteristics of the stereotyping. In order to be aware of discrete groups, first, one must have negative feelings towards a certain group, and then, must be able to recognize the different individuals of the certain group as having certain characteristics that are distinctive and constant, as being akin to other individuals in the group. In addition to that, one must perceive these individuals of the certain group as having distinct characteristics from individuals that do not belong in that group (Brigham, 1971). To put it differently, stereotyping and being prejudiced against a certain group require to have a concept or category of that group.

This conceptualization or categorization of ethnic groups are crucial in the sense that even though stereotyping requires making generalizations about a group, not all generalizations and biased perceptions can be called as “stereotype”; they can simply in the form of “ordinary” generalizations (Brigham, 1971). To be able to claim these perceptions as a stereotype about the ethnic groups, one must recognize the negative attitude, awareness of these groups and over-categorization and over-generalization towards these groups in their perceptions.

The stereotyping traits attributed by the ‘gün’ members to Syrian refugees in Mersin includes being filthy, unreliable, immoral, and greedy, being too noisy and ‘too fertile’. These members have the power to describe, while the others/Syrian refugees are constructed as inferior (Jensen, 2011). One of the ‘gün’ members in the group of neighbors, Şebnem Hanım who is a hairdresser, hired two different Syrian women to help her in different times. From her interaction with these two hired helps, she stated that:

“The thing that I learned about them is this: they say ‘we know everything’ but once you assign a task, they cannot handle it. They lie too much, they tell incredible lies. Syrian women are always on the watch; always looking for more. They are dissatisfied with everything. They even told me that ‘you Turkish women do not look after yourselves, we don’t even go to the restroom without wearing makeup’. They are well-groomed. Plus they love money so much. They love embellishment. They carry other things under their headscarf. They are too dirty. I wouldn’t want to take anything from them, even a glass of water, due to their filthiness”.

This interaction with two individuals from the group of Syrian refugees has ended up with stereotyping, attributing traits to whole members of this group by deducing her experience with two Syrian hired helps, and over-categorization of all members as being liars, well-groomed, loving money too much, being too dirty. Hayriye Hanım, in the same ‘gün’ group, commented on her discomfort about Syrian women wearing headscarf and wearing makeup as:

“I feel uncomfortable because you try to compartmentalize them into a category. You try to perceive them as pious people or people as coming from a modern and secular country; but they don’t fit into these categories because they are living under the Sharia law”.

The comment reflects the attempt to put Syrian refugees under certain categories, when they encounter with these individuals who can be perceived neither as pious because of wearing “a lot of” makeup, nor as secular and modern because of living under the Sharia law. It is one of the discourses that shows the awareness of an ethnic group, Syrian refugees, and the desire to make over-categorizations about the group in question.

In addition to such discourses, there are other discourses on Syrian refugees reflecting stereotyping. Syrian refugees end up with sharing the social and economic space with local people because of the restricted opportunities, rights and privileges which to some extent stem from the temporary refugee status. Because of the

restricted opportunities, some of the Syrian refugees have ended up with begging on streets. Begging, however, is not perceived by the ‘gün’ members as a humanitarian crisis and a case of desperateness but rather related with their being filthy. Fertility is attributed as a threat to own country for the fear that Syrian refugees’ population would be higher than the citizens of Turkey. One of the members in the group of *hemşehrilere* noted her discomfort about fertility that “our country has been invaded silently [by the Syrian refugees]”. Similarly, one of the ‘gün’ members in the group of kinswomen, Nurhan Hanım expressed her opinion on that matter as:

“Syrian women love not working but roaming and giving birth. They are epicures. And they smoke too much shisha. We get annoyed of its smell while walking by the coast. When young ones get into the bus with their headphones on and cellphones in their hands, they don’t give their seats to us³⁶. Ours are offering their seats. They are so disrespectful. They are speaking too loudly, and annoying the society wherever they go. In our apartment, there are three to four houses [that Syrian refugees reside]. After twelve p.m., they put on some dance music and have fun. We cannot sleep”.

Interaction and settling into community life provides refugees to recreate a common ground where they can create some level of stability into their lives. As a result of the lack of interaction, the desire to maintain their own culture in settled community can be accompanied by a lack of understanding of local community life, its conditions and social rules (Grabska, 2006). As the discourse stated above illustrates that a common complaint from the ‘gün’ members is the frequent visiting by friends and family members of Syrians late hours. In Turkey, even though family, friends and acquaintances visits are common, they do not happen always at late hours, nor happen on a daily basis. Although for Syrian refugees, coming together, putting some music and dancing are usual occasions especially during the summer

³⁶ Giving to elderly, pregnant women and disabled people on the public transportation is a kind of traditional norm in Turkish culture. If young does not offer their seats to elderly people or pregnant women, they can be accused of being disrespectful.

period, for local residents, late-night socializing often became annoying. The lack of interaction and integration into local culture results in cultural and social exclusion of Syrian refugees.

Furthermore, most of the participants underlined their lack of trust and their fear towards Syrian refugees because they perceive them as aggressive and always ready to fight. The lack of trust makes it difficult for Syrian refugees to integrate and build positive social relations with local people. According to the discourses of the 'gün' participants, roots of such fear of aggressive behavior seems to stem from some stories and hearsays about Syrian refugees which brings us to other notions that emerged in their discourses.

One of the hearsays heard by their acquaintances and told in two different 'gün' occasions, in the group of neighbors and the group of hemşeriler, was about a Turkish man murdered by his Syrian neighbor at the end of noise dispute in Mersin³⁷. Another hearsay that reflects the lack of trust specifically towards Syrian refugee women is about stealing other women' husbands or marrying a second or third wife who is Syrian: "I am from Gaziantep³⁸. When I visit Gaziantep, women are talking about their fears of 'if my husband marry a Syrian wife'". Polygamy and child marriage are two common practices among Syrian refugees (AFAD, Türkiye'deki Suriyeli Kadınlar Raporu, 2014), while in Turkey even though there are cases of polygamy, it is outlawed according to the Turkish Civil Code and relatively rare, especially in urban areas. Even though people typically marry within their social circle or someone who is close culturally and/or financially, exogamy is considered

³⁷ For more information see (Mersin'de Suriyeli'lerin 'Gürültü Yapmayın' Cinayeti, 2017).

³⁸ Gaziantep is one of the cities that is close to Turkish-Syrian border and has high numbers of Syrian refugees.

as a way of marital and blending social integration for refugees and migrants into country of destination (Fábos & Kibreab, 2007; Lee & Boyd, 2007).

While on the bright side exogamy seems as a logical solution for social integration, Syrian women are forced by their families to acquire the resettlement status through the official marriage or imam marriage³⁹ in that the age difference between spouses is usually too high. A report on Syrian woman refugees living outside of the camps noted the same anxiety of increasing numbers of marriages to Syrian women stated by the ‘gün’ members according to the interviews conducted with local women in Kilis which is resided by a large number of Syrian refugees in Turkey (Göç İstatistikleri-Geçici Koruma, 2018). Various reports suggest that the sources of this increase lie in Syrian women’ being young and well-groomed, and their willingness to marry Turkish men, while only a few people blame the Turkish men for this abuse of marriages (MAZLUMDER, 2015). Among the ‘gün’ members, out of forty-five woman, only Hüsniye Hanım, from the group of kinswomen, stated that it is Turkish men’ choice to marry a Syrian woman, that’s why I don’t blame Syrian women in that matter”. Other members blamed Syrian women for being immoral and stealing others’ husbands.

In addition to hearsays about how ‘dangerous’, ‘violent’ and ‘immoral’ Syrian refugees are, the biased perceptions and marginalization of refugees are fed by personal stories told by local people about their encounter with Syrian refugees. The group of friends and acquaintances’ member, Nermin Hanım who can speak Arabic, reflected her opinion on their lack of trust towards Syrian refugees as Syrian refugees’ dislike of Turkish people and told her personal experience that:

³⁹ *Imam marriage* is a religious marriage conducted by Islamic muftis, sheikhs or imams. Its customs, legality and application are varied depending on government regulations and the country of origin’s customs and traditions.

“I can understand Arabic. They speak freely as: “This is Turk. Let’s speak Arabic, she wouldn’t understand us”. I witnessed an incident. The first years they came, I went to the Türk Telekom (Turkish Communication Services) to pay my bill. There was a security staff who was trying to help a young Syrian woman and he couldn’t speak Arabic. The security personnel was telling something writing something on the paper, trying to do anything to help her. No matter how he struggled, he could not help her. The woman suddenly started to grumble and become outraged by saying in Arabic that: “Nasty Turks! You don’t know any language, you only know Turkish, and you consider yourselves as human being”. She assumed that nobody can understand her because she was speaking Arabic. She stormed off by cursing. You are here so you need to learn Turkish. I mean they should learn it here”.

While telling their discomfort towards Syrian refugees, there are always personal stories that have been nurturing the biased perceptions of the ‘gün’ members. Mevlide Hanım, a ‘gün’ member of the group of parents, told her personal story about her dislike of Syrian refugees that:

“For example my neighbor upstairs. I am living in Viranşehir, Mezitli⁴⁰. The degree of Syrians’ intensity is high in there. They are very unprincipled. When they first came, they knew how to apologize once I had a complaint. Especially, Thursday and Friday nights, [Syrian] women are gathering, doing something like a ‘gün’ meeting. They are coming with their kids. Imagine ten to fifteen kids are running inside the house. It is like kindergarten opened in upstairs. Around fifteen days ago, I went up to warn them about the noise. “They are making too much noise, my head” I said, while indicating my aching head. “It is 9 o’clock” she said. “Ok, then I am calling the police” I answered. Once she heard about the police, she said “ok”. But it only lasts one day. Another day, she is continuing to make noises. You need to warn her on a daily basis”.

The story not only reveals social distance rooted in cultural differences like gathering together at night, but also how biased perceptions are supported by stereotyping Syrian refugees by making characteristic generalizations like being ‘very unprincipled’ towards the neighbors. Mevlide Hanım’s personal story feeds the other members’ perception that Syrian refugees are unprincipled and disrespectful. What emphasized in this section that stereotyping, biased perceptions and hearsays, i.e.

⁴⁰ Mezitli is one of the districts in Mersin that has received a large number of Syrian refugees.

'stories' discovered in the 'gün' participants' discourses, are significant indicators of marginalization of Syrian refugees by the 'gün' members. In the next section, I will focus on the notion of 'us' vs. 'them' in the 'gün' members' discourses.

4.2 'Us' vs. 'Them'

Prejudice and marginalization have their origins in the process of social categorization where classifying people as insiders and outsiders of their own group (Perdue, Dovidio, Gurtman, & Tyler, 1990). As mentioned above, (de)emphasizing positive and negative acts and topics about 'us' and 'them' (Van Dijk, 2006) is one of the strategies occurred in the discourses of the 'gün' members. Polarized categories of 'us' and 'them' have been created in people's daily discourses. This social categorization is created through 'us' vs. 'them' in order to substantiate the idea of being superior over the other which composes the first base of identity shaping and othering. The second base of identity formation and othering lies in the dichotomous relationship between the Self and the Other (Jensen, 2011). Othering can be grasped by this power relations between the Self and the Other in that Lister described the othering notion as a "process of differentiation and demarcation, by which the line is drawn between 'us' and 'them'- between the more and the less powerful – and through which social distance is established and maintained" (as cited in Jensen, 2011, p. 65).

The discourses of the 'gün' members revealed the drawn line between the Self and the Other that 'us Turks' is an emphasis of superior image of 'Turkishness' over 'them' which in our case are Syrian refugees. The most revealing expressions in drawing a boundary between the Self and the Other are exclusive and inclusive

possessives and pronouns like ‘us’ and ‘them,’ ‘ours’ and ‘theirs’ and ‘we’ and ‘they’ (Riggins, 1997). Mevlide Hanım, from the group of parents, illustrates such a case of superiority and boundary separating self and the other as:

“They [Syrian refugees] opened a market in *our* neighborhood. The man is Syrian; his wife is Romanian. She came from Romania to Syria and got married there. The woman and her girls are nothing like Syrians at all; very polite, very respectful, like us. Her clothing is like *ours* as well. It shows that even though your husband is Arabic, if you want it by yourself, you can be polite and respectful. But being polite and respectful are not in these Syrian women’ character”.

Marginalization and social exclusion of Syrian women through the emphasis on ‘us’ as being polite and respectful and ‘them’, Syrian women, and the boundary making can be uncovered in Mevlide Hanım’s discourse. The cultural differences between ‘self’ and ‘other’ are exaggerated in that according to these statements, there is a cultural difference between Syrian and Turkish women, not only in terms of their characteristic differences but also in the appearances as well. ‘Her clothing is like us’ reveals that the said person differentiates Syrian women depending on the apparel.

In addition to such a differentiation, in all ‘gün’ groups, the members complained about feeling like ‘refugees’ in their own country. In order to construct ‘us’ vs. ‘them’, there were emphases on the feeling as if ‘we’ are refugees and ‘others’, who have been acting as if they are the citizens of Turkey. In the eyes of the ‘gün’ members, there is a “victim-victimizer reversal” (Wodak, *Das Ausland and Anti-Semitic Discourse: The Discursive Construction of the Other*, 1997) in that the members are victimized and felt like refugees by attempts to host these forced migrants. In Ayşe Hanım’s words, from the group of parents:

“Ok, you [Syrian refugees] fled from the war but as if *we* are refugees and *they* are the owners of this country. Whenever I look around, I see Syrian

signboards. There are Syrian butcher, hairdresser, greengrocer, market and even their own restaurants which were quite cheap by the way”.

In 2017, Turkish authorities ordered the removal of Arabic signboards of shops, which are mostly owned by Syrian refugees, nameplates and posters in some of the cities like Adana, Hatay and Gaziantep which have considerable number of Syrian refugees⁴¹. In Mersin, signboards, nameplates and posters changed into holding both Arabic and Turkish versions. Even though signboards had changed, some the ‘gün’ members expressed their disturbance toward these signboards. This disturbance, as indicated by Ayşe Hanım, reflected into the perception of ‘us’ as ‘refugees’ and ‘them’ as citizens. Even though on the surface, this perception of Syrian refugees, who fled the country of origin because of war and persecution, and settled into another country, is akin to the definition of a refugee of the UNHCR⁴² and does not imply any exclusion toward the refugees, the emphasis on the putative superiority stemming from being the citizen of Turkey over the position of being refugees marks the differentiation of Syrian refugees as ‘us’, citizenship status, and ‘them’, refugee status.

Merve Hanım, a ‘gün’ member of the group of parents, also emphasized the superiority of the Self/us over the Other/them that:

“It does not matter whether you’re a guest or a refugee; you have to observe *us* and abide by *our* rules. *We* don’t have to live in accordance with *your* rules. Especially those who wander around the street wearing thobe⁴³, I want to set those [thobes] on fire”.

⁴¹ For more information see (Arabic Signboards Being Removed in Various Turkish Provinces, 2017).

⁴² “A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. Most likely, they cannot return home or are afraid to do so.” (United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951).

⁴³ Thobe or thawb is an angle-length traditional garment with long sleeves, designed as an Islamic menswear.

Her superiority over social rules in society, by foregrounding on the necessity of the Syrian refugees observing '*us*' and abiding by *our* rules, are underlined by Merve Hanım to make an emphasis on the social distinction between 'us' vs. 'them' through 'observe *us*', '*our* rules' and not living in accordance with '*your* rules'. Connotation of the thobe is an illustration of this cultural boundary between herself and others; a marker for boundaries of difference between Syrian refugees' culture and her culture. The desire to set the thobes on fire is the extreme point of this marginalization in that Merve Hanım's discourse reveals a hatred towards the Syrian refugees.

Moreover, the lack of trust and the fear of 'them' are crucial parts of creating the notion of 'dangerous foreigners' (Vestel, 2004). 'If I was afraid of the dark streets once before *them*, I am now afraid of walking alone on the streets twice at night. This fear has escalated with *them*'. Burcu Hanım, from the group of neighbors, shared her escalated fear of walking on the streets at night because of the 'dangerous foreigners'. The Self, the 'gün' members, has become a cultural agency for defining and staging 'the others' as dangerous and untrustworthy. The Self legitimates the exclusion of the 'Others' based on the idea that the 'others' are culturally different than 'us', and that their presence in this country will inevitably lead to violence and conflict (Wren, 2001). The stress on the escalated fear justifies and rationalizes the social exclusion of Syrian refugees in the eyes of the 'gün' members.

'Us' vs. 'them' is only one of the practices of marginalization of the Syrian refugees by the 'gün' members 'through which social distance is established and maintained' (as cited in Jensen, 2011). The next section will explain another practice of the social exclusion through scapegoating Syrian refugees.

4.3 Scapegoating Syrian Refugees

The term scapegoating is ‘a projection of one’s own aggression or guilt onto other persons’ (Wodak, 1997). It includes consciously blaming other people for negative incidents and perceiving the scapegoat as threatening. Scapegoating can function as bonding among group members in society:

“The scapegoat is frequently essential for the adequate functioning of a group (whatever the nature of the group) in that he provides an area into which aggressions can be channeled and focused without presenting a threat to the physic integrity of the individual or a threat to the stability and unity of the group itself” (Toker, 1972, p. 320).

As it can be a key player in group interaction, scapegoating is also at the root of prejudices and social exclusion in that prejudice has its core ‘in a societal need to scapegoat’ (Haynes, Devereux, & Breen, 2004). Factors that affect being as chosen as the scapegoat can involve religion, race, gender or personal choices that the scapegoat made. In any case, chosen victims of scapegoats usually consist of outsider groups such as minorities and fringe populations (Shenassa, 2001). A certain set of aggression and frustration is usually directed towards the members of outsider groups. According to Castles and Miller, there are dominant images of the refugees in receiving countries and one of them is that these masses of people are ‘taking away jobs, pushing up housing prices and overloading social services’ (Castles & Miller, 2008, p. 13).

In our case study of the ‘gün’ members, the chosen victims of scapegoat are the Syrian refugees. The dominant image described by Castles and Miller (2008) is the same image drawn from the members. The idea that Syrian refugees are stealing peoples’ jobs is one of the indicators of scapegoating. Along with biased perceptions, the competition in labor market, especially for cheap labor, has resulted in

scapegoating of Syrian refugees (Özpinar, Çilingir, & Düşündere, 2016) as the ‘gün’ members’ discourses indicate. “One of the reasons that behind our lack of trust is that they [Syrian refugees] transform Turkey into an economically backward society. The number of working population is congested because they are working cheaper”. It was Selin Hanım, from the group of friends and acquaintances, who commented on her lack of trust towards Syrian refugees and the role of the Syrian refugees on economic transformation in Turkey. For Selin Hanım, the refugees, who are being used as cheap labors, are the ones to blame for decreasing labor wages and economic backwardness in Turkey.

Especially in the southern part of Turkey where there is a density of Syrian refugees, the refugees work as cheap labors in almost every sector, but largely in service, industry and farming sectors (MAZLUMDER, 2015). While the cheap labor has boosted the local economy, in the long run, it not only led to victimization of the refugees but also an increase in some products and housing prices. Şebnem Hanım, from the group of neighbors, explained her opinion on that matter as:

“After their [Syrian refugees] arrival, the housing prices reached a peak. Both houses for rent and houses for sale. There is an incredible density in the city. Mersin has changed so much. We have become weeny, they have become enormous”.

While the Syrian refugees are scapegoated for increasing housing prices, the density of the refugees in the city is perceived as a threat in the sense that she feels ‘weeny’.

In another ‘gün’ group, the group of kinswomen, Fatma Hanım, who was the only ‘gün’ members blaming the employers, commented that she blamed the employers for forcing Syrian refugees working cheaper which is against the human rights. Şerife Hanım’s response to Fatma Hanım was: “if they [Syrian refugees] did

not want to work cheaper, they would not work. Our citizens are the ones who are affected from it badly. Because of them, our children are unemployed in our Turkey”. Another member of the same group, Deniz Hanım, added that “we cannot find a place to seat on the bus, no job. Our teachers, engineers...All of them are unemployed. I want them to bugger off right away”. According to the ‘gün’ members, high rates of unemployment in Turkey is stemming from Syrian refugees. The fundamental social and economic transformations roots in living together are perceived by the ‘gün’ members as the Syrian refugees are the one to blame for the poverty and unemployment. Apart from these problems, Syrian refugees have also become the scapegoats for crime and immorality. Bediha Hanım, from the group of hemşeriler, scapegoated the refugee children that:

“My only grandson cannot play in the playground of our apartment because of Syrian children. Ten children are living in one house; it is not like three or four children living in a house. Besides, these are vicious children. Because of them, my grandson cannot go to the playground”.

The refugee children are stereotyped as vicious and are scapegoated for social exclusion of Bediha Hanım’s grandson. This Syrian children being ‘vicious’ is a reflection of Bediha Hanım’s overgeneralization which is one of the components of prejudice. In her discourse, scapegoating appears as ‘a way of identifying the people to be hated’ (Petronko, 1971) in that the stereotyped is the one to be hated because of being vicious. Şule Hanım, from the group of hemşeriler, underlined Syrian refugees’ being criminal as: “The crime rate has increased because of them. Women are kidnapping children for ransom, didn’t you watch that on the news? Robbery, kidnapping, prostitution, these are all committed by them”. Attributing to the scapegoat crimes is a tendency of a prejudiced person for intensifying the polarization between the chosen victim group and victimizers (Shenassa, 2001). Şule

Hanim attributed increasing crime rate to Syrian refugees and pursued the scapegoat mechanism for polarization.

In addition to scapegoating for increasing crime and unemployment rates, the Syrian refugee women are scapegoated for destroying families and for being immoral. Nuray Hanım, a member of the group of kinswomen, stated that “they destroy houses, nests and families. They become co-wives. They behave immorally. They are deceiving the men. They are robbing houses and run away with golden ware”. Bahar Hanım added that “they are deceiving Turkish men. It is the Syrian women’ fault that families are breaking apart. Their physical appearance is so beautiful. Even though I am a woman, I am looking at them”. As I explained under the section of Stereotyping, Biased Perceptions and Hearsays, while polygamy is a source of lack of trust towards Syrian refugee women, attributing to these women immorality is also scapegoating. Marking these women as deceivers and accepting being a co-wife justify the scapegoating behavior for Nuray Hanım. Syrian refugee women are not victims; on the contrary, they are the victimizers for destroying families in the eyes of the ‘gün’ members.

Regarding the discourses of the ‘gün’ members, the Syrian refugees are the victims of scapegoating in that with biased perceptions, the members project their own aggression on the refugees for increasing unemployment and crime rates and destroying the families. In the next section, I will elucidate discriminative discourses and behavior appeared in the ‘gün’ members’ discourses against Syrian refugees.

4.4 Discriminative Discourses and Behavior Reflected in the ‘Gün’

Members’ Discourses

Before starting this section, it is crucial to distinguish discrimination from prejudice which refers to a preconceived opinion on the basis of innate characteristics like ethnicity and gender or acquired features like occupation and education. Discrimination, on the other hand, is treating people or a certain group differently based on sex, race, and religion, so on and so forth. It manifests itself when there is a positive or negative effect on a discriminated person or a discriminated group (Lang, 2011). Even though discrimination usually includes a prejudiced opinion towards a person or a group of people, the prejudiced opinion does not necessarily generate discrimination.

Getting the hints from the ‘gün’ members’ discourses, it becomes visible that marginalization of the refugees is not limited with biased perceptions. There are also discriminative behavior and an expression of hate reflected in the ‘gün’ members’ discourses. It should also be noted that discriminative behaviors mentioned below are not based on observations of the researcher but rather on statements of discriminative behaviors reflected in the ‘gün’ participants’ discourses. In line with these statements, Zahide Hanım, a member of the group of kinswomen, explained her opinion on Syrian refugees as:

“We hate them all. They opened a school in the neighborhood, a Syrian school⁴⁴. We had constantly complained to the municipality until we closed down the school. And we finally made it closed this year. We don’t have peace anymore. They are dirty, dirty. They keep their own culture alive in here. I am annoyed. There is this guy who walks around with his nightgown in the apartment site nowadays. You know they have that kind of dress that look like nightgown [implying thobe]. He is receiving complaints about his

⁴⁴ In Turkey, there are Temporary Education Centers (TEC) for Syrian children to make their integration into Turkish educational system smoother. For more information see (Aras & Yasun, 2016).

nightgown. You came here, can you see anyone else who is walking around like that? We hate them. I want to set them on fire once I see them. I don't have mercy for them. When I see them on the sidewalk, you should see how I yell at them as 'bugger off! We don't want you here'. We don't get along with them. They don't speak Turkish. What is there for the employers to do other than underpaying them?"

Complaining about the education center for Syrian children to the municipality and making it to close down reveals discriminatory behavior in Zahide Hanım's discourse. Closing down of the center leads to restriction of these children's right to get a proper education. It is a step to exclude members of a certain group, Syrian children, from a certain area. Emphasizing on her hatred towards the refugees discloses the motivation behind her discriminative behavior revealed in her discourse which is detestation and having no mercy for the refugees.

There are also cases, mentioned in the participants' discourses, of excluding the Syrian refugees from an apartment site by gathering together with other residents not to rent or sale houses the refugees. Elvin Hanım, a member of the group of *hemşeriler*, commented that:

"We don't host foreigners in our apartment. In one of my friend's apartment, there are Syrians. 'We have a fear of being alone with them. We are afraid of them, when we meet in the elevator' they say. That's a pity that the apartment has Syrians".

Ayşe Hanım, from the same group, added that "they are living as if they are living in their own country. We don't want them in our country. The war is over, we want them to return their countries". Pervin Hanım, a member of the same group, is also one of the members that reflect discriminative behavior in her discourse towards the Syrian refugees that "I don't have any Syrian neighbor. In our apartment building, sixty-seven flat residents took a decision about it. They neither rent out to Syrians nor sell their houses". Cemre Hanım carried on that:

“I have a house. The realtor called me one day and said that ‘we will rent out your house to Syrians’. I didn’t accept it. There is no dialog with them, they don’t speak Turkish. When I want to increase the rent, I cannot speak them on the phone, I cannot sue them in case they don’t pay their rents. Why would I rent out to them? I would rent it for half price but I would rent out to my people. Besides if they reside in our apartment building, they would have lots of children. Can the children of the apartment communicate with Syrian children? Their language, religion, education and culture are different. For example, they don’t want to allow Syrian children to swim in the pool of the apartment site. A Syrian family rents a house but actually five Syrian family resides in the house”.

The fact that people come together to exclude a group of people from renting or buying a house is an expression of discrimination in the participant’s discourse in that Allport (1954) defined discrimination as exclusion of “members of the group in question from certain types of employment, from residential housing, political rights, educational or recreational opportunities, churches, hospitals, or from some other social privileges” (p. 15). Discriminative attitude emerged in the participants’ discourses has a negative impact on the Syrian refugees as the excluded group since the Syrian refugees socially and physically exclude from residing in a neighborhood or an apartment building. As in the case of Zahide Hanım, Mevlide Hanım’s discourse, from the group of parents, revealed her hatred that:

“When I was young, the Turks who migrated to Germany would come to visit us. They would tell us that Germans regard them as someone that damages Germany. I found it strange at that time but for the first time, after Syrians’ arrival, I started to think like Germans. Racism was something that I don’t like but I forcibly become a racist. They absolutely do not recognize the rules. When people go to other countries, they would observe others and try to comply with them. If you come to here, you have to obey the rules”.

Mevlide Hanım’s discourse reaches to the point of racism by affiliating herself with Germans. According to Mevlide Hanım’s discourse, it wasn’t her intention to become a racist in that it was because of Syrian refugees that she becomes a racist. So the refugees do not only face with racism but also with being victims of

scapegoating for turning Mevlide Hanım into a racist. Fadime Hanım, from the same group, has Syrian neighbors even though she and her neighbors are trying to eject these Syrian neighbors from their apartment building:

“We have two flats resided by Syrians too. We are trying to eject them from our building. With our neighbors, we made a decision about it. We want to eject them because one person rents a place but then ten people are actually settling down. Three or four families are settling down with ten children. In every room, one family is living. They don’t obey any rules. They’re residing now but we never contact with them”.

Fadime Hanım’s discourse revealed both the absence of social interaction with her Syrian neighbors while she has with her other neighbors coming together to ‘eject’ the refugees. The decision to ‘eject’ the refugees from their residential housing is again a reflection of discrimination in her discourse since it leads to social exclusion of the refugees and being deprived of their housing, even though it is not actually achieved yet. This section indicates that marginalization of Syrian refugees reveals itself in the discourses of the ‘gün’ members. The statements of the ‘gün’ participants evince that the refugees have been excluded from a neighborhood and an apartment building. Their struggle continues on the streets as well in facing with glares and insults as Zahide Hanım’s discourse exemplifies.

4.5 A Comparison of the ‘Gün’ Groups’ Perceptions

This section aims to make a comparison of the ‘gün’ groups in terms of their perceptions on the Syrian refugees in the case of Mersin. Even though minor differences exist among the ‘gün’ groups’ perceptions, common patterns appeared in the ‘gün’ participants’ discourses are more salient. The common patterns indicate that even though the ‘gün’ groups do not have any social interaction with one

another, they share more or less similar perceptions towards the Syrian refugees which will be listed below.

Upon looking at the group of neighbors, this group consists of seven members whose ages ranged between 21 and 50. The biased perceptions and stereotyping patterns appeared in the discourses of the group's members are the refugees being filthy, unreliable, immoral and greedy, and always ready to fight. According to the members' discourses, these perceptions root in the members' limited personal interaction with the refugees, hearsays and the media. The participants of this group are scapegoating the refugees for increasing crime rates, housing prices, stealing peoples' jobs and stealing peoples' husbands. The members felt like their social space is under threat by the refugees, and in line with that they also commented on the feeling of being alienated in 'their own country'. The threat was reflected as a feeling of invasion of their social lives as if 'we'/'gün' members are refugees and 'they'/Syrian refugees are citizens of Turkey. In accordance with this feeling of under threat and invasion, the members expressed their desire to put all refugees in camps, and not wanting the refugees to be in their social space which reflects the group's discriminative approach towards the refugees. It is also possible to conclude by analyzing the 'gün' participants' discourses that scapegoating, discriminative approach and feeling under the threat are embedded in cultural differences between the two communities like wearing chador which commented as a threat to the republican regime of Turkey, and in hearsays, rumors and stories about Syrian refugees getting free education, free healthcare, not paying any taxes, and granting Turkish citizenship. Hosting a large number of refugees is also regarded as an invasion and a threat to the 'gün' members' social lives.

The group of kinswomen has twelve members in the age range of 49 and 70. This group has also shared biased perceptions and stereotypes like being filthy, disobeying the traffic rules, disrespectful and lousy as speaking loudly at public buses or making noises at their homes, immoral, and being 'too fertile' and hedonist. Being 'too fertile' and hedonist were attributed to Syrian women as "they love roaming around and making children instead of working". The Syrian refugees were scapegoated for tricking Turkish men into marriage, stealing peoples' husbands and for high youth unemployment rate. There was only one member who does not share these perceptions about the Syrian refugees in that the member blamed employers and Turkish men for such financial problems. The threat felt by the group of neighbors was also felt by the group of kinswomen in that they felt under threat of being minority, and felt like becoming 'second-class citizens'. While in the group of neighbors, there was not any hate expression, in this group, there were clear expressions of hate like "I hate them all" and "I want to set them on fire" along with discriminative behavior reflected in their discourses like coming together to close down the education center opened for Syrian children and the desire to seclude Syrian refugees from using any health services. Similar to the group neighbors, such perceptions root in hearsays, stories and limited interaction with the refugees. The rumors and hearsays about Syrian refugees getting subsidy from the state, shopping at the groceries for free, getting into Turkish universities without getting any exam and granting Turkish citizenship are feeding these negative perceptions.

The group of hemşehriler consisted of thirteen members whose ages range between 52 and 66. Their biased perceptions and stereotypes are the Syrian refugees being immoral, violent, lousy, 'too fertile', and stinky. Being 'too fertile' lead the members to feel under the threat of being minority. The rumors that the state

provides child support for each Syrian child is raising this feeling of threat as it was the case for the group of neighbors and the group of kinswomen. The Syrian refugees are scapegoated for spread of diseases that are ‘peculiar to Syrian refugees’, increasing crime rates, increasing unemployment rate and stealing peoples’ husbands and destroying families. Just like for the group of kinswomen, this group felt like becoming ‘second-class citizens’ and like their country has been invaded by the refugees. The group also commented that with other neighbors in the apartment building came together not to rent out any flat to Syrian refugees. According to the group members’ discourses, such biased perceptions, stereotypes, scapegoating and discriminative behavior reflected in their conversations are stemming from hearsays, rumors and perceptions that Syrian refugees are not paying any taxes, getting universities without any exam, granting Turkish citizenship, and ‘living as if they are living in their own countries, and their rent is subsidized by the state. Cultural differences like wearing chador and polygamy urge the group members’ negative perceptions as it is the case for the group of neighbors.

The group of friends and acquaintances has six members. Their age range was between 46 and 65. The group has also biased perceptions and stereotypes as Syrian refugees making a fool of Turkish people, being dissatisfied with everything, and being filthy, lousy and impolite. Like the other ‘gün’ groups mentioned above, Syrian refugees are scapegoated for economic problems in Turkey in that it was stated by the ‘gün’ members that Syrian refugees are hindering Turkish economic growth. It was the only group that does not have any discriminative discourses or behavior reflected in their conversations. However, even though all the group members can speak Arabic properly, the members commented that they do not want to integrate with the Syrian refugees because of lack of trust towards the refugees.

Like the other groups, they also claimed that the state provides subsidies to the refugees. The members complained that Syrian refugees are not learning Turkish despite the fact that they came to Turkey a couple of years ago.

The group of parents consisted of seven members in the age-range of 49 and 65. Their biased perceptions and stereotypes consist of disobeying social norms, being lousy, immoral and 'too fertile', disobeying traffic rules, and being disrespectful. As in the other groups, this groups' members also complain that Syrian refugees have 'too many' family members in their houses, that's why they are lousy. There is also the perception that Syrian refugee women 'giving too many births'. Just like the group of neighbors, this group also scapegoated the Syrian refugees for increasing crime rates. The members commented on the feeling of under threat of being minority as a result of high birth rates as well. As in the group of kinswomen, this groups had also expressed hate towards the refugees. Two of the group members had stated that with their neighbors at the apartment, they came together and made a decision to throw the Syrian refugees out of their flat. The same as in the other 'gün' groups, these negative perceptions root in the lack of trust and lack of interaction between the refugees and 'gün' participants.

In comparison of five 'gün' groups' perceptions, the 'gün' groups largely consist of low to middle-class female participants with different backgrounds which were stated under section of Five Case Studies of 'Gün' Groups. All the groups have biased perceptions and stereotypes towards the Syrian refugees as being 'too fertile', filthy, lousy and disrespectful and immoral. The refugees are scapegoated for increasing crime rates, stealing peoples' husbands and increasing unemployment rates by the 'gün' groups. The data also indicates that hosting large number of refugees leads to feeling under threat and as if 'their country' is invaded by refugees.

There are also expressions of hate and discriminative behavior shown in the members' discourses, except for the group of friends and acquaintances. The data on the group of friends and acquaintances, whose members can speak Arabic properly, also indicates that language is not the only obstacle in integration of Syrian refugees into host communities. Even though all members can speak Arabic, they commented on their lack of trust towards the Syrian refugees. Along with language obstacle and lack of trust, lack of interaction and cultural differences between the two communities nourish biased perceptions, stereotypes, scapegoating, social boundaries and discriminative discourses. This comparison of the 'gün' groups' perceptions manifest that all these factors, lack of trust, lack of interaction, language obstacle and cultural differences, are reciprocally shaping these negative perceptions (see Table 1).

Table 1: A Comparison of the 'Gün' Groups' Perceptions

	Group Name	Number of Members	Age-Range	Biased Perceptions and Stereotypes	Scapegoating	'Us' vs. 'Them'	Discriminative Discourses
Group 1	The Group of Neighbors	7	21-50	Filthy, unreliable, immoral and greedy, ready to fight	Increasing crime rates, housing prices, stealing peoples' jobs, stealing peoples' husbands	Feeling of invasion of their social areas as if 'us' being refugees vs. 'them' citizens of Turkey, feeling of being alienated	Desire to put the all refugees in camps, and not wanting the refugees to be in their social space
Group 2	The Group of Kinwomen	12	49-70	Filthy, immoral, disobeying the traffic rules, disrespectful and lousy, 'too fertile', hedonist	Stealing peoples' husbands, high youth unemployment rate	Feeling under threat of being minority, becoming second-class citizens	Hate expression, closing down an education center opened for Syrian children, desire to seclude the refugees from using health services
Group 3	The Group of Hemşhriiler	13	52-66	Immoral, violent, lousy, 'too fertile', stinking	Spread of diseases, increasing crime rates, increasing unemployment rate, stealing peoples' husbands	Becoming second-class citizens, feeling of invasion of Turkey by refugees, feeling under the threat of being minority	Not allowing to rent out any flat in their apartment building
Group 4	The Group of Friends and Acquaintances	6	46-65	Making a fool of Turkish people, being dissatisfied with everything, filthy, lousy, impolite	Hindering Turkish economic growth	Not enough information	Not enough information
Group 5	The Group of Parents	7	49-65	Disobeying social norms, lousy, immoral, 'too fertile', disobeying traffic rules, disrespectful	Increasing crime rates	Feeling under the threat of being minority	Hate expression, attempting to throw the Syrian refugees out of their houses

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

The main aim of this study has been scrutinizing the perceptions of the refugees by the native population. Specifically, it aimed at finding out the perceptions of the ‘gün’ members towards the Syrian refugees in the case of Mersin, a city which received substantial number of Syrian refugees in Turkey. The results obtained in this research have produced crucial insights, which will be explained below, about the degree of integration and social inclusion of the Syrian refugees into the local community.

The first conclusion drawn from this study is that the ‘gün’ occasions are a significant part of social life in Turkey as they both constitute an arena of action where cultural signals and socialization operate, and also function as “building blocks of society”. The study particularly focus on women because women are considered to be expected to be more sensitive and tolerant towards social issues related with refugees and minorities, and less selfish and more altruistic and welcoming than men. The ‘gün’ groups as small units are significant to conduct a research on since they (re)produce cultural and social norms, (re)form perceptions about the out-group members and (re)generate conflicts, resistance and social exclusion in society. With their dedicated meetings, the ‘gün’ occasions create a space of socialization and interaction by sharing not only personal problems, hearsays, common interests and domestic matters, but also to discuss political, social and financial issues that they encounter in their daily lives. In this social arena, the members give a shape to communal norms and expectations in society. By looking at

these small units, it is concluded that through their group identity, interaction with one another and coherence among members, these groups serve to form and enlarge social norms, identities and shared understandings in society.

In addition to their role as informal financial credit and rotating savings associations in low and middle-income urban households' lives and functioning as "building blocks of society", these occasions hold a certain social power in forming and reforming identities of the members of the out-groups in society. Cultural signals are the ones that the 'gün' members rely on as a road-map on how to define their group and on how to perceive the out-group members. Through these cultural signals, the 'gün' groups' perception towards the out-group are (re)formed. With the social power created through interacting with one another in the concept of 'gün' occasion, the 'gün' groups construct identities, social discourses and norms in everyday life. As the 'gün' groups function as "building blocks of society", and hold a constructive power in formal and informal hierarchies toward the out-group members, they generate social exclusion towards the out-group. Discursive interaction among the members create this constructive power and that also shape public opinion towards the Other/the out-group in society even though they are tiny 'gün' groups as a certain type of 'tiny publics' have powerful means of social exclusion and segregation. With solidarity and cohesion among the members, the 'gün' members apply group boundaries towards the members of the out-group, the Syrian refugees.

The second conclusion drawn from this study is that the perceptions of the 'gün' groups towards the Syrian refugees reveal marginalization of the refugees in the form of discursive exclusion and discriminative behavior reflected in the participants' discourses. The members' perceptions towards the refugees are

substantially negative. These negative perceptions manifested themselves in biased perceptions, stereotyping and hearsays; marginalization by drawing a social boundary through 'us' vs. 'them'; scapegoating; and discriminative behavior revealed in the 'gün' members' discourses.

Stereotyping reveals itself in the members' discourses as negative attitudes, awareness of the refugees, and over-categorization and over-generalization towards the refugees. The data indicates that discourses by the 'gün' participants about the Syrian refugees reveal stereotypical content and approach. Stereotyping traits attributed to the Syrian refugees by the 'gün' members being filthy, unreliable, immoral, and greedy, being 'too fertile', and being too noisy. Through the dialogical interaction with one another, 'gün' participants (re)produce stereotyping about the Syrian refugees. The data also shows that the limited interaction between Syrian refugees and these local women has led to making over-generalizations about these social interactions and embrace a stereotypical perception. The 'gün' participants have also biased perceptions as the refugees being aggressive, dangerous, violent and always ready to fight. What the discourses of the 'gün' members bespeak that these biased perceptions stem from hearsays and personal stories on Syrian refugees stemming from personal observations of the 'gün' participants and socially limited interaction. By exchanging these hearsays and personal stories in the context of 'gün', the biased perceptions towards the Syrian refugees and stereotyping have been cultivated in everyday conversations. Moreover, there have been expectations of 'gün' members for Syrian refugees to obey the social rules, to dress in a certain style, not to speak too loudly and not being noisy in their houses, and to act in a certain manner. Once these expectations are not met, social boundary between the 'gün'

members and Syrian refugees is underlined by the members through stereotyping, biased perceptions and ‘us’ vs. ‘them’.

Prejudice and marginalization have also their roots in polarized social categories as ‘us’ vs. ‘them’ in the ‘gün’ members’ discourses. The Syrian refugees are differentiated and demarcated by drawing a discursive boundary between the Self, the ‘gün’ groups, and the Other, the Syrian refugees through pronouns and possessives like ‘us’ vs. ‘them’, ‘we’ vs. ‘they’ and ‘ours’ vs. ‘theirs’. In addition, there is also a “victim-victimizer reversal” in the eyes of the ‘gün’ members that the members have made an emphasis on feeling as if ‘we’/the ‘gün’ members are the refugees while ‘they’/the Syrian refugees are citizens of Turkey. The participants’ feeling as if they are the refugees is based the perception that they feel like their country has been ‘invaded silently’ by the refugees. These pronouns and possessives enable the ‘gün’ members drawing a discursive boundary where social distance is formed and maintained towards the Syrian refugees.

Scapegoating is another pattern that reveals in the discourses of the ‘gün’ members, and leads to prejudgments and social exclusion of the Syrian refugees. The chosen victims of scapegoats by the ‘gün’ participants are the Syrian refugees. The refugees have scapegoated for ‘stealing peoples’ jobs, boosting up housing prices, reversing Turkish economic growth and overburdening social services. The ‘gün’ groups have blamed the Syrian refugees for increasing poverty, unemployment and crime rates. Destroying family structure and an increase in divorce rates are among the reasons behind the ‘gün’ members’ negative perceptions, and they are the grounds for scapegoating. Looking at the data, this study concludes that the ‘gün’ groups project their own aggression on the refugees for economic, political and social issues in Turkey.

Based on the ‘gün’ members’ discourses, this study also concludes that marginalization of the Syrian refugees is not limited with prejudiced perceptions. There are discourses on discriminative behavior and hate expression. According to the participants’ discourses, the Syrian refugees are exempted from housing services in that some ‘gün’ members stated that with other neighbors, they came together and made a decision not to rent out or to sell their houses to the Syrian refugees. There are also members who stated that they are trying to throw the refugees from their houses. Such discriminative behaviors and hate expression revealed in the ‘gün’ participants’ discourses are one of the reasons behind social exclusion and marginalization of the Syrian refugees in Mersin.

The third conclusion of this study is that the discourses of the ‘gün’ members demonstrate that such biased and negative perceptions are stemming from lack of interaction between the ‘gün’ members and the Syrian refugees. Only one participant out of forty-five stated that the participant has been interacting with her Syrian neighbors and it is because the participant is being good and can speak Arabic properly that she has good relations with her Syrian neighbors. In line with this statement, this study also concludes that another reason behind such perceptions is that language is a big obstacle between the two communities. Lack of interaction not only nurtures biased perceptions, but also lead to discursive exclusion of the refugees because of language obstacle. In addition, the data reveals that lack of trust of the ‘gün’ members towards the Syrian refugees is another root of lack of interaction and biased perceptions. The stereotypes and biased perceptions like the Syrian refugees being violent, aggressive and dangerous and immoral are cultivated in lack of trust towards the refugees. Lack of interaction, language obstacle and lack of trust are fostering one another and (re)shaping the perceptions of the ‘gün’ groups as well.

Furthermore, cultural differences, like polygamy, hosting guests late at night and different style of clothing, are accompanied by the lack of trust, language obstacle and lack of interaction between the Syrian refugees and the ‘gün’ members, and encourage prejudice, stereotypes, social boundaries as ‘us’ vs ‘them’ and social exclusion.

The final conclusion of this thesis is that within the context of the ‘gün, the identities of the Syrian refugees are formed and reformed through the discourses of the ‘gün’ members in everyday life. Through personal stories and hearsays, their choice of words, biased perceptions and stereotypes, and by drawing social boundary as ‘us’ vs. ‘them’, the ‘gün’ groups function as “building blocks of society” and shape the Syrian refugees’ identities. The ‘gün’ occasions are social spaces where identity formation and production and reproduction of marginalization of the Syrian refugees take place through dialogical interaction in everyday life. How the ‘gün’ members talk about and perceive the Syrian refugees is continuous everyday reproduction of the marginalization and identity formation. Quintessentially, the results of this study have shown that the perceptions of the ‘gün’ groups towards the Syrian refugees can give crucial implications, as mentioned above, about the degree of social inclusion and integration into local community and how the identities of the Syrian refugees are formed in the case of Mersin in that there has been a social exclusion and lack of integration stemming from lack of trust, language obstacle and lack of interaction between the two communities.

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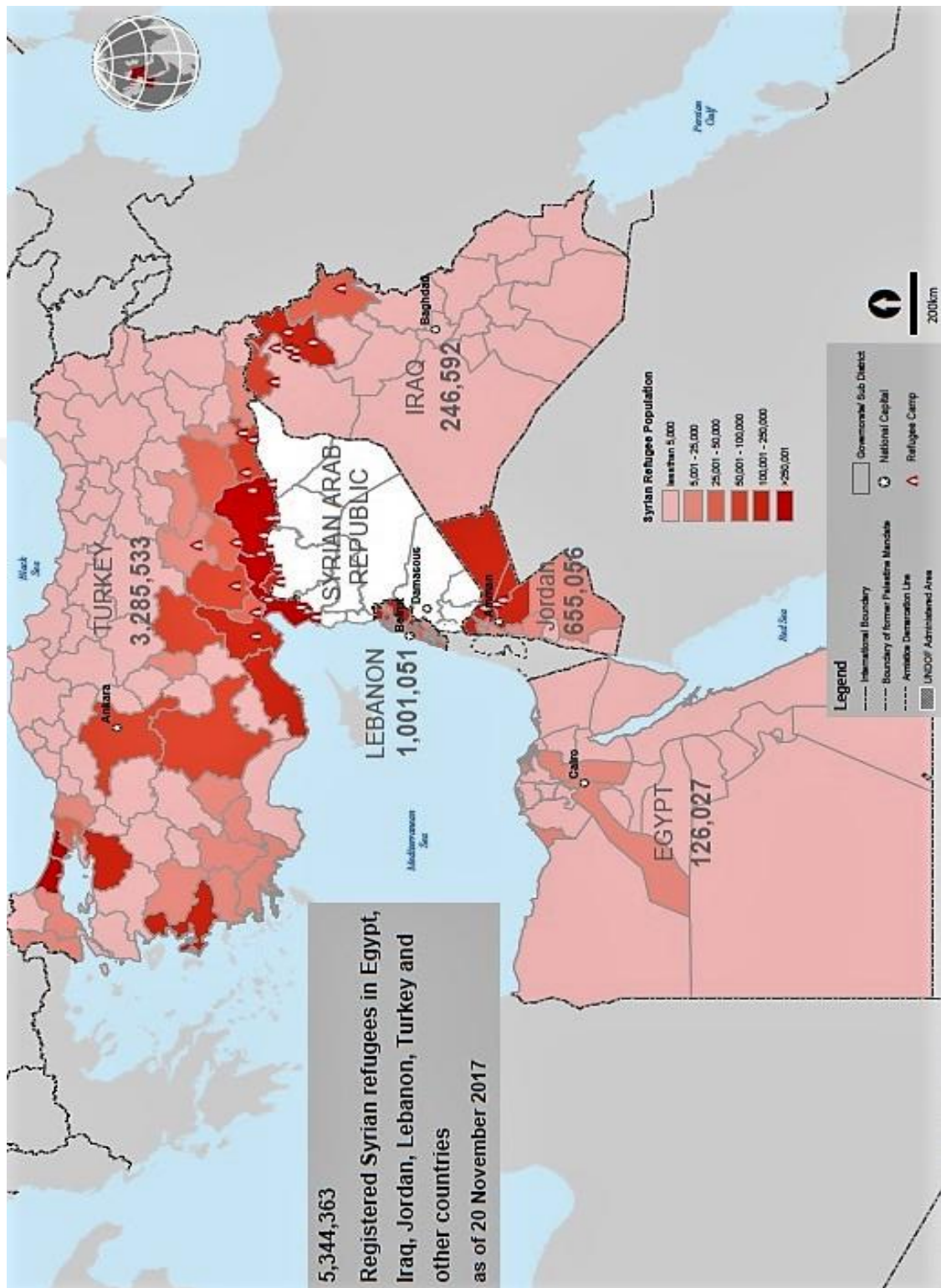
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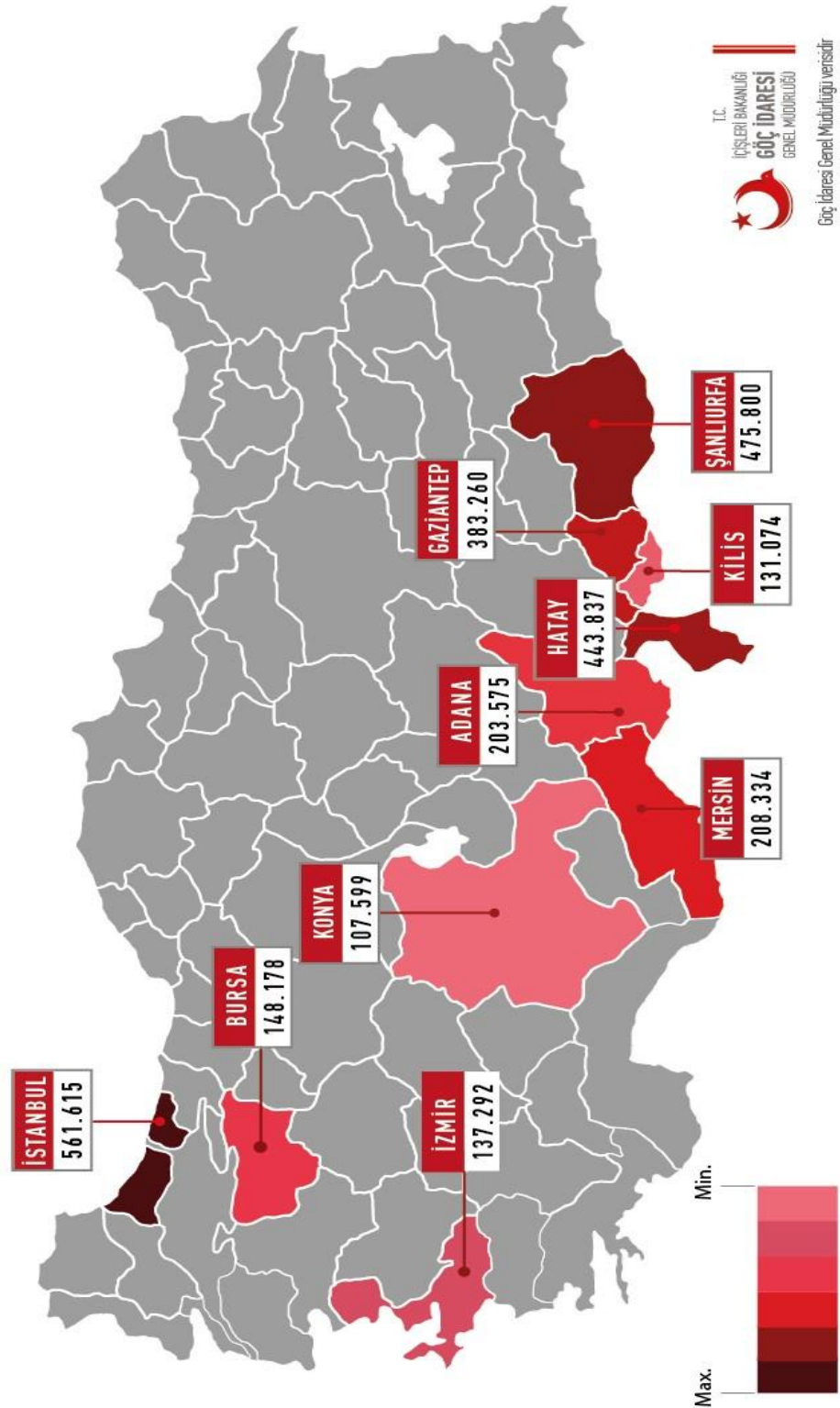
APPENDICES

Appendix A: Estimated number of displaced Syrians in November 2017, p.5



Source: UNHCR: (Syria Situation Map, 2017)

Appendix C: Dispersion of Syrian Refugees under the Temporary Protection Status among the First Ten Cities as of June 2018, p.10



Source: İçişleri Bakanlığı Göç İdaresi Genel Müdürlüğü: (Göç İstatistikleri: Geçici Koruma, 2018)

Appendix D: Dispersion of Syrian Refugees under the Temporary Protection Status by cities in Turkey as of June 2018, p.10

ÜLKEMİZDE GEÇİCİ KORUMA KAPSAMINDA BULUNAN SURİYELİLERİN DAĞILIMI 13.06.2018 (ALFABETİK)									
İL SIRA	İLLER	KAYIT EDİLEN	NÜFUS	İL NÜFUSU İLE KARŞILAŞTIRMA YÜZDESİ	İL SIRA	İLLER	KAYIT EDİLEN	NÜFUS	İL NÜFUSU İLE KARŞILAŞTIRMA YÜZDESİ
	TOPLAM	3.576.337	80.810.525	4,43%		TOPLAM	3.576.337	80.810.525	4,43%
1	ADANA	204.200	2.216.475	9,21%	42	KAHRAMANMARAŞ	100.403	1.127.623	8,90%
2	ADIYAMAN	29.643	615.076	4,82%	43	KARABÜK	794	244.453	0,32%
3	AFYONKARAHİSAR	3.620	715.693	0,51%	44	KARAMAN	658	246.672	0,27%
4	AĞRI	1.139	536.285	0,21%	45	KARS	138	287.654	0,05%
5	AKSARAY	2.695	402.404	0,67%	46	KASTAMONU	1.385	372.373	0,37%
6	AMASYA	621	329.888	0,19%	47	KAYSERİ	74.612	1.376.722	5,42%
7	ANKARA	98.854	5.445.026	1,82%	48	KIRIKKALE	1.058	278.749	0,38%
8	ANTALYA	1.059	2.364.396	0,04%	49	KIRKLARELİ	2.435	356.050	0,68%
9	ARDAHAN	107	97.096	0,11%	50	KIRŞEHİR	915	234.529	0,39%
10	ARTVİN	33	166.143	0,02%	51	KİLİS	130.405	136.319	95,66%
11	AYDIN	11.341	1.080.839	1,05%	52	KOCAELİ	44.646	1.883.270	2,37%
12	BALIKESİR	3.008	1.204.824	0,25%	53	KONYA	107.664	2.180.149	4,94%
13	BARTIN	100	193.577	0,05%	54	KÜTAHYA	579	572.256	0,10%
14	BATMAN	21.268	585.252	3,63%	55	MALATYA	26.231	786.676	3,33%
15	BAYBURT	28	80.417	0,03%	56	MANİSA	12.162	1.413.041	0,86%
16	BİLECİK	453	221.693	0,20%	57	MARDİN	92.394	809.719	11,41%
17	BİNGÖL	836	273.354	0,31%	58	MERSİN	208.338	1.793.931	11,61%
18	BİTLİS	966	341.474	0,28%	59	MUĞLA	13.429	938.751	1,43%
19	BOLU	2.109	303.184	0,70%	60	MUŞ	1.435	404.544	0,35%
20	BURDUR	8.747	264.779	3,30%	61	NEVŞEHİR	8.901	292.365	3,04%
21	BURSA	148.333	2.936.803	5,05%	62	NİĞDE	3.624	352.727	1,03%
22	ÇANAKKALE	2.858	530.417	0,54%	63	ORDU	578	742.341	0,08%
23	ÇANKIRI	400	186.074	0,21%	64	OSMANİYE	54.175	527.724	10,27%
24	ÇORUM	2.860	528.422	0,54%	65	RİZE	861	331.041	0,26%
25	DENİZLİ	12.097	1.018.735	1,19%	66	SAKARYA	13.855	990.214	1,40%
26	DIYARBAKIR	32.877	1.699.901	1,93%	67	SAMSUN	3.460	1.312.990	0,26%
27	DÜZCE	1.354	377.610	0,36%	68	SİİRT	4.519	324.394	1,39%
28	EDİRNE	874	406.855	0,21%	69	SİNOP	101	207.427	0,05%
29	ELAZIĞ	11.579	583.671	1,98%	70	SİVAS	3.219	621.301	0,52%
30	ERZİNCAN	98	231.511	0,04%	71	ŞANLIURFA	474.531	1.985.753	23,90%
31	ERZURUM	935	760.476	0,12%	72	ŞİRİNAK	14.924	503.236	2,97%
32	ESKİŞEHİR	3.405	860.620	0,40%	73	TEKİRDAĞ	10.537	1.005.463	1,05%
33	GAZİANTEP	382.604	2.005.515	19,08%	74	TOKAT	1.114	602.086	0,19%
34	GİRESUN	127	437.393	0,03%	75	TRABZON	2.906	786.326	0,37%
35	GÜMÜŞHANE	70	170.173	0,04%	76	TUNCELİ	41	82.498	0,05%
36	HAKKARİ	5.799	275.761	2,10%	77	UŞAK	2.606	364.971	0,71%
37	HATAY	443.760	1.575.226	28,17%	78	VAN	1.898	1.106.891	0,17%
38	İĞDIR	89	194.775	0,05%	79	YALOVA	3.890	251.203	1,55%
39	ISPARTA	7.147	433.830	1,65%	80	YOZGAT	3.318	418.650	0,79%
40	İSTANBUL	561.848	15.029.231	3,74%	81	ZONGULDAK	319	596.892	0,05%
41	İZMİR	137.338	4.279.677	3,21%					

Source: İçişleri Bakanlığı Göç İdaresi Genel Müdürlüğü: (Göç İstatistikleri: Geçici Koruma, 2018)

Appendix E: List of Participants

The Group of Neighbors

Fadime Hanım
Bilgin Hanım
Şebnem Hanım
Hayriye Hanım
Hatice Hanım
Işıl Hanım
Yasemin Hanım

The Group of Hemşehriler

Zerrin Hanım
Günay Hanım
Bediha Hanım
Şule Hanım
Elvin Hanım
Buse Hanım
Ayşe Hanım
Cemre Hanım

The Group of Kinswomen

Nurhan Hanım
Hüsniye Hanım
Fatma Hanım
Şerife Hanım
Deniz Hanım
Nuray Hanım
Zahide Hanım
Pınar Hanım
Sıdıka Hanım
Gül Hanım
Nesrin Hanım
Hatun Hanım

Pervin Hanım
Cansu Hanım
Ayşegül Hanım
Kübra Hanım
Pelin Hanım

The Group of Friends and Acquaintances

Münevver Hanım
Nermin Hanım
Selin Hanım
Saadet Hanım
Ayşe Nur Hanım
Yeliz Hanım

The Group of Parents

Mevlide Hanım
Merve Hanım
Fadime Hanım
Ayşe Hanım
Zekiye Hanım
Banu Hanım
Kezban Hanım