

COLLECTIVE IDENTITY IN FEMINIST ALTERNATIVE NEW MEDIA: THE  
CASE OF 5HARFLILER.COM

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Approval of the Graduate School of Social Sciences

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## ABSTRACT

### COLLECTIVE IDENTITY IN THE FEMINIST ALTERNATIVE NEW MEDIA: THE CASE OF 5HARFLILER.COM

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This thesis assesses 5harfliler.com, a feminist alternative new media product, in terms of its construction of a collective identity. The focus will be on the construction of the collective identity in the feminist alternative new media opposing the major discourses in power and the property of the collective identity being positioned in a discursive framework. This research indicates the applicability of the theories on collective identity construction to the feminist alternative new media. It raises the question of whether 5harfliler fosters an identity construction in its challenge to dominant discourses of patriarchal power through discursive productions. Thus, the study deploys a discourse analysis of the articles on the website's prominent topics. As a result of the discourse analysis, it is seen that 5harfliler is a place of problematization in which patriarchal codes are contested through discursive productions, yet these productions do not meet the factors for the construction of a collective identity.

**Keywords:** Feminism, Feminist Movement, Alternative New Media, Collective Identity, 5harfliler.com

## ÖZ

### FEMİNİST ALTERNATİF YENİ MEDYADA KOLEKTİF KİMLİK: 5HARFLİLER.COM ÖRNEĞİ

Acar, Ezgi

Yüksek Lisans, Toplumsal Cinsiyet ve Kadın Çalışmaları Bölümü

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Bu araştırma, feminist bir alternatif yeni medya ürünü olan 5harfliler.com'u kolektif bir kimlik inşası açısından değerlendirmektedir. Araştırmanın odak noktası, iktidarın söylemlerine karşı çıkan feminist alternatif yeni medyada kolektif kimliğin inşası ve bu kolektif kimliğin söylemsel bir çerçevede konumlanma özelliği olacaktır. Bu araştırma, kolektif kimlik inşası teorilerinin feminist alternatif yeni medyaya uygulanabilirliğini göstermektedir. Aynı zamanda, 5harfliler'in söylemsel üretimler yoluyla ataerkil iktidarın egemen söylemlerine karşı bir kimlik inşasını teşvik edip etmediği sorusunu gündeme getirmektedir. Bu nedenle, web sitesinin öne çıkan konuları hakkında yazılan makalelerinin söylem analizi verilecektir. Söylem analizi sonucunda, 5harfliler'in ataerkil kodların söylemsel üretim yoluyla tartışıldığı bir sorunsallaştırma yeri olduğu, ancak bu söylemsel üretimlerin kolektif bir kimliğin inşa edilmesine yönelik faktörleri karşılamadığı görülmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Feminizm, Feminist Hareket, Alternatif Yeni Medya, Kolektif Kimlik, 5harfliler.com

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION AND THEORETHICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 1.1. Introduction

Patriarchy, in other words, men's domination is one of the main founding dynamics of society. Patriarchy is a dynamic that circulates through all the spheres, areas and relations of society; thus, it is a pervasive form of power. It imposes and sustains a binary understanding of gender and establishes women as the oppressed social group and men as the oppressing social group and excludes other genders. Therefore, this gender hierarchy is rooted in all areas, including the private and public sphere, and in the area of politics, law, and finally the areas of culture, ideology, and discourse (Savran & Sirman, 2019). It further creates its ideals for these areas, such patriarchy gives attributed roles and ideal images for the genders. The roles attributed to women in patriarchal societies are disseminated through various socio-cultural tools. Generally, the mainstream media reproduces stereotypical roles for women by legitimizing the existing system as well as serving as the carrier of patriarchal discourse and ideology. Patriarchy produces a "patterned subjectivity that bears some relations to cultural conceptions of masculinity-femininity" (Waylen et al., 2013, 40) or in other words, a "refiguring of flesh in ways that adhere to normative gender codes" (Stryker, 2006 in Waylen et al., 2013, 40). Feminists, as opposed to this construction of subjectivity, found ways to construct their subjectivities throughout the feminist movements.

This thesis will focus on the collective identity that may be constructed in the feminist alternative new media as opposed to the power mechanisms, and the identity's property of being positioned in a discursive framework; that is, the feminist alternative media as a space for the construction of collective identity through

discursive productions. My primary aim in this thesis is to explore the collective identity that is constructed in the feminist new media 5harfliler. By relying on a post-structuralist framework, I will attempt to show that the collective identity is a discursive construction, in that it is in motion and always changing. However, even though this research has started with the aim of finding the collective identity construction in 5harfliler, it turned out in the analysis that they fail to construct it. Thus, this research will indicate that the collective identity in the 5harfliler cannot be observed. Therefore, bearing the concept of collective identity constructed and situated within a discursive framework in the feminist alternative media, I will suggest that 5harfliler.com is not a place that this happens, to put it all in the simplest terms.

Even though the discussions on whether the feminist subject is possible or even the theories on the conceptualization of the feminist subject are beyond the scope of this research, I see that it is important to elaborate on the feminist subject that women have been struggling to formulate. In the contemporary social and political context, one can say that one of the most important issues of feminist thought and practice is feminist self-identification (Ünal Abaday, 2015, 422). Some argue that whether one is self-identified as a feminist or not, they could be a bearer of the feminist inclination. The identity theories and criticisms have led feminist scholars to define what the gendered subject or the feminist identity is. The discussions on the feminist subject have emerged at the point where the modern subject is criticized. This thesis will indicate that those discussions of the feminist subject can be examined at three levels throughout the waves of the feminist movement.

The process of adopting a feminist identity begins with recognizing the oppression and discrimination against women. In the women's movement throughout history, women have been contesting the patriarchal codes. Feminists have transformed these codes of patriarchal structure, and its gender binary system, and the areas shaped by this system of hierarchy. Savran argues that women can only eliminate the power that oppresses them by transforming and reconstructing each of these spheres in

concrete terms (Savran & Sirman, 2019). Consequently, this is something that can be accomplished by contesting the patriarchal power in every field of oppression. Besides, the feminist movement utilized alternative media as a means of confrontation. Thus, the conceptualization of the alternative media in this study is essential, since alternative media can be explained as a place where the contestation happens, and a place where the constructed identity may be observed at the same time.

If feminism sees patriarchal power as problematic, every institution in which it leaks becomes a field of struggle for feminists. As I said, media is one of those institutions. Alternative media, as a field of the struggle of the feminist movement, attempts to change existing media structures and create new forms of media to make the oppressed voices to be heard and improve their social positions. The feminist media struggle aims to increase the number of women working in the media, and to prepare a wide range of women's experiences to be seen, and a particular media content that aims to represent the others in society. It also includes the criticism of women's representation in the media, and the challenge to change the policies in mainstream media regulations and carry out activities to prevent gender discrimination or stereotyped prejudices in the media towards women. With the widespread use of the Internet and social media, the women's movement gained a new dimension and the view that the Internet opened a new field for feminist alternative media began to be widely accepted.

In the Gender and Women's Studies field, many types of research have been conducted on the relation between gender and media throughout the beginning of the field of study, however, most of them covered the issue of the representation of women in mainstream media. Although studies combining the concepts of gender and alternative media have been produced in recent years, the number of studies indicating the alternative new media's role in the construction of a collective identity as the feminist identity in this social movement is not sufficient yet. Although similar researches have been done (Mackay and Dallaire, 2014) (Ayers, 2001), locally there

are no researches that are questioning the possibility of collective identity formation in an online feminist media in Turkey. There have been some research on feminist alternative new media products until recently, mostly focusing on the women's organization's websites (Kardam & Ecevit, 2002), (Tekvar, 2017) or women's email groups, which are also extensions of women's organizations (Göker, 2007), which can be defined as studies on Computer-Mediated Communication within the feminist movement. Moreover, the recent research on feminist alternative new media has grown, such as researches on the formation of the women's subject in personal blogs (Depeli, 2015), and the new media being the new activism space for feminism (Eslen-Ziya, 2013), and so on. In terms of the formation of identity, the researches mostly focus on how one forms or explores her own identity or being able to establish an identity through Computer-Mediated Communication. Currently, there are a couple of works on the 5harfliler. One of them covers the use of language and humorous speech by the 5harfliler and has questioned how humor opened up a field of resistance within the alternative new media to the feminist movement based on satire's social function (Birer, 2017, 130). Another recent study on the 5harfliler is conducted upon its function that constructs a digital sisterhood space for women, based on the collective memory work it constitutes (Göker, 2019). This study will analyze the website 5harfliler.com in terms of its ability to construct a collective identity as being the result of the contestation to the patriarchal discourses in an online space that being one of the feminist alternative new media products. To show that, my main focus when analyzing the 5harfliler will be on the critiques against the patriarchal discourses. This research will contribute to the literature because it will explore the construction of collective identity in an online community through its discursive productions. Further, this research may contribute to the new media studies by exploring the idea of the formation of collective identities in online communities as well.

5harfliler.com is a website, which is composed of a group of women who gave this name to the site based on the society's refraining from saying the Turkish word "women", which has authors who often discuss every topic that may be on the



agenda of women, mostly in a humorous language yet with a rebellious tone. The website includes articles from various topics that cover the daily lives of women and the challenges they face, and mostly problematization of the patriarchal system. The experiences of many different women become visible as they can contribute to the site by commenting under the articles, thus it maintains the ability to interact. The website therefore gives space to publicity and also anonymity, and consequently established a community. From the fact that 5harfliler.com is a new media product, I will also elaborate on the conceptualization of the alternative new media in this study's second chapter, where I will represent the feminist movement related to the concept of alternative media to lay the basis for 5harfliler being a feminist alternative media product.

In the first chapter of the study, I will present the theoretical framework of this study. I will first clarify how subjectivity and identity are different concepts, and then I will discuss the conceptualizations of the term identity concerning three approaches. That is, first I will present the socio-linguistic view on the identity construction to indicate how women, by expressing themselves in written or verbal form, constructs a certain structure of their identity. This conceptualization will lead us to a post-structuralist account of subjectivity, which I will employ the particular property of the post-structuralist account of the subject being in a continuous process. Lastly, I will clarify what collective identity is, which is the main theoretical focus of this research. It is also the section in which my argument's foundation is formulated. I will indicate what Taylor and Whittier (1992) have formulated as three factors on the construction of collective identity, which are boundaries, consciousness, and negotiation. I will argue that 5harfliler's discursive productions do not meet the requirements of these factors. Plus, as Mackay and Dallaire (2014) suggest, I will argue that this concept of collective identity that I offer can be positioned within the framework of the post-structuralist account of discursive subjectivity that is always under construction. In this research, I believe, the collective identity does not make an essentialist mistake and does not represent the identity as being passive, which is discursively constructed within the framework of power relations.

In the second chapter, I will give an extensive explanation of the feminist alternative media production, since it is essential for my study to situate itself based on the historical background of the feminist movement. Firstly, I will show the conceptualization of alternative media, since the feminist movement uses alternative media as a tool for its acceleration. That is to say, women have opposed the patriarchal discourses and their oppression on themselves, and they make their voices heard and spread the movement and sometimes revitalize the movement through alternative media. Since 5harfliler is a place in which this tradition may be continuing, it is important to show how the feminist movement has progressed until now. Therefore, I will attempt to clarify the history, media products, discourses and collective identity of the three waves of the feminist movement in that chapter. In conclusion, I will show that the alternative feminist media is now extended to the new media space, and thus I will demonstrate what 5harfliler is made of.

In the last chapter, I will deploy a discourse analysis on 5harfliler to indicate that how the contestation of the patriarchal discourses is seen through their problematization, however, they are not enough to translate into a collective identity. That is, I will assess their discursive productions based on the factors for the collective identity construction as presented by Taylor and Whitter (1999), bearing in mind the post-structuralist identity theories that suggest identity can be positioned in a discursive framework that is constantly reconstructed and thus moving. For the discourse analysis, I have used their categorization based on tags in which they organize their content, and I have chosen the most prominent contents of the website. The tags I have chosen are beauty, motherhood, marriage for the first section of their contestation of the attributed subjectivity of the patriarchal system, the tags gender, sexuality, trans, femicide for their discussions on the most prominent topics of sexual liberation, femicides and the body politics in which they coincide with aims of the LGBT+ movement as being a result of their participatory property. Also, I have deliberately chosen the tags Gezi resistance, abortion ban and İstanbul Convention to see their contribution to the major political debates to explore the similarities

between them and other feminist media. Lastly, I have dissected their narrative pattern as being a translation of the term mansplaining and examined all of these tags in the context of their discursive productions and found out that 5harfliler contests the major discourses yet does not construct a collective identity.

## **1.2. Theoretical Framework**

In this chapter, I will explore the concept of identity and identity construction within the context and sample of this study in which I will investigate whether 5harfliler constructs a collective identity. I will analyze the concept of collective identity within a formulation of its relation to power mechanisms, since the sample of this study exhibits a contestation to discursive power, and through these, a subversion occurs in the discursive productions. In the study, I will also indicate how these power relations are formed and resistance have emerged, thus, to explore whether feminist movement is a systematic movement that opposes power and produces subversive discourses, I will also explore whether this resistance have constructed a collective identity. Therefore, the concept of collective identity will be the main focus in this study and thus in this theoretical framework.

Since the power relations are essential to be present in the construction, I will base the formulations for collective identity that are used for the examination of new social movements, however, I believe that these formulations can be applied to feminist community practices as well, which I will indicate the reasons in this chapter. Since one of the purposes of this research is to indicate how women construct their identities even though the patriarchal thought challenges women to fit in an attributed subjectivity, I want to indicate what women have constructed through the feminist movements as their identities. Thus, I will take the concept of collective identity as the main theoretical framework in this study, since it may indicate the identity constructed as a result of the feminist movement throughout history. As I have said, I will clarify what collective identity is, but firstly, I will explain what other discussions on identity are presented by the socio-linguistic theory and the

post-structuralist theory since I will lay the concept in discursive productions, thus these approaches are useful as well.

The conceptualizations on identity and difference have become essential in the political, social and cultural theory in contemporary debates. The impact of the new social movements on society thus has been very efficient, which I will elaborate on in the next sections on collective identity. As Ünal Abaday shows in her doctoral thesis (2015), “challenging the oppressive conditions in society, identity politics signifies a particular way of making politics based on the assertion of distinctiveness and demand for recognition” (2015, 22). However, showing the progress of identity conceptualizations and theories does not reconcile with the aim of this research. The new social movement theory is the first theory that examines the collective actions in identity-based social movements, and according to this theory, “these new movements are organized on post-material values, rather than on an exclusive concern on economic survival and signify a shift to a post-industrial society” (Touraine, 1981 in Ünal Abaday, 2015, 23). Therefore, with the post-material values in hand, identity politics became an area that makes the unified claims that oppressed groups heard and challenged the oppression mechanisms and discrimination of that certain groups (Ünal Abaday, 2015, 23).

However, there have been criticisms against the current identity politics which often suggest that the experience-based emphasis on the differences among society makes identity politics prone to an essentialist view. Thus, it says that identity politics then create an essential core of the constructed identities (Ünal Abaday, 2015, 25). These criticisms are given by the post-structuralist view on identity that I will present in this chapter. To sum up, in these critiques of the notion of the modern subject, “subjectivity is often theorized as an effect of the social and political context and the unified notion of the self is replaced with a fragmented, multiple, fluid self” (Ünal Abaday, 2015, 25). However, some argue that this notion also opens the door to the constructionist accounts of selfhood.

Before presenting the identity debates on sociolinguistic, post-structuralist and constructivist accounts, I want to explain what collective subjectivity is, since it is a notion that unites the concepts of the subject and identity, and thus will help us to distinguish between the subject and identity at the end. Domingues (2018) defines the concept of collective subjectivity as “conceptualized as social systems, which are inter-subjectively constituted. They have their properties and cannot be either reduced to individuals ... or reified as independent collective phenomena” (Domingues, 2018, 251). Actors or the holders of the identities within the collective subjectivities or, as Domingues puts, “collectivities” are the social systems. Within these social systems, there are agencies and those agencies that have impacts on each other, or upon nature, etc. (Domingues, 2018, 251). The identities within these subjectivities can be different, and collectivities may involve individuals from different backgrounds and individuals that hold different points of view.

Domingues (1995, in Altuntaş, 2019) claims that when self-conscious agents adopt social attitudes of a social group or community in which they constitute the collectivity, those individuals establish a relation with other social groups by joining and forming their group (Domingues, 1995 in Altuntaş, 2019). In terms of collectivities, social relations then become established with different collectivities. Considering the issue within the concept of feminist activism, different groups and different branches of feminism could gather for a common problem, and this does not mean that they have the same thoughts, experiences, political stances, and identities. Thus, the “structure of a collectivity is not homogeneous, so the individuals do not need to exclude their own identities” (Altuntaş, 2019, 32).

Foucault defines subjectivity and identity as being two different concepts. Besides, Foucault asserts that the “identity categories are one of the effects of power where identity is restrictive and limiting, as it is formed through the regulatory apparatus that defines and subjects individuals” (Mackay and Dallaire, 2014, 562). The term “subjectivity”, then, forms the identity. Also, subjectivation is not “permanent or stable, but rather represents the precarious assertion of identity” (Mackay and

Dallaire, 2014, 562), and as Snow (2001) puts, the concept of collective identity is underlined in the interaction between two or more actors who are conditioned to be social objects (2001, 1). Hence, the interaction among individuals or groups as social objects “is contingent on the reciprocal attribution and avowal of identities” (Snow, 2001, 1).

This thesis will focus on the definition of identity and its formation in three headings. The first one is the linguistic formation of identity, which the sociolinguist feminists use to interpret the identity of women in interaction and communication. This definition will lead us to the post-structuralist approach on the subject, and finally, the concept of collective identity.

### **1.2.1. The Feminist Sociolinguistic Approach to Identity**

It is worth pointing out that one of the tools of the historical marginalization of women is language. Irzik and Parla explained the reflection of this subordination of the language through the phrase of “be oneself talked about”:

The connotations of contamination, humiliation, and moral indulgence carried by the term ‘Be oneself talked about’ have a special place in women's lives, because patriarchal ideologies define women's existence with concepts such as privacy, silence, naturalness, mystery, and construct it as a pre-linguistic field. It is precisely for this reason that, in a sense, because of the silence of the ‘natural’ forms of existence, women are always the ones who are ‘talked about’. In other words, even if they do not do something inappropriate and disgrace themselves, they are always in the language of others, and they are always in the language of men (Irzik and Parla, 2004, 8).

The discussion also shows that language can be used primarily to follow the traces of this discriminatory treatment. Irzik and Parla (2004) have indicated the contradiction between the potential of language to construct the subject and the language of the dominant culture. The possibilities of subjectivity offered by the language require one to distinguish itself from the objects of language and the means of language, establish certain sovereignty on both, and acquire the ability to speak through signs.

However, the language of the patriarchal society made the means of the establishment of the male subject by objectifying women in various ways, making the process of being the subject of language particularly problematic for women. The “speaking woman”, especially the woman speaking in the public sphere, has always been between having a word between subjectivity and objectivity and being possessed by the word itself (Irzik and Parla, 2004, 8).

In the field of women’s identity, Bucholtz and Hall (2005) indicate that there are various researches on social identity theory and speech accommodation theory in social psychology, language ideology and indexicality in linguistic anthropology, and theories of style and models of identity in sociolinguistics (2005, 586). However, Bucholtz and Hall describe their framework that they have proposed as an analysis of identity as constituted in linguistic interaction, and they argue that "identity is a discursive construct that emerges in interaction" (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005, 587). Even though they argue for an identity that is intersubjectively rather than individually produced, their definition of identity is broad, that is, identity is “the social positioning of self and other” (2005, 586-587). They define three principles that they took as the basis for their research. The first one asserts that the identity is seen as an emergent product instead of a pre-existing source of linguistics and other semiotic practices, and thus, it is a social and cultural phenomenon (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005, 587). The second one asserts that identities involve (a) demographic categories at macro-level, (b) local, ethnographically particular cultural positions, and (c) temporary, interactionally positions and roles of participants (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005, 592). The third one asserts that identities can be indexed linguistically through labels, implications, stances, styles or linguistic structures and systems. The fourth one asserts that identities are built relationally through several, often overlapping elements of the relationship between the self and the other, including similarity/difference, authenticity/artifice, and authority/delegitimacy, and the last principle asserts that "identity may be in part intentional, in part habitual and less than fully conscious, in part an outcome of interactional negotiation, a construct of others' perceptions and representations, and in part an outcome of larger ideological

processes and structures" (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005, 585). Bucholtz and Hall indicate what these principles have addressed the following.

The first and second principles challenge narrowly psychological and static views of identity that have circulated widely in the social sciences. The third principle inventories the types of linguistic resources whereby interactants indexically position themselves and the other in discourse. The heart of the model is described in the fourth principle, which highlights the relational foundation of identity. Finally, the fifth principle considers the limits and constraints on individual intentionality in the process of identity construction, while acknowledging the important role that deliberate social action may play in producing identity (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005, 587).

The first principle of identity that asserts identity is emergent is familiar to the post-structuralist theory of performativity, which Butler describes (1990). Even though the idea behind the first principle involves fundamentally different approaches, Bucholtz and Hall argue that it enables us to grasp the idea that identity is constituted through social actions, and especially through language (2005, 588). The first principle shows the idea that with performance, culture, and forms of language, it is possible to maintain an identity that emerges from the "specific conditions of linguistic interaction" (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005, 588). This principle also allows us to recognize identity in the situations that speakers' language use does not conform with the social category they are assigned into, thus, through this language used by the speakers who subvert essentialist preconceptions of linguistic ownerships (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005, 588).

As a way of expressing the self, language is utilized not only by speaking out, but also by the act of writing. Since writing is a monopolized technology in the patriarchal system, women have historically been deprived of the tools and motivation necessary for writing, and these have been partially granted to privileged people (Cameron, 1998, 5). Nevertheless, the act of expressing oneself in writing by challenging all kinds of deprivations and oppressions result in a resistance and may be in a subversion.



Women's autobiographies have become very important for feminist research because women have written down themselves and their experiences. Thus, their identities are also visible in the literary products that they have written. In her research that analyses the usage of literary work and self-narration in the identity construction process, Kehily (1995) cites Volosinov's analysis of language and the description of writing as "a verbal performance in print" which engages in a large-scale ideological dialogue (1995, 27). The use of self-narration as a way of recording and verifying women's experiences has been in the focus of feminist sociolinguistic research. Graham (1984) explores the use of self-narration in survey research and argues that it tends to "fracture women's experience" (Graham, 1984, 104). Through self-expression and memory-work, women in the gender and sexuality groups were able to discuss ways of overdetermined personal narratives of gender and shaped their subjective experiences. Overdetermination is a way of expression and conceptualization of the need and desire to give privilege gender identity over other identities and framing the narration through this conceptualization (Kehily, 1995, 26).

The research on women's writing has included the debates that question the sufficiency of women's writing, and what it should include differentiating from men's writing. Some researchers have argued that in women's writing, not only subjects but also language and methods should be different from that of men. For instance, Stanley (from Kehily, 1995), explores the methodological implications in which the feminist research and autobiography involve, and describes a new version of feminist autobiography that reflects on its production. She defines this production as a problematizing notion of the self (Kehily, 1995, 30), which replaces its unity and stability with "an understanding of self as fragile and continually renewed by acts of memory and writing" (Stanley, from Kehily, 1995, 31). Thus, autobiography or self-narration can produce new versions of the self, and this property of deconstruction of self-narration which allows itself to explore the issues of identity will consequently produce new forms of autobiography in which "past selves are critiqued and identity can be seen as fluid and fragmented" (Kehily, 1995, 30-31).

Additionally, the idea that women should create their written language was criticized as being an essentialist point of view and it should be noted that putting women's writing into a single category or reducing it to a common voice, would lead to ignoring hierarchies among women and silencing many women, since the differences among women also exist (Cameron, 1998, 9). For the purpose of eliminating these critiques, the other two kinds of identity approaches should be examined in more depth for this study. It would be functional to describe the approach in which I have mentioned in this section firstly, which is the post-structuralist theory, then I will move on to the concept of collective identity.

### **1.2.2. The Post-Structuralist Approach to Identity**

The post-structuralist theory states that “human subjectivity is constructed by ideology (Althusser), language (Lacan), or discourse (Foucault), . . . any action performed by that subject must be also to some extent a consequence of those things” (Ashcroft et al., 2000, 8). Since this study will explore the discursive productions as their relations to power mechanisms, I will take that one part of the post-structuralist account of subjectivity, namely the Foucauldian approach.

Foucault argues that subjective forms of experience emerge, are developed and transformed through problematization. Problematization is a set of discursive and non-discursive practices that put anything into the play of right and wrong and establish it as the object of thought (Keskin, 2005, 13). Foucault defines the history of problematization as the history of thought. According to him, thought defines what is right and wrong, and what determines the experience and its subject. For Foucault, thought is something that should be sought in all forms of speech, conduct, or behavior in which an individual emerges as a subject (Keskin, 2005, 13). Foucault states that problematization is shaped around three main axes that are knowledge, power, and ethics. By the axis of ethics, Foucault addresses the relationship one has with the self. According to Foucault, individuals establish their subjectivity as the

subject of knowledge, the subject of power relations, and the ethical subject of their actions. This can be realized by making a historical ontology of them, and there is a consequence of it that these truths are contingent, that the boundaries are not insurmountable and that the individuality and identity imposed by the boundaries are transformable (Keskin, 2005, 14).

This historical ontology aims to make a critique which aims to show that the limits are not insurmountable. This criticism is a historical critique of events that have caused ones to construct themselves as the subject of what we do, think, and say. In other words, it is a critique of the axes of knowledge, power, and ethics, and how these axes come together and form the experiences that we are the subject of and that we recognize ourselves as the subject on a certain axis (Keskin, 2005, 15). According to Foucault, there is a sphere of power at the center of discursive and non-discursive practices that carry out the establishment of experiences that we are introduced as the subjects (Keskin, 2005, 16).

Foucault also addresses that the subjects are the products of discursive formations; there, discourse being the system of representation and which reveals the production of knowledge through language (Ünal Abaday, 2015, 25). Subjects in this framework are only produced within discourse, and they become the holders of a certain knowledge (Ibid, 26). Hall (2001) clarifies this process by saying that "individuals have different characteristics, but they will not be able to take meaning until they have identified with those positions which the discourse constructs" (2001, 80). Through Foucault's notion of subject formation, we can derive that there is no subject which precedes the discourse and "all subject positions are . . . the effects of power" (Ünal Abaday, 2015). How this view coincides with the social constructionist view will be explained in the next section. Foucault asserts that to understand the power and the power relations, we need to analyze the types of resistance to it. He gives the example of the women's movement against men and defines it as an opposition to the power over the types of living (Foucault, 2005, 61). Foucault analyses the types of resistance against power and claims that the main purpose of

these struggles is to attack a technique, that is, a form of power, rather than attacking the institution of power, the group, the elites. In the “Subject and Power” when talking about the type of discursive power, he asserts the following.

This form of power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize, and which others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power that makes individuals subjects. There are two meanings of the word "subject": subject to someone else by control and dependence and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge (Foucault, 2005, 19).

Both meanings of the word suggest a form of power that subjugates and subordinates (Keskin, 19). However, Foucault claims that there is always the possibility of resistance in the relation of power, for there would be no relationship of power if there was no opportunity of resistance (Foucault, 2000, 236). Foucault points out that for a relationship to be a power relationship, even the ruled must have some degree of autonomy:

If a power relationship is indeed a power relationship, both can be articulated based on two indispensable elements; the other being recognized as a subject of action until the end of which the power is exercised, and thus being able to open up a whole range of responses, reactions, results and possible discoveries against a relationship of power. (...) Power is exercised only on 'free subjects' only if they are 'free'. By this, we mean an individual or collective subject who face a range of possibilities in which various forms of behavior, various reactions, and different attitudes can be adopted (Foucault, 2000, 73-75).

Butler (2005), in *The Psychic Life of Power*, claims that if we follow Foucault on this matter, that if we understand power as the founder of the subject, the condition of existence and the trajectory of its desire, then power will be something that we not only resist, but also strongly connected to our existence (2005, 10). Butler (2005) considers the subject in relation to power and sees gender as the influence of power. But this influence is not directly a top bottom relationship. She defends the notion of power and advocates the concept of power that is subject to subjugation and thus directly subject to oppression. Butler does not deny the subject when she criticizes the subject, but only questions a presupposed assumption that there is no subject

preceding the power or outside of power. In contrast, a competent and valid subject is produced by power and discourse matrices (Butler, 2005, 51).

Foucault does not state that the mechanisms of how the subject accepts dependence in the theory of power that produces the subject. Butler asserts that power produces the subject or its conditions psychically while acquiring the autonomy of the subject (Butler, 2005, 23). Thus, the subject's association with the power is at the same time a possibility of a political identity. According to Butler, the theory of the subject must consider the ambiguities in the subject. Power is simply not external to the subject, since the conditions of power continue, power is reiterated. That is, the subject is precisely the place of repetition of power (Butler, 2005, 23). Butler (1990), when discussing the Foucault's theory of subjectivation, argues that the concept relies on an "epistemological account of identity" (Bilge, 2010, 13), which should be positioned in within the practices of signification (Butler, 1990, 197). Thus, the concept of identity becomes "a question of how signification and resignification work" (Ibid, 198), by saying that "the subject still encounters its discursively constituted environment in an oppositional epistemological frame. The culturally enmired subject negotiates its constructions, even when those constructions are the very predicates of its own identity" (Butler 1990, 195). This can be interpreted as conceiving identities as being in an attempt to make their way through "societal constrains" (Bilge, 2010, 13), and thus feminist discursive framework is not a production of repression, thus not passive, rather it is "productive and constitutive of subjectivities" (Ibid, 23). Butler also criticizes the acceptance of the categories of the subjects, and she insists that questioning these categories does not mean their refusal. She asserts that the categories, which are the influences of power, function as exclusionary practices when used without question, and not questioning them contributes to the production of the hierarchical forms and excluded the categories of gender within the feminist discourse. The act of "not questioning" of the sample of this study will be unpacked later on.

Butler puts performativity at the center of her work. The idea of performativity is introduced in the first chapter of *Gender Trouble* (1990). She states that "gender proves to be a performance, that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be . . . gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to pre-exist the deed" and "there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (Butler, 1990, 25). Therefore, gender is described as an act that names what it brings, namely, "masculine" men and "feminine" women. Moreover, gender identities are constructed by language, but this does not mean that gender identity precedes language (Salih, 2002, 56). In this sense, identity does not create discourse or language (Salih, 2002, 57), but the other way around, the language and discourse "do" gender. Thus, identity is a signifying practice here, because there is no identity which precedes the language. This means that culturally intelligible subjects are the effects instead of being the causes of discourses (Butler, 1990, 145). In this sense, it is argued that gender identity is performative.

Butler, who also claims that the categories of men and women are formed within the heterosexual matrix, finds the concept of representation problematic and thinks that it is established by a mode of power rather than a reflection of reality. Direk (2014) explains this as "the areas of political and linguistic representation have already established the criteria that form and shapes the subjects. These criteria have always been pre-set and the representation can only be expanded to include those who are accepted as the subjects" (2014, 78).

In *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange* (1995), which is a written exchange with Butler, Benhabib (1995) claims that if gender identity is not present in the expressions of gender, then it is questionable that the ways women change the expressions, in which she means "acts" (Salih, 2002, 59), by which they are constituted. She asks that "if we are no more than the total of the gendered expressions we perform, is there ever any chance to stop the performance for a while,

to pull the curtain down, and let it rise only if one can have a say in the production of the play itself?" (Benhabib et al. 1995, 21). She adds,

We are now asked to believe that there is no self behind the mask. Given how fragile and tenuous women's sense of selfhood is in many cases, how much of a hit and miss affair their struggles for autonomy are, this reduction of the female agency to "a doing without the doer" at best appears to me to be making a virtue out of necessity (Benhabib et al. 1995, 22).

Other theorists, who are also likely to collapse "performativity" into "performance" have produced the statement that the subject is necessary, if only as a fiction (Salih, 2002, 59). This collapse causes Benhabib (1995) to assume that there is a subjective entity "behind the mask", which is a notion that Butler refutes. In the same book (1995), Butler then replies to Benhabib in which she changes the reduction of performativity to a theatrical performance (Salih, 2002, 59-60).

Butler's performativity theory is also critiqued by the ones who argue that in a world where inequalities are real, the identity of a group is necessary for the possibility of political action and that the "death of the subject" will reproduce power (Donovan, 2016, 381-383). Thus, the post-structuralist stance, which functions only in discourse and in the cultural sphere, is accused of being apolitical because it rejects the group consciousness that will give rise to the political action necessary to solve real problems. Another critique to post-structuralist approach received by Bilge (2010) which argues that they accept the conception of agency as being "self-explanatory concept" which is tied to pre-discursive self (Bilge, 2010, 24). Thus, Bilge offers that the concept of intersectionality can be combined with that post-structuralist approach on the subject in which it is both constituting and constituted, since intersecting systems of domination and oppression should be analyzed by four interrelated domains of power which are structural, hegemonic, disciplinary and interpersonal. I choose in this study to analyze the identity construction through what the post-structuralist theory suggests that "identity can be understood as a continuous process by which discursively constructed subject positions are taken up, resisted or challenged" (Butler from Mackay and Dallaire, 2014, 550). Now, I will move on to

the collective identity theories that mainly new social movement scholars focus on to analyze the reasons behind the social movements and political action.

### **1.2.3. The Concept of Collective Identity**

I explained the Foucauldian notion of subjective formation previously, and I now want to show how this also coincides with the social constructionist account of selfhood. Ünal Abaday (2015) suggests that "Foucauldian understanding of subjectivation, . . . , relies on the premise that identity as a stable construct imposed from outside cannot capture the fluid, context-dependent and relational character of selfhood" (2015, 25-26). This insight then accommodates to the social constructionist view, since it asserts that the self is not constructed passively through power relations, instead it is shaped through the active involvement in these relations (Ibid, 26). Ünal Abaday (2015) then further elaborates on another account of the frame as the following.

In this frame, Tarver (2011) reminds us that Foucault's insistence that power is not a monocausal force attempts to separate the active "what comes from the subject" from the passive "what shapes the subject from outside" futile. Accordingly, the dialectical processes of subjectivation may accommodate the idea that subjectivation can also be enabling to the extent that it involves the self's active engagement with the social (Ünal Abaday, 2015, 27).

This notion, that serves the self as not passive but actively in participation, also opens a space to what Hall (1996) suggests on identity that they are "never unified, never singular, increasingly fractured and multiply across different, intersecting and antagonistic discourses, practices, positions" (Ünal Abaday, 2015, 27-28). The concept of collective identity is often subject to criticism of essentialism as I said earlier. As I indicated in the previous section, Judith Butler (1992) questions the concepts such as "woman", "man" and "gender" with the suspicion of essentialism. While it is not possible to ignore Butler's critique, it may be possible to use the concept of collective identity without falling into essentialism (Çağlayan, 2016, 17). It can be explained as what Hall (1996) suggests, as Çağlayan (2016) argues:



Stephen (2005), for example, thinks that if we think of identities in a deconstructed form as Stuart Hall suggests, it will overcome the problem of essentialism. Hall proposes to focus primarily on the formation processes of identity and to understand the formation of identity as a process that will never be completed. This process is a relational process that works against differences, that is, the definition of the other (Çağlayan, 2016, 18).

Taylor (1989) defines collective identity as a shared definition of a group which is derived through the interests, experiences, and solidarity of its members (Taylor, 1989). The shared definition simply means the definitions within a group on what is expressed as right or wrong, in other words, the cause their struggle is essentially about. Since collective identity refers to an ongoing relationship, then the change of the subjects identified and mobilized by this identity can also shape identity. The understanding that collective action, collective identity, and individual identity is construction in reciprocal interaction is also effective in women's identity construction processes. When we perceive collective identity as a condition-dependent, never-completed articulation process as Hall (1996) suggests, it is saved from being trapped in the essentialist view (Çağlayan, 2016, 91).

Another constructionist view belongs to Castells, whose theorization for social movements and media will be articulated later in this research. According to Castells, "social construction of identity always happens in the context of power relations" (1997, 7). Thus, the subordination of their identities is the reason that emerges them, in which they are forced to gain awareness and own their identities to demand equal rights. This also resembles the post-structuralist view. Castells identifies three types of collective identities in terms of their relation to power. They are, legitimizing identity, resistance identity, and project identity. The first one is common in nationalist movements, whereas the second is generated by actors who are in stigmatized conditions. The latter is what Castells argued to be the case for the feminist movement. That is to say, it is what Castells claims that the collective identity of the feminist movement worldwide (1997, 7-8). Feminism fits in the "project identity" as Castells argues, redefining the role of women as in the following definition: when social actors construct a new identity based on whatever cultural

components are accessible to them, redefining their place in society and thus seeking to transform the general social structure (1997, 8).

Taylor and Whittier (1999) propose a framework for the analysis of the construction of collective identity in the new social movements (1999, 170) in their work which examines the contemporary lesbian feminist movement in the United States. While doing that, they aim to "provide a definition of collective identity that is broad enough to encompass mobilizations ranging from those based on race, gender, ethnicity, and sexuality to constituencies organized around more focused visions" (Taylor and Whittier, 1999, 170), which may also be applied to the sample of this study as the following. Taylor and Whittier assess that new social movement theories are generally labeled postmodernist and they are social constructionist paradigms (1999, 174). This point of view offers that collective political actors "do not exist de facto by virtue of individuals sharing a common structural position", however, they are constituted during the progress of the action. In this context, they do so in the feminist movement. Plus, to understand the identity community that is constituted through this progress, one should analyze the social and political struggle that constituted the identity (Taylor and Whittier, 1999, 174). The identity construction processes are essential to each grievance interpretation in the collective actions and thus not just in social movements (Ibid, 170), therefore it should be dissected "the way that constituencies involved in defending their rights develop politicized group identities" (Ibid, 170), so that the presented framework can be applied to each community of the individuals who possess shared interests, which I will explain as the following.

Taylor and Whittier propose (1999) three factors of the construction of collective identity. The first one is "boundaries", the second one is "consciousness" and the last one is "negotiation" (1999, 175-176). The first factor involves the construction of boundaries that refer to the social, psychological and physical structures that assert the differences between the "challenging group" and "dominant group" (1999, 175). Instead of calling it a "challenging group", I adopted the term "subordinates" which

has also proposed by Mackay and Dallaire (2014), since the term subordinates align better with the purpose of this research in which women's movement will be positioned as an act against the power structures. Boundaries, as simply put, encourages "a heightened awareness of a group's commonalities and frame interaction between members of the in-group and out-group" (Taylor and Whittier, 1999, 176). Thus, subordinates establish boundaries between them and the dominant group (which could be men in general), by asserting the different gender performances which are against the values and structures of the dominant group, and in our case, the representation of women in the mainstream media.

Taylor and Whittier also claim that "for groups organizing to pursue collective ends, the process of asserting 'who we are' often involves a kind of reverse affirmation of the characteristics attributed to it by the larger society" (1999, 175). Thus, those who establish boundaries are at the center of the formation of collective identity, and when we formulate it in a way that it coincides with the sample of this study, it is useful that to "understand the commonalities that develop among members of any socially recognized group or category organized around a shared characteristic" (Ibid, 176). It should be noted that the boundaries therefore avoid the ascriptive or differentiating characteristics that could be the base for the power mechanisms, plus the boundaries also allow us to see the intersects within a group which could mark the different levels of systems of dominations. Taylor and Whittier adopt two boundary strategies, the first one is to creation of institutions and constructing a distinct women's culture which could be interpreted as feminist organizations and magazines, and the second one is to create a symbolic system in which a challenge to the dominant system is present.

The second factor of the construction of identity is the consciousness. Taylor and Whitter (1999) highlight the importance of subordinates' definitions of their positions for the political action and utilize the term "identity accounts" to dissect the understanding that the subordinates adopt to make sense of themselves and their shared interests, experiences and values (Taylor and Whittier, 1999, 182).

Consciousness can be realized through written documents, speeches and thus media products that the group collectively puts work into. This could be the case for this research, such as Mackay and Dallaire (2014) also asserted that the media products which women create allows them to "feminine codes that may limit women's resistance to the normalizing effects of disciplinary power, and thus deprive them of the opportunity to ... perform their complex and fluid gender identities" (2014, 552). As indicated above, consciousness refers to the "interpretive frameworks" used by subordinates to define themselves and their interests. In our case, the media products do not only construct women as subjects but also contributes a community in which they compel the power structures. Taylor and Whittier (1999) also defines the development of consciousness as "an ongoing process in which groups reevaluate themselves, their subjective experiences, their opportunities, and their shared interests" (1999, 179), which is clearly a case for the feminist movement and its three waves that show us this ongoing process. It should be noted that the consciousness as the self-understanding also determines the types of individual and collective action of a group which aims to challenge dominant systems (Ibid, 182).

The third and last factor is the negotiation, and Taylor and Whitter argue that positioning collective identity as the consequence of a repeatedly activated shared definitions cause difficulty in distinguishing "doing" and "being". In this framework, the concept of negotiation which is derived from symbolic interactionist approaches in the social movement theory is highlighted, which proposes "a way of analyzing the process by which social movements work to change symbolic meanings" (Taylor and Whittier, 1999, 182). Thus, collective identities are "negotiated and built through the symbolic and everyday actions used by subordinate groups to resist and restructure existing systems of domination" (Mackay and Dallaire, 2014, 552), simply put, negotiations occur within the group. In this case, women contribute to negotiation by indicating alternative representations of women in their media products as oppose to the ones in mainstream media. Taylor and Whitter also address the same as the following.

Challenging the further notion of femininity as frailty, passivity, and preoccupation with reigning standards of beauty, many women wear clothing that enables freedom of movement, adopt short or simple haircuts, walk with firm self-assured strides, and choose not to shave their legs or wear heavy make-up. Devor (1989) terms this mode of self-representation 'gender blending', arguing that it represents an explicit rejection of the norms of femininity and, by extension, of women's subjugation (Taylor and Whittier, 1999, 185).

As Mackay and Dallaire (2014) argue, the concept of collective identity which is proposed by Taylor and Whittier (1999) can be situated within a framework of discursive subjectivity (2014, 550). A constructionist approach that focuses on the construction of identities is seen as useful while explaining the forms of collective identities (Snow, 2001). Snow argues that collective identities are constructed, however, they "are forged not only with the materials suggested by the structuralist perspectives, but with and through the experience of collective action itself" (Snow, 2001, 7). He argues that the structuralist view on identity falls into the hands of essentialism, thus he offers a constructionist view on collective identity (2001, 5). The constructionist view argues that collective identities are "invented, created, reconstituted, or cobbled together rather than being biologically preordained or structurally or culturally determined" (Snow, 2001, 6). I will adopt what Mackay and Dallaire (2014) argue that this feature of collective identity fits well into the post-structuralist view that "subjectivities are always in motion and always under construction" (2014, 551). This can be applied to the sample of this research, 5harfliler, with the aim to explore the collective identity construction in their discursive productions that contest the major discourses.

In the following chapter, I will indicate the history of the feminist movement and their relation to the alternative media production. The purpose of this research coincides with the aim of indicating how feminist movements have utilized the alternative media, since the sample of this study is a feminist alternative media product. Moreover, I will also explore the identity constructions and the discussions that feminist movements involve, thus a comparison between the sample 5harfliler and the previous media could be made. Finally, I will examine how the content, aim

and type of organization that media of the third wave feminist movement are, since I also detect the pluralistic feminism in 5harfliler that the third wave has put forward.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **FEMINIST MOVEMENT AND FEMINIST ALTERNATIVE MEDIA PRODUCTION IN TURKEY**

In this chapter, my primary aim is to indicate that feminist media has always been a place where feminists have resisted against the patriarchal mechanisms, developed arguments against it, and subverted its discourses. My attempt here is to discuss what feminists have opposed throughout history, in which areas they have opposed, and how they have overthrown this imposed their identities in these areas of resistance. Initially, I will present the concept of the feminist alternative media, and what makes a media alternative, I will only add the properties of the feminist media to show that it is, by nature, an alternative media. Then, I will give an articulation of feminist media by dividing it into three waves of the feminist movement. There, my aim is to show the three aspects of the feminist movement; firstly, I want to explain how women have resisted against the power mechanisms throughout the history, then I want to clarify that they have published many alternative media products at each point of the progress of the feminist movement to make their voices heard, and finally, I want to point out that the feminist alternative media deciphers the identity construction and this identity is at a continuous change as the movement continues to be cumulative. As a result, I hope that these discussions will clear the distinction between the previous products of feminist media and 5harfliler.com.

The feminist movement has opposed to the homogeneous category of women from the very beginning of history. The feminist movement, which opposes this categorization, has existed as three waves in history that this chapter will articulate. In short, the first wave feminist movement, which emerged with the demand for equal rights, started to make its voice more effective after the French Revolution in the West, women argued that everyone should have equal rights, thus the concept of

equality is emphasized. For this reason, the concept of equality constitutes the starting point of the feminist movement. Then, the second wave feminist movement has emerged, and emphasized concept of freedom. The wave, which began to be effective from 1960s, has emerged as a revolt against the institutionalization of patriarchal mechanisms. Although it is divided into different branches within itself, the category of femininity has been glorified against men, and the movement has formed its framework in the axis of the discourse of common oppression by opposing the otherness of women in the private sphere.

What feminist discourse mainly constitutes will be unpacked in this chapter. The major discourse that they contest is circulated through all mechanisms, and mainly through the mainstream media. The mainstream media, which shapes and disseminates the knowledge, reproduces a form of hegemony and hierarchy that is also widely accepted towards gender, and thus the subjectivity of women. The mainstream media does this in different ways that by using discourses in power that glorify patriarchal body policies, positioning women within the established gender norms, and not representing them outside the specific contexts that does not conform its norms. In this way, the mainstream media opens up a space for the patriarchal discourses, and thus for men who are the implementors of the system. In contrasts, women's space becomes narrower in this sense. Therefore, feminists needed a place to make their demands heard, as well as a place that they could subvert the narration of the patriarchal power and put their own alternative discourses forward, and hence to open up a space that they could perform their own identities. The best way to do this is to produce media channels, in this case, alternative feminist media products. Before examining the concept of the feminist alternative media, it is necessary to understand what the alternative media is, and what features it is seen as a way of interest for the feminist movement, and then what steps these initiatives and formations took and how it is attempted to follow in this structure.



## **2.1. Alternative Media**

The concept of alternative media has been the topic of the communication studies for many years. The emergence of alternative media coincided with the late 1960s and early 1970s (Kidd, 1999 from Atton, 2002) in a period of increasing feminist, socialist and environmentalist movements in the West is linked to the role of alternative media as a supporting element of social movements and its role in the democratization process (Atton, 2002, 41-42). The alternative media described as an alternative to the sovereign gains a democratic structure by allowing minority groups and sub-classes to participate in the communication process and providing horizontal communication between the audience and the media (Atton, 2002, 8).

Today, it is possible to define alternative media as an alternative to today's mainstream media. It can also be added that alternative media are the places where political demands are expressed, and political structures are affected. Alternative media is the part of the mainstream media that is left out, acting on the basis of spreading the thoughts and ideas of the dominant from their own point of view and from their own voice (Yanikkaya, 2014, 49). In order to define the concept of "undefined" alternative media, it is understood that alternative media have strong ties with social movements and that the place where radical media place itself is the opposition to the mainstream media (Yanikkaya, 2014, 52).

When formulated in this way, it is seen that alternative media not only represent the world views of its participants but also affect these world views. Alternative media differs from the mainstream media not only in terms of its content, but also because of its non-hierarchical organizational structure. Moreover, the alternative media is the channel of counter public in terms of both its own organizational structure and the language it uses and the problems it deals with (Yanikkaya, 2014, 53). The publications of the feminist movements have gained importance especially after 1980s in this context of counter public. Consequently, it can be seen that what

feminists do coincides with the aims of the alternative media, and thus it will be seen that their products are in fact alternative by nature in the following section.

## **2.2. The Feminist Movement and the Alternative Media**

The representation of women in the mainstream media is always a problematic matter. The feminist movement has always taken a stand against being committed as the mother, spouse and sexual object in the media. However, there are cases where women are represented by different experiences in the media. Even in these cases, the media often reproduce the ideal female image of male-dominated ideology by associating different types of women and different women's lives under the denominator of femininity (Gencel-Bek and Binark, 2000, 14). In contrary, alternative media as an important field of the struggle for feminism attempts to change these existing media structures. In this sense, feminist alternative media, where feminist discourses are produced as alternative discourses, has become an important area for the publicity of women.

Women have begun to struggle with the images that do not represent their identity, and thus they have construct and thus perform their identities as a result of this contestation. The most important mainstream channel that they contest is the patriarchal structure in which the man is the subject, which I will elaborate on later in this chapter. Besides, gender and women's issues are not seen as profitable or important issues in commercial channels, but stereotypical representations of gender are reproduced every day (Gencel-Bek ve Binark, 2000, 32). The existence of these problems and the position of the media in the construction process led them to be questioned more. However, it has been seen that the structure and functioning of the mainstream media within the social system forms significant obstacles to the formation of the alternative political, cultural and social discourse (Timisi, 2002), (Köker, 1997). The feminist movement, which left its mark on the years when alternative media has emerged, also embarked on the struggle to transform the messages produced by means of communication. Since, in the feminist movement,

the mainstream media are at the center of criticism in various respects has been an impulsion for women to develop new and different communication models (Timisi, 2002, 417). It can be seen that women were always in a struggle against the mainstream media where men possess the hegemony of it. Thus, the feminist media, as being a counter public and being a resistance place, may be considered as an alternative media.

Yanikkaya (2014) also addresses the issue of whether feminist media can be an alternative media, and claims that the feminist movement in which women's rights and freedom demands come together and put voice and action to the owners of political and social power and the channels in which these movements both share their thoughts and ideas as well as publicly acknowledge their position on certain issues, and addressing women and power at the same time, are by nature an alternative (Yanikkaya, 2014, 54). When looking at the definitions of alternative media, feminist media has spotted a different place as a media that focuses on the problems of women that is not being the subject of the mainstream media, it is presented from the point of men. And, in terms of their connection to women's movement, their policy-making attitude, their language and content, feminist media is an alternative media since its beginning (Yanikkaya, 2014, 55). Therefore, alternative media corresponds to an important point in the feminist struggle.

The feminist media, which is defined by Köker (1997) as the use of mass media by women and with a feminist understanding, is stated to have two main functions by Barbara Marshall, as Köker shows. Its first and internal function is to ensure the flow of the information and the communication between women, and the second and external function is to allow the creation of views on the validity of feminist claims among the social segments (Marshall from Köker, 1997, 31). Feminist alternative media includes the written publications published by women as being against the mainstream media products. Women have started publishing first by small-scale communication tools such as newsletters or flyers in their small groups that involves activist women who aim to spread the feminist thought. The groups of women

organized with different interests at national, regional and local level communicated with each other primarily through underground media (Köker, 2017, 28). While this communication model is seen as an extension of the awareness raising groups as practiced by feminists, it has tried to increase the sensitivity of the wider social groups to women's issues by using “widespread use of magazines, newspapers, radio, television and new communication technologies” (Ibid, 28). With the process that started in the 1970s, women have their own means of communication and their efforts to keep their forms of communication active in the men-dominated environment. Moreover, the freedom of thought and expression of these women is their most important achievement in the terms of communication (Ibid, 28-29).

If we briefly touch upon the principles that have been emphasized in the feminist media that have existed to date and which form the basis of organization; the first one is the participation (Timisi, 1997, 54). Feminist media, as being a part of its structure, questions the relations of power, and seek for the opportunity to eliminate the problems arising from the patriarchal structures. Additionally, feminist media have no intention of making a profit (Ibid, 56). Advertising is not a condition of this structure; voluntary contributions of the community are essential in the removal of these instruments. The second principle is the interaction (Ibid, 56). In the structure formed by the dominant understanding, there is a message transfer from top to bottom. The feminist media, by eliminating this top-bottom relation, designed all members of the community as a source and a recipient (Ibid, 56). Therefore, it can be seen that 5harfliler, the sample of this study, meets the fundamental conditions of being an alternative media. Finally, there is the positive discrimination among these principles. In all areas, the introduction of policies to encourage women because of the inequality in social patterns is called positive discrimination. The aim is to close the gap between the representation of men and women who are not equal is the emphasized. Men's work in the feminist media was prevented with the idea of breaking the men's domination and patriarchal discourses in the mainstream media (Ibid, 57). This structure is important both in terms of showing that women can develop their own way of working on their own and in creating an environment in

which women can speak freely. These elements are the main features that distinguish feminist media from the dominant means of communication (Ibid, 58). 5harfliler, has started and managed by a few women, also meets this principle. Plus, there is a need for media where individuals who cannot find representation in the public sector will be visible and able make their own voice heard. 5harfliler.com and similar places create hope and excitement in this respect.

After discussing the feminist media being an alternative media, it is useful to explore the feminist movement in which the media is produced, and to see what kind of discourses has been put forward in this feminist media. The development line of feminist movements is explained over the term “waves”. The historical process of the feminist movement is treated as first, second and third wave feminist movements. The word "wave" is to the point as a metaphor, because the historical process of the feminist movement has existed simultaneously in terms of discourse, content, and demands, rather than existing as a straight linear line in which one begins from one point that the other ends.

### **2.2.1. The First Wave Feminist Movement**

In this section, I will explore the historical background and the major demands of the first wave feminist movement and at the same time I will indicate the media production to see the places that they have circulated their demands through, and thus the places that they have produce the feminist discourses of the first wave. Finally, I will discuss the transition period of the first wave to the second, and I will discuss the identity construction within the first wave. Some argue that the first wave of feminist movement has occurred in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as the suffragette movement when the women’s organizations aimed to gain equal civil and political rights. In addition, they argue that in the new Republic era that is initiated after the contraction of Ottoman Empire into Turkey, women have gained several equal rights because of the Western modernist thought that the Republic era emphasizes. Thus, in their view, women were held indebted to it so that they have served for the

government and Kemalist principles (Çaha, 2016, 206-207). However, Tekeli (2010) indicates that Turkey's history of the women's movement is actually older than the 20<sup>th</sup> century that it goes back to Ottoman times. She asserts that since 1870, women started to question their subordination. They have started to "write books, published journals, formed associations, launched protest actions and engaged in heated debate with both the traditionalist and reformist men of the era" (Tekeli, 2010, 119). The topics of their movement was the problem of "polygamy" and "repudiation" in which Islamic law has given to men as their rights (Tekeli, 2010, 120). The women's movement has started to obtain some of the rights that they have demanded in the war times, that "they were admitted to universities in 1914; they were allowed to work in factories and the public service in 1915; and in 1917, the "family act" recognized the right to limit polygamy to Muslim women, as well as women of other religions of the Empire" (Tekeli, 2010, 120). Tekeli claims the following about the interpretation of the first wave of women's movement.

It is not erroneous, therefore, to claim that the women's revolution accomplished by the young Turkish Republic was in fact the result of these 50 years of activism by Ottoman women. The most important reforms of the Republic concerning women's status were the adoption of the Civil Law in 1926, and the recognition of the rights of voting and eligibility for women in 1934. The new Civil Law, a translation of the Swiss Civil Code, was a secular text and resolved the problem of polygamy once and for all (Tekeli, 2010, 120).

It can be seen that the first wave of the feminist movement, as the following waves, have impact on the major issues that are caused by the patriarchal system. Hence, the impact they have circulated through their media products and the discourses they produce. It is possible to classify some of the women's magazines published in the Ottoman Period as women's the magazines for women and the feminist magazines for women/by women in terms of the content of these journals and their authors (Yanikkaya, 2014, 59). However, when we look at the demands of these publications, we may see that there are very different and layered voices (Yanikkaya, 2014, 61-62). To list some of the women's media products published in the Ottoman period, in 1845, the first women's magazine called *Kypseli* has started to be published. It is followed by *Gitar* in 1862, and for the first time in 1868, an article

concerning the women's problems in the area has been published in *Terakki* newspaper, which was followed by *Muhadderat*, a women's journal published in 1888 (Yanikkaya, 2014, 62-63). Before the Republic era, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Ottoman women began to publish their journals with the influence of the Western suffragettes. Demirdirek (2016), in her work on the Ottoman women's media, indicates that during these years women's position against the system has changed even before the establishment of the Republic of Turkey (2016, 7). In 1911, a women's conference called *Beyaz Konferanslar* has been organized and this indicates that women were establishing organizations since the Ottoman era (Yanikkaya, 2014, 63).

In 1913, the first 'feminist' journal had published by the same women who organized the conference, a journal called *Kadınlar Dünyası*. It is possible to classify the magazine *Kadınlar Dünyası* as the first example of feminist alternative media in terms of women's writings and letters from the readers (Yanikkaya, 2014, 64). Thus, the feminist media publishing has begun with this journal. The primary demand from women was the right to education, and that the journals they have published involved many ideas on their right of education (Demirdirek, 2016, 53). Additionally, these journals were also arguing against the authorities that do not meet their demands, and in contrast, the authorities were silencing them. Other demands from them were the right to work and right to expression, and with the influence of the Western suffragettes, their major protest was for the right to vote (Ibid, 87). Moreover, women have criticized the fact that they are "the second sex" as Demirdirek argues, and they have overcome this struggle through their empowerment. Therefore, they have challenged the dominant discourses so that they open up their way for their emancipation.

Apparently, alternative media is a place for feminists to realize their shared interests from the beginning of the feminist movement. It can be seen that there is a feminist media production that started at these times. From this point on, the feminists are opposed to the major discourse, revealing their own discourse for their emancipation,

breaking down the attributed subjectivity that they demand for the educated women who has the equal rights. The identity construction of the first wave of feminist movement will be discussed later on, before that, it is useful to indicate the second part of the first wave that begins after the establishment of the Republic.

In the year 1923, the Republic of Turkey was established as a new state with Kemalist principles, which initiates certain legal, educational and social reforms that have targeted rapid modernization, secularization, urbanization and thus westernization (Diner and Toktaş, 2010, 43). One of those reforms aimed to liberate women. Diner and Toktaş (2010) argue that those reforms have coincided with the major demands of the feminist movement. One of the demands was “to have access to the public sphere on equal terms with men” (2010, 44), and in case of the feminist movement, it was a subversion of the patriarchal system that constricts women in the private sphere. The new Republic reforms were consisted of the adaptation to the Swiss Civil Code, that is, the reforms have involved the support for dress norms for women in Western stylization, and that having equality in the case of divorce trials in contrast to the Sharia law, that women having the right the take the custody and inheritance. Besides, voting rights were granted to women in the municipal elections in 1930 and then in general elections in 1934 (Diner and Toktaş, 2010, 44). However, as I have indicated before, these rights have not been given to women, they are the consequences of the first wave feminist movement. Even though the authorities have progressed in terms of women’s rights, the problems they face as women were underestimated. The problems of women were facing consisted of government regulations, inequalities in the public sphere and the violence against women (Arat, 1995, 79). The reorganization of the patriarchal mechanisms was seen as the modernization process rather than aiming to give women their rights, which were carried out through the degeneracy of women (Güzelcan-Şenol, 2010). Therefore, the women were “emancipated, but unliberated” by the state (Kandiyoti, 1987).



Apart from these developments and discussions, with the proclamation of the Republic and the establishment of a new state, a significant change has been observed both in the women's movement and in the number and content of feminist publications. Before moving on to the next period, it is necessary to touch upon an important undertaking in the process until 1935, which is defined as the end date of this first period. A few months before the proclamation of the Republic in 1923, a political party called the Women's People's Party was established. The party founded under the presidency of Nezihe Muhiddin turned into a union by taking the name of Turkish Women's Union in 1924 when the petition was rejected by the government. In 1926, two issues were published as Women's Road and then a magazine called Turkish Women's Road. Until the last issue of the magazine in 1927, 30 issues were published (Yanikkaya, 64-65). Upon the intense demands of the government in 1935, the president of the congress stated that the Turkish Women's Union had been working well for twelve years, and now that the Turkish women had all their rights and equality has reached, the union had no reason to exist. Thus, the process of women's search for the right to life, which began in 1869, started to remain silent for a long time (Yanikkaya, 2014, 64).

The process from the 1920s to the 1960s is defined as the years when women's movements "fall asleep". In Turkey, as a result of the processes articulated previously, this period starts from the year of 1935. In the 1930s and 1940s, a large part of the magazines "directed to women" appeared to be about fashion, housework and republic women. Some of those magazines are: "*El Emekleri, Cumhuriyet Kadını, Salon, Moda Albümü, Evişi, Kadınlar Âlemi, Asrın Kadını, Hanımeli*" (Yanikkaya, 2014, 65-66). As it can be seen, it is possible to define these journals as the publication organs directed to women owned by men, which define women through fashion, beauty and their duties at home and determine their contents with this understanding (Yanikkaya, 65-66). It can be said that these magazines were reconstructing the ideal woman subjectivity of the patriarchal system, therefore they can be considered as what feminists have opposed so that they have produced their

own media. The media above is then reproducing the meta discourse, thus does not contribute to the feminist discourses that are constructed through the resistance.

The media of the first wave of feminist movement set a basis for the future feminists, even though the demands progress but does not precisely differ in each wave. It can be said that the feminist media in the first wave have also served as a place that women have constructed their identities as part of their resistance. When it comes to the identities' property, the movement may show us a that it is a collective identity that is constructed through the publishing the media products that circulates the feminist discourses. However, Rupp and Taylor (1999), when defining the constructed identity of the first wave of the feminist movement as a collective identity, argued that the three collective identity processes that Taylor & Whittier (1999) have shown are not the case for the first wave of the feminist movement, because this definition and processes tend to overstate the unitary properties of collective identity, and it ignores the significant identity and interest (Gamson 1995 from Rupp and Taylor, 1999, 365-366). Instead, they offer to think that "collective identity as three embedded layers; organizational, movement and solidary" (Ibid, 366), and thus take the concept as being shaped by the intra-movement struggles to define and express women's common interests (1999, 366). Thus, this identity approach avoids the notion of the identity as being stable, and it articulates how feminists with different backgrounds, ideas and who have conflict of interests had a sense of togetherness (Ibid, 364-366). However, bearing in mind the fact that this collective identity is a political identity, it attempted to fit women into the category of "citizen", as being "equal" to men in social and political spheres, and ignored the fact that women are different among themselves, and a hierarchy exists even among women, and this collective identity theory does not catch the contemporary debates of the queer theory. The solution to this will be offered by the following waves of feminist movement.

The silence of the first wave and thus beginning of the second wave was marked by the following developments. After some years of the publishing the magazines that

are “directed to women”, the feminist movement has begun to show its signs again in the political sphere. Hence, in the 1970s, some of the political parties have started to publish journals for women, and since the mid-1970s, women’s magazines that are politically grounded have started to be published as well as the popular journals and magazines about knitting, sewing and fashion (Yanikkaya, 2014, 67). In 1975, the publication of the Progressive Women's Association, *Kadınların Sesi* has begun. Forty years of silence have ended with the release of the *Kadınların Sesi*, which became a medium for women to voice their demands with their own words (Yanikkaya, 2014, 68). Thus, the roots of the second wave feminist movement began to emerge.

### **2.2.2. The Second Wave Feminist Movement**

In this section, I will attempt to indicate the historical background and demands of the second wave feminist movement, as well as the media that women produce. The same formulation that I have made for the above section will be followed. Savran, a member of the journal *Pazartesi*, evaluated the feminist movement after 1980 in three stages (Koçalı, 2016, 73). In the first half of the 80s, it was a period of ideological accumulation and fermentation that took place in the internal debates, then in the pages of *Somut* magazine and later in organizations such as the Women's Circle. A period of campaigns and the mobility that began in 1987 with the Solidarity Against Violence Campaign and lasted until the early 1990s, and a period of institutionalization and the project feminism since the early 1990s (Ibid, 74). In the western world in general, the women's movement which started the struggle for equal rights in the second half of the 19th Century underwent a significant change in the last quarter of the 20th Century. That is, the feminism that united around the struggle for rights, as well as the project to reach a new democratic society by politicizing the accumulation of various experiences of women, were described as the second wave of the feminist movement.

One movement gives birth to another, and this continuity is provided by the media production of the women, since the “activist memories underline future political possibilities by allowing the exploration of the positive legacies of past activism” (Göker, 2019, 319). Feminist media production contributes to the feminist collective memory, and these media products remain as the feminist memorials for the next generations. The first-wave feminist movement, even though the demands were different than the second wave was a base for the latter.

The historical background of the second wave feminist movement is marked by the serious political changes in the Republic. After the military coup in 1980, and in a period in which all ideologies, theses, and movements were discussed, women have started a new liberation movement which is the second wave feminist movement in Turkey, in which women coming from leftist tradition saw the theories, theses, and ideologies produced by the power holders as a product of patriarchal system, and they started to discuss the problems that I have indicated in both the public and the private spheres. Second wave’s emergence in the 1980s is expectable for some, since in a country under a westernization project, which is influenced by the Western thoughts, women can also be influenced by the Western feminist movements in the 1960s (Arat, 1995, 84). The second wave of feminism in the world focused on the double burden that both the middle class and the working-class women face (Sancar, 2013, 58). Women were trapped in the triangle of family, marriage, and motherhood, and the political stance and language of second-wave feminism were based on this situation as well as the assigned gender roles in the private sphere (Sancar, 2013, 58). The motto "the personal is political" was adopted by the second wave feminist movement, as Tekeli wrote:

After the coup, a feminist women’s movement developed on the basis of a completely revised analysis. A new generation of middle-class, left-wing, intellectual women, who were in touch with the ideas of the new wave of feminism in Western countries, proposed that the ‘paternalist Turkish state’ was in fact a ‘patriarchal state’, defending the interests of men. This new movement started in Istanbul with small awareness-raising groups that had discovered the famous slogan of Western feminists: “the private is political” (Tekeli, 2010, 120-121).

Thus, the Western feminist movement has also caused the second wave feminist movement to subvert its narrative that defines patriarchal power, that is the old “paternalist state”. However, the second wave feminist movement in Turkey is a “latecomer” in comparison to the one in the West (Diner and Toktaş, 2010, 41), since the second wave has begun in the 1960s in the West, but in Turkey, it begun in the 1980s when the Turkish feminists started to discuss the shared issues as the Western feminists, that is, the elimination of violence against women and oppression of women in the private sphere, the elimination of sexual domination of men, and lastly, the elimination of women's misrepresentation in the media and the challenge against the virginity tests which are applied to women who are about to marry or who have been subjected to sexual assault (Diner & Toktaş, 2010, 41). The second wave feminist movement has also gathered feminists for the protests that on their shared interests, and Diner and Toktaş show that in accordance with the famous motto of second wave feminist movement in the West, which is "personal is political", Turkish women “have framed violence not as an individual matter in the domestic realm but as a political topic that needed to be dealt with in the public realm” (2010, 45). The second feminist wave also started several attempts to institutionalize the movement. Diner and Toktaş (2010) show that feminists “targeted the establishment of consultancy centers and shelters for battered women” and “the establishment of KA-DER is another example of the institutionalization of the women's movement at the societal level ... to enhance women's status and respond to their problems in general” (2010, 46). The “paternalistic state” of Turkey has also established a separate Ministry of Charge of Women and Family, which also marks the influences of the institutionalization of the feminist movement (Diner & Toktaş, 2010, 47). In the 1970s, the feminist women's movement gained momentum again in Western democracies, Turkey has prepared the ground well in 1980 after a similar movement to flourish (Timisi, 1998, 420). During this period, various issues and problems related to women were brought to the public with the development of civil society and the actions of activists, approaches were diversified, the number of women's organizations started to increase, and a new feminist consciousness emerged. With the opening of the discussion of feminism, the increase in publications that can be

considered feminist has gained momentum, which will be discussed later. Women who came together in Ankara and Istanbul after 1980 had the biggest share in the publication of these publications. The characteristics of women coming together in these groups; middle class, well-read, mostly academics, artists and writers, and they were influenced from the Marxist tradition (Timisi, 1998, 421).

As Demirdirek (2016) mentioned, women have used the media to discuss their own issues, circulate their own alternative discourses since the late Ottoman times. After 1980, before creating their media, women opened areas in the media expanding from the cracks through translations, event news and "feminist" pages (Yanikkaya, 2014, 71). The second wave of women's movement, which focuses on gender, patriarchal society structure, the political side of private and public sphere distinction, and lastly, power, has brought important criticisms about women's representations in widespread media and accepted media as a field of struggle. These criticisms expressed in the 1970s in the women's movement began to affect academic studies in the 1980s (Güzelcan-Şenol, 2010, 107). Feminist journalism in Turkey has shown growth during the second wave women's movement which emerged in the 1980s. The foundation of feminist journalism, which arose from the need to provide communication and raise awareness among women, was laid at the awareness-raising meetings held by women in small groups after the military coup of 12 September 1980. Feminist women, who thought that the discussions and the results of these meetings should be shared with other women, went into the process of creating their publications and preferred the field of journalism for this. At the core of the idea that feminist women publishing their publications, is the need to express themselves first-hand and a contrast to the representation of women and the women's movement in the mainstream media (Güzelcan-Şenol, 2010, 108). In the case of media products, apart from these successes on the institutionalization that is discussed above, there have been "44 women's periodicals or magazines were published between 1980 and 1990 and 63 between 1990 and 1996 in Turkey" (Diner and Toktaş, 2010, 46). Besides, apart from the small-scale communication tools, women have started to use

the tools that will provide access to all social groups since the 1970s. Among them, especially magazines and newspapers are in the first place (Timisi, 1997, 58).

The magazines were also important for the post-1980 feminist movement. Feminist media adventure, which started with a single page in *Somut* magazine, continued with *Feminist*, the first issue of which was published in March 1987, and *Kaktüs*, which was published a year later. These were the two magazines in which the feminist movement constituted itself and its promises (Bora, 217). In 1985, *Feminist* magazine, the first example of feminist media owned by women, was launched. A voluntarism-based work understanding has been exhibited in the journal, which avoids advertising and market relations. In 1988, *Sosyalist Feminist Kaktüs*, a second feminist magazine, was launched (Timisi, 1997, 63-64). Some of the journals published by different groups within the feminist movement are as follows: “*Feminist, Sosyalist Feminist Kaktüs, Mavi Çorap, Eksik Etek, Rosa, Pazartesi, Roza, Jujin, Kadın Bülteni, Kadın Postası, Emekçi Kadınlar Bülteni*” (Köker, 1997, 35). On the other hand, in this period, zines that remind us of underground media that women in the old times have published, have been put forward with some examples. Zines are magazines/newspapers that are produced by themselves, often in alternative formats, by a subculture group, sometimes even by a single person, in relation to their interests (Atton, 2011). However, as an alternative form of organization, independent women's magazines could not be long-term within the existing structure. The magazines that attract attention with their discontinuities in the publication life, appeared in short periods and limited numbers because of the financial imposition and the excessive workload, since they existed in order to establish the word of group belonging, not through professional interests. Thus, they experience the struggle that alternative media has, which I have discussed earlier in this chapter.

Another property of the feminist media being an alternative media is that these magazines hold the aim to transform the public, while seeking ways to publicize the experience of consciousness raising groups. Bore argues that “it is strange that so

few women have such a great claim, but from today, we can say that it is not an unjustified claim” (Bora, 2015, 217). Because these magazines became both spokespersons and organizers of a rapidly organizing movement, they have carried feminism to women, and women to feminism (Bora, 2015, 217). This was partly familiar to the left opposition before 1980, which is a movement organized around magazines. There are strong links between magazines and street action, institutional structures and ideological frameworks (Ibid, 217). An important difference was that feminist magazines were able to reach places where the feminist organization could not reach, to those that do not participate in the consciousness-raising groups, allowing individual women to feel themselves as part of a movement and to be attached to it. In this sense, it would not be wrong to say that thanks to the magazines, the feminist movement has grown rapidly and exceeded immensely (Bora, 2015, 217). Looking at the 1980s, it can be seen that the feminist movement and the feminist media have been going through a dynamic and continuous activity, especially since the second half. On the one hand, those who have different understandings among feminists have begun to identify themselves, while on the other hand, the feminist movement has separated from the leftist movement and has been located in a different place as an oppositional movement. However, they continued to act together in many actions, campaigns and counter public (Yanikkaya, 2014, 75).

As Berktaý (1998, 5) emphasized, the symbol of “modern and liberated Turkish woman” was an important tool of the modernization project and the dominant discourse on the notion of identity. In the foundation years of the Republic, the image of 'modern Turkish woman', which has an important role in the construction of national identity of the Republic, is also a fiction that makes the oppression of women invisible on a social level (Arat, 1998). It is evident that feminists' opposition to the ascribed identity of the patriarchy begins here. At this point, their identities are constructed. Women’s breakout to the public sphere led women to redefine themselves, because through their actions in this field, they began to see themselves as the entitled subjects. We can evaluate this process of change in the context of the



subject-experience relationship that Scott et al. (1994) emphasizes. The emergence of women in the public sphere as political actors changed their perceptions of self; they had rebuilt themselves as individuals and the collective identities in their experiences (Çağlayan, 2016, 190). Women felt strong and valuable, their work, the world in which they live, the meaning they assign to what is happening in this world had a decisive role. Thus, the formation of this meaning was influenced by the ideological framing of the movement and its actions.

The solution offered by the problematic conceptualization of feminist identity in the first wave of the movement which have focused on the similarities between men and women, second wave of the movement have offered a focus on the differences between men and women, and provided “a definition of feminist politics in terms of the universal category of woman” (Ünal Abaday, 2015, 29). However, this conceptualization was also flawed that it also ignores the differences among women, and it serves the hegemony of the white, middle-class, heterosexual, cisgender women. Throughout history, men have held the concept of subject for a long time. For this reason, women were directly condemned to be the other, and that they were always objectified by men, and thus even seen themselves through the eyes of men. When the feminist movement has emerged, they begun to find their identities, to invent their own tools of resistance, and demand for their rights.

To sum up, the discussions on the feminist identity is put forward are in sync with the waves of the feminist movement. First, feminists have tried to defend women’s rights by focusing on the women’s identicalness to men and tried to expand the concept of the modern subject that excludes women. Their focus was on the “citizen” identity of women. Later, the discussions on women being a subject have begun by Simone De Beauvoir’s book *Second Sex* (1949) that states “one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman”, and thus she opened a new era by discussing subjectivity and otherness. Thus, the feminist theory is directed towards the quest of what is different in women from men and the feminist theory tried to make this difference about female subjectivity valuable. It is the point where the radical feminist theory

has emerged, and it diagnosed that women are in a position that is oppressed by men especially. Hence, it created a legitimate and powerful collective subject position that oppressed women form against men. The style of politics changes with the discourse of “the personal is political”, and whether the subject is a woman, or a man becomes an important distinction. Thus, the gendered subject has emerged. However, the concept of womanhood thus became essentialized to an oppressed group. That is to say, the differences between women were ignored, and a universal and a stable subject ideal is reinforced. When it was understood that the experience of women, mostly urban, educated and middle class, did not correspond to the experience of every woman. That is to say, in the 1990s, as described above, a period began in which the differences in the feminist movement were expressed; women with different identities brought their demands and interrogations to the feminist movement.

It would be useful to describe what the third wave of feminist movement has offered in terms of women’s identity in the next section, since the third wave has its own distinctive features, and the most obvious of these is that it is influenced by post-structuralist theory and its notion of subjectivity. For feminists, it is no longer a unified, homogenous, singular woman, but women stand on a point where different power structures collide. Feminism has become a field of struggle where differences are expressed and negotiated, and personal and political are linked through the discourses that the third wave has produced. The woman who only defined as the other of the man is contaminated by the feminist discourse, and the ones who were subordinated by the white heterosexual women are liberated.

### **2.2.3. The Third Wave Feminist Movement**

In the 1990s, the feminist movement is continued by the third wave feminist movement, which has worked on the discussions on gender, women's sexuality and rebellion against the patriarchy. This wave has also started the discussions on gender identity, emphasized that the class, race, ethnicity and sexualities intersect, and thus

the different levels of oppression is experienced. Furthermore, the womanhood as a homogeneous categorization is refuted. This progress then caused feminists to construct their identities in terms of their resistance through the waves of the movement. As I described above, the third wave feminist movement focuses on women's experiences on different levels of oppression and on the difference within the subjects. With the post-structuralist theories, the intersectionality and especially queer theory, the category of women on which feminist politics is undoubtedly based is criticized, and the emphasis is on the differences between these identities, thus the plurality of the identities of the movement that involve the members of Islamist feminism, Kurdish feminism and LGBT+ movement. As Diner and Toktaş indicate, Turkish feminists also encountered “the challenge of different conceptualizations of the ‘woman’ question and the politics of identity/difference” (2010, 42). What I see in my field of study, *5arfliler*, is the plural identities are constructed through their production of texts, and thus the third wave feminist movement is the basis for the website. Before coming to the online media products that have emerged during the third wave, it would be useful to explore the historical background of it.

Third-wave feminism in Turkey has said to be begun in the 1990s. The rise of identity politics in the 1990s has also influenced the Western and Turkish feminist movements. Turkish feminists were mostly criticized by their properties of being white, privileged, and middle-class, and the Kurdish and Islamist feminists criticized “white” Turkish feminists for “being ethnocentric and exclusionary of other identities” (Diner & Toktaş, 2010, 47). It can be seen that considering the claims and demands of the third wave, Donovan argues that the emphasis in the third wave feminist movement is in personal stories, individual anecdotes, and in some sort of feminism that rejects the “great narrative” of the feminist theory, with the effect of postmodern approaches (2016, 384). There is no single feminism in the third wave movement, where the message of “individual freedom” goes hand in hand with the efforts to deconstruct categories that there are feminisms such as black feminism, third world feminism, working-class feminism and thus diversity feminism. Cook

and Hasmath (2014) describe this inclusionary part of the third wave feminist movement as the following.

Third-wave feminism is presented as a progressive corrective to earlier visions of feminism because: first, it has been directly implicated in the development of intersectional approaches which aim to identify how gender intersects with other facets of a subject's identities); and second, it has adopted a 'sex-positive' and liberatory approach in order to differentiate itself from the perceived negativity of earlier iterations of feminism, with the intention of bringing young women back to feminism (Cook and Hasmath, 2014, 976).

On the other hand, rejecting the idea of a single woman based on differences and giving priority to personal stories and individual anecdotes has been criticized for the emphasis placed on personal pleasure (Donovan, 2016, 384). This emphasis on individualization cannot be read independently from the neoliberal economic era in which the world enters (Birner, 2017, 71). Third-wave feminist perspectives are shaped by the material conditions created by economic globalization and techno culture. Another criticism that third wave feminism receives is that it is not a coincidence that the "death" of the subject and the category of women coincide with the demands of women to become subjectivities (Ibid, 73). That is, it is a defense mechanism developed by the excluded communities to realize themselves and be the 'representor' of themselves. In other words, it was seen as an obstacle, which forms itself through discursive productions, is accused of being apolitical because it rejects the collective consciousness that will give rise to the political action necessary to solve real problems. However, the main objection from third wave feminism to these criticisms is the adoption of the concept of intersectionality<sup>1</sup>, which gives emphasis on the inclusivity that seeks to form oppositions against the forms of pressure knowing that there are different kinds of subordinations. It is necessary to understand the subject in the domination matrix by the influence of power. The emphasis on intersectionality drew attention to the complexity of the subject and the difference between women. There are many complexities of power in the formation of

<sup>1</sup> Intersectionality theory aims to include race, ethnicity and class axes in the theory.

subjectivity. With the conception of intersectionality, the formation of political groups in which differences are recognized and negotiated is seen.

Aside from the discussions lead from the views that are offered by third-wave feminism, it should be noted that the major difference that has affected the possibilities of third-wave feminists has been technological advances. As this study progress, we will get into the subject of the internet usage of the movement. But firstly, it would be useful to address the feminist media culture that the third wave involves. The magazine *Pazartesi* is the first periodical publication, which became a popular feminist publication. As a publication organ of the Women's Culture and Communication Foundation, the magazine, which started its publication in March 1995, adopted a different understanding of journalism against national widespread media where women are merely victims. In this respect, it is possible to state that it has the feature of feminist alternative media. In March 2002, the magazine stopped its publication due to financial reasons, however, it returned to broadcasting life with the November 2003 issue. In the year 2006, the magazine decided to continue its publication, which was a monthly magazine for 106 issues, in two-month file selections and determined the field of current journalism as an internet website. Magazine *Pazartesi* which was aiming to reach more women and to publish a magazine full of more women has not been updated since the end of 2007 and has not been published in print (Koçalı, 2016), (Yanikkaya, 2014), (Demir, 2006). The following discussion is also dedicated to a comparison between the products of third wave feminist movement as well as being a descriptive account of the products. Since the sample of this study also belongs to this period, it would be useful to dissect the distinctions between 5harfliler and the major feminist publishing in the same period.

The content of *Pazartesi*, unlike previous feminist magazines in the previous waves, aimed to be “popular”, just like the sample of this study, 5harfliler.com, does. This emphasis has been made since the first publications of the magazine. There was a consensus that the feminist movement and women in general needed a different kind

of publication than before, although the popularity was not the same (Bora and Cantek, 2015). The content of the magazine was not thought to consist of women's issues from the beginning, there were news on *Pazartesi* that do not take place in the mainstream media but that concern women. In the magazine, feminist perspective was used to interpret many issues from the Social Security System to the Gulf War (Bora and Cantek, 2015). *Pazartesi* then opened up a new and important area in the transformation of the public that was initiated in the 1980s. Although different levels of discussion and languages can be seen in the magazine, the language used was a popular language, and the discourses were everyday discourses. Language that occasionally contains slang, stays away from political didactics, wavy and sometimes aggressive. Adopting the view that Bora and Cantek offers, I believe that 5harfliler, the sample of this research, moves in the course of the magazine *Pazartesi*. The distinctive factor here is that *Pazartesi* and the above magazines were read by feminists only, however, 5harfliler.com, being a public digital space, is open to everyone, and everyone could reach there in their social media accounts as well. Thus, not only feminists but each part of society could participate in the community. However, this does not mean that 5harfliler's participatory feature is equal to what *Pazartesi*'s and other feminist publishing's ethics. The effects of awareness raising groups in the feminist movement rather than the reader's influence in feminist publishing can be seen in 5harfliler. Also, by the way it provides a space for anonymity, 5harfliler's discussions sometimes become derogatory to some groups that I will indicate in the next chapter. However, the third wave feminist movement has also included more politically grounded organizations and magazines.

*Amargi Cooperative* was one of them, which is an organization that independent of dominant structures such as the political parties and the state, which seeks to spread and strengthen feminist theory against patriarchy and integrated systems of power and for alternative options (Özakın, 2012). *Amargi* sets out to fill out inadequate parts in the feminist thought and set up feminist policy coverage, which could be interpreted as the shared interests of the cooperative is defined and realized precisely. In *Amargi*, which is not a hierarchical organization, there is no governing body, but

only two editors. It realizes its objectives through commissions, workshops and working groups in line with the needs. Everyone has the initiative in their own work. The organizational model is not static, and they can constantly review and change their way of working and principles. There are no men on the editorial board and the activities are open to women only. *Amargi Feminist Magazine* started its publishing life in 2006, and published quarterly, the magazine continued its publication life with domestic and international subscriptions (amargi.org.tr, amargidergi.com). Thus, *Amargi* has tried to alleviate the financial pressures and insists on alternative publishing (Yanikkaya, 2014).

Although there is no environment where the reader can also be a writer, alternative publishing is made to a certain extent by enabling the readers to actively participate in the projects and discussions within the means of social media (Yanikkaya, 2014), (Bora, 2015). 5harfliler.com provides the readers with a chance to become writers also, thus, the negotiations among women may become visible as well as in the online media, just like it was in *Amargi*. But, how *Amargi* has distinguished itself when it comes to the content, that *Amargi* has long and politically grounded academic essays in comparison to 5harfliler's daily and ironic style of writing. Plus, their form of organization is different in comparison to 5harfliler, namely, its being a cooperative whereas there is a personal solidarity between the editors and the authors, but they do not work together, the community building is the only thing to be observed in 5harfliler. The content of *Amargi* was distinctive when in comparison to 5harfliler, since 5harfliler fails to develop new arguments that could be counted as subversive, which will be analyzed in the next chapter. It is argued that "to understand any politicized identity community, it is necessary to analyze the social and political struggle that created the identity" (Taylor and Whittier, 1999, 174), but it is obvious that 5harfliler is not politicized in comparison to *Amargi* and previous feminist publishing. In this case, 5harfliler is far from feminist policy production and include mostly private sphere and pop culture issues, whereas *Amargi's* content includes answers to the political agenda in the country, criticism of the private sphere and popular culture.

According to the thirty-first issue of the quarterly magazine published in 2013, *Amargi* wishes its readers to be authors as well. In the magazine, all kinds of issues related to women, from nationalism to the headscarf law, are being discussed, indicating that readers' comments and participation are expected, and that feminist analysis is needed. *Amargi* ends broadcasting on the grounds that the feminist policy is blocked, but this organization continues as publishing body, namely *Ayizi Publishing*. Also, on the website, under the title of “Feminist Agenda”, current issues, workshops, seminars, actions, announcements of LGBT organizations, campaign announcements, as well as information about the agenda is available (Yanikkaya, 2014, 85). Bora, as one of the founders of *Amargi*, explains the reason of existence of the magazine as; to strengthen ties between feminist theory and practice, to be involved in the women's agenda in Turkey, was to make it appear that they are saying and make both the feminist movement (Bora, 2015, 250). *Amargi* ends its broadcasting on the grounds that the feminist policy is blocked, but this feminist organization continues as publishing body, namely *Ayizi Publishing*.

The property of feminist movement that put emphasis on the institutionalization and the media production is seen in the third wave as well. There is another feminist organization that also produced media, which is called The Flying Broom Foundation that was founded in 1996 by a group of women in Ankara. Its aim is to increase communication, cooperation and solidarity between women's organizations and people sensitivity to women's movement, to transfer their experiences to young generations and to establish a national and international communication network (Yanikkaya, 2014, 86). Defining itself as a communication center, Flying Broom aims to achieve gender equality, empower women and contribute to the solution of inequality problems. The Flying Broom organizes regional meetings, radio and television programs and one of its most important events, the Flying Broom International Women's Film Festival. Flying Broom's *Flying News* magazine began its publication in 1998. *Flying News*, which was published in two-month periods and in the form of a bulletin in the first years, became a magazine by increasing the



number of pages and examining in depth the issues it dealt with. *Flying News* has been published as a special issue since the beginning of 2007; “Media”, “Local Politics”, “Early and Forced Marriages” (Yanikkaya, 2014, 86). Three special issues are available in the *Flying News* archive. *Flying News*, which is published for the 24th time with its special issue titled *Women and Media*, is also published in English every two years. In addition to the magazine, workshops on various subjects such as women's organization, international conventions, communication education, books prepared as a result of trainings and seminars, and publications on cinema are among its activities. On the other hand, the Flying Broom opened its website on February 14, 2002 “www.ucansupurge.org” that provides gender sensitive reporting includes news from all over the world. One of the activities of Flying Broom, which has alternative media features, is the establishment of a local network of women reporters. This women's news network was constituted with the aim of bringing local women's news to the agenda, making women's own news and making their demands and priorities visible (Kardam & Ecevit, 2002). Thus, an alternative women's news network consisting of volunteer reporters has emerged as well.

The feminist media that began to be published in the 1990s can be listed as follows: *Yeter*, published in Ankara as a one issue in 1990 and owned by Aksu Bora, was released with the motto "No to virginity control, our bodies is ours!" (Davaz-Mardin, 1998, 339). The *Women's Bulletin*, which was released between March 8, 1990 and March 8, 1991, was published by sending the greetings to all women who face open discrimination because they are women (Davaz-Mardin 1998, 333). The magazines published in the 1990s are as follows: “*Kadın Belleği, Ankara Bülteni, Dolaşan Mavi Çorap, Emekçi Kadınlar Bülteni, Jibo Rizgariye Jinan, İstanbul Üniversitesi Kadın Araştırmaları ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi, Minerva, Cımbız, Eksik Etek, Kadın Haberleri, Martı, Pazartesi, Roza, Jujin, Uçan Haberler*” (Köker, 1997, 34-35), (Yanikkaya, 2014, 78).

When the feminist media of the 1990s are considered in general, many social, political and legal issues such as violence, rape, legal aid, women's shelters, political

representation and participation were their areas of interest as well including raising their voices. They are organized as a counter public in current affairs as Yanıkkaya defines (2014). In general, it is seen that they operate as channels that produce policies and insist on the implementation of these policies. 1990s was the period that the women organized in many parts of Turkey to put pressure on government policies, regulations, men violence, economic and political rights. In this process, however, the opposition and radical structure of the feminist movement in the 1980s was weakened due to the divergences within the movement and the specific political and social conditions of the period (Yanıkkaya, 2014, 83). Ensuring women's engagement with the feminist movement around the world, sharing materials, opening hashtags on specific initiatives or issues they would like to emphasize, allows women around the world to easily follow the movement-related publications. This makes it possible for women to stay up to date on feminist events even when the feminist movement is rendered invisible by the mainstream media (Kaya, 2018, 568). Feminism today stands out in social media platforms. Social media has brought feminism into the mainstream cultural arena, leading to a change even in the perception of the feminist movement. Therefore, the next section will analyze the new media era of the feminist publication, which also the sample of this study is included.

### **2.3. Feminist New Media in Turkey**

In this section, my aim is to indicate that feminist movement has gained another place in which feminists can make their voices and demands heard, that they could subvert the patriarchal discourses as well as producing their alternative discourses. Before the Internet, feminists expressed their opinions through printed publications, protests, and meetings. However, for women who did not have access to such events or areas without access to feminist publications, knowledge, and solidarity of women were lacking. It has been easier for women to share their personal experiences in the digital age. A functionality of new media product offer might be the new opportunities for sociality that are arguably more immediate, as Atton (2002) argues

while discussing the functionality of zine culture as alternative media. He argues that "relationships in cyberspace might even reverse the trend of the privatization of public spaces, promoting community and social trust amongst participants who lack these in their everyday, lived experience" (Atton, 2002, 76). This might be the case for this study that the 5harfliler, as an online community, and the digital sisterhood it offers to women (Göker, 2019). That is, 5harfliler constitutes a counter public to the mainstream media, hence, Göker argues that "feminist ideas are also disseminated through digital feminist media in websites or blogs, as in the case of 5Harfliler, Çatlak Zemin and Reçel-blog" (Göker, 2019, 314). She asserts that the website editors and the contributors promote feminist solidarity and "they serve feminist politics in explicit and implicit ways by providing a platform for feminist debates, the networking of the like-minded as well as individual empowerment through writing and storytelling" (Göker, 2019, 324). This also resembles the community building practice that feminist movement has practiced, especially with the consciousness raising groups that accelerated the feminist movement in the 1980s.

When analyzing the content of the feminist new media including 5harfliler, it may be dissected that "digital feminist media projects provide a platform for the linking of private and collective memories and foster consciousness-raising and network-building through the feminist use of testimony and storytelling" (Hamilton, 2009 from Göker, 2019, 314). Thus, the feminist alternative new media blogs may constitute "examples of feminist deliberation unsettling conventional formalistic definitions of deliberation that undermine passionate and affective speech and rule out personal matters from public deliberation" (Göker, 2019, 314). All in all, as an alternative feminist new media product, 5harfliler may also produce a counter public, by their discursive productions, which challenge the mainstream media as being a mechanism of power. This will be unpacked in the next chapter, now I will attempt to show the internet usage in the third wave feminist movement.

I have discussed that some of the printed media products of third wave feminist movement has turned into online magazines. In that case, another important

development in the feminist internet usage and the communication of feminists is the e-mail network of the *Kadın Kurultayı* group, which was established with the initiative of a group of women organizing events organized under the name of Women's Shelters Solidarity Centers Convention against violence against women since 1998 (Göker, 2007, 209). Reporters who follow feminist activities and discussions in feminist media or alternative media communicate with women from different feminist organizations through this network. The *Kadın Kurultayı* not only provides news of the event, but also makes it possible to exchange information on legal regulations, the creation of joint explanatory texts, the development of criticism against some of the mainstream media, the communication between feminist women and the grounds for discussion (Yanikkaya, 2014, 93).

Even the Internet as a space is governed by the hegemonic ideologies in general, feminists have utilized this a space for themselves that is full of opportunities for liberation and self-transformation (Göker, 2007, 206). Thus, the online platforms can turn into areas of struggle, which also can be seen the increase in the usage of internet, especially social media, by the feminist organizations. One example can be the *Kadın Kurultayı E-Grubu* in which women discussed their issues and organized protests through this email groups (Ibid, 213). The way that it turned into an organization which women plan their protests can be interpreted as the easy access and communication could provide feminism with an effective transmission of information. Most of these women chose to use the online platform to define and form their “shared interests”, rather than receiving the established definitions in the mainstream media. This is also true in the case of other online platforms that women created for themselves such as in online blogs, and for the sample of this study, in *5harfliler.com*.

The first online blogs that the feminists posted in as their space for themselves can be the followings. Yanikkaya (2014) gives a few examples of short-term feminist blogs in the 2000s *feminist.blogcu* and *mor.blogcu* were active until 2006. *Cin Ayşe*, which has been continuing since 2007 and published as fanzines, focuses on literature,

culture and art. It is also necessary to add *feministbiz* to this list which has been actively logged in between June 2009-2012 (2014, 91). As of 2010, new outlets seem to have shifted to the internet area. The blogs “*blogcuanne, feministanneler, feministmedya, feminizmekiminihtiyacivar, feministutopyacilar*” (Yanikkaya, 2014) are some of the individual and collective feminist blogs in the past. In addition to individual blogs, there are also blogs created by a group of women coming together. While these personal blogs were predominantly food and travel themed, a collective blog entered the realm of blogging in 2012, with its feminist topics, namely 5harfliler, which is the sample of this study. 5harfliler, as the next chapter of analysis will suggest and also as I have indicated in its comparison to *Amargi*, mostly predominated by the issues of private sphere.

At this point, most scholars argue that blogs and academic publications have become very similar in these new media or electronic publishing, just as we cannot easily distinguish between activist feminism and academic feminism despite some controversies and conflicts (Aksit, 2015, 497 from Bora and Cantek, 2015). It is not possible to mention all of the feminist periodicals and new media products here, but *Feminist Yaklaşımlar* and *Fe Dergi* are worth to mention. Both are digitally published magazines, and, in this respect, they have similarities to 5harfliler. However, they are distinct since they follow the traces of *Amargi* which aims to produce feminist politics, however they are even more “academic” when compared to it. Finally, regarding the 2000s and the feminist media, it is necessary to mention that *JinHa* (Jin News Agency), which was established in Southeastern part of Turkey consisting of women only, was founded in 2012 (Yanikkaya, 2014, 93).

*JinHa* and other Kurdish feminist publishing products, such as *Jineoloji*, are the markers of the pluralistic feminism that third wave feminist movement has put forward. Even though Kurdish feminism has gained strength and visibility due to the pluralistic structure of third wave feminism, the voice of Kurdish feminism does not appear in the content of the 5harfliler even though 5harfliler emphasize its property of being inclusionary. This also distinguish 5harfliler’s position in the third wave

feminism that *Amargi* and other magazines have opened up a space to different feminism, especially Kurdish feminism as well. In *5harfliler*, although Islamist feminism is rarely seen, the topics of LGBT movement is prominent. In comparison to *Kaos GL*, which is an organization founded in 1994, *5harfliler* seems to position itself more on a personal level whereas LGBT movement's political grounds can be clearly seen in *Kaos GL*'s periodical publishing (Alan, 2019).

It can be said that alternative new media use or modify the social arrangements of new information and communication technologies and communication tools and practices to challenge or change dominant, expected or accepted forms of society, culture, and politics (Lievrouw from Eslen Ziya, 2013, 868). In Ankara and Istanbul, activists, journalists, and lawyers working in women's organizations such as KADER and Flying Broom have had in-depth interviews with women and published newspapers, magazines, and brochures about the women's movement. In her study where she analyzed the media documents, Eslen Ziya (2013) concluded that activist women groups started to use social media and social networking groups to conduct discussions, create networks and create street actions, and this situation strengthened their lobbying activities (2013, 868). As I have indicated before, Taylor and Whittier argue that there are two boundary strategies that feminist movement adopts (1999, 176). The first one is to create institutions and develop a distinct feminist culture, and the second one is to create a symbolic system affirming "the culture's idealization of the female and, as a challenge the misogyny of the dominant society, vilifies the male" (Ibid, 177). For the first one, the organizations and the magazines can be counted as the strategies. However, *5harfliler* cannot be defined as an organization or an institution apart from it being a community, whereas the institutionalist property of the feminist movement in each wave is seen. However, *5harfliler* coincides with this strategy by being a space for "publicizing feminist ideas and activities" (Ibid, 177). The second strategy that is used for "vilifying the male" is seen in the radical feminism of the second wave, however, it is not observed in the third wave in which the multiple identities are accepted. *5harfliler*, is also open to men to read and discuss, it even consists of some articles written by men as well. However, the

second strategy can be examined by dividing it into two parts, where it can be interpreted as being a challenge to the power mechanism in which the men are the applicators. The detailed analysis of the boundaries and how *5harfliler* responds to them will be unpacked in the next chapter.

The new media products of this period can be the followings. In the international level, feminist online magazines and blogs, such as *Feministing*, *Jezebel*, *Reductress*, *Bitchmedia* are websites that are generally non-profit and independent, respond to mainstream media and popular culture with their feminist interpretations, and even there is an online community called *FemFuture* that gathers these kinds of media together. In national level, *5harfliler* launched in 2012 and is in the focus of this study, and on September 2016, *Çatlak Zemin* is launched to empower women based on the feminist discursive productions; *Reçel-blog* which started publishing in 2014 which it is a place where Muslim women share their daily experiences and social issues. The last example is a purely digital activism platform *Erktolia*, which is an internet platform that identifies and reveals sexist discourses and contents and invites the Internet users to take action against sexism and organizes awareness campaigns. In addition, the interactive structure of the above-mentioned blogs and websites allows commenting under the generated text, thus also acts of intimidation. In any case, despite and with the disadvantages and contradictions, feminist online publications allow for a faster spread of feminist discourse and criticism; and most importantly, through shared experiences, it encourages the solidarity among feminists. This resembles a community building practice that women have done so far in the previous waves of the feminist movement. However, when the feminist media of the 2000s are evaluated in general, it is seen that the problem of discontinuity is significantly overcome by the fact that the number of horizontal ties in their activities and their distribution in different mediums are less than the previous periods (Yanikkaya, 2014, 63). However, the feminist media within the increasingly conservative social structure, establishes links with organizations throughout Turkey and reaches the women besides from the major cities, despite the presence in the organized struggle for women's labor and women's participation in

political life, the feminist movement continues to remain marginal. Feminist media, which not only focuses on feminist issues, but also functions as peace media, can still reach a limited number of women despite all the gains and efforts. It should be noted that the feminist movement of the 2000s opened its debates on topics such as identity differences, class, ethnicity and sexual orientation, and naturally, the feminist media also opened up discussions and played an active role in producing policies on these issues (Yanikkaya, 94).

As stated earlier, since women see the patriarchal system problematic, they have attempted to conquer every institution in which patriarchy has appeared. Thus, it can be derived that women have created spaces in which they confront the patriarchal system and they construct their own collective identity in those spaces. As Göker indicates, “feminist media become a discursive weapon in this struggle to contest hostile framing and to put forward counter- understandings of what feminism is, what feminism can do, and who a feminist can be” (Chidgey, 2012 from Göker, 2019, 323). The new media, then, just helps this discursive weapon to exist.

In this chapter, my primary aim was to indicate how feminists have utilized the media as their “discursive weapon” to construct their identities in contrast to the attributed identity of patriarchal system. It can be seen that through the waves of the feminist movement, women have found ways to circulate their own alternative discourses and thus subvert the discourses in power. I have indicated the ways how women have opposed the power; in which areas they have opposed and how they have used media effectively as their tool for spread their demands and ideas. Through their discursive productions in their media products, feminist movement, even though the shared interests of the feminists are defined in an ongoing manner, have constructed an identity in their resistance to power mechanism. In the next chapter, I will analyze *Sharfliler*, as being a third wave feminist movement product, to explore the identity construction in their discursive production, and thus I will use the factors presented by Taylor and Whittier (1999) to assess the collective identity construction.



## CHAPTER 3

### ANALYSIS OF 5HARFLILER.COM

#### 3.1. Discussion of Research Methodology

The literature of discourse and discourse analysis may exceed the scope of this study, but if it is necessary to make a definition, discourse -in its simplest terms- can be called what emerges from the movement of meaning in language (Sancar, 2008, 106). According to Purvis and Hunt (2014), discourse is a specific linguistic or indicative tool that regulates the thinking, understanding, and experience of all social relations, and those involved in these relations (2014, 12).

Although the methods used by discourse analyzers are different, all studies that regard discourse as a social, cultural and political phenomenon emphasize that discourse is not only a phenomenon reflecting society, culture, and power but also a source of continuous reproduction (Purvis and Hunt, 2014, 11). The discourse takes place in the linguistic twist in modern social theory and provides the term that helps us to grasp the important role of social subjects, which are subjectivities and associated identities, the relations between those subjects and the field in which they exist, beyond the transmission of language and other forms of social semiotics. It takes its importance from its central role in this turn (Ibid, 11).

Binark shows that discourse is "based on a description of systematic linguistic schemes of certain rules, terminology, and speeches" (2015, 43). The starting point of discourse is language. Additionally, Binark indicates the studies that emphasize the relation between ideology and discourse. Discourse, in a Foucauldian sense, is a way of thinking, describing, defining and classifying people, things, knowledge, and

abstract thoughts. According to him, the different discourses of individuals underlie the fact that each individual being different. For this reason, discourses cannot be considered different from power relations, and power and knowledge relations between groups of people are the main determinants of discursive formation (Binark, 2015, 45).

Foucault has theorized the discourse to cover concepts such as power, ideology, social formation, and class. Discourse in Foucault's thought regulates reality, knowledge, and power. Knowledge is engraved in discourses and cannot exist outside discourse. Without the production, accumulation, circulation, and functioning of discourse, power relations cannot be established, strengthened or produced. Every society has certain types of discourse that it accepts and functions correctly (Canpolat, 2005, 105-106). For Foucault, the discourses do not need to take their material power from anywhere else as in the form of production, since the discourse is already power. The research method of this study will be a Foucauldian discourse analysis.

Discourse analysis as a method, with a focus on language and the role that language, offers us “a multidisciplinary approach to research that combines other kinds of research into language, language use, and the texts in which language plays an important role” (Berger, 2018, 271). Discourse analysis falls within the scope of qualitative research (Binark, 2015, 46). That is, research that produces knowledge by trying to understand the experiences, behaviors, societal and institutional functions, and relationships. Since the discussion on the qualitative research methods will exceed the scope of the research, I will now introduce the sample of this research, and then I will indicate the research methodology.

### 3.2. Sample of the Research

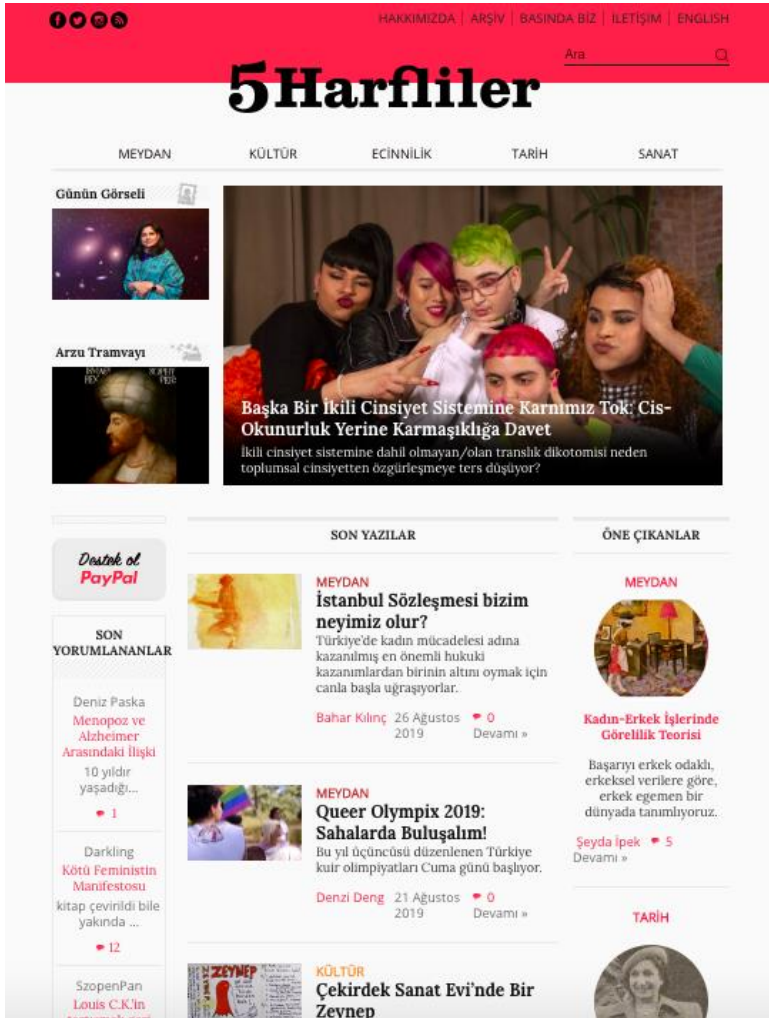
Before going through an overview of the website, I want to state why 5harfliler is distinctive that I choose it for my research. The most distinctive character of the website is its tone and language. That is to say, criticism through satire is mostly directed to the mainstream media, where patriarchal codes overwhelmingly reign; some of them were directed to the patriarchal system through examples encountered in the daily life of women (Birer, 2017). At the same time, the website includes all kinds of topics that may cover all kinds of interests. However, unlike most of the sites prepared by women, 5harfliler treats its discussions in a humorous, critical manner and does not exclude readers from different backgrounds.

The language and the content are different in the other popular examples of blogs such as *Reçel-blog* and *Çatlak Zemin*, which I will indicate in the following sections. The former includes experience-based storytelling with an emotional tone done by conservative women and the latter mostly includes comprehensive political writings which may consequently be described as an activist site. Of course, they all produce content that is “either directly about feminism or aimed at promoting a feminist agenda characterized by gender equality and a critique of sexism and patriarchy in personal and political relations” (Göker, 2019, 317). However, what gives 5harfliler a distinctive character is a style, the way of establishing a dialogue and the content it involves, which will be unpacked in the following sections. Thus, it positions itself through its properties in a place that discursive productions should be investigated.

As can be seen on the Illustration 1, there are 5 main categories such as “Square”, “Culture”, “Djinnies”, “History” and “Art” as well as “Visual of the Day” and “Arzu Tramvayı/ Tram of desire”, which are presented with smaller icons on the left. On the neatly organized home page, when the main categories are clicked through, the text is mostly accompanied by visuals. At some points, visually loaded pages appear as articles. The final chronologically produced content is located in the center of the page with its main photo and the title. As we move down to the bottom of the page,

the latest contents produced chronologically are given one by one along with their categories. On the left are the titles of the last published comments. Thus, the interactivity of the site is also prioritized as it is located on the home page of the website, and this interactive style of this website and its social media pages will be unpacked later in this study.

Illustration 1. Homepage of 5harfliler.com



Source: 5harfliler.com (Accessed 31.08.2019)

At the upmost of the page next to the "About us" category, there are other steady categories of "Archive", "Us in the Media", "Contact" and "English". The website does not publish in English, however, there are some posts that they have translated

for their English spoken audience. It is also seen that when clicked on "English", the website describes itself as a Turkish online magazine focusing on gender quality.

To see the relations between 5harfliler's posting attitudes, I have dissected the articles by their intensity based on the dates. However, 5harfliler did not respond well to this kind of analysis. For instance, there are many political posts on 5harfliler, however, there are not enough posts on the dates of the Gezi protests. Thus, the cause and effect relationship that would be shown through a quantitative analysis based on a timeframe would not work when analyzing the archival data on 5harfliler. For instance, the numerical data for the period between July 2012 to June 2019, the section "The Square" in which 5harfliler's political articles are mostly stocked, shows the following distributions in terms of month and year. However, this does not mean that 5harfliler does not speak about Gezi Protests, I will elaborate on how they produce their discourse on the subject matter in the following sections.

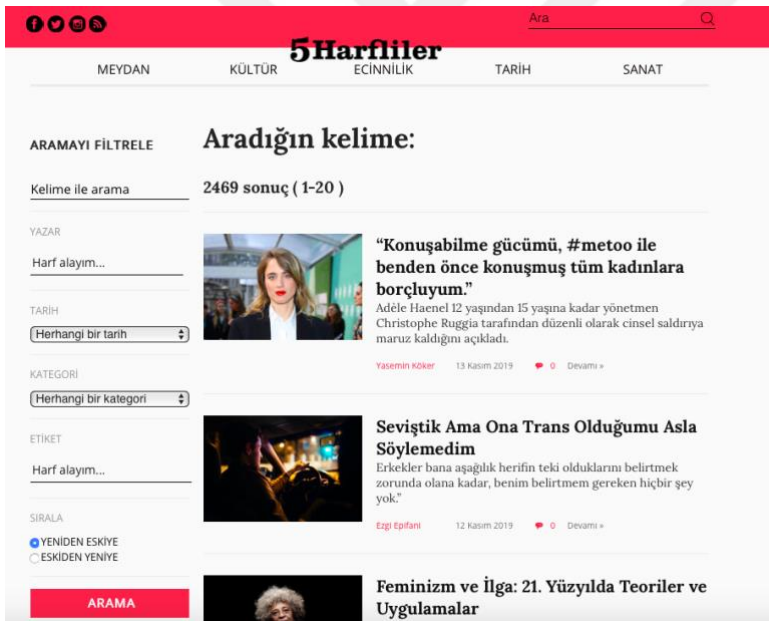
Table 1. Distribution of the Articles by Year and Month of The Square

|              | <b>2012</b> | <b>2013</b> | <b>2014</b> | <b>2015</b> | <b>2016</b> | <b>2017</b> | <b>2018</b> | <b>2019</b> |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| January      |             | 15          | 13          | 9           | 7           | 9           | 3           | 7           |
| February     |             | 8           | 3           | 14          | 5           | 16          | 1           | 8           |
| March        |             | 7           | 19          | 8           | 7           | 16          | 3           | 7           |
| April        |             | 10          | 9           | 2           | 4           | 5           | 2           | 3           |
| May          |             | 4           | 7           | 8           | 4           | 9           | 10          | 3           |
| June         |             | 17          | 6           | 13          | 7           | 9           | 6           |             |
| July         | 7           | 9           | 10          | 8           | 7           | 8           | 4           |             |
| August       | 9           | 7           | 11          | 6           | 5           | 3           | 8           |             |
| September    | 6           | 8           | 8           | 3           | 3           | 6           | 11          |             |
| October      | 7           | 12          | 14          | 6           | 7           | 4           | 8           |             |
| November     | 11          | 17          | 8           | 5           | 12          | 1           | 7           |             |
| December     | 10          | 11          | 14          | 5           | 8           | 3           | 2           |             |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>50</b>   | <b>125</b>  | <b>122</b>  | <b>87</b>   | <b>76</b>   | <b>89</b>   | <b>65</b>   | <b>28</b>   |

Additionally, I have requested the analytics of their Facebook account to see the general audience information based on the rural-urban, young-old distribution of their visitors, but they denied my request. Thus, research based on the audience profile is also not possible for the research uses the 5harfliler as the sample.

Illustration 2 shows that 5harfliler has 2469 articles as of 15<sup>th</sup> November 2019. I analyzed the content of the seven years between July 2012 to June 2019. As I indicated previously, there are five main categories on 5harfliler. Those categories are also interlinked, such as one article that can be a part of the category Djinnies and Square at the same time.

Illustration 2. Archive of 5harfliler.com



Source: 5harfliler.com (Accessed 15.11.2019)

5harfliler also adopts a sub-categorization based on tagging (*etiket*) the articles due to their content. For instance, an article can be under the category Square and it could be tagged as “Violence against Women”, “Domestic Labor” and so on. And when it is clicked on the tags, one can see every post that is tagged with the same heading. Thus, if the readers want to read about a specific subject, they can search through the

subject matter and click on the tags. Thus, the website allows access to specific content by its ease of use. For instance, they have a tag called *manşet* where the readers follow the current agenda of the politics as well as the women's movement.

The content of the 5harfliler is defined by the women who created the site in the upmost "About Us" section on the very top of the page:

5Harfliler is an independent website in pursuit of women's agenda. In the days when the word 'kadın' was almost demonized, it called herself 5Harfliler for all the tired souls overwhelmed by the distinction of girls, women, lady, and lady in terms of "three letters". In the summer of 2012, the persistence of those who reduced the women's agenda to diet, beauty secrets, and relationship advice only started with the idea that the women's agenda was everything a woman could be interested in (5harfliler.com).

As can be understood from this introductory paragraph, it is seen that 5harfliler is a channel that focuses on women. Although the website does not mention that 5harfliler is a feminist website, Bora and Cantek (2015) state that the founding team called themselves feminists. One of the editors has stated in an interview that they are "committed to proving a women's agenda which is flexible, does not hesitate to change and at the same time a fluid one" (Bora and Cantek, 2015, 220). Thus, they want to create an alternative agenda for the subjects that mainstream media will never take into its agenda and will never belong to the agenda determined and owned by men. Another feature of 5harfliler is that it is open to everyone who wants to give their articles to the site and therefore to contribute. So far, apart from the five editors responsible for the site, dozens of women (and a few men) have been sharing their articles on the website. Thus, the reader may also feel as a producer or a part of the medium. Çağla, one of the editors from the team, stated that 5harfliler aims to open a space for women themselves, free from verbal male violence, for example, the arms rolled up in search of a medium where women can talk about their daily issues (Bora and Cantek, 2015, 223).

When looking at the authors' profile of the 5harfliler, the selected topics, articles, and interpretations used in the upper language, theoretical references, foreign languages,

and cultures draw attention. Therefore, the women's agenda, which determines the agenda of the *5harfliler*, is being built with the interest of these writers and commentators. There is the opinion that "the site does not mean to represent anything other than itself" (Bora and Cantek, 2015, 226) among the editors. That is, what the author eats-drinks, reads-listens to, the text she produces carries the author's traces. The authors attributed the limited space given to current politics to the timelessness of their full-time work. However, with the Gezi events and the subsequent corruption operations, the AKP's prominent words and actions on women and family, as well as current politics, we have seen more and more issues on the site (Ibid, 226). It would be useful to add that, for one of the editors, it is the Djinnies section that "gives the website its distinct character, as their major motivation was to show that a woman's agenda is about what a woman is interested in and not something determined from outside" (Göker, 2019, 316). Thus, it attempts to create a space in which the major discourse on women's subjectivity is not determined and internalized.

### **3.2.1. Research Methodology**

Regarding the content on the Internet, the first question to ask is where to begin the analysis. Since the content on the Internet is very numerous, diverse, intense and interconnected, it is important to understand what logical and critical questions and which texts will be chosen as the starting point (Binark, 2015, 31). In this study, *5harfliler.com*, an online feminist new media website, was chosen as the sample of the study because it is the newest and most effective platform that can be shown as an example for feminist alternative media on the internet. The posts published on the website were examined according to their main subject and types, plus the interactions of the posts on the Facebook page of the website were also examined in terms of indicating the participatory side of the website and the reactions from the readers. I will articulate the method of this study after a description of a previous study on *5harfliler*.



A thematic analysis of 5harfliler was already done in Birer's (2017) research. She, after analyzing 50 different webpages of 5harfliler, found that the website criticized patriarchal power through satirical voice in two main themes: "the critique of sexism towards women" and "the critique of hegemonic masculinity". These two themes are subdivided into themselves also. Under the theme "the critique of sexism towards women", themes of "gender roles expected from women" and "objectification of the female body" were found. Under the theme "the critique of hegemonic masculinity", the themes of "normalization of men's violence" and "the critique of homophobia" were found to be dominant. In this research, I am not going to make a thematic analysis of the website, since what I want to indicate is not coincide with the aims of Birer's research that analyzed the language that 5harfliler is using. I am more interested in searching for the following.

When I read and analyze the articles in the 5harfliler, I have mostly seen that women are positioned far from the patriarchy's idealistic views on women, and this position is synthesized by themselves with the feminist values, and these women are probably rebelling against the patriarchal system by construction their discourses against the dominant discourses of it. This process has been the same through the waves of the feminist movement, and as I expressed in the argument of this study previously, through the way that women confront the patriarchal power, they may lead an identity construction that may also become constructed in the 5harfliler. Thus, this research aims to explore the question, does 5harfliler fosters an identity construction in their challenge to dominant discourses of patriarchal power through their discursive productions? For that purpose, I will search for discursive subversions and hence resistance to the discourse in power, and instead of a perspective of a top-bottom relationship, I will search for 5harfliler contesting the major discourses. I will base my analysis on the theoretical framework that is provided by Taylor and Whitter (1999) who claim that there needs to be three factors for collective identity to be constructed, that are: boundaries, consciousness and negotiation.

For the discourse analysis of the 5harfliler to explore what their discursive framework is I have used the categorization of their content, to show how they position themselves and how they choose to talk on particular events and conditions. Rather than being positioned by the researcher, it would be better to let the 5harfliler talk, since its discursive production is the focus and it will lead us to investigate the possible identity construction involved in itself. That is to say, I will use the tags as the categorization of this discourse analysis, and, I have selected the tags based on the discussion of this particular study. In this way, I aim to evaluate them in their categorization, because I attempt to explore their identity construction within their discursive productions. It was not difficult to categorize the content because this area is digital, which makes it easy to use and offer one to classify every type of text and content. However, selecting the most popular and most commented categories and organizing them through my discussion was not a method of data collection that the website provided me with. However, as much as I could, I tried to stick within their limitations and style.

In this study, while analyzing the blog posts, all the articles on the website were read and analyzed in this blog that covers the seven years from July 2012 until June 2019, which is when the blog was founded. However, there is no specific timeframe for the analysis, but I will show some markers in history for my research by which I attempted to show how 5harfliler talks about specific points of the politics of women, such as the discussion of abortion law and the Gezi protests. In this way, I will attempt to show how they have constructed a dialogue between the power and themselves so that their discursive productions confront the dominant discourse of the power, which will consequently indicate that 5harfliler, by the way, it is confronting the power through its discursive productions, may lead to an identity construction. However, this identity construction will be explored if these identities could be positioned as a collective identity. Furthermore, I will also search for the common patterns in their discursive construction, namely their terminology and a recurring jargon against the power mechanisms, to see that whether the identity is constructed by the way it is opposing the power and drawing boundaries between the

power and itself, in terms of what Foucault suggested, the main purpose of the resistances to power is to attack a technique, rather than the institution itself. Moreover, I will assess this case if this narrative pattern would be a possible sign that could lead them to construct their collective identities, but I wish to explore in what ways it distances itself from the dominant discourses on the subject. Also, as well as the dialogue they choose to build with the power mechanisms, I will attempt to show how the solidarity between women is observed in the comments section under the articles to analyze whether they are close to constructing a collective identity in their struggle.

I have chosen these categories both because they are the prominent ones and because they are the categories that can call the shared interests of the feminist movement. The prominent categories for the discussion of the 5harfliler contesting the major discourse of the patriarchal system on the subjectivity of women among the many tags in the 5harfliler are *beauty, motherhood, marriage, gender, sexuality, domestic labor*. Besides, the point where they talk about political debates is similar and at the same time problematic in some respects, to measure their views on these general issues, and to dissect the contestation of the dominant discourses in a broader perspective, especially to see their discourses on the political agenda regarding women's rights, I have deliberately chose these tags even though except for Gezi resistance, the other ones are not prominent tags in 5harfliler, but I chose them for that purpose and they are distinguished from the others by this feature. I have chosen the tags *Gezi resistance, abortion ban, Istanbul Convention* for this, and the tags *femicide* and *trans* were already prominent. Moreover, some of the articles under the same tags has positioned itself in another theme that I will try to explore, thus the distribution of tags among the subcategories are mixed, and the 5harfliler and the articles will lead this distribution. Finally, the tag *mansplaining* which shows their creation of terminology in their language use when they challenge "a technique" of power is selected. Besides, I will also compare their discursive production that confronts to power with other media of women, that is, Çatlak Zemin and Reçel-blog, as well as some other alternative media channels such as Bianet and so on.

Apart from these, it should be said that the tags do not address all the articles that are on the same subject, since the tagging is not systematically done as the archival method of the website and can change in every article, however, in the archival page of the 5harfliler, the tags can be selected by their credentials. Also, the search box will show every article that the searched subject is included, but it is not a marker of the categorization of the content. Thus, the articles that are categorized by the tags are not selected randomly; I have chosen the most popular subjects and tags among the website as well as the two most commented articles under the same tag. The argument of this study has led me to select 11 categories for the research and the distributions of the articles under each category are as the following.

Table 2. Number of Articles by Tags

| <b>Tags</b>         | <b>Number</b> |
|---------------------|---------------|
| Beauty              | 20            |
| Motherhood          | 36            |
| Marriage            | 38            |
| Gender              | 26            |
| Trans               | 25            |
| Sexuality           | 22            |
| Gezi Resistance     | 19            |
| Abortion Ban        | 9             |
| Istanbul Convention | 3             |
| Femicide            | 26            |
| Mansplaining        | 7             |

I will deploy a discourse analysis by considering three main points, which are the 5harfliler's dialogue with patriarchal structure and mainstream media as the first section, since through my analysis of the most prominent topics, I have found out that these ones are mostly the critiques of the major discourses. Additionally, the

comments as solidarity marker as the third section will be indicated, since what I found out in the comments is that 5harfliler establishes a community and this community's way of speech show solidarity, plus I will consider the creation of a narrative pattern as a distinct third section since the pattern is going beyond the website's discourses and for the scope of this research, it should be analyzed separately that this narrative pattern could be a factor that constructs collective identity. Then, it may also mark how the identity can be constructed through discourse in the way of contesting the dominant discourses.

The first section is divided into the subsections of a) Gezi Protests, Abortion Ban & Istanbul Convention, b) Against the Patterned Subjectivity: Marriage, Motherhood and Beauty, c) Sexuality, Body and LGBT+ issues. The first subsection *a* may give us how 5harfliler reacts to the level of political discussions apart from having a feminist archival behavior, and the exploration of the question of do they choose to present new claims against the major discourses on the issues might give us a perspective that to what extent they converge to the productions feminist movement in general. The *b* may provide us with to what extent 5harfliler distances itself from the major discourse on the subjectivity of women, and women's position and gender roles in general as they have reproduced in the mainstream media, and the question of which tools they choose to utilize in their resistance will be explored. The last subsection *c* will give us a sight of how the major discourse that is created by the mass media as a discursive mechanism shapes and proliferates the female body and how 5harfliler rebels against it. The topic of sexuality is one of the most prominent topics on 5harfliler as well as it is a marker for its distinction. Through all of the sections and subsections, I wish to derive an answer to my question of to what extent 5harfliler could succeed to construct an identity, identities and even a collective identity in their resistance to dominant discourses.

I will distribute the categories within them and show two of the articles under each categorization. Showing the articles with a high number of comments is not targeted because of the deletion of comments and the changeability and the uncertainty of the

internet environment. Since the site's commenting culture is both on the website itself and on their Facebook and Twitter accounts, the articles that are the sample of the research will be selected according to their interaction, that is, the two articles in each tagging with the most comments on the website *5harfliler.com* are analyzed. When narrating the articles, instead of the nicknames that the authors use, I will refer the authors as “5harfliler”, since the articles are neatly filtered by a team of editors in case of their coherence to the website’s stance. Plus, since one of the aims of the research is to find out the collective identities, it may be useful to refer in this way.

### **3.3. Discourse Analysis of 5harfliler**

#### **3.3.1. Dialogue with Patriarchal Mechanisms**

In the previous chapters, it has been stated that the feminist movement opposes sexism, that is, all the attitudes, behaviors and activities that position and thus oppress women as secondary and inferior in the society and the use of all institutional and ideological mechanisms to reproduce this thought. Therefore, the power that oppresses women, that is, the patriarchal system, is the bearer of this thought. In this section, I aim to show how the dialogue between 5harfliler and the power mechanisms, which is observed through the discourses of mainstream media is discussed, to show the discursive framework that 5harfliler adopts and produces, and thus an identity construction may be seen through this production. The dialogue they have chosen to conduct with the patriarchy should be explored, since that may lead us to see the collective identities constructed in the process.

One of the most important types of dominant discourses is the discourse of media, which is an important part of the relationship between the gendered individual and the power mechanisms that attribute gender to it. The relationship between media and the dynamics of power examined in the previous chapters is important to understand the reflection of media discourses on social life and its importance in the political sphere. Because to understand discourse, it is necessary to understand the

context of discourse (Van Dijk, 2009, 1), which means the geographical, historical, political “situation”, “environment” or “background”. In the context of media and language, context is a concept for the general social situation of language use or a specific situation of a text or cross-section. Thus, media mediates between context and text (Van Dijk, 2009, 150). Media has an effective role and power in forming and shaping social knowledge. In particular, the mainstream media adopts and reflects the ideology of the status quo, which emerges as a reproduction of discourse of the media.

Although 5harfliler has taken its distinctive character (together with its name) from its contestation of the major discourse on the subjectivity of women, it has also touched upon the issues that what is the agenda of the feminist movement in which the political feminist subjects are constructed. The first subsection in this section will be on how 5harfliler has reacted to the major discussions on Gezi Park protests, Abortion Ban and İstanbul Convention. Through this discussion, apart from the collective feminist memory work that 5harfliler has done by archiving and history writing, I will explore the discursive productions that 5harfliler may have drag into its resistance through this perspective as these selected articles suggest.

### **3.3.1.1. Gezi Protests, Abortion Ban & Istanbul Convention as Political Debates**

This subsection is distinguished from the others. Because in this subsection we see 3 tags that I set to look for a specific purpose since the purpose of this study is to show the contribution of 5harfliler to the political debate, and also to see whether it fulfills the feminist movement's demands and constructs a collective feminist identity. This subsection aims to discover the main position 5harfliler possess when it comes to the political action and debates which involve gendered aspects (Gürer, 2019), (Baydar, 2015) and dominant discussions regarding women’s rights, how they challenge the discourses produced in the mainstream media and how they *choose* to struggle and speak against them. 19 articles are tagged *Gezi resistance*, the article with the most comments is the “Gezi’nin Başörtülü Kadınlarla İmtihanı veya Türkiye’de “Beyaz

Feminizm”e bir Bakış/ Test of Gezi with Women Wearing Headscarves or a Glance White Feminism in Turkey”<sup>2</sup>, reacted by 38 comments and a critique of white feminism which is a derived lesson during the Gezi resistance. The second article is "100 Gün Boyunca Hiçbir Şey Satın Almayacağıma.../...to That I Will Never Buy Anything for 100 Days”<sup>3</sup>, the author only remembers the Gezi resistance period as two weeks that she has never bought anything, and she associates her current minimalist lifestyle to that period. Thus, it would be useful to show that the third article “Gezi Direnişi: Şarkı Listesi/Gezi Resistance: a Playlist”<sup>4</sup> which has 15 comments underneath, is presenting a playlist should be listened to during the protests, which included the political songs of that period about the protests as well as the popular culture songs which could be associated with the protests.

Baydar (2015) describes the start of Gezi resistance as follows:

On May 27, 2013, at 11:30 pm. bulldozers drove into Gezi, a central park in Taksim, İstanbul, to uproot five trees to clear the ground for the construction of a shopping mall. Within a couple of hours, a group of 20–30 people came to sit-in to stop the work. As members of civil societies, ‘Taksim Solidarity’ and the ‘Society for the Preservation and Beautification of Gezi Park,’ they had long been active to stop the Taksim renewal project that had been initiated by the Prime Minister in 2011 (Baydar, 2015, 11).

From this small gathering it turned out to be a major protest against the oppression of the state, and it is also a resistance which grew bigger through the social medias. The mainstream media has marginalized the protesters and decentralized the demands and aims of the protests. Gezi resistance has presented counter-publics from the point

<sup>2</sup> Gezi'nin Başörtülü Kadınlarla İmtihani veya Türkiye'de “Beyaz Feminizm”e bir Bakış on <http://www.5harfliler.com/gezinin-basortulu-kadinlarla-imtihani-veya-turkiyede-beyaz-feminizme-bir-bakis/> (17.12.2019)

<sup>3</sup> “100 Gün Boyunca Hiçbir Şey Almayacağıma” on <http://www.5harfliler.com/100-gun-boyunca-hicbir-sey-satin-almayacagima/> (17.12.2019)

<sup>4</sup> “Gezi Direnişi: Şarkı Listesi” on <http://www.5harfliler.com/gezi-direnisi-sarki-listesi/> (17.12.2019)

<sup>5</sup> “Türkiye’de ‘Gezi’ medyası” on <https://www.dw.com/tr/turkiyede-gezi-medyası/a-16859504> (17.12.2019)



that the intervention and withdrawal of the police into the park turned into a kind of counter-public space where many organizations from the feminist women's collectives to LGBT activists and non-governmental organizations set up tents and camps with the protestors. The alternative new media, as I indicated earlier, may also be seen as a -digital- space of counter-public in terms of both its organizational structure and the language it uses and the problems it deals with and seen as a counter public to mainstream media. Also, the publications of the feminist movements have gained importance as an alternative medium especially after 1980 in this context of counter-public, at the point of feminist media to discuss the social, political and legal issues as the areas of interest. As I have discussed before in the previous sections that feminist alternative media constitutes a feminist deliberation and consciousness-raising, Göker (2019) argues that the digital feminist platforms including 5harfliler “function as counter publics for the debate and exchange of ideas by those who are marginalized within mainstream political debate” (Harris from Göker, 2019, 315). I will suggest that this would be valid in case of the feminist archiving and feminist memory work and bearing in mind how commemorating women in history is important, however, considering the discursive productions and carrying on collective political action, it would not be the case for 5harfliler. For instance, I will use what Göker (2019) has presented as a sample for a feminist memory of activism from Çatlak Zemin:

Let us go to the year 2014, let's! Just like when we all get nostalgic saying things like 'oh, such beautiful years'... To those seemingly distance days which were not that long ago. A claim for space had risen after Gezi, a claim out in the open and directed right to its interlocutors! The struggle for space-place enacted during Gezi in specific reference to the park is a struggle woman have historically known and symbolically expressed in all their arguments and struggles (Çatlak Zemin, 25 May 2018, translated by Göker, 2019, 319).

As this piece of the article shows, the author remembers the protests as being a contribution to the feminist movement that also involves resistance to men occupying the spaces that should be of women, and "tap into the collective memory of the movement and its role shaping the protests" (Ibid, 219). 5harfliler, in "100 Gün Boyunca Hiçbir Şey Satın Almayacağıma.../...to That, I Will Never Buy Anything

for 100 Days" also remembers what Gezi resistance has contributed to the author at a personal level. She points out that she "didn't spend money for 2 weeks and wore the same shoes and a total of 2 clothes" and adds she "didn't see any other benefit". The author here chose to describe the Gezi as a contribution to her economy, as well as the personal gains when it comes to consumerism. She then tells about how the country is trapped in the hands of capitalism and consumerism, without referring to Gezi resistance at any point in the article. Apart from this article being out of the context of the subject, there are other articles on Gezi resistance stating its diversity<sup>6</sup> or being carrying a gendered aspect<sup>7</sup>, but the fact that they do not show the participatory side of the website that they receive none or a few comments is also the reason why I choose to select the articles with the most comments. 5harfliler may not gather its readers on the political debates, as much as other feminist websites do. Through this, the question of whether publishing that kind of article could be considered as a contestation arises, however, since this study's focus is to explore the identity construction with the discursive productions, the site offers no place in this case of political action and thus a feminist collective identity, and the fact that the articles stick to their limit of being at personal level cause one to question the feminist knowledge production the site offers. Even though the political action and the identity production are not directly correlated, instead of the contribution to the political debates and offering new discourses against the major discourses, it would clear the boundaries that 5harliler draws between itself and the power what seems to be clouded at this point. Plus, the negations are not also met bearing in the mind that the contribution and participation in the political debates are very low in case of interaction.

The second article, "Gezi'nin Başörtülü Kadınlarla İmtihanı veya Türkiye'de Beyaz Feminizme bir Bakış/ Test of Gezi with Women Wearing Headscarves or a Glimpse White Feminism in Turkey", assesses the arguments put against the women during Gezi resistance from an intersectionality perspective. She indicates that veiled

<sup>6</sup> "Geziyi Alevileştirmek" on <http://www.5harfliler.com/geziyi-alevilestirmek/> (17.12.2019)

<sup>7</sup> "Marjinalin Masumiyeti" on <http://www.5harfliler.com/marjinalin-masumiyeti/> (17.12.2019)

women are often subjected to street harassment since their properties of being veiled and women at the same time intersect and become an object to the harassment by men in the Turkish context. The author remembers the period of Gezi resistance as a period that the harassment of a few veiled women was experienced. She offers, as a feminist woman, that the feminist movement should be an inclusive, pluralistic feminism that accounts for the intersectionality of different identities. The author argues that the feminist movement in Turkey is "white feminism" and excludes other groups and at the same time takes "one sample" from those groups and thus impersonating a fake inclusiveness sheath. The criticism is in fact on the feminist movement from its aspect of having a hierarchical approach beyond the question of inclusiveness and it is also the representative of a certain sociocultural and socioeconomic segment in the society and never questions the privileges of this segment. In the conclusion from the article, the author gives a critique of orientalist views of white feminism that veiled women do not have an agency and they should be "emancipated". Thus, the article offers a new sight into feminism, and the feminist views on 5harfliler. The comments mostly criticize the article being indifferent to the ones except the "white feminism" and thus felt excluded. One more time, the position which 5harfliler chooses to remember the contribution of Gezi resistance seems problematic because instead of producing a collective memory from that collective action, the articles chose to remember Gezi resistance as being a period which only reminds them specific news or events, or personal gains. As can be seen, the place where they have positioned themselves and talked about these issues is ambiguous and blurred in a way that their challenge to the dominant discourse is reduced to them remembering it as only a period. Thus, their dialogue with the major discourse on the subject is not present in the case of Gezi resistance. All in all, this brings another question to ask, that is, 5harfliler's property of being adaptive and open to differences as being their publishing ethics might not work well for them to position themselves and respond collectively to political debates. Also, we do not see any mainstream media criticism here, we learn only how women remember this period. Therefore, 5harfliler's discursive production is limited to daily discourses. When it comes to the factors of the collective identity, it is said that the consciousness factor,

which defines and realizes the shared interests when contesting the dominant structural mechanisms, the term emphasizes the importance on the attribution of collective actors to “structural, cultural, or systematic causes” rather than to personal matters (Taylor and Whittier, 1999, 179). Hence, 5harfliler, when discussing the political matters, does not meet the factor of consciousness in their act of reducing the matters to the personal level.

Another major discourse in power is on the *abortion ban*. The patriarchal structure of the family institution increases and diversifies the sexist exploitation of women. Women demanded that their bodies be released from the patriarchy's control. To differentiate between sexuality and fertility, the demand for generalization of birth control was raised as well. As the safe birth control system has not been created yet, the right to abortion was requested and the woman had a say on her own body. The discussion of the body and it is being a field of power will be given in the following subsections, thus it would not be essential to present it, since my focus while assessing the discussion will be on interrogating the discourse that 5harfliler produce during their contribution to feminist political debate. There are currently 9 articles tagged by *abortion ban*, the first one with the most comments is “Bir “Evlenmeden Olmaz” ve “Kürtaja Hayır” Hikayesi: Hayat Mucizelere Gebe/A Story of “Not Before Marriage” and “No Abortion”: Life is Pregnant to Miracles”<sup>8</sup> gives a critique of a mainstream media TV show, and the second article is “Devlet Hastanesinde Narkozsuz Kürtaj Dehşeti/Horror of Narcosis-free abortion at the State Hospital”<sup>9</sup>, which indicates the reader's letters story of having an abortion at a state hospital. 5harfliler interprets the abortion agenda as “the discussion of uncles in suits and with mustaches” who build up boards on what to do with our uterus serious<sup>10</sup>, criticize the

<sup>8</sup> Bir “Evlenmeden Olmaz” ve “Kürtaja Hayır” Hikayesi: Hayat Mucizelere Gebe on <http://www.5harfliler.com/bir-evlenmeden-olmaz-ve-kurtaja-hayir-hikayesi-hayat-mucizelere-gebe/> (17.12.2019)

<sup>9</sup> “Devlet Hastanesinde Narkozsuz Kürtaj Dehşeti” on <http://www.5harfliler.com/devlet-hastanesinde-narkozsuz-kurtaj-dehseti/> (17.12.2019)

<sup>10</sup>ly “Kürtaj Yasağı – Geçen Bölümün Özeti” on <http://www.5harfliler.com/kurtaj-yasagi-gecen-bolumun-ozeti/> (17.12.2019)

awful reality and uses satire as a coping strategy. If we want to list the statements of the oppressive and conservative Turkish state about abortion, we can summarize the whole reality with the premise that “Each abortion is Uludere”<sup>11</sup>. Here, the president takes the abortion discussions one step further and likens the abortion to the Kurdish district where a massacre took place and making it clear that sexuality is an area of discipline and regulation, as well as a meeting point of the body and the population.

The first article gives a critique of a series that disparages abortion through chastity. The series, as a mainstream media product, of course, reproduces ideologies and makes a reproduction of tradition through media, showing us the women who should and should not be accepted by society. The series sacralizes the chastity over the “innocent” woman they chose to be the ideal and denigrates the extra-marital sexual activity. Thus, the series reproduces the stigma on female sexuality by fitting it into the family and marriage axis which is purely patriarchal. It is evident that this article, about the dissemination of ideologies through media and being positioned as opposed to these ideologies, is one of the examples that are suitable for this study. The author's positioning herself as against these mainstream media discourses, and her interpretation of this as one of the forms of violence against women may prove her contestation to the major discourse. On the one hand, the article demonstrates the debates on abortion from past to present and how women oppose them, thus contributing to feminist memory work. At the end of the article, the news and research reports on abortion are transferred to us. Thus, the article overthrows the series that shows the women's internalization of this pressure and discipline of her body in a way and establishes an opposite relationship with the media. Thus, in this article, the resistance between the power and the 5harfliler is visible through problematization. But, making the power visible is not enough to say that 5harfliler produces alternative discourses that constructs collective identity. The consciousness factor could be met because making power visible could be interpreted in a way that it defines and helps to realize the group's shared interests in their resistance,

<sup>11</sup> “Her kurtaj bir Uludere'dir” on <https://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/her-kurtaj-bir-uluderedir,z1M5Y2zmwEu6drogItVkiA> (18.12.2019)

however, the problematization of the issues do not go further to construct negotiations, since there is no effort of 5harfliler to change the symbolic meanings, and thus collectively resist the major discourses. The second article will carry this discussion further.

The second article consists of a reader letter from a mainstream media article that the author's assessment of her experience as well as her abortion story. She describes her abortion at the state hospital as "a kind of rape" and tells that she thinks that abortion is done without narcosis, sedatives or even painkillers, and is an act of the state "punishing" women. 5harfliler, only quoting this reader letter, adds nothing to it. We can only remove discourse from the context where this site positions itself, the thought of this is a feminist website helps to detect the motive behind each article when the articles are examined separately. 5harfliler does not give us any certainty in this case and does not directly talk to us or against the major discourse. In the dialogue, it only hits the face that the desperateness of the situation, and in the comments, we see only the sharing of experience. This article, in fact, shows explicitly how various power mechanisms that the body is disciplined by, however, 5harfliler chooses to not get into a dialogue with the power mechanisms and its practice through discourse and stays silent to it. At this point, it prefers not to say what she has to say and what the feminist movement says, makes the patriarchy visible, but does not contradict him directly. Thus, 5harfliler here cannot develop new arguments, they only repeat the meta discourse again.

One of the most fundamental roles of collective action is creating spaces where power becomes visible, as said by Melucci that, visible and recognizable power can also be negotiated because it can be challenged and forced to take account of differences (1985, 810). For 5harfliler then, deciphering the dominant discourse could be mean to resist against this discourse. This view coincides with the concept of culture jamming, which is a way of meaning-making of the alternative media, is defined as a way of struggle that is to deconstruct the dominant discourse that has entered into all areas of daily life such as the topics on gender by using every

possibility of visual, verbal and written language. The way that 5harfliler's technique of challenging to power might coincide with this kind of struggle, however, is it enough to make the power visible to construct the identity? As I stated, I will not focus on the hierarchical relation of women with power structures, instead, I will focus on the contestation to dominant discourses. In this way, through the difference between making an assertion and an expression, what 5harfliler does here does not let one to derive the intention and motivation clearly, thus the subjectivity is vague in this case of not produced discourse. In case of collective identity then, does not attempt to change the meanings, instead it makes a problematization and thus only shows us what it reinforced as established definitions. Although it may be regarded as an identity constructed by putting a distance with the power and itself since it could be understood as defining the shared interests, however, the fact that 5harfliler does not produce subversive discourses against the power that could change the symbolic meanings prevent the collective identity to be constructed. The examples that could show us the same will be shown repeatedly in this research.

In this subsection, I will also consider the resistance against femicide in terms of how in the arena of politics it is discussed by analyzing the articles tagged *İstanbul Convention*, how the recent discussions on mainstream media covered and how 5harfliler contested the dominant discourses. In this way, I want to derive a conclusion that hints for political action and thus speech can be explored in 5harfliler, so that the boundaries that they draw between them and the power can be precise as well as the negotiations and feminist consciousness. There are only 4 articles tagged Istanbul Convention as of August 2019, and the latest one is the consequence of the latest discussions raised after the murder of Emine Bulut<sup>12</sup>. The other ones are published in the year 2014 in which the Convention has come into force. The articles selected are "Feminizmle Mücadele Derneği ya da Siz Bu İstanbul Sözleşmesi'ni Neden İmzaladınız?/The Association for the Fight Against Feminism

<sup>12</sup> "İstanbul Sözleşmesi Bizim Neyimiz Olur?" on <http://www.5harfliler.com/istanbul-sozlesmesi-bizim-neyimiz-olur/> (16.12.2019)

or Why Did You Sign Istanbul Convention?”<sup>13</sup> and “Siyasetin Şefkat Eli/ Compassionate Hand of Politics”<sup>14</sup>. One of the articles in this tag received a maximum of 5 comments, and the second one only received 2 comments.

In 5harfliler, the “intimate public” is generally emphasized, storytelling style of writing is valued, and the most attentive articles tell the personal experiences. From this point of view, the fact that the interaction is low in politically loaded articles indicates that 5harfliler are involved in political action in publishing, but they cannot effectively bring it down to the field, and they cannot open a discussion as much as they could in the personal stories. However, this does not mean that I ignore the motto of feminism that “the personal is political”, instead my claim is that they succeed in the personal part, but because they do not go further from producing everyday discourses, they could not subvert the symbolic meanings emphasized by the major discourse. The case is the opposite in previous publications which are the product of feminist movements as I have shown in the previous chapters. On the contrary, the media present itself as a place where women announce the demands of the feminist movement and highlight the movement instead of their personal stories, and consequently subvert the discourses of power mechanisms. I have indicated that what 5harfliler’s editors claim is to create a revolution in the personal stories, but do the revolutions occur there is the question to ask in this analysis.

I will let 5harfliler show the answer to that. In the first article tagged *Istanbul Convention*, the neo-conservative women’s suggestion for the concept of justice against the equality discourse of feminism is the starting point. Causally, the major discourses that gave birth to the suggestion of the concept of justice are by the patriarchal system, which in this article’s respect, is the government and the president Erdoğan in that particular period. The author of the article takes Erdoğan’s assertion of “women’s struggle sticks to equality” and interprets it as illogical in the simplest

<sup>13</sup> “Feminizmle Mücadele Derneği Ya Da Siz Bu İstanbul Sözleşmesi’ni Neden İmzaladınız?” on <http://www.5harfliler.com/feminizmle-mucadele-dernegi/> (16.12.2019)

<sup>14</sup> “Siyasetin Şefkat Eli” on <http://www.5harfliler.com/siyasetin-sefkat-eli/> (16.12.2019)



terms. The interpretation here prefers the daily language to academic and political jargon; however, we can detect the problematization. Additionally, the article then changes its focus to the dominant discourses represented in the mainstream media about the case and criticizes the discourses by KADEM, a neo-conservative NGO for women's rights, and the summit they have organized on women's rights violations. Still, the chosen style of language and the author's preference not to leave the daily language set shows us the main elements of the critiques of 5harfliler on political issues. However, it does not mean that the language of 5harfliler is not powerful, the language of them combined with their quick-witted satire is very powerful to challenge the dominant discourses, and the criticisms toward the patriarchy should not always be in an academic form, instead, women's writing is finding its way to challenge the power by constructing its language use.

However, what I am trying to suggest is that the signification of the language, as well as the voice, expression and the accentuation, does not address opposition to the dominant discourse that they criticize, it only says how "illogical" is this or dispel them. The author tells ". . . by organizing such a summit this year, they have further developed their fields of activity. They also have a new slogan: Be a man first! Duh... In a slogan, they are consistent in using energy against the demand for equality"<sup>15</sup>, it articulates its criticisms through reactions but does not offer something oppositional or new against it. Thus, it does not produce an alternative discourse here, instead, it repeats the meta discourse that could reinforce the established definitions, however, for the collective identity to be constructed, the shared interest must be realized and the negotiations to change the meanings should be attempted to construct. What 5harfliler does here is the problematization, which is defined as the discursive practices to put the object of thought as right or wrong (Keskin, 2005, 13). In Çatlak Zemin, at the same time, an article on the feminist movement and the collective action of the feminists deals with the decline in women's rights and regression on gender awareness in general. In contrary to 5harfliler's choice of

<sup>15</sup> "Feminizmle Mücadele Derneği Ya Da Siz Bu İstanbul Sözleşmesi'ni Neden İmzaladınız?" on <http://www.5harfliler.com/feminizmle-mucadele-dernegi/> (16.12.2019)

contestation to power, the article on *Çatlak Zemin*, protecting the website's jargon and political stance, and offer ways to produce collective political act against the power, as the author wrote:

With the awareness that we do not have to give up our originalities, that we share each other's pain, joy, struggle, resistance at home, at work, at school, on the street, everywhere, sharing our solutions, treatments, and therapies, sharing our solidarity, and creating our inequalities and hierarchies. I claim that we can reach from the darkness of this age and the blind white of this avalanche to the rainbow with every color of our togetherness (*Çatlak Zemin*, 6 March 2019).<sup>16</sup>

The second article on *5harfliler* that holds the tag *Istanbul Convention* presents the discussion on how the 10<sup>th</sup> article of the constitution of Turkey that is on equality and how state administrators contradict to the principle of equality and continues with the criticism of the Ministry of Family saying that “violence against women has nothing to do with political discourses”. In this article, we are introduced to the violations of gender equality and the terms of the Istanbul Convention and GREVIO, the supervisor of the countries that signed the Convention.

In this article, which is set out for criticism but could only be descriptive, we also see criticisms and dissenting emphasis. However, if these questions alone are enough to create a political debate, the answer may be that it is not enough. Although the author has a feminist thought observed in terms of her criticism, yet it is unclear whether she has opened a political debate through the rhetoric she uses. Therefore, it can be argued that the two articles tagged *Istanbul Convention* fail to open up discursive areas of contestation in an explicit way, instead, they repeat the tradition of *5harfliler* by only deciphering the power mechanisms, however, the contestation to power is present, and these articles can also serve as a consciousness-raising tool. By gaining consciousness, women also become aware of their shared interests which shape their motives for the resistance they build against the power mechanisms. Then they create negotiations and they construct boundaries between them and the power. The problematic point here is that through the discursive production of *5harfliler*, at some

<sup>16</sup> “Kolektif Politik Hareket ve Konumlandırılmış Biraradalık” on <https://www.catlakzemin.com/kolektif-politik-hareket-konumlandirilmis-biraradalik/> (15.12.2019)

points, the boundaries they construct are clouded, and not on a collective basis. The author chooses to stay in a descriptive stance to the matter, and 5harfliler's effort to change the symbolic meanings is not seen, so that the negotiation factor is not met. Also, the fact that the author only described the debate of the period in a complex way, and that she did not produce any new discourse besides the repetition of the slogan "femicide is political", led to questioning the position and ability of 5harfliler in terms of contributing to feminist knowledge and politics, and defining and making others realize the shared interests which could meet the consciousness factor is not present. To establish boundaries, 5harfliler needs to create a symbolic system that could resist and overthrow the dominant discourse, however, what 5harfliler only do is to publicize the feminist ideas, which is not seem enough the construct boundaries. Thus, it cannot be said clearly that the identity constructed in 5harfliler is a collective identity through their discursive productions.

5harfliler may not develop new arguments on the political debates as the other feminist media do, however, the political debates are not the prominent topics that 5harfliler involves. From now on, it would give us other conclusions if we explore the discursive productions in their discussions of the most popular topics on the website and might give us a perspective to see how 5harfliler chooses to talk against the major discourse on their problematized matters. It would be useful to see the narrative they construct when they are in a dialogue with the patriarchal mechanisms, on the topics that they often give their criticisms on, namely the topics on marriage, motherhood and beauty standards. These topics will be given as a joint subsection, because they could be interpreted as the attempts to subvert the major discourse on patterned subjectivity as their major problematization.

### **3.3.1.2. Against the Patterned Subjectivity: Marriage, Motherhood and Beauty**

I will explore in this subsection that if 5harfliler exhibits their arguments against a patterned subjectivity which is circulated through the representations on the mainstream media, and if they resist the discourse in power, and if they produce

subversive discourses. As I have discussed before, the mainstream media, shapes and disseminates the social knowledge, and it reproduces a form of hegemony that is also generally accepted towards gender. This media does this in different ways that it reproduces the discourses in power that glorify patriarchal body policies, positioning women within the established gender norms, and not representing them outside the specific contexts. The discourses of the media on gender are influenced by the major discourses and reproduce them at the same time. Consequently, the woman is positioned in the media by emphasizing the gendered realities that are constructed through certain practices and discourses. Thus, the personal becomes political, and public and private spheres are interconnected (Öztoğat, 2018). However, while men alternate between two spheres, women have historically been limited to the private sphere. In the patriarchal system, women are oppressed under the gender roles expected of them. The patriarchal system established the dual-gender order as its reality.

A feminist movement that reflects women's point of view and defends their specific interests is the driving force of starting to change the present situation as well as the assurance of the hierarchy in the relationship between men and women and the disappearance of sovereign structures in the whole society (Berktay, 1998, 131). The patriarchal system barely recognizes the right of women to be the subjects. Power limits, controls, regulates, enforces, and protects the individual, and it also shapes and forms what is subject to its structures. Subjects are constructed discursively, and power produces the subjects that are subordinate to their structures and assumes "the subject it produces is masculine" (Direk, 2014, 78). When women begin to express themselves and attempt to construct their own identity and start to turn from being represented to becoming "representor", it means a subversion to the established systems and power mechanisms. A threat to the dominant ideological structure is then a claim to power, and thus the resistance against power emerges.

Approach and rhetoric towards women in the media of women in Turkey are complex and consist of many components associated with each other. Economic,

political and general conservative tendencies are reflected in the news as the positioning of women in the family. In media discourse, femininity is predominantly produced by identifying the women as the mother or wife in the family and with a secondary position as the object of violence or sexuality. Then, the sphere in which the gender roles expected from women are manifested the most is the private sphere; because it is the area that is thought to belong to the woman. This distinction reveals the division of labor based on gender. These roles are given to women also coincides with the sexuality ascribed to women by the patriarchal system, they have "existed extensively with their sexuality, but with their sexual identity defined by male-dominant discourses" (Saktanber, 2015, 189). Consequently, women's identities established in the media are becoming increasingly consistent with male-dominated discourse (Ibid, 189), and how women are handled in the media are directly related to the way women are defined in society. Women have to fight hard to establish and maintain their own identities. The media also constitute in this sense a battleground for women in Turkey (Saktanber, 2015, 206). When 5harfliler is analyzed, there are many articles under the topics of women being trapped in a private sphere and in an attributed subjectivity.

On 5harfliler, there are 38 articles tagged as marriage. The two selected articles are "Pornoya Tanık Edilmek/Witnessing the Porn by Force"<sup>17</sup> and "Sanki Kendi Kendime Evleniyorum/As If I Marry Myself"<sup>18</sup>. The former has received 147 comments, and the latter received 54 comments. The first article is written by a woman who witnessed her husband watching porn and when expressed her discomfort with him, she is ignored by the husband and she is denied when she requested to join him. Then she expresses the traumatic consequences of this emotional violence, and questions what she is annoyed the most: either the porn industry that represents women as an object of desire or the emotional violence (and violence, in general) that men practice on women. Thus, the article which seems like

<sup>17</sup> "Pornoya Tanık Edilmek" on <http://www.5harfliler.com/pornoya-tanik-edilmek/> (19.12.2019)

<sup>18</sup> "Sanki Kendi Kendime Evleniyorum" on <http://www.5harfliler.com/sanki-kendi-kendime-evleniyorum/> (19.12.2019)

the storytelling of an intimate experience, then turns into a discussion, as can be seen, that the discussion has also led by 147 comments. It is striking that after the event, she begins to search for the "porn-addict men" and came to the conclusion that:

It was expected that the desire-giving relationship would be destroyed by the desire of the women to be undressed every time a man wanted, leaving him completely to his desires; she could only be involved in this sexual activity by becoming a porn star, her sexual desires, her sources of pleasure being ignored (Sharfliler, 5 March 2015).

The thought and positioning of every society about women are conditioned by the assumptions about their nature and function; moreover, these pre-assumptions are never consistent (Ibid, 10). Berktaý (2003) argues that women are expected to be both good and evil, sacred and worldly, virgin and prostitute (2003, 131). There is, however, one thing that is consistent about them: that throughout the known history, a woman is constructed as the "other" of man and the independent identity of women is denied. Thus, the feminist movement needs to leak into the area of politics by subverting the rhetoric of patriarchal hegemony in the media, who blatantly speaks about women's roles and lives. Even though the media sacralizes the chastity of women, it also represents her as the object of desire. Here in the article, Sharfliler does not develop a new argument around the discussion and consequently does not produce alternative discourses. Sharfliler, here in the article and many among the website, also deciphers how women are experiencing violence in their intimate relationships, and the author only asks questions to the readers on what the women should do in such cases. The comments are the products of these questions on which most of them there is a discussion of how men are subtly but strongly exercise their power in intimate relationships and carry the debate further. However, apart from building a community, Sharfliler does not move forward the topics from the personal level, such as in the article, the author does not even state how pornography is derogatory and how it exploits women (Langton, 1993). Thus, not going further of being an intimate experience sharing space can be interpreted being not enough the subvert the rhetoric of mainstream media. The second article goes further from this point.

In the second article, “Sanki Kendi Kendime Evleniyorum/As If I Marry Myself”, the author begins by sharing her intimate thoughts on not fitting into the stereotypical women identity that keen on being married and she writes:

I love the guy, and he loves me. But I don't think there is a second feeling that puts pressure on me as much as the feeling of being dependent on someone. I'm so used to being me, it's hard being us (Sharfliler, 6 June 2014).

In general, the article consists of the author questioning each aspect of getting married and assess what kind of a mother she possibly will be, at the end, she expresses that she is getting married because of the oppression from the society and her family, thus adding the only notion in the article that may be considered as the point she attempts to resist, since she problematize the oppression, which is also a shared interest, thus she defines and realizes it. In the Turkish context, women are expected to marry at a young age, otherwise, they will be labeled as "tabby", which will cause them to be stigmatized from society. The article apart from narrating an experience does not contribute or adding something new to the alternative discourses of feminism as well as the previous articles. Thus, the articles here are problematize the issues, and define the shared interests such as not being oppressed in intimate relationships with men and with the family. Thus, the consciousness factor could be constructed. However, even though the shared interests are defined, the negotiations that could overthrow the determined interests is not present. Sharfliler here establishes a community that could share the same grievance and experiences; however, they do not attempt to reinterpret the personal experiences (Taylor and Whittier, 1999, 182). Since the factors are not met again, it cannot be said that a collective identity is constructed.

In a patriarchal society, it has been claimed that women are obliged to perform certain social tasks limited to the reproductive area and are not obliged to perform other tasks. For example, the fertility of her body was used as the basis for limiting the woman to the private sphere, devaluating her labor and exclusion from the labor force by proposing the idea of maternal instinct in traditional discourse. Included in

the motherhood tag, there are 37 articles. The first article with the most comments is “Gölge Hamidiye/Shadow Hamidiye”<sup>19</sup>, which is supposed to be a reaction against a mainstream media news article<sup>20</sup> on the first baby of the year 2015 in İstanbul, which is served with a photo of the family in which the mother is wearing a burqa on the hospital bed and father carrying the baby. The article includes the discourses of the state on women's motherhood duties as well as the then discussions on the women and her body regarding the elective cesarean section. The article is an intimidating speech given to the mother, speaking directly at her, using allusions to describe the mindset. The author speaks to the “oppressed” religious and veiled woman in a patriarchal mouth, she narrates a critique; however, we are confronted with a discourse that rejects the concept of agency of the religious woman, a discourse that is produced to oppress her again, thus reinforces the established meanings as well as prevents the realization of the shared interests. One of the commenters criticized the article as the following.

I think that doing this critique of patriarchy will not lead to a place where feminism is aimed, but vice versa; so, I said that your criticism does not open a place, does not position somewhere. Even if you take criticism, even if it is implicit, if your discourse results in the exclusion from the ranks of the struggle from below, one identity - one of the identities that are the victims of the criticized power - would not in a position as for me (Sharfliler, 2 January 2015).

We cannot understand whether the article disagrees or participate in this thought, partly because, there is a repetition of meta discourse, no argument against it is developed, plus what the article aims to do is not clear if the author comprehends the agency of veiled women. Here we see that Sharfliler is insufficient to develop new arguments, as well as it serves as the carrier of a hegemonic thought. Thus, since the consciousness factor implies “interpretive frameworks that emerge out of a challenging group’s struggle to define and realize its interests” (Taylor and Whittier, 1999, 175-176), and since the negotiation factor is utilized to “restructure the

<sup>19</sup> “Gölge Hamidiye” on <http://www.Sharfliler.com/golge-hamidiye> (19.12.2019)

<sup>20</sup> “Yeni yıl 2015'in ilk bebeği 'Meryem Azra' oldu” on <http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/yeni-yil-2015in-ilk-bebegi-meryem-azra-oldu-1263291/> (20.12.2019)



existing systems of domination” (Ibid, 176), the 5harfliler’s articles until this point fails to meet these factors since neither they do define the shared interests by all members a community nor they restructure the major discourses.

In Reçel-blog, where Islamist women express their criticisms, the post called ‘Neden Feministsin Anlatsana Biraz...’<sup>21</sup>, the author attacks on religious men and how they despise women, and how they abuse women in their marriage. Also, the advantageous position of religious men in their Islamist movement, and its reflections in their relationships, is highly criticized in Reçel, which brings them closer to major feminists' arguments. Also, they mostly criticize the double standards in society that make men advantageous, that women are always visible with their veiling, but men are not so that they could mask themselves. And, this caused men to tell women how to dress, how to believe and how to behave in society and also criticize women, thus took that advantage on women and abuse their religion. This is caused by false religious interpretations, and also Reçel women reject the patriarchal interpretation of the Quran. This can be seen in "Hemen Burada Söyle Feminist Mission?"<sup>22</sup>. As can be seen, women in Reçel-blog write about their own experiences as well as the religious women's experiences in general by emphasizing the fact that they are active agents in their resistance to the Islamist men and men in general.

The second article on the topic is called “Bir İnsan Olarak Anne/Mother as a Human Being”<sup>23</sup>, and it criticizes the myth of motherhood and the double standards when it comes to nurturing a child. Perhaps the most typical case involving gender role models and stereotypes is the process of establishing idealized motherhood, which is also troubling for feminism. Mass advertising uses "symbolic violence" (Bourdieu, 2001) on women to normalize and legitimize gender relations of power. In the

<sup>21</sup> “Neden Feministsin Anlatsana Biraz...” on <http://recel-blog.com/neden-feministsin-anlatsana-biraz/> (21.12.2019)

<sup>22</sup> “Hemen Burada Söyle Feminist Misin?” on <http://recel-blog.com/hemen-burada-soyle-feminist-misin/> (21.12.2019)

<sup>23</sup> “Bir İnsan Olarak Anne” on <http://www.5harfliler.com/bir-insan-olarak-anne/> (20.12.2019)

article, 5harfliler criticizes the advertisements that endorse the notion of idealized motherhood, and distinctively, instead of deciphering the problem and leaving it alone, 5harfliler offers a solution to not endorse the "holy" motherhood and if it is to be reminded that parenting is a shared work, happy parents and children will occur. The discursive organization of the state of motherhood contains several codes such as traditionalism, diligence, devotion, and home-centeredness in advertisements, and it becomes a consumption-oriented commodity and thus creates a myth of motherhood. The article shows some of the advertisements and offers the contrary to be done, but does this equally sufficient argument to what feminism has argued that “women are economically subordinated to the needs of capital, they are both houseworkers and in this respect are primarily responsible for the maintenance and upbringing of labor power; it also feeds the army of reserve workers” (Tekeli, 2017, 9). Instead of analyzing the issue by going deeper to its causes, 5harfliler again sticks to the everyday discourses in their resistance to the power mechanisms. Their work indicates problematization as a discursive practice, however, the article does not meet the factors for the collective identity construction, mostly because it does not attempt to restructure the system which could be aligned with defining and realizing the shared interests of the community.

As I stated earlier, patriarchy attributes women to its stereotypical ideals and it produces a patterned subjectivity for women which is derived from the normative gender codes (Waylen et al, 2013, 40), and these roles are reproduced in every institution that power circulates. As stated before, media is one of those institutions. The sexist perspective is nourished by the traditional stereotypes of gender roles in society and the resulting behaviors. Sexism can manifest itself in many areas from media misrepresentation to different sexes to wage inequality in the professional world. The emphasis on the beauty of the female body is one of the ways patriarchal power objectifies the female body and takes control of it. The mainstream media, like other patriarchal institutions of society, has been the carrier and, therefore, the producer of the discourse of the power, which reduces the woman to both a consumer and an object consumed. According to Bourdieu, the body is the main tool in the

construction of the social order of power (2001). In this patriarchal culture, it is very difficult for women to be represented because she is represented. The authority to represent is in the hands of the men, and he objectifies the woman (Berkday, 1998, 9). The stereotypes against women are constantly reproduced through the representation of women in the mainstream media.

20 articles are tagged beauty on 5harfliler, the two articles with the most comments are “Çirkinin Yaşama Hakkı: Philip Seymour Hoffman ve Beyazlı Kadın/Ugly’s Right to Live: Philip Seymour Hoffman and Woman in White”<sup>24</sup> and “Plajlarda Maskeli Kadın Modası/Fashion of Masked Women on the Beach”<sup>25</sup>. In the articles, it is found that the beauty discourse that the media reproduced mostly using cliché expressions was problematized.

In the first article, which is influenced by what an Esquire article<sup>26</sup> argues on the death of Hoffman, as well as influenced by Wilkie Collins's 19th-century detective novel called "Woman in White". The esquire article suggests that the actors who are "ugly" in comparison to Hollywood standards since they are,

...are permitted to behave onscreen in ways that George Clooney and Matt Damon never could. But the same permission extends offscreen, and that's where we see the cost; indeed, we pay to look at men who look like us only when they convince us that that they live in psychic spaces that we could never endure...unless, of course, we happen to be enduring them (Esquire, 2 February 2014).

5harfliler criticizes the pressure to be beautiful, the importance that the media attaches to beauty from the suicide of Hoffman and the representation of the ugly woman in Collins’ novel. It is clear that 5harfliler gives a criticism of the situation,

<sup>24</sup> “Çirkinin Yaşama Hakkı: Philip Seymour Hoffman ve Beyazlı Kadın” on <http://www.5harfliler.com/cirkinin-yasama-hakki-philip-seymour-hoffman-ve-beyazli-kadin/> (20.12.2019)

<sup>25</sup> “Plajlarda Maskeli Kadın Modası” on <http://www.5harfliler.com/cirkinin-yasama-hakki-philip-seymour-hoffman-ve-beyazli-kadin/> (20.12.2019)

<sup>26</sup> “Philip Seymour Hoffman's Final Secret” on <https://www.esquire.com/entertainment/a26357/hoffman-junod/> (20.12.2019)

and at the end the author invites the readers to the discussion by saying “what do you say about the ugly’s right to live and die, the character actor's life that is always in danger?”, which is a typical strategy for 5harfliler to form a broader discussion instead of giving it in the article. The same also happens in the second article consists of the description of face mask wear to prevent sunburn, since in the Asian culture the women are expected to "protect" their whiteness as a beauty standard, thus the article tries to discuss the concept of beauty is relative in different societies. Both of the articles received comments that are in favor of 5harfliler's stance and they expand the discussion, thus a community that problematize the issue is established. It may be said that the discussion of beauty standards then receives a common criticism by the website, bearing in mind that it is one of the leading discussions in the feminist movement.

It can be said that 5harfliler often sticks to the everyday discourse since they most of the time does not go beyond the sharing an intimate experience, not keening on to develop new arguments and maybe position itself in a place in which it becomes insufficient to develop arguments against the major discourses of patriarchal power. With replication of the meta discourse, at some points 5harfliler prevents itself from being "inclusionary" to all feminisms because of their replication and at the same time not explicitly putting something new to the discussion can be harmful to some. Thus, the shared interests of the community are not defined and realized by some, since the interests could not be “shared” when the ascriptive characteristics that are the basis for dominant system are established for some (Taylor and Whittier, 1999, 176). There are no subversive discourses in 5harfliler regarding these themes as far as detected, this could be interpreted as its failure to resist and restructure the existing system of domination. Plus, the inclusionary publishing politics of 5harfliler might prevent itself to construct a collective identity, since there are some points that the shared interests as a group is not meeting at the same point. The most problematic part is the boundaries they attempt to construct are harmed by their repetition of meta discourse in which the patriarchal discourse is seen to be endorsed instead of being a subversion to it. Therefore, as it was through the analysis, it cannot be said that

5harfliler constructs a collective identity through their discursive productions even in their most popular topics. This discussion will go further in the following section; however, it would be useful to carry on the analysis of 5harfliler on their most popular topics in the next subsection.

It can be derived from the above discussion that the female body has become a political tool. The positioning of the female body by the state, capital, and the media is a discursive construction and at the same time the reality. Gender is one of the most important dynamics of the power-body axis. Because power assigns gender to the body by assigning it to a discipline based on its biology, and then it produces gender that imposes certain meanings, values, and roles based on culture and social values. As I have indicated before, 5harfliler mostly problematize the issues on the private sphere. The first topic of problematization was the attributed subjectivity, and the second one is the sexuality. But, the reason that I did not asses the articles on sexuality since this topic is the point where they act jointly with the LGBT+ movement. Also, the way they handle the issues on sexuality exceeds its being an attributed subjectivity. Thus, the next section will be on sexuality, women's body and queerness.

### **3.3.1.3. Sexuality, Body and LGBT+ Issues**

The axis of body and power is a political, historical and discursive axis influenced by various dynamics. Body, life, and nature have an important position in discourse production and power relations. Power materializes its subject when it is born, and it assigns a gender to it. To grow according to certain gender norms, the subject must first have an assigned gender. Through this process, gender is produced when a subject is assigned to a gender. In short, when the body begins to live, it is produced by power. It is at this stage that the human being is a direct subject of power throughout the life on the axis of body-power and that the body is a field of power, as argued by Foucault (1990). Bodies exist in complex contexts that are equipped with observable political events and various mechanisms of power that are discursively

naturalized by disciplines, making them difficult to discern. In this context, the media is one of the most important mechanisms that establish the relation between the body and power. In contrast, the task of alternative media is to overthrow it and subvert these discourses in power.

There is a relationship between media discourses and the power that disciplines the body. Media discourses have an important role in terms of the power constructed on the processes related to regulation and control of body and life processes in terms of its place in socialization. Discourses of power and media discourses naturalize and confirm power over life and body by certain disciplines, while at the same time rendering power relations that reveal discourse and knowledge become invisible. According to Foucault (1990), the body is not a gender entity before it is determined by a discourse that gives it a natural idea of gender, and it is the discourse of sexuality.

In 5harfliler, the concept of sexuality is discussed in both of the tags of gender and sexuality. Under the tag gender, there are 26 articles and the two articles with the most comments are “Al Barbi Bal Barbi, Yanakları Gül Barbi”<sup>27</sup>, which includes the discussions on the female body as well as the beauty impositions on it, including the sexualization of a child’s toy, and “Kadınların Erkeklerden Daha Şehvetli Olduğu Zamanlar/The Times When Women Were More Sensual Than Men”<sup>28</sup>, which is a translated article that offers a framework to break the perception of sex in the 19th century. There are 22 articles under the tag sexuality, in which the two selected articles are “Cumhuriyet, Frengi ve Cinsellik/The Republic, Syphilis and Sexuality”<sup>29</sup>, which gives a critique of the argument that modernization has caused sexual liberation and “Kızlı Erkekli Yaşıyoruz da Orgazm mı Oluyoruz Sanki Sayın

<sup>27</sup> “Al Barbi Bal Barbi, Yanakları Gül Barbi” on <http://www.5harfliler.com/al-barbi-bal-barbi-yanaklari-gul-barbi/> (20.12.2019)

<sup>28</sup> “Kadınların Erkeklerden Daha Şehvetli Olduğu Zamanlar” on <http://www.5harfliler.com/kadinlarin-erkeklerden-daha-sehvetli-oldugu-zamanlar/> (20.12.2019)

<sup>29</sup> “Cumhuriyet, Frengi ve Cinsellik” on <http://www.5harfliler.com/cumhuriyet-frengi-ve-cinsellik/> (20.12.2019)

Başkanım?/Do We Have an Orgasm Even If We Live Together With Men Mr. President?”<sup>30</sup>, which discusses the sexuality and sexual liberation of women.

The first article tagged gender is a critique of the toy “Barby” which is given along with a personal story, giving a common critique of it, as well as the critique of the alternative of “Barby” which is called Lammily, the author transfers us an article<sup>31</sup> about Lammily and it's being an exaggeration of the faults of the female body, this results in a fake "alternative" which is caused by faulted arguments. 5harfliler transfers the ideas of the article in question, and the author adds her positive comments on it. The second article is also a translated article, which gives a cast of the history of women's sexuality as well as the break in the perception of sexuality through the new reality of women's sexual life. The two of these articles aim to give something to discuss through the comments, and they make clear that 5harfliler’s informative side is appreciated, which contributes to the feminist consciousness that could be provided by defining and realizing the shared interests in the context of collective identity construction.

In the articles tagged sexuality, we can see the traces of the then discussion on the cohabitation<sup>32</sup>. The first article suggests that it is a mistake to argue that the discourse of modernization is a movement for sexual liberation, and the discussions on cohabitation on women and men by the state are caused by this discourse. Foucault (1990) argued that sexuality is an area of discipline and regulation. In the article, we can see the traces of this in this critique, though which is not given. The second article is going beyond this discussion by suggesting that even though women and men live together, female orgasm is still inaccessible for women, and thus open a

<sup>30</sup> “Kızlı Erkekli Yaşıyoruz da Orgazm mı Oluyoruz Sanki Sayın Başkanım?” on <http://www.5harfliler.com/kizli-erkekli-yasiyoruz-da-orgazm-mi-oluyoruz-sanki-sayin-baskanim/> (20.12.2019)

<sup>31</sup> Sorry Lammily, your dumpy looks won't fool many little girls” on <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/nov/21/lammily-wont-fool-girls-rival-barbie> (20.12.2019)

<sup>32</sup> Türkiye Kızlı Erkekli Öğrenci Evlerini Tartışıyor” on <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/gundem/turkiye-kizli-erkekli-ogrenci-evlerini-tartisiyor-1788449> (21.12.2019)

broader field of discussion on the female sexuality. The fact that the second article is directed to the state, is showing us resistance against the discourses in power. It is the concept of sexuality that gains the most "hot topic" articles and most reactions among 5harfliler articles, which may be caused by the fact that 5harfliler, through the website's technical properties for being an open community for the discussion as well as its being a "safe" space for women to discuss these topics. The intimate story sharing and the chance it gives to the anonymity, highlight the website among the other. Thus, being an intimate public for women is one of the most appreciated parts of 5harfliler. Although the community building is realized, the factors of consciousness, boundary construction and negotiation are not seen mostly caused by the cloudedly defined shared interests and the lack of attempt to restructure the existing dominant system. The following also shows us problematization on the topic of femicide.

The reflection of women's murders on the media is problematic in terms of the feminist movement. There are many organizations on this subject, and feminists criticize media discourses and news heavily. It is stated that the media primarily reduced women to the "body" which does not represent different situations and lives of women, and it often pushed women into patriarchal roles, showing them in connection with domesticity (Saktanber, 1990), (Timisi, 1997). Thus, it was pointed out that the media reproduces social prejudices and sexist discourse through news and comments. In feminist critical media studies, the main emphasis is on the reproduction of patriarchal values through the media, keeping the image of a woman equivalent to sexuality and body. In general, this criticism continues in 5harfliler. There are 28 femicides tagged articles, the first article is called "Türk Tipi İlişkiler Cangılında Kurban Edildim (=Kız Arkadaşımın Kafasını Kestim)/I have been Sacrificed in the Jungle of Turkish Relationships (=I Cut My Girlfriend's Head Off)"<sup>33</sup> and the second article is called "Kader Kurbanı Olarak 2 Kadını Öldüren Sefer Amcacımla TV'de İzdivaç Keyfi/Having Fun with the Victim of Fate Uncle

<sup>33</sup> "Türk Tipi İlişkiler Cangılında Kurban Edildim (=Kız Arkadaşımın Kafasını Kestim)" on <http://www.5harfliler.com/turk-tipi-iliskiler-cangilinda-kurban-edildim-kiz-arkadasimin-kafasini-kestim/> (21.12.2019)



Sefer Who Killed 2 Women”<sup>34</sup>. Both of the articles give criticism of media that tries to make the perpetrator invisible and gives the justifications to the murders in favor of the perpetrator. In general, under this tag, criticisms of the representation of femicide on the media are given. Rather than focusing on producing an opposing discourse, they can be described as a response letter. Here again, we see the 5harfliler that repeats the meta discourse and put nothing against it. 5harfliler shows us the gravity of the situation, but it fails to produce new arguments. The boundaries, consciousness, and negotiation it draws are therefore weak and unclear. It even quotes this demonstration as follows:

Do you see that the audience and other participants did not say a single word? And how the news that we encounter in the news every day, normalized but somehow pushed away with the tip of our eyes are located in the middle of our enjoyment on the TV? Do you see the host's incapacity, the uncle, who is the victim of fate, expects empathy, searching for a new partner? (5harfliler.com, 8 May 2014)

The major discourses also reproduce the notions of objectification of woman, and that the idea in which woman is associated with the concept of honor, thus restricts her freedom. In the same way, those who do not comply with heteronormative norms and live outside the accepted forms of social life are stigmatized. The body becomes a gender entity in discourse and the context of power relations, and thus an entity that must comply with gender norms and should be disciplined. Consequently, the concept of the gender binary is endorsed and reproduced in the major discourses. Therefore, heterosexuality is considered as the norm as well as cisgender femininity and cisgender masculinity as gender identities, and that other gender were not visible for a long time. Thus, the genders that are outside the gender norms are also disciplined by the power, and the power exercises its right to kill and right to live against those. 5harfliler also joins the discussion on this topic.

There are 25 articles included in this subsection which are tagged trans, and the most commented articles are “Başörtülü Bülent Ersoy ve Müslüman LGBTI

<sup>34</sup> “Kader Kurbanı Olarak 2 Kadını Öldüren Sefer Amcacımla TV’de İzdivaç Keyfi” on <http://www.5harfliler.com/kader-kurbani-olarak-2-kadini-olduren-sefer-amcacimla-tv-izdivac-keyfi/> (21.12.2019)

Varoluş/Veiled Bülent Ersoy and Muslim LGBT Existence”<sup>35</sup> and the following two articles share the same number of comments; “Bir Şoför Sikkisiyle: Halkla İlişkiler Teorisine Giriş/ A Driver's Coin: Introduction to Public Relations Theory”<sup>36</sup> and “Yeni Başlayanlar İçin Travestiler: Bir Travesti Kocasını Elinde Nasıl Tutar?/ Transvestites for Beginners: How Does a Transvestite Hold the Husband?”<sup>37</sup>. In the first article, LGBT Muslims in Turkey were discussed to what extent they may exist. On television, the author drew attention to the transphobia in the reaction to a Muslim transsexual star to fulfilling the religious obligations that she wore a scarf for it. The author states that Bülent Ersoy was subjected to insults despite all of her privileges and the “tolerance” provided by her distance between her and the audience. Thus, in Turkey, the author continues, more needs to be considered on the experiences of LGBTs to be Muslim without having had none of these privileges.

Through the article, the author gathers the reactions to Ersoy on social media and responds to them from the words of Ersoy that she uttered in an old TV show against the transphobic discourses. It is striking here that the author chooses to make Ersoy speak against all of those reactions, since most of the time, 5harfliler chooses to replicate the meta discourses and does not develop an argument against them. What they do is problematization, however, when they replicate the meta discourse, it blurs the boundaries that they establish between them and the power, since the shared interests of the community is not defined precisely. Thus, the structural position of the community is not understood that could provide the 5harfliler with consciousness factor, and the negotiations which the community reinterprets the meanings is not present.

<sup>35</sup> “Başörtülü Bülent Ersoy ve Müslüman LGBTI Varoluş” on <http://www.5harfliler.com/basortulu-bulent-ersoy-ve-musliman-lgbti-varolus/> (21.12.2019)

<sup>36</sup> “Bir Şoför Sikkisiyle: Halkla İlişkiler Teorisine Giriş” on <http://www.5harfliler.com/bir-sofor-sikkisiyle-halkla-iliskiler-teorisine-giris/> (21.12.2019)

<sup>37</sup> “Yeni Başlayanlar İçin Travestiler: Bir Travesti Kocasını Elinde Nasıl Tutar?” on <http://www.5harfliler.com/bir-travesti-kocasini-elinde-nasil-tutar/> (21.12.2019)

However, in this case, the ones who are "outside" the 5harfliler's circle is not harmed, mainly because of the inclusionary publishing policies drag those who could produce subversive discourses on this particular subject. For instance, the second and the third article are both written by Gani Met who is a trans activist. The second article is also a response to the transphobia of the media and other artists to Bülent Ersoy, preceding a discussion on the hypocrisy of Middle Eastern men on trans individuals and the hidden and shamed queerness of them, ending with the statement that even though Ersoy is a "diva", the trans identity that she has prevents all of her privileges just as the other trans individuals. The third article is about the trans experience that transwomen have, the author makes categorization of the wives that trans individuals could become, and also states that "if a woman is a woman, I have experienced the process of being a woman twice. So, I'm a woman twice. If I'm a woman twice, let me have a husband." (5harfliler.com, 10 September 2014).

The last article carries the traces of 5harfliler's typical satire, which is harmonized by a criticism of the patriarchy. As can be seen, the inclusionary publishing policies of 5harfliler allow it to produce alternative discourses on the subject as a distinction from the above analyses.

Up to this point, I have analyzed 5harfliler in terms of its discursive production against the discourses in power, and I have explored it the website subvert these discourses. At this point, it is seen that 5harfliler have both participated in the feminist movement, but also participated in the reproduction of the meta discourse, in which they criticize and attempt to subvert most of the time. The reciprocal relationship between them and the patriarchy is somehow clouded regarding what this analysis has offered. However, it is also clear that there is a contestation of the major discourses, as well as the confrontation of a power mechanism, is present. Since this research aims to find contestations in the discursive productions in the context of construction of collective identity, rather than exploring the top-bottom resistance to power, it can be said that 5harfliler almost always present us a contestation through its problematization. Yet the boundaries they may construct is

not seen, some articles are far from contributing to feminist consciousness, and the negotiations are at some points prevented because of 5harfliler's failure due to the valorization of the essential differences through the politicization of everyday life (Taylor & Whittier, 1999, 187). Therefore, it can be said that the collective identity of 5harfliler, when analyzed within a discursive production, may not be constructed by the assessment provided by the factors of boundaries, consciousness and negotiation.

The next section will analyze the community building technique of 5harfliler, apart from analyzing the articles written by the authors, I will analyze how the readers choose to talk on the topics. Throughout the analysis, I have emphasized the importance of comments, and I chose the articles with the most comments among the most popular topics. 5harfliler is a place where comments are included in the discussion, and we can often find more content than the articles. Thus, the comments section is a place that we may explore to see the plural identities that the feminist movement involves. Within the scope of the research, it may offer us a new dimension to see 5harfliler's identity construction in the context of collective identity.

### **3.3.2. Comments and Discussions as Solidarity Markers**

In this section, as well as the dialogue they choose to build with power, I will show how the solidarity between women may be observed in the comments section under the articles to analyze whether they are close to constructing a collective identity in their struggle. The comments among the readers and the authors of 5harfliler may help to reinforce a feminist identity, since the comments may include encouragement and solidarity among the readers of 5harfliler. Thus, in this section, I will explore here if we see solidarity established in the context of a collective identity, which could be interpreted as if these comments verify the factors or not.

Couldry asserts that “the relationships between the audience and the media industry and between media consumption and media production are changing as audiences become both consumers and producers of media texts (e.g. in Internet situations)” (Couldry from Mackay and Dallaire, 2014, 554). As it can be seen in 5harfliler, one of the features of the website is that it includes both different feminisms and feminist views and presents everyday issues in a perspective that invites the reader to think critically and at all times is seen through the comments section, since the comments become part of the discussions of the articles. Thus, the consumers become the producer in this sense.

5harfliler's commenting policy can be found on the website in the following illustration 3.

Illustration 3. About the Comments on 5harfliler.com



**5Harfliler**

MEYDAN KÜLTÜR ECİNNİLİK TARİH SANAT

### YORUMLARLA İLGİLİ

5Harfliler, okuyucularının yorumlarıyla zenginleşen bir site. Yazıların yorumlanmasından, tartışılmasından, paylaşılmasından; “yorumlarda buluşmaktan” mutluluk duyuyoruz. Birçok yazı, yorumlarla tamamlanacağını bilinciyle, bazen tam da bu amaçla yazılıyor.

Kişilere karşı nefret ve olumsuzluktan mümkün mertebe arınmış, üzerinde düşünülmüş ve ana amacı karşısındakini incitmek olmayan yorumların yer aldığı bir ortam olarak tasarladığımız 5Harfliler’in yorum moderasyonu ile ilgili bazı önemli noktaları paylaşmak isteriz:

5Harfliler’de yorumlar gönderildikten sonra moderasyondan geçer, dolayısıyla yaptığınız yorumu sitede görmeniz zaman alabilir.

- Aşağılayıcı, ırkçılık, cinsiyetçilik, homofobi, transfobi içeren,
- kişisel saldırı, tehdit veya iftira barındıran,
- başkalarının gizlilik haklarını ihlal eden,
- sadece provokasyon amacı taşıyan

yorumlar hoş görülmez. Ancak 5Harfliler, yukarıdaki özelliklere sahip bazı yorumları ibret ya da numune amaçlı veya tartışmayı desteklemek adına yayınlatabilir.

Yorumların moderasyonu, yukarıda belirttiğimiz noktalar ışığında, dönüşümlü olarak çalışan editörler tarafından yapılır. Her durumda, 5Harfliler editörleri yazıya ya da yazıda başlatılmak istenen tartışmaya katkıda bulunan yorumları daima el üstünde tutarlar.

Yorumlarla ilgili herhangi bir şikayetinizi veya bu kriterlerle ilgili fikirlerinizi [yorum@5harfliler.com](mailto:yorum@5harfliler.com) adresinden bizimle paylaşabilirsiniz.

Tabii yine her zaman, yorumlarda buluşuruz...

Source: <http://www.5harfliler.com/yorumlarla-ilgili/> (Accessed 17.12.2019)

As can be seen, many articles are written to receive comments to enhance the discussion, and sometimes with the awareness that they will be completed with comments. About the comment moderation of 5harfliler, which they have designed as an environment that is free from hate and negativity towards people, comments on 5harfliler are filtered by the editors after sent, with the purpose of not to hurt other people. The question to ask here is that the filtering means to exclude other views. As a response, in terms of the publishing values of 5harfliler, the editors uttered the following:

For the 5Harfliler team, there is no concern to be a peace-maker among women. Betül believes their skepticism and questioning attitude to be their defining features. For instance, immediately after publishing something celebratory of #metoo, they publish another post that questions it. She thinks this gives them room for maneuver away from the more dogmatic styles of the speech she associates with women's organizations. For her, the fact that feminist popular media do not have to be politically correct or serious makes it possible to touch emotions and reach more people. For Betül, an important way in which they build solidarity among women is through the editor-author relationship, which she reads like a process that empowers through editing and walking together in creative writing (Göker, 2019, 324).

Therefore, one of the major features that make the site feminist is that it includes both different feminisms and feminist views, and presents the everyday issues discussed with a perspective that invites the reader to think critically. Through this, the website and its storytelling emphasis turn into a mode of communication in which people are moved from silence to public expression (Göker, 2019, 322). Therefore, the storytelling of daily life experiences plays an important role in transforming the readers, since it does open space for public deliberation and public debate, and thus establishes a community of individuals who share common experiences. I have indicated that what 5harfliler mostly do in their articles is problematization, and this community is also built through this. However, for the purpose of this research, now I will explore if this community building through problematization turns into a collective identity.

The collective and participatory structure of the feminist media in the management and the creation of the message dissolves authority from a single center to each

individual. The editors of 5harfliler told in Open Radio interviews that they emphasize in addition to criticizing the official discourse, they also write about the pressure of being a mother, being weak and being beautiful, which they think is lost in their turmoil. In their own words, “we take into account that the official discourse that is produced by the authorities at that time involved the discourse that was a means of oppression that is imposed on being weak, beautiful, and many other things” (Bora and Cantek, 2014, 222). Therefore, they attempt to criticize the official discourse, in other words, the discourse in power. But the success of these critiques to construct a collective identity is explored in the above section. Thus, now I will analyze the comments in this context.

The articles with the most comments often consist of the personal storytelling articles, among which I will show an example. Some of the first-hand articles on the website convey traumatic experiences such as harassment and violence and discuss the problems that women have in common in the social sense, indicating that 5harfliler is a space for feminism in this sense. The topics in which we can trace the signs of solidarity and encouragement among them are the articles on abortion and intimate relationships. At this point, it should be emphasized that the interactive power of the 5harfliler is quite strong since the comments and criticisms that come under many articles feed each other. They are added to each other, to ensure that not only published articles are the only feature of the website, and the comments also contribute to the discussion and can be considered as a discursive production. There are such articles on the site, the comments made to it are more informative and more critical. For example, a translated article called “Oyunun Bir Parçası Olmak: Takılma Kültürü Kadınlara Ne Kazandırıyor?/Being a Part of the Game: What Women Gain from the Hook-up Culture?”<sup>38</sup> that is written on the hook-up culture invited many readers to discuss the relationships and how men are oppressing women in intimate relationships and how they impose their values on women. One of the comments that the article has received is the following.

<sup>38</sup> “Oyunun Bir Parçası Olmak: Takılma Kültürü Kadınlara Ne Kazandırıyor?” on <http://www.5harfliler.com/oyunun-bir-parcasi-olmak-takilma-kulturu/> (21.12.2019)

Illustration 4. Comment on “Being a Part of the Game: What Women Gain from the Hook-up Culture?” on 5harfliler.com

Harika bir çeviri, çok teşekkürler. Sürekli kafa patlattığım üstüne yazı yazmak istediğim bir konuydu. Daha bu sabah defalarca kötü hissetmeme rağmen bu oyuna neden devam ediyorum diye düşünüp kendimi sorguya çektim. Bulduğum cevap kendi kendime "yeterli bir cinsellik yaşadığımı kanıtlama çabası" oldu. Çünkü aynen yazıdaki gibi, uzun bir süre partnerimle cinsel problemlerim vardı ve çözmek için adım atmak yerine kendimi yetersiz, eksik, arzalı hissettiren bir adamla uzun (bayaaaa uzun) bir ilişki yaşamıştım. Ondan ayrılınca her şey yavaş yavaş düzeldi ve doğru kişilerle karşılaştığımda baya haz alabilen bir insan olduğumu gördüm. Sonra bu takılmacalar başladı ve

Source: [http://www.5harfliler.com/oyunun-bir-parcasi-olmak-takilma-kulturu/#disqus\\_thread](http://www.5harfliler.com/oyunun-bir-parcasi-olmak-takilma-kulturu/#disqus_thread) (Accessed 15.11.2019)

This comment is one of the examples of 5harfliler's property of being an "intimate public" and thus the demonstration of solidarity among 5harfliler since the comment expresses that the reader is fond of the article and the thought involved, as well as serving as a place for the reader to share her intimate experiences. Thus, the “the creation of new forms of solidarity through shared emotions becomes possible” (Göker, 2019, 322), and it can be seen that the website may position itself as "intimate public" which emphasis on personal disclosure, empathy, and identification among the readers and writers, thus, they create a common emotional world (Ibid, 322).

The article has been one of the most influential posts on 5harfliler.com, both on the website and on 5harfliler's social media accounts, it has gained many reactions. It even had a new post coming after it that is published as a critique of the first post. This second post called "Takılmak ya da Takılmamak: Gerçekten Bütün Mesele Bu Mu?/Hooking Up or Not Hooking Up: Is This Really the Whole Issue?"<sup>39</sup>, and it was obvious that the second article has corrected the “non-feminist” parts of the first one, as seen in the comments, the readers have contributed to the debate by criticizing the first article’s indifference toward women’s sexual liberation and agency.

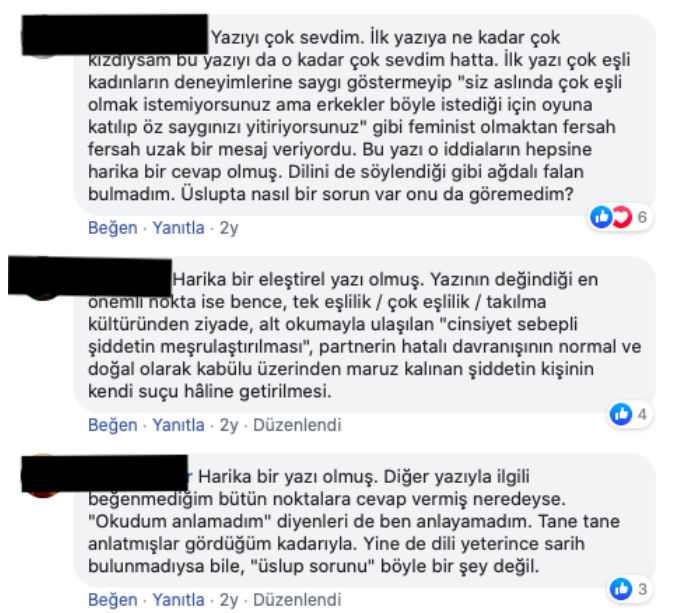
<sup>39</sup> Takılmak Ya Da Takılmamak: Gerçekten Bütün Mesele Bu Mu? on <http://www.5harfliler.com/takilmak-ya-da-takilmamak-gercekten-butun-mesele-bu-mu/> (21.12.2019)



As can be seen in the Illustration 5, these comments are taken from 5harfliler's Facebook page, in which they post the articles and under these posts, the comments are made by the readers in a way that maintains the discussion. Thus, the space of 5harfliler is extended from the website to other social media accounts, and the participatory feature is seen there as well. As seen in the comments, the first article is criticized because of the repetition of the patriarchal discourse, and the second article is then an attempt to situate it in a feminist framework.

Since the second article corrects the first one, the positive comments it receives argue the same. Thus, the readers do not always approve of the website either. It is often seen that most comments contradict each other. At the same time, the readers are most critical of 5harfliler's repetition of meta discourse. It is because, at some points, the comments are more critical and more informative than the article, thus they also contribute to the alternative discursive production.

Illustration 5. Comments on "Hooking Up or Not Hooking Up: Is This Really the Whole Issue?" on 5harfliler's Facebook Page



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/Harfliler/posts/1452463494874912> (Accessed 15.11.2019)

5harfliler also accepts these critics since they also mark solidarity. The editors believe that they should not expect a revolution to reflect their ideas on everyday life. They believe that women can make their revolution by taking a closer look at the personal stories and the course of our cognitive maps. Thus, we can start with everyday issues to revolutionize (Bora and Cantek, 223). In this respect, Göker argues that "at a time when formal and civil societal channels of feminist activism become more and more restricted in Turkey and elsewhere, feminist solidarity seems to be taking root among shared personal struggles with patriarchy" (2019, 322). Savran explains this issue as, on this ground of oppression, it is possible to establish the direct needs of women, which are differentiated from each other by feminist consciousness and politics, and to establish their anger as a common rebellion. In other words, even if women are not spontaneously sisters, they can establish a women's solidarity that paves the way for feminism: they can understand the connections between them and the situation of women who have different lives than their own. Different situations of being a woman are positions that are established and reinforce each other in the patriarchal order against the oppression (Savran, 2018, 156). It is precisely for this reason that feminist consciousness, which is a perception of this reality, is possible, and together it is an opportunity to act as a collective identity as Savran argues.

The solidarity that can be explored in the website may be a sign of its collectiveness, and thus indicates the point where 5harfliler gets close to construct a collective identity. However, it should be kept in mind that most of the time the comments presents us contradictories among the readers, also, the articles in which involve repetition of meta discourse are criticized by the readers, by which their confidence to the website and counting it as a "safe space" might be damaged. The comments only signs that there is a community building practice through their problematization. They involve encouragement and shared emotions, intimate experience sharing about the topic, and thus marks a solidarity through creating an "intimate public". Since what comments in the website do is limited to these, the factors for the collective identity is not met. That is to say, the negotiation factor is implies a restructure of the

existing systems of domination (Taylor and Whittier, 1999, 176), and change the symbolic meanings, however, what 5harfliler only do is to enhance the discussion through the problematization. 5harfliler here does not create a symbolic system that could overthrow the dominant discourse, instead the comments enhance the discussion but does not reinterpret it even in the course of repetition of meta discourse, what 5harfliler only do is to publicize the feminist ideas whether they are against or for the article's ideas, which is also not seem enough to construct the boundaries. That is, the boundary construction is realized through the two steps, first one is to institutionalize and create a common culture, which can be interpreted here as a community building, and the second one is to contest and create an oppositional world apart from the dominant structures. 5harfliler here applies the first step, but through the experience sharing it only creates a common emotional world as Göker (2019) argues. The boundaries through the comments then are not constructed due to the second step. Since the common emotional world does not translate into a place where women define and realize their shared interests since most of the time the comments share their intimate experiences that do not "attribute their discontent to structural, cultural, or systematic causes" (Taylor and Whittier, 1999, 179), the consciousness factor is not met. Therefore, it cannot be said that 5harfliler, through their community building, does not construct a collective identity.

Another question to ask here is that whether the consequences of the participatory side of the website that the comments and the reader participation feeds the solidarity, or in contrary, they exclude some others. For example, in search of the Turkish translation of the term mansplaining, what a reader has offered is chosen, but whether this reader's choice and thus 5harfliler's choice exclude other individuals is an essential inquiry to find out the shared interests could be defined in the website.

### **3.3.3. A Common Terminology for Mansplaining**

As I have suggested, I also explore the common narrative patterns in the discursive production of 5harfliler, and I have found out a specific wordplay they have utilized

to define a particular condition that reflects the hierarchies among women's relationships with men, namely the term mansplaining. The act of mansplaining is defined as "to explain something to a woman in a condescending way that assumes she does not know the topic" (Merriam-Webster, 2019). The term addresses the power relations so that a man has control over the conversation with a woman and has the thought given to him that it is not possible for a woman to have more or the same fund of knowledge as equal to him. Since this word is not translated to Turkish, 5harfliler offers their translation that is also offered by one of the readers. The word "açıklama" in Turkish is the conjugated version of the words "açıklamak/to explain" and "çük/penis"<sup>40</sup>. In the article called "Homo Demonstrans"<sup>41</sup>, the problem of the communication between men and women is analyzed and the author defined the situation as men who know, show and teach everything are not strangers, they are ones we encounter in our relationships and they will be delighted to enlighten women on a subject they are sure that women never think of. In the second article about the same topic, which is also tagged "açıklama/mansplaining", offers the translation for the first time and invite the readers to discuss the issue. In the article "Yoksa Size Hala Açıklamadılar Mı?/Did They Not Mansplain You Yet?", the definition, the discussion, and the visuals supported the tone of the author that is sarcastically expressing herself to decipher the condition. Thus, it can be seen that their problematization is present in this particular topic as well.

Other alternative media spaces either adopted or criticized the term. Another feminist alternative media website Çatlak Zemin, has given a slightly critical look on this translation in one of their articles<sup>42</sup> by saying that some feminists have found these adaptations transphobic because the term directly involves the male genital. The article offers "erkekleme/manning" as an alternative to the translations of the term,

<sup>40</sup> The word "çük" is not a direct translation, however, it is a sarcastic connotation of the penis.

<sup>41</sup> "Homo Demonstrans" on <http://www.5harfliler.com/homo-demonstrans/> (14.12.2019)

<sup>42</sup> "Mansplaining ne demek? Cümle içinde kullanalım: BENİM BABAM MANSPLAINING" on <https://www.catlakzemin.com/mansplaining-ne-demek-cumle-icinde-kullanilim-benim-babam-mansplaining-2/> (14.12.2019).

but it did not attract the attention as what 5harfliler has offered. As for the criticism of the term, in fact, 5harfliler is not a trans-exclusionary feminist site, instead, many articles about trans rights are also indicated in this study. However, I think that they have adopted this translation because they aim to make the language ironic in this particular translation and they ignored this angle.

If the word was a term that was compatible with masculinity, not the sexual organ, this problem would not exist. However, the problem in this translation did not prevent the use of this term by the women on the site and it was observed that this term was used in many articles and comments. We encounter women using the term “açüklama” in the comments both on Facebook page and website, as well as on the social media in general that exceed the space of 5harfliler<sup>43</sup>.

In an article on mansplaining on the independent news agency T24, the search for the translation also continues, and the author has criticized the 5harfliler's translation by writing "radical feminists make use of slang in response to the phallus by their translation. I'm not going to write it here"<sup>44</sup>. In contrast, Bianet, another independent news agency which can be defined as an alternative media, has adopted and used the term “açüklamak” in one of their news articles<sup>45</sup>.

This issue is the work of a language used by the 5harfliler to confront power, which is a terminology that is created throughout their dialogue with the power and could be included in that section of the study. However, the fact that the language it uses to become the common term of this medium and that it goes beyond this medium may also show to what extent the discursively constructed identities circulate. Therefore, I took this property of the site as a separate marker. The extension of the 5harfliler's -

<sup>43</sup> See Twitter Search: [https://twitter.com/search?q=açüklama&src=typed\\_query](https://twitter.com/search?q=açüklama&src=typed_query) (14.12.2019)

<sup>44</sup> “Mansplaining ve kadınların saçmalama hakkı” on <https://t24.com.tr/haber/mansplaining-ve-kadinlarin-sacmalama-hakki> (14.12.2019)

<sup>45</sup> “Korkusuz Kız Çocuğu Heykeli'nin Ayağına İşeyen Heykel Kaldırıldı” on <https://bianet.org/bianet/toplumsal-cinsiyet/187000-korkusuz-kiz-cocugu-heykeli-nin-ayagina-iseyen-heykel-kaldirildi> (14.12.2019)

in fact a reader's- translation of the term can also be interpreted by emphasizing the participatory side of 5harfliler that both the authors and commenters are the primary producers of the media in the website, and it should be reminded that not all posts attract attention or even commented. Although the ones who do not write or comment could be the "outsiders" of the media product, there are many comments and "likes" under each post that 5harfliler releases on their Facebook page and the shareability of the posts could help us to understand the endorsement could provide one with feminist subjectivity. The fact that many outsiders who adopt the feminist identity are also parts of the website's network, it can be said that the website's virtual space is extended beyond where it circulates. Therefore, the outsiders even construct their identities by being part of the feminist movement rather than being a passive consumer of the media (Mackay & Dallaire, 2014, 556). However, these constructed identities could translate into a collective identity is the inquiry.

The term can be one of the examples that shows the common language and the attitude of the site and shows how 5harfliler contributed to their terminology as well as the social media, and maybe to the daily talks in the society. Thus, in a way that their tone, attitude and satirical voice is expressed through their translation of the term, it is seen that 5harfliler may have devised a specific language to talk about the power relations in their talk to men, namely mansplaining, and utilized it to each experience on the matter, and consequently expressed this through a certain usage of language. As Bakhtin (1992) argues, the language is always in motion and a form of dialogue and offers a way to discuss the language by its discursive limitations, and thus the expressions that one uses is shaped by preceding mechanisms:

Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated –overpopulated– with the intentions of others. Expropriating I, forcing it to submit to one's intentions and accents, is a difficult and complicated process. As a living, socio-ideological concrete thing, as heteroglot opinion, language, for the individual consciousness, lies on the borderline between oneself and the other (Bakhtin, 1992, 294).

In the context of the patriarchal power, and a language which is entrapped by this limitation, the same happens. But in contrast, 5harfliler creates a terminology and shape their language, so they transfer and especially choose to transfer their experiences in their ways. As I have indicated, 8 articles are directly tagged as "açıklama" on the website, not all of them discusses the term and the translation anymore, instead they have adopted and transformed the translated version as an everyday term. For instance, in the second article tagged the same and which I took it as the example since it holds the second place by having 14 comments, namely "Tek Dişi Kalmış Radikal Feminist/Single-tooted Radical Feminist"<sup>46</sup>, the author does not even mention the word "açıklama" and directly show us the condition and its definition, rather the word is used as a tag only. Of course, the context and the story that the author tells includes the situation that a random man has mansplained how she could cross the road, but the term and the tag are used just to define the situation. 5harfliler's adoption of "açıklama" as being an example of them adopting certain words can be considered as a meaning-making, which reveals their contestation of the patriarchal structure and its discourses. 5harfliler, as well as the public, now choose to use the common term to define their conditions and experiences which they do not conform to the patriarchal structure deciphered in their relationship with men. Thus, it becomes their narrative pattern within their discursive production.

Their use of self-made narrative may lead them to challenge the traditional knowledge and reality which are constructed as if men's narrative is the norm because their terminology is now used by the public aiming to contest the dominant discourses. The Personal Narrative Group defines personal narratives as "verbal reconstructions of developmental processes" that show the interaction between individual agency and social dynamics in shaping gendered identities (1989, 5). Women's narratives can illustrate aspects of gender relations that explore the structures of a gendered self-identity in specific social contexts, and it can be seen in 5harfliler that through the use of language and satire as the tone, women attempt to

<sup>46</sup> "Tek Dişi Kalmış Radikal Feminist" on <http://www.5harfliler.com/tek-disi-kalmis-radikal-feminist/> (27.12.2019)

create their ways to contest the patriarchal power and its influence over the intimate or professional relationships. This might be considered as a collective action against power. However, as I have discussed before, the use of "açıklama" as the terminology also reduces women and men as the single category and thus ignores the queer identities. That is, women cannot be put into a single category since it will lead to indifference toward the hierarchies among women, and thus silencing many women, especially the queer identities. Hence, even though a common terminology, a narrative pattern that is constructed in their discourse, 5harfliler fails to construct a collective identity in their discursive production simply because they do not define or realize the shared interests within the same community, which could translate into the consciousness factor. Moreover, since the way they choose for their contestation may also silence the others or even oppress the others that mostly involves the queer identities, thus the boundaries are blurred, and negotiation within the group is not met. That is, negotiation encompasses the actions and symbols of the subordinates to restructure the dominant system (Taylor and Whittier, 1999, 176). However, instead of restructuring, 5harfliler in fact contribute to the established meanings of the patriarchal system through their meaning making. Finally, the boundary factor aims to avoid "the reification of ascriptive and other differentiating characteristics" that are based on the patriarchal structure (Ibid, 176), but 5harfliler contributes to these characteristics even though they aim to overthrow the power mechanisms. Furthermore, the plural identities and the inclusivity of the third wave feminist movement cannot be seen here, because having the plural identities does not address the emphasis on the hierarchies among those, however, what 5harfliler do here is to reinforce the established meanings of the patriarchal system as well as to prevent the realization of the shared interests by the community.

Considering all aspects, it is not possible to define this common pattern as a contestation of the discourses against the dominant discourses of the patriarchal power, since the words are not innocent as Bakhtin suggested (1992, 294). Therefore, the question that in what ways 5harfliler involves the dominant discourse on the subject in their record as the patterns or -as I call it- a terminology in which already



circulating dominant discourse within the power structures reveals itself through what seems to be a contestation. In this case, women can be seen as adopting the discourse within the existing political system and aim to improve women's status through the discursive framework of the system, and these claims are supported by the above criticisms that 5harfliler's failure to tackle developing new arguments. Hence, this can be described by the views claiming that this is the bargain that 5harfliler does which can be seen in a negative way that harms the feminist discursive framework that is constructed as subversion since it is not a resistance to the dominant system.

### **3.4. Conclusion**

It can be seen that 5harfliler is a place that the dominant discourses of the patriarchal system are criticized, as it was in the previous media products throughout the feminist movement. This study has explored the question of does 5harfliler fosters an identity construction, especially a collective identity, in their contestation to the major discourses of patriarchal power through their discursive production. Thus, this research aimed to show that 5harfliler's discursive subversions and hence the contestation of the discourses in power in the context of collective identity constructions through the factors proposed by Taylor and Whittier (1999).

I have begun my analysis with the conceptualization of the identity through the sociolinguistic approach, post-structuralist approach and lastly, collective identity approach, that is, a constructionist approach to identity. Since the study focused on the alternative media products of the feminist movement, the collective identity constructed in the movement is analyzed. Since the aim of the study was to examine the contents of the alternative media on the internet, the relationship of the feminist movement and the alternative media, as well as the new media, was also examined.

The fact that the feminist movement and the new media come together to enable women to construct their own identities is explained by giving a cast of the feminist

alternative media production, and how feminists have produced these media within their relation to power. I have argued that the feminist movement is a resistance against power mechanisms, in other words a contestation of the patriarchal structure. In this context, the concept of collective identity that contests and problematize the power mechanisms was the main focus of analysis. Throughout the history of the feminist movement, the alternative media's role as a tool to deploy the feminist discourses was clarified. Thus, the identities within the feminist movements are also constructed through the discourse that feminists produced in their alternative media products. The study also attempted to situate the notion of collective identity within the framework of discursive production.

In the context of the study, the characteristics of the website 5harfliler that falls under the category of the alternative feminist new media created by women have been identified. The website, which was created by women and managed with a non-hierarchical structure, its content which involves women's experiences and various articles on feminist politics, which are difficult to find in non-feminist alternative media, and which approach critical issues related to daily life was discussed. In the light of the study, a Foucauldian discourse analysis of the website that contesting the patriarchal codes was deployed, and the website's labeling system by the tagging is followed, thus the most popular contents are selected along with the 3 main topics in terms of showing website's contribution to major feminist debates.

According to the analysis of 5harfliler, it is seen that 5harfliler is also a place where women exhibit their work of problematization in which patriarchal codes are contested through their discursive production. Also, the analysis indicated that their contestation mostly involved in their everyday and intimate experiences. Most of the time, there is a repetition of meta discourses in their narratives, and their narrative pattern is problematic for an inquiry of the solidarity among the website. I have accepted the notion that collective identity construction can be realized through three factors that Taylor and Whittier (1999) have proposed, that are, boundary construction, consciousness, and negotiation. Through the conceptualization that my

theoretical framework has provided, I have argued that 5harfliler serves us with a reflection of the plural identities that the third wave feminist movement has gathered. Yet the constructed identity in the 5harfliler does not reconcile the factors of collective identity that Taylor and Whittier (1999) have demonstrated, and since 5harfliler's use of everyday discourses in its critiques to the major discourses, as well as the repetition of meta discourse in their narratives, and their bargain with it at some points and their failure to develop new arguments for the feminist discussion have contributed to the fact that the factors for the collective identity is not met.

The findings of this study also showed that new media technologies provide an alternative media opportunity for the feminist movement. It has been observed that the feature of creating counter public resulting from the specific structure of the Internet opens up a field of resistance for which they have established the foundations of the individualized transformations. Those transformations may result in the deconstruction of the patriarchal codes that the system imposes on women.

The further studies can focus on these transformations by a detailed discourse analysis with extended data, and in-depth interviews with the feminists who have experienced an individual transformation through the effects of the feminist alternative media. For the future studies on 5harfliler.com, I would recommend the researchers to explore the post-feminist clues on the website.

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## APPENDICES

### A. TURKISH SUMMARY/TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Ataerki ya da erkek egemenliği, toplumun temel kurucu dinamiklerinden biridir. Ataerkillik, toplumun tüm alanları ve ilişkileri arasında dolaşan bir dinamiktir; dolayısıyla, baskın bir iktidar biçimidir. İkili bir cinsiyet anlayışını uygular ve sürdürür. Kadınları ezilen sosyal grup, erkekleri ezici sosyal grup olarak kurar ve diğer cinsiyetleri dışlar. Bu nedenle, bu cinsiyet hiyerarşisi, özel ve kamusal alan dahil olmak üzere tüm alanlarda, yani siyaset, hukuk ve son olarak da kültür, ideoloji ve söylem alanlarında kök salmaktadır. Ayrıca bu alanlar için ideallerini de yaratır. Ayrıca, ataerkillik cinsiyetler için atfedilen roller ve ideal görünümler de verir. Ataerkil toplumlarda kadınlara atfedilen roller, çeşitli sosyo-kültürel araçlarla yayılmaktadır. Genellikle, ana akım medya, mevcut sistemi meşrulaştırarak, ataerkil söylem ve ideolojinin taşıyıcısı olarak hizmet ederek, kadınlar için basmakalıp rolleri yeniden üretir. Ataerkillik, kısaca, erkeklik-kadınlık kültürel anlayışları ile bazı ilişkileri olan belirli bir öznellik ya da başka bir deyişle, normatif cinsiyet kodlarına uygun şekillerde yeniden şekillendirme yapar. Feministler, bu yapılandırılmış özne inşasının aksine, kendi öznelerini feminist hareketler boyunca inşa etmenin yollarını bulmuşlardır.

Bu tez, güç mekanizmalarına karşı çıkan feminist alternatif yeni medyada inşa edilebilecek olan kolektif kimliğe ve kimliğin söylemsel bir çerçeveye yerleştirilme özelliğine odaklanacaktır; yani söylemsel üretimler yoluyla kolektif kimliğin inşası için bir alan olarak feminist alternatif medya bu tezin odak noktasıdır. Bu tezin öncelikli amacı da bir feminist yeni medya olan 5harfliler'deki inşa edilen kolektif kimliği araştırmaktır. Bu araştırma, post yapısalcı bir çerçeveye dayanarak, kolektif kimliğin söylemsel bir yapı olduğunu, hareket halinde olduğunu ve daima değiştiğinin kabulüyle ortaya konulmuştur. Bununla birlikte, bu araştırma süreci

5harfliler'de kolektif kimlik inşasını bulmak amacıyla başlamış olsa da analizde bunu inşa edemedikleri ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu nedenle, bu araştırma 5harfliler'deki kolektif kimliğin gözlenemeyeceğini göstermiştir. Son olarak, 5harfliler'in, kolektif kimlik kavramının feminist alternatif medyada söylemsel bir çerçevede inşa edilmesinin gerçekleştiği bir yer olmadığını önermektedir.

Tezin ilk bölümünde, araştırmanın teorik çerçevesini sunulmaktadır. Teorik çerçeve bölümü, sosyo-dilbilimsel yaklaşım, post-yapısalcı yaklaşım ve son olarak kolektif kimlik yaklaşımı bölümlerinden oluşmaktadır. Önce özne ve kimliğin nasıl farklı kavramlar olduğunu açıklığa kavuşturulmakta, sonra da kimlik kavramının bu üç yaklaşımla ilgili kavramsallaştırması tartışılmaktadır. Böylece, önce kadınların kendilerini yazılı veya sözlü olarak ifade ederken kimliklerini nasıl inşa ettiklerini göstermek amacıyla sosyo-dilbilimsel görüşün kimlik inşası üzerine tartışmalarını sunacağım. Bu kavramsallaştırma bizi sürekli bir süreç içinde kurulan öznenin bu özelliğini öne çıkaran post-yapısalcı bir özne yaklaşımına yönlendirmiştir. Son olarak, bu araştırmanın ana teorik odağı olan kolektif kimliğin ne olduğu açıklanmıştır. Taylor ve Whittier'in (1999) kolektif kimliğin inşası için gerekli olarak tanımladığı; sınırlar, bilinç ve müzakere olmak üzere başlıklanan üç faktörün formüle edilmesi gösterilmiş, 5harfliler'in söylemsel üretimlerinin bu faktörlerin gereksinimlerini karşılayıp karşılamadığı ölçülmek üzere bu formülasyon temel alınmıştır. Ayrıca, Mackay ve Dallaire'nin (2014) önerdiği gibi, sunulan bu kolektif kimlik kavramının, her zaman yapım aşamasında olan söylemsel bir özne olmasından dolayı, post yapısalcı hesabı çerçevesinde konumlandırılabilmesi savunulmuştur. Belirtmek gerekir ki; bu çalışmada, kolektif kimliğin özcü bir hata yapmadığı ve kimliğin, güç ilişkileri çerçevesinde söylemsel olarak inşa edilirken pasif olarak temsil edilmediği verili olarak alınmıştır.

Çağdaş sosyal ve politik bağlamda, feminist düşünce ve uygulamanın en önemli konularından birinin feminist öz tanımlama olduğu söylenebilmektedir. Bazı çalışmalar, kişi kendisini feminist olarak tanımlayıp tanımlanmıyorsa da feminist eğilimin taşıyıcısı olabileceğini iddia edebilmektedir. Kimlik teorileri ve eleştirileri,

feminist akademisyenlerin cinsiyetli özne veya feminist kimliğinin ne olduğunu tanımlamasına yol açmıştır. Feminist özneyle ilgili tartışmalar modern öznenin eleştirildiği noktada ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu tez, feminist öznenin bu tartışmalarının feminist hareketin dalgaları boyunca üç düzeyde incelenebileceğini gösterecektir. Ayrıca, çalışma feminist hareketin alternatif medya üretimine odaklandığından, feminist hareketler boyunca inşa edilen kolektif kimlik analiz edilmiştir. Çalışmanın amacı, alternatif medyanın içeriklerini internette incelemek olduğu için, feminist hareket ile alternatif medyanın ilişkisiyle beraber, 2000lerde ivme kazanan feminist yeni medyanın ilişkisi de incelenmiştir.

Feminizm ataerkil iktidarı temel problem olarak aldığı için, bu iktidarın içine sızdığı her kurum feministler için bir mücadele alanı haline gelir. Bahsedildiği gibi, medya bu kurumlardan biridir. Feminist hareketin mücadelesinin bir alanı olarak alternatif medya, mevcut medya yapılarını değiştirmeye ve ezilen seslerin duyulmasını sağlamak ve sosyal konumlarını iyileştirmek için yeni medya biçimleri yaratmaya çalışır. Feminist medya mücadelesi, medyada çalışan kadınların sayısını artırmayı ve çok çeşitli kadın deneyimlerini ve toplumdaki dışlananları temsil etmeyi amaçlayan belirli bir medya içeriğini hazırlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Ayrıca, kadınların medyada temsil edilmesini eleştirmeyi ve ana akım medya yönetmeliklerindeki politikaları değiştirme ve medyada kadınlara yönelik cinsiyet ayrımcılığını veya basmakalıp önyargıları önleme faaliyetlerini de içermektedir. İnternet ve sosyal medyanın yaygın kullanımı ile kadın hareketi yeni bir boyut kazanmış ve internetin feminist alternatif medya için yeni bir alan açtığı görüşü geniş kabul görmeye başlamıştır.

5harfliler.com'un yeni bir medya ürünü olduğu gerçeğinden yola çıkarak, bu çalışmanın ikinci bölümünde, alternatif medya kavramıyla ilişkilendirilen feminist hareketin temellerinin nasıl atıldığı ayrıntılı olarak ele alınmıştır. İkinci bölümde, çalışma kendisini feminist hareketin tarihsel arka planına dayanarak konumlandırılmıştır. Öncelikle, feminist alternatif medya üretimi hakkında bir açıklama yapılmış, alternatif medyanın kavramsallaştırılmasını gösterilmiştir. Bunun nedeni, feminist hareketin alternatif medyayı bir ivmelenme aracı olarak kullanıyor

olmasıdır. Böylece, feministlerin ataerkil söylemlere ve kendilerine yönelik baskılarına karşı çıktığı ve seslerini medya yoluyla da duyurarak harekete geçtikleri, bu amaçla da alternatif medya aracılığıyla hareketi yeniden canlandırdıkları ortaya konulmuştur. 5harfliler.com, bu geleneğin devam edebileceği bir yer olduğundan, feminist hareketin şimdiye kadar nasıl ilerlediğini göstermek önemli görülmüştür. Bu nedenle, feminist hareketin üç dalgasının tarihi, medya ürünleri, söylemleri ve kolektif kimliği açıklığa kavuşturmaya çalışılmıştır. Sonuç olarak, alternatif feminist medyanın artık yeni medya alanına genişletildiğini gösterilmiş ve böylece 5harfliler'in özünün ne olduğu gösterilmiştir.

Kadınların kendi kimliklerini oluşturmalarını sağlamak için feminist hareketin ve yeni medyanın bir araya gelmesi, feminist alternatif medya üretiminin bir dökümünü ve feministlerin bu medyayı iktidarla ilişkileri içinde nasıl ürettiklerini açıklamaktadır. Feminist hareketin güç mekanizmalarına, yani ataerkil yapının bir tartışmasına karşı bir direniş olduğu bu çalışmada savunulmuştur. Bu bağlamda, güç mekanizmalarına itiraz eden ve sorunsallaştıran kolektif kimlik kavramı analizin ana odağı olmuştur. Bu nedendir ki, feminist hareketin tarihi boyunca, alternatif medyanın feminist söylemleri konuşlandırma aracı olarak rolü açıklığa kavuşturulmuştur. Böylece feminist hareketlerin içerdiği çok kimlikli yapının, feministlerin alternatif medya ürünlerinde ürettikleri söylem yoluyla da inşa edildiği bu çalışmada kanıtlanmaya çalışılmıştır. Çalışma aynı zamanda, bu söylemsel üretim çerçevesine kolektif kimlik kavramını konumlandırmaya çalışmıştır.

Feminist özne/kimlik üzerine yapılan tartışmalar feminist hareketin dalgalarıyla eşzamanlıdır. Birinci dalga feministler, kadınların erkeklere özdeşliğine odaklanarak kadın haklarını savunmaya ve kadınları dışlayan modern özne kavramını genişletmeye çalışmışlardır. Odak noktaları kadınların “vatandaş” kimliği olmuştur. İkinci dalga feministler ise, kadın doğulmayacağını, kadın olunacağını savunarak kadınların özne olma konusundaki tartışmalarını başlatmışlardır. Böylece, öznellik ve kadının öteki olma durumunu tartışarak yeni bir dönem açmışlardır. Bu sayede feminist teori, kadınlarda erkeklerden farklı olanın arayışına yönelmiş ve feminist

teori kadın öznelliği hakkındaki bu farkları değerli kılmaya çalışmıştır. Radikal feminist teorinin ortaya çıktığı nokta olan bu dönemde, kadınların özellikle erkekler tarafından ezilen bir konumda olduğunu teşhis edilmiştir. Böylece, ezilen kadınların erkeklere karşı oluşturdukları meşru ve güçlü bir kolektif özne pozisyonu yaratılmıştır. Politika üretme şekli, “kişisel olan politiktir” söylemiyle ve öznenin kadın mı yoksa erkek mi olduğu önemli bir ayrım haline gelmiş; böylece, toplumsal cinsiyet konusu ortaya çıkmıştır. Ancak, kadınlar arasındaki farklar göz ardı edildi ve evrensel ve istikrarlı bir özne ideali yeniden güçlendirilmiştir. Çoğunlukla kentsel, eğitilmiş ve orta sınıftaki kadınların deneyiminin, her kadının deneyimine karşılık gelmediği anlaşıldığında ise kesişimsellik teorisinin de katkısıyla üçüncü dalga feminizmin temelleri atılmıştır. 1990'larda, yukarıda tarif edildiği gibi, feminist hareketteki farklılıkların ifade edildiği bir dönem başlamıştır; farklı kimliklere sahip kadınlar taleplerini ve sorgulamalarını feminist harekete getirmiştir.

Feminist bir kimliği benimseme süreci, kadınların kendilerine yönelik baskıyı ve ayrımcılığı tanımasıyla başlar. Tarih boyunca feminist harekette yer alan kadınlar ataerkil yapıya itiraz ederler. Feministler bu ataerkil yapı kodlarını, ikili bir toplumsal cinsiyet sistemini ve bu hiyerarşi sisteminin şekillendirdiği alanları dönüştürmüşlerdir. Feministler, kadınların kendilerini baskılayan gücü ancak tüm bu alanların her birini somut olarak dönüştürerek ve yeniden yapılandırarak ortadan kaldıracabileceğini savunmuştur. Sonuç olarak bu, her baskı alanında ataerkil iktidara itiraz ederek gerçekleştirilebilecek bir durumdur. Medya da bu dönüştürülmesi gereken alanlardan biridir. Feminist hareket, tarih boyunca alternatif medyayı bir çatışma aracı olarak kullanmıştır. Dolayısıyla, bu çalışmada alternatif medyanın kavramsallaştırılması esas olmuştur; çünkü, alternatif medya mücadelenin gerçekleştiği bir yer ve aynı zamanda inşa edilmiş kimliğin gözlemlenebileceği bir yer olarak açıklanabilir.

Toplumsal Cinsiyet ve Kadın Çalışmaları alanında, toplumsal cinsiyet ve medya arasındaki ilişki üzerine birçok araştırma yapılmıştır, ancak bunların çoğu kadınların ana akım medyada temsil edilmesi konusunu kapsamaktadır. Son yıllarda toplumsal



cinsiyet ve alternatif medya kavramlarını birleştiren çalışmalar yapılmış olmasına rağmen, alternatif yeni medyanın bu toplumsal harekette feminist kimlik olarak ortak bir kimlik oluşturmadaki rolünü gösteren çalışmaların sayısı henüz yeterli değildir. Kimlik oluşumu açısından, araştırmalar çoğunlukla kişinin kendi kimliğini nasıl şekillendirdiği veya keşfettiği üzerine odaklanmaktadır. Bu çalışma, 5harfliler.com web sitesini, feminist alternatif yeni medya ürünlerinden biri olan çevrimiçi bir alanda ataerkil söylemlere yapılan itirazın sonucu olarak kolektif bir kimlik oluşturma yeteneği açısından analiz etmiştir. Bunu göstermek için, 5harfliler'i analiz ederken ana odak noktası ataerkil söylemlere karşı eleştiriler olmuştur.

5harfliler.com, kadın gündemindeki her konuyu tartışan yazarları olan, Türkçe'de "kadın" kelimesinin söylenmekten kaçınılmasına bir eleştiri yaparak, siteye bu ismi veren bir grup kadından oluşan bir web sitesidir. Çoğunlukla mizahi bir dilde ama ironik bir tonla konuşan web sitesi, kadınların günlük yaşamlarını ve karşılaştıkları zorlukları ve çoğunlukla ataerkil sistemin sorunsallaştırılmasını kapsayan çeşitli konulardaki makaleleri içermektedir. Çalışma kapsamında, kadınlar tarafından oluşturulan alternatif feminist yeni medyanın kategorisine giren 5harfliler web sitesinin özellikleri de belirlenmiştir. Kadınlar tarafından oluşturulan ve hiyerarşik olmayan bir yapı ile yönetilen web sitesi, kadınların deneyimlerini ve feminist politika üzerine -feminist olmayan alternatif medyada bulunması zor olan- gündeliklerle ilgili kritik konulara yaklaşan çeşitli makalelerin yer aldığı bir içeriğe sahip olduğu görülmüştür. Birçok farklı kadının deneyimleri, makalelerin altında yorum yaparak siteye katkıda bulunabilecekleri için görünür hale gelir, böylece web sitesi etkileşim özelliğini barındırmaktadır. Bu sayede web sitesi katılımcılığa ve anonim olmaya yer açar. Tüm bunların sonucu olarak bir topluluk oluşumuna şahit olunabilmektedir.

Bu topluluk oluşumunun, ataerkil söylemlerin sorunsallaştırılması yoluyla nasıl bir işleve sahip olduğunu göstermek için 5harfliler üzerine bir söylem analizi uygulandığında, bu topluluk oluşumunun ve kimlik kurulumunun kolektif bir kimliğe karşılık gelmek için yeterli olmadığı ortaya çıkar. Böylece, 5harfliler'in söylemsel üretimleri Taylor ve Whitter (1999) tarafından sunulan -kimliğin sürekli olarak

söylemsel bir çerçevede konumlandırılabilceğini öneren post-yapısalcı kimlik teorilerini akılda tutarak- kolektif kimlik inşası için gerekli olan faktörlere dayanarak değerlendirildiğinde, bu faktörleri karşılamadıkları görülür. 5harfliler'in ataerkil sistemin egemen söylemlerinin, feminist hareket boyunca önceki medya ürünlerinde olduğu gibi, eleştirildiği bir yer olduğu görülebilir. Ancak bu çalışma, 5harfliler'in söylemsel üretimleri yoluyla ataerkil iktidarın büyük söylemlerine karşı çıkmaları sürecinde kurulan kimlik inşasını, özellikle de kolektif bir kimliği teşvik etmediği sorusunu araştırdığı için, 5harfliler'in söylemsel yıkıcılığının ve dolayısıyla Taylor ve Whittier (1999) tarafından önerilen faktörlerin uygulanışıyla kolektif kimlik bağlamında iktidardaki söylemlerin tartışmasının gösterilmesini amaçlamıştır.

Bu tezde, söylem analizi, 5harfliler'in kendi içeriklerini organize ettikleri etiketlere dayalı olarak sınıflandırmalarını kullanılmış ve web sitesinin en öne çıkan başlıkları seçilmiştir. Seçilen etiketler, ataerkil sistemde kadına atfedilen öznellik konusundaki tartışmalarının ilk bölümü için güzellik, annelik, evlilik ve en öne çıkan konulardaki tartışmaları için toplumsal cinsiyet, cinsellik, trans ve kadın cinayetleri etiketleridir. 5harflilerin katılımcılığı öne çıkaran özelliğinin bir sonucu olarak LGBT+ hareketinin amaçlarıyla örtüştükleri beden politikaları konusu da bu bölümlerde analiz edilmiştir. Ayrıca, kasıtlı olarak seçilen, onlar ve diğer feminist medya arasındaki benzerlikleri araştırmak için kadın gündeminde yer alan siyasi tartışmalara katkılarını görmek için Gezi direnişi, kürtaj yasağı ve İstanbul Sözleşmesi etiketleri de analiz edilmiştir. Son olarak, mansplaining/açıklama kavramını ve bunun tercüme edilmiş biçimi incelenmiştir. 5harfliler, barındırdığı bu etiketlerin tümünün söylemsel üretimleri bağlamında analiz edilmiş ve 5harfliler'in ataerkil söylemlere karşı çıktığı, ancak kolektif bir kimlik oluşturmadığı faktörlere bağlanarak ölçülmüş ve kanıtlanmıştır.

Çalışmanın ışığında, ataerkil kodlara itiraz eden web sitesinin bir Foucaultcu söylem analizi uygulanmış ve etiketleme yoluyla web sitesinin etiketleme sistemi kullanılmıştır. Böylece en popüler içerikler, web sitesinin büyük feminist tartışmalara katkısını göstermesi açısından 3 ana konu ile birlikte seçildiği belirtilmişti.

5harfliler'in analizine göre, 5harfliler'in kadınların ataerkil kodların söylemsel üretimleriyle tartışıldığı sorunsallaştırma çalışmalarını sergilediği bir yer olduğu görülmektedir. Ayrıca, analiz sonucunda çoğunlukla günlük ve samimi deneyimlerin içerikte yer aldığını gözlenmiştir. Çoğu zaman, anlatılarında meta söylemlerin bir tekrarı olduğu ve anlatı kalıplarının, web sitesi arasındaki dayanışmanın sağlanması açısından sorunlu olduğu ortaya çıkarılmıştır. Teorik çerçevemin sağladığı kavramsallaştırma sayesinde, 5harfliler'de üçüncü dalga feminist hareketin bir araya getirdiği çoğul kimliklerin bir yansıması görülmüştür. Ancak, 5harfliler'deki inşa edilmiş kimlik, Taylor ve Whittier'in (1999) önerdiği kolektif kimlik faktörlerini sağlamamış ve 5harfliler'in gündelik söylemleri büyük söylemlere kullanması ve meta söylemlerinin tekrarlanmasından bu yana anlatılar ve bazı noktalarda ataerkiyle olan pazarlıkları ve feminist tartışma için yeni argümanlar geliştirememeleri, kolektif kimlik için faktörlerin karşılanmamasına katkıda bulunmuştur.

5harfliler'deki Gezi Direnişi, İstanbul sözleşmesi ve kürtaj yasağı etiketlerine bakıldığında, diğer feminist medyaların yaptığının aksine siyasi tartışmalar hakkında yeni argümanlar geliştiremedikleri görülmüştür. Örneğin, 5harfliler'in Gezi Direnişi'nin katkısını hatırlamayı seçtiği pozisyon sorunlu görülmektedir. Çünkü, bu kolektif eylemden kolektif bir bellek üretmek yerine, 5harfliler'in makaleleri Gezi Direnişi'ni sadece belirli haberleri, olayları hatırlatan veya kişisel kazançların sağlandığı bir dönem olarak hatırlamayı seçmişlerdir. Kürtaj yasağı etiketine bakıldığında, iktidar ve 5harfliler arasındaki ilişki sorunsallaştırma yoluyla görülebilmektedir. Ancak, iktidarı görünür kılmak 5harfliler'in kolektif kimlik inşa eden alternatif söylemler ürettiğini söylemek için yeterli değildir. Bilinç faktörü bu aşamada sağlanabilir, çünkü iktidarı görünür kılmak, grubun direnişlerindeki ortak çıkarlarını tanımlayacak ve gerçekleştirmeye yardımcı olacak şekilde yorumlanabilir. Ancak sorunsallaştırma, müzakereler inşa edebilecek kadar ileri gitmez, çünkü 5harfliler'in sembolik anlamları değiştirme çabası ve dolayısıyla toplu olarak büyük söylemlere direnmesi ve onları yeniden yapılandırma uğraşı saptanamamaktadır. İstanbul Sözleşmesi etiketli iki makalenin de söylemsel tartışma alanlarını açık bir şekilde açamadığı söylenebilir, bunun yerine, 5harfliler geleneğini sadece iktidar

mekanizmalarını deşifre ederek tekrar etmiştir: iktidara bir karşı gelme durumu vardır ve bu makaleler aynı zamanda bir bilinç yükseltme aracı olarak da kullanılabilir. Ancak, kolektif bir kimlik kurulumu açısından değerlendirildiğinde bunları yeterli olmamaktadır. Belirtmek gerekir ki; siyasi tartışmalar, 5harfliler'in içeriğinde yer alan öne çıkan konulardan değildir. Bu yüzden, web sitesindeki en popüler konularla ilgili tartışmalarındaki söylemsel üretimleri araştırılmış ve 5harfliler'in sorunlu bulunduğu konularda büyük söylemle nasıl konuşmayı seçtiğini görmek amaç edinilmiştir. Ataerkil mekanizmalarla diyalog halindeyken oluşturdukları anlatıyı, sık sık eleştirilerini verdikleri konularda, yani evlilik, annelik ve güzellik standartları ile ilgili konularda görmek faydalı olmuştur. Bu konular ortak bir alt bölüm olarak verilmiştir; çünkü, bunlar kadına dayatılan öznellik konusundaki egemen söylemi, ana sorunsallaştırmaları yapmaları ve böylece de yıkma girişimleri olarak yorumlanabilmektedir.

Evlilik, annelik ve güzellik etiketlerine bakıldığında, 5harfliler'in genellikle günlük söylemlere takılı kaldığı söylenebilir; çünkü, çoğu zaman kişisel bir deneyim paylaşmanın ötesine geçmez, yeni argümanlar geliştirmeye hevesli değildir ve belki de ataerkil iktidarın büyük söylemlerine karşı argüman geliştirmenin yetersiz olduğu bir yere konumlanmaktadır. Meta söylemin tekrarlanmasıyla, bazı noktalarda tüm feminizmlere kapsayıcı olmaktan vazgeçmektedir. Bu nedenle, topluluğun ortak çıkarları bazıları tarafından tanımlanmamakta ve gerçekleştirilmemektedir, çünkü bazıları için ataerkil sistemin temelini oluşturan tanımlayıcı özellikler kurulduğunda çıkarlar “paylaşılamaz” (Taylor ve Whittier, 1999, 176). 5harfliler'de bu temalar hakkında tespit edildiği gibi yıkıcı söylemler yoktur, bu mevcut ataerkil sistemine direnememesi ve yeniden yapılandırılmaması olarak yorumlanabilir. Ayrıca, 5harfliler'in kapsayıcı yayıncılık politikası, kolektif bir kimlik inşa etmesini engelleyebilir, çünkü bir grup olarak paylaşılan çıkarların aynı noktada toplanmadığı bazı noktalar vardır. En sorunlu kısım, inşa etmeye çalıştıkları sınırlar olarak görülmektedir. Ataerkil söylemin yıkılması yerine onaylandığı görüldüğü meta söylemin tekrarlanmasından zarar gören bir kesim söz konusudur. Bu nedenle,

5harfliler'in en öne çıkan konularda bile söylemsel üretimleriyle kolektif bir kimlik inşa ettiği söylenemez.

Daha önce de belirtildiği gibi, 5harfliler çoğunlukla feminizmin özel alanındaki konuları sorunsallaştırmadılar. Öne çıkan sorunsallaştırma konuları, özne olmak ve cinsellik olarak gözlemlenmektedir. Ancak, araştırmada cinsellik hakkındaki makaleleri değerlendirilmesinin nedeni, bu konunun 5harfliler'in LGBT+ hareketi ile birlikte hareket ettikleri nokta olmasından kaynaklanmaktadır. Ayrıca, cinsellik ile ilgili konuları ele alma biçimleri, atfedilen bir öznellik olmayı aşmaktadır. Bu nedenle, toplumsal cinsiyet, cinsellik, trans ve kadın cinayetleri etiketleri de araştırmada incelenmektedir.

Bu noktaya kadar 5harfliler, iktidarın söylemlerine karşı olan söylemsel üretimi açısından analiz edilmiştir ve web sitesinin bu söylemleri alt üst ettiği keşfedilmiştir. Tezin sonraki bölümlerinde, 5harfliler'in hem feminist harekete katıldığı hem de çoğu zaman eleştirdikleri ve yıkmaya çalıştıkları meta söylemin çoğaltılmasına katıldığı görülmektedir. Bununla birlikte, egemen söylemlerin eleştirilmesinin yanı sıra bir iktidar mekanizmasının yüzleşmesinin olduğu da açıktır. Bu araştırma, 5harflilerin iktidarla olan ilişkisini bir alt üst ilişkisi olarak araştırmak yerine, kolektif kimlik inşasını söylemsel üretimlerinde aramayı amaçladığından, 5harfliler'in neredeyse her zaman sorunsallaştırması yoluyla bize bir çekişmeyi (contestation) sunduğu söylenebilir. Yine de kolektif kimlik kurulumu faktörleri açısından ölçüldüğünde, inşa ettikleri sınırlar görülmemektedir. Bazı makaleler feminist bilince katkıda bulunmaktan çok uzaktır ve 5harfliler'in günlük yaşamın politikleştirilmesi yoluyla temel farklılıkların değerlendirilmesi konusundaki başarısızlığı nedeniyle müzakereler bazı noktalarda önlenmektedir. Bu nedenle, söylemsel bir üretim bağlamında analiz edildiğinde, 5harfliler'in kolektif kimliğin faktörleri olan sınırlar, bilinç ve müzakere açısından sağlanan bir değerlendirme ile inşa edilemeyeceği söylenebilir.

5harfliler'in en önemli özelliklerinden biri de tartışmalar yorumlar yoluyla genişlediği ve bilinç yükseltme işlevi görmesidir. 5harfliler'in bu topluluk oluşturma tekniğini analiz edilmiş, yazarlar tarafından yazılan makaleleri analiz etmenin yanı sıra, okuyucuların konular hakkında nasıl konuşmayı seçtiği de gözlemlenmiştir. Yorumlar bölümü feminist hareketin içerdiği çoğul kimlikleri görmek için araştırılabilecek bir yerdir. Araştırma kapsamında, 5harfliler'in kimlik yapısını kolektif kimlik bağlamında görmek bize yeni bir boyut sunabilir. Bu noktada 5harfliler, baskın söylemi devirebilecek sembolik bir sistem yaratmaz. Yorumlar tartışmayı geliştirir, ancak meta söylemin tekrarlanması sırasında bu söylemi yeniden yapılandırmayı amaç edinmez. 5harfliler'in tek yaptığı, ataerkil iktidara karşı olup olmadıklarını duyurmaktır. Yani bir sorunsallaştırmadır. Ancak, bu da sınırları oluşturmak için yeterli görünmemektedir. Çünkü, sınır inşası iki adımda gerçekleştirilir; birincisi, bir topluluk olarak yorumlanabilen ortak bir kültürü kurumsallaştırmak ve yaratmaktır. İkincisi, dominant olanın dışında bir muhalefet dünyası yaratmak ve direnmektir. 5harfliler burada ilk adımı uygular, ancak deneyim paylaşımı yoluyla Göker'in (2019) iddia ettiği gibi sadece ortak bir duygusal dünya yaratır. Yorumlar yoluyla sınırlar ikinci adımdan dolayı inşa edilmez. Ortak duygusal dünya, kadınların ortak çıkarlarını tanımladıkları ve gerçekleştirdikleri bir yere dönüşmediği için, yorumlar çoğu zaman "hoşnutsuzluklarını yapısal, kültürel veya sistematik nedenlerle ilişkilendirmeyen" kişisel deneyimlerini paylaşmaktadır (Taylor ve Whittier, 1999, 179). Böylece, bilinç faktörü karşılanmaz. Bu nedenle, 5harfliler'in topluluk oluşturma yoluyla kolektif bir kimlik kurduğu söylenemez.

Çalışmada aynı zamanda 5harflilerin bir anlatı yapısı ortaya koyduğu görülmektedir. İngilizcede "mansplaining" olarak geçen terimin "açıklama" olarak tercüme edilmesi ve bunun yoğun kullanılması da kadın ve erkekleri tek kategoriye indirgemekte ve böylece kuir kimliklerini göz ardı etmektedir. Yani kadınlar, kadınlar arasındaki hiyerarşilere kayıtsızlığa yol açmaktadır. Böylece birçok kadını, özellikle de kuir kimlikleri susturduğundan bu durum kolektif kimlik kurulumu açısından sıkıntılıdır. Bu nedenle, söylemlerinde inşa edilen ortak bir terminoloji, aynı topluluk içindeki

ortak çıkarları tanımlayamadıkları veya gerçekleştiremedikleri için söylemsel üretimlerinde kolektif bir kimlik inşa edemezler.

Tüm yönleri göz önüne alındığında, bu ortak anlatı yapısını ataerkil iktidarın baskın söylemlerine karşı koyulan bir çatışma olarak tanımlamak mümkün değildir; çünkü, sözler Bakhtin'in önerdiği gibi salt değildir (1992). Bu durumda, kadınlar mevcut politik sistem içindeki söylemi benimsemiş olarak görülebilir ve sistemin söylemsel çerçevesi yoluyla kadınların durumunu iyileştirmeyi amaçlamaktadırlar. Bu iddialar, aynı zamanda 5harfliler'in yeni argümanlar geliştirme konusundaki başarısızlığıyla ilgili yukarıdaki eleştirilerle desteklenmektedir. Dolayısıyla bu, ataerkil sisteme bir direnç olmadığı için, yıkım olarak inşa edilen feminist söylemsel çerçeveye zarar veren, 5harfliler'in ataerkil bir pazarlığı olmasıyla açıklanabilir.

Bu çalışmanın bulguları, yeni medya teknolojilerinin feminist hareket için alternatif bir medya fırsatı sağladığını göstermiştir. İnternetin kendine özgü yapısından kaynaklanan karşı kamu yaratılması özelliğinin, bireyselleştirilmiş dönüşümlerin temellerini oluşturdukları bir direniş alanı açtığı görülmüştür. Bu dönüşümler, sistemin kadınlara dayattığı ataerkil kodların çözülmesinde de görülebilir.

## B. THESIS PERMISSION FORM/TEZ İZİN FORMU

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