

BEAUTY PERCEPTION OF WOMEN BEFORE AND AFTER
THE EXPERIENCE OF AESTHETIC SURGERY

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ABSTRACT

BEAUTY PERCEPTION OF WOMEN BEFORE AND AFTER THE EXPERIENCE OF AESTHETIC SURGERY

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Physical appearance of women and criteria of defining the ideal women are widely discussed, and became important variables for women to percept and define themselves. The "importance" of beauty and having an outlook that matches with the contemporary norms of beauty are overemphasized and distributed by different tools. Combination of emphasis on "importance" of beauty and simplified access to aesthetic operations, create a misperception for women as an obligation for being beautiful to feel competent, integrated and empowered. This study aims to understand the transformation of beauty perception of women, who had an aesthetic surgery and see this act as a material, non-material investment, and a physical, emotional, pecuniary labour, for self and other women, and the hierarchy this perception transformation creates. To understand and analyse these questions, a survey applied to 20 women who had at least one aesthetic surgery, and five aesthetic surgeons, between September 2015 and December 2015. In this study, the "empowerment" that is believed to be "achieved" with the aesthetic surgery. Within this framework, different perspectives of Kathy Davis

and Llwellyn Negrin about the subject are discussed. The question “if the alleging empowerment is resulted with an overall and real empowerment for all women, or it recreates the ongoing hierarchical norms” is asked in the study.

Keywords: Beauty, empowerment, aesthetic surgery, gender, identity

ÖZ

KADINLARIN ESTETİK OPERASYON TECRÜBESİ ÖNCESİ VE SONRASINDA GÜZELLİK ALGISININ ŞEKİLLENİŞİ

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Yüksek Lisans, Toplumsal Cinsiyet ve Kadın Çalışmaları Bölümü

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Kadınların fiziksel görüntüsü ve ideal kadın güzelliğini tanımlama kriteri derinlikle tartışılan, kadınların kendilerine dair algısı ile kendilerini tanımlamasında önemli olan değişkenler haline gelmiştir. Güzelliğin ve güncel güzellik normlarıyla eşleşen bir görüntüye sahip olmanın “önemi” farklı araçlarla vurgulanmakta ve yaygınlaştırılmaktadır. Güzelliğe dair vurgu ve estetik operasyonlara erişimin kolaylaşmasının yarattığı birliktelik kadınlarda bütün, entegre olmuş ve güçlenmiş hissetmek için güzel olmanın zorunluluğuna ilişkin algıya neden olmaktadır. Bu çalışma estetik operasyon deneyimi sonrası, estetik operasyonları maddi veya maddi olmayan bir yatırım, ya da fiziksel, duygusal ya da maddi emek olarak gören kadınların kendilerine ve diğer kadınlara dair güzellik algısının değişimini, bu algı değişiminin yeniden ürettiği hiyerarşiyi anlamaya çalışmaktadır. Araştırma sorularına yanıt bulabilmek ve süreci anlayabilmek için, Eylül 2015 ve Aralık 2015 tarihleri arasında, estetik operasyon geçirmiş 20 kadın ve beş estetik cerrah ile görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Bu çalışmada, kadınların estetik operasyon ile “kazandıkları” güzellik sonucu elde edildiğine inanılan “güçlenme”

sorgulanmaktadır. Bu gerevede, Kathy Davis ve Llewellyn Negrin'in konuya ilişkin farklı yaklaşımları alışmada tartışılmaktadır. "İddia edilen güçlenme tüm kadınlar için gerçek bir kazanıma mı neden olmakta yoksa mevcut hiyerarşik normları yeniden mi üretmektedir?" sorusu tartışılmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Güzellik, güçlendirme, estetik ameliyat, toplumsal cinsiyet, kimlik

To myself and my father

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The idea of female beauty and women's decisions on their own appearance became an important and widely discussed subject in feminist thinking throughout history. Beauty lurched between being an evil that must be escaped from or an unimportant issue that should be ignored and trifled, to being an empowering decision that strengthens women or an imposition of patriarchy. Maybe more than any other concept in feminist thinking, beauty became a controversial issue and is still being discussed.

The research question of this thesis will be how the aesthetic surgery experience will shape women's ideas about self, gender identity and body; either as a tool of empowerment and gender construction that leads feeling more comfortable with their bodies as Kathy Davis points, or as a tool of body dissatisfaction and disempowerment by accepting the existing structures of patriarchy and inequality as Llewellyn Negrin suggests. Secondly, this study aims to ask the question how does women's perception of their and also other women's beauty transform after the experience of having an aesthetic surgery and how the perception of beauty was transformed after this experience.

Aesthetic operations are being applied too often, and have become a part of daily life. Lunchtime operations and the decreased level of post-operational problems enabled aesthetic applications to become more and more popular. An operation with less complications, and an

easier post-procedure is for sure useful from the perspective of medical science, but the increase of demand must be questioned sociologically, especially when it comes to the difference between male and female ratio of the demand.

The study group for this thesis is selected specifically within women between 35-40 years old, middle and upper middle class. Most of the study group members have an undergraduate degree, and all of them are living in the city. Men and women experience physical beauty differently from each other. Body image disturbance resulted in different levels and outputs in the two groups. But more significantly, not all women interpret the idea of beauty in the same way. Women from different classes experience the body image disturbance in significantly different ways.

The study reveals that females reported a more positive relationship between body image and self-esteem than males did, while upper class women are more concerned about this relation than lower class females are¹. Women from upper class are more concerned about physical beauty and thinness, since women from higher socioeconomic status correlate satisfaction and body shape more than those in lower classes. Women are expected to fit the norms and expectations of physical beauty defined by society more than men are, whereas women from the upper class face the expectations of physical beauty more than women from the lower class. Due to having enough opportunities, they are expected to "fix" their beauty and aging issues. Having the higher expectation standards, upper class women need to make more effort for their physical look, as we can see in anorexia nervosa cases, where the sickness affects young, healthy women raised in luxury, more than other women from lower

¹ Cash, T. F. (2002). Women's body images. In *Handbook of women's sexual and reproductive health* (pp. 175-194). Springer US

classes, as it is stated in the book *The Golden Cage: The Enigma of Anorexia Nervosa*^{2,3}

Another reason for selecting the women from this specific group is to be sure that the women are able to afford the expense of the operations, and are financially able to make their own decisions. Selecting this study group, it was also aimed to see what would be a women's decision about her own beauty when she has a chance to decide with free will, and their reaction to the supporters and excoptors.

The participants in the interviewee group have specific characteristics that make their assumptions important in several ways. Women who have an aesthetic surgery mostly think that this is a sacrificial, effortful, and self-abnegating act, and place themselves in another place than other women do. They believe that their beauty is acquired, not innate, and they place their beauty as a superior experience gained after personal effort. As a unique experience for the women who have an aesthetic surgery, the details of this situation can be learned only after questioning women who had this experience. Also as an extension of the idea of acquired beauty⁴,

² Bruch, H. (2001). *The golden cage: The enigma of anorexia nervosa*. Harvard University Press.

³ In the referred study, it is mentioned that most of the young women who suffer with anorexia nervosa belong to an upper economic class and they consider themselves as not worthy of the privileges and worth they are living. The writer explains the young women who suffer from the illness as birds in a golden cage from "seemingly well functioning and well-off families that grow up deficient in self esteem." The young women attended this study mention most of them are feeling that they are being squeezed between the expectations from their families and the feeling of being grateful to what they have.

⁴ The term of acquired beauty is used in the study instead of achieved beauty, because the term "achieved beauty" contains the sense of obtaining with hard work and physical/emotional effort, while "acquired beauty" also contains the meaning of obtaining with material and non-material investment together with hard work and physical/emotional effort as Riji and Litjmaer offers.

women who had an aesthetic surgery have a sharper idea about the beauty of others, namely, other women.

Moving from the personal idea of beauty to the beauty of others, they also transform the perception of beauty for others as well. Their contribution to the general idea of beauty can only be understood if we try to analyse their assumptions on the subject. And the best way to learn their assumptions is to question the women who had an aesthetic surgery. For these reasons, assumptions of women who had an aesthetic surgery is unique, important, and needs to be questioned. In this study, the aim was not to reach general results via following personal answers. Oppositely, my aim in this study is to reach experiences and perceptions of a very specific group of women. Being beautiful has different meaning and costs for everyone, personally.

The issue of beauty may seem to be a *non-academic subject* in such a territory, and one may wonder why it is important to study the issue of physical appearance. Hierarchical relations are available in every part of our lives. With this study, I aim to show how a comparatively unrelated modification may result in a change in power relations, hierarchy and social classification. I want to show the relation between a very personal issue and hierarchy relations.

Women who had an aesthetic surgery, exhibit an effort to stay fit, and apply anti-aging on themselves seem to create an aggressive and even insulting attitude towards women who do not seem to care about their own physical appearance in the way others do. Women who see their body modification effort as an investment for a new social position harshly comment on other women who do not plan to make these changes. When women create their perception of social position according to their physical appearance, and believe that the perception of society is shaped according to beauty, they try to

devalue other women who do not want to have aesthetic surgery, to be fit, or to fight against aging. Especially when they see a woman who is not "beautiful" in a social position desired by them, they act extremely negative towards them and even insult openly.

According to Brooks, empowerment of women combines economical, educational, social uprising, and also participation and self determination about social and political issues in the surrounding and also self.⁵ Most of the respondents attended to this study mention that, their position in the professional life and economic cluster did not change significantly after the experience of aesthetic surgery. Another indicator, self determination and participation to the social and political positions that surround them is significantly stable before and after the aesthetic surgery experience. Most of them mention that they were not contributing and acting distantly on the social and political happenings around them before the aesthetic surgery because they were trying to solve a personal issue before they start contributing their surroundings. But after the experience of aesthetic surgery, they still do not show an increased amount of interest in such issues. The only significant increase is available in self determination and making decisions individually on their personal appearance and giving less importance to other people's decisions about themselves. From a more physiological perspective, Sprague and Hayes define empowerment as a topic that has the standpoint of the dominant one, and point that the reason of defining one as self determined is the result of one's interpersonal and social structural relations that actually empower. Sprague and Hayes conclude empowerment in

⁵ Brooks, A. T. (2010). Aesthetic anti-ageing surgery and technology: women's friend or foe? *Sociology of health & illness*, 32(2), 238-257.

relation to women's standpoint and other's development within social structures.⁶

Beauty and its interpretations by women and beauty professionals who attended the study is explained as a tool that creates new, and recreates existing, inequalities; it also causes new hierarchies and recreates the existing ones between women. Beauty as a tool of inequality creates inequality groups that arise from the perception of beauty. Western beauty and the look that cannot be defined as western are created as counter inequality groups. According to the answers given by the women who attended the survey and those provided by aesthetic surgery professionals, the norms of beauty are defined as "western," and "beautiful" is explained in terms of western norms. The idealization of western beauty norms as a base creates an inequality between western-western like and the other, and forces women with a non-western look to change their appearance to seem like the "upper" group.

Beauty as a creator of inequalities between women⁷ also transforms and reshapes the hierarchy that already exists. Like in other groups, women have hierarchies between them. But beauty opens reveals new types of criteria to move, percolate, and replace oneself within the group. Aesthetic surgery and modification of physical appearance is one of the most important tools to reshape the position in the hierarchy. Position in the hierarchy that comes from economic situation can be changed by the transformation in one's physical appearance or the ability to change other people's appearances. The most significant examples of trickling from a lower group in the

⁶ Sprague, J., & Hayes, J. (2000). Self-determination and empowerment: A feminist standpoint analysis of talk about disability. *American journal of community psychology*, 28(5), 671-695.

⁷ Edmonds, A. (2007). 'The poor have the right to be beautiful': cosmetic surgery in neoliberal Brazil. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 13(2), 363-381.

hierarchy are successful fitness coaches who mostly belong to a lower economic group than their customers, but who are, at the same time, respected and whose words are minded. As obvious in the previous example, beauty and women's perception of beauty has a power to transform the existing bulky hierarchy norms and inequalities.

Beauty also recreates the hierarchy that already exists within women. There already is a hierarchy between women, according to women who exhibit effort to be more beautiful and see beauty as an investment for a better social positioning for themselves. These women believe that the money and time they have spent to change their previous status, which they think was a result of their physical appearance, places them in a upper position than others who cannot or do not spend their resources for beauty. Also, they think that they suffered physically and emotionally before and after the surgery (or they still suffer to stay fit or apply anti-aging procedures), and they deserve a new and better social position in society more than "naturally beautiful" women do, because the latter did not spend money and time, did not suffer physically and emotionally, and has its position "congenitally".

The women who believe that the resources they have spent must be appreciated and must help them get to a higher position than others who cannot or do not use their sources to become more beautiful, recreate the inequality and hierarchy which made them suffer a lot in the past. Rather than developing empathy and trying to understand the women who suffer exactly like they did, women who attended the study seem to recreate the same hierarchy in a retaliating manner.

Almost all women who attended the study mourn for their "lost" years that are unrecoverable, and identify their new look as an acquired victory. Spending too much time, material sources, and non-material

sources, women deliberately and intentionally cap off their relation with women who cannot or do not undergo aesthetic surgery, and sometimes they even use humiliating language against these women.

The tone of revenge in their explanations is targeted to women who are in their previous situation and suffer from the same problem, instead of the ones who "bully" them. Instead of creating empathy with women who suffer from the same issues, women who attended the study seem to win over the sympathy and love of people who hurt them in the past and feel blessings to their effort, and finally scale up in the new group by stepping over the women in the "lower" hierarchical group. I analyse these insulting acts and desperate search for consecration to their effort of women who think they should keep their new position in society over other women believed to be "ugly," as a desire to have a lower group in social hierarchy under themselves.

Being a member of a higher group in hierarchy is only meaningful when there is a lower group. Previous victims need another victim group below themselves in the hierarchy to strengthen the newly achieved position in social hierarchy, and without another insulted group, it is not easily manageable or even possible to keep the new comparatively advantageous position. The re-creation of inequalities and hierarchies are also interpreted as a result of the sufferings in the previous life of these women, who grieved with the pain of being alienated and who experienced self-dissatisfaction, and finally found a possibility to live the life they've always dreamed of.

In my interviews, hate for overweight women, for women who do not have an aesthetic surgery (even if they need, according to beauty perception of my interviewees), and for women who do not apply anti-aging remedies (also containing women who don't dye their hair),

were easily recognizable. The tension was especially high against women who are not "fit," and my interviewees were feeling extremely comfortable when they were insulting this group, rather than when they were commenting on women without an aesthetic surgery. I do not analyse this difference as an indulgent act, but I read it as an effect of me being the interviewer. Because I am not overweight, my interviewees were able to position me as a "fit" woman, and I was placed into the same category with them, and this led them to make insulting comments to "other" women without hesitation. But when it came to aesthetic surgery, my position was possibly not that monochrome for them, and my ideas about aesthetic surgery were probably a grey area, since according to some of them *"I have a very pretty face that would look prettier with a little touch,"* commented one of my interviewees. Lack of this *little touch* might have made them uncertain about my place in their classification. For this reason, running the interviews with another interviewer who had an aesthetic surgery may generate different results, and interviewees' answers related to aesthetic surgery may possibly be as critical as their answers on being fit.

In the interviews, I used a question set of five for women who had an aesthetic surgery:

1. Would you explain the beautiful woman in your mind? What kind of aesthetic surgery/ies did you have and were you planning to look similar to that woman in your mind? Are you happy with the result?
2. When did you first think about having a surgery, were you supported by your family/friends/partner and did you/would you still do it even if you were not supported?
3. What do you think about modifications in the male body? Do you think that a man (maybe your partner) would do the same to look better?

4. What do you think about being overweight/your current weight and aging? How do you feel about getting older?
5. What is your opinion about women who are distant to anti-aging, weight control and aesthetic surgery?

Also, I interviewed 5 aesthetic surgeons situated in Bağdat Street⁸, İstanbul. I used the question set below to find answers for my questions:

1. Would you classify your patients? Is there a way to group them psychologically, economically or socially?
2. What does "beautiful" mean for you as a professional and as an individual? Do they differ, is there a formula to define "beautiful," professionally?
3. What are the ethical limits of aesthetic surgery? Do you often reject a patient?
4. Is female beauty universal or local?
5. What are the factors that affect a woman's beauty perception?

As Sontag points, physical beauty, body image and body image surveillance affect males and females differently⁹. Body image and body control cannot only be read as aesthetic issues while there is a gender differentiation. Women's bodies are publicized and criticized according to the social definition of beauty. Beauty, defining a beautiful body, and explaining what is "beautiful" is political and gendered at the same time. To understand and analyse this gendered issue, in this thesis, feminist thinking is used as a base for the study

⁸ Bağdat Street is located in İstanbul, and known as one of the most popular locations in the city for upper and higher economic classes. According to the study conducted by Dülger Türkoğlu and colleagues about Measuring Quality of Life in İstanbul in 2008, Bağdat Street is classified as a dwelling for higher economic class members. The street hosts the most famous international brands' shops and most famous aesthetic surgeons of the whole country. The street can be labeled as the center of luxury for the Asian part of the city, which is equivalent to the European part's luxury center, Nişantaşı.

⁹ Sontag, S. (1982). Double standard of aging. *Readings in adult psychology: contemporary perspectives*/edited by Lawrence R. Allman, Dennis T. Jaffe.

to be able to understand the beauty perception, its application to daily life, and effort to be beautiful by a specific group of women, who are Turkish women selected within the upper or middle upper economic cluster and aged between 35 and 40.

My assumptions are that the increase in women's economic position and independence leads them to freely decide on their beauty modifications. It was assumed that the increase in the income and economic freedom would help women (and men) reach aesthetic surgery and non-surgical procedures. Aesthetic surgery and non-surgical procedures are accepted as luxury expenses, and without the increase in income, it is not easily possible to spend on an expense item that falls under luxury expense. In relation to the answers given by the interviewees, it is obvious that women who think about aesthetic surgery realize this as soon as they have their own (sufficient) economic freedom, and they give less importance to others' ideas, mostly negative ones, claiming that they do not need a surgery. Also, the ones who have their economic independence but do not have enough level of income for the surgery start saving money in this phase as well. It is an assumption in this thesis that sufficient income or saving makes others' (friends, families and partners') ideas about one's body less important.

Also, it was argued in this study if women's perceptions on other women's beauty is changeable after the beauty change is completed (having a surgery, losing weight, etc.). I also argue if women's beauty perception is reshaped along with their body after a major change, like an aesthetic surgery. This newly shaped perception is sharper, more aggressive, and even insulting when it comes to commenting on other women's beauty.

More than just shaping the body of an individual, beauty is being used as a tool to recreate the power relations and class idea, and also reshapes the hierarchy between women.

The meaning of physical appearance was and is very important in individuals' and groups' lives. Even denial of importance of physical appearance is made through physical appearance tools or clothes. Rejection of female body hair removal is moving towards a dying trend and showing armpit hair as in #dyepit campaign. Almost all acts against current beauty concepts argue that the other way is "beautiful" too. Definition of beautiful changes, but beautiful, and the wish to be beautiful, stays. The body is a place where self or others can ensure their ideas and power.

The body is like a small territory that can be ruled by the locals or the invaders. One body for an individual (or a group sometimes) is as important as a piece of land for a country. States, religions, and cultures focused and continue to focus on the female body. Beauty and body surveillance are important aspects of feminist thinking, such that ideas on body create shifts in paradigm and create sub movements and waves in thinking. Body, ideas on body and body control, and analysis on decisions about one's own body are important in feminist thinking. Physical appearance and beauty is a part of everyday life, and it is not a non-academic subject like some may classify it to be. Beauty and physical appearance are questioned and defined every day, so they must be questioned as academic aspects as well.

In this study, the aim is not to complete a research specific to the perception of beauty of Turkish women overall, but to understand the beauty perception and understanding of a specific group of women who attended the study and to have an insight about their

perceptions. This study aims to understand the concept of being beautiful for the specific group of women that attended the survey, and it is believed that the insight may guide many other studies that focus on real experiences of women.

The interview technique and the data gathered from the meetings are hoped to be useful for other future studies. The search for a change on perception of female beauty after an aesthetic surgery will be a contribution to the literature, together with an analysis of power relations, inequality and hierarchy.

This study has six main chapters. After giving a brief introduction and a literature review of physical appearance and beauty, I will start discussing beauty and the content and meaning of an "ideal women" for women who attended the study, and also for aesthetic surgery professionals. Understanding beauty and the "ideal" as a concept will act as a base for the interview results. I will try to understand the meaning of beauty for professionals and individuals, and will be analysing aesthetic surgeons' ideas of beauty, both professionally and personally. Also I will discuss the meaning of others' beauty and the changing meaning of others' beauty for women who had an aesthetic surgery, after their surgery is applied. It can be concluded from the answers given by the interviewees that beauty of other women and their body becomes a land to set an authority. Women who had an aesthetic surgery mostly have a claim other women's bodies. The demand for surveillance and authority declaration over other women's bodies will be discussed in this chapter. Also, the difference between wish for surveillance over other women's bodies and men's bodies will be mentioned.

In the following chapter, the decision-making procedure for having a surgery and also the motives behind this decision-making will be

analysed. And finally, beauty as an investment will be determined, and its interpretation as a material and non-material investment will be questioned.

In the conclusion part of the thesis, the outputs will be analysed from the perspective of authority and hierarchy, and it will be questioned if the act of having a surgery is an empowering one. It will be asked if this is an empowering act, and if it is a temporary one since the beauty of body is not constant.

1.1 Methodology

In this chapter, the main objective is to explain the methodology that is the base of a study used in this thesis. Main information, field experience, important details, barriers and limitations, common specialties of the respondents, why they are important, and detailed qualitative and quantitative information about the respondents will be analysed in this section via data analysis. Also, an explanation of the reason why this methodology was chosen will be clarified.

1.2 Researcher's Intention

Throughout my personal history, I have seen many women who were happy with their looks, until they were asked if they would think about having an aesthetic surgery. I have seen too many faces or bodies that changed with external invasions. I have met many young women who waited until they turned 18 so that they can have the surgery that they dreamed of. None of them were ugly women, genuinely. I realized that I did not know how to classify an *ugly woman*, all while they were easily doing this for themselves (and mostly for others after their surgery), sometimes cruelly. Beauty was always a catchy

concept for me. It was fascinating to see how women find themselves a new *trendy* look, transform themselves like a silkworm into that new look, spend some time in that look, and search for the new *trend* once again.

Power, the feeling of empowerment and its relation with beauty became an important and intriguing subject for me after I started to search the idea of beauty and its interpretations by feminist scholars. The discussion between feminist thinkers who believe that beauty can be a tool of empowerment¹⁰ and other feminist scholars who mention that this is the recreation of beauty norms and patriarchy¹¹. The bi-directionality between patriarchy's role on accepting the beauty as a tool of empowerment, also effect of transforming the class relations and seeing beauty as a tool of empowerment directed me to study on the subject. The aim for understanding if patriarchal norms force women to think that they must feel empowered when beautiful, or women fight against patriarchy with the power of beauty motive me to stress on the issue.

Perception of beauty and its affects cannot only be defined as personal issues. For Naomi Wolf, "men and women do not experience the wealth same way, even if they have the same amount of money. Urban professional women spend up to one third of the money to beauty maintenance. They don't even consume the same amount of food, because most women are voluntarily under-nourished to stay thin, and since food is the primal symbol of social of worth and main

¹⁰ Davis, Kathy. (1991) *Remaking the She-Devil: A Critical Look at Feminist Approaches to Beauty*. Hypatia vol.6, No.2

¹¹ Negrin, L. (2002). Cosmetic surgery and the eclipse of identity. *Body & Society*, 8(4), 21-42.

organizer of the power relations, we cannot talk about equality if we don't talk about what we eat, and why we don't eat"¹².

Bodies of men and women are reconstructed through social beauty norms. This reconstruction requires less from male individuals, and the requirements are mostly about gaining, rather than losing; constructing, rather than rasping: As stated in the study, male adolescents wish to be bigger and heavier to have more self-esteem, whereas female are required to be thin to have more self-confidence¹³. Beauty has a strong sense of gender identity construction when it comes to female physical appearance. Beauty is strongly linked to being female, and vice-versa. It was mesmerizing to see how thousands of different women can merge in one subject, beauty, in their own way, and to see what they can surrender and spend for beauty. To be able to see the limits of desire for being beautiful, I wanted to select my target group among the women who have enough income to spend for a luxury expense item, as explained before.

The world of aesthetic surgery is a different one for me, and one that I believe I will not be a part of as a subject. I believe that most of the feminist researchers will not take part in it, just as I will not. For this reason, I wanted to make the women who had a aesthetic surgery or a non-surgical procedure visible to academia, especially for feminist women. As I questioned my interviewees about how they thought of having a surgery in such a complicated territory, other researchers may ask me the same thing. It is believed in this research that all

¹² Wolf, N. (2013). *The beauty myth: How images of beauty are used against women*. Random House.

¹³ Abell, S. C., & Richards, M. H. (1996). The relationship between body shape satisfaction and self-esteem: An investigation of gender and class differences. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 25(5), 691-703.

women must be visible, so as a researcher, I wanted to help the women mentioned to be visible in the literature.

1.3 Research Site

The research site in this thesis was the clinics of aesthetic surgeons on Bağdat Street. This area is one of the wealthiest neighborhoods in the Asian side of İstanbul. There is no official research about the number of aesthetic surgeons in the area, but 36 private clinics were identified in this research in the 10-kilometer-long street.

There are specific reasons this street was chosen as the research site. The most popular and the most expensive aesthetic surgeons of İstanbul are placed in the area. It was estimated that there are 1,200 aesthetic surgeons in Turkey, stated in the data published by ISAPS in 2014, and this is equal to 3.00% of the total number of aesthetic surgeons globally.¹⁴ The price of a surgical operation is also defined by the market recognition of the surgeon. In the market research, it became apparent that the price of the same surgery can differ by 3,000 TL between a very well known, popular surgeon and a lesser known one. Since the main aim of this study is to find out beauty decisions and insights about perception of beauty of a specific group of women who are in upper middle and upper class, the research area is chosen as this type of neighborhood, and the target group is defined as the patients of the well-known and famous surgeons.

Another reason to choose the aesthetic surgeon clinics was the possibility of finding women who also had non-surgical procedures as well. In the clinics mentioned, Botox, injections, and nose and chin

¹⁴<http://www.isaps.org/Media/Default/globalstatistics/2015%20ISAPS%20Results.pdf> (04.11.2016)

reshaping with injections are applied as well. The application of a certified and qualified injection must be repeated every 6 months, because this is a temporary application. There are cheaper and less healthy injection materials, but they are dangerous and risky to use. Regardless, there are many surgeons who choose to apply them.

The last reason for choosing the aesthetic surgery clinics is that the women I met in this research area are more confident and comfortable than any of the other women I can meet in a different atmosphere. Women in the waiting rooms of the clinics had a feeling of being a community, and being tarred with the same brush. They were happy to be one level higher than the other women who did not have a surgery, and were turning to the side and showing their noses proudly (mentioning that the puffiness and purple dashes will melt away so soon), and telling other women who seem to be doubtful that they absolutely did not hesitate even one second.

1.4 Respondents

To find answers for my research questions and sub-questions, I interviewed women living in İstanbul aged between 35 and 40 and who had at least one aesthetic surgery. I limited my research group to women between the aforementioned age group and women who can be named in the upper middle and upper economic position, because I wanted to study the beauty perception of women who have the economic independence to decide on their own beauty. In total, 20 women between the ages mentioned and five aesthetic surgeons were interviewed between September 2015 and December 2015. The interview target group consisted of middle upper and upper class members.

In the study, six of my respondents were married, and 12 of them were single, while two were divorced during the time we had the interview. The distribution between the private and public sectors is the same (nine), while the number of unemployed women is two. Most of the public-sector employees were women in academia, in different levels. Also, more than half of the private sector employees held a manager position.

Half of the women who attended the interview had an income of 3,000 to 5,000 TL. Five women's income was between 1,000 and 3,000 TL. Two of them mentioned that their income is between 5,000 and 7,000 TL and three of them pointed out that their monthly income is more than 9,000 TL. Since some of the interviewees were not working, it is crucial to explain the "income" definition in this study. Income refers to the amount of money women earn as a salary, as other ways like rent income, or *pocket money* given by their partners. Women who work in the private sector are placed in the lowest income section of the group. Only one of three women in the 9,000+ segment were working in a full-time job, and the rest were not occupied with a full-time or part-time job. Below the summary of respondents can be found.

Table 1. Table showing the distribution of 20 respondent women

Code	Age	Sector	Occupation	Education	Marital Status	Income	Operation Details
G1	35	Private	Journalist	GR	Single	3000-5000	Nose-Botox
G2	40	Public	Nurse	GR	Married	9000+	Abdominal Lifting-Breast Implants
G3	35	Public	Public servant	GR	Single	3000-5000	Nose
G4	39	Private	Boutique owner	GR	Divorced	9000+	Nose-Nose revision-Botox-Chin shaping-Breast Imp.
G5	36	Private	Manager	GR	Single	5000-7000	Breast imp.
G6	36	Public	Academician	PG	Single	3000-5000	Nose-Botox
G7	35	Public	Academician	PG	Single	3000-5000	Nose-Breast imp-Botox
G8	39	Private	Manager	GR	Single	5000-7000	Nose-Chin Shaping-Botox
G9	40	Private	Manager	GR	Single	3000-5000	Breast imp.
G10	37	Not working	Not Working	GR	Single	3000-5000	Breast imp-Botox
G11	38	Private	Ast.specialist	GR	Single	1000-3000	Nose
G12	36	Public	Teacher	GR	Single	3000-5000	Nose
G13	38	Public	Ast.specialist	GR	Married	1000-3000	Eye bag rem.-Nose-Breast Imp.
G14	39	Not working	Not Working	GR	Married	9000+	Breast Imp
G15	40	Public	Teacher	GR	Married	1000-3000	Liposuction - Breast Imp
G16	37	Private	Academician	PG	Divorced	3000-5000	Ear operation
G17	35	Public	Public servant	GR	Married	3000-5000	Nose-Chin
G18	37	Private	Translator	GR	Single	3000-5000	Nose
G19	38	Public	Academician	PG	Single	3000-5000	Nose
G20	40	Public	Public servant	GR	Married	3000-5000	Nose

The second group that I interviewed consisted of five aesthetic surgeons that have private clinics in the Bağdat Street area. Only one of the surgeons was female, and the remaining four were male. It was obvious that the most popular aesthetic surgeons are men, in the same way that the most popular and most expensive coiffeurs are also men. Also, all aesthetic surgeons I interviewed were 40 years or older. Considering the length of the study and the time needed for being a popular and well known aesthetic surgeon, 40 years is a very young age for success.

Interviews with the surgeons were not as difficult as the ones with women who had aesthetic surgery. Surgeons were willing to answer the questions openly. In scope of this research, five surgeons were contacted and all of them spent a significant amount of time for this study. Surgeons are easily accessible via internet. All surgeons have meeting demand forms on their websites, and their assistants call back in maximum half an hour to set an appointment. I informed all surgeons via these forms that I am not a future patient, but a researcher.

An explanation of the working system of a aesthetic surgeon may give hints about the importance of time for an aesthetic surgeon. Most aesthetic surgeons, especially the most popular ones, make the first consultation with a patient without a fee. In this consultation, visitor's photos are taken by the surgeon, photos are uploaded to the computer, and the surgeon applies Photoshop changes to the patient-to-be's photos.¹⁵ After the Photoshop application, the patient-to-be is invited to the surgeon's office to talk about the demands of the visitor

¹⁵ Some surgeons reject photoshop usage. They claim that the better a surgeon uses photoshop doesn't mean a more satisfying result. I can say that briefly half of the surgeons use the photoshop and half of them reject" Also I found some surgeons while I was searching for appointments, who have contact forms where you can upload a photo of yours to see the possible result.

and possibilities/impossibilities of this demand. Finally, the patient is sent to the surgeon's assistant's office where they set a date for the surgery and discuss the price. In most cases, multiple operations are more profitable in comparison with a single operation. This total consultation takes 20 minutes. Clinics work all days except Saturday and Sunday evenings, and appointment slots are full for the next three weeks in average. (I tried to make an appointment for "the most famous aesthetic surgeon of İstanbul" in September. His assistant told me that she can set an appointment for me in January). Considering the situation with appointment dates, it was not easy for an aesthetic surgeon to spend almost one and a half hours for my research.

1.5 Barriers and Limitations

There have been several limitations and barriers in the study that will be listed in this chapter of the thesis. The limitations and barriers of this study helped me to focus on, think, and develop an insight about some point of views that I might not be aware of. In my first interview with an aesthetic surgeon, the doctor was surprised with my plan to interview women who had aesthetic surgery. He warned me that this study may not be successful because most of the women who had a aesthetic surgery would not like to speak about it. As he said, arranging interviews with the women was not very easy. They did not want to speak at first, and when they did, they were giving very short answers about their *previous life*. It was easy to talk about how they feel right now, but talking about the previous situation was frustrating for them. It was like they did not want to remember. I sometimes felt like a disturbing reminder of their previous life that they want to forget. Still, I can sincerely say that my interviewees tried their best to answer my questions.

Another problem was women's suggestions about my physical appearance and possible changes that would *make me more beautiful*, and their future about upcoming modifications that they will apply themselves. Sometimes during the interviews, I felt that I should keep the women as the subject of the conversation, but they insisted on giving advice about possible changes I could make, and they kept talking about the latest trends in the body modification industry. It was obvious that they were passionate about talking about beauty trends more than anything else in life. I was uncomfortable when they tried to change the subject and started offering me some beauty tips, but later I saw that the intervening style of women who had aesthetic surgeries to other women's bodies, especially in the subject of body weight, had additional value for my study. Then, I started to tolerate their advice about me, and I let them criticize other women who did not have a surgery. For me, even keeping the conversation in target was a barrier at first but it was later turned into a possibility to broaden my study.

The trust issue between the women and I was another problem that I was warned against by the surgeons earlier. Women, who were not comfortable speaking about their previous life with anyone, were building barriers right after they learned that I study gender. They were suddenly entering a defensive phase, and trying to defend their surgeries to me. To solve this problem, I decided to explain myself before starting my interviews, and I made a small speech before I started questioning them. In short, I told them that I am not against aesthetic surgery, and that if I were against it, I would talk to the women who did not have surgery since this would be easier, and I continued to say that I just want to learn about their motives and beauty standards. After this speech, they were relieved and put me in a position of someone who cares about their ideas and who thinks

that they know better about the beauty subject. Also, the snowball technique that will be explained later helped me a lot, because the idea spread between my interviewees that I was not there to judge but to listen.

Also, after learning that the study was conducted by a feminist student, surgeons used to start answering extremely carefully, and began choosing every word they would use. Only one of them let me record the interview, while the rest wanted me to take notes. All of them asked me at least twice if I promise that I will not use their names. I believed that they openly shared their professional knowledge and ideas with me, but I think that there was a limitation in their answers about their own ideas. Some *off the record* ideas mentioned by the surgeons (that will not be used in this study, but helped me a lot to understand their ideas completely) were not repeated in our official interviews again.

Since the subject was too sensitive and personal, it was not easy to find and reach the interviewees. I used snowball sampling to communicate with the women who had aesthetic surgery. I found almost all my interviewees via social media, namely Facebook. I felt that there was an undefined and unofficial system of referrals between women who had aesthetic surgery. In the beginning, only one interviewee I personally knew agreed to answer my questions. Then, she became my referee, and asked a friend of hers who had a surgery. Then, the new interviewee gave my name to others, and the others invited other friends to our interview. In the beginning, it was a mistake to think that reaching the interviewers would be easy. Starting from the first day of the research, I realized that talking about the desire to be more beautiful, and mostly the aesthetic surgery issue, is a taboo. Women who had aesthetic surgery carry their previous physical appearances with them, and wait to “recover”

from it like the healing of a surgery scar. Women expect to “recover,” and like one of them mention openly, they do not become their new selves straight off. Beauty does not come in the blink of an eye right after the anaesthesia wears off. In short, without the unofficial referral system between my interviewees, it would not be possible to complete the meetings.

I found a small portion of the interviewees using a different technique. The second technique was to visit the private clinics of aesthetic surgeons in İstanbul and to invite the women who had surgery and who visit the surgeon for post-examinations to answer my questions. These women were open to answering the questions due to the lack of identification information between them and myself. The questions were addressed to the interviewees in private lounges provided by surgeons in their offices, or (most of them) in a friendlier environment like cafés. None of the interviews were made in a non-face-to-face environment. Questions were directed as daily conversations, and none of the interviewees were pressured to continue answering a question that they did not feel comfortable answering.

The interviews were mostly like friendly café talks, rather than academic research, and I should admit that, especially in trio meetings where more than one interviewee attended, I felt that the conversation was turning into a “let’s get Botox this weekend chat,” and I had to intervene to come back to my questions.

The questions were designed as easily extendable, and allowed me to ask several follow-up questions. At the beginning of the interviews, women were not precisely comfortable right after hearing that I am a gender studies, *also known as feminist*, student. I always felt in the beginning that, they acted distant and defensive. The idea of “*this feminist will judge me*” was present between my interviewees and

me. Additionally, my personal appearance stressed them out more, because most of the time I do not put on makeup, I have messy curly hair, and I mostly wear casual clothes, and this unfortunately matches with the *no-makeup-feminist* idea of most people. For this reason, I had to explain to my interviewees at the beginning that, I am not against aesthetic surgery, and I am not running this study to criticize women who had surgery, rather I am doing it to understand the motives and insights of a specific group of women's beauty. In addition to the revisions of the master's students group and my thesis advisor, I got serious help in structuring my questions from the surgeons I have interviewed. Surgeons reshaped some of my questions that would be asked to the women who had aesthetic surgery. They also helped me learn how to ask questions, and after revising my questions, they also modified some words and question orders. Also, my thesis advisor read all the answers given by 20 women who had aesthetic surgery and five aesthetic surgeons, which was a unique contribution. Finally, all answers were discussed in the master's student group, of which I was a member.

CHAPTER 2

HIERARCHY REPRODUCING THROUGH BEAUTY

Beauty is interpreted multifariously as a reflection of good, a division of passion or transgression. Beauty was and is a controversial and challenging concept in social sciences. People with different views from different points of view approached the issue of beauty and physical appearance. While some saw beauty as an input in social relations, others analysed it as an empowering tool.¹⁶

As Mulford mentions, one of the most significant theories with which to approach the issue of beauty is social exchange theory. According to the theory mentioned, the relations of individuals are explained in a similar manner to economic behaviour. The theory is briefly explained as “seeing social action as an ongoing interchange between rational individuals who decide what to do based on the relative costs and benefits of the alternatives with which they are confronted” by Mulford and colleagues.¹⁷

As Harold H. Kelley suggests, all individuals’ relationships are evaluated with the simple calculation which can be formulized as $\text{profits} = \text{rewards} - \text{costs}$.¹⁸ According to the theory, the costs and

¹⁶ Davis, K. (2013). *Reshaping the female body: The dilemma of cosmetic surgery*. Routledge.

¹⁷ Mulford, M., Orbell, J., Shatto, C., & Stockard, J. (1998). Physical attractiveness, opportunity, and success in everyday exchange 1. *American journal of sociology*, 103(6), 1565-1592.

¹⁸ Kelley, H. H. (1967). *The social psychology of groups*. Transaction Publishers.

benefits in a relationship determine the decision to either continue it or end it. The costs and benefits, and their comparison in a relationship, are the main indicatives that result in the continuity of relationships of individuals. In short, human behaviour, according to the social exchange theory, aims to increase the benefits and decrease the costs for any interaction.

In social exchange theory, the relations that are similar to economic relations and can be evaluated with benefit-cost calculations, have different inputs that change the balance of benefits and costs, which also changes the decision of continuity of a relationship. Physical attractiveness is identified as one of the inputs in a social relationship by the social exchange theory. Social exchange theory also explains the differentiating exchange attitudes of men and women. Mulford and colleagues (1998) mention that, people are more likely to cooperate with other people who they classify as "attractive," and men who define themselves as attractive work with other men often, but women who define themselves as attractive cooperate with other women less often.¹⁹

Accepting beauty and physical attractiveness as an input to the social interactions²⁰, the theory gives the concept mentioned a power to change the correlation of social relations. To achieve the main aim of an individual in every relation, which is to increase the benefits and to decrease the costs, physical attractiveness can be applied as an input. Mulford and colleagues (1998) claim that, since the exchange currency of social relations is not money, but non-material things like

¹⁹ Mulford, M., Orbell, J., Shatto, C., & Stockard, J. (1998). Physical attractiveness, opportunity, and success in everyday exchange 1. *American journal of sociology*, 103(6), 1565-1592.

²⁰ Sprecher, S. (1998). Social exchange theories and sexuality. *Journal of Sex Research*, 35(1), 32-43.

love or approval by others, love is counted as one of the inputs that effects the benefits and costs.²¹ According to the scholars that interpret the social relations with the social exchange theory, beauty and physical attractiveness that effects upward economic mobility is one of the influential inputs in human relations.²²

Like many other theories, the feminist approach tries to understand beauty and physical appearance from different perspectives.

Body and feminist thinking has a deep historical background²³. Early western feminists approached corporeality and stressed on physical differences with suspicion. Their first aim was not to emphasize the physical differences and historical link between women's bodily differences, but to underline a universal human. Following the First World War, women's bodies started to catch not only feminist thinkers' attention, but also states'. Seeing the body of a woman as a factory for new generations, women's bodies started to increasingly become a part of politics. Abortion and control over one's own body were in the agenda. Simone De Beauvoir uncharacteristically emphasized the difference between men and women. Beauvoir claims that "woman is weaker than man, she has less muscular strength".²⁴ But she points that this obvious biological difference should not result in a social application of it, and with this idea she takes the first step in sex and gender dichotomy.

²¹ Mulford, M., Orbell, J., Shatto, C., & Stockard, J. (1998). Physical attractiveness, opportunity, and success in everyday exchange 1. *American journal of sociology*, 103(6), 1565-1592.

²² Holmes, S. J., & Hatch, C. E. (1938). Personal appearance as related to scholastic records and marriage selection in college women. *Human Biology*, 10(1), 65.

²³ Bordo, S. (2004). *Unbearable weight: Feminism, Western culture, and the body*. Univ of California Press.

²⁴ De Beauvoir, Simone. *The Second Sex*. London, Jonathan Cape, 1953 (66)

From the very early periods and studies of feminism, dominant variables' effects on women's lives had been questioned. For Kate Millett "patriarchy refer to male domination and power relationships by which men dominate women," while Juliet Mitchell explains patriarchy as "kinship systems in which men exchange women,"²⁵ and Marilyn French enlarges the context to being "a manifestation and institutionalization male dominance over women and children in the family, and the extension of male dominance over women in society general."²⁶ With the rising interest in social elements of oppression on women in 1970s, dieting, make-up, aesthetic surgery and body modification became interest areas of feminist writers. Bodies of women are "trained, shaped and impressed with the prevailing historical forms of masculinity and femininity,"²⁷ so that "in our culture not one part of a women's body is left untouched, unaltered."²⁸

Throughout the contemporary feminist thinking on body politics, there had been two main approaches to the idea of physical appearance and beauty: Beauty as a tool for oppression and beauty as a culture of discourse. Wendy Chapkis (1986), in her influential study *Beauty Secrets: Women and the Politics of Appearance*, accepts beauty as the main tool of oppression over women. She points out that society codes natural woman as ugly, and takes her under control through beauty rituals – namely "getting rid of unwanted hair, aesthetic surgery, cellulite cures, etc." – which are mostly painful and applied in secret because they are entitled as "shameful." According

²⁵ Beechey, V. (1979). *On Patriarchy*. Feminist Review, No.3, 66–82.

²⁶ Kramarae, E. C. (1995). *PATRIARCHY: Feminist Theory* Routledge International Encyclopedia of Women : Global Women's Issues and Knowledge, New York : 1493–1497.

²⁷ Bordo, S. (1993). *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body*, Berkeley, California, University of California Press, p. 91

²⁸ Dworkin, A. (1974). *Women Hating*, New York, Dutton Press, p. 113)

to Chapkis, both getting rid of facial hair and choosing to live with it is painful, is a tool of oppression over women's body, and is an act of violence that is set to keep woman in line. She mentions following the idea of "personal is political," "apparently each isolated act of violence, like personal abuse, is too private to be a real solution. But going beyond private solutions means breaking the silence."²⁹

Susan Bordo (1995) on the other hand, mentions in *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* that beauty is a cultural happening, a more complex phenomenon than an oppression tool. According to Bordo, "The body – what we eat, how we dress, and the daily rituals through which we attend to the body – is a medium of culture."³⁰ Women are seen as a part of the culture, not simply as being oppressed by some ideas. Being more culture-centered, Bordo's analysis is stronger than the oppression model. "A discourse model provides a more sophisticated framework for linking individual beauty practices to a broader context of power and gender hierarchies. Since women do not stand outside culture, their preoccupation with appearance must necessarily both reproduce and construct cultural discourses on femininity, beauty and the female body."³¹ Bordo stresses power relations, and beauty's power of making women *docile bodies*.

Starting from the 1990s, feminist ideas on power relations and oppression stressed on Foucauldian understanding of disciplinary power. Foucault explains his idea of discipline as;

²⁹ Chapkis, W. (1986) *Beauty Secrets: Women and the Politics of Appearance*, South End Press, USA, p.3

³⁰ Bordo, S. (1995) *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*, University of California Press, USA, p.165.

³¹ Davis, K. (1991) *Remaking the She-Devil: A Critical Look at Feminist Approaches to Beauty*, *Hypatia* vol.6, no.2 (Summer 1991)

*"Discipline 'makes' individuals: it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise"*³²

According to Foucault, disciplinary power has three dimensions: hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment and the examination.³³ While Foucault explains the disciplinary power in *Discipline and Punish* via examples from prisons, factories and educational institutions, he mentions that these institutions shape the bodies of the prisoners, students and workers into docile bodies.³⁴

Sandra Bartky criticizes Foucault in *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression* for failing to notice that disciplinary practices are gendered and that, through such gendered discipline, women's bodies are rendered more docile than the bodies of men.³⁵ She criticizes Foucault's explanation on the grounds that he misses the fact that the disciplinary power and associatively turning into docile bodies are completely gendered.³⁶ She illustrates this idea by using examples of dieting, bodily ornamentation, and aesthetic surgery. Also she follows Foucault's idea of "the principle of his own subjection."³⁷ Bartky points out that

"It is women themselves who practice this discipline on and against their own bodies....The woman who checks her

³² Foucault, M. (1977) *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, p.170

³³ Ells, C. (2003). *Foucault, Feminism, and Informed Choice*. *Journal of Medical Humanities*, 24, 213–228.

³⁴ Foucault, M. (1977) *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, p.135-169

³⁵ Allen, A. (2008). *Feminist perspectives on power*.

³⁶ Ibid

³⁷ Foucault, M. (1977) *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, p.203

make-up half a dozen times a day to see if her foundation has caked or her mascara run, who worries that the wind or rain may spoil her hairdo, who looks frequently to see if her stockings have bagged at the ankle, or who, feeling fat, monitors everything she eats, has become, just as surely as the inmate in the Panopticon, a self-policing subject, a self committed to relentless self-surveillance. This self-surveillance is a form of obedience to patriarchy."³⁸

One of the strongest criticisms against the idea of Sandra Bartky and other feminist thinkers who claim that beauty is used as a power and oppression tool comes from the post-feminist front. Two simple questions asked by post-feminists raises a question mark: What if women chose to be attractive just because they wanted to be, and what if being attractive strengthens women instead of helping them be oppressed? In her article *Remaking the She-Devil: A Critical Look at Feminist Approaches to Beauty*, Kathy Davis discusses whether post-feminists are right or not. She points out that neither "beauty as a tool for oppression" nor "beauty as a cultural control mechanism" ideas are able to explain the reason women undergo aesthetic surgery. She explains the situation through Fay Weldon's fictional female character from the novel *The Lives and Loves of a She-Devil* who undergoes surgery, and becomes a powerful and independent women in the end.³⁹ Starting from women's empowerment in the workplace in the 1970s, the benefits of looking attractive started to be discussed more frequently between feminists. As Naomi Wolf discussed in her book called *The Beauty Myth*, stress on beauty of the new women in the workplace is not innocent. Wolf explains the motives of capitalist society over women's beauty as follows;

³⁸ Bartky, Sandra, (1990). *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression*. New York: Routledge, p.80

³⁹ Davis, Kathy. (1991) *Remaking the She-Devil: A Critical Look at Feminist Approaches to Beauty*. Hypatia vol.6, No.2

"How to make sure that busy, stimulated working women would keep consuming at the levels they had done when they had all day to do so and little else of interest to occupy them? A new ideology was necessary that would compel the same insecure consumerism; that ideology must be, unlike that of the Feminine Mystique, a briefcase- sized neurosis that the workingwoman could take with her to the office. To paraphrase Friedan, why is it never said that the really crucial function that women serve as aspiring beauties is to buy more things for the body? . . . The beauty myth, in its modern form, arose to take the place of the Feminine Mystique, to save magazines and advertisers from the economic fallout of the women's revolution."⁴⁰

Approaching from different perspectives to body, physical appearance, and beauty, the issue became an important aspect for almost all branches of feminism, and it will continue to be a point of interest for feminist studies. Whether a tool of empowerment or a means of oppression, beauty, appearance, body modification and decisions on outlook will be discussed and debated by the scholars. The link between empowerment, physical appearance and self-esteem became a subject of discussion in the contemporary feminist thinking.

As Ellen Riordan Suggests, empowerment is an important subject for feminist scholars in relation with physical appearance. Many different feminist writers approached the issue from different perspectives. Empowerment with its relation to female body and perception is studied by different scholars. Empowerment is defined as a tool that starts to change one's life in the personal level and is expected to affect the empowerment of a group. It is examined as a means of transformation for a social group that starts from one person. Empowerment is structured as a bottom up expansion that is also a

⁴⁰ Wolf, Naomi. (1990) *The Beauty Myth*. London: Vintage Books. P.66

tool of applying theory to practical life.⁴¹ Capitalism and patriarchy have a transforming power of commoditizing subjects and turning them into objects.

Empowerment, which is a desired notion, can be a dangerous tool when it is used by capitalism and patriarchy over female body and physical appearance. The commoditization power of patriarchy and capitalism over female body by using empowerment as a tool divides feminist thinkers into roughly two groups: Scholars who think that empowerment and its returns are useful for women's position in the society, and other scholars who claim that empowerment rhetoric uses women's bodies as commoditized agents⁴² used by patriarchy and capitalism that results in recreating patriarchy and oppression of women. Scholars belonging to this group criticise feminist thinkers' views who believe that aesthetic surgery is not an empowering act as utopic. They mention that the claims of the counter group are inconsequential and sometimes offensive in practical life.

A group of feminist thinkers claim that cosmetic and aesthetic surgeries can be defined as tools for empowerment and identity building. For them, female aesthetic surgery is a path for self-determination and a tool for empowerment and regaining the control of one's body. The aesthetic surgery can be used by women to "reduce the distance between the internal and external," and women are defined as makers of their new lives by remaking their bodies.⁴³ It is argued by those groups of scholars that, after the aesthetic

⁴¹ Riordan, E. (2001). Commodified agents and empowered girls: Consuming and producing feminism. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 25(3), 279-297.

⁴² Riordan, E. (2001). Commodified agents and empowered girls: Consuming and producing feminism. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 25(3), 279-297.

⁴³ Davis, K. (1997). Cosmetic Surgery as Feminist Utopia?. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 4(1), 23-37.

surgery applications to women who “does not feel at home”⁴⁴ in their bodies, women start to feel more powerful, they increase their self-esteem, and integrate to the society as more powerful individuals. They believe that self-esteem is upgradeable by using physical appearance. The scholars who believe that the empowerment can be obtained with a change in physical appearance also mention that feminists can use the power of capitalism and media to increase empowerment of women, as was very popular by the end of the 1990’s in anti-aging advertisements.⁴⁵ This rhetoric that links self-esteem of a woman with the physical appearance and thus with her empowerment is used very frequently by medical professionals and the media.

The counter group feminists claim that focusing on the female body regarding the empowerment of women, and claiming that her self-esteem can be increased by changing her outlook, recreate patriarchal norms rather than empowering it. Feminist thinkers who believe that empowerment and self-esteem cannot be related to physical appearance point out that linking body confidence to self-confidence and body image to self-esteem might seem empowering for women whose bodies fit the contemporary perception of beauty. But it applies oppositely for women whose body is not similar to the general perception of beauty. This kind of empowerment is exclusionist. Also, we must ask the question “what defines the beauty norms,” according to the scholars.

⁴⁴ Davis, K. (1997). Cosmetic Surgery as Feminist Utopia?. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 4(1), 23-37.

⁴⁵ LaWare, M. R., & Moutsatsos, C. (2013). “For Skin That's Us, Authentically Us”: Celebrity, Empowerment, and the Allure of Antiaging Advertisements. *Women's Studies in Communication*, 36(2), 189-208.

Feminist scholars who are against forming a link between empowerment and outlook also point out that this postulation does not only effect power relations, but also defines self-love and medical condition of one's body.⁴⁶ This logic that focuses on empowerment and physical appearance, feminist scholars claim, dictates whether women can love themselves or not. Empowerment by putting physical appearances to the centre creates a direct link between self-love, body image, and self-esteem. Also, rationalization of the lack of self-love leads to the creation of another link that is also between body dissatisfaction, which may lead to rationalization for medical conditions like anorexia nervosa.⁴⁷ Setting physical appearance conditions to empowerment and self-love leads to harsh results in groups where expectations are higher. According to Banet-Weiser, self-esteem may be a psychological issue, but surveillance practices are experienced differently in different groups, and those practices are raced and classed. The empowerment and self-love criteria of middle and upper middle white young girls is more drastic and market based, because media representation of the perfect female body is applied onto white woman, claims Banet-Weiser.⁴⁸ According to the scholars mentioned, as a result of being a target of surveillance like a market good, women are expected to modify their bodies, not to love themselves, and even medically suffer if they do not fit into beauty norms, which are identified by an empowerment tool by the prior group.

⁴⁶ Markula, P. (2001). Beyond the perfect body: Women's body image distortion in fitness magazine discourse. *Journal of sport and social issues*, 25(2), 158-179.

⁴⁷ Markula, P. (2001). Beyond the perfect body: Women's body image distortion in fitness magazine discourse. *Journal of sport and social issues*, 25(2), 158-179.

⁴⁸ Banet-Weiser, S. (2014). Am I pretty or ugly? Girls and the market for self-esteem. *Girlhood Studies*, 7(1), 83-101.

Accepting western beauty norms and contemporary beauty codes as tools of empowerment may seem like an empowerment and self-esteem tool, especially in the contemporary world where being “beautiful” is achievable with aesthetic surgeries, but it means legitimization of hegemony on the female body and accepting the recreation of patriarchal and capitalist oppression on women, according to the scholars who are against accepting a relation between empowerment and physical appearance.

Except feminist scholars, the notion of beauty ideals, body surveillance and concept of ideal women became subject of works of Feminist artists. As Negrin points, one of the most important performances carried out by Orlan in *The Ultimate Masterpiece: The Reincarnation of Saint Orlan*.⁴⁹ The performance aims to show, as Gilman mentions, the instability of male-defined beauty ideals.⁵⁰ Orlan had many aesthetic surgeries and used aesthetic operations as a tool to criticise the beauty ideals stipulated to female body. She requested the surgeons to apply facial features of women from several paintings, once defined as beautiful and that are not accepted as ideal in today’s world, such as forehead of Da Vinci’s Mona Lisa, chin of Boticelli’s Venus, nose of Fontainebleau’s Diana, eyes of Gerard’s Psyche and mouth of Boucher’s Europa.⁵¹

Beauty perception of Turkish women, aesthetic surgery practices and idea of ideal women are studied and there are many important studies about these concepts. The study conducted by Ebru Güzel (2013)

⁴⁹ Negrin, L. (2002). Cosmetic surgery and the eclipse of identity. *Body & Society*, 8(4), 21-42.

⁵⁰ Gilman, S. L. (1999). *Making the body beautiful: A cultural history of aesthetic surgery*. Princeton University Press.

⁵¹ Nayar, P. K. (2004). *Virtual worlds: culture and politics in the age of cybertechnology*. SAGE Publications India.

named Women and Beauty within Cultural Context focuses on capitalist world's effects on women's beauty and bodies as consumption objects. Another study focuses on female beauty is completed by Eser Levi (2014) which is named Imposed Beauty in the Context of Consumption Culture: The Role of Perfect Woman Model Usage in Advertising on Purchase Intension focuses on perfect women image and its dissemination by the ads. Sevim Odabaş (2004) on the other hand, centers upon the perception of beauty of women who visit the beauty centers in Ankara. She interviewed 100 women and visited 16 beauty centers to gather data for her study. Also another study that focuses the aesthetic surgery experiences of people in a specific region is completed by Orhan Bingöl in 2015 with the name Plastic surgery interventions and modern body: Example of Samsun. In this study, Bingöl approaches beauty which he defines an interdisciplinary concept from the perspectives of body control and power relations.

The most relevant study that focus on beauty perception, idea of ideal women and women after the experience of aesthetic surgery is completed by Berna Tari-Kasnakoğlu in 2008. The study that is named Exploring local and global ideals of beauty in Turkey: Discourses and practices of plastic surgery patients and physicians focalize plastic surgery as a consumption phenomenon in today's world where it is easier to reach the surgeries.

The study helped me a lot with its research technique and its guidance to the literature. There are differences between my research and Tari-Kasnakoğlu's research in the sense of research groups and results. In Tari-Kasnakoğlu's research, the researcher applied the surveys to three groups. In the first group the aim of having the surgery has first a wish to end a physical problem, not being beautiful. In the second group, Tari-Kasnakoğlu the aim for having a surgery is only being beautiful. In the last group, questions were directed to people who

seek an application of non-surgical procedures. In the research conducted by me, the research group is equal to the second group in Tari-Kasnakoğlu's research, women who are seeking aesthetic surgery only with the aim of being beautiful. Also, in Tari-Kasnakoğlu's research, plastic surgeries and beauty are named as sellable in the market. She names the clients of physicians as "customer-patients", where in my research, women who seek aesthetic surgery can be named as labourer-patients, because for women who attended this study define their aesthetic surgery experience not as simple as a commodity that can be bought by money, but more, an achievement that can be reached by material or non-material investment. Tari-Kasnakoğlu also focuses on patient-physician relations and physicians as marketer of beauty procedures, while in this study the main focus is the perception and the transformation of perception of beauty and also the effect of beauty in power relations.

2.1 Determinants in Creating the "Ideal Woman" and Dissemination of "The Beautiful"

Judging people by their appearance, and setting standards for beauty is nothing new,⁵² the concept just changed its shape with contemporary "opportunities" for creating a universal standard. Beauty standards existed long before printed press, social media or internet. With the lack of mass media and the possibility of spreading an idea all over the world easily as the "mainstream ideal," there was enough space for "local" beauty ideals for smaller groups who have different characteristics and different kinds of "beauties".

⁵² Gilman, S. L. (1999). *Making the body beautiful: A cultural history of aesthetic surgery*. Princeton University Press.

As Tarı-Kasnakoğlu also mentions, today's world with the huge impact of mass media, internet, and social media, there are specific "mainstream beauty standards" that are applied to many different women from many different groups, with many different physical specialties⁵³. Mainstream beauty of today's world can be explained as "Western standards of beauty, which are derived from a predominantly Anglo-Saxon influence."⁵⁴ There are two main problems that this "unity" creates. Firstly, because it is shaped with the features of "white western women," it creates an almost unachievable beauty target to women who are not white and western. Different groups of women get affected differently by the notion of mainstream beauty, in proportion with their extent of resemblance to it.

For Festinger, "To the extent that objective, non-social means are not available, people evaluate their opinions and abilities by comparison respectively with the opinions and abilities of others."⁵⁵ But at the same time, "A person does not tend to evaluate his opinions and his abilities by comparison with others who are too divergent from himself," as stated in the study. In the case of mainstream beauty, women who cannot find a more similar "ideal" beauty to themselves, start to experience the problem of self-esteem stronger than women who are closer to the "mainstream" beauty norms do.

⁵³ Tarı, B. (2008). *Exploring local and global ideals of beauty in Turkey: Discourses and practices of plastic surgery patients and physicians* (Doctoral dissertation, Bilkent University).

⁵⁴ Chin Evans, P., & McConnell, A. R. (2003). Do racial minorities respond in the same way to mainstream beauty standards? Social comparison processes in Asian, Black, and White women. *Self and Identity*, 2(2), 153-167.

⁵⁵ Festinger, L. (1954). A theory of social comparison processes. *Human relations*, 7(2), 117-140.

The second problem that arose from the “standardization” of beauty is the instability of beautiful in contemporary world.⁵⁶ Beauty is mostly set as a standard, but the standard and idolized beauty may change from one year to another quickly (but still, within the borders of white western female silhouette). This possibility of change puts women in a position where they may not ever feel “beautiful enough,” and live in a continuous feeling of panic to catch the latest “mainstream” of beauty. The mainstream norms of beauty spread to the world via internet, broadcast media, and the fashion industry, and the universal promotion of the beauty norms is supported by the medium continuously.

2.1.1 Media

Printed media and television were continuously named as the most important forms of press and broadcasting until the internet arrived.⁵⁷ It would be an understatement to say that the first two are not important anymore, but internet today deserves to be named as one of the most powerful tools of broadcasting, and relatedly, of shaping the idea of mainstream beauty.

Mass media, which contains broadcast media, printed media, and digital media, is important in creating beauty ideals and idols. According to the study run by Engeln-Maddox, it is very important for women to look like a media ideal, and there is a significant relationship between satisfaction with one’s own appearance and

⁵⁶ Tarı, B. (2008). *Exploring local and global ideals of beauty in Turkey: Discourses and practices of plastic surgery patients and physicians* (Doctoral dissertation, Bilkent University).

⁵⁷ Milkie, M. A. (1999). Social comparisons, reflected appraisals, and mass media: The impact of pervasive beauty images on Black and White girls' self-concepts. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 190-210.

looking like a media ideal.⁵⁸ Because they have various effects on female perception of beauty, all types of media are important in shaping and reshaping the female body.

Broadcast media, namely film, television, radio, and so on, as well as printed media are more controllable compared to digital media.⁵⁹ Both areas have enough power to create, spread, and support the mainstream beauty ideal within its limits and with a lack of interactivity that is available in digital media. While broadcast and printed media “show” women what is the ideal one, internet differs in that it provides a “chance” for every individual to comment on another one’s beauty, and show the mismatch between ideal and actual.⁶⁰

Tiggeman and Slater mentions that digital media, especially social media, makes body, more specifically the female body, an “open source” that can be commented on, “developed,” criticized, reshaped, and stigmatized by others. In their influential study *NetGirls*, Tiggemann and Slater found out that “75% of the girls [in their study group] had a Facebook profile, and spent an average of 1.5 hours there daily. Facebook users scored significantly more highly on all body image concern measures than non-users.”⁶¹ Broadcast media is

⁵⁸ Engeln-Maddox, R. (2006). Buying a beauty standard or dreaming of a new life? Expectations associated with media ideals. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 30(3), 258-266.

⁵⁹ Milkie, M. A. (1999). Social comparisons, reflected appraisals, and mass media: The impact of pervasive beauty images on Black and White girls' self-concepts. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 190-210.

⁶⁰ Ferguson, C. J., Muñoz, M. E., Garza, A., & Galindo, M. (2014). Concurrent and prospective analyses of peer, television and social media influences on body dissatisfaction, eating disorder symptoms and life satisfaction in adolescent girls. *Journal of youth and adolescence*, 43(1), 1-14.

⁶¹ Tiggemann, M., & Slater, A. (2013). NetGirls: The Internet, Facebook, and body image concern in adolescent girls. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 46(6), 630-633.

still important in shaping perceptions of ideal beauty because women “are more likely to compare themselves to high-status peers than characters on television,”⁶² but social media is the strongest one of all in body image dissatisfaction in today’s world with users’ anonymity and the structure of internet’s interactivity.

Like in many other parts of the world, in Turkey media is used as a tool to represent and recreate femininity norms. The increasing number of TV shows related directly to female physical appearance and clothing is evident. There are several “style and fashion” programs that directly focus on female appearance and fashion, such as *Bu Tarz Benim*, *İşte Benim Stilim*, *Bugün Ne Giysem*, *Gardrop Savaşları*, and *Bana Her Şey Yakışır*.⁶³ In addition to style and fashion shows, there is an extreme TV show broadcasted in one of the most popular and TV channels nationwide named *Böyle Çok Daha Güzelsin*,⁶⁴ where husbands start modifying their wives’ wardrobes together with a famous stylist, and they decide which aesthetic surgery operations will be applied to and modify their wives’ physical appearances.⁶⁵

In a regular program flow of *İşte Benim Stilim*, a contestant walks in a podium with clothes she chose to buy with the weekly budget given by the production. She is first commented on by her competitors and then by the jury. The jury and other competitors harshly criticize the

⁶² Ferguson, C. J., Muñoz, M. E., Garza, A., & Galindo, M. (2014). Concurrent and prospective analyses of peer, television and social media influences on body dissatisfaction, eating disorder symptoms and life satisfaction in adolescent girls. *Journal of youth and adolescence*, 43(1), 1-14.

⁶³ This Style is Mine, Here’s My Style, What Shoul I Wear Today, Wardrobe Wars and Everything Suits Me.

⁶⁴ You Are Way Better Like This

⁶⁵ All contestants in these TV shows are female, only in 1 season of *Bu Tarz Benim* male contestants were accepted, but after accepting male contestants, TV Show discontinued broadcasting because ratings were too low.

contestants regarding their appearance, femininity, physical specialties, aesthetic surgeries, and also lack of aesthetic surgeries.

The program is a unique example of recreating and reshaping femininity norms. It is broadcasted in the daytime and has a wide audience ranging from lower, middle, upper middle and higher economic classes. The women who attend the TV show are selected mostly from the higher economic cluster, or if opposite, they are given a sufficient budget to buy from stores that target the upper economic cluster. The TV show is such a powerful tool of recreating and promoting the beauty norms in that it does not only show upper class women to be stylish, but also teaches middle/lower class women how to reach “fake” versions of femininity norms’ tools. The collaboration of the TV show’s representation of female norms and the market’s response allows all class positions to reach the same norm for different prices.

The TV show also represents and recreates the aesthetic surgical beauty norms, but since the market cannot respond to this recreation with erratically diverse prices in surgeries (or fake surgeries), the media has an important role in recreating the inequalities that arise from physical appearance and beauty norms. Exclusion of the ones who cannot or do not undergo aesthetic surgery is recreated by the media with such TV programs, and hierarchies between women are represented again and again by creating new “odd-ones.”

2.1.2 Fashion Industry

The fashion industry is not only related to clothes; it also sets rules about body, specifically weight, hair, clothes, and facial features.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ KARACAN, E. (2007). Women Under The Hegemony Of Body Politics: Fashion and Beauty. A Thesis Submitted The Graduated School Of Social Sciences.(Supervisor: Adnan Akçay). Ankara: Middle East Technical University.

With the appearance of models in fashion shows, facial features, make-up styles, and hair styles are also shaped.

Differing from the instability of facial beauty, hair styles, or make-up styles, the ideal body silhouette has been defined by the fashion industry as slim - almost skinny - over approximately the last 60 years. The fashion industry and fashion magazines are identified as promoters of unrealistic thinness standards over the years,⁶⁷ and these unrealistic standards are being presented as the "ideal." Promoting such thin models has been related with anxiety, negativity, body image dissatisfaction, eating disorder symptoms, and eating disorders among young women, as stated in the study.⁶⁸ As Pinhas mentions, as the gulf increases between the actual body image of women and the ideal body image of women, body image dissatisfaction also increases. The study reveals that women express a higher dissatisfaction about their body image after being exposed to images of fashion models.⁶⁹

The fashion industry and mass media cannot be analysed separately from each other in terms of standardization of female beauty and ideal beauty norms. Both feed each other with their own resources, inputs, and outputs to create one set of beauty standards. The cooperation

⁶⁷ Tiggemann, M., Slater, A., Bury, B., Hawkins, K., & Firth, B. (2013). Disclaimer labels on fashion magazine advertisements: Effects on social comparison and body dissatisfaction. *Body image*, 10(1), 45-53.

⁶⁸ David, P., Boyne, N., & German, T. (2009). Thinness portrayals of fashion models: Perceived body dissatisfaction in self and others. *Visual Communication Quarterly*, 16(2), 67-78.

⁶⁹ Pinhas, L., Toner, B. B., Ali, A., Garfinkel, P. E., & Stuckless, N. (1999). The effects of the ideal of female beauty on mood and body satisfaction. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 25(2), 223-226.

between the two makes both stronger in setting the standards of global beauty.

2.2 What Should *She* Look Like? Weight, Age and Facial Features of Ideal Woman

As Slevin mentions, the ideal woman has three important criteria: weight, young look or effort to stay young, and smooth facial features, according to current beauty standards⁷⁰. For some women, all criteria need to be met while for others not all three are necessary to be labelled as “beautiful.” Still, the expectation is to possess all three criteria completely to be *completely beautiful*.

Contrary to given facial features or inevitable aging, weight is controllable. Because it is controllable, women are forced to believe that they can and should fit the unrealistic beauty standards, which results in body image disturbance or eating disorders.⁷¹ Most of the women in the study reveal that they are not content with their weight, and even if they are, they are stressed about keeping it balanced.

(G1) A weight obsessed life doesn't leave me, unfortunately. I am 53-54 kilograms and I wear size 34. People I've recently met say that they cannot imagine me oversized. I care about my weight not to let them imagine an oversized me. Because when I do unfortunately, I feel very unhappy, and I'm sure that I reflect this unhappiness to others.⁷²

⁷⁰ Slevin, K. F. (2010). “If I had lots of money... I'd have a body makeover:” Managing the Aging Body. *Social Forces*, 88(3), 1003-1020.

⁷¹ Yamamiya, Y., Cash, T. F., Melnyk, S. E., Posavac, H. D., & Posavac, S. S. (2005). Women's exposure to thin-and-beautiful media images: Body image effects of media-ideal internalization and impact-reduction interventions. *Body image*, 2(1), 74-80.

⁷² Kilo takıntılı yaşam, ne yazık ki yine de yakamı bırakmıyor. 53-54 kiloyum ve 34 beden giyiyorum. Beni son yıllarda tanıyanlar kilolu halimi hayal edemediklerini söylüyor. İşte onlar bu hali hiç hayal etmesinler diye, kilo almamaya çok dikkat ediyorum. Çünkü aldığım da, ne yazık ki, kendimi gerçekten mutsuz hissediyorum ve bunun da dışarıya yansıdığına eminim.

Being overweight seems to be an obstacle in being defined as beautiful for most of the women who attended the survey, even if other features are present. For complete beauty, women expect themselves and others to meet the thinness standard of the contemporary beauty ideal.

(G2) I am not overweighed now but I am talking about the times I was; weight is an obstacle to reach beauty, weight and beauty can't go together. Something is always missing for an overweighed woman with a beautiful face. I guess that, that woman can never be completely beautiful. Overweight is a very big obstacle for beauty. ⁷³

As stated by the women who attended the study, weight management can be achieved by continuous sports activities, simple surgical touch, or serious body contour operations. But in the final analysis, it is accepted as a standard that can be met if sufficient effort is exerted. Unlike weight, facial features are more "predestinarian." People are born with a given facial feature, but with the guidance of universal facial beauty ideals and the help of medical science, they can change their appearance and fit the beauty standards. Facial beauty standards have a mathematical explanation per some scientists, as explained by Jefferson, which leads to grouping the ones who does not fit it as *patients* or *abnormals*:

Beautiful faces have ideal facial proportion. Ideal proportion is directly related to divine proportion, and that proportion is 1 to 1.618. All living organisms, including humans, are genetically encoded to develop to this proportion because there are extreme aesthetic and physiologic benefits. The clear majority of us are not perfectly proportioned because of environmental factors. Establishment of a universal standard for facial beauty will significantly simplify the diagnosis and treatment of facial disharmonies and abnormalities. More important, treating to this standard will

⁷³ Kilolu değilim şu an ama kilolu olduğum dönemler için söylüyorum kilo güzelliğin önünde engel, kilo ve güzellik bence bir arada çok zor. Çok güzel yüzü olan kilolu bir bayanda hiçbir zaman her şey tam olamaz. O kadın asla tam güzel olamaz gibi geliyor bana. Kilo büyük bir engel güzel olmaya.

*maximize facial aesthetics, TMJ health, psychologic and physiologic health, fertility, and quality of life.*⁷⁴

The female standard facial beauty ideal is based on smooth and proportional facial parts⁷⁵. Aesthetic surgery (or sequent surgeries) is offered to facial parts that are accepted as non-proportional or smooth. Most of the women who attended the study experienced a facial surgery. Labelled as predestinarian, facial modifications are still possible with surgery for the attendees.

The last criterion - young look - differs from the first two - weight and facial beauty. Aging, is defined as "fighting a losing battle" by women who attended the study. Being inevitable, an aged body became more aesthetic starting from the twentieth century even if the wish for a young body is old in myths; it seems as pathologic and not desired.⁷⁶ All women who answered the questions mentioned that there is no escape from this pathology of getting old at some point, and most of them stated that they plan to escape from looking old as much as they can. The major reaction is to panic when talking about the inevitability of getting older. Even death seems more acceptable for some women in the study compared to aging.

(G)It is a terrible feeling. It is something we can't fight in the end, whatever we do. Sometimes at night I find myself dreaming about crazy projects like real-life Photoshop. I can't believe that there is no solution for that. I want to call out to scientists here if they don't release the solution because of increasing population: we don't want to live

⁷⁴ Jefferson, Y. (2004). Facial beauty-establishing a universal standard. *International Journal Of Orthodontics-Milwaukee-*, 15(1), 9-26.

⁷⁵ Cross, J. F., & Cross, J. (1971). Age, sex, race, and the perception of facial beauty. *Developmental Psychology*, 5(3), 433.

⁷⁶ Gilman, S. L. (1999). *Making the body beautiful: A cultural history of aesthetic surgery*. Princeton University Press.

*forever; we want to die beautiful. I mean okay we can die but we don't want to get older.*⁷⁷

Even though the media proposes aesthetic surgery techniques as a “magical” touch, aesthetic surgery is limited, especially when the subject is aging. Women who had or who plan to have an aesthetic surgery are aware that none of the aesthetic surgeries can give them eternal beauty, because beauty, even for women who were “born beautiful,” is finite. Women who interpret being loved, respected, or feeling empowered conditionally with being beautiful also inwardly know that the love, respect, and empowerment are temporary, and will not last forever. For this reason, living a healthy, long life that correspondingly contains the age of seniority is nothing but a bad dream. Most of the women who attended the study mention that living life only until the last day they can keep their beauty is more preferable than a life that contains a seniority period where aesthetic surgery cannot help them. Evitable or inevitable, these three criteria shape the silhouette of the standard and idealized woman, and at the same time, help women to place themselves in a position while benchmarking the ideal women ensue from the criteria mentioned.

Our bodies are not only our homes but they are also the means for evaluating our self-worth, as Calasanti and Slevin mentions.⁷⁸ “Aging properly” is seen as a criterion to self respect and aging naturally is accepted as a loss of function, according to Gullette.⁷⁹ In today’s world

⁷⁷ Korkunç bir his. Ne yaparsak yapalım sonunda karşı gelemeyeceğimiz bir şey. Bazen geceleri kendimi gerçek hayat Photoshop’u gibi çılgın projeler planlarken yakalıyorum. Bence buna bir çözüm bulunmamasına imkan yok. Nüfus sorunu yüzünden bunu piyasaya sunmuyorlarsa buradan bilim adamlarına seslenmek istiyorum: bizim derdimiz ölmek değil, güzel ölmek. Yani yine ölelim tamam ama yaşlanmayalım.

⁷⁸ Calasanti, T. M., & Slevin, K. F. (2001). *Gender, social inequalities, and aging*. AltaMira Press.

⁷⁹ Gullette, M. M. (1997). *Declining to decline: Cultural combat and the politics of the midlife*. University of Virginia Press.

of consumerism, the expectation from the bodies are to be young, thin and toned.⁸⁰ Aging is not seen as a result of a natural process, but it is accepted as something to be solved by approaches of medical ideology, and aging is expected to result with a beautiful and controlled body with the help of medical approaches.⁸¹ This controlled aging procedure is named as aging successfully by Slevin⁸² and Young&Gillet explains the expectation of society to age successfully as a moral imperative.⁸³ Our bodies are expected to be disciplined by practices of exercise, dieting and aesthetic surgery to fit the beauty norms and to decrease the stress of the surveillance and social pressure⁸⁴, and if aging is inevitable, it is expected not to look old at least.⁸⁵ Different than having smooth facial features or losing weight, aging and getting old is impossible to cease. According to Cruikshank, aging is within and beyond our control, it is something that can be postponed but cannot be escaped.⁸⁶ While both men and women age similarly, gender plays an important role in the experience of aging period, in relation with social pressure.⁸⁷ As Sontag mentions, even

⁸⁰ Slevin, K. F. (2010). "If I had lots of money... I'd have a body makeover:" Managing the Aging Body. *Social Forces*, 88(3), 1003-1020.

⁸¹ Calasanti, T. M., & Slevin, K. F. (2001). *Gender, social inequalities, and aging*. AltaMira Press.

⁸² Slevin, K. F. (2010). "If I had lots of money... I'd have a body makeover:" Managing the Aging Body. *Social Forces*, 88(3), 1003-1020.

⁸³ White, P., Young, K., & Gillett, J. (1995). Bodywork as a moral imperative: Some critical notes on health and fitness. *Loisir et societe/Society and Leisure*, 18(1), 159-181.

⁸⁴ Gilleard, C. J., & Higgs, P. (2000). *Cultures of ageing: Self, citizen, and the body*. Pearson Education.

⁸⁵ Öberg, P., & Tornstam, L. (2001). Youthfulness and fitness—identity ideals for all ages?. *Journal of Aging and Identity*, 6(1), 15-29.

⁸⁶ Cruikshank, M. (2013). *Learning to be old: Gender, culture, and aging*. Rowman & Littlefield.

⁸⁷ Slevin, K. F. (2010). "If I had lots of money... I'd have a body makeover:" Managing the Aging Body. *Social Forces*, 88(3), 1003-1020.

though men and women age similarly, when they experience getting older, men's bodies are named as distinguished, while women are branded as failing to be feminine.⁸⁸ As a result of higher expectations in such a battle that is known that it will be lost sooner or later, women develop more concern about their physical appearance and feel social pressure more⁸⁹ and also they feel more dissatisfied with their appearance than men.⁹⁰ Being defined by different perspectives, beauty, attractiveness and physical appearance are defined either as a tool of empowerment or means of reproducing patriarchy. In addition to global approaches to meaning of attractiveness, and appearance of female body, Turkish scholars also focused on the subject from many different perspectives. Beauty, that is determined by fashion industry, media and also by medical professionals, not only have a relation with social empowerment, but it is also directly related to self worth, and psychological empowerment as well. It makes self confidence of women a vulnerable notion to link a concept that is related to self worth and empowerment with temporary and changeable variables like aging and physical beauty norms.

⁸⁸ Sontag, S. (1982). Double standard of aging. *Readings in adult psychology: contemporary perspectives*/edited by Lawrence R. Allman, Dennis T. Jaffe.

⁸⁹ Cash, T. F. (2002). Women's body images. In *Handbook of women's sexual and reproductive health* (pp. 175-194). Springer US.

⁹⁰ Grogan, Sarah. (1999). *Body Image*. Routledge

CHAPTER 3

SURGEONS' AND PATIENTS' PERCEPTION OF BEAUTY

In this chapter, the main objective will be analysing the answers given by the interviewees particularly about the view of "ideal woman," variables that effect this female ideal appearance, women's positioning in view of the standardized ideal, endeavours to decrease the distance between self and ideal woman, and finally, carrying out all effort to reach the ideal female appearance as an "investment" procedure. Conceptualization of beauty and the ideal woman will be analysed in this chapter.

3.1 Aesthetic Surgeons

Aesthetic surgeons are positioned in two different places in standardizing the female ideal beauty: as the promoter of the beauty ideals and as the implementer of defined beauty standards.

Almost all aesthetic surgeons interviewed for the study explained the ideally beautiful woman like a scientific fact, with measurements and numerical values:

(E1) I have a professional and a personal idea (about ideal beauty). For me personally, someone with shiny and happy eyes is beautiful, if her heart is beautiful then she is beautiful, which is the only thing we cannot perform with a surgery. If you ask my professional idea, how scientifically a woman seems beautiful for someone, then I must talk about numbers. Important thing about face is the angles. Angles of nose, lips, and eyebrows mustn't be narrow, and too much hollowness mustn't be available. Body is also evaluated over numbers. A 1.65 tall woman must be B or C cup, 55 kilograms. Hips must

be narrow and lifted. Legs must be straight and tall, woman should be well dressed, make up and haircut must be proper.
91

In the interviews, all participant aesthetic surgeons mentioned that the current ideal of beauty is defined over the western beauty norms, with a small chin and nose, long legs and preferably white skin. 92

(E1) The women I mentioned (above) is western. Aren't the generally accepted ideas and movements western? Idea of beautiful woman is Western itself. Most popular surgery in Far East is eyelid surgery, for example. But I should mention that, the ideal one is not the Western women's eyes, the desired eyes are mostly Middle Eastern, big and beautiful. But we don't see a Western woman have an eyelid surgery. Middle Eastern women uses contact lenses in the colour of Western women, while the beautiful one is her own eyes' shape. 93

About the implementation of beauty norms, aesthetic surgeons in the study mostly mention that the beauty standards, and also women's demands, may shift, while the shift does not digress beauty norms that are standardized globally, as it is also stated in Tarı-Kasnakoğlu's study⁹⁴. Also, surgeons state that the norms are set according to the

⁹¹ Bu konuda bir kişisel fikrim bir de profesyonel fikrim var. Bence gözlerinin içi gülen, cıvı cıvı bir insan güzeldir, kalbi iyiye güzeldir ki bu da bizim operasyonla yapamadığımız tek şey. Profesyonel fikrimi, bir kadının bilimsel olarak karşdakine güzel görünmesinin birimlerini sorarsanız da ölçülerden bahsetmem gerekir. Yüzde önemli olan açılardır. Burunda, dudakta, kaşta dar açı olmamalı, çok oyukluk olmamalıdır. Vücut da oranlar üzerinden beğenilir. 1.65 boydaki bir kadının B ya da C cup olması, 55 kilo civarında olması gerekir. Popo dar ve arkaya çıkık olmalıdır. Bacak düz, uzun olmalı, kadın güzel giyinmeli, makyajı, saç kesimi güzel olmalıdır.

⁹² Some may point that there are many women of color, Asian or Latin women who are modelling, or accepted as beautiful. But the difference will arise when we look at their representation in media. Those women are mostly announced as "success stories", and named as "Latin Beauty", "Asian Star", "Black Diamond", where none of White western beauty idols are named as "White Star" or "European Beauty"

⁹³ Az önce bahsettiğim o ideal kadın batılıdır. Genel olarak dünyada kabul gören fikirler, hareketler de batılı değil mi zaten? Güzel kadın fikri de batılıdır. Uzakdoğu'da en çok yapılan operasyon göz ameliyatıdır mesela. Ancak şunu da belirtmem gerekir ki, bu göz konusunda ideal olan aslında batılı kadının standart göz şekli değildir, biraz daha orta doğulu bir gözdür istenen, büyük ve güzel şekilli. Ancak hiç batılı kadınların göz ameliyatı olduğunu görmeyiz. Orta doğulu kadın gidip batılı kadının göz renginden olan lensler takar, ama ölçüsel olarak güzel olan kendi gözüdür.

⁹⁴ Tarı, B. (2008). *Exploring local and global ideals of beauty in Turkey: Discourses and practices of plastic surgery patients and physicians* (Doctoral dissertation, Bilkent University).

specialities of Western women in the contemporary world. Surgeons mostly pointed out that they would not prefer most surgeries today, since today's demands are significantly different, which develops the "fashion" side of aesthetic surgeries.

(E4) Perception of beauty is like science. Before, while some theories were still unknown, and some things were not proven yet, we were thinking that what we know is true, and we used to act accordingly. The surgeries were done in relation to "smaller nose is better", "bigger breast are beautiful". Now perception is changed, so are the surgery results. (What effects women's perception of beauty is their surroundings, the current idea of beauty. I can say it clearly. What effects men's women's everyone's perception of beauty is foregrounded and dominant rules of beauty. Whatever dominated in television, internet, American movie sector, shift our perception of beauty⁹⁵

When it comes to the practical side for the promotion of beauty norms, there are some technical restrictions for aesthetic surgeons. As per the Therapeutic Medicines Advertising Act, it is forbidden to display images of patients before and after treatment/surgery for advertising purposes in Turkey. Due to the restriction, aesthetic surgeons are not allowed to make their own advertisements as they wish to in broadcast media. For this reason, almost all aesthetic surgeons in Turkey use social media "effectively." Because they cannot post photos legally, they use their personal Instagram and Facebook accounts, and post photos of their patients, as shown below:

⁹⁵ Güzellik algısı da bilim gibidir. Yıllar önce bazı teoriler bilinmezken ve bazı şeyler henüz keşfedilmemişken, eldekiler doğru sanılıyordu ve buna göre hareket ediliyordu. Ne kadar küçük burun o kadar güzel, ne kadar büyük meme o kadar güzel diye ameliyatlar yapılıyordu. Şimdi algı da değişti, ameliyat sonuçları da. (Kadınların güzellik algısını etkileyen) Etraflarıdır, o sırada mevcut olan baskın güzellik fikridir. Bunu net bir şekilde söyleyebilirim. Kadınların da, erkeklerin de, herkesin kafasındaki algıyı etkileyen ve oluşturan o sırada baskın olarak göz önüne getirilen güzellik kurallarıdır. Televizyon, internet, Amerikan sineması o sırada neyi pohpohluyorsa, algı ona doğru kayar.



Image 1. Photograph taken from the Facebook feed of a famous aesthetic surgeon in Turkey.⁹⁶

Beauty professionals present new techniques in aesthetic surgery via their columns in nation-wide newspapers, and they also attend TV programs to explain details of surgeries almost every day. In standardization of beauty, digital, printed, or broadcast media are all important, and they collabourate with each other to cover up the insufficiency of one another. Media in all forms can promote one thing as the “ideal,” and with this power it is possible to effect or modify what is beautiful, and to let people think how far they are from the mainstream ideal of beauty.

3.2 Concept of “Ideal Woman” and Woman’s Classification through their View of Ideal Woman

Notion of ideal woman is not a newly created concept; it subsisted centuries ago, even before the aesthetic surgery technology was created. Noses were still big, or breasts were small even before the first aesthetic surgeries, but the idea of aesthetic surgery became

⁹⁶<https://www.facebook.com/guncelestetik/photos/a.315387258495084.80328.314813795219097/1255348074498993/?type=3> (03.08.2016)

available only after Renaissance.⁹⁷ Centuries passed and aesthetic surgery became a part of daily life with technological developments. Trends and demands changed from “vital needs” like pathogenesis or battle scars to a liberation from knowing that an individual can change his or her physical appearance anytime, in a world where the judgment is made on appearance.⁹⁸

Ideal woman has a specific and standard image in the contemporary world, with a slim silhouette still with curves, a young face and body, and smooth facial features⁹⁹. And these general ideals not only shape women’s idea of beauty or their bodies, but also their identity since the concept of beauty not only represents an intervention to beauty but also forms identity.¹⁰⁰

According to Tarı-Kasnakoğlu’s study, the ideal beauty is defined two main groups: Ideal women as previous self or ideal women as someone else. Tarı-Kasnakoğlu defines the segregation as:

*Results indicate that beauty is perceived as something that individuals improve, upgrade, and refine through time. Potential patients tend to have one of two ideals: The individual’s own younger appearance or someone else’s appearance.*¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Gilman, S. L. (1999). *Making the body beautiful: A cultural history of aesthetic surgery*. Princeton University Press.

⁹⁸ Ibid

⁹⁹ Gilbert, L. A., Deutsch, C. J., & Strahan, R. F. (1978). Feminine and masculine dimensions of the typical, desirable, and ideal woman and man. *Sex Roles*, 4(5), 767-778.

¹⁰⁰ Heyes, C. J. (2007). Normalisation and the psychic life of cosmetic surgery. *Australian Feminist Studies*, 22(52), 55-71.

¹⁰¹ Tarı, B. (2008). *Exploring local and global ideals of beauty in Turkey: Discourses and practices of plastic surgery patients and physicians* (Doctoral dissertation, Bilkent University).

Answers given by the respondents of this study is harmonious with this classification, still, there are some differences within the groups. According to Tari-Kasnakoğlu, the women who are willing to seem like another woman are following the features of an ideal image created by media, advertising, fashion industry, film or music industry or beauty pageants. In the second group, Tari-Kasnakoğlu mentions, women want to look like their younger self.¹⁰² The women attended to this study and located in the group mentioned, differently, claims that they want to seem like their previous self, not only with the aim of looking young. Women after experiencing a period that results with a change in the body, like giving birth to a child, gaining/losing weight are also locating themselves in this group. They are willing to travel back in time not just to look younger, but to look like their previous self in different areas.

3.2.1 Idealizing Physical Appearance of Other Women

Throughout the years, the idea of “aesthetic must be personal and tailor made” became trendier, and aesthetic surgery met with “natural looking touch.” Surgeons continuously declared, mostly on TV and magazines, that visiting a surgeon’s office with a photo of someone else is a very senseless act, and the operations must be designed for the individual. Thus, the wish to looking like one specific person became outdated, but never disappeared.

(E1) Different countries have different demands, because women from different parts of the world have different body shapes. Mediterranean women have larger hips. Mediterranean women demand operations that may help her hip look better and legs longer. But I can say that, even though women’s bodies are diverse, their ideal woman

¹⁰² Tari, B. (2008). *Exploring local and global ideals of beauty in Turkey: Discourses and practices of plastic surgery patients and physicians* (Doctoral dissertation, Bilkent University).

*dream is common. Long legs, thin, small nose, fleshy lips... I've managed my first operation 20 years ago. Aesthetic surgery always aimed to stay away from synthetic look, but earlier times the technique didn't let us do it. Those times, widely accepted surgeons were performing surgeries on famous women of society and the results were synthetic looking unsuccessful ones. Then since these women were rich leaders, other women were demanding the same synthetic looking unsuccessful operations. Now leader women have aesthetic surgery, but they look natural.*¹⁰³

Today, women generally do not wish to declare that they want to seem like one specific person. Rather, they mostly point out that they want their bodies to be "normalized" or "corrected".¹⁰⁴ However, the notion of "ideal woman" still continues its existence within this normalization and correction, not on the basis of one single person, but as a concept:

*(G3) I didn't aim to look like someone else. Everyone must be one of a kind, I think. But at the end of the surgery, notwithstanding I dreamed of one specific woman, for sure I had a beautiful woman on my mind and I seem like her.*¹⁰⁵

Unfortunately, the distance between the concept of beautiful women and real women is getting bigger. According to the study, after

¹⁰³ Farklı ülkelerin farklı talepleri vardır çünkü farklı ülkelerin kadınlarının farklı vücut yapıları vardır. Akdeniz kadınının kalçası geniştir. Akdeniz kadını bacağının uzun görünmesi, kalçasının güzel görünmesini amaçlayan operasyonlar ister mesela. Ancak şunu diyebilirim ki, kadınların vücut ölçüleri ve yapıları birbirinden farklı ise de, varmak istedikleri ideal kadın hayali ortaktır. Uzun bacaklı, zayıf, büyük olmayan bir buruna, dolgun dudaklara sahip... Ben ilk kendi yönetimimdeki estetik operasyonu yaklaşık 20 yıl önce yaptım. Estetik cerrahın amacı her zaman sentetik görüntüden uzak durmaktı ancak ilk zamanlarda teknik buna bazen elveremeyebiliyordu. O dönemlerde kabul gören bazı estetik cerrahlar ünlü ve cemiyetten kadınlara ameliyat yapıyordu ve bu ameliyat sentetik görünen başarısız bir sonuç ortaya çıkıyordu. Sonra bu kadın ünlü, zengin ve lider olduğu için bu sentetik görüntü moda oluyor, diğer kadınlar da onlara benzemek için aynı başarısız ameliyatı talep ediyordu. Şimdi moda konusunda lider olan sözü geçen kadınlar estetikli ancak doğal görünümünden yana.

¹⁰⁴ Gimlin, D. (2000). Cosmetic surgery: Beauty as commodity. *Qualitative Sociology*, 23(1), 77-98.

¹⁰⁵ Kimseye benzemek istemem. Herkes kendine özgü olmalı bence. Ama ameliyat sonunda, özellikle bir kadını hayal etmemiş olsam da elbet kafamda güzel bir kadın vardı ve ona benzemiştim.

viewing the images of women who are accepted as “ideal,” women are less satisfied with their look and body image, and in the long term, this results in eating disorders and depression.¹⁰⁶

Societal expectations from women about beauty have increased and toughened. Women are pressured to be beautiful, and their body image that does not fit the beauty standards of the society are started to be named as “pathologic.”¹⁰⁷ Beauty ideals surge, wave, and shape the beauty norms of women. Even facial or body shape beauty norms change as trends of fashion do - faster and harsher than before. Women must follow and catch the new trends of beauty, and they need to reshape themselves again and again in relation to the new ideals.

(G4) My idea of beautiful woman wasn't the same all the time. Before, there were other popular women, and we used to like them. Now the popular and trendy ones are different. For example, if I say that I like Banu Alkan and I walk around in her style, everybody laughs at me. Before, I used to seem like women I used to like, now I am similar to women I like today.¹⁰⁸

The trends can be followed more easily in clothing, hair styles, eyebrow shapes, and more; however, the need to follow the new trends in body modification can be painful: there are many women who have aesthetic surgery and have a narrow, small and snub nose; but five or ten years later they need to have a revision surgery because a more natural look has become “popular” in 2010s. Having

¹⁰⁶ Pinhas, L., Toner, B. B., Ali, A., Garfinkel, P. E., & Stuckless, N. (1999). The effects of the ideal of female beauty on mood and body satisfaction. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 25(2), 223-226.

¹⁰⁷ Morgan, K. P. (1991). Women and the knife: Cosmetic surgery and the colonization of women's bodies. *Hypatia*, 6(3), 25-53.

¹⁰⁸ Güzel kadın fikrim hep aynı kişi değildi. Eskiden başka kadınlar gündemdeydi, biz de onları beğeniyorduk. Şimdi ise gündemde olan, beğenilen kadınlar başka kişiler. Mesela şimdi Banu Alkan'ı beğeniyorum deyip onun gibi gezsem herkes bana güler. Eskiden, o zamanlar beğendiğim kadınlara benziyordum, şimdi ise şu anda beğendiğim kadınlara benziyorum.

Botox and filling the face with medical materials was one of the biggest trends in the 2000s, while too much Botox is today named as “pillow face syndrome” and is being used to insult actresses with Botox in US magazines.¹⁰⁹ Expectations from women arose with the new trend of beauty: Women must be young but not “pillow face” in older ages, perfectly beautiful but natural and fit but not “manly.”

3.2.2 Idealizing Previous Outlook of Self

Ideal woman as “past self” is mostly seen in surgeries applied after pregnancy, weight loss, trauma or operations related to aging. Women demand the surgery after a “process” has been completed: After they decide that they will not give birth to another child, they have lost enough weight, or they have aged “enough.” In the interviews, four women mentioned that they had a surgery after they decided that they will not give birth again or they have lost enough weight. All these women had a non-facial surgery, like breast implants or liposuction. Facial surgeries, if not related to a trauma, are mostly linked to “ideal women as another woman, while body surgeries are strongly related to “ideal women as previous self.”” All women who said that they had surgery after they decided they will not give birth again or lost enough weight mentioned that they did not aim to look like someone else, or they want to look like previous self. Only one woman stated that she had an ideal of another woman, but she did not visit the doctor’s office with an image of her.

(G2) I never wanted to seem like someone else, besides I didn't have such a surgery, I didn't have the surgery to be more beautiful, I had the surgery to fix my disrupted parts. Actually, you don't seem like someone else with surgeries I've made. Still, it seems like the beautiful woman in my

¹⁰⁹As an example: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-1174448/Rise-Pillow-Face-The-new-look-gives-away-celebs-plastic-surgery-try-recapture-youth.html> (19.05.2016)

mind but I didn't have one person, I had an ideal, and I seem like her now. ¹¹⁰

In the idea of "ideal woman as previous self," women have a desire to have their previous body again. They mostly claim that their body is changed due to exogenous reasons, and they decide to have a surgery to *travel back in time* to be themselves again. Women that believe the ideal woman is someone else point out that their "ugliness" is given, determinist. They change their "faith" and become "someone else, someone new," with these surgeries. But when it comes to the idea of ideal woman as previous self, they blame not faith, but an exterior affecter, and they – sometimes – revengefully fight the things that brought them to the point where they stand now.

3.3 Perception of Other Women's Beauty After Aesthetic Surgery Experience

Women in this study who had an aesthetic surgery explained and mostly complained about other people's interventions on their personal space related to physical appearance, before their surgery experience. In their interview answers, a surprising stability became evident regarding their intervention to other women's appearance. Almost every attendee to the interview criticized other women who rejected having a surgery, were overweight, or differed from the mainstream beauty ideal with their own will.

Rather than recovering an error, they chose to repeat this intervention by seeing it as a right that comes from their new position in society that is a result of their *investment*. Women whose bodies

¹¹⁰ Hiç kimseye benzemek gibi bir kaygım olmadı zaten o tarz bir estetik operasyon olmadım ben daha güzel olmak için değil gerçekten bozulan yerlerimi düzeltmek için operasyon oldum. Zaten benim ameliyat olduğum yerlerle birine benzeyemiyorsun da. Gerçi aklımdaki güzel kadının vücuduna benzedi ama aklımda bir kişi yoktu, bir ideal vardı, ona da benzedim.

were intervened by other people's comments, start to think that intervening became the right of those people due to the material and non-material investment they have made for their new body.

Women who think that they gained the power of controlling their own body after the surgery, request a right to comment on other women's bodies as a nascence of *the investment*.

3.3.1 Bodies of Other Women: Surveillance on Other Women's Bodies

Surveillance is an important tool of "disciplining" one's body, as Sontag mentions.¹¹¹ Fitzsimmons claims that, body surveillance together with objectification of female body, results with accepting female body as an object to be gazed and criticized.¹¹² McKinley and Hyde points that, not being only a tool of changing women's bodies into object or a subject of gaze, it also results with convincing women that their bodies are modifiable with enough amount of effort.¹¹³ According to Harper and Tiggemann on the other hand, surveillance may result with self objectification which means disciplining one's own body, and objectification of other women's bodies by internationalization and reflection of beauty ideals.¹¹⁴

Not only women's perception of their own beauty, but also their classification of other women's beauty changes after having an

¹¹¹ Sontag, S. (1982). Double standard of aging. *Readings in adult psychology: contemporary perspectives/edited by Lawrence R. Allman, Dennis T. Jaffe*.

¹¹² Fitzsimmons-Craft, E. E., Harney, M. B., Koehler, L. G., Danzi, L. E., Riddell, M. K., & Bardone-Cone, A. M. (2012). Explaining the relation between thin ideal internalization and body dissatisfaction among college women: The roles of social comparison and body surveillance. *Body image*, 9(1), 43-49.

¹¹³ McKinley, N. M. (2004). Resisting body dissatisfaction: Fat women who endorse fat acceptance. *Body Image*, 1(2), 213-219.

¹¹⁴ Harper, B., & Tiggemann, M. (2008). The effect of thin ideal media images on women's self-objectification, mood, and body image. *Sex Roles*, 58(9-10), 649-657.

aesthetic surgery. In addition to perception, women who had an aesthetic surgery develop a new space of authority over other women's bodies. With this new authority, women classify bodies of other women differently.

Rather than using "beautiful" and "ugly" as a rating label, they create some sub-groups for "beautiful" and "ugly" such as "innate and effortlessly beautiful," "laboriously beautiful," "not yet beautiful," or "condignly ugly."

3.3.1.1 A New Classification for Beauty: Innate Beauty and Acquired Beauty

Natural beauty and achieved beauty have been pit against each other throughout the history of female beauty.¹¹⁵ Given and natural beauty is accepted to have a link with truth, goodness, knowledge, spirituality and passivity.¹¹⁶ Oppositely, a woman who tries to seem beautiful is linked to agency: enhanced beauty is labelled to be active, and reflects the intentions of the woman herself.¹¹⁷

Women who had an aesthetic surgery and attended the study do not reject "activeness," but they also value it over both natural beauty and rejection of modifying the body for the sake of beauty. According to the answers given by the interviewees of this study, women who had an aesthetic surgery tend to group beauty and ugliness in two different sub-groups in relation to their new experience in the process

¹¹⁵ Clarke, L. H., & Griffin, M. (2007). The body natural and the body unnatural: Beauty work and aging. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 21(3), 187-201.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Holliday, R., & Taylor, J. S. (2006). Aesthetic surgery as false beauty. *Feminist Theory*, 7(2), 179-195.

of beautification. With the new explanations of beauty and ugliness, women who had an aesthetic surgery find themselves new areas of implementing their newly gained authority. Sub-groups are created in relation to their material or non-material labour and investment spent on beauty.

The classification of beauty is mostly based on naturality and acquisition. Valuing naturality in their newly constructed look, women who had an aesthetic surgery controversially cherish the artificial beauty more than the innate one. Women who had an aesthetic surgery mostly stress on the labour and material/non-material investment they have spent when they are talking about the “naturally” beautiful who can never understand them, because of their “privileged” position.

Devaluation of natural beauty by women who had an aesthetic surgery originates from the lack of need for effort to be loved, accepted, approved, and desired. Women who accept aesthetic surgery as an investment and effort, which puts naturally “beautiful” women in the *silver spoon in mouth* position. Their innate beauty becomes less valuable compared to the gained and achieved beauty of women who had an aesthetic surgery.

3.3.1.2 Classifying “Ugliness”: by Women who Had an Aesthetic Surgery

Women’s attitude towards women who have enough financial possibilities but do not have aesthetic surgery or comply with standard beauty norms was one of the most unexpected results of the study. Women that attended the survey mostly matched fitting standard beauty norms with self-esteem.

(G9) I say that it is laziness. That women don't have self-respect (on women who have enough economic power but don't have aesthetic modifications) ¹¹⁸

Their reactions to women who do not fit standard beauty norms were mostly didactic, angry and sometimes even hateful. Even their "womanhood" is questioned because of the lack of an effort to fit the norms, and they are not accepted as "woman."

(G10) Sometimes I come across with women in the street whose grey hair appear. They seem disgusting in my idea. Especially when it appears a fingerbreadth. Women who completely don't dye their hair, the ones who accepted, I remove them from the group of women and I don't get angry with them. But what kind of difference may woman who stop dying her hair and walking around with two pair of colours in their head; and woman who doesn't use deodorant may differ from each other? ¹¹⁹

For them, the only reason for not having a surgery might be their fear of having a surgery, if it is not related to laziness.

(G8) People who have a fear from the surgery don't do it. Or they say "I am beautiful as I am" and fool themselves. Generally, a woman who cherish beauty, somehow have the aesthetic touch. For me, she makes it right. What does a small amount of fear mean against being found ugly? I believe that cowards can't reach the beauty of life. ¹²⁰

Women who had aesthetic surgery approach other women's "defects" as a disease that can be cured, and approach women who do not plan to have surgery as patients that can be healed. For this reason, rather

¹¹⁸ (Ekonomik gücü olmasına rağmen bu müdahaleleri yapmayan kişiler hakkında) Tamamen tembellik diyorum. O kadınların kendilerine kişisel saygıları yok.

¹¹⁹ Mesela bazen sokakta saçlarının beyazları görünen kadınlarla karşılaşıyorum. İğrenç görünüyor bence. Hele ki bir de iki parmak çıkıyor falan. Tamamını boyamayan kadınlar mesela kabullenmiş olanlar, onları kadınlar grubundan çıkarıyorum ve onlara kızmıyorum. Ama saçını boyamadan yarısı başka renk gezen kadınla deodorant kullanmayan bir kadın arasında nasıl bir fark olabilir?

¹²⁰ Ameliyattan korkan insanlar yaptırmaz. Ya da ben böyle güzelim deyip kendilerini kandırırlar. Genelde gerçekten güzelliğine estetiğe düşkün bir kadın ne yapar eder her türlü estetik dokunuşları yaptırır. Bence doğru da yapar. Birazcık acı çirkin bulunmak karşısında ne ki. Bence korkaklar yaşamın güzelliklerine de ulaşamıyor.

than feeling empathy towards them, women that had aesthetic surgery disclaim any kind of complaints related or not related to the bodies of other women, and believe that "what can be cured but is not cured must be endured."

Women who attended the survey distinctively try to rationalize the surgeries they experienced. Women's reaction to rationalize their aesthetic surgery may be a result of their concern about other people's views of seeing their beauty as artificial or valueless. Women who had an aesthetic surgery tend to defend themselves against the concerns mentioned above, and to defend, they sometimes "attack" the natural beautiful women and women who do not fit the beauty ideals.

3.3.1.3 Relation of Weight and Hatred

Standard beauty norms dictate women to be slim, and current trends promote a thin body ideal and the ideal is mostly unrealistic, leading a majority of women to face body dissatisfaction, even the ones with normal weight.¹²¹ Weight is one of the most important factors of beauty in the contemporary standards of beauty. As an enemy of standard beauty norms, being overweight became a part of the study. The shape shifting and more significant anger over overweight women were visible in the answers of the study.

For most of the women who attended the study, an overweight woman is described as impossible to be beautiful.

(G4) An overweighed woman cannot be beautiful. It is an obstacle, certainly an obstacle. I am extremely careful about

¹²¹ Coker, E., & Abraham, S. (2014). Body weight dissatisfaction: A comparison of women with and without eating disorders. *Eating behaviors*, 15(3), 453-459.

my weight and I am content. But I am very afraid of gaining weight, for this reason I work extremely hard. Everybody should work and become thin, rather than criticizing slim people. ¹²²

Weight is one of the most important areas of intervention to another person's body. Lack of a desire for changing the "overweight" body silhouette with a surgery or with a non-surgical procedure apparently made interviewees compassionate, but they mostly felt angry about the other women's bodies.

(G1) Unfortunately weight is a part of beauty. Unfortunately, I cannot name a woman as beautiful with 10-15-kilogram overweight. I at most can say that she will be a beautiful woman if she loses weight. Except pregnancy, necessity to use a medicine or disability, I feel an urge to help, and sometimes anger against overweighed people. I say, you have extra 15 kilograms, you don't have the right to eat that pasta. I know it is cruel, but I am so angry with women who carry their extra weights as their faith...If a woman is complaining that she is fat and not finding a solution for that, I want to beat her black and blue and ask what is your problem. Why do you walk around with those extra kilos you have, buddy? ¹²³

It is not clearly understandable for women who attended the study that some women may be content with their weight even if it does not fit the contemporary standards of beauty. A didactic attitude and a wish to *show the right way* is seen in their discourse.

(G1) I try to inseminate myself, that it is their decision and they are happy this way... I try not to judge nobody, but I can't stop what's on my mind, sometimes. "You have money. Hire

¹²² Şişman bir kadın güzel olamaz. (Güzelliğe) engeldir, kesinlikle engeldir. Ben çok dikkat ediyorum kiloma ve çok memnunum. Ama kilo almaktan çok korkuyorum, bu yüzden durmadan emek harcıyorum. Herkes harcasın herkes zayıf olsun oturdukları yerden zayıfları eleştireceklerine.

¹²³ (Kilo güzelliğin) Maalesef bir parçası. Ben ne yazık ki 10-15 kilo fazlası olan birine güzel diyemiyorum. En fazla "aslında kilo verse, ne güzel kadın olur" diyorum. Bir hamilelik, özel bir ilaç kullanımı, sakatlık gibi durumlar hariç, kilolu insanlara içimde bir yardım etme hissi ve bazen de öfke duyuyorum. Diyorum ki 15 kilo fazla var, senin o makarnayı yeme gibi bir lüksün yok. Çok acımasız biliyorum ama ben fazla kilolarını kaderleri gibi taşıyan kadınlara çok kızıyorum. ... Bir kadın hem şişmanım diye söylenip hem de bu soruna çözüm bulmuyorsa, senin neren ağrıyor diye bir temiz dövesim geliyor. Neden üzerindeki fazlalıklarla dolaşıyorsun arkadaş?

a Pilates instructor" I say to myself. I try to impress my close friends. I hold their hand and bring them to gym sometimes.

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Rather than having empathy over other women, women who had an aesthetic surgery pity, hate, and insult overweight women because they believe that they do not exert the necessary labour and investment to achieve the desired life. Because they exerted enough labour and made material and non-material investment, women who had an aesthetic surgery have a right to intervene to others' bodies more than anyone else. Also, seeing women who do not practice an aesthetic surgery or plan to lose weight as a lower group, women who had an aesthetic surgery tend to practice upward social comparison where they may value their material and non-material investment, and experience a positive consequence which is opposite to downward comparison that they lived through for a long time before they had the surgery.¹²⁵

3.3.2 Male Body and Women's Acceptance as is

Contrary to women's striking wish for authority over other women's bodies, it was obvious in the answers of attendees that women did not seek power on the male body. Women were asked several questions about their partner's or ideal man's body during the study. Questions aimed to cover women's expectations from men about their physical appearance, and women's definition of an attractive male body. Surprisingly, almost every woman who attended the study, who had an aesthetic surgery, and who obviously had a focus about

¹²⁴ Onların seçimleri ve böyle mutlular diye telkin ediyorum kendimi... Kimseyi yargılamamaya çalışıyorum ama aklımdan geçene de bazen engel olamıyorum. "Ya arkadaş paran var, pulun var. Tut bir pilates hocası." diyorum ne yalan söyleyeyim. Yakın olduklarımı etkilemeye çalışıyorum. Elinden tutup güzellik salonuna bizzat götürüyorum bazılarını.

¹²⁵ Myers, T. A., & Crowther, J. H. (2009). Social comparison as a predictor of body dissatisfaction: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of abnormal psychology, 118*(4), 683.

physical appearance, revealed their ideas about the unnecessary of a man to focus on outlook as much as a woman.

3.3.2.1 Lack and Futility of Surveillance on Male Body: Views of Women who had an Aesthetic Surgery on Male Body, and Male Body Modification

In relation to the answers given by women who had an aesthetic surgery on ideal male appearance and men's aesthetic surgery, the contrast between women's expectations from other women and their expectations from men was obvious. Women revealed great expectations (sometimes unachievable) about themselves and other women, while they asked men to provide only basic principles. And women alluded that physical appearance and beauty are defined as fiddling in men's intense agendas.

(G14) Everyone must have these surgeries for their own sake, but I don't think that men would deal with this issue. They know that when they skin through taking a bath, we don't ask for more. ¹²⁶

Most women who attended the study explained physical beauty, the effort to be beautiful, and aesthetic surgery as feminine exerts, and could not associate it with masculinity. Some revealed men's focus on their own physical appearance to be "inappropriate" and unappealing.

(G9) My boyfriend is a paunchy, normal Turkish man. This is the way I like anyway. I don't like a man who focuses on himself that much. ¹²⁷

¹²⁶ Herkes kendisi için bu ameliyatlari olmalı ama sanmıyorum bir erkeğin böyle dertlerle uğraşacağını. Biliyorlar ki biz onları biraz yıkanmayı becerdiklerinde kabul edip fazlasını sormuyoruz.

¹²⁷ Benim erkek arkadaşım göbekli normal bir Türk erkeği. Ben böyle seviyorum zaten. Ben öyle kendine çok bakan adamdan hoşlanmam.

Coding beauty and beauty related activities as feminine acts, women left an exceptional area to men and aesthetic surgery. As a justification to male aesthetic surgery, some women pointed out physical conditions that may cause psychological problems.

(G18) I don't have a partner and the partner I imagine do not put up with that kind of pain. In addition to that I see no harm in having a surgery if my partner has a physical dysfunction that effects his psychological condition ¹²⁸

Women do not seem to stress on the inequality between their and society's expectations from men and women. Aware of the difference, they reproduce it by using enforcing it by choice. It is explicit that the physical perfection expected from women is not subjected to men, and women who attended the study revealed that they accepted and reproduced this situation. Language used to explain women's and men's physical specialties in case of a deviation from the ideal one differ from each other.

(G19) I don't believe that men would suffer to seem beautiful; we accept them ugly as well. I don't think that anyone calls a paunchy man as "whale". A man with a big nose is charismatic. No one looks at the defects in their bodies. ¹²⁹

Other people's reactions differ for men and women about rejecting to have an aesthetic surgery. Not having an aesthetic surgery is normal and preferable for men, while it is an issue of self-esteem when a woman decides not to have a surgery. Also, while a generally accepted universal beauty is strictly applied to women, men are less

¹²⁸ Partnerim yok ve kafamdaki partner de bu tarz acılara katlanmaz. Bununla beraber ruh sağlığını etkileyecek derecede kötü bir görüntü veya fiziksel açıdan rahatsızlık veren bir fonksiyon bozukluğu varsa düzeltmesinde sakınca görmem.

¹²⁹ (Erkeklerin güzel görünmek için acıya katlanacağını) sanmıyorum, biz onları çirkin olarak da kabul ediyoruz. Göbekli bir adama kimse balina demez. Büyük burunlu erkek karizmatiktir denir. Kimse onların vücutlarındaki kusurlara bakmaz.

affected by the standard norms, and their deviation from the standard is justified with local characteristics.

(G8) As women, are we Scandinavian? His belly, big nose, hair are okay, but it is a problem if we don't seem like women they love from all these countries. This is not fair. But I don't know why I try to fit into this. My beauty and aim to keep myself beautiful means "self-respect", but if I complaint because he doesn't go to gym, if I complaint about his hair, then I become materialist. This is not fair.

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Women have almost impossible beauty standards for themselves that are set by the society and reproduced by themselves. They do not have a perfectionist attitude towards men as much as they do to women. According to the answers given by women who attended the survey, it seems that women accept men with their defects and imperfections, but they reject doing this to themselves and other women. Sometimes they even question the fairness of the situation. Most of the women in the research accepted this as a "fact" that beauty is for women, and men are not supposed to spend time on their physical appearance as much as women are, and if they do, it is not a very manly and preferred attitude. Being beautiful is accepted by women themselves as a responsibility of women, and their desire to clamp down on others' bodies is only limited with other women, not other men.

Davis points that, even though men's demand on aesthetic surgery procedures is increasing, number of demands of men will never be equal or more than female demands. She points that, men will never be the subject of the beauty myth, and since most of the aesthetic surgeons are men, they will never promote men's surgeries as much

¹³⁰ Kadınlar olarak biz İskandinav ülkesinden miyiz? Onun göbeği, büyük burnu, kolları tamam, biz onların hastası olduğu ülkelerin kadınlarına benzemezsek sorun var. Bu hiç adil değil. Ama neden buna uymaya çalıştığımı bilmiyorum. Benim güzelliğim, kendime bakmam "kişisel saygı" oluyor, onun spor yapmamasından, kılından tüyünden şikâyet edersem materyalist oluyorum. Hiç adil değil.

as they do for female. She claims that, aesthetic surgeries will never be a tool for creating masculinity. She has three reasons to explain her assumption, and point why an aesthetic surgery has a “symbolic transgression of norms of femininity”. First, she believes that preoccupation with body is matched with femininity and not with masculinity. Secondly, she claims that admitting how a man looks hurts his feelings is coded to be feminine and has no relation with masculinity in society. And finally she explains that being a passive member of the operation procedure is not linked to masculinity.¹³¹

According to the study conducted by Jacqueline Sanchez Taylor, women who had an aesthetic surgery link aesthetic surgery procedures and beauty norms with women instead of linking the concept with men. Women tend to reproduce the social norms about masculinity listed above, related to reasons why aesthetic surgery will generally be matched with femininity. By this matchup, after the aesthetic surgery women create an area for gender construction, and they believe that they achieve a gender construction procedure that is genuinely related to female and constructing a feminine body.¹³² Women who attended this study mostly point that aesthetic surgery is a “responsibility” of women, and by achieving a “duty” that they match with femininity and dividing from men completely, they believe that they also strengthen their gender construction and femininity.

The idea of female beauty is constructed by many different agents: aesthetic surgeons, media, fashion industry and others. But also, it is a concept that is reproduced by women themselves, by supporting the idealization of other women who fit the norms of beauty, or their

¹³¹ Davis, K. (2002). A dubious equality: men, women and cosmetic surgery. *Body & Society*, 8(1), 49-65.

¹³² Taylor, J. S. (2012, December). Fake breasts and power: Gender, class and cosmetic surgery. In *Women's Studies International Forum* (Vol. 35, No. 6, pp. 458-466). Pergamon.

younger and previous selves. Beauty is also defined in two different section by women who had an aesthetic surgery: the natural and innate beauty, and achieved, constructed beauty. Opposite to women's definitions of female beauty, women who attended this study didn't stress on male physical appearance, and they linked the concept of beauty with women, not men. It was explained by most of the interviewees as a responsibility of female, not male.

CHAPTER 4

DECIDING TO HAVE AN AESTHETIC SURGERY

People may decide to have an aesthetic surgery if they believe that they do not fit the beauty standards in their minds. Beauty standards in one's mind are not set innately, rather, they are built. A person is born into a group of people without knowing if s/he is beautiful or not. Living in society day by day, people become aware of the beauty norms of the society they live in, and their idea of self-beauty becomes apparent.

In this study, 36 different surgeries were referred to by 20 different women. Ten women mentioned that they had only one operation, while 10 pointed out that they had at least two surgeries. Fifteen of the single surgeries were facial surgeries. Most of the women who had a facial surgery explained their pre-surgery self as "not beautiful," while women who had non-facial surgeries expressed their previous self as "not womanlike."

Not all people try to fit the general beauty norms, give the same importance to beauty, and share the same values in the sense of beauty with other people. It was revealed in this study that women have different motives, different histories, and different reasons for deciding to have aesthetic surgery.

4.1 Self-Motived Decisions

The first group that arose from this study mentioned that they always wanted to have a surgery, and they knew that they were “ugly.” These women mostly made up their minds in early adolescence, and accepted the “fact” that they were “ugly,” and started to planning how to “fix it.” The process of adoption for such a harsh statement on their own body is interestingly common to almost all cases.

(G4) I used to see magazines like Elele, Cosmopolitan, Bazaar. When I paid those magazines, my mother used to have fun of me for example. I used to look at thin, beautiful Hollywood stars and wanted to look like them. For a while, while I was thinking that I will never have enough money for the surgery, I became member of some websites like “Beautiful Women with Big Nose” or “Big Nose Appreciation Forum”. I used to love Gisele Bundchen for example because she had a big nose. Then I realized that I don’t like that woman, I was consoling myself. When I had enough money, I didn’t have Gisele or something in my mind.”¹³³

In this study, 35% of women mentioned that they decided to have a surgery before they were 18 years old. These women point out that they realized their physical appearance does not fit the images of “beautiful women” in the magazines or they were told by someone else that they were different from other women:

(G5) “In high school, I used to look at the magazines and dreamed of being as beautiful as that women I saw there. I decided to reshape my nose in that period.”¹³⁴

¹³³ Yirmili yaşlarımda Elele, Cosmopolitan, Bazaar gibi dergileri görürdüm. O dergilere para verince de annem alay ederdi mesela. İçindeki incecik, güzel, Hollywood yıldızı gibi kadınlara bakar onlara benzemek isterdim. Bir ara, ameliyat için param hiç birikmeyecek gibi düşünürken bazı sitelere üye olmuştum. “Beautiful women with big nose”, “Big nose appreciation forum” falan gibi. Gisele Bundchen’i beğenirdim mesela çünkü onun da burnu büyüktü ama kabul görmüştü. Sonra farkına vardım ki aslında o kadını beğenmiyorum, kendimi avutmaya çalışıyorum. Param olduğu sırada aklımda artık Gisele Misele kalmamıştı.

¹³⁴ Lisede o zamanın ünlü dergilerine bakıp o kadınlar kadar güzel olmayı hayal ederdim. Burnumu yaptırmaya o dönemde karar vermiştim.

Most of the women who attended this study and who think that they were aware that they did not fit the given femininity and beauty norms placed themselves in a lower position in the hierarchy amongst women. Those women not only claimed that they are in a lower position in the hierarchy than beautiful women, but they also think that their abilities and talents that do not contain pieces from physical beauty must be placed in a lower position in the hierarchy of abilities. In the hierarchy of abilities and talents, being smart, being good at conversation, and being a good reader are placed in a lower position than being beautiful. Also, success in a profession may be explained as a result of loneliness that comes from “ugliness.”

(G1) I didn't even see myself as a woman in my twenties where I used to explain beautiful woman as perfect... I was spending my life that days by eating Eti Form (a diet cracker brand in Turkey), living with the short-term diets, and doing sports like crazy. I was 10 kilograms more than today. 10 kilograms is a lot if you are 1.65. Unfortunately, I didn't like myself at all. When I turn, and look those years, I explain the reason how I find boyfriends as "maybe I was a good chatter".¹³⁵

It is significant within the study group that women who started to realize that they do not completely fit with the beauty norms accepted the “fact” silently and without a doubt, and they did not fight the ideas of other people; rather, they started to work on what to do next: preparing their families, and searching for the possibilities especially economically for the surgery. When they came out and told their close circle that they do not like their appearance and they want to have a surgery, they faced two types of reactions in general: acceptance or denial.

¹³⁵ Güzel kadını çok kusursuz tarif ettiğim 20li yaşlarda, henüz kendimi kadın olarak görmüyordum bile... O zamanlar hayatım Eti Form kemirerek, yeni çıkan kısa süreli diyetlere göre yaşayarak ve manyaklar gibi spor yaparak geçiyordu. Şu an olduğumdan 10 kilo kadar fazlaydım. 1.64 boyunda birisi için 10 kilo önemlidir. Maalesef de kendimi hiç beğenmiyordum. Hatta şimdi o yıllara dönüp baktığımda, nasıl erkek arkadaş bulabildiğimi de “herhalde muhabbetim güzeldi” diye açıklıyorum.

Some of the women mentioned in the interview that they received a smooth and acquiescent reaction from their close circle. They were supported and promoted, emotionally and financially, by their families. It was interestingly common in almost all cases with a positive reaction that mothers supported the surgery, and fathers objected or abstained. In this study, there were no examples of an openly supporting father.

(G6) My mother supported, my father thought that it was ridiculous but he didn't comment, I think that he said that it is womanish issue and he kept silent.¹³⁶

Support of the family is mentioned as "relieving," while at the same time it can be heart breaking to hear from the close circle that having a surgery is a good idea.

(G10) My friends supported me. Like the co-work of women before a wedding, they twizzled around me curiously. I felt a little like a new-born puppy, and I asked why they weren't twizzling around me before. I felt like more valuable and I felt happy, and then I thought maybe I wasn't that valuable before. But generally, everyone supported me. This made me happy, but I was also sad to know that the change made everyone so happy.¹³⁷

Contrary to the women who are supported by their families and close circle, some other women mentioned that they were not completely supported by their family, friends, partners or close circle.¹³⁸ A

¹³⁶ Annem destekledi, babama saçma geldi ancak çok yorum yapmadı, kadınlar arası bir iş herhalde deyip sustuğunu düşünüyorum.

¹³⁷ Arkadaşlarım çok destekledi. Kadınların düğün öncesi bir ortak çalışması olur ya, onun gibi öncesi sonrası meraklı meraklı etrafımda dolandılar. Biraz yeni alınmış köpek gibi hissettim, biraz da "önceden neden bu kadar etrafımda dönüp durmuyorlardı" dedim içimden. Sanki daha değerli gibi hissedip sevindim, eskiden değerli değil miydim diye üzüldüm. Ama genelde herkes destek oldu. Bu destek hem sevindirdi, hem de değişmem herkesi bu kadar mutlu ettiği için üzdü.

¹³⁸ It would be clarifying to explain that, close circles can not be named easily "homogeneous supporters/excerptors". All interviewees had some supporters, and some excerptors at the same time according to their answers.

supportive attitude towards the expression for a desire to have an aesthetic surgery may be heart breaking as explained above, but it still means one is one step closer to the solution. Having a negative reaction from the close circle, however, created anger and insurrection, according to the answers given. Women in the study stressed repeatedly the “genetic responsibility of the opposing family.”

(G6) Generally my nose was a topic as a part of family traditions. It's a heritage from my father's side. My father and his family took it personal and had hard feelings I guess, but we didn't dwell on the subject, it was accepted.

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An opposition from the members of the family apparently hurt the feelings of the women who decided to have aesthetic surgery, with their interpretation of “family members’ genetic responsibility in their ‘ugliness,’” while at the same time, the decision may hurt the feelings of family members for breaking a promise or a disclaimer of inheritance. Even though physical resemblance has lost its determinant link with parental investment and kinship in today’s world, physical similarity of children to parents is counted as an important arbiter of psychological links for parents and children.¹⁴⁰ According to Volk, numerous studies concluded that children who are similar to their parents receive significantly more financial support and social-emotional resources from the parents than the others.¹⁴¹ A resemblance between family members and an individual may help

¹³⁹ Genelde burnum bir aile geleneği olarak konu edilirdi. Babamın tarafından gelen bir miras bu. Babam ve ailesi sanıyorum biraz kişisel algılayıp bozuldular ama sonra o konu da çok devam etmedi, kabul edildi.

¹⁴⁰ Marre, D., & Bestard, J. (2009). The family body: persons, bodies and resemblance. *European kinship in the age of biotechnology*, 14, 64.

¹⁴¹ Volk, A. A., & Quinsey, V. L. (2007). Parental investment and resemblance: Replications, refinements, and revisions. *Evolutionary Psychology*, 5(1), 147470490700500101.

both sides to develop a more secure and simplified relationship, and may create a feeling of "similarity," and a diffraction from this commonality may be seen by the parents and family members as breaking the promise. People have a genetic tendency to develop social relations more with those who physically and genetically resemble them.¹⁴²

Family and close circle opposition and mother opposition are strictly different from each other, as stated in the answers given in the interviews. Opposing mothers are one of the specific groups that needs to be mentioned privately in the study. Their opposition is mostly explained as a sense of disappointment and incomprehension by the women who had aesthetic surgery. Even after many years since the surgery, the sense of being forsaken can be felt from the answers of the interviewees.

*(G4) My family didn't support me but my friends, everyone around me did. My family said that it is a very stupid decision, and asked me ironically if I was trying to seem like women on TV, if I'm trying to be Ajda Pekkan, if I don't have any other problems to deal with. I cannot forgive their attitude. They didn't understand me, because my mother didn't have such a problem, I used to seem like my father but that was not an issue for a man. I was the one to deal with the ridiculous attitudes of people, to waste my life without having a boyfriend, and I just couldn't accept my mother who didn't have such a problem to have fun with me.*¹⁴³

¹⁴² Rushton, J. P., & Bons, T. A. (2005). Mate Choice and Friendship in Twins Evidence for Genetic Similarity. *Psychological Science*, 16(7), 555-559.

¹⁴³ Ailem desteklemedi ama arkadaşlarım, etrafımdaki herkes desteklediler. Ailem, çok aptalca bir karar, televizyondaki o kadınlara mı benzemeye çalışıyorsun, Ajda Pekkan mı olacaksın, senin başka derdin mi yok gibi sert ve alaycı tavırlarla yaklaştılar. Onların bu tavırlarını affedemiyorum. Benim durumumu anlamadılar, çünkü annemin böyle bir sorunu yoktu, babama benziyordum ama zaten bir erkek için problem değildi bu durum. Herkesin alaycı tavırlarıyla ben karşı karşıya kalıp, sevgili edinemedim, kendime güvenemedim yaşıyıp giderken, böyle bir derdi olmayan annemin benimle dalga geçmesini kabul edemiyorum.

It was common in the answers that opposition of the family is saddening but at the same time quickly disregarded by the interviewees.

An opposition from close friends may only have emotional results, but a family opposition may result in financial burdens as well specific to the surgery. Women under 18 years of age and who do not have an income to plan their future surgeries lose their last hope after being faced with family opposition, until they start to work and save enough money.

As a common attitude, none of the women in this study whose families opposed the surgery gave up the idea of surgery. Instead, they found alternative ways like saving their pocket money, even if it meant wasting their current life while dreaming of a new future.

(G9) Since breast wasn't a body part like nose or chin, it wasn't easy to share it with others. I saved money like the girl in American Beauty, but as a young person, when I spent my money on something else, I had a guilty conscience. ¹⁴⁴

As a final subgroup to the women who knew that they were "ugly" and decided to have surgery at early ages, we need to mention women who disregarded others' positive or negative ideas. These women clearly addressed that they did not ask the opinions of their family, friends and close circle, but they "informed" them that they will have a surgery. More than "this is my body," women based their attitudes on two different soles. First base was "I paid for the surgery so I didn't ask others' ideas".

¹⁴⁴ Meme biraz daha burun veya çene gibi ortada bir bölge olmadığından dolayı, ameliyat olma fikrini başkalarıyla paylaşmak kolay olmadı. American Beauty filmindeki kız gibi biriktiriyordum, ama genç bir insan olarak o parayı başka bir şeye harcadığımda bu defa da vicdan azabı çekiyordum.

(G10) My family didn't support me a lot. Besides I live in a different city, I financed it (my surgery) myself. I didn't ask for approval, I just informed them. ¹⁴⁵

The second part of the group mentioned that they were doing this "generosity" for them (the ones who were supposed to approve or oppose), for this reason they do not need to ask for their approval.

(G14) I didn't share my idea with anyone, I decided myself, and then I told this to my husband. I didn't have an approval seeking attitude. Finally, isn't he the one who will look at me whole day? Actually, I don't think that a Turkish man would oppose breast implants. There are no men I guess, that would oppose a woman who wants to be beautiful. ¹⁴⁶

Some surgical modifications may be identified by women who had an aesthetic surgery as "a favour" if the modification results in a generally accepted aesthetic outcome, and if the possibility of opposition (of a partner mostly) is regarded as impossible and irrational. Bigger breasts are an important example of this situation, and are approved as being more beautiful by aesthetic surgery professionals and is explained by them as "ideal" in Turkey:

(E1) A 1.65 tall woman must be B or C cup, 55 kilograms. Hips must be narrow and lifted. ¹⁴⁷

The definition of beauty norms set by the professionals are almost computational and formulized. Regarding facial operations, most of the surgeons mentioned that they have defined ethical rules and they

¹⁴⁵ Beni ailem çok desteklemedi. Zaten başka bir şehirde yaşıyorum, maddi olarak da kendim karşılıyorum. Bir onaya sunmadım durumumu, sadece bilgi verdim.

¹⁴⁶ Fikrimi kimseyle paylaşmadım, kendim karar verdim, eşime de karar verdikten sonra söyledim. Ondan onay alır bir tavırm da yoktu. Sonuçta bütün gün bana bakacak olan o değil mi. Zaten karşı da çıkacağını sanmıyorum, herhangi bir Türk erkeğinin meme implantına hayır diyeceğini sanmıyorum. Güzel olmak isteyen bir kadına karşı çıkacak bir adam yoktur bence.

¹⁴⁷ 1.65 boydaki bir kadının B ya da C cup olması, 55 kilo civarında olması gerekir. Popo dar ve arkaya çıkık olmalıdır.

would not operate a surgery that may possibly not be suitable for a specific face. But when it comes to breast implants, surgeons allow room for their patients to make the decision. According to the information given on a famous surgeon's webpage, a prosthesis can be as big as the existing breast tissue can cover,¹⁴⁸ and he lists the benefits of having a breast implant as follows:

- Looking and feeling more feminine
- Increases self-respect and self-confidence
- Increases the opportunity to choose cloths easier and feel that they fit better
- You can have more symmetric breasts
- Changes resulted after pregnancy, breast feeding and weight loss.¹⁴⁹

Women in this group, together with the two subgroups, significantly informed their close circle after managing everything about their surgery, and in very short notice, as if they wanted to preclude an opposition or bias towards the decision that was already made.

4.2 Decisions Made with Motivation by Others

The second group of women in the study mentioned that they do not have dissatisfaction with their body or at least they do not classify themselves as "ugly" before being told so by others. None of the individuals were born or say that they are ugly, but the sense of ugliness is constructed in life, with the beauty ideals mentioned in the first group, or comments of others, as in this group.

¹⁴⁸<http://www.guncelozturk.com/gogus-estetik-sanati/gogus-buyutme/>
(31.03.2017)

¹⁴⁹<https://tr.linkedin.com/pulse/meme-b%C3%BCy%C3%BCtme-esteti%C4%9Finin-faydalar%C4%B1-op-dr-g%C3%BCncel-%C3%B6zt%C3%BCrk>
(31.03.2017)

In the period of childhood and pre-adolescence, physical attractiveness is one of the most important factors of acceptance in peer groups. Even more important than sociability and athletic ability in determining friendship choices for children is physical attractiveness of a child.¹⁵⁰ Peer ideas are slightly effective in learning about self-attractiveness in childhood and early adolescence because of the uncensored language of the group. Children mostly express their ideas about others' beauty as easy as they describe the colour of an object.¹⁵¹

The effects of peer comments on physical beauty may not have the same result in every individual. In this study, interviewee answers can be grouped into two according to the effect of peer comments. The first group of women stated that they were hurt by the comments of others, but others mentioned that they were not affected by the comments during their childhood, but recalled the memories of negative comments during their adolescence as a justification for their "ugliness."

(G7) I knew that I was going to do this (surgery) from 14-15 years old. I understood that I wasn't beautiful around 11 but, until around 14, you say "so what, let's go and play". Then it hits you.¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ Zakin, David F. "Physical attractiveness, sociability, athletic ability, and children's preference for their peers." *The Journal of psychology* 115.1 (1983): 117-122.

¹⁵¹ It must be expressed here that the idea of beauty for children may not be perfectly matching with the iade of beauty for adults. It is explained in many studies that beauty idea of children is not only related to aesthetics, but it is related to self interest or familiarity as well.

¹⁵² 14 15 yaşlarımdan beri yaptıracığımı biliyordum. 11 yaşlarımda falan güzel olmadığımı anlamıştım da 14'e kadar falan ee ne olmuş neyse gidip oyun oynayalım falan diyor insan. Sonra dank ediyor kafasına.

Peer group comments lead to a conclusion mostly in the adolescence period.¹⁵³ With the increase of importance given to physical attractiveness, young people take their peer groups' comments on their beauty into account more during the adolescence period.

(G4) I realized that I wasn't beautiful for the first time in high school when my friend said so naturally "That girl doesn't want her boyfriend to be alone with very beautiful girls, but it wouldn't be a problem with you. Everybody voiced that I wasn't beautiful easily, but I never accepted. I knew that I was going to be beautiful one day."¹⁵⁴

In addition to the peer group, family or close circles may lead individuals to understand more about physical appearance¹⁵⁵. Apparently in the selected group, in addition to friends, mothers and their peer groups had an important impact in the close circle effect. Rather than harshly commenting like friends in some cases, mothers and their peers helped female children implicitly in their socialization environment. None of the mothers or their peers in the group approached daughters by telling them that they are ugly, but they wisely made them understand that they need to give extra care to their physical appearances.

(G6) My mother is kind of authoritarian. She always wanted me to do the best and be the best. In all our memories, I remember that she was comparing me with someone. Ayşe's notebooks are not dog-eared, Fatma's clothes are always clean and her room is tidy, Ece passed high school

¹⁵³ Salmivalli, C., Kaukiainen, A., Kaistaniemi, L., & Lagerspetz, K. M. (1999). Self-evaluated self-esteem, peer-evaluated self-esteem, and defensive egotism as predictors of adolescents' participation in bullying situations. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 25(10), 1268-1278.

¹⁵⁴ İlk defa lisede bir arkadaşım çok doğal bir şekilde "o kız sevgilisinin çok güzel kızların yanında yalnız kalmasını istemez ama mesela senin yanında olsa sorun olmaz" dediğinde güzel olmadığımı fark ettim. Herkes benim ortalama altı olduğumu çok kolay dile getirebiliyordu ve kabulleniyordu, ama ben bunu asla kabul etmedim. Bir gün çok güzel olacağımı biliyordum

¹⁵⁵ Robertson, J. F., & Simons, R. L. (1989). Family factors, self-esteem, and adolescent depression. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 125-138.

*exams, so on. My mother talked about others in physical issues as well. Ayşe is very beautiful, Fatma has such a lovely face, such and such. I guess that my wish to be beautiful, my school or professional success is related to my mother's attitude. I don't know how got this is, but I know that it effects too much.*¹⁵⁶

The construction of the self-beauty idea is supported by many other channels, and it can be claimed that only one sentence can result in the construction of self-beauty awareness. Repeated comments from different "emitters" results in a general idea on one's own physical attractiveness.

*(G7) I understood the issue (that she wasn't beautiful) while I was turning to adolescence. I guess that I understood when aunties squeezed and loved beautiful girls and told me "that one is sweet".*¹⁵⁷

Even if mothers mostly did not comment on their daughters' physical appearances, some of the interviewees noticed the feeling of disappointment in their mothers.

*(G13) She was authoritarian, someone I'd love to be similar physically, a woman who gives importance to physical appearance. We had a relation full of conflicts. She was the beautiful one and I was the one who is trying to be beautiful. Sometimes I think, if someone would have shown my photo and asked my mother if she'd like to have a child like this when she was a young girl, would I be the daughter in her dreams. I guess not. No one dreams of an ugly daughter.*¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ Annem otoriter bir kadındır. Benim hep her şeyin en iyisini yapmamı ve en iyisi olmamı isterdi. Tüm anılarımızda birileriyle beni kıyasladığını hatırlıyorum. Ayşe'nin defterinin köşeleri kıvrık değil, Fatma kıyafetlerini çok temiz tutup odasını topluyor, Ece Anadolu Lisesi'ni kazanmış, falan. Annem fiziksel olarak da hep başkalarından bahsederdi. Ayşe çok güzel olmuş, Fatma'nın yüzü ne kadar güzel falan. Sanırım benim güzel olma isteğimde de, okulda veya işteki başarımda da annemin bu tavrının etkisi var. Bu ne kadar iyi bir şey bilmiyorum, ama insanı çok etkilediği kesin.

¹⁵⁷ Ben durumu dediğim gibi çocukluktan gençliğe geçerken fark etmiştim. Teyzelerin falan güzel kız çocuklarını mincıklayıp sevip bana dönüp bu da pek tatlı maşallah demesinden anladım galiba.

¹⁵⁸ Otoriter, fiziksel olarak benzetmek istediğim, estetik duruşu önemseyen güzel bir kadındı. Çatışmaları çok olan bir ilişkimiz vardı. O güzel olan taraftı ben ise güzel olmaya çalışan. Bazen hep düşünüyorum, anneme genç bir kızken, benim genç kızlık fotoğrafımı göstetseler ve bu senin kızın olacak deseler, hayalindeki çocuk ben olur muydum diye. Bence olmazdım. Kimse çirkin bir çocuğum olsun diye hayal etmez.

Women who attended the survey and pointed out that their mothers were more beautiful than them indicated a double disappointment about their mothers' opposition. The first disappointment was an expected one that is linked to the foresight of the impossibility of being understood by a woman who never felt the same way and who was not excluded and marginalized in the same way either. Women who think that their mothers are more beautiful than them never placed their mothers and their previous selves in the same class. Rather they see their mothers in a hierarchically upper position, and also think that the impossibility of being in different hierarchical groups creates dissatisfaction for their mothers, even if they never mention it. The second disappointment, which was unexpected for women who decided to have an aesthetic surgery, came from the lack of appreciation.

Most of the women who attended the study explained their previous life as a failure in pleasing their mothers with their physical look, and their surgery as abnegation to please their mothers. They pointed out their disappointment towards the opposition of their mothers at a time when they were expecting appreciation and gratitude towards this decision. Women who expect to face the first disappointment that is "not being misunderstood by the mother that belongs to a different hierarchical group which is a result of mother's natural, given and effortless beauty" are shocked, saddened and heartbroken with the second disappointment that is unexpected for them. An opposition of a "beautiful" mother strengthens the sense of belonging to different hierarchical groups and gives more importance to their attained beauty over natural, effortless beauty.

In this study, there were no examples of partners who told their partners that they need a surgery, according to the answers given by the women. Since questions were not directed to them, their reaction

or inclusion to the subject will be analysed through the eyes of women. Most of the interviewees mentioned that their partners did not support, but at the same time did not oppose the idea of having aesthetic surgery. Interviewee women commonly mentioned their belief that even though men say “unnecessary” to the aesthetic surgery, they want women to be beautiful and they do not oppose surgery completely.

(G7) My partner is one of those unreasonable Turkish guys who say that aesthetic surgery is not necessary, but breast implants look good. I believe that they see previous surgeries as benefit and they don't think about it. If I was planning to do the nose surgery now, he'd make it a big problem.¹⁵⁹

Close circle, family, friends, partners or peer groups are important in shaping one's idea of self-attractiveness. Even though one wishes to reject the effect of others on ideas related to oneself, other people's ideas and provisions related to oneself will most probably have an effect, as was observed in the cases of most interviewees in this study.

4.2.1 Medical Aesthetic Professionals' Views as Motivators

In the study, there was another group of women who mentioned that they were affected by someone else, but the “someone else” in this group needs to be analysed separately from the close circle, because they are health professionals. In most of the cases, interviewees stated that they visited a health professional's office for another reason, but they were conducted towards possibilities of a surgery.

¹⁵⁹ Benim sevgilim de “estetik gerekli değil ama silikonlu göğüsler ne güzel oluyor” diyen klasik mantıksız Türk erkeklerinden. Sanırım eskiden yapılanları kar sayıyorlar ve üstüne düşünmüyorlar. Şimdi yaptırıyor olsaydım burnumu, kesin büyük olay çıkarırdı.

Women mentioned that they talk about their beauty with a health professional, namely, an aesthetic surgeon or otorhinolaryngologist. This situation is mostly valid for facial surgeries, specifically rhinoplasty (nose surgery) since the nature of the deviation operations are open for this progress, but may also contain body modification surgeries as well:

(G3) I didn't even think about it. I went to the otorhinolaryngologist because I couldn't breathe easy, convinced me that the tip of my nose was down, and said "let's fix it". I wasn't aware that the tip of my nose was down and ugly. I felt suspicious after doctor said that, I asked other people, and when I heard the same thing from other people, I decided to make it. (...) As I said I had no concern visually. Doctor put that in my mind, I didn't even realize, I don't know why he was disturbed... I was content with my nose but if you hear it from someone, especially a professional, you start to care.¹⁶⁰

Professionals' ideas are less likely to be ignored, and most of the women who attended this study mentioned that they trust their doctors and they do not ignore the opinions of the professionals:

(G1) Opposite than most of the women who had an aesthetic surgery, I didn't live a nose obsessed life. Yes, my nose way a little bigger for my face but I never worried that my nose is ugly. I didn't like my profile that much because the tip of my nose was a little down. By the way I always had a breathing problem. (...) I had an appointment from a surgeon that I always heard of. I wanted to have his opinion. And made the surgery. This happened I guess in 2-3 weeks in total.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ Benim aklımdan bile geçmedi ki. Zor nefes aldığım için KBB uzmanına gitmiştim, doktor ikna etti beni, senin burnun düşmüş, biraz ucundan düzeltelim dedi. Ben o zamana kadar burnumun düşük olduğunu, çirkin olduğunu fark etmemiştim bile. Doktor kendisi bana bu şekilde söyleyince aklıma bir kurt düştü, sağa sola sordum, bir iki kişiden daha duyunca da yaptırmaya karar vermiş oldum. (...) Dediğim gibi aslında görsel olarak benim bi sıkıntım yoktu. Doktor aklıma soktu, ben bile rahatsız değildim, o niye rahatsız olduysa artık... Ben memnundum burnumla ama birisinden, özellikle bir profesyonelden bunu duyunca insanın aklına takılmaya başlıyor.

¹⁶¹ Aslında ben birçok burun estetiği yaptıran kadın gibi, burun takıntılı bir yaşam sürmedim. Evet, burnum yüzüme göre büyükçeydi ama asla burnum çirkin diye

Some of the women that can be placed in this group stated that they visited an aesthetic surgeon's office with a small possibility of having a surgery, and with a desire to hear their professional ideas about their physical appearance.

*(G1) I entered doctor's office and he said "Is it your nose?". I would have been there to have a breast implant. Doctor said that he thought there was a cool girl whose beauty was shadowed by her nose. He said that I will have a lot of compliments on my eyes after making my nose. And it happened this way. I asked sensitive questions to the doctor, like what would he do if I was her daughter. He gave the same answer and I trust that man who was a sculptor at the same time, and made this crazy decision.*¹⁶²

These women mentioned that they were not close to the possibility of having a surgery, and they were expecting to hear that they do not need it, but right after their visit, these women changed their minds.

4.2.2 Major Physical Changes as a Motive

The last group of women who explained their reason for having a surgery mentioned that they had a surgery because of a major change in their body. The major change includes weight loss, pregnancy, and aging, according to the answers given by the women. The main characteristic of the women in this group is that all of them plan to have a surgery, after a period is over, that makes them different than

dertlenmedim. Fotoğraflarda profilimi pek beğenmiyordum çünkü burnumun ucu biraz aşağıya eğik geliyordu. Bu arada da ciddi bir nefes alamama problemim vardı. (...) adını hep duyduğum ünlü bir estetik cerrahı randevu aldım. Ve ameliyat oldum. Bir de onun fikrini almak istedim. Tüm süreç sanırım 2-3 hafta içinde gelişti.

¹⁶² Doktorun odasına girdiğim an "Burun mu?" sorusunu sordu. Zira pek ala silikon yaptırmaya da gitmiş olabilirdim. Doktor "Şuradan havalı bir kız geldi ama burnu yüzünü kapatıyor diye düşündüm" dedi. Hatta burnumu yaptıktan sonra gözlerime iltifat alacağı söyledi. Öyle de oldu. Gittiğim doktora gerçekten çok damar sorular sordum. "Kızınız olsam peki ne derdiniz?" gibi. Yanıt değişmeyince ve aynı zamanda heykeltıraş da olan bu adamın söylediklerine güvendim ve bu çılgın kararı aldım.

their previous selves. Women in this group plan to have a surgery once they do not plan to have another child, decide that they lost or gained enough weight, or think that they are "old enough to have a surgery." Women in this group mention that they want to be their previous selves again, and they see the periods mentioned as the factors that put a distance between their previous self and current self:

*(G14) I wanted to seem like my previous self, my breasts were always beautiful, they were deformed because of mastitis during breast feeding period. The woman I'd like to seem like was absolutely me. Before, I didn't have a problem except the breasts. After the child, I wanted to solve because they seem small and saggy.*¹⁶³

It was a more common comment about the surgeries that women explained their changes as a need and reflection of the responsibility of their roles as a mother or wife. Mentioning their "unattractiveness" as their own mistake or fault, they explained their surgeries as a part of devotion.

*(G14) After the second child. After breastfeeding your breasts become saggy for sure. After the children, I wanted to be beautiful. I didn't want my children to have a mother who gave up everything and my husband to have such a wife. While I started, I also made my teeth.*¹⁶⁴

As a topic of discussion, women's bodies may sometimes have to undertake various burdens. People, easily discussing women's bodies, sometimes put women into dilemmas (which are naturally not

¹⁶³ Kendi eski halime benzemek istiyordum, göğüslerim her zaman güzeldi, çocuklar sonrası emzirme döneminde mastit sebebi ile deforme olmuşlardı. Benzemek istediğim kadın kesinlikle eski bendim. Eskiden meme problemi dışında bir sorunum yoktu. Çocuktan sonra hem küçük hem de sarkmış olunca bu işi çözmek gerek dedim.

¹⁶⁴ İkinci çocuktan sonra. Çocuklardan sonra meme sarkıyor tabi. Ben de çocuklardan sonra artık kendimi güzelleştirmek istedim. Çocuklarımın kendini bırakmış annesi, kocamın öyle bir karısı olmasın dedim. Başlamışken beğenmediğim dişlerimi de değiştirdim.

dilemmas but sometimes being placed as they are contrast) like motherhood and womanhood. Some interviewees mentioned that while trying to reshape their bodies, women had to deal with their “roles” as well.

(G2) No one supported me, they said that it is a hard surgery and there is no need. You are beautiful, those are the marks of motherhood, look we all have them. I confronted everyone and made it. Maybe if it was my nose, no one would oppose me. But when I said that I'll have the abdominal surgery, everyone started to say "we are mothers, we are holy, this is not ugliness, and those are the memories of our babies." That holiness sometimes suits the book and sometimes doesn't. That time it didn't, made everything harder for me. At the end, you might be holy for your husband, heaven forbid.¹⁶⁵

Losing weight, ending the pregnancy processes¹⁶⁶, or aging made women rethink their bodies. In order to be beautiful for themselves, or to complete their “responsibilities” that come from their roles, women in this study went under the knife. It is not an easy decision to have a surgery, and it is harder to decide to have a surgery without a life threatening physical health problem. Women in this study chose to take the risk to make themselves feel more beautiful, whether motivated internally or externally, and to start a new life with their new bodies.

¹⁶⁵ Kimse beni desteklemedi zor bir ameliyat gerek yok dediler. Sen böyle güzelsin, anneliğin izleri, bak hepimizde var dediler. Kocam da istemiyorum dedi ama ben kendimi beğenmiyordum. Herkesi karşıma aldım yaptım. Belki burnumu yaptırısam kimse karşı çıkmazdı. Ama göbeğimi yaptıracağım deyince hemen bir “anneyiz, kutsalız, onlar çirkinlik değil, yavrularımızın anıları” falan dediler. Bu kutsallık da bazen işimize geliyor bazen gelmiyor, bu defa işime gelmedi işimi zorlaştırdı. Sonra kocan için de kutsal olmak var işin ucunda, Allah korusun.

¹⁶⁶ Dworkin, S. L., & Wachs, F. L. (2004). “Getting Your Body Back” Postindustrial Fit Motherhood in Shape Fit Pregnancy Magazine. *Gender & Society*, 18(5), 610-624.

CHAPTER 5

SURGERY AS A MATERIAL AND NON-MATERIAL INVESTMENT

Aesthetic surgeries are not demanded only to be beautiful. Being beautiful is not the result of an aesthetic surgery, rather it is a part of the process and a tool with which to shape a new identity or to construct the gender identity, which makes the aesthetic surgery an “investment” for the future life of the individual. To understand the distance between actual self and previous self of women who had an aesthetic surgery, it is necessary to analyse and question their perspective towards their previous, reconstructed self.

5.1 What Happens to the Previous Self?

After the aesthetic surgeries, there is a time of recovery, but this period is not only a physical remission. The period also covers a psychological “renewal.” After having an aesthetic surgery, a person does not wake up and suddenly accept or adopt his/her new look. The individual who has the surgery is the last person in the hospital room to see the new face, and the face she/he sees is not a result of a period that the patient anticipates, but is the first step of a new creation like the doctors always mention.

It is an almost semi-solid (because the shape of it changes every single day, almost one year long) puffed and mordant body part, and most probably not even close to the imagined image in the patient’s mind. “Recovery” needs patience after the surgery, physically and emotionally. The one who has the surgery cannot adopt the new body

easily, but squirms out of him/herself slowly. Surgery is not *hatching*; it is *molting* according to the explanations of women who had aesthetic surgery.

(G18) In relation to self-confidence, there is a perfect progress for sure. Except these, I was sociable, funny even before the surgery, but I was feeling like the fat, ugly but ridiculous girl of the group, now I don't feel that way too much. For sure that feelings, didn't wipe away, because everything is brand new yet. My spirit is still fat and has an ugly nose. But every day I feel like I am going better. Physically I feel myself more beautiful. Now I have a more proportional face and body. That's what it is. ¹⁶⁷

Aesthetic surgery is different from any other medical intervention. It is not a simple cut, rather it is the process of recreating a new identity, colonizing one's body to assimilate it within the ideal beauty norms.¹⁶⁸ A change in the shape of a nose does not only mean a more "aesthetic" look for a woman; it also means being a member of a new group that is the "generally accepted beautiful women's group." For this reason, an aesthetic surgery is never only a simple medical touch to one's body. Thus, women who had aesthetic surgery need some time after the surgery to construct their new identity as "beautiful woman," to pull themselves off from their previous self, and to put distance between the new self and the previous self. People who had a surgery tend to hide it most of the time, and people almost hysterically want to know about it. The biggest celebrity aesthetic

¹⁶⁷ Özgüven konusunda müthiş bir gelişme var tabii. Bunlar dışında ameliyat öncesinde de sonrasında da hep girişken, eğlenceli bir insandım ama önceden grubun kilolu, çirkin ama komik kızı gibi hissedirdim şimdi öyle hissetmiyorum çok. Tam anlamıyla geçmedi tabii o düşünceler, çünkü daha çok yeni her şey. Ruhum hala kilolu ve çirkin burunlu. Ama her geçen gün daha iyiye gittiğimi fark ediyorum. Fiziksel olarak kendimi daha güzel buluyorum. Daha orantılı bir yüzüm ve vücudum var artık. Budur yani durum.

¹⁶⁸ Okopny, C. L. (2005). *Reconstructing women's identities: The phenomenon of cosmetic surgery in the united states* (Doctoral dissertation, University of South Florida).

surgery database "Plasticopedia"¹⁶⁹ allows users to search 742 celebrities, and 23 subgroups like "Celebrities against aesthetic surgery" or "Celebrities with eyelid surgery." Like famous people, most interviewee women in this study do not like to speak about the previous self. They mostly wish that, once they have the surgery, everyone would forget that the surgery was applied. One of the biggest fears of the women in the study is mentioned to be having a new face/body that seems so artificial that everybody understands they had a surgery.

(G1) I was worried to seem so different from my previous self. I had problems like what if I seem like someone else, what if it seems too "shaped", what if I can't recognize myself. And yes, the first counter, oedematous, with the mirror wasn't easy. My nose effected everywhere. Thank God my fears didn't come through, people who didn't see me for a long time didn't even realize that I had a surgery

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Women who had an aesthetic surgery tend to put a distance between the desired new self and undesired previous self. They are prone to act like their previous self never existed, and treat it like a nightmare that is over, or at least one that existed but is unrelated to the new self. Their explanation of the previous self gives the impression of the end of a previous body, rather than a renewal. Their recovery is explained by the women as an emergence from a cocoon, rather than a healing.

(G18) I still have obsessions about my outlook but I have a progress comparing the old times. For example, I always tried to sit in the corners, I was thinking that if I stay at the center my nose would jump into the table, like I would be

¹⁶⁹http://education.makemeheal.com/index.php/Category:Celebrity_Plastic_Surger
y (20.02.2017)

¹⁷⁰ Kendimden çok farklı olmaktan korkuyordum. Ya başkasına benzersem, ya çok estetikli durursa, ya kendimi tanıyamazsam gibi dertlerim vardı. Ve evet ayna ile ilk yüzleşme, bir de o ödemli halde, çok kolay olmadı. Burnum tüm yüzümü etkilemişti. Çok şükür korktuğum başıma gelmedi hatta beni uzun yıllar görmeyen kimse estetik yaptırdığımı fark etmedi bile.

too available. Now I don't have it. Or I used to get in a quandary to hide my head when I was travelling on a bus, if another bus passes us by. ¹⁷¹

Women who explained their previous self were inclined to put a distance between their new and old bodies, as if they are completely new formations, away from unsettling experiences.

5.2 New Identity, Gender Construction and Surgery as an Investment for Future Life

Aesthetic surgeries are painful - probably more than the interviewees of this study imagined they would be before they had one. Rhinoplasty promotions today stress on being "cut-free" and "painless." For an individual who sees someone after a rhinoplasty surgery, the meaning of "painless" may change. Most people after a rhinoplasty seem like they were seriously beaten: empurpled eyes, plasters and tampons support this observation. After a breast implant, women cannot move their arms easily if the surgery was operated from the underarms, and a vacuum drain is placed to absorb leakage caused by the implants. The individual cannot go for a walk for two weeks. After a facelift, a patient may have hematoma or nerve damage. Facial skin may swell out suddenly, and a tube may be placed behind the ear to let the blood out. Clips are used in the hairy tissue to make skin tighter.

Having an aesthetic surgery is a hard decision and also a hard action for the patient, but surgeries also differ from each other in accordance with the level of difficulty.

The difficulties of surgeries may be placed in different groups. Like all surgeries, aesthetic surgeries are risky, and contain risks of mortality

¹⁷¹ Hala dış görünüşüm hakkında takıntılarım var ama eskiye kıyasla gelişme gösterdim, o kesin. Mesela bir yerde otururken hep köşelere oturmaya çalışırdım ben, ortada olunca daha bir meydanda olacaktım gibi, burnum masanın ortasından fırlayacakmış gibi. Şimdi o yok mesela. Ya da otobüste giderken kafamı nereye gizleyeceğimi şaşırdım yandan başka bir otobüs geçerken falan.

or organ loss. There is no study that specifically shows the mortality or organ loss statistics after aesthetic surgeries, but because they are open operations, aesthetic surgeries are not less dangerous than any other open surgeries, statistically. Aesthetic surgeries also contain possible complexities that may occur in the post-surgical period. Even though the surgeries are promoted as a piece of cake, they have different levels and durations for recovery. Breast implants come with vacuum drains and the impossibility of moving the arms for a long time, while a liposuction results in a long-term medical corset. A first-hand explanation of a surgery experience may help to better understand the difference between different surgical operations and the process of recovery:

(G16) My body didn't accept the catgut used in my first surgery and I've lived with that 1.5 years. That period was painful because the catgut was behind my ear, whenever I touch it mistakenly, my body developed abscess. Also cold was effecting my ears too much. Whenever it was a little cold, my ears started to hurt. Actually I still deal with cold. Since my body rejected the catgut, my suture re-opened again, and I had to have another surgery. Now I don't have a problem but my ears are not like before. I should be fragile against them. But I'm not flap-eared anymore and I'm so happy, and I don't regret it all.¹⁷²

In addition to the differences between the locations of surgeries, economic cluster differences also result in different recovery procedures and durations. Rhinoplasty surgeries have different techniques that result in shorter recovery periods but higher costs, like open surgeries, intranasal surgeries, and even ultrasonic

¹⁷² İlk ameliyatımda kullanılan iplikleri vücudum kabul etmedi ve bu şekilde 1 buçuk sene yaşadım. O dönem sıkıntılıydı çünkü kulak arkasında iplikler duruyordu ve elim yanlışlıkla ne zaman o ipliklere çarpsa kulaklarımda apse oluşuyordu. Ayrıca soğuk çok etkiliyordu. Biraz rüzgârda kalsam hemen kulaklarım sızlıyordu. Şu an hala soğukla mücadeleyle devam ediyorum gerçi. İplikleri vücudum kabul etmediği için kulaklarda bir miktar açılma oldu ve ikinci operasyonu geçirdim. Şu an bir problem yok ama artık kulaklarım eskisi gibi değil. Onlara karşı hassas davranmam gerekiyor her zaman. Ama kepçe olmadıkları için mutluyum ve ameliyat olduğum için pişman değilim.

surgeries with micro cuts. Also the materials used in a surgery change the cost of an operation, and consequently, change the access of specific economic clusters to the surgery as well as the invisibility or visibility of the surgery. In a less expensive surgery, the catguts must be removed by the doctor, and the patient must live with a plaster cast or splint, while after an expensive surgery, swelling vanishes in two days and the transparent splint can be removed within one week. The period of recovery of an aesthetic surgery must be tracked carefully by the aesthetic surgeon, and the recovery period can be expected to create medical complications, which are not very exceptional.

The third difficulty that arises after surgery is psychological. Even if most of the women who had an aesthetic surgery mention that they were not content with their previous appearance, the result of the surgery have the potential to be different from the expectations. The pre-surgery period and deciding on the new appearance is built on predictions and commitments between patient and surgeon. A change in the face or body can be unsatisfactory or the patient may not find what she expected. Even if the result is successful, the patient needs to wait minimum one year to see the exact result.

Related to the information above, the question "Why would someone do this then?" arose in everyone's mind. Women who had an aesthetic surgery and attended the survey mostly explained their beauty as a commodity,¹⁷³ and the surgeries as an investment for a better and happier life. The main aim for the surgeries may be interpreted as "being beautiful," which would not be correct since it is an outcome rather than the main aim as the answers suggest.

¹⁷³ Gimlin, D. (2000). Cosmetic surgery: Beauty as commodity. *Qualitative Sociology*, 23(1), 77-98.

Women wish to be beautiful and to be accepted as “normal,” rather than being accepted as “the most beautiful women.” In reference to their pre-surgical look, some women mentioned that they do not feel “normal” or “like a woman.” Also, some other women stated that they wanted to be beautiful, and/or to shift to another group that is more privileged than they are. Another group in the study strictly questioned their right to be loved during the pre-surgical period. And a final group of women, who faced the lack of control over their bodies and their surroundings, used aesthetic surgeries to gain authority over their own bodies, and maybe contradictorily over the bodies of other women.

5.2.1 Normality and Constructing New Gender Identity

As Davis mentions, aesthetic surgery has a relation with femininity and women’s relationship with their bodies.¹⁷⁴ Rather than being only related to beauty and linked to women’s oppression, Davis suggests that aesthetic surgeries are mostly related to femininity, being “normal” and having the control of one’s own life.¹⁷⁵ Davis claims that, women do not undergo aesthetic surgery unaware, rather, they are calculating the pros and cons, and deciding to have an aesthetic surgery after making the calculations, which means women are not blind victims of oppression but instead they are voluntarily finding ways to cope with beauty ideals and gender norms. She points that, being an “extraordinary solution to an extraordinary problem”, aesthetic surgery may be a solution of a problem related to femininity, that may not be seem as a problem to other one. Aesthetic surgery

¹⁷⁴ Davis, K. (1991). Remaking the She-Devil: A Critical Look at Feminist Approaches to Beauty. *Hypatia*, 6(2), 21-43.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

can be seen as a solution for the problem of not feeling feminine enough, and a tool for gender identity construction or correction¹⁷⁶.

Women who had an aesthetic surgery not only wish to be beautiful, but also want to be "normal" in the sense of femininity. Women seek surgeries to have "a happy, regular life."¹⁷⁷ Most women mentioned in the interviews that prior to surgery, they did not have "womanlike" physical features. Most of the time, women grow up with femininity codes in their minds, and these codes carry features from physical appearance.

(G15) Breast implants were always in my mind but I was procrastinating. Since we grow up thinking that there is a strong link between breasts and womanhood, I was thinking about having the surgery starting from the day I realized that they won't get any bigger.¹⁷⁸

"Womanly" physical appearance is defined by the interviewees as "a small nose, a round and small chin, big enough breasts, and round hips."¹⁷⁹ Anything extremely small, big or angled was named "unfeminine." Women mentioned that prior to their surgeries, they had a sterner look, which is not one of the features they match with a woman.

¹⁷⁶ Davis, K. (1991). Remaking the She-Devil: A Critical Look at Feminist Approaches to Beauty. *Hypatia*, 6(2), 21-43.

¹⁷⁷ Gimlin, D. (2000). Cosmetic surgery: Beauty as commodity. *Qualitative Sociology*, 23(1), 77-98.

¹⁷⁸ Silikon sürekli aklımdaydı ama hep erteliyordum. Kadın olmakla meme arasına güçlü bir bağ olduğunu düşünerek büyüdüğümüzden, artık memelerimin daha fazla büyümeyeceğini anladığım günden beri düşünüyordum.

¹⁷⁹ Frith, K., Shaw, P., & Cheng, H. (2005). The Construction of Beauty: A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Women's Magazine Advertising. *Journal of communication*, 55(1), 56-70.

(G10) Feeling beautiful changes one physiologically as well. But physically, my facial impression got softer, I seem cuter. In accordance to my look, I feel beautiful.¹⁸⁰

When women do not fit the beauty standards and norms matched with being a “female,” they may start to feel that they are not “feminine” enough. This may be a result of a facial or bodily feature that is coming from the nature of their body, or may be the result of a change in their body.

(G9) I always thought that my breasts will grow and I will seem like all other women. When I turn 18, I accepted the fact and decided to have a surgery.¹⁸¹

Femininity norms in society force women to think that being a woman has some specific rules, and there are several physical characteristics to be a “woman.” In relation to this acceptance, the danger of losing “femininity” (or maybe never having it) arises. A woman who believes that the social femininity norms are not found in her body may be sceptical about her womanhood, and may believe that she needs to change her body to be a real woman. Aesthetic surgeries do not only promise beauty; they also commit a gender construction as well.

According to Davis, aesthetic surgeries are not only about beauty, but they are at the same time gender construction tools that are empowering women with the help of their self-experience. She says that surgeries are not only about physical appearance but they are also related to “identity creation.” She points out that a surgery is a tool for a woman who does not feel at home in her body. She states that;

¹⁸⁰ Kendini güzel hissetmek insanı psikolojik olarak değiştiriyor. Ama fiziksel olarak ifadem yumuşadı, daha sevimli görünüyorum. Görüntüme uygun güzel hissediyorum.

¹⁸¹ Ben 18 yaşına kadar hep göğüslerim büyüyecek ve her kadın gibi görüneceğim diye düşündüm. Ancak 18’ime gelince kabul ettim ve daha fazla büyümeyeceğini düşünerek ameliyat olmaya karar verdim.

*Cosmetic surgery is not about beauty but about identity. For a woman who feels trapped in a body which does not fit her sense of who she is, cosmetic surgery becomes a way to renegotiate identity through her body. Cosmetic surgery is about exercising power under conditions which are not of one's own making. In a context of limited possibilities for action, cosmetic surgery can be a way for an individual woman to give shape to her life by reshaping her body.*¹⁸²

Cosmetic surgery may be a tool to help women construct their gender as Davis mentioned, but this assistance is a result of a procedure, not an explanation or vindication to the reason why women feel dissatisfied about their bodies, as Negrin points:

*In the case of Davis, her guarded 'defence' of cosmetic surgery leaves unchallenged the social structures of inequality responsible for women's dissatisfaction with their bodies. Her conception of cosmetic surgery as a 'solution' in certain circumstances, is premised on the acceptance of the parameters of the given system as unalterable.*¹⁸³

As many aesthetic surgeons name it, aesthetic surgery operations are rationalized by society as a tool for self-reliance, self-esteem, happiness, self-satisfaction and even femininity. A start to a new life, relatively more "content" romantic experiences, and a more successful professional life for women who had an aesthetic surgery are cited by other people and women themselves as the essential results of a surgery. As Negrin summarizes, the part we need to focus on is not the positive change after the surgery, but the question regarding why a woman feels more content, more "feminine" after a modification in her body. Accepting the aesthetic surgery as an empowering tool does not help us understand why a woman feels that she has to cut, sculpt, stuff her body with medical equipment to feel more feminine and satisfied. The surgery and feeling content after the surgery are the results of a procedure, while the need for having a

¹⁸² Davis, K. (2013). *Reshaping the female body: The dilemma of cosmetic surgery*. Routledge.

¹⁸³ Negrin, L. (2002). Cosmetic surgery and the eclipse of identity. *Body & Society*, 8(4), 21-42.

surgery to feel empowered is the part we need to focus on to understand the issue, and focusing on the issue from this perspective makes it impossible to accept aesthetic surgery as a tool for the empowerment of women.

It is clearly stated by the interviewees in this study that women who are not content with their bodies use aesthetic surgeries as a tool for gender construction, and they claim that with this construction they feel like their lives are more "liveable," and they are happy that they have chosen to put their bodies under the knife to be more "woman," and they feel more "feminine," which also means "normal," after the surgeries they went through.

5.2.2 Passing: Will to be Accepted as an "Original" Member of the New Group

As Gilman suggests, for some people seeking an aesthetic surgery, the motivation may be to be accepted by another group, or to be the member of a desired group¹⁸⁴. The desired set may be another ethnic, social, economic, or advantageous group. People who think that they are disadvantageous in face of another group may use aesthetic surgery as a tool to rise, to be a part of the advantageous group.

"Passing" is explained by Gilman as the movement from "perceived reality of the self and the ideal category into which one desires to move," or from "unhappiness to happiness." The author mentions that, according to the "patient," there are physical reasons for being excluded from the desired group, which also means being excluded from "happiness."¹⁸⁵ Change in the physical appearance of and

¹⁸⁴ Gilman, S. L. (1999). *Making the body beautiful: A cultural history of aesthetic surgery*. Princeton University Press.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

possessing the specialties of the other group that seems advantageous may be used by the individual to peel away from his or her own group. The advantage does not need to be strictly economic, or social, it can be a combination of all. Being a member of an advantageous group may lead to an easier and "better" life, which makes the shift in the group an "investment" for future life.

The ideal woman image today is explained as having western specialties, "whiter than white,"¹⁸⁶ and is an element of white western woman fantasy, rather than a real one. Placing the ideal white woman in the centre, women who are physically away from the centre suffer from the expectations of society a lot more than others. The distance between the white woman and the ideal woman is closer, but it requires too much of a woman who is not white or western. Women who do not see themselves as a member of the "western beautiful women" group may use aesthetic surgery as a tool to shift from one group to another.

The desire to be a member of another ethnic group creates the "ethnic aesthetic surgery" concept, which is problematic in many ways. That concept includes skin whitening, nose narrowing, Asian eyelid surgery, and lip refining. According to the study run by Kaw on Asian-American women who performed eyelid surgery, women claimed "they are proud of being an Asian-American and they don't want to be "the white women," whereas they don't like to carry Caucasian features."¹⁸⁷ She mentioned the race fact as "the features (eyes and nose) Asian Americans are most concerned about are conventional markers of their racial identity, a rejection of these markers entails, in some sense, a devaluation of not only oneself but also

¹⁸⁶ Heyes, C. J. (2009). All cosmetic surgery is "ethnic": Asian eyelids, feminist indignation, and the politics of whiteness. *Cosmetic surgery: A feminist primer*, 191-205.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid

other Asian Americans. It requires having to imitate, if not admire, the characteristics of another group more culturally dominant than one's own (i.e. Anglo Americans) in order that one can at least try to distinguish oneself from one's own group."¹⁸⁸

Beautiful women may seem as an advantageous group according to some other women who think that they are not beautiful. For example, it is a popular belief that beautiful women are more successful in job interviews, or they reach a "happier life" easier than "ugly" women do.¹⁸⁹

Not exactly stating a specific ethnic group, women who attended this study implicitly explained the features of the western white women as their desired group, with depictions of white skin, long legs, and a slim silhouette as well as references to their generally Hollywood rooted idols, and they mentioned openly that they wanted to be one of the women in that group that might be named as advantageous.

(G2)In relation to my explanation of beauty, women must be thin, tall, like a swan. She doesn't have to be blonde but she must be snow white. If you analyse beautiful women nowadays, you'll see, if a woman will be considered as beautiful, she must be white. ¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁸ Kaw, E. (1994). Opening faces: The politics of cosmetic surgery and Asian American women. *Many mirrors: Body image and social relations*, 241-265.

¹⁸⁹ There is an exact opposite in Turkish culture that, beautiful women have bad luck and they may have an unhappy life because of their beauty, and there are two sayings specific for beautiful women in Turkish which may be translated as "I wish God gives you the luck of ugly", and "I wish your luck will be more beautiful than your face.",

¹⁹⁰ - Benim g zellik tanım ma g re kad n ince, uzun, ku u gibi olmal . İlla ki sar s n olmasına gerek yok ama a ık renk ten ho uma gidiyor. Hatta bence g zel kad n bembeyaz tenli olmal . Bu sıralar e er be enilen kad nlar  inceliyorsanız fark edersiniz, kad n g zel olacaksa bembeyaz tenli olmalıdır.

Particularly, none of the women who attended the interviews directly pointed out that she would like to have a surgery to shift her ethnic belonging, which is opposite of the characteristic of surgeries demanded by most Asian or Iranian women, who openly explain their desire to look like another ethnicity. Rather, they mentioned their wish for moving to another group indirectly, and if possible, invisibly. Gilman mentions in the study that with “passing,” people seek invisibility in their desired group, so most of the time they do not seek to be the “most beautiful” or the “most attractive” of the desired group, but they just want to be a natural part of it.¹⁹¹

Women in the research group continuously stated their fear of being easily recognized. They claimed that they would prefer forgetting and making others forget about their pre-surgery look, and expressed their desire to have a surgery that is “good” enough to hide the lack of naturality in their new appearance.

5.2.3 Deserving to be Loved

The women who attended this study and who had an aesthetic surgery mostly explain a strict link between being deserved and being loved romantically. According to them, there is a strong relation between being beautiful and deserving to be loved. Being loved has an interlocking meaning with being desired and being at the centre of attention. They explain being loved as a result of being beautiful, and none of them mentioned that they are disappointed after the surgery.

¹⁹¹ Gilman, S. L. (1999). *Making the body beautiful: A cultural history of aesthetic surgery*. Princeton University Press.

Most of them do not have a partner, but most of them mentioned that they were not loved before having a surgery, while a large number of them were not single before the operation.

The women who attended the study have a suspicion about the value of actual love that they experienced before the surgery, and they have no doubt about the love they deserve, even if most of them are single after the operation. They look for reasons for the love they experienced before the surgery. Women who had an aesthetic surgery tended to trust that they deserve to be loved because they “paid the worth for it” in advance with the surgery which is an investment; and they refuse to believe the authenticity of the love they experienced before the surgery, because they do not believe that they deserved to be loved in the first place.

Physical appearance is an important aspect of romantic relations according to the studies, since it is not the only or the most determinant variable as Lujansky suggests¹⁹². According to the study, rather than the overall beauty of an individual, the relative beauty of an individual in a relationship is more important. Individuals are more likely to “rate” their partners’ physical appearance in relation with their own appearance.¹⁹³ People tend to choose a partner who has approximately the same level of attractiveness. Also, the level of submission in a relationship is increased if an individual believes that his or her partner is more attractive than him/herself.

The women who attended this study based most of their answers about their romantic relations or their relations with

¹⁹² Lujansky, H., & Mikula, G. (1983). Can equity theory explain the quality and the stability of romantic relationships?. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 22(2), 101-112.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

partners/potential partners on the idea that physical appearance is the core of their interactions. They postulate that their level of being “lovable” or the reality of the love they experience must be calculated in relation with their physical appearance and outlook. For this reason, they have difficulty in believing that they deserve to be loved when they are “ugly,” and oppositely, they assume that love will find them right after their aesthetic surgery. Although maybe more than other women, this almost fictionalized presupposition is not unique to women who had an aesthetic surgery. Studies show that body image and its relation to the idea of deserving love is understood differently by men and women, where women are repressed to “treat themselves as aesthetic objects” by the cultural environment, and they are mostly inclined to let other people intervene in their body image ideas.¹⁹⁴ The fictional correlation of beauty, body image, and deserving love results in body image dissatisfaction, eating disorders or depression.¹⁹⁵ Oppositely, men do not experience the same cultural environment as women and they do not experience an intervention to their body images:

*“Male scientists and philosophers have created a nearly unbroken historical stream of tracts—philosophical, religious, scientific—on women’s bodies and their distinctive maladies and excesses, almost all linked to our reproductive systems and sexual organs. But they have been remarkably good at forgetting that men have a sex”*¹⁹⁶

The aesthetic surgeries can be named as milestones for the women who had an aesthetic surgery. The women who attended the study

¹⁹⁴ Ambwani, S., & Strauss, J. (2007). Love thyself before loving others? A qualitative and quantitative analysis of gender differences in body image and romantic love. *Sex Roles*, 56(1-2), 13-21.

¹⁹⁵ Troisi, A., Di Lorenzo, G., Alcini, S., Nanni, R. C., Di Pasquale, C., & Siracusano, A. (2006). Body dissatisfaction in women with eating disorders: Relationship to early separation anxiety and insecure attachment. *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 68(3), 449-453.

¹⁹⁶ Bordo, S. (2000). *The male body: A new look at men in public and in private*. Macmillan.

mostly examine their previous romantic relationships or lack of romantic relationships in correlation with their physical appearance. Taking the surgery as a milestone, they try to find explanations for their previous relationships, since they do not believe that there was any reason for anyone to be together with them while they were not beautiful. According to the study that correlates self-love and the idea of deserving love, individuals who experience self-doubt problems and who have low self-esteem tend to underestimate and look down upon the love of their partner, and try to find rationalizations for the love they experience.¹⁹⁷ Women in the study act too mercilessly towards their previous self, especially in the topic of deserving to be loved. It was obvious for some attendees in the study that some women waited to deserve love until they would “invest” on themselves, and after they completed their investment process, they “expect” to be loved as a return of their investment. They are too surprised when they think about their romantic relations prior to their aesthetic or aesthetic surgery experience, even more than anyone else. They question and try to find a justification to explain their previous romantic relationships, as if they did not deserve to experience the feeling of being loved before the surgery.

In addition to deserve being loved, women tend to hide their “past” from their partners if they have met them after aesthetic or aesthetic surgery. With their concerns about deserving the love of others, some women in this study mentioned that they did not talk about aesthetic surgeries they have experienced, and they are worried about the possibility of their secret being exposed.

(G6) I have a boyfriend. But we didn't meet before the surgery. We've never talked about my surgery. I guess that he doesn't know it. He didn't have an idea about Botox as

¹⁹⁷ Murray, S. L., Holmes, J. G., Griffin, D. W., Bellavia, G., & Rose, P. (2001). The mismeasure of love: How self-doubt contaminates relationship beliefs. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 27(4), 423-436.

*well, I shaped his perception, and made him believe that this is not an aesthetic operation I guess. Sometimes I fantasize strangely that if we have a child who doesn't seem like any of us, then after I explain him the surgery I had, I wonder if he leaves me, then I stop thinking about it.*¹⁹⁸

Most of the women did not even expect to be loved before the surgery.¹⁹⁹ Love, as a return to the investment and as a commodity, is expected by the women who had an aesthetic surgery to arrive after the operation; and is expected crouselly as it is a certain result of an already verified scientific experiment.

5.2.4 Body Control

Aesthetic surgeries are more achievable and affordable more than ever before in the contemporary world.²⁰⁰ With the promotion of "flawless" women in the media, increasing affordability of operations, smoother and easier technical possibilities of the surgeries, and wide spreading effects of the internet, women's bodies have become more and more open to discussion, and decisions about one's own body are depersonalized day by day.

Women's bodies are intervened, interpreted by other people, and offered to change. It is less easy to stay *as is*. Most of the women in the study mentioned several times that they were asked *when* they

¹⁹⁸ Benim erkek arkadaşım var. Ancak ameliyattan önce tanışmıyorduk. Kendisiyle benim ameliyat olmuş olduğumu hiç konuşmadık. Bildiğini sanmıyorum. Botoks hakkında da bir fikri yoktu, ben onun algısını kurguladım, bu bir estetik değil ki diye diye inandırdım galiba. Bazen çocuğumuz olsa ve ikimize de benzemese, estetik olayını açıklasam, beni bırakır mı diye garip fikirler geçiyor kafamdan ama sonra düşünmüyorum üstüne.

¹⁹⁹ Gimlin, D. (2000). Cosmetic surgery: Beauty as commodity. *Qualitative Sociology*, 23(1), 77-98.

²⁰⁰ Morgan, K. P. (1991). Women and the knife: Cosmetic surgery and the colonization of women's bodies. *Hypatia*, 6(3), 25-53.

will have the surgery, with a presumption that the surgery will take place one way or another but is not applied yet. Women underwent the surgery mostly seemed to accept this control over their bodies, and mentioned a “beauty” focused life. Some of them explained to have such a beauty focused life that they did not even choose their own professions, but floated to that job after a series of beauty related occasions.

(G7) I didn't like my nose, my breast and so. I didn't feel like a woman. If I were beautiful, I guess I wouldn't choose academic career. I had plenty of time to read books because I wasn't beautiful. I am sure that if I were beautiful, I'd spent my time in more meaningless things.²⁰¹

In addition to the lack of control over their own life and their bodies, women mentioned some significantly similar responses about the ongoing issues in their surroundings, which show a lack of control over their surroundings as well. Most of the attendees answered questions about how they could focus on their own beauty in a geography where political instabilities and tragic events occur, aggressively. Two interviews, which were the only ones that were not finished, were interrupted after the question mentioned.

(G12) People have a perception about self, starting from the day they were born, and this is related and not related to the external variables. I was effected and not effected from external variables. I believe that inside, where you have your own ideas about yourself, there are some ideas that cannot be effected by external things.²⁰²

²⁰¹ Ben beğenmiyordum burnumu, göğsümü falan. Kadın gibi hissetmiyordum. Güzel olsaydım akademik kariyer de yapmazdım gibi geliyor bana, kitap okumaya çok vaktim oldu öyle çok güzel olmadığım için. Eminim çok güzel olsaydım vaktimi daha anlamsız şeylerle harcardım

²⁰² Kişi doğduğu andan itibaren kendiyile ilgili bir algıya sahip olur ve bu dışsal koşullara hem bağlı hem bunlardan bağımsızdır. Ben dışsal koşullardan hem etkilenmedim hem de etkilenmedim. İnsanın içinde kendiyile ilgili fikirlerin olduğu yerde dışarıdan gelen şeylerle durdurulamayan fikirler olduğunu hissediyorum.

Some interviewees pointed out that without solving internal issues and having control over one's own body, it is not possible to control the external occasions. They mentioned that to be a part of the surroundings, an individual must solve personal issues and have control over body.

(G8) I had to solve my own issues to be able to reach other things. I had to solve my own problems to focus others' problems. I did, and now I am interested in other people's problems as well. If I didn't do this, I would still be dealing with myself ²⁰³

A final group of women openly pointed out that they were not, and are not, willing to control their surroundings.

(G10) If I didn't spend that time on myself, I would most probably share two photos in Facebook like other people. I wouldn't take the hills or join military service. We are a group of people sitting and talking. I can comment (on Facebook) while I have sutures on my body ²⁰⁴

With the lack of control over their own body, their life, and surroundings, women in the study seem to have an emptiness inside, which will be filled after they take the control of their body. Almost all interviewees seemed to await their post-surgical period like a cocoon, to have their own body control, and in most of the cases, control of other women. The post-surgical period is classified as a term that leads to a certain control over one's own body, but also in the late-end period of pre-surgical era (where financial issues are also solved) women seem to have the control of their own body. In some extreme

²⁰³ Benim dışarıdaki şeylere tepki gösterebilmem için kendi sorunlarımı çözmem gerekiyordu. Kafamı tamamen dışarı verebilmem için kendi dertlerimi çözmeliydim. Yaptım, şimdi dışarının sorunlarıyla da ilgileniyorum. Eğer çözmeseydim hala kendi içimde dertlerimle uğraşıyor olurdum.

²⁰⁴ Ben bu vakti kendime ayırmıyordum, başkaları gibi Facebook'ta bir iki tane fotoğraf paylaşıyordum en çok. Ne dağa çıkacaktım, ne de askere gidecektim. Bizler oturduğu yerden konuşan bir insan grubu haline geldik. Bu yorumları vücudumda dikişler varken de yapabiliyorum.

cases, obsession with bodily perfection may ensure and thus a continuous set of new surgeries may be covered with the concept of body control.

The interviewee women who had aesthetic surgery and who suffered from other people's intervention to their body, also tended to see a right to surveillance other women's bodies as a right. In the answers of women who attended the study, it was obvious to see that women commented on other women's bodies in a harder and tougher manner.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Aesthetic surgery is not a single medical operation; rather, it is a multidimensional issue. Having aesthetic surgery and reasons for choosing to have one provides hints about many different issues related to the female body and forces authority over the female body. Aesthetic surgery and the period of deciding to have it contains data about shaping one's understanding of beauty, the media's effect on the female body, contemporary beauty norms, "liabilities" of rejecting contemporary beauty norms, being accepted, body-image dissatisfaction, changing social position, and using the body as a commodity for acceptance and recreating the beauty norms on other women.

I aimed to study this issue, because I believe that having an aesthetic surgery is a personal and intimate act, while at the same time, due to its social results and reasons must be questioned and analysed. Women's experiences about their beauty, body image satisfaction or dissatisfaction, the process of choosing to have their body modified, and the motives that lead some women to accept beauty as a tool of investment must be heard from them directly.

I had two main questions in my mind when I started the study. I wanted to learn why a woman would like to modify her body, and what brings her to think that accepting a risky operation is good for her. My second aim was to understand why a woman decides to have a surgery if she is not happy with only her look, or if she wants to be as contemporary beauty norms want her to be. My second main

question was to learn how women transform beauty as a tool of material and non-material investment, and finally as a physical, emotional, pecuniary labour to “pass” to another group. Also, I wanted to learn the classification of “naturally beautiful” women and women without an aesthetic surgery, by the women who experienced an aesthetic operation.

The concept of accepting beauty as a labour and an investment directed my question to another phase: After having a great deal of trouble, do women change the attitude that they faced ever since their early ages and recall as heart breaking memories, towards other women who do not have aesthetic surgery? And finally my last aim was to find out if women who had an aesthetic surgery ask for the same effort from men, as they ask from other women.

As an answer to my first question, most of my respondents revealed that the ideal beauty norms powerfully affected those via media, peer groups, and close circle, and as the span between contemporary beauty norms and self appearance increases, the pressure over women also increases. Beauty and being beautiful and attractive is coded by my respondents as a part of self-esteem, and the more they seem like the idols of contemporary beauty norms, the more they feel they have self-respect.

The respondent women’s answers about idealization of women may be divided into two groups: Other “idealized” woman and past self as ideal woman. The first group of women who declare that the ideal woman is someone else - mostly one typical woman who is not an individual person but an image that contains all ideal features a woman should have - easily explained that the ideal woman and the idealized woman was more or less the same for all respondents, with defined weight, age and facial features.

The second group of women included those who wanted to be like themselves again after natural or unnatural changes, and who wanted to have surgery to seem like their past self who was similar to the idealized woman more than now. In idealizing another defined woman or previous self, women had a common benchmark: a woman whose facial and bodily features were deliberately drawn, and jointly explained by different women.

Control over body was an important aspect stated by the respondents frequently.

Most of the respondents, evoked that they would like to have control over their body, opposite of the fact that they were not able to change their given physical appearance right until they had enough financial power. Sometimes obsessively, they wanted to be sure that they have their bodies' control. Especially the fact that they will not be able to have control over their bodies' aging seemed to put them in a constant feeling of discomfort.

Answers for the second part of the question arose at the beginning of the study, was the most surprising one for me in terms of the attendees' responses. My aim was to learn about the results of aesthetic surgery from the point of authority over other women's bodies. At the beginning of the study I was expecting to find out a more pathfinder attitude towards other women about physical appearance, whereas women who had an aesthetic surgery were mostly willing to clear their previous history, and exhibited a growing anger over naturally beautiful women or women who do not plan to have surgery. Especially the hate for overweight women was surprisingly explicit. Viewing their surgeries as labour and material/non-material investment, women were more reserved and sometimes nervous about women who naturally have what they struggle to have, or the ones who already reject it. Also respondents

were explicitly discriminatory between women and men regarding their expectations.

They seem to have opinions about men, including their partners that they do not need to have aesthetic surgery or struggle to look better just because they are men. As they accept their jobs or political conflicts, they admit that an "ugly man" deserves to be loved and approved. Also the acceptance of the local *defects* of men is explicit in comparison with women. Women are expected to fit the global beauty norms, whereas a man can easily be named as bellied, because he is a Turkish man.

This research had many barriers, some of which were estimated by me before the study and some which were astonishing for me as a researcher. It was obvious that women who had aesthetic surgery were not supposed to be completely comfortable about talking about their previous self, since we are used to seeing many people who insist on rejecting their obvious operations. Finding and drawing out the respondents was expectedly difficult, and there were inevitable barriers. The unexpected and shape shifting barrier was the respondent women's will of control about changing their own body and surveillance over bodies of other women. It was not an expected feature and after getting to know my respondents, the will of control found itself a bigger and inevitable place for itself in this study.

All people have a relational self that is made of personal experiences and personal selections, and that is also affected by relations with others. It is impossible to claim that this relational self is completely sterilized from the market dynamics and general enforcements of patriarchy. In order to think about the possibility that self-empowerment arises from physical appearance, we have to first ask what the possibilities of realizing the self are. Women do not create,

think, and imagine the beauty norms only by themselves and apply these norms on themselves. They learn the norms created by patriarchy, interiorize them, and believe that they will not be powerful and accepted members of society if they do not apply them. Believing that being loved and accepted needs specific conditions and trying to fit into them is being overpowered rather than being empowered. The application of the beauty norms created by patriarchy to feel empowered is a submission, rather than a real empowerment in this manner. The women who attended the study believe in conditional love. They believe there are conditions to being loved, accepted, and feeling empowered.

Women who had aesthetic surgery have three diffractions in their personality, retrospectively. They have a pre-surgical period of personality that is required to disappear and be forgotten completely, and this harbours the feeling of exclusion and assumption of being disliked. The post-surgical period of personality contains self-complacency, attachment to the new group, and the feeling of deserving to be loved. But there is a third phase that shapes most of the attitude towards other women and also to the total self: "in limbo" period between pre-surgery and post-surgery. This period is the phase where women suffer physically, spend their material investments, cannot achieve the beauty standards that they demand, and also cannot blur, even "scatter around" their previous self, the fact that they had a surgery. When women look back to their "in limbo" period, they interpret this phase differently from each other: as a sacrificial duration, a success story, or an agonized era. This is the period where women classify the types of beauty in relation with the emotional and physical labour, and where they place gained beauty over given beauty. Also this period is the starting point for women who had an aesthetic surgery to create a critical point of view towards women who cannot or do not have aesthetic surgery. With a need of blessing the material and non-material labour they have

exerted in this period, they put down the women who hold opposing views.

Thinking of this period, some of them strictly mention that they would never suffer that much for someone else and they had the surgery only for themselves. But none of the women who attended the study pointed out that they would never have a surgery again even after suffering that much. Women are aware that having an aesthetic surgery does not give them eternal beauty, because the norms of beauty are easily changeable in short time periods, and they also know that physical beauty is not permanent. Women who had an aesthetic surgery believe that the power, adoption, or love that comes from physical beauty is temporary.

The empowerment of the physical beauty approach in literature is used and adopted to practical life by the aesthetic surgeons. They recreate the discourse of empowerment with their promotional materials and appeal, saying that having bigger breasts, bigger lips, a smaller nose, or a more feminine figure makes women feel more comfortable and confident, and increases self-empowerment. The collaboration between the academic discourse about empowerment and practical results by the aesthetic surgeons recreate the patriarchal norms on the female body and female physical appearance. Aesthetic surgeons define the limits and shape of the ideal female body, and by modifying the female body according to these norms, they claim that they give women a chance to have more self-confidence and empowerment. Also, acting oppositely to these norms created by patriarchy, and verified by the literature and applied by the aesthetic surgeons, women can be named as not lacking self-respect and a will for being empowered. In this way, it is rational to accept the disempowerment of women who do not have aesthetic surgery, do not fit the current physical beauty norms, and do not look as feminine as patriarchal norms want them to. Seeing physical

beauty as a norm of self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-satisfaction, also rationalizes the lack of the aforementioned concepts for women who do not fit the norms of ideal beauty and femininity.

Women's empowerment can be evaluated by economical, educational or social uprising, also participation and self determination about social and political issues in the surrounding and also self. Being analysed as not empowered in the study, women who had an aesthetic surgery are seen as empowered in one are: self determination and giving decisions about own body. Respondents in this study were significantly self-oriented and self-focused, and they were not giving importance to decisions of other people anymore about their physical appearance. By not giving importance to other people's views about their physical beauty, they did not mean to neglect the beauty norms anymore; rather, they tend to modify their bodies as they wish. Davis mentions that, neglecting the ideas of other people, their families or partners, about their aesthetic surgery decisions may be read as another kind of freedom, but it may be described as rise of individualism and abstraction.

My main question in this study was to learn the main motives for a woman to have aesthetic surgery, learning if surgery is an empowerment or disempowerment act, and this action's relation with creating or reshaping the inequalities between women, and also transforming the hierarchy between them, by following the answers of a specific group of women. I analysed its effects' difference from those of men. The study revealed that beauty is not only a strong tool for reshaping existing inequalities between western women and the rest or middle class and upper middle class, but also a means to recreate, and more than this, to modify the established rules of hierarchy between them. It was obvious in the study that beauty is a strong tool that may even reorder the conventional and expected order of hierarchy set by material relations.

The conclusive argument of this study is that beauty, being definitely more than a cosmetic perception, has the power to modify the existing inequalities, and is also used as a tool for transforming the existing hierarchy relations within women. Beauty became an easily accessible tool of material and non-material investment for upper middle class women with simplified and easily accessible aesthetic surgeries, and turned out to be a tactile transformer instead of an intangible imagination. This power that is easily accessible and may be called as “empowering” for some women, is a means of excluding and suppression for the others who cannot or do not have aesthetic surgery. Beauty, and making a material non-material investment to be more beautiful, may be analysed as an empowering act for women who believe that physical appearance matters and who have enough economic means to reach it as stated above. Most of the respondents in this study mentioned that they felt more confident, powerful, and extroverted after they had the surgery/ies. Most of them attribute their current life, which is more desired than the previous one as they mentioned, to the surgeries they had.

Rather than being an empowerment tool, aesthetic surgery and aesthetic surgery operations must be analysed as tools for women to cope with imposed femininity and beauty norms. Women may feel that they are empowered after a surgery to deal with problems they face that occur in relation to the lack of convenience with imposed norms of femininity. Having an aesthetic surgery to feel conformity to the “beauty norms,” and feeling empowered after modifying the body in harmony with these femininity rules, must be read as a recreation and reproduction of the norms that force women to modify their bodies, rather than an empowerment tool.

The connection between accepting beauty as a tool of empowerment and recreation of hierarchy/patriarchy cannot be defined as one way,

it is rather a loop. Setting physical conditions to feel empowered, results with easy disempowerment and anxiety of losing empowerment. But at the same time, the inclination to set physical conditions to feel empowered is fuelled with the anxiety of losing beauty, which is the result of social pressure and surveillance to fit the beauty norms. Also, setting physical conditions to feel loved, accepted or empowered results with recreation of patriarchy and transformation of hierarchy, but at the same time conditional love and empowerment is fed by patriarchy and social pressure to be beautiful, itself. While new hierarchies between women who are "beautiful" and women who do not fit the norms of beauty are results of the acceptance of beauty as a tool of empowerment, it is at the same time the base of the idea of beauty as an empowerment tool.

The women who attended the study, while they are feeling the anxiety of losing their newly gained empowerment, mention that they are stronger than before. But in their actual life, they describe their empowerment only in comparison to "other" women who do not fit the beauty norms. The only empowerment they describe is against the public surveillance about their physical appearance. They believe that they are stronger and they feel more confident in society. Coping with the social pressure can be identified as an empowerment from a point of view, but the repetitious aesthetic surgeries and anxiety of aging shows that, this coping mechanism does not result with an overall and constant outcome, rather, it is a temporary and local one.

Davis explains the process of independence and individualization as being an empowering act since it makes it possible to cope with given feminine beauty norms and women seek independence with the aesthetic surgeries, but Morgan mentions that the result of having an aesthetic surgery is not an empowerment or a process of independence, rather, it is an increasing dependence on male

assessment and dependence on the services of the experts.²⁰⁵ Balsamo also points that reading individualization that rise up after the aesthetic surgery more as alienation. Also, women who get above themselves physically after the surgery is explained as a partial act, rather than a complete self love by Balsamo, who claims that women do not develop a whole self love, rather they love the modified parts of their bodies, and they develop a distancing to the rest of their bodies. This results with a separation of mind from the body, and also a loss of sense of integrity.²⁰⁶ The conclusive result of the study supports the idea of losing integrity of body, and giving more vulnerability to the perception of feeling empowered for women, by linking the empowerment notion to temporary and changeable concepts like beauty, physical appearance and beauty norms defined by the society.

Reading the aesthetic surgeries as tools for empowerment creates the problem of exclusion to those do not look like the normative, and a rationalization for their disempowerment. Accepting a body modification to feel empowered opens up a space for exclusion, hierarchical sequencing, and marginalization of the "other." This acceptance only changes the alienated group, but it does not change the reality that a group of women is being excluded. It is a fact that women who classify themselves as ugly or disempowered may feel that they move upwards in the hierarchical order, and believe that beauty is a tool and investment for their empowerment; but it is also obvious that accepting this empowerment as an advantage only recreates and transforms the subjacent group.

²⁰⁵ Morgan, K. P. (1991). Women and the knife: Cosmetic surgery and the colonization of women's bodies. *Hypatia*, 6(3), 25-53.

²⁰⁶ Balsamo, A. M. (1996). *Technologies of the gendered body: Reading cyborg women*. Duke University Press.

Most of the women who attended the study point out that they felt alienated in society because of their looks; they felt that they are not loved, respected, or are underestimated because they were “others.” Accepting the notion that empowerment comes from aesthetic surgery as a fact results in two options: If empowerment with aesthetic surgery is authentic, all women should either modify their bodies and must be *as alike as peas in a pod* to be real equals, or it must be accepted that women who cannot or do not apply aesthetic surgery will never be equal to others.

Even the women, who may achieve beauty with their economic tools, are living under the heavy stress of the “acquired” new life and the possibility of suddenly melting away its yields, since beauty does not last forever, and even the women who claim that beauty is an empowering tool feel the stress that empowerment may melt away with the beauty. The transience of beauty and youth creates a significant feeling of panic. Linking the social position and likability to this volatile concept and risking a huge material and non-material investment on such a transiency increases the stress and panic, and turns the empowerment into a weakness in the long-term.

The literary focus on beauty, physical appearance, and especially women’s beauty is deep and detailed. Following the footsteps of a specific group of women on their perception of beauty, I tried to understand how this group of women perceives and also recreates and transforms the existing relations and inequalities pursuant to beauty. Class and hierarchy relations cannot be undermined, but the contribution of beauty to the equation changes their existing and ordinary rules. Beauty, physical appearance, and access to beauty recreate existing power and hierarchy relations. Every woman’s experience is valuable, meaningful and unique. It is anticipated that this study that focuses on the experiences of women will give an

insight about the issue from the perspective of women and contribute to the existing literature.

All people want to develop a coherent self, and a consistent personal story. Women who had an aesthetic surgery have to cut their personal history at some point, and most of them live in fear of facing their previous self one day. They cannot track their own, coherent history retrospectively, and some of them feel that they have to blur the previous years. Those are women whose body image perception is changed at some point, positively, as they mention. But they cannot find ultimate peace with this *positive* change, because of the lack of coherent self and consistent and monolith self-history, and also due to the continuous fear of the transiency of beauty. They have common points with women who had change in body image perception in a negative way, such as organ loss. Both women mourn for their personal history: one group longs for the previous life because they lose an actual body part, and the other group mourns because of the *wasted* years that will never return. As a further study, it is aimed to research the effects of a negative change in female body image, and to understand the perception of relations, similarities, and differences between these two groups. In this study, it is aimed to discuss the notion of empowerment in relation to physical appearance associative to the ideas of Negrin and Davis' ideas. It is asked in this study if beauty and self-appearance have a strengthening effect on empowerment of women as Davis points, or oppositely, focusing on beauty as a tool of empowerment creates and recreates the patriarchal norms that disempower women in the society as Negrin claims. Conclusively, the study claims that, being a tool for discrimination for women who are not defined or who does not want to be defined as beautiful, physical appearance creates vulnerability and disempowerment by linking the concepts of beauty and physical attractiveness to self-love and empowerment.

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APPENDICES

A. TURKISH SUMMARY/TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Güzellik, güzellik algısının yaratılışı ve uygulanışı sosyal bilimlerin önemli konularından olmuştur. Bu çalışmanın amacı, güzelliğin bir güçlendirme ögesi olarak farklı bakış açılarına göre yorumlanışını tartışmaktır. Bu çalışmada güzelliğin, kadının güçlendirilmesi için kullanılabilecek bir öge oluşunu savunan Kathy Davis'in "bir güçlendirme aracı olarak güzellik" fikri ile Llwellyn Negrin'in, bu görüşün mevcut ataerkil önyargıları güçlendireceği görüşü karşılaştırmalı olarak incelenmiştir.

Çalışmanın gerçekleştirilmesi ve estetik operasyon deneyiminin yaşattığı dönüşümün incelenip sorulara yanıt bulunabilmesi için, en az bir estetik operasyon geçirmiş 20 kadın ile Bağdat Caddesi, İstanbul'da muayanehanesi bulunmakta olan 5 adet estetik cerrah ile görüşme yapılmıştır. Görüşmelerin tamamı yüz yüze gerçekleştirilmiş olup, görüşmelere Eylül 2015 tarihinde başlanıp, görüşmeler Aralık 2015 tarihinde tamamlanmıştır.

Güzellik algısı konusunda dünyada tamamlanmış çeşitli çalışmaların yanı sıra, Türkiye'de de yürütülmüş çalışmalar bulunmaktadır. Estetik operasyon konusunda ülkemizde yapılmış en önemli çalışmalardan biri Berna Tarı Kasnakoğlu tarafından gerçekleştirilmiş olan doktora tezidir. Berna Tarı Kasnakoğlu tarafından belirli benzerlik ve farklılıkları olan bu çalışmada, bahsi geçen çalışmadan özllike literature erişim alanında fayda görülmüştür.

Güzellik algısı, genellikle tanımlanmış olan ideal kadın fikri etrafında şekillenmektedir. Güzel kadın algısının şekillenmesinde, farklı aktörlerin etkisi bulunmaktadır. Medya, güzellik algısının oluşturulmasında en önemli ajanlardan birisidir. Güzellik algısının yaratılmasında ve güzel kadın imajının yayılmasının sağlanmasında medya oldukça etkilidir. Ülkemizde güzellik ve moda programları özellikle son dönemlerde oldukça popüler hale gelmiş, bu programlarda güzel kadının neye benzediğine dair oldukça ilgi çekici tanımlamalar yapılmıştır.

Medyaya ek olarak, moda endüstrisi de güzellik algısının yaratılmasında etkilidir. Moda endüstrisi, yalnızca kıyafetler üzerinden değil, aynı zamanda kıyafetleri taşıyan modeller ile de kadın bedeninin ideal formunun nasıl olması gerektiği hakkında etkilidir.

Güzellik algısının yaratılması ve yayılmasında en etkili ajanlardan biri de estetik cerrahlardır. Estetik cerrahlar yalnızca güzellik algısının yaratılmasında değil, yaratılmış güzellik algısının kadın bedeni üzerinde uygulanmasında da etkilidir. Estetik cerrahlar, çalışmaya katılan görüşmeci kadınlar tarafından çok güvenilir tanımlayıcılar ve uygulayıcılar olarak tanımlanmışlardır. Ayrıca, estetik cerrahlarla yapılan görüşmelerde, güzellik normlarını neredeyse matematiksel bir tanımlamayla açıkladıkları dikkat çekmiştir.

Tanımlanmış güzellik algısına bağlı olarak, çalışmaya katılmış olan kadınlar tarafından ideal kadın fikrinin açıklandığı görülmüştür. Çalışmaya katılan kadınlar ideal kadın fikrini iki ana grupta açıklamışlardır. Bu açıklamaya göre kadınlar ideal kadını kendilerinden başka bir kadın üzerinden veya kendi beenlerinin geçmiş hali üzerinden tanımlamışlardır. İdeal kadını başka kadınların vücutları üzerinden tanımlayan kadınların, genellikle çok genç yaşlardan itibaren estetik operasyon geçirme amacına sahip oldukları

görülmüştür. Güzelliği kendi bedenlerinin geçmiş hali olarak tanımlayan kadınların ise, çoğunlukla vücutlarını etkileyen bir süreci tamamladıktan sonra estetik operasyon geçirdikleri görülmüştür. Bu süreçler, istedikleri kadar çocuk sahibi olduktan sonra veya yeterince yaşlandıklarını düşündükten sonra tamamlanmıştır. Başka kadınlar üzerinden güzellik algısını tanımlayan kadınların çoğunun yüz estetikleri uygulattıkları, kendi bedenlerinin geçmiş hali üzerine bir özlem duyan kadınların ise genellikle yaşlanma karşıtı uygulamalar ve gövdeye dair estetik operasyonlar talep ettikleri dikkat çekmiştir.

Estetik operasyon geçiren kadınların, estetik operasyonlar öncesinde, başkalarının kendi bedenlerine yaptıkları müdahalelerden oldukça rahatsız oldukları, bunu bir müdahale olarak gördükleri belirtilmiştir. Hayatlarının bu dönemini acı çektikleri bir süreç olarak tanımlamışlardır. Ancak, estetik operasyon geçirdikten sonra, başka kadınların hayatlarına yaptıkları müdahalelerin yanlış olduğunu düşünmedikleri görülmüştür. Estetik operasyon geçirmeleri gerektiğini düşündükleri kadınların ameliyat olmaması veya olamamasını bedenlerine yaptıkları bir saygısızlık olarak görmüşlerdir.

Özellikle fazla kiloya sahip olmanın, ideal kadına dair tüm değişkenlerden daha çok etkili olduğu görülmüştür. Çalışmaya katılan ve genel güzellik algısının dayattığı kriterlerin içinde olan kadınların neredeyse tamamının kilosundan memnun olmadığı görülmüştür. Kendi bedenlerinin dışında, başka kadınların bedeninde de en çok eleştirdikleri konunun kilo ile ilgili olduğu görülmüştür.

Kilonun dışında, özel olarak ele alınması gereken bir başka güzellik ideali de yaşlılık üzerine odaklanmaktadır. Yaşlılık ve yaşlılık karşıtı uygulamaların geçici olduğu ve sonsuz güzelliğin imkânsızlığına dair en önemli ipucunun yaşlılıkla bağlantılı olduğu görülmüştür. Yaşlanmak, çalışmaya katılan kadınların neredeyse tamamının en çok

korktukları oldu olmuştur. Estetik operasyonlarla mükemmel bir burna veya bedene sahip olunabileceği, ancak yaşlanmaya karşı savaşın neredeyse “baştan kaybedilmiş”, ve en sonunda kaybedilecek bir savaş olduğu belirtilmiştir.

Yapılan görüşmeler sonucunda, başka kadınların bedenlerine yapılan bu müdahalenin temelinde, estetik operasyon geçiren kadınların, estetik operasyon tecrübesini maddi ve manevi bir yatırım olarak tanımlayışlarının bulunduğu gözlenmiştir. Estetik operasyon geçiren ve araştırmaya katılan kadınların çoğu, geçirdikleri bu tecrübeyi maddi veya manevi bir yatırım, ameliyatları ise fiziksel ve maddi bir fedakârlık olarak tanımlamaktadırlar.

Başka kadınların bedenlerine dair yapılan müdahale ve bu müdahaleyi yapmak için görülen, maddi ve manevi yatırımdan kaynaklanan hak, erkek bedeninde karşılık bulmamıştır. Çalışmaya katılan kadınlar, diğer kadınların bedenlerine müdahale etmekte hernaç bir sorun görmezken, erkek bedeninden beklentilerini en düşük seviyede tutmaktadırlar. Erkek bedenine dair beklentilerini bölgesel farklılıklara göre deęiştiren, ve n düşük seviyede tutan estetik operasyon tecrübesi yaşamış kadınlar, diğer kadınlardan ve kendilerinden oldukça yüksek beklentilerle bahsetmekte, ayrıca bölgesel fiziksel farklılıkları yok sayarak, tüm kadınların balı, beyaz, zayıf kadına benzemelerini istemektedirler.

Estetik ameliyat yaptırmak istemenin çeşitli motivasyonlara baęlı olduęu, tez çalışmasına ve görüşmelere katılan kadınlar tarafından belirtilmiştir. Ameliyat olma motivasyonları da, ideal kadının tanımlanmasında yapılan ayrıma benzer bir şekilde şekillenir. İdeal kadını başka bir kadın olarak tanımlayan ve estetik operasyonu geçiren kadınlar, oldukça erken yaşlarda ameliyat olma motivasyonuna sahip olmuşlardır. Eski bedenlerine özlem duyan

kadınlar ise, nispeten daha ileri bir yaşta operasyon talebinde bulunmaktadır ve bu taleplerinde motivasyonları, bedenlerinde çeşitli değişikliklere sebep olan bir sürecin sonlanması ile ilintilidir.

Estetik operasyon yalnızca estetik bir müdahale olmakla sınırlı değildir. Çok boyulu ve çok yönlü incelenmesi gereken bir konsepttir. Estetik operasyon geçirme motivasyonlar, ideal kadının yaratılması ve uygulanması alanında pek çok ipucu vermektedir. Estetik operasyon olma motivasyonunun yaratıldığı süreç ve ardından takip eden estetik operasyon geçirme dönemi ile takip eden iyileşme ve yeni hayatı kurma süreci, kadın bedeni, ideal kadın, beden görüntüsü hakkındaki memnuniyetsizlik, yeme bozuklukları, öz sevgi, kendini kabul, bedensel ve ruhsal bütünlük ve bu fikrin algılanışı konusunda önemli detaylar vermektedir.

Bu çalışmanın yapılma sebebi, estetik operasyon ve ameliyat talebine sebep olan motivasyonun bireysel ve içten bir çaba olmasının yanı sıra, toplumsal sonuçlara dair de ipuçları içermesidir. Kadınların güzelliği algılayışını anlamanın yolu, estetik operasyon tecrübesini birebir yaşamış olan kadınların dinlenmesi olacaktır ve bu sebeple çalışmada estetik operasyon geçirmiş olan kadınların terübelere yer verilmiştir. Çalışmaya başlarken iki ana soru sorulmuştur: Kadınlar neden estetik operasyon yatırmayı talep etmektedir ve bu riskli operasyonu bedenlerine uygulamayı kabul etmiştir? Uygulanan bu ameliyat taleplerinin bedensel memnuniyetsizliğin bireysel yansıması olarak mı, yoksa toplumsal normların zorlaması ile bi uygulandığıdır. İkinci soru ise, kadınların güzelliği başka bir gruba geçişte bir maddi ve manevi yatırım ve duygusal ve maddi bir çaba olarak dönüştürdükleridir. Ayrıca, doğal güzellik ve kazanılmış güzellik fikrinin, estetik operasyon geçirmiş ve bu tecrübeyi yaşamış kadınlar tarafından nasıl tanımlandığı incelenmiştir.

Güzelliğin maddi ve manevi bir yatırım ve duygusal ve nesnesel bir emek olarak kodlanması, çalışma için başka araştırma alanları da açmıştır. Kadınların, estetik operasyon geçirmeden önce yaşadıkları üzüntü verici tecrübelerin, estetik operasyon sonrasında, operasyon geçirmemiş kadınlara karşı tutumlarında empati kurulmasına sebebiyet vermediği, aksine, yeni konumlarını hak etmek için zorlu bir süreçten geçen kadınların, diğer kadınları bu emeği harcamadıkları için sert biçimde eleştirdiği görülmüştür. Bu sorgulama ve beklentinin, kadınlardan beklenenin aksine, erkeklerden talep edilmediği dikkat çekmiştir.

Çalışmanın gerçekleşme sürecinde araştırmacı çeşitli sınırlandırmalar ve zorluklarla karşılaşmıştır. Estetik operasyon geçiren ve başka kadınların bedenleri hakkında rahatlıkla konuşan kadınların, çalışma süresince, kendi eski bedenleri hakkında konuşurken zorlandıkları, konuşmalar dahi bir başkasının bedeninden bahseder gibi kendi eski bedenlerine mesafe ile yaklaştıkları görülmüştür. Görüşmecilere ulaşılması zor bir süreç olmuş, tecrübesi hakkında konuşmak isteyen kadınlara erişmek için oldukça fazla çaba gösterilmek zorunda kalınmıştır. Bu zorluğu aşmak için estetik operasyon geçirmiş görüşmecilerin, kendi tanıdıkları diğer estetik operasyon geçirmiş kadınlara ulaşması ve estetik cerrahların muayenehanelerinde kendilerinin referansı ile bazı görüşmeler yapılması sağlanmıştır.

Tüm insanlar kişisel deneyimler ve seçimlerle meydana gelen, mantık silsilesine sahip birer benliğe sahiptir. Benliğin oluşması sürecinde başka insanların etkilerinin de olduğu görülmektedir. Bu benliğin oluşumunun sterilize, yalnızca bireyin iş dünyasına özel bir süreç olduğunu düşünmek doğru olmayacaktı. Kadınların güzellik algılarının oluşumunda da yalnızca kendilerinin yarattığı bir kavram ve kendilerine özel olan bir süreç olduğunun düşünülmesi ve toplumsal güzellik normlarından etkilenmenin olmayacağı fikri doğru bir

yaklaşım olmayacaktır. Kadınlar yaşadıkları toplum içinde ve deneyimleri çerçevesinde ataerkilliğin desteklediği ve yarattığı güzellik algısını içselleştirebilir ve kendilerinin ve diğerlerinin bedenlerini buna göre yorumlayabilirler. Güzelliğin ve kabul görmenin bedensel bazı normlara bağlı olduğuna inanmak ve bu fikrin empoze edilmesi bir güçlenme ile sonuçlanmayacak, aksine, güçlenme, kabul görme, başkaları ve kendisi tarafından seilmeyi kolay zedelenabilir ve hassas kurallara bağlayacaktır. Aterkilliğin güçlendirdiği güzellik normlarını güçlenme ile birebir ilişkilendirme ve eşleştirmek, verilmiş olan bu kurallara uymadığı taktirde güçlenmiş olmayacağını hissetmek, özetle "oyunu kuralına göre oynamak", bir güçlenme olmaktan ziyade, ataerkillik normlarını yeniden yaratmak ve onları kabul etmekle eşdeğer olacaktır. Çalışmaya katılan kadınların verdiği yanıtlarad bu görüş desteklenmiş, çalışmaya dâhil olan kadınların seilme algılarının, koşullu bir seilme olduğu görülmüştür. Aynı süreç güçlenme için de geçerlidir: çalışmaya katılan kadınlar için güçlenme de güzellik gibi çeşitli değişkenlere bağlı, kaybedilebilir ve kırılgan bir kavram olarak tanımlanmıştır.

Çalışmaya katılan kadınların verdiği yanıtlara göre, estetik operasyon geçirmiş olan kadınların bu tecrübeyi yaşamalarına istinaden benliklerinde retrospektif olarak üç ırılma dönemi olduğu belirlenmiştir. Ameliyat öncesi deneyme bağlı olan ilk kırılma, ameliyat öncesi bedenin neredeyse yok edilmek istenmesi, unutturulmak ve unutulmak istendiği bir süreçtir. Üçüncü dönem, estetik operasyon tecrübesi yaşayan kadınların, ameliyat sonrası komplikasyonların atlatıldığı, yeni beden ile seilmeyi, kabul görmeyi ve güçlenmeyi hak ettiklerini düşündükleri süreçtir. Ancak, ameliyattan hemen sonraki süreç, dâhil olunduğu düşünülen yeni gruba uyum sağlama çabası, beden yeni haline alışma süreci, ameliyat sonrası fiziksel sorunlar atlatılana kadar yaşanan fiziksel acı ile birleşen hisler sebebiyle, bir çeşit araf olarak tanımlanabilir. Bu

dönemde kadınlar kendilerini ne güzel, ne çirkin hissetmekte; dâhil olmak istedikleri gruptan da, dâhil olacaklarına inandıkları yeni gruptan da farklı bir konumda olduklarını düşünmektedirler. Bu süreç, katılımcı kadınlar tarafından, estetik operasyon sürecinin fiziksel ve ruhsal olarak en acılı olduğu dönem olarak tanımlanmaktadır. Süreçte, maddi ve manevi yatırım yapılmış, fiziksel acı sürmekte, görüntü istenenden farklı ve kabul görme, güçlenme, sevilme şartlarının tamamlanmadığı hissedilmektedir.

Katılımcı kadınlar tarafından bu dönem, maddi, manevi ve bedensel fedakârlıkların enyoğun biçimde hissedildiği, ancak henüz karşılıklarının alınamadığı bir zaman dilimi olarak tanımlanır. Bu dönem aynı zamanda güzelliğin kazanılmış ve doğuştan gelen olarak ayrıştırıldığı ve kadınlar tarafından içselleştirildiği dönemdir. Bu dönemin maddi, manevi, bedensel fedakârlıkları sebebiyle kadınlar, estetik operasyon tecrübesi geçirmemiş kadınlara karşı tepkilerini çekinmeden ve müdahaleci bir biçimde beyane tmeye başlamaktadır.

Katılımcı kadınların bazıları, bu dönemi düşündüklerinde başkası için asla estetik operasyon geçirmek istemeyecekleri, ancak bunu kendileri için yapacakları beyanında bulunmaktadır. Fakat kadınların hiçbirisi, artık estetik operasyon eçirmeyeceklerini söylememektedir. Kadınlar, estetik operasyonların kendilerine sonsuz güzelliği bahşedemeyeceğinin farkındadır. Güzellik normlarının geçiciliği ve özellikle yaşlanma karşıtı uygulamalarda zamana karşı kesin kazanılmış bir savaş olmayacağının bilincindedirler. Fakat bu görüş onların bu savaştan vazgeçmesine değil, yeni operasyonlar geçirme fikrinin oluşmasına sebep olmaktadır. Güzelliğin geçici olmasına bağlı olarak, estetik operasyon deneyimini yaşayan kadınlar, güç, sevilme ve kabul görmenin de geçici olduğunu beyan etmektedir.

Güzelliğin güçlenme ile bağlantısına dair literatür, estetik operasyonları uygulayan cerrahlar tarafından benimsenmiş, içselleştirilmiş ve uygulanmaktadır. Güçlenme diskurunun estetik

cerrahlar tarafından sözel ve pratik olarak yaratılması, güçlenme diskurunun kadınlar tarafından kabul görmesinde de etkili olmakta, kadınlar bedenleri ile mutlu olmayı ve göreceli güçlenmişlik hissini özsaygı ile bağdaştırmaktadır. Bu süreçte, estetik cerrahların kadınlar üzerindeki etkisinin oldukça büyük olduğu görülmüştür. Akademik söylemler ile Pratik uygulayıcıların ortak görüşü, ataerkil normların kadın bedeni üzerinde uygulanmasını daha kolaylaştırmış, bu süreç sonucunda toplumsal güzellik kabulleri daha etkili ve görünür hale gelmiştir. Estetik cerrahlar hem söylemleri ile hem de uygulamaları ile bu sürecin en etkili elemanlarından. Hem estetik cerrahlar, hem de bazı akademik yaklaşımlarca desteklenen bu görüş, güzellik algısına uymak ile öz saygıyı eşleştirmiş, güzellik algısına uymadığı düşünülen veya güzellik algısına uymak konusunda bir isteği olmayan kadınların kendilerine karşı öz saygıları olmadığı söyleminin ortaya çıkmasına ve güçlenmesine sebep olmuştur. Bu söylem, güçlendirme ile de yakından ilintilidir. Güzellik algısına uymayan, bu konuda bir çabası olmayan veya olamayan kadınların radikalleşmiş görünmesi, kolayca eleştirilmesi, güzellik ve kadınsılık kavramlarının birbiriyle ilişkilendirilmesi ve güzelliğin özsaygı ile eşleştirilmesi, bahsi geçen kadınların güçlenmemesini rasyonalize eder hale gelmiştir.

Kadının güçlenmesinin tanımı ve ölçümü maddi, eğitimsel değişkenler veya sosyal yükseliş ile yapılabileceği gibi, katılım ve kendine dair kararları kendisi verme ile de değerlendirilebilir. Estetik operasyonlar sonrasında kadın katılımcılar kendilerinin güçlenmiş olduğunu beyan etse de, bu değişkenlerden yalnızca kendi bedenlerine dair kararları verme konusunda bir güçlenme yaşadığı gözlenmiştir. Çalışmaya katılan görüşmeci kadınların çoğunun benmerkezci ve kendine odaklı olduğu dikkati çekmektedir ve estetik operasyon sonrası dönemde başkalarının bedenleri hakkındaki, özellikle de estetik operasyon yaptırmada olumsuz olan fikirlerine önem vermedikleri

görülmüştür. Başkalarının görüşlerine estetik operasyon deneyimi sornası önem verilmemesi, başkaları tarafından beğenilmek veya begenilmemenin artık önemi olmadığı anlamına gelmekten ziyade, bedenlerindeki değişiklikler hakkındaki kararları kendi kendilerine almayı tercih ettikleri ile ilgilidir. Kathy Davis tarafından bu kendi bedeni hakkında kararları kendisi verme eğilimi, estetik operasyonlar ile kazanılmış yeni biçime bir özgürlük olarak tanımlanmıştır. Ancak bu değişim aynı zamanda kendine odaklılığın yükselişi ve sosyal hayattan bireyselliğe doğru uzanan bir eğilim olarak da okunabilir.

Bu çalışmanın ana amacı kadınların neden estetik operasyon yaptırmak istediklerini ve bu deneyimi yaşamak için sahip oldukları motivasyonu incelemektir, estetik operasyonunun bir güçlendirme aracı mı, yoksa ataerkilliğin yeniden yaratılmasında güçlendirici bir değişken mi olduğuna dair literatür tartışmalarını analiz etmek planlanmıştır. Estetik operasyonların güçlendirme olarak yarattığı algının, yeni bir alt sınıf yaratarak, sanal bir güçlendirme yaratıp yaratmadığı, kadının topyekün güçlenmesine mi, yoksa bazı kadınların güçlü hissederken diğerlerinin yeni bir alt sınıf olarak güçlenmeden uzaklaşıp uzaklaşmadığı anlamaya çalışılmıştır. Çalışmanın sonucuna göre, güzellik algısı ve güzellik normlarının etkisi, ataerkil normların yeniden yaratılması ve yeniden şekillenmesinde oldukça etkilidir.

Çalışmanın sonuç argümanı, güzelliğin yalnızca kozmetik bir konu olmaktan çok uzakta olduğunu belirtmektedir. Güzellik aksine, mevcut eşitsizlikleri yeniden yaratmakta ve süregelen ataerkil kuralları yeniden şekillendirip güçlendirmede bir değişken olarak görev yapmaktadır. Güzelliğin önemi ve güzelliğe yapılan vurgu yükselmekle beraber, orta sınıf kadınların da estetik operasyonlara erişim imkânı çok daha kolay hale gelmiştir. Güçlendirici olduğu söylenen bu sürece erişimi daha kolaylaşan kadınların, estetik operasyonlar ile güçlendiklerini hissetmeleri, aslında gerçek olmayan

bir güçlenme hissini yansımasıdır ve altında ataerkilliğin yeniden yaratımı, dayatılan normların gönüllü kabulü ve başka kadınları güçsüzleştirerek güçlendiğini düşünme fikri yatmaktadır. Araştırmaya katılan kadınların çoğu estetik operasyonlardan sonar kendilerini daha güvenli, güçlü, dışa dönük tanımlamaktadırlar.

Estetik operasyonlar bir güçlenme aracı olarak anılmaktan ziyade, mevcut ataerkil normlar ve güzelliğin dayatılan kurallarıyla bir başa çıkma yöntemi olarak görülmelidir. Empoze edilen güzellik normları ve ataerkil kurallara uymak adına bedeninin biçimini değiştiren kadınlar, mevcut kurallara uygun hale gelince kendilerini güvenli, güçlü, daha sosyal ve kabul görür hissettiklerini belirtmekte ancak dayatılan kurallara uygun hale geldikleri için bu sanal hissi güçlenme olarak adlandırmaktadırlar.

Güzelliği bir güçlenme aracı olarak algılamak ve ataerkilliği yeniden yaratmak bir döngü olarak birbirini tamamlamaktadır. Güçlenmeye fiziksel kurallar koymak, kolaylıkla gücü kaybetmeye veya gücü kaybetme ihtimali sebebiyle yaşanan paniğe sebebiyet vermektedir. Güçlenmenin fiziksel şartlara bağlanmasının güçlenme ile en çok gelişen yönü, gücü, seilmeyi ve kabul görmeyi kaybetme anksiyetesini yaşamaktır.

Çalışmaya kadınlar estetik operasyon sonrası tecrübe ile güçlendiklerini söylemekle beraber, sıklıkla bu yeni kazanılmış gücü kaybetme korkusunu da beyan etmişlerdir. Güçlenmelerinin tanımını estetik operasyon geçirmemiş kendi bedenleri ve güzellik algısına uymadığını düşündükleri diğer kadınların bedenleri üzrinden yapmaktadırlar. Toplumsal baskı ve sorgulayıcı gözlerden kurtulduklarına dair bir güçlenme hissetmekle beraber, özellikle yaşlanma korkusu ile bu yeni kazanımın sonsuza kadar devam etmeme ihtimali sebebiyle korku yaşamaktadırlar.

Davis bağımsızlık ve bireyselliği normlaştırılmış güzellik algısına karşı güçlendirici etkenler olarak tanımlamaktadır. Estetik operasyonların bireyselliğe ulaşabilmek için önemli araçlar olduğunu vurgulamaktadır. Ancak Morgan, estetik operasyonların bireyselleşme yolunda önemli araçlar olmadığını, aksine erkek değerlendirmesi ve çoğu erkek olan estetik cerrahların görüşlerine uymak adına yapılan değişiklikler olduğunu savunmaktadır. Balsamo'ya göre ise, estetik operasyonları gelen ve Davis'in bireyselleşme olarak adlandırdığı değişiklik, daha çok kendi bedenine ve çevresine karşı yaşanan bir yabancılaşma ve kapanmadır, ve ameliyat tecrübesi sonucunda oluşan yeni beden bütün ve tamamlanmış bir benliği yansıtmaktan çok kırılmalara sahip ve bölümlü bir benlikle sonuçlanır: yeni yaratılan benliğin bütünsel ve retrospektif bir bütünlüğü olmadığından dolayı tam değildir. Bedenlerine dair duydukları sevginin de bütüncül bir sevgi olmadığı, değiştirilmiş ve "mükemmelleştirilmiş" beden bölümleri ile "mükemmelleştirilecek ancak şu anda mükemmel olmayan" beden bölümlerine karşı farklı hisler besledikleri, bütünlük hissinin kaybolmuş olduğu vurgulanmaktadır.

Gerekli ekonomik araçlara sahip olan ve bedenini mevcut güzellik algısına uygun biçimde değiştirmek isteyen ve buna imkânı olan kadınlar, bu kazanılmış güzelliğin getirdiği güçlenme hissinin bir anda eriyip yok olacağı veya ilerleyen zaman ile kaybedilebileceği hissiyle yaşamaktadır. Güzelliğin sonsuz olmadığına dair fikir, güçlenmenin de kaybedilebileceği hissini doğurmaktadır. Güzelliğin geçici oluşu ve sonsuza kadar devam etmeyeceği gerçeği, açıkça hissedilebilir bir panic ve çaresizlik hali yaratmaktadır. Sosyal pozisyon ve sevilirliği bu kaygan konsepte bağlamak ve büyük bir maddi manevi emek ve bedensel çabayı geçici bir değişime bağlamak hissi uzun vadede strese sebep olmakta ve güçlenmeyi bir güçsüzlük haline çevirmektedir.

Kadınların g zellik algısı, genel g zellik algısı, g r n   ve g  lenme ile ilgili derin ve olduk a geni  bir ara tırma konusudur. Bu  alı mada mevcut uluslararası ve usual  alı malar incelenerek edinilen bilgi ile ataerkilli in yeniden yaratım s reci ve g  lenme konusu ilenmeye  alı ılmı tır. Ataerkil normların yenededn yaratımı incelenirken, sınıf ve mevcut e itsizlikler incelenmeden bir sonuca varılması imk nsızdır. G ellik, g zelli e eri im, kadın bedeninden beklentiler ve estetik operasyonlar mevcut g   dengeleri ve g zellik normlarını yeniden yaratır veya d n  t r r.

Bu  alı ma, 35-40 ya  arası kadınların estetik operasyon  ncesi ve sonrasına dair tecr beleri ve d n   mlerini incelemektedir ve ancak g r   me yapılan kadınlara dair bir sonu  vermektedir.  alı manın ba ka kadınlara uygulanması durumunda, tamamen farklı sonu lara ula ılması ihtimali bulunmaktadır. Bu  alı manın sonu ları genelge er ve t m kadınlara uygulanabilir de ildir. Her kadının tecr besi e siz, anlamlı ve  zeldir. Bu  alı mada,  alı maya katılan kadınların deneyimlerinden bir i g r  edinilmesi ve gelecek  alı malara katkıda bulunulması hedeflenmi  ve ama lanmı tır.

Bu  alı mada g  lendirme nosyonunun faklı g r   ler tarafından nasıl ele alındı ı ve g ellik ba lamına farklı g r   ler tarafından nasıl yorumlandı ı Kathy Davis ve Llwellyn Negrin'in g r   leri ekseninde ele alınmı tır.  alı mada g zelli in g  lendirici bir fakt r oldu u g r    ile g zelli in g  ledirici bir fakt r olmaktan  ok ataerkilli in yeniden yaratımın sebebiyet verdi i g r    kar ıla tırmalı olarak tartı ılmı tır. Bu  alı ma, sonu  olarak, g zelli i g  lendirici bir ara  olarak g rmenin, g zellik algısına uymayan kadınlar i in g  s zle tirici bir araca d n e e ine ve bu g  s zle tmeyi rasyonelize etmenin, kadınların t m  i in g  lenmeyi imk nsız kılaca ına sebep olunaca ı savunmaktadır.

Kadınların fiziksel görüntüsü ve ideal kadın güzelliğini tanımlama kriteri derinlikle tartışılan, kadınların kendilerine dair algısı ile kendilerini tanımlamasında önemli olan değişkenler haline gelmiştir. Güzelliğin ve güncel güzellik normlarıyla eşleşen bir görüntüye sahip olmanın “önemi” farklı araçlarla vurgulanmakta ve yaygınlaştırılmaktadır. Güzelliğe dair vurgu ve estetik operasyonlara erişimin kolaylaşmasının yarattığı birliktelik kadınlarda bütün, entegre olmuş ve güçlenmiş hissetmek için güzel olmanın zorunluluğuna ilişkin algıya neden olmaktadır.

Bu çalışma estetik operasyon deneyimi sonrası, estetik operasyonları maddi veya maddi olmayan bir yatırım, ya da fiziksel, duygusal ya da maddi emek olarak olarak gören kadınların kendilerine ve diğer kadınlara dair güzellik algısının değişimini, bu algı değişiminin yeniden ürettiği hiyerarşiyi anlamaya çalışmaktadır. Araştırma sorularına yanıt bulabilmek ve süreci anlayabilmek için, Eylül 2015 ve Aralık 2015 tarihleri arasında, estetik operasyon geçirmiş 20 kadın ve beş estetik cerrah ile görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Bu çalışmada, kadınların estetik operasyon ile “kazandıkları” güzellik sonucu elde edildiğine inanılan “güçlenme” sorgulanmaktadır. Bu çerçevede, Kathy Davis ve Llewellyn Negrin’in konuya ilişkin farklı yaklaşımları çalışmada tartışılmaktadır. “İddia edilen güçlenme tüm kadınlar için gerçek bir kazanıma mı neden olmakta yoksa mevcut hiyerarşik normları yeniden mi üretmektedir?” sorusu tartışılmaktadır.

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