

FEMINIST SOLIDARITY: POSSIBILITY OF *FEMINISM* IN
SOLIDARITY PRACTICES?

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ABSTRACT

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In this study, possibility of establishing feminist solidarity, sustained and based on feminist politics in Turkey is examined. Commonality discourse, the notion of sisterhood and identity politics, creating illusionary homogeneity are criticized of being exclusionary and limiting. Contemporary accounts of feminist solidarity are investigated in order to find a way out for establishing solidarity across difference. However, it is seen that these contemporary approaches are far from designating a driving force to stimulate feminists / activists to come together. It is argued that in order to achieve feminist solidarity respecting differences is a must. It is also argued that solidarity has to become a powerful relation among feminists and to do so internalized inequalities and power holding within activism has to be interrogated. Consciousness raising among activists is offered as a means to overcome challenges to activism and

barriers to solidarity. Furthermore it is argued that feminism has to become the motto of activism and feminist politics as the basis for establishing feminist solidarity.

Keywords: Feminist solidarity, sisterhood, sameness and difference, consciousness raising.

ÖZ

FEMİNİST DAYANIŞMA: DAYANIŞMA PRATİKLERİNDE *FEMİNİZMİN OLABİLİRLİĞİ?*

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Bu çalışmada, Türkiye’de sürdürülebilir ve feminist politikaya dayalı feminist dayanışma kurabilmenin olabilirliği incelenmiştir. Yanıltıcı bir birlik yaratan ortaklık söylemi, kızkardeşlik kavramı ve kimlik politikaları dışlayıcı ve sınırlayıcı olmaları nedeni ile eleştirilmiştir. Farklılıkları gören bir feminist dayanışma örebilmenin bir yolunu bulmak adına günümüze ait feminist dayanışma yaklaşımları araştırılmıştır. Ancak, bu yaklaşımların feministleri / aktivistleri bir araya getirecek bir itici güç tayin etmekten uzak oldukları görülmüştür. Feminist dayanışmanın sağlanabilmesi için farklılıkları görmek gerektiğinin bir şart olduğu tartışılmıştır. Ayrıca, dayanışmanın feministler arası güçlendirici bir ilişkiye dönüşmesi gerektiği ve bunun sağlanabilmesi için ise içselleştirilmiş eşitsizliklerin ve aktivizmde iktidar arayışının sorgulanması gerektiği tartışılmıştır. Aktivizmin sorunlarının ve dayanışmanın önündeki engellerin aşılması için araç olarak bilinç yükseltme

önerilmiştir. Ayrıca, feminizmin aktivizmin şiarı ve feminist politikanın feminist dayanışmanın temeli olması gerektiği tartışılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Feminist dayanışma, kızkardeşlik, aynılık ve farklılık, bilinç yükseltme.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The very possibility of feminist solidarity has been one of the fundamental concerns of feminist theorists and activists for years. Beginning with the monopolist notion of sisterhood and solidarity based on sisterhood, enforced commonality of identity politics and further accounts of feminist solidarity has been one of the major issues addressed, examined among feminists. Discussing the issues mentioned above, the main concern of this study is the need for a shared feminist vision among feminists.

As Renegar and Sowards states recent and ongoing division within and among feminist movements and theories, lack of consensus within activism, in-group fighting, and a focus on singular women's theories and issues along with other challenges to activism have created problems and a lack of solidarity that is counterproductive to feminism as a whole.¹ Considering the very distressed discussions and conflicts among activist women in Turkey, the central objective of this study is to answer the research question of whether feminist solidarity both sustained and based on feminist politics in Turkey is possible through examining how it is conceived by feminists and activist women.

¹ Renegar R. V., Sowards K. S., 2003: p.330.

The study aims to inquire into the possibility of feminist solidarity, both sustained and empowering and based on unity which is built upon respect for difference in Turkey. In addition, the importance of unity along with differences coming into prominence will be questioned. In this sense the study mainly discusses the contexts of solidarity, how activists conceptualize *feminist* solidarity, the limitations to *feminist* solidarity, barriers to form feminist solidarity, the problematic aspects of the notion of sisterhood solidarity, identity politics and furthermore the contemporary notions of feminist solidarity, and it will try to come out with the likelihood of solidarity among women either materialized or future possibilities². The study also aims to be explanatory of the internal conflicts, all embracing feminist activism and suggestive to the nature of feminist solidarity and future of feminist activism and solidarity practices in Turkey.

PERSONAL BACKGROUND

The main motivation driving me off studying the issue of feminist solidarity has been my personal experience in one of the leading women's organizations in Turkey and acquaintanceship with feminists and women's organizations developed in these two years period of time between 2005 and 2007 and after. Since then what has been revolving in my mind was my will to find an answer to the paradoxical notion of solidarity among women, reasons of women's personal and organizational conflicts with each other, inconvenient struggles within

² For the conceptualization see page 4-5.

and in-between women and women's organizations and the movement's internal strife in general. This was the picture of feminist activism in Turkey for me and the vital question of mine to answer in order to clarify my identity as a feminist and to become a partner of the feminist struggle.

I tried to give several answers; those of which were mostly practical, temporary and neither of them satisfying. I then decided to find the answer in feminist literature and one day came up with the slogan 'Sisterhood is powerful'. What actually was the so called 'sisterhood'? Is it what bonds women to women? If so, it was not that much powerful or it was not the appropriate word to describe feminist solidarity in the case of Turkey. While, the two years of experience has shown me that activist women, women within feminist organizations had conflicts with each other, I also knew that they could come together, work jointly and manage to be 'successful'. However what I felt was the permanent tension, a little spark to trouble the waters, mastering relations among activist women.

Then I discovered the popular slogan which I encountered in almost every action of feminists, which is 'Yaşasın kadın dayanışması' ('Women's solidarity long lives!') celebrating women's solidarity in every occasion. Establishing inclusive and welcoming solidarity although interrupted with diverse reasons, was possible as in the case of Campaign Against Domestic Violence (1987), Purple Needle Campaign (1989), Civil Code reforms (2000-2001) and Penal Code

reforms (2002-2005), or in the case of the preparation of the shadow NGO report on Turkey's Fourth and Fifth combined Periodic Country Report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (2003). But I also personally witnessed the conflicts among women as in the case of disputes among feminists in Ankara and İstanbul during the Turkish Penal Code reforms (2005), religious feminists' reactions to KADER's campaign for General Elections in 2007, conflicts among feminists / activist women as in the case of headscarf issue, and many others among and within liberal feminists, Kemalist women, Kurdish feminists and so on.

A simple observation reveals that ethnic based conflicts, ideological conflicts, political orientations, reflected disagreements among women's organizations, personal conflicts among women are all divisive factors within feminist activism in Turkey. So what was it then feminists were celebrating? Was it feminist solidarity really empowering women or only a weak slogan in content? Is it coming together for short-termed purposes and then breaking all the links among women/feminists/activists? Is this what is understood from solidarity? How far solidarity practices are *feminist*?

Although there exists abundant literature on sisterhood, identity politics and feminist solidarity in feminist theory and practice in general and studies on Turkish feminist movement in particular, there is a scarcity of works on the issue of solidarity within feminist activism in Turkey. Although it is possible to find some written materials on

women's experiences of joint work and feminist solidarity and on the conflicts that feminist activism faces in Turkey, these studies mostly remain introductory and far from offering a theoretical ground. This study - noticing how controversial the matter in hand might be – aims at offering a modest and developable theoretical and practical explanation to the current situation of feminist activism in Turkey.

CONCEPTUALIZATION

One of the main delicate issues in this study is the concepts used within. For the analytical purposes it is meaningful to explain –but not to define- the most critical concepts at the beginning of the study. First of all, the study is built upon the very notion of *feminist solidarity* which will be discussed in detail in the following chapter. However, within the study 'solidarity practices' – corresponding to *women's solidarity* mostly preferred by women –is also used as a concept which involves a more comprehensive participation of women into solidarity practices. 'Solidarity practices' refer to rather temporary, tenuous, tactical –in terms of having small scale and short term effects- relations with weak ties to feminism, whereas *feminist solidarity* refers to more empowering, sustained and deeper relations nourished with feminism aiming at profound change for collective good. The main reason for this differentiation of feminist solidarity and solidarity practices is both the contravened nature of the term 'feminist' and women's perception and conceptualization of 'feminist solidarity' itself. It is not possible to ascribe feminist solidarity to every solidarity practices among women

while some women themselves do not label themselves as 'feminist' or do not conceptualize solidarity practices as 'feminist' for a variety of reasons. Furthermore, 'solidarity practices' is used –as in the case of the title of this study- when the feminist character of solidarity established is in question. Besides, *women's solidarity* is in general not preferred in this study due to its reductionist nature which this study in fact criticizes.

Similarly one other differentiation that needs to be mentioned is between feminist activism and women's movement. Feminist activism refers to actions and thoughts woven with feminism, for instance, 'challenging gender hierarchy and changing women's social status'³. On the other hand women's movement refers to a 'broader category of activism, which includes all mobilizations of women as social and political actors that invokes and reflectively creates the politicized identity of 'women'.⁴ Within this study both terms will be used; *feminist activism* will be preferred when the feminist character of activism is emphasized and *women's movement* while referring to activism including a variety of women's organizing.

ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

In chapter two, I try to provide an overview of the literature on feminist solidarity and discuss basically the essentialist and critical

³ Sperling V., Ferree M. M., Risman B., 2001: 1158.

⁴ Ibid p.1158.

interpretations of feminist solidarity. Then I provide a brief background of feminist activism and an overview of patterns of solidarity practices in Turkey.

In order to frame feminist solidarity, first of all I discuss the notion of sisterhood and efforts of developing feminist solidarity based on sisterhood. The main reason for raising the issue of sisterhood is the assumption it is based on; that it is relatively easier for women to come together on the basis of *common oppression*. I argue that this assumption however, is insufficient to develop sustainable, *feminist* solidarity since it disregards inequalities among women and power relations implicit in relations among women. In fact, solidarity based on sisterhood may well insidiously obscure the possibility of feminist solidarity open to collectivity based on diversity by blanketing the very possibility of various forms of domination women actually oppose and inequalities among women.

Second, in the theoretical chapter, I raise identity politics and homogeneity issue inherent in concepts such as feminist identity, sisterhood and woman in terms of all being obstacle to feminist solidarity. I argue that will, effort and awareness should be replaced with static prescriptions to feminist solidarity and commonality discourse with critique, disagreement and dissent in order to achieve sustained feminist solidarity. I also argue that in order to be successful in achieving feminist solidarity moving away from identity politics is a necessity.

Third, I discuss the contemporary accounts of feminist solidarity opening out new possibilities of solidarity based on diversity rather than solely on commonality. Not denying the need for establishing feminist solidarity on the basis of collective political action, the main tune of the alternative accounts has been respect for difference among women and continuous questioning of relations of domination implicit in relations among women. First of all I examine bell hooks' *'sisterhood solidarity'* reinterpreting sisterhood and questioning sexism, racism and classism implicit in the notion. Then I lay out Jodi Deans' account of *'reflective solidarity'* –which is based on the idea that disagreements and arguments among women can be the source of solidarity –. I further present *'coalition building'* and Reagon's alternative to solidarity models and likewise I try to handle Mohanty's *'common differences'* discussion which she offers as the basis of deeper solidarity among women. The following discussion in the chapter touches on Lyshaug's account of solidarity in difference which she calls as *'enlarged sympathy'* and Bartky's *'fellow-feeling'*.

In the second part of the theoretical chapter, I try to frame feminist activism and feminist solidarity in Turkey. In the first part I present activism in Turkey and briefly put forth what has been done in Turkey from 1980s to present. Briefly it will be discussed what has been done since 1980s, the major turning points of activism, main issues activism has dealt with and so on. In the second part I overview feminist activism in Turkey in terms of solidarity practices and try to relate it to the theoretical discussions.

The study is mainly based on the data gathered from semi-structured in depth interviews conducted with feminists and activist women. The third chapter will put forth the methodology used for the study in detail, the organization of the interviews, the questions involved and details about interviews conducted. Furthermore, I try to convey the limitations of the study.

The fourth chapter involves conceptualization of main concepts, the nature and context of feminist solidarity, basis for feminist solidarity, issues of solidarity practices, 'successful' solidarity practices, controversy and possible formulas for feminist solidarity, solidarity practices based on sameness and difference, sisterhood solidarity, means of feminist solidarity, the role and importance of consciousness raising for feminist activism. The fifth chapter involves challenges to feminist activism, barriers to establishing growth-enhancing feminist solidarity in Turkey and future possibilities for feminist solidarity.

In the conclusion chapter, I try to give answers to the questions which have been compelling for this study, summarize my criticism to establishing relations on the basis of sameness and emphasize the importance of attending differences in order to achieve feminist solidarity and in doing so linking theory and praxis spiritedly.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Significantly, I learned that any progressive political movement grows and matures to the degree that it passionately welcomes and encourages, in theory and practice, diversity of opinion, new ideas, critical exchange, and dissent. [...] Again and again I have to insist that feminist solidarity rooted in a commitment to progressive politics must include a space for rigorous critique, for dissent, or we are doomed to reproduce in progressive communities the very forms of domination we seek to oppose.

bell hooks¹

2.1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND FOR FEMINIST ACTIVISM

This chapter aims at understanding the nature of feminist solidarity in detail. Since the motto of establishing feminist solidarity for a long time in feminist activism had been sisterhood, the notion will be thoroughly investigated. Identity politics, the issue of sameness and difference in terms of establishing feminist solidarity will be questioned. Contemporary accounts of feminist solidarity shedding light on feminist activism will be explored in order to find more achievable formulations to establishing feminist solidarity in Turkey. In order to better interpret the solidarity practices activism will be summarized in Turkey. Furthermore, solidarity practices since 1980s in Turkey will be reviewed for better analyzing the possibility of establishing feminist solidarity.

¹ hooks, 1994: 65-67.

2.1.1. Sisterhood: Solidarity of Sameness

One of the striking slogans of the 1970s was “Sisterhood Is Powerful!” first voiced by ‘radical women’ in January 1968 at a peace demonstration in the opening of Congress aiming at raising awareness of their ‘antiwar sisters’². In time there appeared Robin Morgan’s popular books, *Sisterhood is Powerful* (1970) and *Sisterhood is Global* (1984) and both were appreciated of presenting short essays on the condition of women and women’s movement in different countries. In addition to this, the books have been criticized of being ethnocentric and the notion of sisterhood supported in her books to be exclusive. If women reconstruct the logic of sisterhood as being organized and unified in their struggle then sisterhood can turn to be powerful. But if it is solely based on the logic of oppressive similarities in all women’s lives that is believed to be unifying women disregarding inequalities among women, then it fails³ and this is why the notion has been criticized afterwards.

The intense feminist activism during 1970s in the United States resulted in the expansion of the movement and women enhancing the sense of sisterhood. Becoming sisters meant forming ‘allies in a struggle against a common set of oppressions and oppressors’ as Siegel defines⁴. But as she subsequently argues, sisterhood even though had been influential

² Siegel, 2007: 23.

³ Trimberger, 1986

⁴ Siegel, 2007: 46.

enough to gather women early on then turned out to be controversial after the movement became powerful. The nature of the sisterhood, combined with increasing participation of women non-white or not educated, or not belonging to middle class, etc., thus resulted in increasing diversity and the will to set the form and the direction of the movement resulted in the splitting of the movement rather than empowering activism⁵.

The notion of solidarity flourishes with feminists' demands for *global sisterhood* early in the second wave feminist activism. These early attempts to form solidarity among women appealed to commonality which then undermined the very logic of unity. Similarly bell hooks argues that global sisterhood failed because of the inconsistent assumption of white bourgeois feminists that women would meet under the commonality of shared oppression⁶. In such a conjecture, the positioning of bourgeois feminists was not on an equal footing with "other" feminists, instead this was an implicit assertion of leadership, thus holding power within the movement⁷. Therefore within such a hierarchical structure, reconciliation, collective action and feminist solidarity were getting difficult to sustain through sisterhood since the notion was based solely on commonality and could not embrace difference. Difference among women and between women's

⁵ *ibid*: 2007.

⁶ Hooks, 1986.

⁷ *ibid*: 132.

experiences of commonality of shared oppression has turned out to be divisive since it was solely sameness that is valued.

Although it was not much audible until the 1980s, skepticism of sisterhood dates back to the 1970s. Since then, the account of feminist solidarity offered by early feminists through the notion of sisterhood and the symbolic unity it suggested was extremely challenged for being exclusionary based upon women's common experiences and interests, common oppression and the category of women *per se*.⁸ Although the configuration of sisterhood is considered to be challenging the social order, it has also been supportive of the status quo and hierarchy and superior position of women among women if not permanently questioned. Mitchell and Oakley states that; "Sisterhood can undoubtedly be a relationship of solidarity and support... [but] cannot be an instant and transcendent unification of women..."⁹.

Feminists, early in the second wave activism regarded women as an undifferentiated collective and the notion of sisterhood was representing the ideal form of solidarity among women disregarding diversity based on class, race, sexuality, ethnicity, and so on. According to Fraser, the movement in the U.S. was caught in the equality / difference debate could barely broke out of this impasse through recognizing the differences among women largely through the work of

⁸ Allen, 1999; Naghibi, 2007; Mohanty, 2006.

⁹ Mitchell & Oakley, 1976: cited in Caplan & Bujra, 1978: 19.

lesbians and feminists of color by the mid 1980s.¹⁰ In addition, remaining blind to differences among women or being all alone cost a lot. She states, "False universalizations of *some* women's situations and *some* women's identity ideals had not promoted feminist solidarity. They led, on the contrary, to anger and schism, to hurt and mistrust."¹¹

Similarly as stated by Ellen Willis¹² - who did not accept the practical possibility of universal sisterhood - this understanding resulted in weak ties seemed to be holding women together.

There was an unarticulated assumption that we could work out our differences solely within a feminist framework and ignore on other political issues. Again, I think that assumption was necessary, in order to create a feminist framework to begin with, but it made for a very fragile kind of solidarity – and it also excluded large groups of women¹³.

This assumption unfortunately precluded many feminists like Joe Freeman who were not like the ordinary 'sisters'. Freeman, in her article titled *The Dark Side of Sisterhood*, a kind of confession of a long term quietness came in 1976, calls it as trashing; a disease of self-destructiveness surrounded the movement, seducing the 'unlikeness'. The movement, as Freeman stated, seduces women through the 'sweet' promise of sisterhood and this is how the movement masks its trashing

¹⁰ Fraser, 1997.

¹¹ *ibid*: 102, italics are original.

¹² Co-founder of the radical feminist group Redstockings in early 1969 with Shulamith Firestone.

¹³ Willis, 1984: 95.

disease.¹⁴ She – as a feminist marginalized within the movement by other feminists- harshly criticizes sisterhood and the sameness. The notion solely based on some feminists’ assumptions of commonality is re-criticized by Freeman as follows:

With other thrashings, sisterhood has been used as the knife rather than the cover-up. A vague standard of sisterly behavior is set up by anonymous judges who then condemn those who do not meet their standards. As long as the standard is vague and utopian, it can never be met. But it can be shifted with circumstances to exclude those not desired as sisters. Thus Ti-Grace Atkinson's¹⁵ memorable adage that "sisterhood is powerful: it kills sisters" is reaffirmed again and again... The Movement's worship of egalitarianism is so strong that it has become confused with sameness. Women who remind us that we are not all the same are trashed because their differentness is interpreted as meaning we are not all equal¹⁶.

Freeman’s terms ‘anonymous judges’ and the ‘standards’ implying power structures and hierarchical arrangement among feminists have always been problematic for activism and a barrier to feminist solidarity. Likewise, Chandra T. Mohanty criticizes Robin Morgan’s assumption of women to be “cross-culturally singular, homogenous group with the same interests, perspectives, and goals and similar experiences”¹⁷. Her anthology of indigenous women’s historical struggles, challenges the notion of *global* women’s movement and the notion of ‘universal sisterhood’. Mohanty, questioning the universality of commonality of women’s oppression, argues that being women can

¹⁴ Freeman, 1976.

¹⁵ Ti-Grace Atkinson was the president of the New York Chapter of the National Organization for Women (NOW) between 1967-68.

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ Mohanty, 2006: 110.

only create an illusionary unity among women¹⁸. According to Mohanty, the assumption of universal sisterhood based on women's shared will, in fact, wipes out "material and ideological power differences within and among groups of women."¹⁹

Nima Naghibi draws attention to the limitations of the discourse of sisterhood. Naghibi argues, the discourse of international sisterhood during the second wave of feminism, undermined the solidarity and collectivity among women due to its divisive configuration²⁰. She, pointing out to the need to attend differences among women and being aware of our share in reproducing abjection and subjugation of other women, states;

Thus, recognizing the ways in which we participate in and reproduce dominant discursive representations about "Other" women is crucial to the creation and development of a resilient feminist politics, one that moves away from the hierarchical model of compulsory sisterhood and makes room for disagreement and dissent.²¹

The utopian notion of sisterhood has been mostly criticized by new and different voices 'challenging hegemonic tendencies' which is seen as a prerequisite for a *global movement* on the ground of it's being in the exclusive possession by a 'privileged minority'²². As Vargas states feminism(s) needs to reinvent itself to deal with this new reality. The

¹⁸ *ibid*, 118.

¹⁹ *ibid*, 116.

²⁰ Naghibi, 2007.

²¹ *ibid*: 107.

²² Antrobus, 2004: 15.

case for feminism(s) has also altered; there exists different feminisms instead of a singular feminism and *global feminist sisterhood* is proved to be hypothetical. The symbolic and discursive frameworks are much wider and more changeable paying importance to diversity and heterogeneity.²³

Consequently, the notion has been splitted into fractions worldwide trough black feminists', Third World women's, Chicana feminists' organizing and so on. The UN led conferences and forums and other international level activism provided a platform for feminists to challenge the dominance of Western feminists and the organizations established and run by them and to share their views with each other at a broader platform. Mostly feminists from developing countries voiced their concern about the replication of power relations oppressing and exploiting women that feminist should be challenging.

The UN World Conference on Women in Nairobi, 1985, "a new stage in our understandings about the struggle for social transformation", different from previous conferences has been powerful with the recognition and acceptance of diversity among women.²⁴ The common point of criticisms was that solidarity among women could not be achieved on the basis of a 'false homogeneity' which global sisterhood has been firmly based on²⁵. Similarly as Simons states in order to

²³ Vargas, 2003.

²⁴ Çağatay, et al., 1986.

²⁵ Steans, 2007: 735.

achieve an inclusive feminist activism as an international and intercultural movement, coalitions among feminists based on dialogue is required, avoiding compartmentalizing through race, class, and sexism.²⁶

To conclude, the logic of sisterhood, which represented the ideal form of solidarity, had been powerful early in the second wave activism, in fact, undermined the very logic of unity among feminists. The assumption that women would meet under the commonality of shared oppression turned out to be divisive since it ignored differences among women. Women are not an undifferentiated collective and the unity based on this misleading assumption can only be temporary and weak.

2.1.2 Feminist Identity Politics... Loaded With New Problems?

There can be no mass-based feminist movement to end sexist oppression without a united front-. Women must take the initiative and demonstrate the power of solidarity.

bell hooks²⁷

Second wave feminists' notion of sisterhood relying on common interests of women, women's shared oppression, exclusionary notions of women, women's experience has grown increasingly problematic by the late 1980s and 'the critique of any notion of the common interests of women, the common oppression of women, even the category of

²⁶ Simons, 1979: 399.

²⁷ hooks, 1997:486 in Diana Meyers

women per se, was in full swing' and this 'feminist critique of identity politics seemed to necessitate a corresponding critique of solidarity'²⁸.

The illusionary homogeneity brought with it the problematic 'feminist' identity and 'woman' identity that is assumed to be fixed and static. And the main trouble with such homogeneity embedded in feminist identity politics has been an uncritical acceptance of the *identity* – whether it be *woman* or *feminist*- and assuming such identity as the organizing principle of feminist politics.

One of the feminist critics of identity politics, namely, Judith Butler states that establishing a foundational identity to mobilize feminist politics meant limiting the possibilities of unpredicted, new identities that could be articulated to feminism²⁹. Similarly, as Dean argues the main problem with the identity politics results from 'ascribed' identities and fixed prescription to feminist solidarity that is believed to be achieved through getting the proper ascription of what constitutes a 'woman' or a 'feminist'.

[...] the numerous American feminists in the 1980s sought to give an identity to women and feminism. This identity was supposed to unite women, to guarantee their unity as a political group. Thus, as critics of this politics of identity exposed the diversities within and among women, they have appeared to challenge the very goal and possibility of feminist solidarity.³⁰

²⁸ Allen, 1999: p.99.

²⁹ Butler, 1990: 147.

³⁰ Dean, 1997: 244.

Women's oppression considered to be shared by all women likewise and equally and women as a homogeneous social group. In 'identity politics' the individual identity was associated with collective identity and consciousness-raising as a feminist tool presumed as 'a basis of political action, a *de facto* fixed reality of women's oppression that has to be discovered'. Differences among women, rather than being recognized, were mainly interpreted by those holding the hegemonic power within the movement, as designating different stages of consciousness³¹. Yuval Davis states the fallacy of the 'identity politics' as being based on the hegemonic experiences of white middle class western women and being static. For her, "'Identity politics' tend not only to homogenize and naturalize social categories and groupings, but also to deny shifting boundaries of identities and internal power differences and conflicts of interest..."³²

The feminist critique of identity politics necessitates the critique of feminist solidarity especially when it is based upon 'repressive notion of group identity' as in the case of sisterhood model of solidarity³³ and that results in a repressive and exclusionary version of feminist solidarity. Hereby Butler puts forth solidarity as being an exclusionary norm that 'rules out the possibility of a set of actions which disrupt the very borders of identity concepts.'³⁴

³¹ Yuval-Davis, 1997: 119.

³² *ibid*, 119.

³³ Allen, 1999: 101.

³⁴ Butler, 1990: 15.

However, Butler's criticism to identity politics is also criticized as being impracticable to offer an alternative to feminist solidarity³⁵. As Allen emphasizes through rejecting solidarity altogether, it becomes extremely difficult to act together around and for common goals and criticizes Butler for failing to presume non-repressive group identities and the possibility of feminist solidarity based on 'collective political action'³⁶. Likewise, Allison Weir abridges Butler's position as follows:

Solidarity... is rejected as a basis of feminist politics, because it excludes the possibility of subversions or disruptions of the group identity, and, presumably, of disruptions of group action aimed at the achievement of agreed-upon goals. In other words, a coalitional activist group should refrain from affirming any solidarity or common purpose, because it might thereby thwart its own subversion. An interesting notion, in the abstract, but it's difficult to imagine how such a group could actually get anything done. Or why should it want to³⁷.

Hannah Arendt offers key insights into the power that binds together the feminist activism with her political theory. Arendt, rejecting all identity categories in favor of an open ended, non-repressive, non-identitarian view of politics, reformulates solidarity as the outcome of concerted action, rather than as pre-given and fixed.³⁸ Allen founding her account of solidarity on Hannah Arendt's political theory formulates feminist solidarity as follows:

³⁵ For criticism to Judith Butler's feminist critics of identity politics, see Hekman, Susan (2000) "Beyond Identity: feminism, identity and identity politics", *Feminist Theory*, Vol.1(3), pp.289-308 and Benhabib, S. (1999), "Sexual Difference and Collective Identities: The New Global Constellation", *Signs*, Vol.24(2), pp.335-361.

³⁶ Allen, 1999:101.

³⁷ Cited in Allen 1999: 101.

³⁸ Allen, 1999.

...if anything, can bind the increasingly fragmented feminist movement together and link it to related social struggles against racism and heterosexism, and yet to do so in a way that avoids excluding and marginalizing individuals who do not fit neatly into fixed identity categories, feminist theorists must move beyond the terms of the identity politics debate and formulate non-repressive, non-exclusionary conceptions of group identity.³⁹

Deriving from Hannah Arendt's political theory as interpreted by Allen, Arendt's account offers a choice between identity and non-identity and allows developing an alternative model of solidarity. Arendt rejecting solidarity based on sameness, shared identity or shared experience of oppression, emphasizes that sameness cannot be the basis for political action and 'unitedness many into one is basically antipolitical'⁴⁰. Therefore, what calls collective political action into existence is not shared identity, instead the 'shared commitment of distinct individuals' for a common goal. Again drawing from Arendt, Allen defines solidarity as the collective power, growing out of action and binding feminist movement together.

A consideration of Arendt's work thus prompts a shift from thinking of solidarity among women as the power of sisterhood to thinking of solidarity among feminists (women and men) as the power of those who pledge to work together to fight relations of subordination.⁴¹

Allen describing solidarity in Arendt's terms as the 'power arises out of such reciprocal commitments to act in concert'⁴². Moreover, her

³⁹ Ibid: 102.

⁴⁰ Cited in Allen, 1999: 107.

⁴¹ Allen, 1999: 112-113.

⁴² Ibid.: 113.

definition includes questioning of power relations and relations of subordination among women. According to Arendt, individuals are bond together by means of mutual promises which are contested, reinterpreted and revised. Arendt's politics offers a possible politics based on shared differences. Lisa Disch grounds Arendt's politics on commonality which is 'constructed by learning how each of us sees differently' rather 'discovered by recognizing how 'we' are all alike.'⁴³ Subsequently, she within her politics based on commonality within difference in which identity is never fixed and always in process, sees solidarity as something achieved through a shared commitment and a common goal similar to the accounts of solidarity which will be discussed in the following section in detail.

Susan Hekman in her informative article "*Beyond Identity*" argues that feminist identity politics rooted in criticisms to ascribed identity of 'woman', resulted in embracing identities imposed by the society and she asserts that feminism should be challenging those identities and differences⁴⁴. Furthermore, Hekman supposes moving to a politics beyond identity even it allows a diverse array of identities and she offers a 'politics in which political actors identify with particular political causes and mobilize to achieve particular political goals'⁴⁵ in accordance with what Allen envisages.

⁴³ Disch, in Allen, 1996.

⁴⁴ Hekman, 2000.

⁴⁵ Ibid: 303-304.

To conclude, it is worth to mention that it is clear that in order to develop a strong, conceivable and attainable model of feminist solidarity and for achieving a sustained feminist solidarity apparently we need to move beyond the identity politics. Furthermore, we need to leave our will to try to call into being an inevitably exclusionary vision of “we”. What is also needed is to expand feminist politics so as to comprise other political goals in order to develop a common goal and a collective good around which diversity and difference may operate.

2.1.3 Contemporary Accounts of Feminist Solidarity

The basic problem while seeking for feminist solidarity among women as aforementioned is defined as ‘reliance on universal subject *woman*’ on ‘common oppression’⁴⁶ and the core aspect of the expansions of solidarity has been respect for difference.

One of the leading feminists developed such a criticism of the notion of sisterhood is *bell hooks*. The problem lies in feminists’ attempts to ascribe an identity to woman and building it on a limited understanding of ‘sisterhood’ based mainly on victimhood and avoiding many feminists and feminist groups to unite with each other and the ‘other’. hooks emphasizing a new understanding of sisterhood without discarding the notion, distinguishes two forms of sisterhood. She disputes the basis for feminist solidarity or bonding among women

⁴⁶ Elam, 1994: 32.

in women's shared victimization and common oppression which she states as 'a false and corrupt platform disguising and mystifying the true nature of women's varied and complex social reality'.⁴⁷

'Women's liberationists' - as she calls the middle-class, white women - notion of sisterhood and the claim for solidarity for all 'sisters' eradicating women's difference is no longer the uniting force.

Sexism, racism, and classism divide women from one another. Within feminist movements, divisions and disagreements about strategy and emphasis led to the formation of a number of groups with varied political positions. Splintering into different political factions and special interest groups has erected unnecessary barriers to sisterhood that could easily be eliminated.⁴⁸

hooks develops her criticism on sisterhood and feminist solidarity originated by sexism, racism and classism. According to hooks, solidarity 'requires sustained, ongoing commitment'⁴⁹ and at this point she offers her understanding of solidarity embracing diversity, disagreement and difference. Hooks' account of solidarity requiring sustained and committed struggle comes up through confronting conflicts, affirming and respecting difference.

Although hooks criticizes solidarity solely based on commonality and pays attention to difference, she also attaches importance to unity and develops a notion of solidarity which does not rely only on diversity.

⁴⁷ hooks, 1991 in Yuval-Davis 1997:125.

⁴⁸ hooks 1997: 497.

⁴⁹ *ibid*: 499.

Women do not need to eradicate difference to feel solidarity. We do not need to share common oppression to fight equally to end oppression... We can be sisters united by shared interests and beliefs, united in appreciation for diversity, united in our struggle to end sexist oppression, united in political solidarity.⁵⁰

In hooks' understanding, discarding the idea of sisterhood was what brought about the weakening of political solidarity and feminist movement. Sisterhood needs to be questioned, reinterpreted and renovated all over again to assign its 'true meaning and value'. As she terms, 'concern for the collective' is the source for feminists to strengthen solidarity and in order for having a 'sustained women bonding' women have to transform female consciousness, unlearn sexism and come together as once tried to be done in consciousness-raising groups.⁵¹

One another feminist critical of the notion of sisterhood comes from *Jodi Dean* preferring to call it as 'solidarity of sameness'. Like hooks, pointing to the identity politics, Dean identifies class, race and sexuality as the barriers to 'women working together'. As an alternative to identity politics Dean offers what she calls 'reflective solidarity' based on the idea that disagreements and arguments among women can be the source of solidarity and summarizes her vision of feminist solidarity as transforming 'these barriers into resources for connections among

⁵⁰ *ibid*: 499.

⁵¹ *Ibid*.

feminists'⁵². Dean aims to envision the “we” without labels and describes her account of solidarity as follows:

Positioning reflective solidarity as the bridge between identity and universality, as the precondition of mutual recognition necessary for claims to universality under pluralist, postmodern conditions, it argues that a communicative understanding of “we” enables us to think of difference differently, to overcome the competing dualisms of us/them, male / female, white / black, straight / gay, public / private, general / particular. Further, it claims that the key to this overcoming can be found in the margins and spaces that mark the limits of our concepts, the boundaries of our discourses⁵³.

Basing her explanation of solidarity on ‘mutual expectation of a responsible orientation toward relationship’⁵⁴ Dean believes disagreement can be empowering for building a ‘community’ if it is established through relations based on the perception of variability and questionability. Mutual expectation requires diverse uses of the term “we”, responsibility indicates ‘accountability for exclusion’⁵⁵, whereas orientation to a relationship involves mutual expectation to a broader and respectful plane to bond diversities. These ties created through mutual expectation necessitate openness thus enables accountability among women.

She states that solidarity in order to be achieved, disagreement along with diversity must be transformed into ties and commitments and to

⁵² Dean, 1997: 260.

⁵³ Dean, 1996: 3.

⁵⁴ Dean, 1997: 260.

⁵⁵ Dean, 1996: 29.

attain an inclusive 'we' what is needed to be done is to relate each of individuated 'I's into a wider platform. In order to achieve an inclusive "we" the bonding should arise from mutual recognition of partners of a relationship instead grounding it on exclusion of others. Furthermore, the sense of "we" must be "interpreted not as given, but as 'in process'"⁵⁶.

... because it is created through communicative utterances, this "we" cannot remain fixed. It is constantly recreated and renewed by the "query" as members confront and challenge, accept and reject, the claims raised by each and all⁵⁷.

Solidarity designating a relationship in Dean's account, is only possible through 'communicative engagement' that is through dialogue, interaction, and questioning of opposition and diversity. Solidarity among women is impossible with the assumption of collective identity based of some feminine essence rather it is to be achieved 'as a conscious project'⁵⁸.

[...] reflective solidarity refers to the exclusion of exclusion: we are connected through our struggle against those who threaten, denigrate, and silence us. Additionally, if we are to move doubt to the foundations of our notion of solidarity, we must always be aware of the limits of any given understanding of "we."⁵⁹

Criticizing the model of solidarity based upon the preexisting group identities, Dean develops her account on difference fostering solidarity

⁵⁶ Dean, 1996: 3.

⁵⁷ Ibid: 31.

⁵⁸ Ibid: 248.

⁵⁹ Ibid: 31.

rather than precluding it. Replacing the “us vs. them” model to a communicatively achieved “we” approach respecting difference reinforces an inclusive account of solidarity thus avoiding the exclusion of diversity. Dean, exactly compatible with hooks views states:

Fragmentation fails as a solution to the problem of feminist solidarity because it forfeits dialogue and leaves the dominant presumptions of who women are intact... splinter groups focus on their own differences, as if they existed in some sort of vacuum... Engaging with feminists and other activists and working to achieve an understanding of our interconnections is neglected in favor of the solidification of pre-existing identifications.⁶⁰

Dean’s account of solidarity is based on both ‘opposition to those who would exclude, define and oppress other and that of our mutual recognition of each other’s inalienable individuality’.⁶¹ Dean decisively departs from the sisterhood solidarity by defining ‘hypothetical thirds’, implying the other and situating the third into every relation referring to identity politics’ exclusionary attitude towards the others. This situated, hypothetical third avoids the ‘construction of ‘we’ through the creation of an excluded ‘them’ or an ‘other’’.⁶²

Both hooks’ account of redefined version of sisterhood solidarity and Dean’s account of ‘reflective solidarity’ are conceivable in analyzing the problems of feminist solidarity. However, both hooks and Dean are far from offering workable accounts. The main problem with these

⁶⁰ Dean, 1997: 248.

⁶¹ Ibid: 245.

⁶² Lyshaug, 2006: 81.

accounts is the fallacy of designating a driving force for gathering women and feminists from diversified backgrounds, beliefs, identities, ideologies, views, different forms and experiences of subordination and so on. In fact, although ideally Dean's configuration of solidarity is inclusionary, non-hierarchical and valuing every woman's experience and voice, in terms of its practicability it can be criticized. Already aware of its impracticability, she criticizes her account of not being able to point out a way to encourage women to come together to create such a solidarity.⁶³

'Coalition building' is another suggestion for solidarity supported by feminists as a solution to balancing the claims of unity versus difference. Bernice Reagon, in her speech published in *Homegirls: A Black Feminist Anthology* (1983), criticizes women's organizations creating 'safe spaces' based on narrow identity politics and states within those 'safe spaces' it is inevitable to confront the reality of differences among members. As will be discussed in the fifth chapter, this is exactly the case in Turkey; women are acting within their organizations and these 'safe spaces' not only obscure differences among the members instead and more critically, these organizations both obscure and deepen differences among activists/ feminists as a whole, most of which are based on identity politics. Cole, annotating Reagon, emphasizes that the only way to effectively deal with political

⁶³ Dean, 1995. See also Lyshaug Brenda's criticism in Lyshaug (2006) "Solidarity without 'Sisterhood'? Feminism and the ethics of coalition building", *Politics & Gender*, 2:77-100, p.84

issues is to 'join forces across difference' and the success depends on how much we are able to detach ourselves with similar others⁶⁴.

Reagon acknowledging its shortfalls and difficulties argues that coalitions are necessary for the survival of the members of the identity groups to contact with difference and in order to actualize coalitions we need to move beyond the 'comfort zones' where we are able to confront, understand and accept difference⁶⁵. Lacking in hooks' and Dean's explanation, Reagon states, the motive behind coalitions is women's 'desire to survive'⁶⁶.

Although Reagon puts forth a motive for building solidarity her model does not guarantee 'reciprocal recognition and affirmation' and prevention of hierarchical structures within relations necessarily. Furthermore, coalitions although enable encountering among women are far from ensuring sustained feminist solidarity which is very similar to the case in Turkey and will also be discussed in detail in the fourth and fifth chapters. Besides, Reagon's motive for building coalitions; establishing commonalities with the unlike –or tactical solidarity as will be termed by Dean-, that is, women's desire to survive is pragmatically based and does not aim at establishing *feminist* solidarity.

⁶⁴ Cole, 2008: 444.

⁶⁵ *ibid*: 444.

⁶⁶ Lyshaug, 2006: 80

Similar to hooks' description that feminist solidarity requires sustained, ongoing commitment, Mohanty states unity is not given but it is something to be struggled for. Rather than using the term unity, Mohanty prefers to refer it as coalition and bases her account of solidarity on "common differences"⁶⁷. Mohanty emphasizes that differences and commonalities exist in all contexts and feminist solidarity is an outcome of relations of mutuality, co-responsibility, and common interests⁶⁸. She believes that 'common differences' can form the basis of a deeper solidarity among women and eliminate the unequal power relations among women if regarded.

At first reading of Mohanty's account, it seems to be embracing 'difference' over 'commonality' but as she mentions what determines 'our potential political alliances' is 'the common context of struggles against specific exploitative structures and systems.'⁶⁹ She continues with stating that recognizing differences and particularities allows us to better acknowledge connections and commonalities.

The challenge is to see how differences allow us to explain the connections and border crossing better and more accurately, how specifying difference allows us to theorize universal concerns more fully. It is this intellectual move that allows for my concern for women of different communities and identities to build coalitions and solidarities across borders.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Mohanty, 2006: 225 & 244.

⁶⁸ *ibid*: 242.

⁶⁹ *ibid*: 49.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*: 226.

While appreciating the opening out achieved through coalition politics that is moving beyond identities, Dean criticizes coalition and affinity of not being able to keep feminists together. As she states:

[...] the politics of coalition and affinity provides tactical solidarities that rely on the contingent meeting of disparate interests. Our reason for coming together is instrumental; we work with those who can secure our interests [...] 'solidarity' of coalition politics abandons any effort toward achieving a more broad-based and lasting feminist solidarity.⁷¹

Brenda Lyshaug both acknowledges and criticizes Dean's and Reagon's accounts of solidarity. She appreciates Dean's emphasis on mutual responsibility and 'ethically rich form of' recognition paying great attention to either excluding or restraining difference and Reagon's account of being a reasonable explanation to the longstanding problems of diversity and unity claims within feminism. However, she states;

Feminist connections across difference must be built on a more durable and generous form of reciprocal recognition than that of mutual instrumentality if a sense of mutual accountability is to be maintained between allies. [...] Not only tactical bonds fail to enact a satisfying form of mutual recognition across difference, they also do not necessarily break down existing barriers that impede such recognition.⁷²

In return for her criticism she offers the integration of 'feminist ethic of self-cultivation' into any account of solidarity. Transforming individual attitudes according to her allows mutual responsibility and recognition. Lyshaug's account of solidarity in difference which she calls as

⁷¹ Dean, 1997: 249.

⁷² Lyshaug, 2006: 81-82.

‘enlarged sympathy’ is mainly based on ethical self-transformation allowing attentiveness, connection and accountability towards others. I argue that actually, what Lyshaug offers is a way out what hooks foresees, that is a way to question sexism, racism and classism internalized by women and power relations among women, in other words for me anything that prevents women from establishing empowering solidarity practices.

Her explanation of sympathy involves identification with the other on the basis of sympathetic ties among diverse subjects because of which sisterhood has been in fact criticized. However, appealing to Sandra Lee Bartky’s response, Lyshaug tries to explain how to avoid ethical problems such identification is prone to⁷³.

Sympathizing with others [...] expresses affirmation for and appreciation of them. Moreover, to the extent that fellow-feeling is animated by a desire to seek value in others, it enriches the self’s experience of others and also “provide[s] an occasion for moral . . . development”.⁷⁴

Sandra Lee Bartky, likewise, develops another way out to encourage women to come together and develop solidarity oriented relations. Bartky using Max Scheler’s notion of “*Mitgefühl*”, or “feeling with” and translating it as “fellow-feeling” emphasizes the affective aspects of solidarity. Different from former explanations Bartky emphasizes the

⁷³ Bartky drawing on Scheler’s phenomenological account of *Mitgefühl* uses the term fellow-feeling instead of sympathy (Lyshaug, 2006).

⁷⁴ Lyshaug, 2006: 89.

emotional aspect of feminist solidarity in which emotions become the motivation to bond women to women.

In her account of solidarity, imagination and 'certain cognitive understanding of the concrete specifics of the other's context' plays important role.⁷⁵ As Gould states in Bartky's configuration of solidarity the relation among women remains at individual level; in her expression "feeling with" another and socializing the notion of solidarity – moving solidarity to groups - remains problematic⁷⁶.

To conclude for this section, it is possible to say that the main point of discussion in contemporary accounts of feminist solidarity is respect for difference without disregarding commonality among women. Although offering coherent alternatives to feminist solidarity, the above discussions for me are far from suggesting a reasonable path to achieve feminist solidarity or at least it is difficult for me to imagine that feminists in Turkey will achieve sustained solidarity either through hooks' sisterhood solidarity, Dean's 'reflective solidarity' of Mohanty's coalitions and will do so by 'enlarged sympathy' of 'fellow feeling'. hooks' and Dean's accounts are not workable accounts; although they opened up the way for establishing feminist solidarity, they do not offer a tool –more importantly a driving force, a motive- to do so. Similarly, the problem with Mohanty's account, based on 'common differences', is that it is far from designating a tool to collectivize differences. Reagon,

⁷⁵ Gould, 2007: 152.

⁷⁶ Ibid: 153.

on the other hand is criticized for not assuring sustained feminist solidarity. Fallacy of designating a driving force as well holds sway over Lyshaug's and Bartky's accounts. Moreover, Bartky's fellow feeling, calling emotions as the motive is individualistic and does not guarantee collective political action.

What has been experienced in Turkey as of 2009 is solidarity practices based on coalitions which I believe far from feminist solidarity accounts offered above. The motive behind feminist solidarity is hard to be determined simply by theoretical approaches which can only be instrumental in portraying the facts and offering possible tools. However, I argue that the only way to create the motive and attain a driving force for establishing feminist solidarity is activism itself. Feminism is not separately a theory, it is not activism alone either; for me it is theory molded with praxis oriented towards change. Therefore, the way out; a possible solution to achieving feminist solidarity roots in the combination of theory and praxis.

2.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF FEMINIST ACTIVISM AND SOLIDARITY IN TURKEY

The aim of the following sections in this chapter is to analyze the past and present of feminist activism / women's movement and try to analyze activism in terms of feminist solidarity / solidarity practices in Turkey.

Natasha Walter describes UK's women's movement as 'something that looks very like a women's movement does still exist in Britain. It is not a mass movement that marches to one drumbeat, but a large collection of single-issue organizations that press for feminist aims in many different accents.'⁷⁷ Walter's statement actually reflects the case in feminist activism in Turkey. I would argue that it is even difficult to subscribe feminist identity and politics to activism in Turkey as a whole. In fact, today's activism is a mixed one and it is appropriate to describe it as 'women's movement'; a broader activism involving both feminists and activist women and instead referring it as *feminist solidarity*, what is experienced is actually temporary solidarity practices around issue based activism in Turkey.

2.2.1. A Short Glance at Activism from 1980s to Present

Women's activism although traced back to early 1900s in the Ottoman Empire and early Republican⁷⁸ period after the 1920s, 1980s is accepted as the emergence of the 'new' women's movement and revival of women's activism in Turkey⁷⁹. It is labeled as 'new' because its motto has been feminism which could question the dominant ideology and

⁷⁷ Walter, N. (1998), cited in Predelli, L.N., et al., 2008:6.

⁷⁸ For more information about women's activism before 1980s, see Zihnioğlu, Yaprak (2003): *Kadınsız İnkılap (Revolution Without Woman)*, Metis yayınları, İstanbul; Çakır, Serpil (1996). *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi (Ottoman Women's Movement)*, Metis Yayınevi, İstanbul.

⁷⁹ The political climate before 1980s was mostly dominated by right vs. left wing dichotomy and women's issues could become more visible after 1980s. Feminist activism like other social oppositions during 1980s developed ironically in an era when political life was embattled after the last military coup of September 12, 1980.

patriarchy and had 'independent and critical consciousness' required for this questioning.⁸⁰ The early years of 1980s referred as 'fermentation' period laid the ground work for a more organized women's movement which was until then limited mainly to consciousness raising groups and feminist publishing.⁸¹

Consciousness raising groups set up by feminist women, discussing women's issues in Yazko Group's⁸² (Writers and Interpreters Cooperative), and women's page in *Somut* journal were the main fields of activism for women during the early 80s. The main concern of women of those times seems to understand feminism, discuss feminism and to introduce feminism in Turkey. After a period of publishing experiences women established the first stable structure of their own, that is, *Women's Circle*. Women's Circle established in 1984 has served as women's own publishing house and women published books translated from feminist literature. Besides, Women's Circle hosted feminist discussion sessions which anyhow had been pioneering for feminist activism in Turkey.⁸³ Marked by interruptions or of short duration 'feminist writing and publishing was an important tool of penetrating public consciousness' during those years and after and

⁸⁰ Berktaş, 1998: p.7-8.

⁸¹ Savran, 1998: p. 3.

⁸² A small group of women who came together for the publication of a series of women's books in 1981 in Yazko, the Writers and Interpreters Cooperative.

⁸³ Tekeli, 1998.

women continued with journals named '*Feminist*' and '*Socialist Feminist Kaktüs*' in the late 1980s.⁸⁴

The best expression of women's accumulation of experience, knowledge and consciousness during the early 1980s has been those very famous campaigns organized first in 1986 and the following years mainly against the violence against women. Not only for these campaigns but in general the main issue that women's activism dealt with was violence against women. Although differences among feminists and their ideologies existed, feminist activism during late 1980s has been very effective and collaborative. Despite their differences they could meet under common agendas and struggled for change. Commonality of shared oppression was the main agenda and issue of solidarity. This had validated radicalism of activism at the time, i.e. what called collective action into existence –in Arendt's terms- was the shared commitment of distinct individuals and not the shared identity.

What hooks suggests as the driving force, that is, the concern for the collective was pushing women to activism and acting in solidarity then in Turkey. The first mass action of women has been the petition campaign, aiming to align national legislation with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in Turkey (1986) which 'partially legitimized' feminism in

⁸⁴ Arat, 2004: 283.

Turkey with almost 4000 participants⁸⁵. Campaign against Beating⁸⁶ (1987) and Purple Needle Campaign⁸⁷ (1989) followed this and other protests like protest against the 438th clause of Turkish Penal Code⁸⁸ (1990). What is also worthwhile to note is that during these years feminist activism took place either in İstanbul, Ankara or İzmir and was mostly limited to these provinces.

The women's movement in 1980s has been carried out of small groups into the streets and legitimized through activism.⁸⁹ These groups consisted of mostly educated and urban women and mainly located in İstanbul and Ankara. Concurrently with their rigorous dynamism and activism, some of the activist women have laid the ground for the

⁸⁵ Savran, 2005: p.82.

⁸⁶ The word for beating in Turkish is "Dayak," a much more commonly used type of violence against women, and the original name of the campaign is "Dayağa Karşı Kampanya". Campaign against Beating was initiated in 1987 against the refusal of the divorce application of a pregnant woman with three children who was regularly beaten by her husband and the judge's reference to the proverb saying: "You should never leave a woman's back without a stick and her womb without a colt" as his rationale. The campaign aimed to pull out men's violence against women from the main domain of violence and considered men's violence against women within the domain of male hegemony and domination. For more information about the campaign see Mor Çatı (1988) *Bağır! Herkes Duysun!* (Shout, Let Everybody Hear!), Kadın Çevresi Yayınları, İstanbul.

⁸⁷ Probably the most exciting campaign of the women's movement at the end of 1980's has been the "Our Body Belongs to Us. No to Sexual Harassment" campaign that is more widely known as the "Purple Needle Campaign" organized as a protest to sexual harassment in 1989. For further information about women's activism and experiences of women's movement after 1980s in Turkey see Amargi, (2005) *"Özgürlüğü Ararken: Kadın Hareketinde Mücadele Deneyimleri"* (In Search for Liberty: Experiences of Struggle in Women's Movement), S.S. Amargi Kadın Bilimsel ve Kültürel Araştırmalar Yay., İstanbul.

⁸⁸ This article which reduced the sentence for rapists by one-third if the victim was a sex-worker was than repealed in 1990.

⁸⁹ Demir, 1996.

establishment of more permanent structures such as Purple Roof Women's Shelter Foundation (1990) and Library of Women's Works (1990) in İstanbul and Women's Solidarity Foundation (1991) in Ankara, the journal *Pazartesi* (1995) in İstanbul and many other women's organizations in the following years. Those organizations have been important carriers of the movement to its current form and also portent of future fragmentation of activism.

Although activism is not limited with women's organizations, in the 1990s onwards women's organizations became the locus of women's activism in Turkey and 'safe spaces' for women different from each other in a fragmented milieu as Reagon suggested. The number of women's organizations dramatically increased by 1990s. According to a study conducted in 2003, their number in 38 provinces of Turkey was 313 and 75% of those women's organizations were established after 1990 which is a very remarkable progress due to diverse array of reasons and with many challenging outcomes⁹⁰. In time, activism in Turkey like in many other countries has been institutionalized through women's organizations and 'community based feminism' is replaced by *structured activism*⁹¹ and the visible women's movement is replaced by the 'professionalization of feminism'.⁹²

⁹⁰ The study titled 'Data Base System for Women's Organizations in Turkey' was conducted in 2003 by Flying Broom and supervised by Prof. Dr. Yıldız Ecevit from Sociology Department of Middle East Technical University.

⁹¹ The term *structured activism* refers to a more organized type of activism with its organizations and designated agendas.

⁹² Lang, 2000: 290.

Activism moving from streets to organizations dramatically changed and scattered through newly established women's organizations. Women facing problems due diversified political and ideological preferences⁹³ preferred to establish their own organizations and 1990s has been an era for women who only become to know their own field of work and interest.⁹⁴

The main reason for the difference of 1990s from 1980s originates from the diversity of ideological stances of women's groups and in this context their field of work and ways of organizing.⁹⁵ Moreover, 90s has been an era in which Kurdish and Islamist women's feminist demands were more visibly introduced. And both Kurdish and Islamist women along with women involved in late 80s activism established their own organizations. Women's movement and activism mainly belonging to İstanbul, İzmir and Ankara before, geographically disseminated to other cities of Turkey. Especially with diverse women's organizations and along with their diverse agendas and priorities, the political character of the feminist activism that was achieved in late 80s has been weakened in a sense because this diversity meant difficulty in getting organized, lack of consensus, cooperation and solidarity.

Activism was obscured by women's organizations dealing mostly with their own problems, priorities and field of work. Thus sustainability

⁹³ See Section 5.1. "Challenges to Feminist Activism"

⁹⁴ Aksu and Günel, 2002.

⁹⁵ Ecevit and Kardam, 2002.

became and still remains the most troublesome issue for women's organizations, subsequently weakening the possibilities of feminist solidarity. As Koçali describes, 'Feminism has directed its course differently after 90s; it's been a period women mostly gathered for actions and women's groups working on different issues hardly entered into relations'⁹⁶.

The evolution of women's activism's in the 1990s resulted in a diversified and fragmented activism, furthermore the issues of women's activism were diversified and the field of activism was broadened. Additional issues such as political representation, communication, economic discrimination, culture were raised by activists and strategies such as lobbying and networking gained prominence. However violence against women and struggle for legal reforms remained central to the 1990s agenda. Flying Broom (1996), Capital City Women's Platform (1996), Association for Supporting and Training Women Candidates in Politics (1997), Association of Republic's Women (1997), and KAMER- Women's Centre⁹⁷ (1997) are some of the leading organizations established during this period.

Feminists and activist women do not have an effective common action in the first half of the 1990s. In the second half of the 1990s and onwards Civil Code reforms and in the early years of 2000s Penal Code Reforms

⁹⁶ Koçali, 2005: p.138.

⁹⁷ KAMER - Women's Centre, officially established in Diyarbakır in 1997 has been the first women's organizations on violence against women in the South-eastern region of Turkey, is now active in 23 provinces of East and Sout-East region with its centers.

were the most important items of women's agenda. The old version of Turkish Civil Code falling short in bringing actual equality for women had been criticized by activists for years and after an intense work of women the code was reformed covering women's demands in 2001. Women's organizations' common struggle for the Civil Code Reform is worth mentioning both due it has been the 'widest coalition ever formed' since 1980s and gathered women with diverse political affiliation and identities⁹⁸ and it has been long term and intense action that modified women's movement's boxed in women's organizations structure.⁹⁹ In 2002, after the successful experience of Turkish Civil Code reform process "The Women's Working Group on the Turkish Penal Code" was founded and the group prepared specific proposals for the amendment of the discriminatory articles. After a while in order to effectively lobby the parliamentarians to include the proposals of the Working Group to the new draft law *Women's Platform on the Reform Process of the Turkish Penal Code* was initiated including women's organizations, lawyers, academicians and media members. After an intense and difficult work including conferences, meetings, marching and lobbying the law has been amended accordingly to the thirty of the thirty five proposals of the Platform. Activism run for the amendment of Turkish Penal Code will be one of the main examples given by respondents to successful solidarity practices and will be discussed in the fourth chapter in detail.

⁹⁸ İlkaracan, 2007.

⁹⁹ Işık, 2002.

The issue of violence against women has been a common denominator gathering any women since 1980s and despite their different ideological, political stances and priorities, has been a field in which feminist politics was possibly produced and feminist solidarity is achieved. Annually organized 'Women's Shelters / Consulting and Solidarity Centers General Assembly'¹⁰⁰ gathering hundreds of women is the best example of this cooperation and solidarity among women. These assemblies have been crucial experiences in terms of communication, joint action and feminist politics for women's movement in Turkey and paved the way for 'functional platforms' of the following years.¹⁰¹

What was also distinctive about 1990s is that 'women's organizations were encouraged and mobilized through and within a UN led process'.¹⁰² In 2000, for the first time, women's organizations prepared an alternative NGO report and presented this to the Beijing +5 Conference held in New York. In 2004 a second report was prepared. This report was an outcome of an intensive study at the NGO Forum on CEDAW- Turkey in 2003 organized by activist women and welcomed

¹⁰⁰ Women's Shelters / Consulting and Solidarity Centers General Assembly first organized in 1998 in İstanbul with the efforts of Purple Roof Women's Shelter Foundation is now organized annually and hosted by different organizations in different provinces each year is a joint action of women's organizations working for the elimination of violence against women. The Assembly has been a platform for women through which action and policy against violence against women in the country are determined and institutionalized and the authority is urged to take action in accordance.

¹⁰¹ Ecevit, 2005: 9; Tekeli, 2005: 61.

¹⁰² Parmaksız, 2003: 6.

more than 450 representatives of women's organizations¹⁰³. However, although feminist activism has a tendency to follow the international activism and sometimes adjust its agenda accordingly with international gender issues, it still has a domestic character and mostly limited with country's borders. One of the most important exceptions is Turkey's full membership to European Women's Lobby in 2004. Nevertheless, 'collaborative projects with groups in and especially outside of Turkey'¹⁰⁴and networking is still the weakest element of activism.

Activism explicitly carried on its country-wide expansion both numerically and geographically in 2000s. With the increasing numbers the agendas, priorities and their field of work have also diversified. In addition to women's organizations, platforms or umbrella organizations gained importance through which they could join forces with diverse groups or individuals. In this context, the most important joint action of women in terms of concrete acquisition has been the Turkish Penal Code reform process.

Women's joint action was also conveyed to the virtual space; the Internet. Internet activism also became one of the main fields for women's movement in 2000s. Besides, virtual groups were established. Women gathered under different topics and formed their yahoo-groups or their web sites through which they could informed, get informed and

¹⁰³ www.ucansupurge.org

¹⁰⁴ Gülçür, 1999.

reacted through. Activism through the Internet has been an accelerator force however; it is difficult to claim that it has also empowered networking and solidarity. It is a necessity to weigh the pros and cons, and it is for sure that activism carried to the virtual space has adverse effects. It has deteriorated face to face relations, consequently the most important means for solidarity.

In 2000s feminist activism's heritage from 1990s, that is fragmentation and diversification has deepened, along with the expansion of activism and articulation of new issues and concerns. As mentioned above, Penal Code Reforms make its mark on early 2000s. It is possible to claim that during the Penal Code reforms activists performed a more dense and dynamic struggle in solidarity with many diverse groups. Following the Penal Code there appears coalitions and campaigns for Novamed¹⁰⁵, Women's Platform for Constitution, support for candidacy of Ayşe Tükrükçü and Saliha Ermez¹⁰⁶, Campaign for Tuzla Tersaneleri¹⁰⁷ and so on.

¹⁰⁵ Novamed is the name of the multinational firm producing blood sets at Antalya Free Trade Zone. 82 women working at the firm left work on September 2006 and lasted their strike for 448 days due to lack of health protection, social security, anti-unionization and oppression due to being 'woman'. Many women's organizations and feminists in order to support women at Novamed established a platform titled 'Women's Platform for Solidarity With Novamed Strike'. For more information about Novamed, see "*Happy Ending in Novamed Women's Strike: Is it real?*" by B. Tokat and Ö. Pehlivaner, *Feminist Yaklaşımlar*, www.feministyaklasimlar.org.

¹⁰⁶ Ayşe Tükrükçü and Saliha Ermez are former sex workers who became independent candidates in parliamentary elections on July 22, 2007. During their election campaigns they were supported by feminists.

¹⁰⁷ Tuzla Shipyard Strike is the strike of hundreds of workers at Tuzla. The workers demanded to stop workplace deaths and feminists gave support to workers.

Campaigns as the main tool used for feminist activism make the mark on 2000s and platforms to get organized. The above examples can be multiplied. Campaigns although practical and preferred by women are not always accepted as solely beneficial. Campaigns paving way to short term contacts on the other hand are difficult to sustain. Instead, it is seen as time consuming and becomes an obstacle deepening current relations and establishing empowering relations among women and this consequently prevents activism from developing sustainable relations¹⁰⁸.

Barriers in front of establishing empowering relations and developing empowering, sustainable feminist solidarity have been diverse in 2000s. As discussed in the interviews, main issues raised were professionalization of activism, project based activities, NGOization of feminist activism, funds and scarcity of financial sources and lack of alternative strategies to cope with survival issues. All these mentioned issues and many others –which will be raised in the fifth chapter-, indicate weakened or not well developed feminist character of activism in Turkey that is the main barrier for me in front of developing feminist solidarity.

¹⁰⁸ See Savran and Koç, 2005.

2.2.2. A Short Glance at Feminist Solidarity in Turkey

Although the experiences of feminist activists' differ from that of their counterparts in the West, women in the late 1980s in Turkey had an emphasis on sisterhood based solidarity. Effort and will to create an independent and autonomous movement, without any extension such as socialist, nationalist, radical or Islamist has been the characteristic of 1980s feminist activism. This will or rather concern for the collective has been so strong that it had functioned as a melting pot for 'other attachments' all but feminist and resulted in postponement of them for a while until activist women began to establish their own organizations based on different issues, views or identities.

The ones who demanded such integrity and solidarity was actually a small group of women who have been effective, changed the agenda, set the political debates of the time mainly in İstanbul and Ankara, and unfortunately could not extend the movement like it was; unified, small in scope but effective and acting in strong solidarity. Depending on hooks' understanding of feminist solidarity and her examination it is worth to mention that splintering into different groups, moving away from diversity, disagreement and difference although made activism widespread did not strengthen it. As hooks mentioned, this has resulted in 'unnecessary barriers' to sisterhood. This splintering instead had a debilitating affect which could evolve to enrichment for feminist activism. The Turkish case is not an exception, and feminist activism

has been splintered into different groups in time which resulted in both the expansion of activism and differentiation.

Consciousness raising groups provided a similar space for women in Turkey in the early 1980s' activism and 'constituted the basic organizational form of feminism'¹⁰⁹. Women's discussions involved actually what hooks seen as obstacles to the true nature of sisterhood. Defending non-associational activism women involved in these groups were critical of oppressive, hierarchical, authoritarian nature of older associations those are the products of 'masculine' politics of the left once they were mostly members of.

Not a mass but small group; not a leader, equal 'us'; not a decision maker and obedient but developing and implementing decisions in common; not militants denying individualism but saying 'I' respecting personality, we as women turned upside down the old organizational life. The most we restrained were the ones with natural leadership aptitude...¹¹⁰.

Consciousness raising -as Şule Aytaç¹¹¹ describes- was awakening force for feminists or for women at the beginning of a long-term investigation practice. In fact, 'it provided an inquiry of state of womanhood common to every woman, independent of class, race, age, religion or so... [Consciousness raising] was a process of learning how to act together.'¹¹² It was a path to feminist solidarity. The first years of the 80s

¹⁰⁹ Marshall, G. A. 2005.

¹¹⁰ Tekeli, 2005: 58.

¹¹¹ She is one of the first feminists of 80s' activism.

¹¹² Aytaç, 2005: 44-45.

had been a period of consciousness raising, empowerment and raising sensitivity for women¹¹³.

Consciousness raising groups are replaced by women's organizations by the 1990s. Consciousness raising group, once an effort for raising consciousness now has transformed into a kind of technique to raise awareness among women. Currently, there are activities called such as consciousness raising meetings, trainings, seminars, etc. and the activity is performed by already 'conscious' women. However, this tendency as a result brings the patriarchal hierarchical formation into activism.

Activism, has evolved and fragmented in time including various ideologies, identities, varying priorities and emphasizes. If it is asked, what has changed from 80s to 90s in terms of solidarity issue and in terms of commonality and difference debate? The answer would be that the old fractions have arisen and women at the same pot with different priorities and views began to depart from undivided variety. Besides, the 90s have been a period when activism's feminist character weakened or not well developed and its potential for strong feminist solidarity lessened. For me, feminists experienced untimely disintegration, expansion and success in terms of achieving change which interrupted feminist activism's maturation in Turkey. Then again, women's organizations created 'safe spaces' and decreased the chance of confrontation of differences.

¹¹³ Timisi & Ağduk, 2002: 15.

As Ecevit points out what is needed to be done is to discuss to what extent activism is being realized based on 'feminist' concerns¹¹⁴. This question has become the mainstay of this study as the study has developed. It was the main question in my mind during the interviews and answering why women could not develop sustainable feminist solidarity. At the heart of feminist solidarity lie feminist theory, feminist political discourse and feminist politics. Moving away from these concerns, results in feminist activism's transformation into women's activism in Turkey. What is in general observed in today's activism is short term, of set purpose gatherings, *tactical solidarity* practices and contacts questionable in terms its feminist character. Certainly, this is both the result of and cause of the state of feminist activism in Turkey today. Feminist politics needs to be home for all, however, eagerness to hold power within the movement and therefore disregarding differences results in moving away from feminism.

Detailed analysis will be made in the following chapters however, briefly to say receding from feminist essence has changed the nature of solidarity, strategies of activism and unsurprisingly the future of activism in Turkey. Considering the theoretical discussions, similarly it is observed that solidarity practices and activism in Turkey is more permissive to differences nevertheless instead of understanding and accepting the one that is different it is still based on highlighting the similarities different from suggested means of solidarity. Best example

¹¹⁴ Ecevit, 2008: p.28.

to the case is a definition provided for 'solidarity' within one of the women's electronic mail group;

Solidarity is for protecting and enhancing our similarities in spite of difference among us. Our views may not overlap with Kazete's one to one. We can have discrepancies in addition to our similarities, that is, our common denominator. However, solidarity is the name for gathering for improving our similarities and our common denominator¹¹⁵.

To conclude, it is possible to say that it was feminism holding activists together during the early years of feminist activism in Turkey and consciousness raising was the main tool to organize. There was a small group of activists sharing similar interests and an agenda around which they put up resistance to patriarchy. However, the feminist character of activism in Turkey has weakened in time with the expansion of activism and differentiation. Feminist political discourse and feminist politics began to lose the ground as a result weakened the possibility of establishing feminist solidarity.

¹¹⁵ An e-mail sent to 'Kadinkurultayı' electronic mail group on 23rd of August, 2008.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The study is based on in-depth, semi-structured interviews. 21 in-depth interviews conducted with activist/feminist women, mostly representatives of leading women's/feminist organizations and most widely known names within feminist activism in Turkey. Furthermore, techniques such as participant observation and documentary work are also used to enhance the quality of the study. Together with the data collected through the interviews, the analysis of the study is drawn from personal experiences with one of the leading feminist organizations in Turkey as well as personal contacts with activist/feminist women¹.

In-depth interview technique is preferred since it was the best way 'to gain insight into the world of ... respondents'² and to reveal women's ideas and experiences about feminist solidarity. Besides, it is thought to be the most reasonable method due to lack of written documents and

¹ I was a research assistant of Prof. Dr. Yıldız Ecevit within the study conducted in 2003 by Flying Broom titled 'Data Base System for Women's Organizations in Turkey'; I assisted Prof. Dr. N. Gaye Erbatur, female MP for Adana from the Republican People's Party (2006-2007); Within the project of "Local Dimensions of a Wider European Neighborhood: Developing Political Community through Practices and Discourses of Cross-Border Co-operation"-coordinated by Ass. Prof. Ayça Ergun- I have conducted 16 in-depth interviews with representatives of women's organizations between August 2007 and January 2008.

² Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007: p. 114.

publications on the issue. Moreover, in-depth interview has been the most effective technique for me due to my previous experiences in several studies / projects. Furthermore, for me in-depth interview method which I believe depends on mutual learning, understanding and sharing, turns out to be the most open, efficient and sincere means for gathering information.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE INTERVIEWS

The interview questions fall under six main topics; the nature and the context of feminist solidarity, barriers to feminist solidarity, sameness and difference in terms of feminist solidarity, means of feminist solidarity, challenges of feminist activism in Turkey, future possibilities of feminist solidarity³.

In the first topic which is the nature and the context of feminist solidarity, the questions are formulated to reveal what feminist solidarity meant to feminists and activist women, in what context feminist solidarity is perceived and issues around which feminist solidarity is realized and its possible reasons are questioned. Besides, the issue of commonality which is restraining possibilities of feminist solidarity is explicated.

³ The interview questions are given as Appendix-1.

The study relies upon the need to an empowering and sustainable feminist solidarity in Turkey. Hence, the second topic, namely, barriers to feminist solidarity examines the possible reasons impeding feminist solidarity. Under this heading also examined the issues around which feminist solidarity is established and women's agendas for new possibilities of developing feminist solidarity.

In the third part, the issue of sameness and difference is investigated in terms of feminist solidarity practices. Possibility of feminist solidarity against the differences among women is weighted up. Problems prone to feminist solidarity based on sameness and the limitations of the discourse of sisterhood is questioned.

The fourth topic; means of feminist solidarity deals with mainly consciousness raising as a feminist means of solidarity and new means replaced such as platforms and alternatives offered by women.

In addition to the main argument of solidarity issue, the study aims to be explanatory of the internal conflicts, all embracing feminist activism and suggestive to the future of feminist activism in Turkey. Therefore, the fifth section of the interviews is based on disclosing current challenges to feminist activism and suggestions of solution. Furthermore, to what extent women tend to rely on feminist theory in order to achieve feminist solidarity is also questioned. Finally, women's views about the future of feminist solidarity practices are discussed.

DETAILS ABOUT THE INTERVIEWS

The interviews took place between September 2008 and January 2009. I conducted interviews with activists, one from İzmir, seven from İstanbul and thirteen from Ankara. During the interviews digital voice recorder was used with the permission of respondents. Interviews lasted from one and a half hour to two hours and each interview was fully transcribed.

Women interviewed are well known activists, feminists and/or academicians either new in activism or has been involved since 1980s. They are either member of women's/feminist organizations or individual activists. The interviewed women involved a group of veteran activists, feminists, women who went along with activism as well as young activist feminists.

The organization of the interviews is above mentioned, however, the questions are not covered respectively and usually the interviews were rather conversations based on exchange of views. Instead, I sometimes had conversations during the interviews only to get to know each other reciprocally and the respondents were free to move from one issue to another. However, eventually, I tried to cover all of the issues for each respondent at the end of the interview and leave no unanswered questions.

During the course of my research, I have observed that from time to time the question in my mind did not overlap with what women had in mind regarding 'feminist solidarity'. Conceptualization sometimes caused commotion and it was difficult to gather women's views on 'feminist solidarity'. However, as a young feminist woman, who has been actively involved in one of the leading women's organizations in Turkey for two years, I have been both an insider and by not being involved in 80s activism and avoiding myself from internal conflicts of activism, I have been an outsider during the research. Feeling myself both as an insider and outsider usually provided me the courage to direct the interview towards a 'feminist' context.

Secondly, since the issue the study dealt with was a sensitive one, some of the women, sometimes, hesitated to share their views openly and abstained from giving details or examples especially about their personal experiences. In fact, some mentioned that they would not accept to be interviewed if not asked by my supervisor and still while interviewing sometimes they did not feel free to tell and spoke off the record. In order to carry the study's aim that is to understand the experiences of individual woman and to comply with women's request of confidentiality, the names will not be given throughout the following chapters.

Geographical representation was not a criterion for this study. However, future research taking into account geographical representation would be an advantage. Moreover, research on the same

issue can be enhanced if it includes activist/feminist women from a more diverse background, views, feminisms, regions and ages. Finally, it is realized that there is discernable differentiation among women in terms of their understanding / expectations / possibilities of feminist solidarity and for the future research agenda I would like to offer disclosing more explicitly the generation gap and its probable reasons among women.

CHAPTER 4

SOLIDARITY PRACTICES IN TURKEY

4.1. FEMINIST SOLIDARITY: CONCEPTUALIZATION, NATURE AND ACTION

4.1.1 Conceptualization of Feminist Solidarity

To begin with, while taking feminist solidarity as the issue for this study, I have realized that I did not expect to come up with this much controversy and complexity about the concept. However, most of the answers to the question of what ‘feminist solidarity’ meant to women has started with expressing how difficult it was to answer such a question and there were several explanations. In general it was very much complicated for women to define and describe what solidarity meant to them and issues that hold feminists together: “[feminist solidarity] is continuously defined, continuously decomposed and over and over again struggled for in the political field.” (R1)

This statement highlights the varying and diversified nature of feminist solidarity. Feminist solidarity – understood mostly as *women’s solidarity*- although a widely used concept, its content is uncertain and not well defined by feminists/activists in Turkey. Feminist solidarity as a

political concept consists of political arguments which women stick to - either this is women's political visions or identities-. However, this varying and diversified nature of the concept results in misapprehension and complicates its achievement. In fact, the main concern among women, who actually underlined the political character of feminist solidarity, was its misperception among women. More politically stated by one of the respondents, *feminist solidarity*;

... is establishing empathy, communication and easily sharing aspects of womanhood. Whilst doing this within a political framework transforming it to a big stick. [...] Additionally, it is a difficult concept to question and hard to achieve in our times. What I mean by 'our times' is that feminist movement moving from the stage of face to face relations, consciousness raising groups - demanding/aiming development and strengthening - ... to a stage in which articulating itself to a global women's movement, women's projects, professionalization... This is because, women's movement have power struggles, identity struggles... and crucial hierarchies within itself and results simply in putting feminism in quotation marks... (R2)

This quotation actually, summarizes the case in Turkey and constitutes the core of the study's argument. Similarly, uncritical acceptance of identity brings about illusionary homogeneity, in fact based on hegemonic experiences and this as a result avoids establishing broad-based, lasting feminist solidarity. In this sense, some of the respondents state that the difficulty about the concept is due to taking feminism as an identity and women as a homogeneous group expected to act in common in every occasion. Discomfort about the illusionary homogeneity embedded in feminist identity is raised as follows;

We have identities and positions other than being woman and we experience different hegemonic relations. Consequently, I think we should not expect all women to behave like a homogeneous group (R3).

Without disregarding the difficulty of conceptualizing feminist solidarity, it is possible to say that in general, feminist solidarity is mostly associated with personal solidarity practices among women and it is hardly politicized i.e. barely reinforced with theory which then will be an explanation to its weak nature in Turkey.

In general solidarity as a concept for me is acting together, trusting each other to attain an objective and effort for substituting and compensating for shortfalls of each other (R4).

Feminist solidarity is mostly based on commonalities, womanhood and common oppression described with helping and supporting each other, acting together for a common aim. Briefly to say, it is perceived as a state of understanding each other on the basis of common oppression.

[feminist solidarity] is about believing in supporting each other... sharing anything about feminist thinking, hegemony, sexism... it is something more than material sharing, it is sharing about womanhood (R5).

Discernibly, although there were some references to differences among women, women's understanding of feminist solidarity mostly based on sameness, commonalities and shared experience of oppression and the issue of inequalities, power struggles, hierarchy among women is underestimated. The reason for this is most probably having rather weak ties with theory and not having a common feminist vision. Therefore references to issues women were more familiar with and experiencing were prominent.

Even they are from different classes, different social groups, with different world views, I believe women have a common point; common oppression problem emanating from patriarchy (R3).

Besides emphasis on commonalities, some also express feminist solidarity as an empowering relationship and it is as being strengthening power of resistance similar to Allen's approach defining solidarity as the power arises out of reciprocal commitments to act in concert.

What feminist solidarity means to me is collective empowerment... it is the capability of proceeding on our way, struggling all in one... it is individual empowerment. Yes, it is, but if it is not collective empowerment, then it is not feminism (R6).

Equally empowerment becomes the motto of feminist solidarity for some;

I perceive feminist solidarity in conjunction with feminism's very important slogan or conception which is 'personal is political'. First of all, while making feminist politics -namely public politics- there is the feeling of empowerment of making politics within the context of feminist solidarity. In other words, there is an empowering significance of acting in solidarity while making politics (R7).

There were also explanations to feminist solidarity which were very much similar to hooks' understanding among women interviewed. One of the respondents describes feminist solidarity as follows;

'[feminist solidarity] shows womanhood experiences differing from each other actually have internal connections.' (R8)

Likewise empathy and difference is also mentioned;

For me solidarity is a political concept. Not only for me, the concept itself is political. Solidarity is the issue of establishing empathy among different ways of oppression (R14)

Similar to hooks, some drew attention to sexism internal in our relations among women and some to sexism internal in women;

When you start to make feminist politics or personally involve in activism, you don't purify from burdens of sexism; it is not possible. If you are living on these lands, this country, this world you get your share from the whole accumulated... sometimes you consider your friend that you make feminist politics together as militarist or sometimes as racist... (R9).

Likewise, encountering with the 'other' and altering the exclusionary vision of 'we' is also mentioned;

Solidarity is only possible if a woman or a group of women disclaim social privileges and do not put pressure on the other. For instance, recently, lesbian and heterosexual women have solidarity practices which I consider as a positive case (R10).

One other respondent on the other hand refers to inequalities among women and solidarity as a means of overcoming these inequalities and states;

The most important thing is sharing; people, especially women sharing the whole life... Because, the things that we have are not created... there are inequalities among women and the responsibility is not ours, it is directly the system. This can be knowledge, materiality... or violence. These are not our choices; actually they are directly given to us within the system. Therefore, through feminist solidarity we try to eliminate these [inequalities] from our relations. In this sense, it is different from helping one another (R7).

Similar to Dean's account, that the sense of 'we' must be interpreted as in process, one of the respondents describes her understanding of feminist solidarity as follows;

Feminist solidarity basically depends on establishing relations with others assuming that we all know about gender roles, that is assuming that feminists know about gender roles... It is an experience in common (R11).

To conclude, respondents' understanding of feminist solidarity is built explicitly upon commonality rather than difference. It is possible to say that the overall conceptualization and understanding of feminist solidarity matches mostly with hooks' account. Difference among women is hardly mentioned to be the source of feminist solidarity although respect for difference is mentioned by some. However, commonality, cohesion of experiences, similarities and most importantly common oppression lays the ground for feminist solidarity. Moreover, it is possible to differentiate conceptualizations' of women as 'solidarity' and 'feminist solidarity', the latter which is very much politicized.

4.1.2 Basis of Feminist Solidarity: Womanhood, Feminist Politics, Feminism...

After questioning what is understood from feminist solidarity, I tried to figure out what feminists needed to achieve solidarity. My intention while asking this question was to assure what is understood from feminist solidarity and how far women have associated feminist solidarity with feminist politics and theory. In general I also tried to investigate the resolution between identity politics and feminist politics and how far women were aware of the rather frequently raised need of

feminist activism that is feminist politics. Besides, I also tried to reveal the issue of commonality and difference in terms of feminist solidarity, which I consider it of primary importance in order to achieve sustained feminist solidarity.

In general the responses were quite developed and the issue of difference in terms of achieving feminist solidarity gained importance without disregarding commonalities. The importance of determining common goals in order to achieve feminist solidarity and difficulties about planning on common objectives is raised. Interestingly, only two of the respondents mentioned patriarchy which I believe should be the main issue for feminists to gather around.

It is possible to say that there are two main trends; one is more political and feminist in terms of its references, the other is more practical and mostly based on action. On the one hand, there is mainly emphasis on feminist politics and the need for questioning sexism internal in feminists' relations which is the main focus of hooks' account of feminist solidarity;

Patriarchy is present in all women's lives; either she is educated or not and rich or not... However, we don't experience it equally same. What is important is to build up connection between poor and uneducated women's and professional and educated women's experiences of oppression, also to see clear differences among women, even power struggles... Therefore this is solidarity; seeing your part in oppression of different women and becoming aware of experiences of common oppression (R3).

Again very much similar to hooks' account and her emphasis on questioning sexism implicit in relations among women, one of the respondents states;

I expect something deeper from feminist solidarity. I set apart feminist solidarity, because it is similar to fellow-travelling (*yol arkadaşlığı*) [...]. I am talking about helping her to realize masculine manner I see in her, mannish violence of her against her colleague or when she is not aware of discrimination in her family (R12).

Although their reference, which is questioning sexism, hierarchy and inequalities among women, is very much similar, some of the respondents' emphasis was more on praxis and that feminist solidarity needs to be built on activism.

This [feminist solidarity] is not something existent and accessible; instead solidarity is something that we need to create by acting together... And this requires facing up to oneself and each other (R3).

Reliance on being 'woman', emphasis on common oppression and 'women's common denominator' - a common statement among women in Turkey-, as should be remembered, criticized in previous sections, however, for some, specified as crucial for establishing solidarity. On the other hand for some, being feminist is essential. Furthermore, it is also stated that there is difference between establishing solidarity among people labeling themselves as feminists and establishing solidarity for a common goal among women. However, feminism forms the basis of feminist solidarity for most of the respondents. Feminism, as being *sine qua non* of solidarity and the bond among differences is stated as follows;

Being woman is insufficient for establishing solidarity. Because, women are differentiated among themselves; there are class differences, educational differences, ethnicity differences, cultural differences and so on. Therefore, being women guarantees nothing. But if there is feminism, there is solidarity despite differences (R6).

As aforementioned, accordingly with contemporary accounts of feminist solidarity, importance on difference has started to come into view. Although included expressions of disappointment due to disrespect to difference among women, some stated the importance of efforts to establish solidarity embracing diversity. Compatible with hooks' views and similar to Dean's emphasis difference is considered to be fostering an inclusive solidarity.

We could not talk about our real differences [...] We should start from talking, talking about our differences which will create inconceivable solidarity (R11).

Indirectly referring to illusionary homogeneity, uncritical acceptance of identity is criticized.

We have to presuppose these differences, differences of political views. In other words, it is not something simply to say that we are all women, we have common problems, solutions are common, and contrarily it is very much complicated than that [...] (R8).

The best answer to my question has given by one of the respondents which I believe summarizes the difficulty with conceptualization of feminist solidarity and the differentiation between feminist solidarity and women's solidarity.

[Women's solidarity] is directly related with conceptualization of 'personal is political'. [...] Therefore, women's solidarity for me first of

all starts with perceiving the idea that personal is political. It is crucial to ask whether we distinguish women's solidarity and feminist solidarity. This is a crucial distinction that we should think about. [...] Feminist solidarity is the politicized version of women's solidarity. Because, it is not possible to call every women's solidarity as feminist solidarity. [...] Is it women's solidarity? Or is it feminist solidarity? I can answer for both... I know it is a complicated concept which we have not portrayed enough, on which we have not mused on. While conceptualizing, some of us call it as women's solidarity, some, however, as feminist solidarity. Then, for some of us, in order to achieve solidarity we should be woman, however, for some of us we should be feminists. I think the concept is not politicized very much. Solidarity, conceptualized as women's solidarity, based on the subject 'woman' is more personal solidarity... I do not shift it; however, what is important for me is how much we are politicizing solidarity as women and how much we establish it on feminist basis... (R13)

To conclude there is still a need to rely more upon feminist politics and theory in order to achieve an inclusionary and feminist solidarity. Feminism to become the basis for activism, differences should be respected and then transformed into sources and potential for future possibilities of establishing solidarity.

4.1.3 Issues of Feminist Solidarity

Issues around which solidarity is established actually predicated the nature, scope and barriers to feminist solidarity. One of the main points this study was built on is the assumption that women could come together when it comes to common oppression and especially violence against women. Under this title, what is aimed at is trying to figure out main issues of solidarity practices and to understand why women come together especially around some issues easily whilst some issues

remain taboo even among women. It is also intended to understand why solidarity practices are dense in case of common oppression, coercion, and exploitation and rare for some other issues such as sexual rights, poverty, migration and so on.

The emphasis on commonalities, common oppression and common experiences is very prevalent among activist women. Ovadia puts it as, –and many others would do so-, ‘Widespread and systematic solidarity; the only mechanism to change women’s situation is exclusively possible through having in common with all women’¹. Unsurprisingly, none of the respondents disagreed with the view that common oppression is the underlying issue of feminist solidarity. In fact, most of the references given were about commonalities and oppression.

In my opinion, feminist solidarity becomes easier and more real when built on common problems and similar circumstances we experience. Actually, as I mentioned before, we don’t have a solidarity culture and political consciousness. However, the issue that solidarity sprouts most easily is common oppression (*R10*).

Furthermore, predictably, the primary issue of feminist solidarity, stated by respondents, has been violence against women.

Violence against women... has been a motive force and common ground for different women and different politics. At least, a common ground to talk to each other... It was not possible to achieve it for politics or employment (*R1*).

¹ Ovadia, 2008: 39.

In a similar way it has been stated;

It is impossible not to act in solidarity when it comes to violence against women. The simplest description for solidarity is available for violence against women (*R12*).

It would not be wrong to state that activist women in Turkey, have a potential to simply mobilize around issues easily identified, transparent, not contradicting with women's ideological preferences and common to most women's agendas. Along with the description above, violence against women becomes the intersecting agenda despite ideological, political and personal conflicts among women. However, some of the respondents also clarified that not 'violence against women' instead domestic violence or body politics are the main issues women can easily act jointly.

It becomes the bonding point because it makes, the common denominator of woman, most visible. Being women may not provide partnership for other violence categories. However, women from different ethnic group, country, all economic conditions and all social classes, experience domestic violence. At least statistics tell this; it is universal [...] (*R5*).

One of the main reasons of violence against women, to be the main issue of solidarity practices and discourses is because women themselves experience it. Therefore, women's political representation, participation of women in formal labor market and many others are not being the primary issue, since they are not the pressing need of the majority. However, establishing feminist solidarity on common experiences, oppression, common denominators turns out to be divisive, weakens solidarity practices and restricts its scope. Some of

the respondents also drew attention to the problem and were more critical about solidarity based on commonalities and sameness.

Firstly, I don't think that it is right to establish solidarity on commonalities [...]. For instance, 'womanhood common denominator' (kadınlık ortak paydası) is one of the unsafe issues within women's movement. [...] while underlying this, [discrimination on the basis of gender] I don't think a poor woman, professional woman, a woman living in a different region is oppressed in the same way or share the same commonality (R14).

The assumption that women will easily establish solidarity based on commonalities unfortunately, fails to explain differences among commonalities among women. It is also stated by some of the respondents that issues that women have in common such as honor crimes or headscarf is perceived, meant, voiced and experienced differently by women from different regions and different backgrounds. Thus, solidarity to be based on commonalities has potential risks;

First, setting out merely on commonalities, may prevent solidarity with people we don't intersect and generalizations, the so called commonalities, may result in overlooking differences [...] (R14).

And for some it is not easy to gather women only through commonalities;

There are many women trying to call into being by 'feeling with power', -in Perihan Mağden's term-, It is not possible to bunch these women and women who reject this [feeling with power] and women who really try to eliminate all contexts oppressing women only because they have a common interest (R2).

Briefly to say, the main point raised is that solidarity should not be solely based on commonalities but it should be strengthened through commonalities and respecting difference. This point actually reminds Mohanty's emphasis that the more we recognize differences and particularities, the more we acknowledge connections and commonalities. However, when it comes to praxis, it is domestic violence that women are ready to act in solidarity and hard to establish solidarity when differences are prominent and intense.

Furthermore, new fields and issues voiced among interviewees that they felt the need to establish solidarity were also notable and diverse. Some persistently stated that violence against women should be the focal point, some on the other hand stated several other issues such as sex work, poverty, economic violence against women, solidarity with young women.

For instance, we can't still manage to do it; oncoming young women to create fields for calling themselves into being. This is very much related with solidarity, because in order to open field we should know to make retreat. That is we need to establish solidarity with young women. But, we don't have time to spare, everything changes at high speed, we are dealing with 'very important' issues... etc. The reason may be diverse, however, there is something which is usual; we do not want to give the place (R8).

Most importantly political representation, women's political participation and relations among women in politics were also raised which I believe is primary importance in terms of establishing empowering solidarity among women.

For me, for instance, solidarity in politics is an unstudied field which is

very important. Similarly, solidarity for labor market and entrepreneurship are also unstudied. We do not set up the rules of solidarity for politics... We all have the opportunity to be represented but at the same time, we have the choice of politically exist in different ideologies or structures. We should bring together these two; while competing against others we should establish solidarity among women. But this is something requires alchemy and we could not yet find out a formula or glamour for (R4).

It is seen that still domestic violence is the main issue of solidarity practices among women. Violence against women that is the common issue on activists' agendas gathers women from diverse backgrounds with different ideological preferences. However, if sameness and commonalities become the motive for solidarity, the feminist character weakens and its scope is limited. Furthermore, differences then become obstacle to act together.

4.1.4 'Successful' Practices of Feminist Solidarity and Solidarity's 'Feminism'

It is worth to ask which solidarity practices women are considering as 'successful' in order to better comprehend their 'solidarity' perceptions. The main objective of this section is actually to identify women's solidarity practices and figure out how and why they consider them as 'successful'. Furthermore, given 'successful' solidarity practices will also shed valuable insight to what extent solidarity practices are 'feminist'.

It was surprising to come by very similar examples despite a diverse range of solidarity practices. The main concrete solidarity practices women raised as 'successful' have been Campaign Against Domestic Violence, Civil Code Reforms, activism around CEDAW, Turkish Penal Code Reforms, Novamed and DESA. Additionally, for some the most successful solidarity practice was solidarity established around issues of which they themselves are concerned with. Secondly, as if agreed upon criteria for success were very much similar among women.

While for some, success is related with the input, for others it is related with the output of the action; some refers solidarity practices' success to predetermined framework and predefined objectives while others to the outcome. However, for some, what is successful about solidarity practices is their capacity to gather a wide range of women with differences and for others the method used in achieving solidarity matters.

In general in order to refer to a solidarity practice as successful, it is important for women themselves to be involved in that action. Most of the interviewees gave successful examples in which they were mostly involved as individuals or as organizations they are a part of. In terms of achieving the predetermined objectives activism established around legal acquisition and especially Turkish Penal Code Reforms has been the outstanding example:

In Civil Code Reforms and Turkish Penal Code Reforms women with very different viewpoints, both from left and right wing could come together (*R15*).

For some the existence of women's movement itself meant success:

The existence of women's movement in Turkey is the success itself for me. Every action we undertook -partially or completely succeeded- indicates women's solidarity. Civil Code Reforms, removal of the clause regulating head of the household has been achieved with the struggle of thousands of women and have been actions we actualized through establishing solidarity effectively (R13).

Civil Code and Turkish Penal Code Reforms were also considered as successful due to women's capacity to gather differences, diverse sources and tools.

For me the campaigns that we consider as successful are Turkish Penal Code Reforms and Civil Code Reforms for which we as women all together took the floor (R5).

As aforementioned in the previous section, violence against women and mainly domestic violence has been the focal issue of solidarity practices. Not surprisingly, the examples given to successful solidarity practices also major on violence and women's struggle for violence against women.

Even though there are problems, I consider struggle for violence against women; nearly two decades of struggle as successful. In spite of its shortfalls, the outcomes of women's, women's organizations' struggle... should have been all the better. However, it is a field of resistance. Consequently, it is not about women's lack of involvement or performance, but increasing power of resistance. I consider this long period in itself as successful (R5).

Campaign for Novamed; a multinational company in Turkey producing blood products for dialysis, is also considered as successful. Its success again is associated with gathering different sources and

using diverse tools.

Solidarity for Novamed is political. It is a political solidarity of feminist women and women experiencing class and gender oppression. It has been successful from beginning to end (R10).

Strike of women working at Novamed and the support they received from women's organizations and feminists is considered to gather women under the issue of women's work after a long while.

Novamed has been an excellent trial and also challenge for women. We acted with solidarity with women of Novamed... We have women working at unions –although not in all of them-... Novamed was under the Petroleum Workers' Union, and we had a friend there... Novamed activism involved street demonstrations, raising funds, media and so on... (R9).

Women involved in 'Local Politics Working Group' –lasted nearly four years-, on the other hand stated that the solidarity established around the issue has been successful in terms of several points; involving large scale of women, having predetermined common objectives, 'trust' among women and other points given below:

Components of the group were amazing. We started with 3-5 women but then the group was broadened; from mayors to the head of Turkish Women's Union... However, there have been predetermined commonalities; we tried to identify problems of local politics. There was activism which is very important. If we come together around a table, we would ally to a certain extent... But, if you discuss at each stage of activism, you start to speak the same language; you transform your own language and consequently reach an agreement (R8).

If the relation of solidarity practices to feminism is questioned, it is observed that 'feminist' dimension of solidarity practices remain small

in scope, i.e. emphasis to feminism is insubstantial in solidarity practices and 'feminist' solidarity practices are more individual based experiences. Although there have been references to inputs and outputs, reference to feminism and feminist politics remains weak in women's solidarity practices. Indeed, solidarity practices uttered are far from feminist framework; instead they can be examples of 'women's solidarity' in terms of involving women not labeling themselves as feminists, not being predicated on feminism and so on. One of the main criteria for success mentioned by respondents is gathering diverse women together. However, although gathering diverse women together broadens activism and may turn out to be more effective in terms its outcomes, actually undermines solidarity practices' 'feminist' character and results in compromise from feminism. However, this does not mean that none of them is aware of this; instead some of them especially highlighted the need to differentiate feminist solidarity.

Violence is where we are most successful, where we are most successfully become visible. But, I think there is a turn for the worse in the field of struggle for violence against women. We have lost the difference between what feminists do and what United Nations or Hürriyet Newspaper does (R8).

Similarly one of the respondents stated,

We sometimes easily, as men's politics do, depreciate what men depreciate, discount what men discount... This is what I have been observing about many women and women's groups... Instead we should strengthen women's solidarity with feminist solidarity, we break with ties... Thus, what we have done is to support -consciously or unconsciously- the hegemonic discourse carried out on victimized women and serve to regenerate it (R13).

Some of the interviewees, as the grounds will be explained in detail in the following section, specifically stated that solidarity practices have been weakened in the last few years.

There had been an increasing solidarity until the end of 2004, that is, the end of Turkish Penal Code process. There had been feminist solidarity. However, now, the trend is reversed (*R16*).

As a final point the main criteria for success should be the commitment of solidarity practices to feminist politics and theory. Whether it is the input or output that determines success, it should take up its references from feminism. It was mentioned that feminist solidarity was not sufficiently politicized as a concept. Eventually, the respondents' answers to the most successful solidarity practices unsurprisingly were not satisfying enough in terms of their adherence to feminism.

4.2 SAMENESS AND DIFFERENCE IN TERMS OF FEMINIST SOLIDARITY

The discussion of sameness and difference in terms of feminist solidarity has been the most interesting and leading topic in this study. Issues such as sisterhood, limitations of discourse on sisterhood, solidarity of sameness and difference, limitations of solidarity based on sameness, difficulties of solidarity based on difference are elucidated in this section.

4.2.1 Sisterhood: Magic Wand to Bring Feminists Together?

Feminist sisterhood is only possible among women who trust each other and maintain sincerity since they rely on each other. If you have set out an objective, if you consciously take part in the activism, then it [sisterhood] is managing to stand side by side in the path aimed at (R5).

Discussion of sisterhood is considered to be important since it shapes or at least indicates what women build solidarity on. The notion was central to feminist activism during the early years, late 80s and early 90s in Turkey. Sisterhood as a notion was used as a 'means to unite women through an emphasis on common experiences, and a device to argue politically for the need to change society by promoting gender equality'². It was the testament to a shared common oppression, subordination and inequality. However, as explained in the second chapter as well in Turkey 'sisterhood' since 1990s, proved to be insufficient to bring feminists together over against differences. It has become confirmed part of the daily, practical discourse, but has not been strong enough to gather feminists, since sisterhood is basically built upon the commonality of shared oppression.

Before conducting the interviews, I expected that women would give more importance to sisterhood since the solidarity practices in Turkey are more based on commonalities and sameness. Sisterhood, as a frequently used concept among women, expected to mean more than it is in actual fact. However, most of the women interviewed had adverse

² Predelli, L.N., Perren, K., Halsaa, B., Thun, C. & Manful, E., 2008: 98.

thoughts, deep disappointment and comments about the notion and the ones with positive views were hesitant as well. Following passage from one of the interviewees in fact abridges the general discussion about sisterhood.

For me, the notion of 'sisterhood' is an affable call in general however; more often than not this call involves coerciveness. You may not position someone as if she is your sister with dense experiences. But, you don't need someone be on your side to act in solidarity... Your sister is someone coming from the same environment with same experiences. Therefore, when you want someone to be your sister, in a sense you ask her to 'get white'. But everyone who is getting white... may also come close to power relations (R11).

Feminist sisterhood, relying on hegemonic experiences, for most of the respondents is difficult to achieve. Moreover, it is difficult to claim that they believe in global sisterhood. However, for some still sisterhood is the reference to commonalities among women, the sameness shared by all.

Feminist sisterhood reminds me women's movement to meet at common denominators... however, women are not a homogeneous group. There are women from different classes, different ethnic roots and religious sects and from different political and philosophical beliefs... In this regard, it is difficult to achieve sisterhood but sisterhood can be achieved depending on women being the second sex and the oppressed side in terms of gender roles (R17).

As aforementioned, sisterhood, discounting inequalities among women when based exclusively on oppressive similarities among women, becomes vulnerable to failure and the following statement may well verbalize why it is difficult to establish sustained feminist solidarity.

Sisterhood, is the common voice of women against women's oppression, is the common objective, common politics and ideology. It

is politics special to women; it is the voice special to women. Otherwise, sisterhood is not Ayşe and Aliye to become sisters... which is singularizing... [Sisterhood] is about perceiving accurately the objective, settling the strategy, collectivizing what we are planning on and how we are going to do so. But everyone joins with her color and capacity. In this sense it is not singularizing (R4).

Recalling hooks emphasis about sisterhood, what needs to be done is assigning sisterhood's *true meaning* and *value*; transforming sisterhood as the source of concern for the collective. Although the above statement is an attempt to reformulate *sisterhood*, what is paradoxical about it is that it represents the ideal case, which Turkey's activism is far away. Nevertheless, practically it is not always that easy for women to join with their own 'colors' and 'capacity'. Obviously, nowadays in feminist activism, sisterhood implies monochrome and sameness far from respect for difference. Briefly to say, feminist sisterhood involves difference and respect for different colors, nonetheless, in reality, it may become a tool to conceal inequality and oppression and power relations among women. It may also be the expression of feminist politics and activism based on similarities. And this in fact, reveals why women – especially the ones involved in 80s activism- generally are disappointed about the notion. Sisterhood is mainly criticized due to not being practicable and because it embraces prejudices.

I know most of the women who were the feminists at 80s, like me, are experiencing a period in which they say that 'sisterhood had been a story'... In 90s for instance... there is the illusion of sisterhood and then there is the period of collapse when you say that 'the sisterhood staff is not real'. And then the period in which everyone went on individual ways... feminist movement organized through campaigns, temporary structures... You set out for something, then it comes true, then you set out for something else, it comes true and you fall apart... (R4).

It is worth remembering Dean's account of solidarity in which solidarity is a relationship achievable only if based on dialogue, interaction, and questioning of opposition and diversity. It has to be consciously constructed on 'communicative engagement'. Some of the interviewees, although level criticism at 'sisterhood', mentioned both establishing sisterhood and feminist solidarity required an ongoing process; both sisterhood and feminist solidarity has to be constructed and reconstructed.

For me, feminist solidarity and sisterhood are things to be constructed. This is an objective, an ideal, it is not something existing, not something presented in our biology, genes or estrogen hormone. If we do it, we do it, if we don't, we don't... Becoming collective public subjects in order to change the life is not easy. Continuous questioning, continuous argumentation, establishing continuous politics dealing with the objective... These are the things that feminist politics will establish (R2).

It is also questioned how and why sisterhood has been changed in Turkey since 80s and how the idea of feminist sisterhood has functioned in the past and present. Sisterhood marking out for a future inspired with hope and 'feminism' turned into a disappointing experience and vision. Comprehending the reasons for changing expectations and understandings of the notion towards a negative attitude would also light the way for achieving feminist solidarity.

The thing about our time is difference... At the same time, we are fragmented. Formerly, it was more holistic; you explicitly knew what you opposed. Because, what you opposed was highly visible, such as violence. Recently, many things became visible, but, not to everyone and not in the same way. This is the problem (R18).

For some sisterhood has weakened in meaning and value today;

Actually, sisterhood was then [80s] more powerful, i.e. things are more powerful when first arise. The sisterhood was more powerful and more sincere then. Now, I sometimes think that sisterhood discourse at the moment is tenuous and based on memorization. It has weakened in terms of its meaning (R15).

It is a fact, sisterhood, the all-embracing and powerful myth of feminists' neglected, ignored or hardly ever discussed difference and inequalities among feminists. The reasons raised by women are diverse; for some it should be searched outside the assumption of feminist sisterhood.

...sisterhood has been spoken about the main principle of feminism in Turkey; partially realized, partially unrealized. And now there are other criteria of being feminist other than adopting the value of sisterhood... The criteria has become 'doing job'. The criteria for being feminist today, doing as much as possible job on feminist politics' agenda (R2).

The issue of 'doing job' within feminist activism has revealed the hierarchical and unequal relations among feminists and in such an environment, 'difference' among women and between women's experiences of communality of shared oppression has turned out to be divisive. Furthermore, the practice of holding power through diverse basis such as age, knowledge, experience and so forth regrettably brought about women's will to power against women.

At the late 80s, there was a perception of sisterhood based on disregarding differences. Now, sisterhood is tried to found on- but not achieved- fetishized differences. Transformation has positive effects; global sisterhood may sometimes result in women arrive at essentialism. However, the real reason for sisterhood to cease to exist is not the inclination to fix differences; it is professionalization of feminist

politics and functioning as service providing. That is NGOization (R10).

Professionalization of feminist politics, project-based activism, hierarchical feminist organizations or the “NGOization” of feminist activism, involving contractual relationships with funding bodies, as will be discussed in further sections, became the most voiced problematic issues of feminist activism. Through with the integration of the Internet into activism and as a result weakening face to face relations, group identities are deepened. All feminists of 80s were in a sense in the same pot and the number of feminist groups was very limited. But now, the number has incredibly increased and continues to do so and this makes both ‘sisterhood’ and feminist solidarity unattainable. If we could recognize our differences, the numbers would then be prosperity. Unfortunately, today, differences result in fragmentation of the movement, weakening of the power and feminist solidarity to go out of being an attainable objective.

4.2.2 Solidarity of Sameness or Difference?

“Janet Jakobsen has observed that feminist movements have always been characterized by diversity and difference, but the reason for the repeated failure of alliance politics has been ‘a disarticulation of diversity from complexity’”.

Nima Naghibi³

³ Naghibi, 2007: 75.

While conceptualizing feminist solidarity, it is crucial to keep solidarity and feminist solidarity separately. As stated before feminist solidarity is a more politicized concept and aims at profound change. Feminism supposes differences –without absolutizing them– among women and one of the basic principles to achieve feminist solidarity is not to fix identities, because fixing identities, fixes oppression and legitimizes making politics on oppression. Furthermore, it is not reasonable trying to ground feminist solidarity solely either on commonalities or differences. It is irrational to always expect common issues to gather women or differences to be a source of dynamism and solidarity.

It would also be meaningful to evidence how women construe ‘differences’. Differences may sometimes be discourses, classes, past experiences, knowledge about movement, efforts, sometimes may be political views, regional and cultural differences, ethnic origins, sexuality and difference in age. Although during the interviews some of the respondents emphasized the importance of differences among women in terms of establishing solidarity, it is observed that majority of them attribute differences as obstacles in terms of solidarity practices. Some consider women should ‘get over’ differences whereas some on the other hand are hopeless since they consider differences among women are too deep to associate.

Differences in Turkey are deepened and overstated. To be a Kurd woman turned into a privilege. To be an Armenian woman or an Alevi woman [...] We do not cogitate for disabled women as we do it for Kurd women. But we are mistaken; we place her not for being woman but for being a Kurd woman, the other for being an Armenian woman. Then our differences are deepened; we feel happy of being different, we perceive differences as privileges (R15).

However, for some transforming differences among women into means for solidarity depends on how far feminism is internalized in the struggle. Once more, NGOization, impacts of projects and funds on activism is raised and it is emphasized that activism is under the influence of political currents more than feminism. One of the respondents puts forth it as:

“If I were not a feminist, I might not prefer to use my advantages to empower women and would rather prefer individual empowerment.”
(R6)

In addition sometimes differences may turn out to be isolation among women.

It may be possible in theory; we can get closer as far as our differences may become prosperity. If our differences are decomposing us we get isolated. It is necessary to establish empathy with the ‘other’ and to know ‘other’s political aura (R19).

Some of the respondents mentioned ‘Women’s Shelters Assembly’, which has been organized by women’s organizations every year since 1998, as the most concrete output of activism despite its problems. Women’s Shelters Assembly, with its agenda focusing on women’s shelters and elimination of violence against women has created a field in which women could relate with each other. One of the most important experiences of activism, Assembly –hosted by different women’s organizations each year- has been organized for 11 years with the strong will of women and has been instructive for further solidarity practices.

It is not realistic to be together all the time and to act with the same

reflexes. We cannot achieve it. However, at least we can convert it into a reflex to act jointly at some points [...] Otherwise we become estranged to each other. Therefore, women's assembly is very important (R6).

During the course of the research it is also questioned if there is a statement/slogan similar to / instead of sisterhood for feminists' coexistence despite differences at the present time. Interestingly some of the respondents stated being feminists despite differences resembled being *fellow travelers*. However, even being fellow travelers assumes a joint action based on commonality or similarity; sharing the same path. Therefore it is possible to state that it is quite difficult for women to get rid of already internalized differences and inequalities based on differences among them. Briefly to express, I argue that feminist solidarity is only possible if our statement / motto / path is 'feminism' despite our differences.

4.3. MEANS OF FEMINIST SOLIDARITY

This section aims at investigating feminist methods used today while establishing solidarity and women's need to strengthen the possibility of forming feminist solidarity. In the first part 'consciousness raising' as a feminist method and its role in feminist organizing and solidarity will be discussed. Furthermore, other methods used for organizing, preferences of methods used, contemporary methods used and the role of consciousness raising at our present day will be questioned.

4.3.1 Consciousness Raising as a Feminist Method

[...] in a political culture dominated by divisions between "organizers" and "organized" and between "leaders" and "followers," its [consciousness raising] stress on the value of each woman's experience and knowledge serves to build nonhierarchical and transformative spaces for thinking about and acting upon one's own and each other's different situations.

Cricket Keating⁴

Feminist activism's efforts for getting familiarized with feminism, introducing feminism and transforming itself since 1990s broadened and aimed at transforming others. It is possible to define the period until the 1990s as raising consciousness and awareness and drawing attention to feminists' demands, putting feminism on the map and making feminist activism more and more visible whereas afterwards women aimed at more concrete results such as affecting policies and changing and improving legal arrangements for women. Consciousness raising –unique organizational basis for early activism- played a key part in feminist organizing in Turkey during the 1980s –although experienced by a small group of women- which is however replaced with various means after the 1990s and lost ground or discounted by activist women. It is observed that consciousness raising as a feminist tool meant more to women involved in 80s activism, who have been actively participated to consciousness raising groups of the time.

⁴ Keating, 2005: 91.

Consciousness raising was basically, a tool to develop collective political action, which has been crucial for the basis for feminist solidarity. For instance, Stella Ovadia who actively participated in consciousness raising groups recalls that she has become a feminist by exploring herself being a woman⁵. Almost all of the respondents were of the same opinion that consciousness raising as a method and consciousness raising groups as a means were very much productive for feminist organizing.

For feminist solidarity there needs to be refraction at some point. First of all, an individual refraction is needed. However, it is difficult for women to achieve this self-refraction individually. This surely needs to be done jointly with dialogue. This is what consciousness raising means to me (R18).

Similarly for some of the respondents, consciousness raising is the process of becoming a feminist, a method to know oneself, to face oneself.

Consciousness raising is a sort of adventure shared with friends through our inner voyage. Calling out, discussing with, evaluating, may be the adventure of seeing oneself from without (R9).

Trust is mentioned to be the *sine qua non* of consciousness raising groups. While sharing experiences in terms of women's oppression, it is directly or indirectly mentioned by most of the respondents that trust is a must for facing up to oneself or others.

The trust developed during [consciousness raising groups] helps

⁵ Ovadia, 2009, Amargi Sayı.11 s.39.

women abate their touchiness. Of course you may take huff at, but it is important to know what 'undressing' means, how empowering it is while you are feeling so fragile, to know that 'touchiness' may also be empowering... However, this is only learnt through experience; you are not that afraid of undressing yourself (R8).

Besides, being in a 'voyage' for becoming a 'woman' and a 'feminist', consciousness raising for feminists, materialized through consciousness raising groups, were crucial for feminist organizing in terms of providing 'space for women to explore their sexism'⁶.

Feminists grow with consciousness raising. You capture yourself, your language in the group; talking about yourself. You cannot be 'us' without understanding yourself; your weaknesses and deficiencies and without noticing your mistakes (R15).

On the other hand for some –paying importance on similarities- it is a voyage for discovering how alike women and their demands are;

We may not meet with each other in our ordinary lives while the system is pushing us to different paths. This is a real threat. We should not make politics on theoretical level. We can find out how similar we are only if we come together or if we carry on controversies with each other and negotiate (R1).

What feminists experienced within consciousness raising groups is also similar;

It is a converting process. That is, consciousness raising groups are very instructive, for everyone it is an experience of no return with many advantages (R8).

⁶ hooks, 1997: 489.

Consciousness raising as a feminist tool ensures close contact between, lived experiences and female subordination, i.e. feminist activism and theory. It is the *identification* and *naming* of female subordination. According to Antrobus, it is the link between one's own experiences with others' experiences; a linkage between one's oppression with deeper understanding of other forms of oppression women faces⁷, i.e. it is the most important tool for achieving feminist solidarity.

Consciousness raising groups of the 1980s have created a field in which women experienced disciplining for making politics in collaboration. However, consciousness raising group, as a feminist tool, was replaced with other tools in time and even though consciousness raising as a concept is used in today's activism it has altered in context. During the interviews it is mentioned that consciousness raising changed along with changing priorities, needs for discussion, nature and the content of the discussions and necessities.

Code of activism; being involved in consciousness raising groups lost its importance in time due to several reasons. Being involved in consciousness raising groups meant a step forward into activism and feminism. However, through aging of activism -women involved either did not replaced with new generations or the integration of younger feminists into activism has been harder than expected- the need for consciousness raising groups decreased or the 'heritage' of consciousness raising could not be passed on.

⁷ Antrobus, 2004: 110.

Secondly, activism of the 1980s had a more condensed agenda and could focus on issues more specifically since it was mainly run by a small group of activists. However, today; women's agenda is disjointed and shifts very quickly. Besides, different groups have different priorities and different agendas. Making progress in activism shifts the importance from consciousness raising to action itself. Yet, this does not mean that consciousness raising groups have ceased, instead some of the women's groups still carry on activities under the name of 'consciousness raising', although mostly changed in nature and content. For instance KAMER's 'consciousness raising group practices' or Amargi Feminist Academy's –a feminist organization in İstanbul-regular reading sessions –although not directly called as consciousness raising- are in a way consciousness raising practices.

Furthermore, it is mentioned that both time and trust –ferment of consciousness raising groups - are main concerns of today's activism and in such an environment – feminist activism being professionalized and NGOinized-, being involved in a consciousness raising group is an extreme case.

Nothing remains same. As a movement we are in a dynamic environment and we have to improve our tools, methods accordingly. At the moment, we are not able to create a platform in which we can speak everything clearly. We cannot talk about feminist politics. We are struggling against violence however; we cannot talk about questioning our own internalized violence (R14).

Besides, in time consciousness raising groups turned out to be spaces for women –considered to be- similar to each other relying on the

assumption that women had commonalities and this at the end shifted differences and inequalities among women instead engendering feminist solidarity. Consequently, consciousness raising groups emphasizing the group dynamics are either replaced by or given its place to other tools such as trainings, group studies, seminars and most critically to project based activities mostly with adverse effects.

4.3.2 Alternative Means for Feminist Solidarity

Feminist activism, mainly through institutionalization, compartmentalized in time and through funds and sponsorship project based activities became widespread. NGOization of activism –as will be discussed in the following chapter- although, expanded the political discourse of activism and broadened it, project based activities –both the reason and outcome of NGOization- demerged women’s groups, diversified their strategies and weakened personal ties and solidarity practices as a consequence.

They are [consciousness raising groups] replaced with projects, rushing and tracing the agenda. Violence against women became more visible. Each day an event broke out and we prepared a press statement. We followed the agenda. Projects take time. You rush to finalize projects confining yourself in a room (R15).

One of the outcomes of project based activities has been trainings with time and content limitations. Trainings although have been instructive and useful for women individually, carried hierarchy among women and women’s organizations with it and weakened collective political

action. 'Feminist' projects pave the way for trainings as the most 'feasible' means for organizing. Emphasis on women's trainings embraces women's empowerment through knowledge, is nourished from modernization and development theories. This emphasis which feminists of 1980s definitely objected returned back with project based activities. In addition dependency on external sources became a current issue causing disagreements among women. Feminism losing its position against dominant ideologies has also lost its connective power. Trainings laid the groundwork for hierarchy among women. The knowledge being shared during the trainings is used as a tool for power and status⁸.

We have to spare at least some time for each other and for ourselves instead of rushing from one place to another, making press statements, etc. Roughness then becomes impossible. That is, it becomes difficult to mistreat any woman you meet, when you comprehend someone holistically –that is a benefit of consciousness raising- with her story (R8).

Campaigns and street activism is mentioned to be the most practical means in terms of achieving their purpose as planned. Especially, campaigns have been unifying women's organizations around a common issue which otherwise would not come together. Feminist activism's experiences of campaigns date back to 1980s. As briefly mentioned in the second chapter, activism flourished with very courageous campaigns which at the end lay the ground for legitimization of feminism and put activists' demands on the agenda.

Women's movement, starting with Campaign against Domestic

⁸ Üstündağ, 2006: 23-24.

Violence out bursting into streets in 1980s was radical and street activism. However, what happened is institutionalization in 1990s; establishment of women's centers at universities, Library of Women's Works, that is drawing back from streets; more academic and institutional, on the other hand project feminism cropping up. [Activism] both demerged from streets and radicalism in a way (R3).

During the course of the interviews, there was an emphasis on the importance of street activism in terms of its capacity to attract the interest of women out of activism and make feminism more visible and legitimate. It is mentioned that the success of other means used within feminist activism such as campaigns and platforms depends on street activism.

It is possible to say that feminist movement gives importance to street politics – more than many other movements – Because, everybody walking in the streets may not be socialist, but most of them are women. Therefore, being at the streets is more significant for feminist movement (R11).

With the expression of Şirin Tekeli, 'functional platforms' offer an alternative model which are necessarily 'unsteady, flexible, enlarging and dwindling away accordingly with the varying needs and open to renewal' organizations deepening solidarity and cooperation among women's organizations⁹. However, depending on my personal experiences as a woman being directly involved in *Ankara TPC (Turkish Penal Code) Women's Platform*, I can hardly say that it was open to renewal and engender solidarity among women and women's organizations. Although it is another subject matter of a separate study, activism around Turkish Penal Code in Ankara has frustrated efforts of

⁹ Tekeli, 2005: 61.

many individual women in Ankara and resulted in break of relations. Nevertheless, in order to thoroughly understand and achieve solidarity practices of our day, platforms as a very common means of organizing offer a new field of research.

Likewise, platforms are both mentioned to be both necessary and useless during the interviews. Platforms thought to be practical organizing however, temporary, established around a common target and terminated either trough achieving your target or being unsuccessful.

Platforms are useful if you abstract them in a good way. I mean, the means itself cannot be good or bad. The issue is how you apply it... Platforms –mainly an outcome of opposing movements – offer horizontal relations. One of the main characteristics of a platform is gathering different organizations on an equal footing. If one dominates others than this is malfunctioning (R2).

Some of the respondents accepting the difficulty of establishing deeper feminist solidarity with all challenges to activism and barriers to solidarity practices, state that platforms in a very much complicated environment are relatively practical means. Platforms are mentioned to decrease the risk of assimilation of differences. Similarly one of the respondents states,

Platforms in a qualified sense, are means gathering women from different backgrounds; enabling women to see and listen to each other and meet. They may be a power while achieving women's aims (R14).

However, as pointed out in second chapter, campaigns and platforms are instrumental and bring about *tactical solidarity* in Dean's term but they do not enable broad-based, sustainable and lasting feminist solidarity. On the other hand, it is also mentioned that when platforms are formed on the basis of organizational representation, most of the time, they are of no avail. When activists stand out with their political and individual identities not only in platforms but also in any other form of organizing, it turns out to be a deadlock.

[Platforms] become the center of conflict for organizations. That is, what makes platforms functional is being formed by independent initiatives and persons with no attributions (R1).

Although not new for feminist activism, platforms- mentioned to be useful for ad-hoc solidarity practices - are difficult to sustain as in the case of issue based platforms of recent years, established for Penal Code Reforms, constitutional amendment, peace, etc. Disappointing experiences with platforms - even though they enable organizations to develop collective action- display how individual participation as a feminist means is important for activism and establishing solidarity.

Women's Platform for Lasting Peace for instance, which I followed up closely although not participated individually [...]. Eventually, nothing happened. However, it has been a transformative experience for women actively took part. It was fantastic; there were Kurdish women and lesbian women and they recognized each other. This is what I mean; if there were enabling grounds everything may be easier. But this is not the case always. For instance the Executive Committee for CEDAW-Turkey -as a platform- is the exact opposite case; women hate each other. It is felt into two groups; disassociated groups hate each other, because none of the groups called of defensiveness. They carried on with their individual and political identities (R8).

For some of the respondents, irrespective of the means used for organizing, the upmost important thing is to organize feminist voice.

Presently, we have a 'principle' problem. We could not develop common principles. This is one of the main barriers for feminist solidarity. We need common principles to act together (*R7*).

In this sense, in spite of the alternative means or new means used within feminist activism, need and nostalgia for consciousness raising groups –especially among 80s activists - is remarkable due to its power to offer possibilities of collective political action, to unite feminist voice across multiple lines of difference and pave the way for feminist solidarity.

CHAPTER 5

BETWEEN WAY OUT AND DEADLOCK: THE PRESENT AND FUTURE OF FEMINIST ACTIVISM AND SOLIDARITY

5.1. CHALLENGES TO FEMINIST ACTIVISM

The interviews were dominated by challenges to feminist activism. Respondents have mentioned many challenges to activism; the most recursive of which are division based on the politics of identity, escalation / strengthening of neoliberal trends, NGOization, the retreat of the state, depoliticization of activism, fragmentation and professionalization of feminist activism.

First of all, feminism has transformed into a professional politics in Turkey; project based activities with 1990s, funds, NGOization, NGOs settling in our activism. We came to an end where we don't stir an eyelid for our own struggle without receiving a project ... (R10)

Feminists' first formal disassociation is experienced through organizations established in late 1980s and early 1990s. Some of the feminist activists of 1980s, after dense discussions, preferred to establish organizations, durable and welcoming women with similar views, preferences and priorities. 1990s have witnessed an outbreak of women's organizations and the number of organizations has multiplied and activism has experienced a remarkable transformation. The only alternative of the 1980s that is streets gathering women has been

replaced by organizations in a sense disintegrating activism into small pieces.

Doubtless we are booming and consequently experiencing problems. There is also lack of knowledge about how to make politics, disorganization of structures and rapid expansion (*R1*).

Institutionalization of women's movement brought about the issue of institutional sustainability which also led to hierarchies, divisions and power imbalances within and among feminists and their organizations and institution building thus 'channeled demands for autonomy into generating power from civil society'.¹ Seeking solutions for institutional sustainability -as the leading issue of most of the organizations- directed organizations to external funds which eventually gave rise to compartmentalization and professionalization of activism. In exchange of funds accountability, professionalization and institutional sustainability are demanded from women's organizations. Moreover, the only possible way to sustain an organization through funds meant 'projecting' your aims, relations and your agenda.

Even though funds and along with project based activities have been instrumental for women to move their concerns into the political arena, they have also eroded relations among women which in due course weakened the possibility of strengthening feminist character of activism and consequently wiped away the ground for feminist solidarity². Instead of engendering cooperation and solidarity, funds have resulted

¹ Arat, 1997: 106.

² Markowitz and Tice, 2002.

mainly in competition among organizations³. Project based activism, most often referred to as 'project feminism' focusing on women's and women's organizations' everyday issues resulted in ignorance of feminism's strategic issues. Project feminism has also resulted in difficulties in communication, drawing apart from the grassroots, weakening of volunteerism and bureaucratization of activism⁴.

The mainstream political agenda and the attitude of the state towards feminist activism also contributed to fragmentation;

The main issues separating feminist movement in Turkey are chronicle problems of Turkey. These problems split the movement. We quarrel for laicism, headscarf, Turkishness, Kurdishness. We quarrel for whether we have slain Armenians or not (*R15*).

Feminism recommends questioning of power. Some of the respondents while discussing the challenges to feminist activism emphasized that feminists will be able to establish empowering solidarity only if they develop alternatives to patriarchal means. Otherwise there is always the threat of manipulation of activism by power.

Men and state prevents our solidarity and splits us. State does this in a way; indicates women's organizations close to itself and works with them. This means discrimination with the one chosen and the others. We as women and as individual woman are separated due to. Differences among us are also source of separation [...] what is important is to be aware of our differences and inequalities among us. The one in more advantageous situation should use those advantages for empowerment [...] (*R6*).

³ Herzorg, 2008.

⁴ Arat K. Z. F., 2006: 30-31.

Politics of identity and political orientations are also challenges to activism. Today, one of the main fault lines for activism is ideological conflicts among women. Especially the division between Kemalist women and feminists is outstanding.

Kemalist women, political formations, political discrepancies are very much reflected in activism. These focuses of conflicts are headscarf issue, Kurds, war in Iraq, etc. (R6).

Similarly, ethnic origins are also a matter of conflict for activism. When coincided with political identity and religious orientations the outcome becomes even an obstruction.

Are you identifying yourself first as a Kurdish woman or first as a Kurd and then woman or first as a woman and then as a Kurd? The order of the words is very important. Feminist movement has to be the movement of one identifying themselves first as a woman. However, Kurds, Islam, Kemalists and others should be integrated into the movement afterwards (R18).

It would not be inappropriate to state that there is a threefold line in activism today; feminists – involving further separations-, Kemalist women and activist women with religious orientation. From time to time, these women come up against and rarely come to a mutual understanding especially the conflicts of both lines with Kemalist women is remarkable. It has been stated that Kemalist activist women are content with what they are and have been insensitive to other political views and intolerant to differences among women.

Kemalist section is very much problematic; one of the main challenges to women's movement. Kemalist section is very much conservative; conservative to everything... These are things we should face and talk. But we don't. We cannot be 'us' without being 'me'. This is very

important (R15).

Absolutizing ideological stances has been and continues to be challenging for feminist activism. One of the respondents states how difficult it is to gather these three or more lines and establish solidarity practices.

There are many many issues splitting feminist movement. There is a group calling themselves as 'Islamist feminist', another calling 'Muslim women' or there is a group phrased as 'soft water' feminists. Islamist feminists but there are women like X communicating with all. It is very much diversified; there are differences even among the groups. However, what splits women's movement is Kemalists [...]. Others [besides 'Kemalists'] women carry on their relation with women's movement through rarely using symbols. But, Kemalists [...] will never make a concession. They have walls, even castles [...] we can only come together for very extreme cases such as Üzmez's case⁵, cases of violence (R12).

Especially with 2000s, dissolution of state-within-a-state and with the opening out of accession to European Union, reforming relations between military and politics has created a critical line. That is, Kemalist women rapidly moved to an ultra nationalist wing and their discourses also shifted away from women's rights and became the advocates of state which resulted in a breaking with feminists. As one of the respondents emphasizes, the outcome for feminist activism was losing one of its critical components.

⁵ Hüseyin Üzmez, 76 year old, journalist in Vakit Daily Newspaper, is under arrest for sexually abusing a 14 year old girl in Bursa. In his case the first forensic report has suggested that the girl was physically and psychologically unharmed however, after a while a new forensic report prepared by the sixth board was published saying that the sexual abuse caused the girl's psychological health to deteriorate. He was released earlier following the previous forensic report, now under arrest and his trial continues.

Feminism is based on this; modernist and western Republican political context. Activism is devoid of this and the support received is rapidly withdrawn. Feminists and Kemalists started to seek for new political alliances; that are Islamists and Kurds and there appeared new ties. What I call as post-Soviet politics or identity politics has very negative results for feminists yet time to time it provided an expansion for feminists; feminists started to stand on their own (R2).

Difficulties with drawing up agenda are also mentioned by many. In the light of NGOization and project based activities, feminists' will and power to set the agenda has also declined which I believe is very much weakening feminism's political integrity and indirectly stands as a barrier to feminist solidarity. It has been stated as 'drifting with rapid and dense agendas' by one of the respondents.

The issue about funds is whose priority and whose agenda... This is the main problem. Is it governance what we are trying to achieve, or is it gender-mainstreaming on our agenda, is it violence against women and who will decide. These are crucial (R8).

It is also mentioned by many that feminists need to come together and focus on feminist objectives and methods, discuss how to make feminist politics. Ties between activism and theory are seen as weak and it is mentioned that they need to be improved. Similarly one of the respondents stated;

Women have to determine the agenda, however, what we are doing is chasing after the agenda. The agenda is set up by patriarchal system and by men and women go after it. Women need to be able to create their own agenda (R17).

Ecevit, states "Our feminisms weaken as we diverge from feminist theory's guidance; we ignore our most needful instrument to produce

feminist politics”⁶. Feminist theory is in continuous production. However, what should we question here is the link between praxis and theory. Diverging from feminist politics instead is the principal concern of this study while trying to achieve feminist solidarity. Flying Broom, on 22nd of January, 2006 organized a meeting titled “Women Movement, Feminism and Our Future” with the participation of feminist activists and academicians. Sündüz Haşar’s - one of the participants of the above mentioned meeting- statement was impressively describing activism’s situation;

It was feminist ideology we nourished. We receded from feminist ideology. We could not identify our differences. We evolved and expanded, however, we were fascinated with our ‘successes’. We reproduced feminist sources due we needed it. Now, we do not feel the need to feminism!!! (R7)

Challenges to feminist activism raised by the respondents are crucial to better comprehend activism in Turkey however, they are not enough alone to explain why it is so difficult to come together despite differences and respect for each other diverse experiences. Therefore, it is important to realize the impacts of those challenges mentioned to establishing feminist solidarity.

⁶ Ecevit, 2007: 17.

⁷ Notes of a meeting organized by Flying Broom –a women’s organization in Ankara- http://www.ucansupurge.org/arsiv/www.ucansupurge.org/indexba4b.html?option=com_content&task=view&id=2804&Itemid=77; accessed 5th of June, 2009.

5.2. BARRIERS TO FEMINIST SOLIDARITY

While trying to understand perceptions of feminist solidarity, problems with establishing feminist solidarity are also raised and this section aims to make an explanation to obstacles to establishing growth-enhancing relations and solidarity among feminists. This section –very much related with the previous sections’ discussions- will try to highlight the difficulties of establishing feminist solidarity depending on the challenges that feminist activism faces.

The list of issues raised by women is a long one and includes using patriarchal tools such as media, province based activism centered in mainly Istanbul or Ankara, lack of platforms to talk about feminism, lack of resources and resource sharing, flashing agenda and depending on this discontinuity and dismissal of proceedings, lack of publicity and visibility, lack of voluntariness, having different priorities and most importantly not having feminism-centered activism and most importantly holding power within activism.

During the interviews, it is emphasized that having difficulties in terms of arriving at a compromise among feminists is not the main problem. Instead, it was “not being open to communication”⁸. The main issue with this problem is not the outcome, in fact, the way you try not to come to a compromise which is actually not communicating with each

⁸ R11.

other, without even trying to talk with each other. Lack of strengthening communication networks among feminists has been the outstanding reason for lack of organized and systematic solidarity. However, as discussed in the previous section, the reason for not having strengthening communication networks are diverse and involves institutionalization, NGOization, fragmentation, issue-based and temporary agendas, segregation based on politics of identity, age etc.

It has been stated that NGOization and professionalization of feminist activism has weakened volunteerism. Especially, young women's perceptions about feminism and activism have to be further investigated. Since, the field of activism – paid, with shifts, and where CV is the key of entrance - now provides an adventurous carrier for younger people. Besides activism's single issue focus has a weakening effect on feminist solidarity. The field of activism, unfortunately, has been splitted up into smaller components; each organization is the 'professional' of a component or has the right to speak in 'its' field. Relations are hardly established on establishing solidarity; rather competitiveness and conflicts determines the relations among activists and we have many leading cases.

As previously stated politics of identity, political orientations, ethnic origins, religious views are all reasons for fragmentation of activism. However, what prevents feminist from establishing solidarity is not their differences, instead impatience to differences and polyphony.

Although there are several efforts of establishing solidarity, at one point political views, ethnicity, etc. briefly differences among women hinder solidarity practices of activists.

Feminist theory must be the source of activism, and activists and activism need to be re-nourished with feminism. But, prejudiced or rather weak perceptions about feminism among activists unfortunately restrain solidarity practices. This is why theoretical discussion networks where perceptions of feminism can be overviewed and discussed among activists become a need.

It is feminist consciousness that bridges different situations of womanhood against the divisions on the basis of class, nationality, ethnic groups, ages, sexual orientations, race and etc. I can describe 'diverging from feminist theory's guidance' as ignoring the development of feminist consciousness, not adopting politics empowering women as a political subject, not being able to bridge housewife and sex worker and becoming blind to the whole with the drunkenness of individual achievements. I am not sure calling it as 'feminist theory' in an environment in which feminism is everywhere but weak in content. Still, feminist politics and feminist consciousness are very important (R10).

Referring to Ecevit's statement given in the previous section, one of the respondents answers as follows;

This is a very important evaluation. In fact, we always say differences, understanding our differences [...] But we have to see the red light; we lose theory when divided this much on the basis of our differences. Feminist theory is the only way to keep common ground of being woman. It is very important to understand and perceive our differences however how shall we provide commonality if we seclude all our differences. It is feminist theory that provides commonality and we need to claim it [...]. Where we are going to stand if each woman has her feminism and we have millions of feminisms (R5).

Diverging from feminist theory regrettably deepens the challenges of activism, estranges women from their 'collective' and 'political' struggle and shifts challenges from theoretical to individual basis.

We are not performing consciousness raising activities anymore [...]. Now organizations are established, several politics issues are produced but you lose your main objective, starting point after a while. You draw apart from both theory and your life, daily life after a while... For instance women used to file joint suit. Isn't it very radical? This is very important. We neglected such actions and besides we do not have consciousness raising anymore. Above and beyond, we do not discuss our conflicts and problems on a theoretical basis and on the basis of feminism. We have some clichés and we are contented with them (R7).

To conclude for this and previous section, it a long list of challenges and barriers to activism and solidarity, however, the main issue to be questioned among women should be the desire to hold power within the movement. Feminism needs to become activism's motto again. Otherwise, power struggles among women, in-group fighting, lack of consensus and lack of patience to differences will carry on preventing us from developing alternative prescriptions to feminist solidarity and establishing feminist solidarity.

5.3. FUTURE POSSIBILITIES OF FEMINIST ACTIVISM AND SOLIDARITY

The final section of this chapter aims at investigating future possibilities of feminist solidarity practices and shed light to feminist activism's future in Turkey depending on the comments and views of the respondents. Formulas offered by respondents to overcome the impasses and obstacles that feminist activism face will also be issued. It

is possible to classify the views on activism's future mainly as positive or negative. Most of the respondents –inspired with hope - mentioned that what is needed to be done before all else is to bring down the resistance to feminism within women's movement and the best solution is seen as conceptual discussions.

We have to define a common point about our perception of being 'feminist' and 'feminism'. Solidarity has to begin with this. You see women at different women's organizations doing and speaking 'feminist' things but they defense themselves as 'But, we are not feminists, we are never!' (R19).

Yuval Davis states 'all feminist politics should be viewed as a form of coalition politics in which the differences among women are recognized and given a voice, in and outside the political 'units' and the boundaries of this coalition should be set not in terms of 'who' we are but in terms of what we want to achieve'⁹. Similarly, it is mentioned by some of the respondents during the interviews that women have to shift other identities but feminist and acknowledge that differences are basis for feminist collective action and solidarity.

Sincerity ends when you describe yourself as Kurd or Kemalist. Because these things limit yourself. On the other hand, when you can describe yourself as a woman, then you become free, perceive things differently. This is how we can establish cooperation, but first it has to be secondary [other identities, belongings, etc.] Besides, as a woman when you become an actor you will change the definition of 'being Kurd' or many things will change when you question where you stand as a woman in Kemalism (R18).

⁹ Yuval-Davis, 1997: 126.

Dialogue and communication is recommended in order to achieve inclusive solidarity¹⁰. The need for dialogue – a very frequently used concept in contemporary activism- is also raised by some of the respondents. Besides, the next most cited solution has been action itself. Action is described as converting and it is recommended that women should make an effort to recognize and understand each other within activism.

I think that we should never mislay activism, because, activism also gathers us. I mean, how far we can come together by writing or drawing. We can only come together at weekends and touch each other. What I mean by street is all those platforms, women's assembly, etc. Means directly related with feminism. We need activism (R6).

In terms of means and methods used within activism, respondents stated that women's movement in Turkey has been and believed to be open to alternative and new organizational models and means used.

Women's movement finds out different organizational forms accordingly with the needs. I like the flexibility at organizing. This is an amorphous crowd. When you look at the organization structure of the women's movement you come up with all kinds of organization models, there are unstructured groups, companies, cooperatives, professional NGOs, associations and foundations, some are platforms and initiatives [...]. Even sometimes crackling and eliminations in terms of organizational models is experienced, women's movement has the potential to move on with renewals due strength in the field of communication (R1).

For some of the respondents diversification of activism is inevitable and this will carry on. However, some and especially one of the younger

¹⁰ Waller & Marcos, 2005 in Steans, 2007: 737.

feminists interviewed mentioned that the future will be more willing to welcome differences among women.

There will be many discrepancies. This time it's not going to be ethnicity or else, but age; feminist movement has created its generations. Young feminist will be more different [...]. There will be more and more divisions but there will be young feminists with new means. They were ['adults' as expressed by the respondent] polluted by the Left, injured. Young feminist with new minds... We were caught in the middle and this is what we suffer from. The next or the following generations will get clear of being in the middle and will be focused (R18).

The main concern about feminism's future is feminist activism losing its radicalism. Especially when compared with European countries' activism, it is stated that feminists in Turkey should be cautious about transforming from 'movement' into NGO based structure and losing its potential to evoke resistance and change. It is mentioned also that activism should maintain its repugnancy instead becoming integrated to the 'system'. The recipe offered again was strengthening the link between theory and practice. However, fallacy of designating a driving force in feminist solidarity approaches is also observed in respondents' answers. Although each respondent has the will to establish sustained, feminist solidarity, it was difficult to answer what should be the inspiration for gathering women and building alliances.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The issue of feminist solidarity –although partially- is tried to be handled within this study. Retaining the main question, that is the possibility of achieving broad-based, sustainable and *feminist* solidarity, women's conceptualization of the solidarity, their ability to forge solidarity across differences, solidarity practices, issues of solidarity, means used to establish solidarity, challenges to feminist activism and barriers to feminist solidarity and future possibilities of solidarity practices in Turkey are tried to be investigated. Furthermore, the study's focus was calling attention to establishing *solidarity* in order to overcome internal conflicts all embracing feminist activism in Turkey and personally coming up with explanations to the questions driving me off studying 'feminist solidarity'.

The research material of this study comprised 21 in-depth interviews with activists and feminists from different backgrounds, ages, political views and affiliations. It should be noted that the data used in this study is a cross section from a wider and deeper whole of lived experiences and may well be enhanced with further studies. However, what has been shared during the interviews has been illuminating and pioneering to accomplish this study which otherwise would be an unfinished effort due to the scarcity of inquiry, examination or

literature on the issue of solidarity within feminist activism in Turkey. Nevertheless, considering the objective of the study, further studies on a broader scale is a must.

In the course of this study, accounts of feminist solidarity are moderately explored and their relevance with activism is interrogated. Basically, accounts of feminist solidarity both basing solidarity solely on similarities and solidarity valuing difference are discussed. The notion of sisterhood and sisterhood solidarity –solidarity based on commonalities – is criticized due its nature obscuring the possibility of establishing feminist solidarity in a diversified activism and covering up the very possibility of a variety of forms of domination and inequality among women. Afterwards, alternative accounts of bell hooks, Jodi Dean and Chandra Mohanty are presented and compared with each other along with Reagon's and Bartky's suggestions.

Sisterhood as a slogan and solidarity practices based on a similar perception; meeting under the commonality of shared oppression unfortunately has been defective in establishing sustainable, broad based feminist solidarity. Relations based on sisterhood disregarding diversity based either on class, race, ethnicity, political orientations and so on had similar consequences in Turkey i.e. commonality of shared oppression turned out to be divisive in solidarity practices and sisterhood felt short in sustaining feminist solidarity.

It has been criticized that uncritical acceptance of identity and taking identities as the organizing principle of activism hinders the possibility of establishing *feminist* solidarity. Identity politics is criticized of ostracizing differences among women and seducing the unlikeness. The main criticism in terms of feminist activism in Turkey focuses on the assumption of *womanhood as the common denominator* of activism which is also a frequently used slogan. This actually constrains our perception of feminism and obliges being woman as the prerequisite of solidarity. On the contrary in order to achieve an inclusionary feminist solidarity, what we ought to take as common denominator is feminism itself.

Solidarity may turn into power of those who pledge to act together to fight the relations of subordination and it is possible to come up with corresponding cases in Turkey. However, it would not be wrong to claim that solidarity practices are barely engendering long lasting relations and ongoing commitment. Feminists and activist women need to attend differences among women otherwise they carry on reproducing objection and subjugation of other women. We have to move beyond the illusionary homogeneity among women and be more open to identities other than woman. What is needed is to develop non-repressive, non-exclusionary conceptions of group identities. Furthermore, activist women need to question the practice of holding power within activism which is considered to be the critical barrier in front of empowering solidarity. Although not openly shared within the study, it is a fact that there have been some very detrimental cases

experienced within activism and even there are women who cannot bear to stand next to each other.

All the contemporary accounts challenging hegemonic tendencies converge at the criticism of attempts to form solidarity based on commonality and try to develop new frames to solidarity across difference. bell hooks' account of *sisterhood solidarity* built upon difference in unity and unity for the concern for the collective, necessitates sustained and ongoing commitment. What we need to do in Turkey is actually very much similar, that is the reconstruction of the logic of sisterhood -or howsoever we express it- as being organized and unified in activism. Dean however, terms it as *reflective solidarity*, which she believes disagreements and arguments – or anything else perceived as barrier to solidarity- can be the source of connection and subsequently solidarity. In her account, offering communicative engagement, similar to hooks, variability and questionability grounds the basis for solidarity. Nonetheless, both of the accounts are far from designating a driving force stimulating activists to come together.

Reagon on the other hand offers *coalition building*. Pragmatically stating, the need for coalitions is the desire to survive according to her. Agreeing with her portrayal that women's organizations create safe spaces, it would not be wrong to state that her approach does not promise mutual recognition and ensure broader solidarity. Mohanty bases her account on common differences and determines force behind political alliances as the struggle against exploitative structures and

systems. Similar to Reagon, Mohanty puts pragmatic decisions on the basis of solidarity which are mutuality, accountability and acknowledgment of common interests. Recalling Lyshaug's criticism to Dean and Reagon, which should be also express to Mohanty's account, what is offered by all is actually *tactical solidarity*, instead of a more durable and deeper feminist solidarity. Lyshaug, suggests self-cultivation to transform individual attitudes which she terms as 'enlarged sympathy'. In Bartky's approach the similar motivation termed as 'fellow-feeling' is the tool to establish ties among individuals. Here again, the study's argument is that although respect for *difference* and the *other* is prevalent in contemporary accounts none of them actually offers conceivable way out for solving activism's challenges and establishing broader, sustainable and feminist solidarity.

Definitely, there is not any fixed prescription to *feminist* solidarity this study can propose; in fact it is something to be generated by activists themselves. However, feminists have to urge the dilemma of similarity and diversity. What we need in Turkey is to create broader fields –the only criterion is to be welcoming differences and prevent personal conflicts to preclude collective good. In the light of theoretical discussions, also questioning internalized inequalities and hierarchical relations have to be interrogated and minimized. Besides, what is recommended by respondents is activism itself. Nevertheless, achieving strong activism -stating its voice, creating its own agenda and carrying this agenda on the political stages - depends on establishing empowering solidarity among activists.

Although it is difficult to suggest a concrete path, organizing feminist voice will be our strength. What was dominating respondents' conceptualization of *feminist solidarity* was commonality and even though respect for difference holds place in the answers, in practice it is preferred to come together with the similar. In addition what is problematic with conceptualization of *feminist solidarity* was its not being political, i.e. it was hardly reinforced with theory. The study's assumption that women could come together and establish solidarity practices on common oppression, namely violence against women is confirmed by respondents. However, the ability to meet at a specific issue is not something to celebrate; on the contrary this in fact limits the scope of our understanding of solidarity and our practices. Actually, this also shows how we are open to differences which are prominent and intense in activism in Turkey.

Descriptions to *success* were also instructive in terms of perceiving where we are standing. It is reaffirmed that we need to refocus on feminist ideology and mold activism with feminism. Whether it is the input or the output to determine the success of solidarity practices we need to base our frame to feminism and seek to have outcomes accordingly.

We have to learn to act with activists' and feminists' own color and capacity and value each individual's experience separately. We have to internalize feminism in our struggle in order to convert differences into prosperity. Examples such as the Women's Shelters Assembly must be

pervaded since its considerable contribution to activism through opening field in which activists confront with each other, contact and try to establish dialogue.

Regarding the means used within activism what this study will offer is reconsidering consciousness raising back in activism. Different from any other means used within activism consciousness raising is the only means used to solely empower activists themselves and the only tool to encourage feminists to question themselves and their relations. Consciousness raising practices either materialized through consciousness raising groups or by other means, have been very crucial in feminist organizing and instrumental in developing collective political action through providing spaces for activists to explore their sexism. Furthermore, this study suggests that consciousness raising disciplining for making politics in collaboration ensures the linkage between activism and theory, i.e. gives the most effective key to feminists to establish and act in solidarity. However, what needs to be done is to reconstruct the logic of consciousness raising and assign its dynamic power and its transformative potential.

Professionalization of feminist activism, project-based activism, hierarchical feminist organizations, NGOization and women's organizations creating safe spaces for activists actually harbor the risk of losing the larger picture. Establishing solidarity and ties among differences gets more and more difficult since women's organizations concentrate on specific issues along with professionalization of

activism. What we have to do is to analyze our organizations, seek for alternative resources of funding our activities. We should recall that what feminism aims at is the transformation of a system which is internalized in our relations therefore we need to begin with ourselves and re-politicize activism.

Diverging from feminist politics as the principal concern of this study underlines all barriers in front of solidarity practices. Here again we should focus more on linking theory and praxis. Prerequisite for achieving strong, empowering, broad-based and sustainable feminist solidarity is to have a feminist vision of the future. However, the most unsatisfying answers were given to the questions related with activism's future and future possibilities of solidarity practices. Activism in Turkey has to develop theoretical discussion networks¹¹, be committed to volunteerism, have permanent agenda with concrete objectives and be welcoming diversity and especially younger feminists. The only way to establish feminist solidarity is to stimulate feminist theory, feminist political discourse and feminist politics in activism and to strengthen the relationship between feminist activism and feminist knowledge production.

This study is an effort to investigate the possibility of feminism in solidarity practices in Turkey. It also aims at being with its strength and weaknesses reference for further studies on *feminist solidarity* and

¹¹ Bora, Special Issue Flying News 2000 March, p.25.

activism. However, both basic and advanced analysis of feminist activism in Turkey is still a pressing need. Especially, broader studies on challenges to feminist activism with concrete results, offering strategies for activism would be enlightening. It is believed that activism with its strength for change, hand in hand with theoretical studies can find unity in diversity.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX-1: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

I. The Nature and the Context of Solidarity: *(How activist women define feminist solidarity? What are the examples of feminist solidarity in Turkey since today? In what context and issues? How?)*

1. What does *feminist solidarity* mean to you?
2. What does feminist solidarity entail? (Common objective? Being feminist? Being woman? Feminist politics? etc.)
3. About which issues and how solidarity is possible?
4. Do you think that women can easily establish solidarity when the point in question is common oppression, repression, exploitation, isolation, etc.?
5. Do you think women need feminist politics to establish solidarity?
6. Which joint actions of feminists in Turkey do you think has been successful? And why do you consider it as 'successful'?

II. Barriers to feminist solidarity: *(What gets in the way of feminist solidarity?)*

7. "What gets in the way of establishing growth-enhancing, empathetic relationships, solidarity among feminists? (Class, sexuality, culture, ethnicity, race, etc.)

8. (Depending on the answer of the 7th question) Do you think it is possible for feminists to establish solidarity against the disassociation on the basis of class/ ethnicity/ identity, etc? If yes / How? If, no / Why?
9. Is there an agenda / action or issue that you think feminists in Turkey did not and should act in solidarity?
10. Why is it so hard sometimes to establish solidarity with persons from different cultures, races, socio-economic classes, sexual orientations and ethnicities than our own?

III. III. Sameness and difference in terms of solidarity: (Feminist solidarity based on sameness? / What are the problems that sisterhood is prone to? / What are the limitations of the discourse of sisterhood / solidarity of sameness? Is it possible to achieve solidarity in spite of differences?)

11. What does feminist sisterhood means to you?
12. Do you feel yourself as a sister when you think of feminists in Turkey? (If, yes / why? / If, no / why?)
13. How late 80s feminist activism's motto 'sisterhood' is conveyed to our date? How did it change? Why it has changed?
14. Dou you think solidarity / unity among women is possible against the differences?
15. Can we be different but not alienated?
16. Is there an expression for feminists' coexistence against differences at the present date?

IV. IV. Means of feminist solidarity: (What is needed to strengthen the possibility of forming feminist solidarity? Consciousness Raising?)

17. What does consciousness raising means to you?
18. Do you think consciousness raising is an efficient feminist tool (If, yes / why? / If, no / why?)
19. What has superseded feminist consciousness raising in our date?
20. Is there any means you can offer to act in solidarity? (Platforms, termed campaigns or activities, issue-oriented coalitions, broader feminist politics, etc.)
21. (In Şirin Tekeli's terms "'functional platforms' are organizations open to renewal, unsteady, flexible, deepening solidarity and cooperation among women's organizations, enlarging and dwindling away accordingly with the varying needs.") Do you think platforms are instrumental in establishing solidarity?
22. How should successful / efficient corporations be? About what issues women can establish successful / efficient corporations?

V. Conflicts: "In addition to the main argument of solidarity issue, the study aims to be explanatory to the internal conflicts, all embracing feminist activism and suggestive to the future of feminist activism in Turkey."

23. What are the challenges to feminist activism in our day?
24. What are the issues splitting feminist activism in Turkey?
25. What is the most important present conflict –either within or outside- of feminist activism in Turkey? What is your solution would be?

26. Is it possible to have successful feminist activism in such a fragmented environment?
27. “Our feminisms weaken as we diverge from feminist theory’s guidance; we ignore our most needful instrument to produce feminist politics” - Yıldız Ecevit. What do you think?

VI. Future possibilities of feminist solidarity:

28. What Works? What can be done to overcome the impasses, the obstacles that feminist activism is facing today?
29. How do you assess the future of feminist activism in Turkey?
30. What do you think about the future possibilities of feminist solidarity in Turkey?