Kurdish Women Activists' Conceptualisation of Feminism and Nationalism: An Ethnographic Study of London-Based Kurdish Organisations

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ABSTRACT

This study has explored the ways in which Kurdish women activists interpret and practise feminism and nationalism in London. Kurdish women's relations to nationalism can be analysed in various ways. However, this study specifically focuses on the claim that nationalism is antithetical to feminism. Moreover, it has argued that the pre-migration experiences of Kurdish women, related to their national and gender identities, direct them to continue their activism in London. Accordingly, I asked: what roles did the pre-migration experiences of Kurdish women play in their identities and their engagement with activism in London? In what ways do Kurdish women activists in London articulate their political and social demands? How do these women activists negotiate feminism and nationalism?

This research was born in a need to analyse Kurdish women's activism in diasporas, which fills the gap in the literature on diasporas, women and activism. Firstly, this research narrows the focus by taking the gender component into account. This is because it was considered that women experience diasporas differently than men. Secondly, migration was discussed as a linear journey that starts from the home country. The main consideration was that different ties with the homelands give rise to various forms of activism that enrich diaspora studies. While some research has been carried out on Kurdish women's relation to nationalism, no previous study has investigated Kurdish women activists' approach to nationalism in diasporas.

Based on feminist ethnographic research, including observations and unstructured interviews, this study offers an understanding of how the background of diasporic Kurdish women shapes their activism in London, what demands they raise, and how they negotiate feminism and nationalism. Because Kurdish women's relation to nationalism is multidimensional, the intersectional approach, which emphasise the multiplicity of identities, is applied for this study. Along with transnational feminists, this study underlines the fact that Kurdish women's political activism can be understood through analyses of their multiple identities. However, transnational feminists have been criticised as they omit women's national identities for fear that nationalism might overshadow feminism.

The findings of this study contribute to the literature on women and nationalism, diasporas and migrants' activism in many ways. However, two main contributions need to be highlighted.

Firstly, Kurdish women's relation to nationalism in their activism puts them in discussions about whether nationalism is antithetical to feminism. In this study, I have shown that in the case of Kurdish women, there is no certain response to the claims that nationalism is detrimental to feminism or that nationalism strengthens feminism. Kurdish women meet with different forms of state nationalism as there is not an official Kurdish state and different forms of Kurdish nationalism exist in different Kurdish national movements. Kurdish women's different encounters with nationalism led them to develop different approaches to nationalism, which was reflected in their activism. Compared to Kurdish women from Iranian and Iraqi Kurdistan, Kurdish women from Turkey's Kurdistan emphasise their national identity more intensively in their demands.

Secondly, Kurdish women developed different approaches to nationalism because of their different meetings with patriarchy in national movements. What we know about patriarchy is largely based on feminist studies that investigate what patriarchy is and how it affects women's lives. However, feminist scholars have not examined women's reactions to patriarchy in much detail. This study underlines two points. First, women from different ethnic groups may encounter different forms of patriarchy in national movements. Hence, the focus is on Kurdish women activists and the patriarchy that they have encountered. Second, women develop multiple reactions when they encounter patriarchy. These Kurdish women developed three reactions to patriarchy: internalising patriarchy, dealing with patriarchy and challenging patriarchy. This study used the concept 'hidden patriarchal codes' for the first time to express that some Kurdish women believe that they were challenging patriarchy as they broke away from the patriarchal mentality. However, these women may still possess aspects of masculine cognition, albeit they may not even be aware of them.

Keywords: Activism; Diasporas; Kurdish women and nationalism

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BSA	British Sociological Association
CUP	The Committee of Union and Process
DFNS	The Democratic Federation of Northern Syria
ETA	*Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* – Basque Homeland and Liberty
FGM	Female genital mutilation
HEP	*Halkin Emek Partisi* (People's Labour Party)
ICP	The Iraqi Communist Party
IKWRO	Iranian and Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
KCC	Kurdish Community Centre
KCK	Koma Civaken Kurdistan
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party
KDP-I	Kurdistan Democratic Party – Iran
KJK	*Komalen Jinen Kurdistan*-Kurdistan Communities of Women
KNK	Kurdistan National Congress
KOMALA	The Kurdistan Organisation of the Communist Party of Iran
KRG	Kurdish Regional Government
KTC	*Kurdistan Teali Cemiyeti* (the Society for the Betterment of Kurdistan)
KUK	The Kurdistan National Liberationists
KWO	The Kurdish Women's Project
MP	Member of Parliament
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PDKI	The Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan
PKK	*Partîya Karkerên Kurdistanê* (Kurdistan Workers' Party)
PTSD	post-traumatic stress disorder

PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
PYD	Democratic Union Party
TKSP	The Socialist Party of Turkish Kurdistan
UK	United Kingdom
YJA-Star	The Free Women's Unit
YJWK	*Yekitiya Jinen Welatperezen Kurdistan* (Patriotic Women Union of Kurdistan)
YPG	People's Protection Units
YPJ	Women's Protection Unit

GLOSSING OF TERMS

Newroz: The first day of spring and the first day of the new year (21 March) in Kurdish culture.

Peshmerga: Kurdish military forces of Iraqi Kurdistan.

Kufiyah: A traditional scarf with black and white or red and white stitch.

Tasbih: Beads that are used in praying or as accessories in Middle Eastern Culture.

Serhildan: Kurdish uprisings and protests.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Social Significance and Scope of The Study

This study began as an exploratory research project to understand, discover and explain the activism of Kurdish women in London. My personal circumstances and experiences shaped this study. When I was a philosophy student at Istanbul University, I worked in a non-government organisation (NGO). This organisation was formed to raise forced migrants' issues and help them to overcome their challenges in Istanbul. The first time I had been involved in sociological research was within this organisation. My experiences there led to me continuing my education in Sociology where I could focus more on forced migration. I applied to Mimar Sinan Fine Art University to study a Master's Degree in Sociology. My proposal was accepted. During the interview, Prof. Ali Akay, the head of the department, raised a question that led me to confront myself.

> Akay: You are already working for an NGO on forced migration. Why do you want to study forced migration here?
> Me: You are right, I am working for an organisation where we conduct various research projects on forced migration. These research projects are quite important. However, I noticed that we talk about issues and offer similar remedies. By entering the academic life, I might be able to offer different remedies for forced migrant women's issues.
> Akay: Do you want to be a professor?
> Me: I do not care about having a title. I just want to have knowledge that gets richer over time.

I was apparently responding to Prof. Akay's question, but I was actually talking to myself. I aimed to become an academic. I did not have any response to why I wanted to be in academia until the day I had this interview. Fortunately, the university offered me a place. I researched how NGOs in Diyarbakır handled the issues of forced migrant women. Immediately after completing the degree, I migrated to London because of my marriage. I chose to be in academia to facilitate my adaptation to the new life. For my PhD, I focused on the experiences and perspectives of Kurdish women activists. This is because, based on my participation at the NGO and the findings of my Master's research, I witnessed that activists have knowledge about

local issues that should be discussed in the social sciences. Combining local issues and knowledge with theories makes it possible to understand communities more comprehensively. Therefore, my main focus is on the knowledge, experiences, demands, clashes and struggles of Kurdish women activists.

This PhD study is about Kurdish women activists interpreting and practising feminism and nationalism. More specifically, it aims to investigate some questions: why are Kurdish women involved in Kurdish national movements? Why did the first-generation Kurdish women transfer their activism from their homeland to London? Why did the second-generation Kurdish women conduct activism? How is women's activism perceived in mixed-gender organisations? What do Kurdish women demand through their activism? How are Kurdish women's demands shaped differently depending on their country of origin and the type of organisation in which they work? How do Kurdish women relate to Kurdish nationalism? And how is Kurdish women's relation to nationalism interpreted by feminist groups?

This study specifically focuses on women's relation to nationalism. There are two different approaches to women's relation to nationalism. Some scholars, such as Grewal and Kaplan (2006), and Barlow (2006) and McClintock (1991), view nationalism as dangerous for feminism because nationalist projects are patriarchal and monolithic. These scholars are sceptical about women's position on nationalism. On the other hand, some scholars, such as Kim (2009) and Herr (2003), argue that nationalism is perceived differently in the Third World, and the claim that nationalism is antithetical to feminism does not reflect Third World women's relation to nationalism.

This study's place in this discussion is unique as there is no sole version of nationalism that Kurdish women meet. Kurdish women encounter different forms of nationalism of different states – Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria – as a result of having no official Kurdish state. The oppression of Kurdish women in these states led them to participate in Kurdish national movements. However, there is not a unified Kurdish movement. Thus, this study contends that it is not possible to say with certainty that nationalism is detrimental to feminism or nationalism supports feminism as Kurdish women have multiple relations to nationalism.

In this study, I have also discussed that Kurdish women do not approach nationalism and feminism on the same level. This is because women encounter different types and levels of patriarchy in national movements. Analysing the possible forms of patriarchy in the Kurdish movements enabled this study to view specific and multiple oppressions of women. To give an example, Kurdish women from Iraqi Kurdistan who have links with traditional Kurdish movements, like KDP, are met with apparent patriarchy. This results in Kurdish women's scepticism over nationalism. Kurdish women from Turkey's Kurdistan who have links with the PKK have different experiences in the national movement. According to participants of this study, women's activism is encouraged by the PKK. Even though PKK supports women, these Kurdish women still encounter patriarchy in the movements. This is because some members of the movement could not internalise the movement's egalitarian gender perspective. Unlike Kurdish women from Iraqi Kurdistan, these Kurdish women from Turkey's Kurdistan do not view Kurdish nationalism as antithetical to feminism as they view patriarchy in the movement as the product of members rather than the movement, for it fights against the patriarchy. As a result, the national and gender demands of those Kurdish women intersect as they have been marginalised by the Turkish state through their national and gender identities. Those discussions on how Kurdish women conceptualise nationalism and feminism uniquely contribute to the literature on women and nationalism by pointing out that women's relations with nationalism can be more complicated.

Theoretically, transnational feminism is chosen as it enables this study to view Kurdish women through their multiple identities. It is the aim that analyses of Kurdish women's experience through their multiple identities will contribute to discussions on universal sisterhood in the literature. The main assumption on Universal sisterhood is that women could build a unified front against universal patriarchy and combat women's common experiences of oppression around the world by disregarding divisions of race, sexuality, class and national origin (Mendoza 2002). In this sense, along with transnational feminists, this study adopts the intersectional approach that focuses on the complexity of identities and criticises universal sisterhood by emphasising women's intersecting oppressions and multiple forms of resistance (Herr 2014).According to this approach, if identities are complex, with many intersections of class, race, gender, and sexuality driving people to react in different ways at different times, women will behave politically, not just because of their gender, but also because of their race,

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class, and sexuality, in a complicated interplay of all of these factors (Waylen, 1996). This study underlines that although Kurdish women are from the same ethnicity, they encounter different oppressions and develop various resistance against these oppressions as analysing the intersection of women's multiple identities reveals intra-group differences (Crenshaw, 1991).

During the study, I specifically focused on patriarchy. I applied Walby's (1997, p. 20) definition of **patriarchy** 'as a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women'. However, I have emphasised that not only men but also women oppress and dominate women through **hegemonic masculinity,** which is 'the culturally idealised form of masculine character' (Donaldson, 1993, pp. 646-647). In this study, I have emphasised that Kurdish women encounter patriarchy in their private lives and also in organisations.

Moreover, Kurdish women's activism in Kurdish movements caused them to migrate to London. As a result of their migration, Kurdish women's multi-layered relations to nationalism gained another aspect. They are now migrant women. Hence, this study's focus is on the intersection of three areas: women, nationalism and diasporic activism. Indeed, different forms of nationalism shape Kurdish women's activism in diasporas as the migrants do not automatically cut their ties with the homeland (Faist, 1998). Migrants' ties with their homeland have been highlighted by various studies. One of the focuses of these studies is migrants' political activism in diasporas. Diaspora studies commonly ask how and why migrants mobilise for their aims. More specifically, these studies question the functions of migrant organisations (Keles, 2015; Odmalm, 2007, D'Angelo, 2015, Fennema and Tillie, 1999; Griffiths et al., 2006) and how migrants' political practices are articulated and received (as Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003; Fennema and Tillie, 1999; Dangelo, 2015; Herman and Jacobs, 2015; Başer and Swain, 2008; and Keles, 2015). In light of these studies, this study focuses on the Kurdish community, one of the highest politicised communities in London (Griffiths, 2000). Analysing the Kurdish communities in diasporas is unique as this stateless community develops multiple ties with different parts of the homeland (Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria).

Furthermore, this study narrows the focus by taking the gender component into account. This is because there is a growing body of literature on Kurdish diasporas, but little is known about Kurdish women in diasporas, feminism, and women and nationalism. To contribute to the literature in these areas, this study asks how the political practices of Kurdish migrant women

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are articulated and received. By analysing Kurdish women's activism, this study underlines that these women experience diasporas differently than men and they have different roles in diasporas (Anthias, 1998). Hence, this study adds the gender perspective to the literature on Kurdish diasporas.

Moreover, this study specifically focuses on Kurdish women's multi-layered approaches to nationalism and analyses how these approaches have been reflected by their activism in diasporas. This focus enables the study to analyse these women's activism in detail by considering these women's migration as a whole journey starting from the homeland. Lastly, this study links Kurdish women's pre-migration process with their activism in the new country. Analysing the link between Kurdish women's different perspectives on nationalism, which were shaped in the pre-migration process, and their activism in diasporas is important, for it enables us to understand migrants' activism.

1.2. Research Aims and Research Questions

This study adds to the knowledge about Kurdish women's activism in London. By focusing on Kurdish women's activism, this study aims to highlight these women's demands. Their demands might be related to national identity, as these women worked in organisations whose names generally contained the word 'Kurdish'. Also, these women's activism was related to their gender identity. Hence, this thesis has the following primary question: How do Kurdish women activists in London interpret and practise nationalism and feminism? The question incorporates two key points: how Kurdish women activists in London interpret nationalism and feminism and how Kurdish women practise nationalism and feminism. As emphasised by Harding (1991), feminism is still considered taboo in many cultures as it is perceived as a Euro-centric, racist, bourgeois and heterosexist phenomenon. Even though Kurdish women struggle with gender-related issues, they might avoid identifying themselves as feminists. These women also might not be regarded as feminists by feminists as they are not organised in a feminist group. Kurdish women's interpretations of nationalism might differ, and they might also differ from what Western feminists understand to be nationalism. Another factor to consider is how women practise nationalism and feminism, or in other words, how women emphasise their national and gender identities in their demands.

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This primary question outlined above is also supported by three secondary questions.

1. What is the role of Kurdish women's background in shaping their activism in London? The purpose of this question is to explore how Kurdish women's activism started. It is assumed that pre-migration experiences for the first-generation Kurdish women shaped these women's activism in London. As implied in the primary research question, Kurdish women's approaches to nationalism and feminism are different. This secondary question led to an analysis of the possible link between the approach of these women to nationalism and feminism and their pre-migration experiences. Moreover, second-generation Kurdish women, who did not have any pre-migration experiences, might have been affected by their parents' or relatives' stories about their homeland.

2. In what ways do Kurdish women activists in London articulate their political and social demands? This question led to an analysis of Kurdish women's activism and their demands. Kurdish women's demands were analysed in two groups: extra- and intra-organisations demands. Extra-organisational demands are reasons that lead Kurdish women to work in organisations. Those demands include what Kurdish women want to express to the states, other NGOs or the public. Kurdish women have participated in Kurdish organisations to raise their voices for their ethnic and national demands, such as being recognised as Kurds. Also, they aim to draw attention to human rights breaches that the Kurds encounter. After that, Kurdish women started to speak about their gender equality demands. Hence, this section will analyse to what extent Kurdish women's ethnic and gender issues are reflected in their demands. Intra-organisational demands are ways in which Kurdish women express their gender equality claims in those organisations. The aim of this section is to investigate how Kurdish women are situated and treated in those organisations. How women respond to their situations in the organisations is another part of this section.

3. How do Kurdish women activists conceptualise feminism and nationalism? This led to an analysis of how Kurdish women activists justified their nationalist struggles. Since there have been significant discussions about women's position in relation to nationalism in the relevant literature, Kurdish women's nationalist demands might also be subjected to scrutiny by some Kurdish feminists and non-Kurdish feminists. Hence, the aim of this research question is to analyse how Kurdish women negotiate feminism

and nationalism, how Kurdish women view nationalism and whether Kurdish women develop different approaches to nationalism.

1.3. Methodology

To analyse how Kurdish women activists conceptualise feminism and nationalism, this study conducted feminist ethnographic research that applies unstructured interviews and observation. The fieldwork started on 10 March 2018 by observing the rally called 'Million Women Rise' and ended with the last interview on 16 February 2019. London was chosen as the research area because the UK-based Kurdish communities have established their organisations mainly in London, with the aim of solving their social and economic problems, easing their homesickness by organising social and cultural activities and adapting to Britain's way of life (Demir, 2012).

Certain criteria in selecting participants were applied for the study. Firstly, participants in this study work within mixed-gender Kurdish organisations such as Halkevi, the Kurdish Community Centre (KCC), and within single-gender Kurdish organisations such as The Roj Women's Foundation, the Roj Women's Assembly, the Iranian and Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation (IKWRO), The Kurdish Women's Project/Organisation (KWO), and the Culture Project. The division between mixed- and single-gender organisations enabled the study to analyse how the type of organisation affects Kurdish women's approaches to nationalism.

The second criterion relates to the country of origin from which Kurdish women migrated. Kurdish women from Turkey, Iran, and Iraq participated in this research. Syrian Kurdish women activists could not be included in the study because they were not emotionally comfortable with participating in the research due to the war in Syria. This criterion is important as there are few studies that focus on Kurdish women from different parts of Kurdistan.

1.4. The Structure of The Thesis

The next chapter (Chapter Two) contains background information on the Kurdish Question, how Kurdish Nationalism has been shaped, how Kurdish women were situated in the PKK, and Kurds' migration to Europe and Britain. Also, this chapter analyses Kurdish women in

Kurdish National Movements, such as the Kurdistan Organisation of the Communist Party of Iran (KOMALA) and the Kurdistan Democratic Party-Iran (KDP-I) in Iran and Iraq.

Chapter Three provides a theoretical context for the position of Kurdish women in relation to nationalism and includes key debates about the topic. These debates helped to identify the gaps in the literature and highlight the significance of this study. Through applying the intersectional approach, I have reviewed theories about women, nationalism, and activism in diasporas.

Chapter Four addresses the reason behind choosing a qualitative research method and feminist ethnography, the criteria applied in selecting organisations and participants for the study, the methods used to obtain data, how the data were analysed, and the ethical issues considered.

In Chapter Five, I explore how Kurdish women's pre-migration traumas have affected their identities and their engagement in activism in London. This chapter consists of two parts. In the first part, I discuss how Kurdish women's national identity was shaped. The second part of this chapter focuses on why Kurdish women participated in Kurdish Movements.

Chapter Six contains an analysis of what Kurdish women want to express through their activism. I divided Kurdish women activists' demands into intra-organisational and extra-organisational demands. Intra-organisational demands relate more to Kurdish women's gender demands within the mixed-gender organisations. Extra-organisational demands concern what Kurdish women want to say through their activism. I have shown how these demands can be nationalist and gender related.

Chapter Seven analyses how Kurdish women negotiate nationalism. This chapter is a critique of some transnational feminists who ignore women's national identities in claiming that nationalism itself is antithetical to feminism. I have analysed this claim from the perspective of Kurdish women's feminist struggles within the context of a broader Kurdish National Liberation movement.

Chapter Eight discusses the main arguments that are highlighted in this thesis. This chapter focuses on women's relation to nationalism by considering discussions on whether nationalism is detrimental to feminism and highlights the significance of this study.

The concluding chapter (Chapter Nine) revisits the research questions, highlights this study's contribution and makes recommendations for further studies.

1. CHAPTER TWO: AN OVERVIEW OF KURDISH NATIONALISM AND KURDISH DIASPORIC ORGANISATIONS

2.1. Introduction

The concept of diaspora makes it possible to have a deeper understanding of refugees' lives if this concept is understood as a transnational social structure relating to both the host country and the country of origin (Wahlbeck, 1998). Migrants start a new life in a new country in the shadow of their memories of their home country. The Kurds arrived in the UK with not only their physical existences but also their traumas and issues. To reach a deeper understanding of what Kurdish women in London want and how they have experienced being in the diaspora, which is identified as a relational network that is typically created by forced scattering and reluctant dispersing (Gilroy, 1994), an analysis of what happened in their homeland is required.

This chapter aims to analyse the history of Kurdish women's engagement with nationalism and the reasons that led Kurdish women to migrate and engage in activism in London. This chapter is divided into six parts. The political activities of the Kurds (Turkey's Kurdistan) in London are closely linked to the Kurdish question. Hence, the first part contains the historical background of the Kurdish question. In connection to the Kurdish question, the second part focuses on the Kurdish movement PKK, in terms of the movement's ideological transformation. The PKK's ideology is closely related to women as the PKK highlights the importance of women's emancipation for the national liberation. Thus, the third part examines the situation of Kurdish women in the PKK. Even though the main focus of the study is on Kurdish women from Turkey, it also examines the activism of Kurdish women from different parts of Kurdistan. Hence, the fourth part contains historical information on the position of Iraqi Kurdish women in relation to Kurdish nationalism, and the fifth part examines the situation of Iranian Kurdish women in Kurdish nationalist movements. Lastly, many Kurds have migrated to Europe, including the UK, and established organisations. The sixth part focuses on the political activism of Kurds in Europe and Britain.

2.2. Kurdish Nationalism and The Kurdish Question

2.2.1. Understanding The Kurdish Question

The Kurdish Question has been engaging Turkey's internal and external politics on various levels since the late Ottoman Empire. Many scholars have focused on the reasons for the Kurdish Question in their analyses. The question has been regarded as being a problem of under-development. İçduygu et al. (1999), for example, emphasised that the poor socio-economic environment of the Kurds, which they defined as 'an environment of insecurity' (p. 992), was related to the ethnic question. It has also been linked to the failure to recognise Kurdish identity (Çelik, 2010; Gambetti, 2009; Yeğen, 1999). From the mid-1920s until the end of the 1980s, the Turkish State claimed that there were no Kurds living within the Turkish territory (Cornell, 2001) but rather that there were Turks living in the mountains, who intermingled with Armenians, Arabs and Persians, who had forgotten their mother language and their origins and became alien to their own race (Kılıç, 2007). This was a matter of oppression and the denial of rights of an ethnic group (the Kurds) by the majority group (the Turks) (Cornell, 2001).

The Kurdish Question has also been defined as an issue of human rights breaches (Kılıç, 2007; Bozarslan, 2001; Çelik, 2010; Gambetti, 2009). The majority of Turkish officials were hostile to any improvements in human rights, and many of them were linked ideologically to the Turkish radical right. They conceived the State as being holy and as an eternal entity that was threatened by internal and external enemies. In their view, the Kurdish Question was not a cultural, political or social issue but was formed by internal and external enemies of Turkey (Bozarslan, 2001). Human rights breaches became part of the everyday praxis of these officials to overcome these enemies.

2.2.2. History Of the Kurdish Question

Aghaei (2017) stated that Kurdish Nationalism emerged in the late Ottoman Period as a reaction to Turkish Nationalism. In the Ottoman Empire, citizens were brought together by Islamic identity, which was formalised as the Union of the Muslim Nation (*Millet*) between 1878 and 1923. This understanding was practised in the Empire under the name of 'the *Millet* System' (Yavuz, 1998). Under the *Millet* System, the Kurds were a part of the Islamic *Ummah*, or ruling *Millet*, not a minority (Kılıç, 2007). Under this system, from the 16th century, the Kurds had their own provinces and emirates and operated semi-autonomously in their internal

affairs (Arakon, 2014). However, the Empire attempted to control Kurds' local authorities and empower the central authority by declaring reform movements. As a result of this attempt to centrally control Kurdish regions, 20 rebellions took place between 1806 and 1914 (Kılıç, 2007).

In the newly founded Republic, the Kurds were considered as Turks because they were Muslim. The aim of the new Republic was to build a nation of Turkish citizens in a multi-ethnic, multilingual and multi-religious region (Cassier and Joongerden, 2013). In the first constitution, drafted in 1921, the name 'Turkey Republic' was given to the state. This name did not refer to any religion or ethnicity. In the second constitution, drafted in 1924, the name 'the Turks' was used for the first time: 'Without religious and ethnic difference, every person of people of Turkey who is a citizen is regarded as "Turk"' (Yavuz, 2001, p. 9). This was a sign of transforming all communities into Turks (Cassier and Joongerden, 2013).

The famous maxim of the founder of the Republic, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, '*Ne Mutlu Türküm Diyene*' ('Happy is whoever says I am a Turk'), has been used as an expression of the nation (Cornell, 2001). The state used the media, army, education and art to reinforce the Turkish identity (Yavuz, 1998). Every morning, primary school students read the national pledge, which starts with: 'I am a Turk, I am truthful, I am hardworking' and ends with 'Happy is whoever says I am a Turk'. The shouting of the national pledge in schools continued until its abrogation in 2013. The exclusion of the Kurdish identity was an outcome of this project, the aim of which was to build a central, secular nation-state and, therefore, to exclude tradition, religion and minorities (Yeğen, 1996). Kurds were excluded because of their so-called backward culture and feudalistic tribal organisation, which was assumed to be a social organisation based on pre-nationalist and pre-scientific religiosity (Casier and Jongerden, 2013).

Therefore, until the 1980s, the Kurdish Question was not only a question related to identity or an ethno-political reaction to not being recognised, but it was also assumed to be a problem that stemmed from the region's pre-modern and feudal tribal structure, which was regarded as being culturally and economically backwards and to which a solution should be sought through assimilation to provide unity between the state and people (Keyman, 2012). Hence, Yavuz (2001) described the Kurds as victims of the secularist nation-state. The Kurds reacted to these assimilation policies with uprisings. Between 1925 and 1940, over 20 uprisings, which were

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violently suppressed by the Turkish Army, occurred in predominantly Kurdish-populated South-East Turkey (Olson, 1996).

During the 1960s, the Kurds played a part in activities in leftist movements. However, by the mid-1970s, they withdrew their support from these movements and began to establish Kurdish revolutionary groups and movements (Güneş, 2009). During the 1970s, various Kurdish socialist parties or groups emerged rapidly, including the Socialist Party of Turkish Kurdistan (TKSP) in 1974, Rizgari in 1976, the PKK in 1978, the Kurdistan National Liberationists (KUK) and Kawa in 1978, and Ala Rizgari and Tekosin in 1979. All of these Kurdish national groups were dedicated to political and ethnic demands related to socialism and the Kurdish struggle to varying degrees (Güneş, 2013).

Most of these groups could not survive after the military coup of 1980. This is because one of the main aims of the coup was controlling the Kurdish and religious movements, as the state identified Kurdish nationalism, the left and radical Islam as separatist movements and banned all forms of these movements (Yavuz, 1998). Unlike other Kurdish movements, the PKK gained its power after the coup of 1980. The reasons why the PKK stood out among other groups are emphasised by Akkaya and Jongerden (2019). Firstly, the PKK did not have any relationship with other Kurdish political groups. Secondly, the PKK had contact with organizations in Palestine, and members of the PKK were trained by those Palestinian organizations in Lebanon. Thirdly, the PKK formed its own ideology (Apoculuk). Unlike other movements, the PKK did not involve itself in discussions on different versions of socialism (China, Soviet Union, Cuba, Albania). Lastly, members of the PKK were loyal to their party (Akkaya and Jongerden, 2019).

2.2.3. *The PKK*

In this section, PKK will be discussed as still there has been an ongoing war between the movement and the Turkish Army. The Turkish Army increased its oppressive tactics including the use of paramilitary militias and widespread torture in response to the PKK's guerrilla actions. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the violence escalated, resulting in tens of thousands of deaths and millions of refugees (Novellis, 2018). Britain was one of those destinations

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favoured by Kurds, as the UK has been a host to Kurdish students and then refugees from Iraqi Kurdistan. One of the reasons for why the UK was popular destination is that the British government did not require Turkish citizens to have visas. However, increasing conflicts and human right breaches caused the increasing influx of Kurdish asylum seekers from Turkey. Thus, a visa requirement was imposed in 1989 (Wahlbeck, 1998). These Kurdish migrants engaged with activism intensively and established organisations in London. Kurdish women also actively worked in these organisations. Kurdish women's activism in the diaspora can be linked to the PKK's gender perspectives. Hence, understanding the PKK and its gender perspective facilitates analyses of Kurdish women's relation to Kurdish nationalism and feminism in Britain.

The PKK emerged from leftist movements (Akkaya and Joongerden, 2012) and was formed to mobilise Kurdish students, peasants and workers against 'Turkish colonialism' and Kurdish feudal landlords (Yarkın, 2015). By 1999, the PKK had reached an important crossroad. Öcalan, who was one of the founding members of the PKK and the leader of the PKK since its foundation, was captured in Kenya and brought to Turkey. Imprisonment of Abdullah Öcalan led to dramatic changes in PKK's ideology and action (Leezenberg, 2016). In 2005, the PKK Movement defined its main purpose to be the constitution of an ecological, democratic confederalist society, which translates into an anti-capitalist, anti-sexist, anti-industrial, ecologist, democratic modernity and autonomous, radical democracy (Yarkın, 2015).

Concordantly, political order in Rojava comes to the front as the PKK's political perspective has been practised in Rojava. Besides the full representation of ethnic and religious groups, the Rojava Autonomous Administration pays attention to gender-egalitarianism. In Article 27 in the social contract of Rojava, it is stated that: 'women have the inviolable right to participate in political, social, economic and cultural life'. In parallel to Article 27, from neighbourhood to canton level, all women's institutions are established to avoid deep-seated patriarchal patterns, which disempowered women, and to support women to solve their issues (Cemgil and Hoffman, 2016). Kurdish women have become prominent because of their struggles and also their participation in political life. The Kurdish movement defines the struggles in Northern Syria-Rojava as 'the women's revolution'.

In the following part, I will examine the situation of women in the PKK from the formation of the movement to their being defined in practice as the core members of the

revolution in Rojava. Also, as mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, developments in the homeland are replicated in diasporas. In my analysis of the PKK and women, I have considered how Kurdish women's activism in London has been shaped by the PKK's approach to women as well as by the situation of Kurdish women in their homeland.

2.3.2.1 Kurdish Feminism and the PKK

Kurdish women's emancipation has been emphasised strongly by the movement. This is because Öcalan believed that a political and social transformation of Kurds would occur not only through Kurdish national liberation but also through the women's emancipation struggle, in a process of double liberation (Şahin-Mencütek, 2016). Accordingly, women started to organise themselves separately. In 1987, the first women's organisation, *Yekitiya Jinen Welatperezen Kurdistan* (Patriotic Women's Union of Kurdistan – YJWK), was established in Germany (Joongerden, 2017). The active participation of Kurdish women as fighters in the movement increased in the 1990s (Çağlayan, 2012). The first women's guerrilla unit within the Yekitiya Azadiya Jinen Kurdistan (Women's Freedom Union of Kurdistan – YAJK) was formed in 1993. In 1995, the First Kurdistan Women's Liberation Congress and the First Army of the Kurdistan Free Women's Union, later called YJA-Star, were formed in the PKK (Ferreira and Santiago, 2018). During this period, the PKK's political ideology shifted from a focus on women's liberation to a women-centred analysis of society with the aim of transforming gender relations (Novellis, 2018). The power and influence of male guerrillas were challenged by the Women's Army and autonomous Kurdish women's sub-groups. These developments led Kurdish women to develop a feminist consciousness by questioning their comrades' sexist attitudes (Yüksel, 2006) to the rise of the female guerrillas, thus challenging patriarchy in society and in the movement (Novellis, 2018).

Besides guerrilla fights, Öcalan (1992) emphasised the importance of movements in cities, and women were expected to lead city movements. Öcalan (1992) called Kurdish women in cities to consider Palestinian women in *intifadah* and to initiate and lead similar riots called *serhildans*. Kurdish women responded positively to Öcalan's exhortation and became more visible in the public sphere through these mass uprisings, which reached its peak during the period between 1990 and 1993 (Açık, 2013). *Serhildans* were led by Kurdish women; they

had an undeniable role in Kurdish women's mobilisations in cities (Azizoğlu Bazan, 2017). Since the mid-1990s, Kurdish women have been at the forefront of organising street demonstrations, petitions and sit-ins against the state. Their activities were confronted by the security forces, and some women were consequently arrested (Şahin-Mencütek, 2016). Some of these women whose lives were thought to be in danger in Turkey had to emigrate to the West. London was one of Kurdish women's favourite destinations in which to seek asylum. Since settling in a new country, these women have continued their activities in the diaspora. In the following chapter, I discuss in detail the activities of Kurdish women in London.

During the 1990s, the increased participation of women in the guerrilla forces was felt in the legal and political arenas. Kurdish women's appearance in these arenas was not independent of the increased number of female guerrillas, as the guerrillas proved that Kurdish women were capable of doing everything (Begikhani et al., 2018). Along with the foundation of the pro-Kurdish party, *Halkin Emek Partisi* (People's Labour Party – HEP), a Kurdish woman, Leyla Zana, was elected as parliamentarian for the first time (Kutschera, in Dryaz, 2011). During the swearing-in ceremony, Zana added to her oath: 'I have sworn this oath for the sake of brotherhood between the Turkish and the Kurdish people'. This infuriated her Turkish colleagues (Bruniessen, 2001, p. 15). Zana was the most popular example of a woman in the political arena, but many other Kurdish women were nominated and elected in both general and local elections (Çağlayan, 2012). At the same time, Kurdish women started to form their own organisations and branches; these women also influenced the movement.

Kurdish women were also in a challenge against the patriarchal nature of the movement. According to his analyses of three Kurdish magazines, *Roza*, *Jujin*, and *Jin u Jiyan*, published in the 1990s, Çaha (2011) stated that Kurdish women criticised the traditional structure of Kurdish society and the Kurdish movement. The feudal values of the society rendered women as commodities. Men, who were part of the movement and identified themselves as being leftist, revolutionary and progressive, ignored women's gender-based issues, tried to masculinise women and were not able to release their traditional values. Çaha (2011, p. 443) gave an example from *Roza* in which Kurdish women emphasised their double subordination: 'Yes, men are the slaves of the Turkish state, but we, sisters, are the slaves of the slaves and we are those women fighting for a so-called asexual utopia.'

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Kurdish women who raised their voices against masculinity in the movement have been supported by Öcalan. Öcalan talks about the necessity of killing the dominant manhood, which means also killing the power and one-sided domination (Çağlayan, 2012). The struggle for freedom, socialism and equality requires an ideological and cultural struggle, the aim of which is to break the five-thousand-year-old male domination; women's struggle for emancipation was key to the movement (Joongerden, 2017).

Öcalan's arrest in 1999 placed the movement in a deep crisis (Al-Ali and Taş, 2018b). A group in the movement questioned Öcalan's leadership status, by claiming that he should be a symbolic leader without any influence over the movement's tactical and strategic politics (Joongerden, 2017). Also, they attempted to challenge women's autonomy during the party congress in 2000, which resulted in the confirmation that the power of female fighters could not be challenged (Novellis, 2018). This crisis led Öcalan to reconsider the ideology and tactics of the movement, including a re-conceptualisation of women's roles and gender roles within the movement (Al-Ali and Tas, 2018b).

During Öcalan's capture and imprisonment and his stance of seeking a peace agreement with Turkey, women's groups continued to support his leadership. Therefore, Öcalan relied on loyal members, such as women, to keep control of the movement (Novellis, 2018). After his arrest, Öcalan developed the idea that majoritarianism can easily lead to populism, which can lead to the oppression of ethnic, sexual and religious minorities, such as women and the poor. Thus, the idea of democratic confederalism provided an egalitarian framework for all people, including women and ethnic minorities (Al-Ali and Taş, 2018b). This was a new phase for the movement and for Kurdish women. While previously Kurdish women were fighting for equality in the movement in the 1990s, now any decision and position within the organs of the movement required women's power, participation and presence (Saeed, 2018).

The movement promoted the idea of Jineology (the science of women), described as the creation of a women's paradigm, introduced by Öcalan (Al-Ali and Taş, 2018). The necessity of developing Jineology was explained as sexist gender domination not only created by the state and power-oriented mindset but also by scientism, which ought to be criticised (Jineology, 2018). According to this understanding, the social sciences have not found women to be worthy of study (Jineology, 2018). Jineoloji was developed as an alternative to androcentric and positivist social sciences (Al Ali and Käser 2020). According to Jineoloji, social sciences were

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developed by masculine understanding and cannot help women as their focus is on society, not on personal practices. Sociology, for example, was born out of the need to develop solutions to the enormous crisis caused by monopolies of capital and power, conflict and wars. Sociology was used to reshape the androcentric society (Taşdemir 2016). Jineoloji differs from social sciences in that, rather than analysing and empowering nation-states, Jineoloji considers the nation-state as the central challenge to women's emancipation (Jineoloji Akademisi 2016).

Accordingly, women's academies were established in Northern Syria and in many places in the southeast of Turkey to develop Jineology and discuss a range of topics, such as women and science, women and politics, alternative history of women, women in democratic autonomy, the ideology of women's freedom and why women must be leaders. Many male and female cadres were involved in education programmes that stressed the significance of gender-based equality (Al-Ali and Taş, 2018; Novellis, 2018). During the 9th congress in 2005, the PKK was re-established, and its aims were re-defined in conformity with Öcalan's defence texts. This was the realisation of a gender liberationist, democratic, ecological society, the realisation of self-determination and national unity of the Kurdish nation and the establishment of the democratic communities (Yarkın, 2015). As mentioned in the previous part, this model has been put into practice in Turkey and in Syria.

In Turkey, for example, women from the Pro-Kurdish People's Democracy Party (HDP) made up 40 per cent of the political positions in the 2015 national elections (Tank, 2017). The pro-PKK Syrian Kurdish party, the PYD (Democratic Union Party), consists of a shared co-chair position reserved for one man and one woman (Pavičić-Ivelja, 2017). With self-declaration of autonomy, Kurdish women have formed dozens of women's associations, unions, and communities to conduct gender awareness campaigns in Northern Syria (Rojava region) (Tank, 2017). All autonomous initiatives taken by women to organise themselves are connected to the central idea of Democratic Confederalism. The model of co-leadership, a gender quota in mixed institutions, *Jineolog*y, academies and educational centres for women are organised by the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria (DFNS), based on the idea that national liberation is only possible through women's freedom (Ferreira and Santiago, 2018). Besides the political and social arena, increased numbers of Kurdish women are also actively involved in military forces.

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The Kurdish women's agency in the Syrian Democratic Forces, which is a military coalition, was formed by different groups to fight ISIS in Raqqa and represents not only the practice of self-defence but also questioning the legitimacy of using violence (Ferreira and Santiago, 2018). The Women's Protection Unit (YPJ), formed in 2013, has also resisted oppression from both male domination in the form of ISIS and the patriarchy in everyday life (Pavičić-Ivelja, 2017).

The main focus of this study is on Kurdish women's relation to Kurdish nationalism and feminism in their activism. Therefore, I have analysed the Kurdish Question and the PKK broadly. However, I have also considered Kurdish women from different parts of Kurdistan and have investigated how Kurdish women's perspectives are different depending on their personal backgrounds and political allegiances. In the following section I will address Kurdish women's relations to Kurdish nationalism in Iraqi Kurdistan. Then, I will cover Kurdish women's engagement with Kurdish nationalism in Iranian Kurdistan.

2.2.4. *Kurdish Women in Iraqi Kurdistan*

Iraqi Kurdish women had a different story from their counterparts in Turkey. This was because Iraqi Kurds were more traditional than the Kurds in Turkey, and there was no overarching ideology to drive the women's movement and press for revolutionary change in Iraq (Bengio, 2016). Historically speaking, following the establishment of the Turkish Republic in the 1920s, Kurdish women played an important role in the women's movement in Istanbul. Some of those Kurdish women moved to Iraqi Kurdistan to maintain their activism there. Therefore, the region became a centre for women's activism, including the opening of a school for girls (Bengio, 2016).

However, between 1918 and 1932, Iraq was under British rule, and the Kurds were struggling for autonomy. Even though there were a few female public figures in Iraqi Kurdistan, the intellectual and political environments were dominated by feudal patriarchy and nationalism, which were not amenable to feminist awareness (Mojab, 2001). From the 1940s, the Iraqi Communist Party was the initiator in women's rights, even though the equality between women and men that they promised was postponed after the revolution (Fisher-Tahir, 2010). The ICP's nationalism, which was inclusive, was popular among minorities, including the Kurds. The

ICP's critique of social injustices drew the attention of the Kurds, who were divided as privileged and under-privileged ; tribal leaders and landowners on the one side and the majority of the population on the other side. Many Kurds joined the ICP or the Kurdish Communist Party (Al-Ali, 2008).

In 1943, the Communist Iraqi Women's League was formed as the first nationwide women's organisation. Following the example of the Iraqi Communist Party, several political parties formed women's organisations, including the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), which established the Kurdistan Women's Union in 1952 (Fisher-Tahir, 2010). As seen in many other Middle Eastern countries, the struggle for women's rights was linked to discourses on anti-colonialism, modernisation and independence and was expressed mostly by male reformists and their sisters, mothers, wives and daughters (Fisher-Tahir, 2010).

Iraqi Kurds started armed resistance to self-rule in 1961 before Iranian Kurds (in 1979) and Turkey's Kurds (in 1984) (Mojab, 2001). Since the beginning, Kurdish women have participated in armed groups. As mentioned by Bengio (2016), a Kurdish female *peshmerga* called Shello joined the *peshmerga* in 1960 when she was 20 years old. Shello had important duties in the battle against the Iraqi Army until her death and then became a symbol of bravery. Another woman, Leyla Qasim, a Kurdish student activist, was executed in 1974 by the Iraqi Government because of her Kurdish Nationalist activities. Qasim walked to the scaffold singing the Kurdish National Anthem '*Ey Reqip*'. Before she was hanged, her last words were: 'Kill me! But you must also know that, after my death, thousands of Kurds will wake up. I feel proud to sacrifice my life for the freedom of Kurdistan' (Bengio, 2016, p. 41).

As mentioned by Bengio, there were Kurdish women fighters whose names were well known because of their bravery. However, in Iraqi Kurdistan political organisations, such as the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (*Yeketî Niştîmanî Kurdistan* – PUK*)* and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (*Partiya Demokrata Kurdistanê* – KDP), women were not allowed to participate in combat for many years, but they were involved in gendered underground activities, such as providing logistics and nursing (Begikhani et al., 2018). These women were more active in the nationalist struggle in cities.

The PUK and the KDP-I were also politically active in cities, pursuing independence and autonomy. They mostly added gender equality on their agenda, but, in practice, they failed to

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organise women (Mojab, 2001). Hardi (2013) claimed that, before the First Gulf War, women were individually active in promoting women's rights. Women's movements in Iraq were spoken about after 1992. The 1991 Gulf War was an important turning point for the Kurdish women, as the autonomous regional government was established after the war (Bengio, 2016). In the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War, Kurdish Nationalist Parties, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), participated together in parliamentary elections. They formed the regional government of Iraqi Kurdistan in the area that was protected from Saddam Hussein and called 'the safe haven' by the United States and its allies. A few Kurdish women were elected to parliament, and besides nationalist struggles, these women assumed duties as peacemakers. To give an example, they stopped the civil war between two political parties, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), which broke out in 1994 (Bengio, 2016).

However, these two major political parties hampered the women's struggle. Their main argument was that the society was Islamic, and both women and men should respect traditional life (Mojab, 2001). In 1992, a petition demanding the reform of the Iraqi Civil Code, which the parliament had adopted, was submitted. The petition was signed by 1,500 women who demanded equal rights in divorce and inheritance and the abolishment of polygamy. With only six women representatives supporting the demands, the proposal was rejected by the parliament (Mojab, 2001). This was not the only example of how Kurdish women's activism was restrained by male leaders of political parties. The Kurdish women's campaign against honour killings was subjected to harassment. As a result of political opposition, the newly established shelter for victims of domestic violence was closed (Al-Ali, 2005). Women activists were directed to work for charities to support political parties and leaders (Fisher-Tahir, 2010).

Despite these impediments to women's activism from male-dominated politics and successive wars, Kurdish women continued their activism by establishing women's organisations in Iraqi Kurdistan. Women from a wide political spectrum, from the right wing to the left wing, participated in these organisations. Women discussed honour killings, forced marriages, domestic violence, female suicides, and female genital mutilation in radio programmes and on TV channels (Fisher-Tahir, 2010). Each organisation was affiliated to (and financially supported by) one political party. These organisations benefited from project-based funding given by international NGOs between 1992 and 2003. After 2003, they were funded by the State Department, which targeted specific issues (Hardi, 2013). Since April 2003, women's

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initiatives and NGOs have grown rapidly all over Iraq (Al-Ali, 2005). The Women's Rights Protection Committee in the Kurdish National Assembly was an example of the achievement of these organisations, which resulted in changes to codes of law. Between 1992 to 2004, the Assembly repudiated various discriminatory laws against women. As a result, husbands were forbidden from disciplining (physically abusing) their wives. Honour killings and polygamy were banned. The law that stated that the testimony of two female witnesses in a court was equal to one male witness was also changed. A law that called for the formation of a special court to combat domestic violence was also passed during this period (Bengio, 2016).

In 2005, the *Grupi Helwest,* which incorporated 44 organisations, was created in Sulaymaniyah. The group responded to changes in the new Iraq by launching a campaign called 'Defending women's legal and civil rights'. Subsequently, many similar umbrella organisations joined the campaign throughout the region. Although women's organisations were initially aligned to cone of the political parties, many semi-independent or independent women's originations were formed later (Hardi, 2013). In August 2014, when fighting between *peshmergas* (now called the KRG) began, Kurdish women began to participate in military engagements. However, the appearance of Kurdish women in the KRG remained symbolic. Kurdish women's standing in the KRG was less pronounced than Kurdish women's political and military involvement in Turkey (Bengio, 2016).

As a result of patriarchy, some Kurdish women who were abducted for abuse by Iraqi soldiers during the Anfal genocide in 1988 were not welcome when they returned home, and some of them were reportedly killed (Mojab, 2001b). As a result of patriarchy, the nationalist parties either ignored or supported the war against women. This situation triggered the military and political activism of many Kurdish women. There was increasing tension between patriarchal nationalism and feminist awareness. While most women had been tied to domestic household work and agricultural work in rural areas, the formation of strata of professional and intellectual women was reshaping social and political life in Kurdistan (Mojab, 2001b).

To sum up, Kurdish women in Iran have had different experiences and struggles. This was because the Kurds' experiences in Iran were formed in a context that was in the middle between the cultural and political permissiveness in Iraq and the absolute denial of Kurdishness in Turkey (Harris, 1977). In the following part, I will discuss the position of Iranian Kurdish women in relation to Kurdish nationalism.

2.2.5. *Kurdish Women in Iranian Kurdistan*

Iranian Kurds, who constituted seven per cent of Iran's overall population, had ethnic recognition issues in pre-Islamic history. The Pahlavi Dynasty was founded by Reza Shah in 1925. Parallel to the Turkish Republic, which was founded in 1923, the Pahlavi Dynasty in 1925 fostered the idea of one nation and one language (Yeşiltaş, 2016). The dynasty was shaped by Iranian nationalism blended with secular ideology. Reza Shah aimed to create a modern, centralised and unified Iran. During the Pahlavi Era, between 1926 and 1941, then after a short lull which continued until 1979, the state promoted the core nation by advertising Iranians as a pure Aryan race and calling to reduce Islamic and Arab influence on Iranian history. In line with this, Persian literature and language were propagated officially through the education system and the media. Writing in non-Persian languages and speaking these languages in public places were declared to be illegal activities, and those who practised doing so were punished (Yeşiltaş, 2016). The Kurds were generally viewed as a greater threat than other ethnic groups in Iran. This was not only because the Kurds were a border minority and geographically concentrated but also because they demanded a major reorganisation of the state framework rather than a slight re-adjustment (Yeşiltaş, 2016).

In September 1941, Iran was invaded by British and Soviet armies (Roosevelt, 1947). The occupation of Iran by the Soviets during the Second World War changed the Kurds' situation. Tehran's control over the Kurdish areas was weakened by the demobilisation of the Iranian army (Harris, 1977). Kurdish tribes occupied the mountains along the Turkish and Iraqi borders from Maku in the north to Qasr-i Shirin in the south. As a result of the absence of effective Iranian authority, the Soviets had direct relations with the tribes. These tribes had permission from the Soviets to control their own affairs on the condition that they provided grain for the Soviet army and maintained security (Roosevelt, 1947). Encouraged by the Soviets, Kurdish separatism was consolidated in North-Western Iran (Harris, 1977).

Kurdish nationalist groups were also active in the cities. In August 1943, a dozen young Kurds, who were mainly petty officials of the town and small merchants of the Komala Zhian Kurds, formed the Committee of Kurdish Youth. The number of members was kept under a hundred for security reasons. The committee was organised in cells, and meetings were never held in the same house twice. The constitution was strongly Kurdish nationalist, and only Kurds who

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were of Kurdish descent on both sides or had an Assyrian mother could be members (Roosevelt, 1947). After the Gulf War ended, the Soviets refused to withdraw their forces from Northern Iran. They encouraged Nationalist Kurds and Azerbaijanis to establish autonomous governments within the framework of the Iranian Constitution.

In December 1945, the National Government of Azerbaijan was formed, and on 22 January 1945, the Republic of Kurdistan was announced (Mojab, 2001b). The Iranian State portrayed both movements as a threat to the unity and territorial integrity of the Iranian Nation. The Kurdish and Azeri Movements in 1945-1946 marked the formation of ethnic movements in Iran. These movements provided a framework for political pluralism, local, provincial and cultural autonomy, decentralisation of power, and respect for all ethnic and religious differences in the country (Yeşiltaş, 2016). Establishing the Kurdish and Azerbaijani autonomous regimes underlined the crucial issue in Iran: the focus of the nationalist question was more an institutional matter of how the Iranians of all ethnicities and colours could build an effective institution of government and common political life and less concerned with identity issues like 'who is Iranian?' (Yeşiltaş, 2016).

Kurdish autonomy in the Mahabad Republic led to pluralism in the Iranian Regime. There are few studies on the Mahabad Republic and the gender perspective of the institution is nearly invisible. Mojab's study (2001b) was important because it analysed the constitution of the Mahabad Republic and relevant literature to ascertain the situation of Kurdish women during this time. According to Mojab (2001b), the Mahabad Republic (the Kurdish Republic of 1946) could be distinguished from previous Kurdish movements, not only in terms of its republican form as it was administered by a political party and a cabinet, but also its national army, modern educational system, tax system, modern media, national flag, national anthem, national language and mobilisation of women into the cultural, educational and political life.

The Kurdish Republic was founded by the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP), which was formed out of the dissolved nationalist party, the Society for the Revival of Kurdistan (Komaley J. K.). The Komale identified Turkey, Syria, Iran and Iraq as their external threats. Their internal threats were listed as illiteracy, tribalism and industrial and economic under-development. Within this framework, women were called to participate in the struggle for the freedom of the homeland. Mojab (2001b) shared the following poem published in *Nistman*, the magazine of the Komale.

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Dear *dêde* [sister], O sensible and beautiful Kurdish girl,

May your chastity never be stained.

Lenin rose up and the oppression of the veil was eliminated;

You are, however, still confined under the full veil.

Girls among all peoples are free now,

It is only the Kurdish girls whose rights are trampled upon.

Break the fetters and chains on your feet,

My dear *dêde*, with the help of your brother!

For the sake of the motherland, God helping,

Let's work together like sisters and brothers.

Like Joan of Arc, rise up like men. (p.75).

Kurdish women were advised to fight like men to protect the motherland by the poet. Kurdish women's beauty was highlighted, and their fight to protect the motherland was also to protect their chastity. An emphasis on protecting honour and the motherland to recruit more people for nationalist movements was not new. As stated by Najmabadi (1997), this was an eroticisation of the homeland. From the 18th century to the first decade of the 20th century, Iranian modernity was shaped by concepts of nation (*millet*), homeland (*vatan*), politics and knowledge. In this context, the homeland (*vatan*) was not only a gendered nation in Iranian modernity but also the nation (*millet*) was largely a brotherhood. The maleness of the *millet* (nation) and femaleness of the *vatan* (homeland) were linked to honour (*namus*). Variegating between the integrity of Iran and the purity of women, *namus* (honour) constitutes the purity of Iran and women as subjects of male protection and possession. From this perspective, national and sexual honour supported each other (Najmabadi, 1997).

The Komale was dissolved, and the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (*Partiya Democratik a Kurdistana ir* – PDKI) was established in 1945, two months before the establishment of the Kurdish Republic. The Kurdish Democratic Party declared that the interests of the people should be protected based on democracy (PDKI Constitution, 1945, Chapter 2, Article 4). Like Komale's Constitution, the Democratic Party also declared that the aim of the party was to extend the struggle for democracy and the prosperity of people (Article 5) (Mojab, 2001b). Equality between men and women was also emphasised, as stated in Article

21: 'in all political, economic, and social affairs, women should enjoy equal rights with men'
(Bengio, 2016, p. 42).

Owing to its short life of approximately 11 months, the party could not hold any congress as it promised in the constitution, and they were not able to create a mechanism for elections and parliamentary democracy. The party's gender policy and the way in which women and leaders emphasised was an effort to change the *status quo* within the political, social and cultural context of the time were conditioned by male leadership's nationalist outlook (Mojab, 2001b). However, the short-lived Republic touched women's lives. The leaders of the Republic encouraged women's participation in the nationalist movement in particular and in the political sphere in general. The Kurdish women's party, the Union of Democratic Women of Kurdistan, also known as the Ladies' Party (*Hizbi Yayan*), was formed in March 1946 (Bengio, 2016). The party was inspired by the achievements of women in the Soviet Union and Europe, but members were not familiar with the feminist ideas of the time (Mojab, 2001).

The women's party was a wing of the PDKI, and its primary aim was to mobilise women to support the nation. The party also emphasised that a liberated Kurdistan needed educated women (Bengio, 2016). In line with this, the aim of the party was to develop literacy because, according to statistics, the rate of literacy for women who were 15 years and over was no more than four per cent in 1946 (Mojab, 2001b). The party also organised fundraising activities to support the national army, weaved clothes and socks for soldiers and *peshmergas*, participated in demonstrations and marches, and wrote articles in newspapers (Mojab, 2001b).

Mojab (2001b) stated that the women's organisation created an image of the Republic as a modern state, one that was interested in women's advancement. This was parallel to Jayawerdena's (1989) claim that modernisation movements in the Third World commonly encourage the development of the New Woman who is educated, has a Western appearance, works outside of the home and also is a good wife who strengthens familial status. Mojab (2001b) criticised the Republic's perspective of women. Kurdish women were encouraged to take part in the non-domestic activity, but they were recognised only if they assisted men in the nationalist struggles. The question is whether Mojab was harsh in her criticism, considering the time. However, Mojab (2001b) referred to the Azerbaijan National Government, which was close to the Kurdish Republic. The Azerbaijan Government undertook more radical reforms and recognised women's suffrage rights in 1946, two years after the French women's suffrage

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rights. The Kurdish Republic did not support women's suffrage enough to be compared with the Azerbaijan Government. With the collapse of the Republic at the end of 1946, Kurdish women's activities had also ceased (Bengio, 2016).

Kurdish women's political activities increased again during the 1979 Revolution, particularly after Khomeini's accession. During this time, Kurdish organisations were formed, and Kurdish women assumed duties in these organisations and formed women's groups, such as the Saqiz Women's Union, the Mariwan Women's Union, and the Sinna Women's Committee (Begikhani et al., 2018). The Kurds were eager to have autonomy again. With the formation of the Islamic Republic in 1979, the Kurdish delegates met with Ayatollah Khomeini to present to him their demands for autonomy. They were told that the demands could not be accepted as Iranian territory would be under threat. Also, the political decision was influenced by religion as the tension between the Shia leadership of Tehran and Sunni Kurds could not be ignored (Entessar, 2010).

Although Iranian authorities were not tolerant of their demands for autonomy, the Kurds went to the local elections to elect councillors. Many of the councillors were members of, or sympathisers with, the Marxist-Leninist guerrilla organisation, Fadaiyan-e Khalaq, the KDP-I and the Islamic leftist organisation, Islamic-e Khalaq (Entessar, 2010). These organisations started armed struggles against the Iranian Regime. Khomeini stated that Marxist-inspired demands for autonomy were against the interests of the Islamic Republic of Iran (Entessar, 2010). The Iranian state attacked the Kurdish cities, resulting in the Kurdish forces' withdrawal from the cities. During this time, two Kurdish groups, the KOMALA and the KDP-I, were the most influential. They emphasised that the demands of the Kurds and other national minorities within the decentralised structure were the core condition for the democratisation process in Iran. In this sense, the Kurds' call for democratisation not only addressed issues about rights and freedoms but also answered the question of what kind of institutions Iran needed in order to have a more inclusive democracy (Yeşiltaş, 2016).

Many Kurdish women continued their activities in the Marxist-Leninist Komale organisation (formed in the early 1980s) (Begikhani et al., 2018), and in the KDP-I. In the 1980s and the 1990s, similar to the PKK, the KOMALA (the Kurdistan Organisation of the Communist Party of Iran) mobilised women. The organisation was involved in the guerrilla war against Iran. Young Kurdish women, who were mainly from the urban areas, took up arms and engaged in

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military and political operations (Mojab, 2001). Women's participation in the political process was portrayed as a project to integrate women as active agents in the nation-building project (Begikhani et al.*,* 2018). In the military camps, Kurdish women engaged in non-traditional work, such as political and military training and broadcasting. Traditional work, such as childcare and cooking, was divided between men and women (Mojab, 2001). However, women were more focused on the ideology of the party, which emphasised the liberation of the working class in Iran, rather than being concerned with their own rights (Begikhani et al., 2018). The KDP claimed that Kurdish society was traditional and Islamic and that therefore women should follow traditional and religious forms of patriarchal rules (Mojab, 2001b). I discuss the differences between the Komala and the KDP-I further in the following chapters because some of the participants in this study were connected with the Komala and the KDP-I.

To conclude, there have been only a few studies about the position of Iranian Kurdish women in relation to Kurdish nationalism. These have indicated that Iranian Kurdish women have been involved in nationalist movements to support the nation but that their gender equality demands were not welcomed at the same level in different movements. Kurdish women from Turkey, Iran and Iraq were involved in Kurdish parties for different reasons. They were also situated in those movements differently depending on the movements' gender perspectives. However, what is common is that some Kurdish women had to migrate to Europe as a result of their political activism. The next section will focus on Kurdish refugees and migrants' political activism in Europe and Britain.

2.3. The Kurds in Diasporas

2.3.1. The Kurds in Europe

Today, Kurds in Europe are a diverse population, reflecting a wide range of political ideologies, religious beliefs, linguistic groups, socioeconomic classes, educational levels and gendered experiences. Despite these distinctions, the existence of transnational social links appears to be a common trait of all Kurdish groups throughout Europe. Millions of Kurds have been displaced by political events in Turkey, Iraq, and Iran during the last few decades. In the 1960s, the Kurds from Turkey came to Europe as labour migrants, primarily to Germany; today, they

make up the majority of Kurds in Europe (Wahlbeck, 1998). Those Kurds were mainly from the working class and migrated in search of economic, political and social benefits.

The Kurds of Iraq, on the other hand, were largely refugees who began migrating to Europe and other parts of the world after the unsuccessful 1975 rebellion. This Iraqi Kurdish refugee group included highly educated, urban middle-class Kurds who were politically active in the Kurdish national movement (Bengio and Weitzman, 2013). In 1963 and particularly after the 1970s, the Kurds from Syria came to Europe after the Ba'ath Party had come to power and al-Asad secured his presidency (D'Angelo, 2008). The Kurds from Iraq, Turkey, and Syria made up the majority of the Kurdish diaspora before 1979. Iranian Kurds began migrating after the Islamic revolution in Iran and the accompanying struggle between the central authority and the Kurdish movement (Bengio and Weitzman, 2013).

Since the 1970s, and especially in the 1980s and 1990s, many Kurds have fled the disputed area of Kurdistan (Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria) due to ethnic prejudice, prosecution, conflict, and economic hardship (Keles in D'Angelo, 2015). Following uprisings, the aftermath of the Gulf War, and Saddam Hussein's repressive acts, particularly the brutal Anfal campaign, the waves from Iraq surged considerably in the 1980s and 1990s (D'Angelo, 2008). After the military coups in Turkey in 1971 and 1980, numerous Kurdish refugees arrived in Europe and Britain as activists, victims, or targets of the combat between security forces and the PKK in the 1990s. Compared to labour migrants who identify as ethnic-national Turks, there has been very little re-migration among migrants and refugees who identify primarily as Kurds (Faist, 1998). These political incidents changed the Kurds' migration.

For example, the vast majority of Kurds arriving in the UK are asylum seekers, but there are also students, professionals, and businesspeople (D'Angelo, 2008). Between 1993 and 1996, the Kurds (of Turkish citizenship) were among the top ten nationalities claiming asylum in the UK (Griffiths, 2000). Therefore, Kurdish migrants to the UK differ from those other migrants who arrived after the post-war labour shortages and economic boom or after the EU's enlargement (Keles, 2015).

As a result of the political prospects in European countries that fostered a process of self-discovery, labour migrants became politically active and mobilised. A substantial number of Kurds only discovered their 'Kurdishness' in Germany, where they were free to express their

culture, language, and self-organization. The Kurds found an opportunity to express their Kurdish heritage in Western states. However, the diaspora elite, or the core of the diaspora, is made up of those who arrived after the 1980s for political reasons. Asylum seekers who arrived in Europe in the early 1990s (and later) brought turmoil from Turkey with them. The goal of the already-politicised Kurds mobilising those who had arrived in Europe with earlier waves of Kurdish migration was to establish a second basis for the Kurdish struggle, this time beyond Turkish borders (Başer, 2011). Ayata (2011) conceptualised activities and myriad institutions of diasporas as 'Euro-Kurdistan' (p.525), which is a dynamic process of Kurdish collective-identity creation in and through Europe rather than a physical location.

Therefore, organisations play important roles in the creation of Euro-Kurdistan. These organisations work to raise awareness of Kurdish identity and culture and draw the attention of European bureaucrats, politicians and the public. The umbrella organisation KON-KURDS in Belgium covers more than 150 Kurdish groups and is responsible for lobbying at the European institutional level. YEKKOM in Germany is also an umbrella organisation merging around 50 groups. Large organisations, such as FEYKA in France, FEDKOM in Holland and FEYKURD in Denmark, support the PKK. Also, KOMKAR (the Association for Kurdish Workers for Kurdistan), which was affiliated with the movement Özgürlük Yolu, focused on improving Kurdish workers' standards in Europe (Başer, 2011).

2.3.1.1.Kurdish Migrants' Political Activism in Europe

Refugees who engage in political opposition activities for the country of their origin try to develop transnational ties (Faist, 1998). During the 1990s, Kurdish satellite TV channels strongly influenced Kurds' political practices in Europe. The development of Med TV, which strongly promoted the PKK, has a significant role in unifying the Kurds in diasporas and the international legitimacy of the Kurdish nation (Griffiths, 2000). As Clifford (1994) stated, technological developments make refugees' situation "at home and away" (p.309). Today, Kurdish diasporas' use of the Internet and social media is based on multi-stranded economic, individual, social and political relations and encompasses their imaginary and symbolic geographies, their politics of identity in their homeland and also their receiving country. These physically limited places have become more intensified through the Internet. This involved, for example, the creation of transnational political movements and homeland focused agendas, through campaigns, petitions, and political and social activism (Keles, 2015).

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Many Kurdish refugees actively work to raise awareness of the Kurdish issue, even though they live in exile in Europe. Their political activities were also aimed at enhancing identity to support refugees' lives, which are fragmented (Wahlbeck, 1998). Engaging in intellectual, cultural, and political activities led these migrants to question the hegemonic ethos of nation-states. This has sharpened Kurdish refugees' identities (which have a hybrid nature) by distinguishing them from those who still live in the homeland (Bengio et al., 2013). Undoubtedly, it was expected that Kurdish refugees' identities would undergo changes when they crossed the borders.

In the long term, the cultural activities that were organised by Kurdish intellectuals had an important impact on the political mobilisation of the Kurds. For example, in Germany a large mass of non-politicised Kurdish workers were recruited by the PKK (Bruniessen, 1998). Up to 1980, Kurdish was sufficient in daily use, but it was not sufficient for discussions of contemporary political and social matters. Many stories were written in Turkish and translated into Kurdish. This has changed significantly; Kurdish has been enriched and developed to serve as a tool for literary and political discourse. Journal and books in Kurdish were published in France, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and Sweden; these books were reprinted in Turkey. Some Kurdish journals moved their offices from Europe to Turkey. Many new journals have appeared, and publishing in Kurdish became popular (Bruinessen, 1998).

As argued by Østergaard-Nielsen (2003), immigrant politics and diaspora/homeland politics are not separable in Kurdish and Turkish organisations. This is because those migrants' political claims for their religious or ethnic distinctiveness send political signals to Turkish authorities. Dialogues between Kurdish and Turkish political organisations and European political actors show how transnational political networks change political agendas' formulations to create more internationally accepted discourses on human rights. Kurdish organisations have created a link with international human rights organisations to lead coalitions, such as exchanging information on how to work for local authorities between German-based Kurdish organisations that support the PKK and the Welsh Independence party. These organisations evoke human rights and democracy rhetoric during their campaigns, which catch the central policy makers' attention easily, while the rhetoric of those stressing radical communist or separatist ideology is limited to dialogue with only marginalised political counterparts (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003).

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Kurdish migrants' political practices were shaped by the incidents that caused their migration (Bruniessen, 1998). Kurds in Sweden were already politicised when they reached the country; the PKK made few new recruitments there. Kurdish migrants were mainly from leftist groups and the Kurdish movement. Specifically after 1980, Sweden became a centre for Kurdish activists and intellectuals (Başer, 2013). On the other hand, many Kurdish migrants were guest workers and not politicised, hence, Germany was more of a fertile recruitment ground for the PKK. Specifically, the second generation involved the PKK as they found self-respect in activities. Therefore, the mobilisation and political practices of the Kurds are different according to the receiving country. In line with this, the political activism of the Kurdish migrants and refugees in Britain needs a separate review.

2.3.2. The Kurds in Britain

Britain is another important host country for the Kurds. Until 1989, the United Kingdom did not require Turkish residents to obtain a visa, making it easier for Kurds to enter. This was in contrast to other nations where deportations and imprisonment of Kurds had become a big issue, such as in Germany, the Netherlands, and Belgium. As Kurdish immigration to the UK increased, the British government sought to control the influx, and visas became more difficult to get. At the same time, it became increasingly difficult for Kurdish people to remain in Turkey, so many began to enter the UK illegally, paying enormous sums of money to "people smugglers" and arriving in a variety of vehicles, including trucks, boats, and cars. Chain migration, in which different waves of immigrants are linked by familial or regional ties, was an important feature of Kurdish migration to Britain (Taş, 2013).

The Kurds in London are mostly Alevis from Malatya, Sivas and Maraş. They claim asylum in Britain as a result of the persecution of Alevis in Turkey (Griffiths, 2000). Even though they outnumber Turkish Cypriots and Turks, they were officially identified as Turks. The total number of Kurds in the UK is unknown because the Home Office records for asylum seekers do not identify applicants' ethnic backgrounds, only their country of origin (Demir, 2012). Also there are thousands of undocumented Kurdish migrants (Başer, 2011). As a result, we are left with many estimations (Demir, 2012). When the Kurdish refugees arrived in Britain, they

joined ready existing networks that helped them to settle, as Turkish Cypriots and mainland Turks had arrived before them (King et al., 2008).

The sudden arrival of Kurds in north London in 1989 presented logistical problems for Turks who had been living in London since the 1970s and 1980s military coups in Turkey. However, it also provided a common linguistic (and to some extent cultural) heritage that built an effective solidarity campaign. This was not only in terms of organisation but also in terms of the clothing and catering industries, where the Kurds were able to 'fit into' an established economic niche (Griffiths, 2000).

Until the early 1990s, the textile industry employed almost 90% of the working Kurdish community in the UK. However, the textile industry collapsed towards the end of the 1990s, and the number of garment manufacturers decreased from approximately 1,600 to roughly 20-306, some of which are still run by Kurds. The Kurdish population was compelled to seek other employment and relocate to other industries, such as the catering industry (restaurants, takeaways, cafes, and off-licences) (D'Angelo, 2008). However, Kurdish women's access to employment was more difficult because of their poor English language skills and lack of an educational background. Kurdish women, unlike Turkish Cypriot women, do not have skilled dressmaking heritage, nor do they have the opportunity to gain such skills through work training, as much of the labour in this field is done at home and paid on a piece-rate basis (King et al., 2008).

Many Kurds had no apparent legal status when they landed in the UK. They were often pushed into working alongside – and often being exposed by – the developing Kurdish community as they struggled with a new culture and especially language. These ambiguous experiences cemented pre-existing poor trust in the state and state institutions, especially when compared to exaggerated expectations of ease and independence (Taş, 2013). In this sense, Kurdish organisations work as a bridge between Kurdish migrants and the state institutions. In the following sub-section, I will cover the role of Kurdish organisations in Kurdish migrants' lives.

2.3.2.1 Kurdish Migrants' Activism in Britain

Safran (1991) stated that some diasporas persist in not going home as there is no homeland to return to, or even if the homeland exists, it may not be a welcoming place for those who are politically, ideologically, or socially active. While the homeland myth exists, it may be used by societies of diaspora, home and host countries in various ways for social and political purposes. This triangular relationship has interesting implications for minority and majority relationships. Members of diasporic communities may be mistreated by the host country as they may be viewed as strangers within the gates, or they might be required to keep those minorities in diasporas.

Accordingly, Wahlbeck's (1998) study underlined diaspora communities' perspectives and feelings in this triangular relation. According to the study, when Kurdish refugees were asked if they felt that they belonged to an ethnic minority in Britain, they had issues understanding the question. In his explanation of how Kurdish refugees react to their orientations towards their countries of origin, Wahlbeck stated that because of their inclination towards Kurdistan, it is challenging for them to be recognised as an ethnic minority within the context of their host nations. In other words, the Kurds in Britain have a continuous relationship with the homeland; they tend to think of themselves within the framework of their homeland rather than a context of British ethnic relations. Instead, they continue their relationship with the homeland psychologically and emotionally in different ways (Wahlbeck, 1998).

As is mentioned earlier, the reason for migration has a role in migrants' political practices. The Kurds mainly arrived in Britain in the 1980s as political refugees and intellectuals who experienced migration because of a shared sense of Kurdish identity. Those refugees set up organisations with political and cultural aims (D'Angelo, 2008). The political nature of their exile gave them different migration experiences in Britain (Kings et al., 2008).

Kurdish organisations have been founded in the UK to directly serve community needs and assist UK Kurds in the gurbet (diaspora) with their identity crisis (Taş, 2013). These organisations play a role in providing culturally specific services in the Kurdish language and in promoting and preserving the cultural identity (D'Angelo, 2008). A confluence of local, global and transnational developments has led to the significant socio-political articulation of Kurdishness in Britain. In this sense, linguistic and cultural factors have gained importance. There have been negotiations for introducing the Kurdish language as a subject for exams at London-based schools; the local Kurdish media have been founded, local government

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publications were translated into Kurdish. Those steps point to the multiple levels on which socio-political circumstances for valuing cultural resources as capital are generated. Therefore, in time, knowledge of the Kurdish language is not insufficient; rather it is established as a resource to be turned into cultural capital (Erel, 2010).

Turkey's Kurds are arguably the most politicised community in London (Griffiths, 2000). This is because political activities are much more intense among stateless diaspora communities compared to other types of diasporas, specifically if they unify around homeland issues, such as ongoing conflicts secession (Başer and Swain, 2008). The political practices of Kurdish migrants changed the nature and function of some existing organisations. For example, Halkevi, which was founded by leftist Turkish and Kurdish migrants in the late 1980s, became a Kurdish-oriented organisation in the 1990s due to intensive Kurdish migration to London. Their leftist ideology shifted to ethnic-based politics. Their discourses and strategies became more about claiming rights for Kurds in Turkey and the desire for recognition of Kurdish identity (Demir, 2012).

Following that, the Kurdish Workers Association (renamed the Kurdish Community Centre) was established in 1989. Kurdish organisations in Britain continued to be characterised by a strong political orientation, and many of these groups were formed with clear ties to – or even as an emanation of – Kurdish political parties.

This component can still be seen in several community centres, where general symbols of national principles are prominently displayed, such as flags and maps of Kurdistan (D'Angelo 2015). Kurdish discourses became linked to claims for Kurdish rights in Turkey, expressing a desire for their ethnic identity to be recognised. Some of these organisations are still active and have strong ties to Turkey's Kurdish struggle (Demir, 2012).

Kurdish organisations grew and varied during the 1990s, with an expansion in the Kurdish population in London. The tightening of asylum regulations, as well as restrictions on welfare and the loss of the right to work, made life more difficult for Kurdish – and other – asylum seekers. As a result, volunteer groups have taken on the housing and welfare requirements of migrants and refugees. In line with this, in 1989 the Kurdish Housing Association and in 1992 the Kurdish Disability Organisation were founded. In 2013, roughly ten medium-to-large

Kurdish organisations, as well as a handful of smaller and more informal ones, remained active in London (D'Angelo, 2015).

The Kurdish community also needed to make a special space for women. As mentioned earlier, when Kurdish women fought alongside males against the Turkish state as part of the PKK movement, their standing was radically altered. Women grew more empowered and more willing to assert their rights. Despite this, some Kurdish women continue to face patriarchal forms of family restrictions, as well as religious and cultural ones. In the UK, young girls, newcomers, and women who do not understand English are particularly vulnerable, and some of these women are harassed or humiliated by their families or husbands. Honour-based violence, blood feuds, and forced marriage are all threats or realities for some. Because of the establishment of Kurdish women's organisations, such as the Roj Women's Association, Kurdish women have a place to talk about and solve their issues (Taş, 2013). Today, a range of Kurdish women's organisations, such as the IKWRO (2002), the Roj Women's Association (2008), the Kurdish Women's Project/Organisation (the KWO) (1998, renamed in 2004), and the Culture Project carry out activities to help Kurdish women.

2.4. Conclusion

Kurdish nationalism is linked to the Kurdish Question. As a result of the Kurdish Question, the Kurds have been engaged in political activism in Kurdish movements. As a result of their political practices, they migrated to Europe and Britain. They continued their activism in the UK and were organised under Kurdish organisations. This chapter offered some background information on the political activism of the Kurds and Kurdish women. The following chapter will analyse how Kurdish women's activism has been viewed by scholars.

CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1. Introduction

This thesis is composed to develop a better understanding of how Kurdish women activists interpret and practise feminism and nationalism in London-based Kurdish organisations. Theoretical discussions will fortify the study by highlighting different aspects related to it. The main argument is drawn from the literature on women and nationalism. As women's relation to nationalism is a broad area, this study focuses on whether nationalism is antithetical to feminism.

Two oppositional approaches will be discussed. The first is the belief shared by some scholars that feminism should be free from nationalism as nationalism is detrimental to feminism, and the second is the argument put forward by Third World feminists that nationalism can support women's emancipation. Scholars such as Allarcon et al. (1999) and McClintock (1991) are sceptical about nationalism, highlighting national movements that might enhance patriarchy. Even though women's emancipation is supported by national movements, this does not mean that these movements are free from patriarchy. Women may encounter various levels and types of patriarchy as they hold various identities, a point which led this study to analyse women's relations to patriarchy through the intersectionality of their multiple identities. To reach more comprehensive analyses, migrant women's activism will be analysed through their relation to nationalism and their reaction to patriarchy.

This chapter is divided into four sections: because discussions on women and nationalism frequently apply patriarchy to argue whether nationalism is conflicting with feminism, the chapter begins by analysing patriarchy. As a result, in light of the intersectionality of women's identities, Section 3.2 provides an overview of theories of patriarchy. Section 3.3 emerges from discussions on whether nationalism is antithetical to feminism. In this section, women's relation to nationalism will be analysed by considering the related literature. When examining how women relate to nationalism, women's activism is a useful case study. Section 3.4 examines the activism of migrants in diasporas, with a focus on migrant women's activism. The motivations for women's activism, the impact of pre-migration traumas on women's activism, and how women respond to patriarchy are also covered in this section.

This section will end by analysing the literature on Kurdish women's activism. Lastly, Kurdish women's relation to nationalism in the diaspora will be analysed through the intersectional approach. Section 3.5 gives insight into the intersectional approach to justify why it is suitable for this study.

3.2. An Overview of Theories about Patriarchy

Patriarchy has been defined in various ways. In this study, Walby's (1997) definition of patriarchy is applied. According to this definition, patriarchy is "a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" (p.20). Walby's definition of patriarchy highlights the social (rejection of biological determinism) and structural (patriarchy is a social framework that is collective and does not require every man to be oppressive and every woman to be subordinate). According to this definition, patriarchy differs significantly from other social structures in terms of how it has emerged and how it operates (Duncan, 1994), as differentiating between forms and degrees of patriarchy is important (Walby, 1997). Walby (1997) also importantly states that different ethnic groups might have different forms of patriarchy, and it is not appropriate to claim that one form is better for women than another. However, this study goes beyond Walby's claim by focusing on different forms of patriarchy in the same ethnic group. In this sense, this study specifically asks what patriarchy is and how women react to it to examine Kurdish women's various relationships to patriarchy.

3.2.1. What Is Patriarchy?

Patriarchy encapsulates the techniques, ideologies, and societal structures that have allowed men to maintain dominance over women for much of human history (Ramazanoğlu, 1989). More specifically, the concept of patriarchy recalls dominance, power relations, and gender hierarchies (Hunnicutt, 2009). Patriarchy is not just a core concept in feminist theory; it is also the term that causes the greatest debate among feminists, and it is employed in a variety of ways by different feminists (Ramazanoğlu, 1989). Accordingly, Batson-Rollock and Soares (2010) underlined that radical feminists made a significant contribution to feminist theorising by isolating the concept and theory of patriarchy. They viewed patriarchy as the system of power relations that divide the organisation of society into oppressive men and oppressed women. This understanding empowers women through institutions such as the family, the

church, and the academy, which reinforce and justify women's subordination to men. In line with this, patriarchy is characterised by hierarchy, power, and competition (Sultana, 2010).

However, patriarchy does not imply that all women are victims, and all men are oppressors, or that no woman has more privilege and power than any man. It also does not state that gender oppressions are deeper than oppression of class, race or any other identity (Bryson, 1999). In this sense, unlike radical feminists who viewed patriarchy as a trans-historical, universal and trans-cultural phenomenon, that is, women were oppressed by men more or less in the same way everywhere (Acker, 1989), socialist feminists analysed the relation between class and patriarchy. This is because women from the working class and racial and ethnic minorities stated that their situations are different from those of middle-class women. White theorists' notions of patriarchy seemed to reflect white, middle-class women's reality rather than including minority and working-class women (Acker, 1989). Marxist feminists emphasised women's unpaid labour and how it links to the capitalist system and the rise of patriarchy (Whelehan and Pilcher, 2004). However, they failed to analyse patriarchy comprehensively as they restricted themselves to considering class only (Kandiyoti, 1988).

Accordingly, a dual-systems theory, a synthesis of radical feminist and Marxist theory, has been developed by scholars such as Walby (1997) and Cockburn (1998). Instead of concentrating solely on capitalism or patriarchy, the dual-system theory contends that both systems have an impact on how gender relations are shaped in modern society (Walby, 1997). However, Cockburn (1998) criticised this theory by stating that it is unnecessary to problematise whether capitalism and patriarchy are interacting systems (dual-systems theory). She questioned whether we were considering a single complicated system or a number of interrelated systems, highlighting the fact that it is more crucial to understand how we interpret the system than how we perceive patriarchy and capitalism.

These varied patriarchy analyses provide theoretical support for numerous studies. These patriarchal frameworks, however, may not adequately analyse the activism of migrant women because these women's transnational activities may be connected to different identities other than their gender identity. Hence, the transnational feminist approach to patriarchy and their criticism of the universal sisterhood came into prominence.

Transnational feminism is an understanding of how global relations and power geometries are enmeshed with patriarchal relations. To address gender relations, it is necessary to analyse in what ways and how they are affected by imperial/neo-imperial and colonial/post-colonial power dynamics (Clini and Brah, 2017). Therefore, transnational feminist scholars identify the connections, relations and intersections between different political struggles linked to colonialism, patriarchy, capitalism, racism and heteronormativity (Al-Ali and Käser, 2020).

Transnational feminists, such as Bhopal (1997), Grewal and Kaplan (1994), Mohanty (2003), Patil (2011), and Waylen (1996), claimed that it is difficult to identify a unitary women's movement because global sisterhood implies monolithic patriarchy that connects women around the world. To respond to what was problematic with the monolithic patriarchy, the second wave of feminists, especially, believed that this patriarchy unified women by disregarding divisions of race, class, national origin and sexuality (Mendoza, 2002). This has led feminist studies to fail when examining how gender and class processes affect women differently depending on the ethnic and racial groups to which they belong (Anthias et al., 1993).

This study is significant because it expands transnational feminists' analyses by examining the various patriarchies that (Kurdish) women from the same ethnic group experience. However, while patriarchy may or may not be verbalised by Kurdish women it can be detected in their demands. Thus, this study analyses how Kurdish women activists articulate their political and social demands. Another aspect that should be taken into account is the fact that focusing solely on patriarchy depicts women as helpless victims of masculinity. Predictably, women develop different reactions when they encounter patriarchy. Feminist scholars significantly have analysed patriarchy, however, women's negotiation with the patriarchy has not been paid enough attention.

3.2.2. How Do Women Negotiate Patriarchy?

Kandiyoti's (1988) study made a significant contribution to analyses of patriarchy. Kandiyoti (1988) emphasised that women may bargain with patriarchy. She supported her claim by emphasising women's bargain with patriarchy in nationalist movements. These women may self-censor their gender-related demands for the sake of their national demands (Kandiyoti, 1988), or they may re-frame their gender demands using nationalist discourses (Jacoby, 1999).

Women's bargain with patriarchy is also related to how women participated in nationalist movements. Anthias et al. (1983) defined women's appearance in national movements as the biological reproducers of the ethnic groups; as participants in economic, political and military struggles; as transmitters of the culture; as symbols of ethnicity and as signifiers of ethnic and nationalist groups. These categories are commonly linked to motherhood that can be considered as a bargain with patriarchy.

Women's participation in national movements through their motherhood has drawn many scholars' attention. Alison (2009), Parker et al. (1992), Heckman and Gelder (2011) and Çağlayan (2009) underlined women's status as mothers in national movements. Namely, women may feel the need to sacrifice themselves like mothers are expected to or to construe their male colleagues as being their brothers to obtain public visibility. Heckmann and Gelder (2011) emphasise that both Kurdish and Turkish political activities create the image of "mothers and sisters" to have their female members accepted by the general public.

Also, Parker et al. (1992) state that women are initially only able to access the nation-state through the role of motherhood and the bearing of sons who are ready to sacrifice their lives for their homeland. Militant Tamil portrayals of state family planning as a genocidal scheme, for example, have also appealed to the importance of mothers. In the territories under their control, the Tamil Tigers outlawed family planning services from government health departments and urged women to have as many children as possible to increase the nation's population and also to sacrifice their sons and daughters for the sake of the nation (Alison, 2009).

Motherhood is an important example to understand women's bargain with patriarchy. However, this analysis is not sufficient to explain non-mother women's deal with patriarchy. Women may also use different approaches in their bargaining with patriarchy. Women's negotiation to patriarchy may also not be limited to bargaining. Scholars have not examined women's reactions to patriarchy in detail. Therefore, to gain deeper knowledge of women's reactions to patriarchy, this study asked how Kurdish women react to the forms of patriarchy that they encounter in Kurdish national movements.

To sum up, the transnational feminist approach to patriarchy in analysing migrant women through the intersection of their multiple identities enables us to view migrant women's activism holistically. The major contribution that transnational feminists have made to both

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transnationalism and global feminism is unveiling the patriarchal, gendered, hyper-sexualised and racialised character of nationalism (Mendoza, 2002). This raises a question about women involved in nationalist and ethnic movements, such as Kurdish women in the PKK, who have a dual struggle: ethnic and gender. These women in national movements may reject the term feminism or may define their feminism through class, ethnicity, religion, or race struggles. Hence, in the following section, I have analysed women's relation to nationalism in detail.

3.3. Women and Nationalism

Women's relation to nationalism has been addressed by many scholars, such as Yuval Davis et al. (1989), Al-Ali (2000), Al-Ali and Pratt (2011), Altınay (2011), Cockburn (1998), Jayawardena (1989), Mojab and Gorman (2007), Moghadam (1994), Vickers (2006), and Yuval-Davis (1997). These scholars approached the relationship between gender and nation in two ways: firstly, how women have been involved in the nationalist process, such as modernisation movements, and secondly, how the state/movements treated women in the ethnic/nationalist process. These discussions feed the main debate of whether nationalism is detrimental to feminism.

There has been a considerable amount of research on women's involvement in nationalist projects. Women's participation in ethnic/nationalist movements is different from that of men (Hamilton, 2007; Walby, 1997, 2013). Yuval-Davis and Anthias (1983), for example, have pointed out five ways in which women participate in nationalist processes: (1) as the biological reproducers of members of ethnic collectivities; (2) as the reproducers of ethnic and nationalist groups; (3) as the transmitters of culture; (4) as symbols of ethnicity and as participants in political, national, economic and military struggles; and (5) as signifiers of ethnic and nationalist groups. Women's participation in nationalist processes might occur in some or all of these ways. The first three ways are linked directly to mothering. Indeed, appearing in nationalist processes as mother reproducers of nations is emphasised in many nationalist movements (Şerifsoy, 2011; Najmabadi, 2011). This is because, as stated by Parker et al. (1992), women were initially able to access the nation-state only through the role of motherhood as the bearers of sons who are willing to sacrifice their lives for their homeland.

Hamilton (2007) focused on women's participation in ETA (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna – Basque Homeland and Liberty) and stated that unlike during the 1960s when female activists were mainly single and childless, mothers occupied a privileged place in radical nationalism in the 1970s. Therefore, she claimed that like all forms of maternity, radical nationalist motherhood was ideological. The idealisation of nationalist motherhood not only heightened the visibility of male activists but also made other forms of women's nationalist activism less visible, including their roles in movements. The situation was not different for Kurdish women, as they became active as victims, wives, sisters, and mothers of thousands of male political activists who were tortured horrifically and treated badly in prisons (Açık, 2013).

Another discussion regarding women-nation relations is about how women are represented in nationalist projects. Although women are part of the nationalist projects, Walby (2013) asked to what extent and under what circumstances nationalist movements are gendered projects. Feminist scholars are pessimistic about the answer to this question. A common belief is that nationalist projects are male-privileged. Enloe (2000) stated that militarisation processes grant privilege mainly to men but necessitate women's participation. Through militarisation processes, women gain places where they can develop their political abilities. However, men reshape nationalist ideologies and strategies that further support men's privileges; through these nationalist ideologies, men suppress women's voices (Enloe, 2011). As a result, Moghadam (1994), for example, argued that because of the changing nature of nationalism and feminism, these two movements are becoming less compatible.

These discussions lead us to question the relationship between nationalism and feminism. More importantly, the focus needs to be on how women in national movements experience nationalism and feminism in these movements. As those women are a part of national movements, their experiences and perspectives enrich discussion on women and nationalism. However, because of the variety of national movements, women's approaches to nationalism and feminism cannot be generalised. Accordingly, case studies help to explore the complexity of national movements to uncover diversity, variation, and heterogeneity rather than delve into homogeneity and sameness (McCall, 2006). In line with this, a study on Kurdish women's experiences with feminism and nationalism become important. Hence, determining how Kurdish women activists in London conceptualise feminism and nationalism is the goal of this study.

To comprehend how Kurdish women conceptualise nationalism and feminism, one must examine how the two ideologies have been viewed in connection to one another. The question of whether nationalism is antithetical to feminism has been discussed by feminist scholars, such as Al-Ali and Pratt (2011), Herr (2003), and McClintock (1991). Their claim is represented by Virginia Wolf's famous statement that 'as a woman, I have no country; as a woman, I want no country. To me as a woman, my country is the whole world' (Jacoby, 1999, p. 513). What is commonly seen in the discussion about women and nationalism is that scholars distinguish between Western and Third World feminism and/or women in their analyses. In discussions, it is emphasised that nationalism mostly takes priority over feminism, and nationalist movements disregard feminist demands and postpone women's emancipation after national liberation (Kim, 2009, Enloe, 1989). Alarcon et al. (1999), for example, argued that the normalised relationship between women and the nation is based on the historical neglect or suppression of women's struggles by masculinist narratives. According to these regulatory structures, the types of discourse that produce and control citizen subjects contribute to the institutionalisation of women's subordination in contemporary nation-states.

Analysing the responsibilities to which women are entitled is necessary in order to respond to how women have been treated. This is because women have been assigned duties mostly in nurturing and preserving national culture through playing roles as carriers, transmitters, icons, boundaries or inter-generational reproducers of the culture (Kim, 2009). If the nation is an extended family, women's role in this family is limited to nurture and reproduction only, and if the nation is defined as a religious identity, then the description of appropriate womanhood can be found in scripture (Moghadam, 1994). Then, just as other true members of the nation, women must perform their roles properly (Anthias et al., 1993). In this context, ethnic culture is organised around rules of family, sexuality, and marriage (Anthias et al., 1993).

In most of the nationalist discourses, the tendency has been to assume the patriarchal and monolithic concept of a nation based upon the subjugation of women (Allarcon et al., 1999). This raises the question of why the analogy between nation and family has been emphasised. The answer is simple and clear because unrelated people must be aggregated through brotherhood (Najmabadi as cited in Şerifsoy, 2011). Therefore, McClintock (1991) stated that nationalism is dangerous and gendered. Theorists of nationalism (McClintock excludes Fanon) seldom feel the need to explore how nationalism is implicated in gender power. McClintock

supported her claim by adding that there is not any nationalism in the world that has granted both men and women equal privilege to access the resources of a state.

In contrast, Al-Ali and Pratt (2011) asserted that the issue is more complicated in the neo-colonial/post-colonial setting than in the Western context. Firstly, the concepts of 'feminism' or 'feminist' are rarely used in the Middle East because of the stigmatisation of those words (Al-Ali and Pratt, 2011). Political conservatives, traditionalists, and even leftists have alleged that the concept of feminism is a product of decadent capitalism; that it is based on Western culture which is of no relevance to Third World women; that it is the ideology of the local bourgeoisie; and that it diverts and alienates women from their religion and culture on the one hand, and from the revolutionary struggle for nationalist emancipation and socialism on the other hand (Jayawardena, 1989). Also, feminism is perceived as a threat to group identity in terms of ethnicity, nation, and race (Jacoby, 1999).

Secondly, there is a diversity of experience regarding the relationship between nationalism and feminism in the Middle East (Al-Ali and Pratt, 2011). As stated by West (1992), feminism and nationalism coincide under three kinds of social conditions: identity rights movements within their societies, historical national liberation social movements, and decolonisation movements. Therefore, West (1992) argued that nationalism has a different meaning for groups and communities. For social movements, nationalism means the affirmation of cultural identity. However, for minorities in a state dominated politically and economically by majorities, nationalism means identity rights, and social movements demand inclusion and respect for their identities (West, 1992).

In line with this, Third World feminists have pointed out a relatively positive side of nationalism that includes self-determination, national sovereignty, community, and pluralism (Herr, 2003). Accordingly, Kim (2009) acknowledged that, while she could not claim that feminism and nationalism are harmonious ideas, in the case of South Korea, the feminist struggle is compatible with Korean nationalism. This is because feminist nationalism might be used in the South Korean women's movement. Minjung feminism, the comfort-women issue, and the abolishment of the family-head system are three examples of the South Korean women's nationalism movement since the 1980s. Such studies are important in analysing how promoting gender and nationalism together is possible.

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Although nationalism and feminism are compatible in the Third World, women are also struggling against masculinity in national movements. Herr (2003), for example, stated that nationalism should be considered as being Janus-faced. According to her, Third World feminists do not turn a blind eye to the complications and contradictions in nationalist discourses. The loyalty to the nationalism of many Third World feminists who fight for national independence is fraught with dubiousness and tentativeness (Herr, 2003). On the one hand, feminists have a common purpose of national independence with their male colleagues. On the other hand, if these women raise feminist issues and develop a programme for structural changes, they face admonition from their male and female colleagues that now is not the time.

Even though men claim that they support women's liberation, they might not internalise the women's emancipation programme of the movement, potentially resulting in a paradox between their private and political lives. To put it another way, some men may personally respond favourably to feminism, but when they consider men as a group, their attitudes towards feminism may contain contradictions and ambiguities (Ramazanolu, 1992). This might relate to their internalising the sexual division of their roles – something which might produce differences depending on their culture. That is to say, the gender roles being referred to can be identified as hegemonic masculinity, 'the culturally idealised form of masculine character' (Donaldson, 1993, pp. 646-647). However, Connel and Messerschmidt (2005) mentioned that, although hegemonic masculinity relates to cultural ideals, it should not be assessed simply according to cultural norms.

Another point that is necessary to emphasise is that masculinity is only framed under a heteronormative conception of gender, which is focused mainly on the differences between males and females (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Women might also display hegemonic masculinity in oppressing other women. Women who have been subordinated by other women often criticise themselves because the subordination of women by men has been turned upside down, with women now subordinating other women in terms of class, sexuality, ethnicity, physical capacity, age, etc. (Ramazanoğlu, 1992).

In a nutshell, women's relation to nationalism is viewed as antithetical by some scholars. The main reason is that women's emancipation demands may be postponed for the sake of national demands, and women may be required to continue traditional patriarchal roles in national

movements. However, some scholars such as Al-Ali and Pratt (2011) underlined that specifically Third World women's situation and their approach to feminism are different from those of Western women as feminism is perceived in the Third World as a product of capitalism (Al-Ali and Pratt, 2011) or a threat to ethnic/national identity (Jacoby, 1999). These discussions significantly fed this study to comprehend the focus on women and nationalism. There are significant gaps, though, as shown by the case of Kurdish women and nationalism.

Kurdish women's relation to nationalism has been increasingly analysed by scholars. However, these studies have mainly focused on Kurdish women in a single Kurdish movement, rather than comparing Kurdish women's different approaches to nationalism in different Kurdish movements. In contrast to previous studies, this study highlighted that each Kurdish movement has different gender perspectives that resulted in Kurdish women's different experiences in national movements. Also, as mentioned in the previous chapter, the Kurds do not have an official Kurdish state. They lived under different state territories, leading them to encounter different state nationalisms. Therefore, this study asked how did the encounter with different state nationalism shape Kurdish women's relation to nationalism? As a result of meeting with different Kurdish nationalisms and different state nationalisms, it is necessary to ask how these Kurdish women conceptualise Kurdish nationalism. This question aimed to contribute to discussions on whether nationalism is antithetical to feminism.

3.3.1. Kurdish Women and Nationalism

Because women have different motivations for joining national movements than males, Kurdish women participate in them in different ways than Kurdish men (Hamilton, 2007; Walby, 1997, 2013). Besides encountering ethnic segregation, Kurdish women were even more disadvantaged than Kurdish men because of their gender. The patriarchal-traditional structure of Kurdish society and the cultural isolation that occurs, e.g. only knowing the local language, have been the primary obstacles for Kurdish women (Gündüz-Hoşgör and Him, 2011). Speaking the local language in the community may consolidate ethnic ties, but it separates ethnic groups from those of the population who only know Turkish (Gündüz-Hoşgör and Smits, 2003).

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Examining how Kurdish women encounter and mitigate the language barrier might be a crucial factor in explaining their ethnic identity. Some Kurdish women, for instance, first met the language barrier when visiting families who were arrested during the military coup of 1980 (Bozgan, 2014). Women could not communicate with their relatives on visiting days as speaking Kurdish was prohibited in prisons. Kurdish women also came across the language barrier in the cities to which they moved, subsequently making them feel disconnected from the economic activity of such cities. In turn, just as in other public opposition movements, mainstream ideas of gender were shattered, and the traditional roles of Kurdish women were politicised (Bozgan, 2014).

The language barrier is an important factor that causes Kurdish women to question their ethnic identity and leads them to get involved in Kurdish movements as a result. However, the language barrier alone does not sufficiently explain Kurdish women's involvement in national movements. As mentioned in Chapter Two, the denial of the Kurdish identity by states and encountering human rights breaches are important reasons for forming Kurdish movements. Kurdish women might have experienced denial of their ethnic identity differently from Kurdish men, and they may develop different perspectives because of their experiences. Apart from the language issue, Kurdish women's different experiences, such as state violence and the effects of those experiences on their participation in Kurdish national movements, have not been adequately focused on.

Besides the language barrier and the relative cultural isolation that Kurds, and especially Kurdish women, have to face, the traditional structure of Kurdish families also affects Kurdish women's decision to become involved in the Kurdish movement. As claimed by Kandiyoti (2004), some women participate in the national movement in the name of patriotism and self-sacrifice to step out of their narrowly determined roles in society. This claim resonates with Caglayan's findings (2009) that Kurdish women become involved in the movement to get rid of their traditional family structures and reduce family pressures. The reason behind Kurdish diasporic women's participation in the movement, however, may be different from that identified by Caglayan. First of all, in comparison with Turkey, living in the diaspora may provide young women with more options to break from the practices of their traditional lives. Secondly, Caglayan (2009) specifies that women become involved in the Kurdish movement due to the effect that their families and relatives have on their identity formation, as politicised families tend to produce politicised women. Kurdish women who experienced the 1980

military coup or the political situation of the 1990s may have gotten involved in the movement due to their families' personal experiences of those events. Unlike Caglayan's interviewees, however, Kurdish diasporic women may not have experienced these events due to their living in the diaspora at that time. These women, though, may have become patriotic as they grew up listening to their relatives' experiences regarding the military coup and the evacuation of their villages.

Çağlayan's study contributed significantly to the literature on Kurdish women and nationalism as well as to studies on the Kurdish Movement. In the present study, I extended Çağlayan's study in three directions. Firstly, Çağlayan's study was conducted at the beginning of the 2000s. After her research, the Partîya Karkerên Kurdistanê (Kurdistan Workers' Party – PKK) reached a significant milestone that had a tremendous effect on Kurdish women's activism. The PKK changed its ideology and practice after the capture of the leader, Abdullah Öcalan, in 1999 (Leezenberg, 2016). This was a new phase for Kurdish women since they were in more decision-making positions as the movement needed women's participation, power, and presence (Saeed, 2018). Therefore, in this study, I considered Kurdish women's activism after this development.

Secondly, Çağlayan's study focused on Kurdish women activists in Turkey. Many Kurdish women activists had to leave Turkey because of their political activism. London was one of the women's destinations where they maintained their activism. As a result of their migration, Kurdish women were given another identity as migrant women, which undoubtedly differentiated Kurdish women's activism in London from how it was in Turkey.

Thirdly, Çağlayan's study mainly concerned Kurdish women from Turkey. In this study, I have compared the activism of Kurdish women from Turkey, Iranian and Iraqi Kurdistan. Studies of the Kurdish diaspora, such as those by Griffiths (2000), D'Angelo (2008, 2015), Keleş (2015), Ostergaard-Nielsen (2001), Wahlbeck (1998), and Başer (2013), have focused on Kurds, who were one of the most politicised communities in Britain. However, most of these studies have not paid enough attention to gender. Despite a growing number of studies that address Kurds in diasporas, few of them have focused on Kurdish women in diasporas. Kurdish women's activism and their position concerning nationalism have not been considered in detail in these studies. Also, these studies did not differentiate stateless Kurdish women according to which state territory they were from. This study is based on Kurdish women from Turkey, Iran

and Iraq, and aims to consider how the different experiences of Kurdish women in different home countries influenced their activism in their host country.

Interesting discussions about why Kurdish women (especially those from Turkey's Kurdistan) link their activism with Kurdish nationalism can be found in the literature. Yüksel (2006), for example, linked Kurdish women's involvement in Kurdish movements in Turkey with the Kemalist modernisation movement, which was mentioned in Chapter Two. According to his study, Kurdish women were marginalised as a result of the Kemalist modernising project. Their ethnic identity was shattered on the one hand, while their Turkish counterparts were potential beneficiaries of Kemalist reforms on the other hand, aimed at improving women's civil and political position in Turkey. In this sense, a significant divide has arisen in Turkey between these two groups of women. The origins of Kurdish women's oppression and subjugation in Turkey may best be understood at this crossroad: the intertwined disintegration of Kurdish ethnic identity with Turkish women's emancipation (Yuksel, 2006).

Çaha (2011) also pointed out the division between Turkish and Kurdish feminists and claimed that Turkish feminists are also oppressors of Kurdish women. He stated that as women of an oppressed nation, Kurds face a host of other issues in addition to those related to womanhood, such as war, abuse, rape, forced migration, humiliation, and assimilation. Despite repeatedly stating that they are unable to distinguish between all of these issues, Turkish feminists consistently overlook the second part of the problem. Moreover, he underlined that some Kurdish women accuse Turkish feminists of being colonial, creating a relationship between the oppressed and the oppressor with Kurdish feminists.

Similarly, Al-Ali and Taş (2018) stated that the more radical and autonomous Turkish feminist organisations arose in the 1980s and they criticised Kemalism for being patriarchal and dictatorial. Third-wave Turkish feminists mostly overlooked or underestimated the plight and problems of Kurdish women's rights activists in the 1980s and 1990s. Since the 1990s, an increasing number of Turkish feminists have begun to take the criticism of Kurdish women seriously, questioning their positionality and politics, particularly concerning the Kurdish Question. Despite this, tensions and divisions continue to exist between and within Kurdish and Turkish feminist organisations.

The core reason for the division between Kurdish and Turkish feminists is more about Kurdish women's emphasis on their dual identities. Kurdish feminists argue that they are women; they

are also a member of an oppressed nation (Çaha, 2011). Even though Kurdish women are not politically active or do not have a direct link with the Kurdish movement, they are somehow linked to the Kurdish movement. Some Kurdish women have relatives who are members of the Kurdish national movement; such women visit their relatives in prisons and attend their funerals. As a human rights activist Mukaddes Alataş (as cited in Azizoğlu Bazan, 2017, p. 15) emphasised: 'we attend funerals every day. Most of our friends who we work with lost at least one of their relatives in this war'. Hence, Kurdish women's activism developed under the shadow of the war (Begikhani et al., 2018). They are fighting to save their dual identities because, for whatever reason, neither of them can be reduced to a secondary position. These two fights for emancipation should be waged concurrently and in tandem (Çaha, 2011).

These discussions prompt us to consider the formalisation of Kurdish women's identities. In this sense, Brewer's (1999) identity transition helps us to analyse Kurdish women's identity formation(s). According to Brewer et al. (in Brewer, 1999), there are several different ways in which an individual may subjectively portray the relationship between social identities when more than one is active. First, although the person may be conscious of having two distinct identities, they are either independent of one another or may even be contradictory. Secondly, compound group identification, which is determined by shared membership in both groups, is one type of dual identity. The subjective in the group is only available to individuals who share membership in both groups when multiple social identities are present. Lastly, nesting identities, in which one identity is superior while the other is a distinct component or subgroup identity, are another example of dual identities (Brewer, 1999).

Women's activism is an excellent starting point for analyses of how women relate to nationalism. This is because women's demands reflect their conceptions of feminism and nationalism. To understand which identities women prioritise, how they connect their identities, and whether any identities overlap, it is necessary to analyse women's motivations for participating in activism and the demands that women make. Thus, the following section will focus on migrants' activism.

3.4. Migrants' Political Activism in Migrant Organisations

Migration is more than just moving from one location to another. Rather, migration frequently results in ongoing interactions between geographically dispersed populations because migrants do not automatically cut links with their sending nations (Faist, 1998). Migrants' links with the sending nations make transnational social spaces a combination of symbolic and social ties (Faist, 1998). To reach more comprehensive knowledge about diasporas, migrants' activism and the roles of migrant organisations gain importance as these organisations have a crucial role in creating symbolic and social ties. In this section, I will focus on two different types of migrant activism. One focuses on the construction of migrant diasporic identity through participation in migrant organisations, and the other considers women's activism that strives for women's rights.

Migrants' activism has been defined in many ways. Sajed (2021), for example, described migrants' activism as an example of minor transnationalism that emerged in global flows. Accordingly, minor transnationalism refers to the various 'micro-practices' that minority and diasporic communities engage in to negotiate and confront ambiguous borders. Itzigsohn et al. (1999) clarified Sajed's definitions by pointing out transnational practices that also include migrants' activism. More comprehensively, they distinguish between narrow and broad kinds of transnationality. They categorised people's transnational activities, through the narrow-broad division, into four groups: economic, political, civil-societal and cultural. Among these categorisations, Ostergaard-Nielsen's focus (2003) is more on political practices. She specifies that the narrow practices refer to membership in political parties or local-hometown associations, while the broad practices refer to attendance at meetings or activities. People may participate in broad practices in one field and narrow practices in another field or in broad and narrow practices in the same field at different times (Itzigsohn et al., 1999).

Similar to Ostergaard-Nielsen (2003), Pero and Solomos (2010) divide migrants' activism into political and non-political. Moreover, they emphasised that non-political categories could include political practices or vice versa. In other words, these openly politically and democratically conflicting mobilisations and protests against basic rights and decent working and living conditions appear to represent diversification in the scenario dominated by non-political and often self-limited or hired NGOs organised primarily by ethnicity. Pero and Solomos's point could be understood through Itzigsohn's narrow-broad division as he stated that these differences are degrees rather than categories. Transnational activities may be called

non-political as they consist of a high level of non-political practices, but they also may include a lower degree of political activities.

Differences in migrants' activism could also emerge from various organisational patterns among many migrant communities. The institutional structure and the choice of incorporation patterns support or hinder the expression and organisation of the migrant group identity (Odmalm, 2007). Firstly, to understand the political activism of migrant organisations, it is necessary to analyse their functions. Diasporic identification has been explained through mutual trust, strong ethnic group consciousness and solidarity which importantly create a bond between migrants and their political and cultural geographies (Keles, 2015). The mutual destiny of migrants canalises them to act in solidarity through political activism. In this sense, Miller (in Pero and Solomos, 2010) identified five key channels to analyse migrants' transnational political participation: consultive institutions, the extra-parliamentary avenue, the organisational avenue, industrial democracy, and the diplomatic channel.

According to a civil society typology, voluntary organisations can act as a counterweight to the state and/or strengthen marginalised groups in society. Migrant organisations might thus aim to use this platform to either raise awareness of issues that affect their ethnic group or nationality or to effect changes in the political context (Odmalm, 2004). Migrant organisations have been viewed through their positive and negative impacts on migrants' settlement and activism. Most of the literature recognises that these organisations may have negative effects; they may consolidate social division, creating ghettoization and migrants' dependency to access the services (D'Angelo, 2015). Some organisations also might be authoritarian and anti-democratic (Fennema and Tillie, 1999).

Although while migrant organisations have drawbacks or shortcomings, their very important positive impact on migrant communities cannot be overlooked. What needs to be considered is that ethnic migrant organisations originated from desperate needs, an increasing effort to not lose ethnic identity and roots, and adaptation to new social norms and relationships (D'Angelo, 2015). In this sense, migrant organisations are positioned to help communities, specifically during the early stage of their settlement. These organisations' support provided to migrants, specifically forced migrants who are uncertain about their future, alleviates their boredom, provides a sense of self-determination and identifies their unmet needs. In some cases, they help refugees and asylum seekers to understand the welfare system and integrate them into the

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relationship of the host country. The term integration refers to getting used to the new environment and creating processes between refugees and the receiving society (Griffiths et al., 2006). Therefore, Fennema and Tillie (in Herman and Jacobs, 2015) claim that ethnic (minority) organisations function as a bridge between ethnic minority groups and the ethnic majority.

Secondly, many scholars such as Østergaard-Nielsen (2003), Fennema and Tillie (1999), Dangelo (2015), Herman and Jacobs (2015), Başer and Swain (2008), and Keles (2015) focus on how migrants' political practices are articulated and received. The political activism of migrants arises in various forms. Migrants may involve direct cross-border participation in the politics of the country of origin through voting in elections, and involving debates in the press, as well as their indirect participation through political organisations in the receiving country (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003). Their political participation in the host country can be fulfilled by visiting meetings, where neighbourhood matters are discussed, participation in a so-called neighbourhood council, active lobbying, and voting in elections if they are eligible (Fennema and Tillie, 1999). Migrants and refugees can also mobilise around issues related to their migration status. In this sense, they unite their demands related to both the country of origin and receiving country. They may be politically active on immigrant politics, host issues, homeland politics, diaspora politics, and transnational politics. Migrants and refugees may mobilise for immigrant politics to reach a better situation in the host country, such as acquiring more economic, political, and social rights, and fighting against discrimination (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003).

Accordingly, Herman and Jacobs (2015) highlighted the debates on migrants' political participation. They pointed out that the societal debate on non-European migrants' involvement in political debates has a schizophrenic twist: while some participants praise the active citizenship of migrants as a matter of principle and want to force it to a level that is comparable with the overall population, others only endorse political participation by migrants if it is "invisible" and will not empower ethnicity as a political marker. Though there is some dissatisfaction with spotlighting migrants' ethnicity, the link between their ethnicity and their political practices is necessary to analyse to understand their stories comprehensively. Hence, many existing studies on the migrant network and the political, economic, and geography of migration view the co-ethnic network as a central hub for multiple resources for individual migrants (Keles, 2015).

Besides the necessity to analyse the link between migrants' ethnicity and political practices to reach a comprehensive story of migration, gender is also another factor that must be considered. While the transnationalisation of women's activism and women's claims for equality, as well as migrant transnationalism, have received a lot of attention, little research has been done on migrant women's transnational claims (Mugge, 2012). To understand migrant women's transnational demands, the next section will analyse their activism.

3.4.1. Migrant women and Activism

In relation to the development of feminist approaches in the 1970s and the early 1980s, migrant women started to appear in anthropological and sociological studies (King and Zontini, 2000). In the 1980s and 1990s, diaspora studies started to discuss gendered perspectives of diasporas by including women's experiences (Al-Ali, 2010). Accordingly, scholars have analysed diasporic processes related to migration and mobility, the conceptualisation of home, labour force participation, political mobilization, the transmission of cultural traditions and norms, and cultural productions (Al-Ali, 2010). In conjunction with the previous section, this section's focus will also be on the migrants' activism. This section will specifically focus on gender and analyse the reason behind migrant women's engagement in activism.

Women and men experience diasporas differently (Anthias, 1998). Itzigsohn and Giorguli-Saucedo (2005) focused on how men's and women's transnational practices can be different. They found that men's transnational participation is a more likely reactive type that sees transnational actions as a reaction to a bad incorporation experience. Bad experiences can be the result of frustration with vocations, or the social position acquired in the receiving nation. On the other hand, they described women's transnational participation as "resource-dependent transnationalism", which asserts that immigrants attempt to re-establish ties to their home countries, but they are unable to do so immediately after relocating due to a lack of resources.

In this regard, migrant men and women have different transnational practices giving a clue about their different reasons for activism. Goldring (2001) linked men's and women's different transnational activism to the erosion of the patriarchal privilege of men in the family. In addition to restricted spatial mobility, men lose authority and the decision-making process in the family. Their loss of status led them to be more interested in participating in hometown

organisations than women. On the other hand, working outside the home may improve women's bargains with patriarchy. Women may be less interested in the long-term preservation of transnational spaces, particularly in practices that are removed from immediate family ties, such as some of the activities linked with local organisations.

However, Franz's study (2003) on Bosnian refugee women highlighted the opposite of Goldring's study (2001). Similar to Goldring, Franz also stated that migrant men mainly focus on hometown issues, watching news of the home country, while women's aim is more on adapting to the host country. In contrast to men who aim to continue their profession, migrant women work in unskilled jobs (even if they are highly skilled) as their consideration is their children and family. Their work in the host country helps them to step out from their patriarchal families. Even though many Bosnian women began to provide the primary source of family income (and their legal jobs eventually provided health care and residence permits for other family members), they did not see their successful socioeconomic adaptation to their new environments as a step toward emancipation. Because they saw themselves as mothers, sisters, and daughters rather than feminists or female independent-minded professionals, they highlighted the value of traditions and family relationships (Franz, 2003).

As stated by Goldring (2001), migrant women may be prompted to question patriarchy by their job outside and their shifting economic circumstances. This may lead them to get involved in gender-based activism. However, Franz's (2003) study underlined that this is not the common case. Both studies emphasised that migrant women are less interested in hometown issues and put distance on hometown organisations. Those studies importantly contributed to the migrant women's transnational practices. However, this research did not respond to why some migrant women are involved in activism in host countries.

Likewise, scholars such as Al-Ali (2002) and Malkki (1995) stated that background information on migration helps us to understand migrants' activities in the receiving country. Al-Ali (2002) questions whether the same force motivates all transnational activities and emphasises that labour migration is only a part of transnational practices and social fields, which are driven and motivated by other historically specific cultural, social, and ideological factors. Malkki (1995) makes a similar reference to forced or involuntary movements of individuals as Al-Ali does, and she asserts that these movements are only one aspect of cultural and socio-political practices. As stated by Anthias (1998), the social positioning of these

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migrant groups is not often related to their trajectories during migration and settlement; their constitution and location in the home country also need to be analysed. Migrants' positions in their country of origin are background information that shapes their settlement and adaptation process in the receiving country. Malkki (1995) summarises the background information as follows:

"Nationalism and racism, xenophobia and immigration policies, state practices of violence and war, censorship and silencing, human rights and challenges to state sovereignty, "development" discourse and humanitarian interventions, citizenship and cultural or religious identities, travel and diaspora, and memory and historicity are just some of the issues and practices that generate the inescapably relevant context of human displacement today. In many studies of refugees, however, these are the kinds of "background information" or "root causes" that sometimes have been considered, for many reasons, beyond the scope of study" (p.496).

The division of forced and voluntary migration leads us to analyse background information on migration. Forced migration may include tragedies that shape migrants' activities in the receiving country. The next section will focus on migrant women's pre-migration traumas in consideration of how those traumas shape migrant women's activism.

3.4.1.1. The Effect of Pre-migration Traumas on Migrant Women's Activism

The background information or root causes are parts of the migration process, which affects which ways migrants use to reach a new country as well as how they settle. The root causes of migration may be traumatic experiences. In line with this, Steel et al. (1999) analysed post-traumatic stress (PTS) symptoms among Sri Lankan Tamil refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants in Australia. They found that pre-migration traumas – detention and abuse, traumatic loss, flight from the conflict – and post-migration traumas – adaptation difficulties, loss of culture and support, health welfare, and asylum difficulties – cause PTS among refugees, immigrants and asylum seekers. They argue that traumas have direct and indirect effects on asylum seekers and refugees. Experiences of torture can be overwhelming and have a direct influence on PTS, while social isolation in the new settlement indirectly affects it. What their study indicates is that, as Malkki stated above, the background of migration should not be

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beyond the scope of studies. Those root causes of migration need to be analysed with post-migration difficulties to understand migration as a whole.

Similarly, Silove et al. (1997) conducted a study to analyse asylum-seekers' and refugees' anxiety, depression and PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) association with pre-migration trauma and post-migration stressors in Sydney, Australia. According to their study, a large percentage (79%) of their participants were traumatised by witnessing killings, suffering torture and captivity, and being assaulted. Some of these asylum seekers and refugees have all the symptoms of PTSD, which is associated with pre-migration traumas, difficulties in dealing with immigration officials, delays in processing refugee applications, racial discrimination, and obstacles to employment and loneliness. What is salient in their study is that they differentiate between asylum seekers and refugees and argue that asylum seekers who have been traumatised before their migration show high levels of psychiatric symptoms. This is because asylum seekers experience insecurity and perpetual dread of deportation. Steel et al. (1999) and Silove et al.'s (1997) study shows that the host country's immigration policies are important in terms of how asylum seekers, refugees, and immigrants deal with their pre-migration traumas and post-migration stressors.

As discussed in Chapter 2 (History Chapter), Kurdish women have been oppressed through their gender and national identities, which resulted in some of these Kurdish women's involvement in Kurdish movements. Kurdish women's political activism resulted in imprisonment and detention and more oppression by the state. Some of these women had to migrate to the UK because they felt insecure in their home country. In other words, Kurdish women's traumatic experiences in their home country can be a reason for their migration to the UK. There is a need to pay a specific attention to women's traumatic experiences in academic analyses. This is because the same incident might traumatise men and women differently depending on how they perceive it. Also, women might have different traumatic experiences, such as being exposed to gendered torture-being raped or being threatened by the rape -because of their gender identity. Even though women constitute the majority of refugees (Al-Ali, 2010), the refugee literature still does not differentiate those people through gender or other categories that define their identity (Colson, 2008).

Migrants may fall into silence and live under the shadow of traumas, or they may raise their voices about the experiences that traumatised them. If they choose the latter, political activism becomes a salient option for migrants to fight against what they experienced. Al-Ali (2007) is one of the scholars who analyse the relationship between gender ideologies and women's political mobilisations. She claims that those refugee women who have had traumatic experiences of violence might have different political and emotional attitudes than those who did not experience these. These experiences might have two different consequences. Experiencing violence might radicalise refugee women who support the armed struggle or who work to promote peace. On the other hand, the psychological and physical effects of violence may evoke a state of paralysis, anxiety, and deep depression, which are not conducive to political activism (Al-Ali, 2007). This can be linked to Cohen's claim (1996) that diaspora politics is related to groups that are barred from participation in their homeland politics or who even do not have a political regime to support or oppose.

In this way, the political involvement of Kurdish women who do not have an officially recognised homeland, as underlined by Cohen above (1996), or do not have a political regime to support or oppose, can be analysed under diaspora politics. To refer to Al-Ali's claim (2007), Kurdish women's experiences of violence in the homeland may direct them to get involved in political activism. However, because they do not have an official homeland, their experiences of violence may differ depending on their country of origin. Therefore, their tendency to work to support armed struggles or promote peace would be different. Even though there is a growing number of studies that have focused on Kurdish diasporas and have successfully made Kurdish migrants' activism apparent, Kurdish women's activism in diasporas has not been treated in much detail. Linking Kurdish women's pre-migration traumas with their post-migration activism would reveal unspotted aspects of their migration.

In line with these, this study links Kurdish women migrants' pre-migration traumas with their political activism by asking what the role of Kurdish women's background is in shaping their activism in London. Analysing Kurdish women's activism considering their pre-migration experiences fills the gap in the literature, as even though women and children constitute the majority of refugees (Al-Ali, 2010), the refugee literature is still biased in that it differentiates those people through age, gender or other categories to define their identity (Colson, 2008).

To sum up, all these discussions are related to Kurdish women's multiple identities that are considered in this research. Relations of Kurdish women's identities, particularly national and gender identities, acquaint us with how Kurdish women interpret and practise feminism and nationalism. However, a question that arises here is how we analyse Kurdish women's multiple identities. In this sense, the intersectional approach is chosen as the theoretical framework of the study. In the following section intersectionality will be discussed to justify why this approach is the most suitable way to analyse Kurdish women's relation to nationalism.

3.5. Intersectionality of Identities

Gender relations have increasingly been recognised as intersecting with a variety of other types of hierarchy and axes of identity because of feminist collaboration over distance and diversity (Conway, 2012). This is related to the difficulty in identity politics. Rather than failing to transcend difference, as some sceptics claim, the difficulty with identity politics is that it usually conflates or ignores intragroup differences, which contributes to conflict between groups (Crenshaw, 1991). Intragroup differences point out multiple marginalised people's experiences. In this sense, the significance of intersectionality stems from including the perspectives of multiple-marginalised people, particularly women of colour, and adding multiple independent strands to the analyses (Choo and Ferree, 2010).

Intersectionality is interested in understanding the effects of race, class, and gender on women's identities, experiences, and fights for empowerment. Initially, this feminist theory emphasised a 'triple danger' approach to class, race, and gender, examining how the individual becomes increasingly vulnerable, marginalised, and submissive as each new element of injustice is added (Davis, 2008). In transnational feminism, it is stipulated that women have multiple identities and multiple oppressions stemming from, *inter alia*, issues dealing with sexuality, gender, class, race, and nationality (Conway, 2013). That is to say:

> … *if identities are complex, comprising multiple intersections of class, race, gender and sexuality causing individuals to react in different ways at different times, women will act politically, not simply based on gender, but race class and sexuality as well, in complex interaction.* (Waylen, 1996, p. 16).

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As stated above by Waylen (1996), women act differently as their identities intersect multiple times. In each of these autonomous divisions, diverse spheres of social relations are prioritised. Nevertheless, these divisions might overlap, while others might become more prominent than others (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Intersectionality examines the interactions of several categories (including but not limited to gender, race, sexual orientation and class) to recognise how these fundamental components affect political access, equality, and the possibilities for any type of justice (Hancock, 2007). In summary, intersectionality has been illustrated explicitly in Crenshaw's example:

> Intersectionality is what occurs when women from a minority group… [try] to navigate the main crossing [in a] city… The main highway is the 'racism road'. One cross street can be Colonialism, then Patriarchy Street… She has to deal not only with one form of oppression but with all forms, those named as road signs, which link together to make a double, a triple, multiple, a many-layered blanket of oppression (Crenshaw cited in Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 196).

On the other hand, considering each division as being autonomous misdirects us. According to this understanding, these fragmentations prevent us from viewing how social forms exist in mutually determining relations (Mojab and Carpenter, 2019). This division also prevents us from omitting differences among women. As pointed out by Ramazanoğlu (1989), identifying women as 'Third World', 'Black', 'women of colour', 'Muslim', Latina', 'Indian' etc. highlights the ethnic and racial divisions which exist between women. In this respect, one should ask whether all Black, all Muslim or all Third World women experience the same level of subordination. Cockburn (1998) rightly stated that not even all ethnic groups are homogenous, postulating that a single ethnic group might constitute different cultures.

What is important about women's multiple identities is that the intersection of these identities creates different forms of consciousness. On a practical level, as emphasised by Sandoval (2000), differential consciousness is the basis for differential social movements and differential activism. Sandoval referred to Anzaldua's concept of 'between and among' and stated that:

> the activity of consciousness as the differential insofar as it enables movement 'between and among' ideological positioning (the equal-rights, revolutionary,

supremacist and separatist modes of oppositional consciousness) considered as variables, is to disclose the distinction among them (p.57).

Differential consciousness can be viewed as enriching the movements. Bromley and Ahmad (2006) rightly asked how diverse cognitions can enable women's movements to become a space for solidarity. As discussed previously, transnational feminists negate the unity of women by addressing universal sisterhood and emphasising solidarity rather than unity. What needs to be considered is how much of the theory can be practised. In other words, to what extent does women's activism welcome differences? Hurtado's (2019) study underlined that there is no impeccable solidarity among feminists. She researched white undergraduates who defined themselves as feminists to analyse whether they acknowledged the privileges that they had based on their race and class. She stated that previous studies have focused on what people of colour are denied rather than what white privilege affords. Therefore, Hurtado asked whether they had any privileges that were naturally given to them without any effort. Surprisingly, all the participants (50 feminists) referred to their race and class without any hesitation as to the privileges that were given to them.

Another salient finding by Hurtado was that white feminists feign ignorance when they meet with the oppressed in a mass protest or a moral argument. What privileged feminists choose to do is to give an audience to the oppressed, listen to them, and seem to be engaged. The claim of ignorance is a powerful weapon in feminists' hands because Western feminists already knew the psyche of the oppressed while the oppressed are trying to enlighten them. In order to address the question of why Hurtado's study is important, it needs to be highlighted that a variety of women groups from different ethnic, racial, religious and class backgrounds engage with various types of activism in diasporas. So far, however, there has been little discussion about power relations among those women groups. Accordingly, this study fills the gap as Kurdish women activists meet different women groups to discuss their demands and how much they are in solidarity. This analysis is an interesting point that has not been focused on before. In addition, by focusing on Kurdish women specifically, this analysis adds another dimension to the concept of the universal sisterhood. Also, it procures a comparative aspect about how Kurdish women conceptualise feminism differently to Western feminists.

3.5. Conclusion

This chapter analysed discussions to understand Kurdish women's relations to nationalism. The main argument was shaped around seeking a response to whether nationalism is antithetical to feminism. The primary idea being discussed here is patriarchy, which women may encounter in national movements. Some feminists are sceptical of the claim that national movements can support women's emancipation. On the other hand, several feminists from the developing world emphasised that national movements might benefit women and that feminism, nationalism, and patriarchy are viewed differently in the developing world. To reach a deeper understanding, the intersection of women's national, gender and religious identities was considered. Intersectionality seemed perfectly suited to the task of investigating how the categories of race, and gender are interconnected and mutually constitutive, emphasising how race is 'gendered' and gender is 'racialised'(Davis, 2008), as well as how both are linked to religion. Besides gender and ethnic identities, migrant women also have diasporic/migrant identities. The demands that they raise through their activism are precious to understanding women's relation to nationalism.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

4.1. Introduction

This study offers analyses of Kurdish women's relation to nationalism by considering the intersectionality of their multiple identities. To achieve the aims of the study, feminist ethnography was conducted in London-based Kurdish organisations. This chapter begins with an explanation of the rationale for the choice of qualitative methodology and feminist ethnography. This is followed by an explanation of the selection criteria of interviewees and organisations. Secondly, this chapter discusses how this research was conducted and how I gained access to my participants. Next, the final sections focus on ethical and reflexive challenges.

4.2. Research Design

Qualitative research approaches have been chosen to be the most suitable methods for this research project when compared to quantitative research methods because qualitative research methods provide greater opportunities for obtaining information about the researched community's shared beliefs, values, assumptions, and practices (Braun and Clarke 2013). Qualitative research is crucial to understanding the nature of that setting (Kurdish organisations), i.e. what it means for participants to be in the setting, what their lives are like, what's going on for them, what their meanings are, and what the world looks like in that particular setting (Patton as cited in Merriam, 2009, p. 14).

The qualitative research approach is also the most appropriate approach when feminist sensitivities come to the fore. In positivist approaches, a researcher is expected to ask questions in the same order and not display emotions while engaging with participants. In this approach, as is discussed in much feminist literature, the researcher is regarded as being intellectually dominant and superior to the interviewees (O'Reilly, 2009). On the other hand, it is easier for women's voices to be heard when the qualitative research approach is utilised and when women are not treated as objects controlled by the researcher (Bryman, 2008). As emphasised by Denzin et al. (2013), qualitative research contains two contrasting elements. On the one hand,

it points to broader, interpretive, feminist, critical understanding. On the other hand, it is drawn from locally defined human experiences and their analysis of events.

This study aims to analyse the practices, experiences, and perspectives of Kurdish women activists. The main focus of the study will be on feminism and nationalism that, as mentioned above, may cause a feminist criticism. Kurdish women who raise their voices through their demands may also want to be heard through their words. Questionnaires may cause those women to feel that they are limited by giving short answers that do not sufficiently express the points they want to emphasise. Also, women's relation to nationalism is a complex subject that may consist of sensitiveness and conflicts. Hence, interviews need to be supported by observations. Because of the nature of the subject, (feminist) ethnography is adopted as the methodology in this research to listen to the voice of Kurdish women.

4.3. Methodology

The ethnographic perspective is the most effective way to comprehend Kurdish women's activism. This is because, ethnographic analyses require an interpretation of the meaning, function and impact of people's actions and institutional procedures as well as how they relate to local or possibly broader context (Atkinson 2007). The meaning and impact of Kurdish women's activism in the Kurdish diaspora need an ethnographic analysis. Also, this study links reasons for migration and diasporic activism as its focus is on Kurdish women who are migrants and activists. Kurdish women's pre-migration experiences may shape their activism in London. Gans (2010) emphasises the appropriateness of the method in the study of ethnic, racial, and economic minorities. Furthermore, studying current social issues such as human rights, violence, genocide, poverty, immigration, racism, equality, peace, justice, health and healing, and cultural survival (Tedlock, 2005) requires collecting data from participants who have experienced the consequences of these issues directly or indirectly.

More specifically, feminist ethnography is chosen to analyse Kurdish women's activism. This is because, as was underlined in the previous chapter, Kurdish activism in diasporas has been increasingly focused on by scholars. However, those studies are gender blinded and Kurdish women's activism has not been paid enough attention. Feminist ethnography is chosen for this study to emphasise the gendered aspect of Kurdish activism in diasporas. In line with this, the

following section underlines what feminist ethnography is and why feminist ethnography is the most appropriate method for this study.

4.3.1. Feminist Ethnography

Davis and Craven (2016) stated that feminist ethnography is used to manage the dynamics of power in social interactions based on gender analysis. In this gender analysis, feminist ethnographers take all people in the field organisations and community into account and pay specific attention to gender. According to early feminist researchers, the relationship between the researcher and the researched should be non-hierarchical. Today, most feminist researchers consider this to be naïve; rather, they argue that there exist power relations between women (Skeggs, 2005). The focus of feminist ethnography is on issues of oppression and dominance. Hence, the ontological position of feminist ethnography focuses on structures of patriarchy, oppressed groups, and dominance (O'Reilly, 2012).

Feminist ethnographers' specific focus on gender gives rise to some misinterpretations. Visweswaran (1997) criticised studies that assumed that feminist ethnography is about female researchers writing about other women. She argued that a broader understanding of feminist theory's relationship to social movements means that women should not be seen as sole subjects, authors, or audiences of feminist ethnography that emphasises the issue of social inequality in the lives of men, women, and children. As a result, various forms of critical ethnography might be understood as feminist ethnography.

Skeggs (2005) differentiates ethnography and feminist ethnography and states that even though ethnography is a theory of the research process, feminist ethnography is defined by its link to theoretical positions. Fields (2013) clarifies how feminist ethnography is different from ethnography by highlighting spoken/unspoken duality. According to her, it will be impossible to create an ethnographic description of these unspeakable and unspoken experiences and expectations. Other ethnographers, on the other hand, have considered the quiet and the unspoken. Feminist ethnography appears to be particularly well suited to identifying the limits of what may be said, questioning how that boundary is constructed and maintained, and peering over the edge at what cannot and has not been stated. Emotion as a source of inquiry leads to rich insights in ethnographic studies. Queer and feminist studies of effect are being researched. Symbol interactionism, "not simply what people can speak about", is also taken into account

in studies of emotion. This involves studying their feelings, as well as what they are unable to express and feel (Fields, 2013, p.497).

Feminist ethnography was the most appropriate methodology for this research project in which the main aim is to investigate Kurdish women's activism in the nationalist movements. Firstly, this study aims to analyse Kurdish women's experiences as activists. Those experiences may include power relations between Kurdish women and Kurdish men. Also, it was assumed that there are power relations among Kurdish women. Secondly, talking about pre-migration traumas and the variety of oppression can be missed in some research methodologies. By adopting feminist ethnography, this study aims to focus on unspoken experiences, which might be crucial for analyses of women's relation to nationalism.

4.3.1.1. Unstructured Interviews

I met with 28 Kurdish activists to conduct interviews with them. Twenty-one were from Turkey, four were Kurdish women from Iraq, and three were from Iran. Three of my participants were male while 25 were female activists. The length of interviews varied from 33 minutes to 151 minutes.

This research started with observations of events and participants and conducting semi-structured interviews with Kurdish activists. After a few weeks in the field and I had completed six interviews, I discussed the interview questions and my experiences in the field with my supervisors to reduce the weaknesses, possible problems and ambiguities of my research project.

The main weakness that surfaced was that I was following the interview guidelines too rigidly. Focusing mainly on the research questions during interviews prevented me from obtaining richer data. After discussions with my supervisors, I focused on my participants' stories through unstructured interviews which made the interviews more like daily conversations, but, as emphasised by Dexter (as cited in Merriam, 2009), they were conversations with a purpose. I noticed that by interviewing in this way, my participants and I were more comfortable. Also, the length of the interviews became longer.

The main reason for adopting unstructured interviews was to develop a better understanding of participants' realities and to be exposed to unanticipated themes (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2016). Talking about Kurdish women's experiences can be sensitive. Structured or semi-structured interviews would make Kurdish women psychologically uncomfortable as some of my participants may feel that they are being questioned, which reminds them of the time when they were interrogated by the police because of their activism. The starting sentence of each interview ("Shall we start our interview by talking about your life story?") was the same in every single interview, but the rest of the interviews were unique as the conversations were shaped according to participants' stories. Each unstructured interview allowed me to generate data with different patterns and structures (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2016). Interviews were shaped by what participants wanted to emphasise about their life. Some interviews were mainly about pre-migration traumas, such as prison experiences, while others were about the forms of patriarchy they encountered in organisations. Unstructured interviews were considered the best methods to fulfil feminist ethnography's aim to produce knowledge from women's specific experiences to make them visible (Davis and Craven, 2016).

As mentioned earlier, the interviews were conducted as daily conversations with a purpose. Miller and Glassner (1997) stated that interviews can be unstructured, and the question wording and the sequence can be flexible. The interviews deliberately created opportunities to talk about something I was interested in. The purpose of the conversation was the key that determined the flow of the interview. Conversations were sometimes re-directed through questions when I felt that the respondent had moved on to a completely different topic. I expanded participants' narratives occasionally by asking them how they felt, what they did, or what thoughts they had about an issue.

More importantly, I believe that unstructured interviews reduced the hierarchical relations between my participants and I. Building non-hierarchical relations was important because research where a non-hierarchical relationship exists between the researcher and researched results in more valid data (Oakley, 1998) as the participants feel more comfortable talking about their feelings and experiences. Through unstructured interviews, I asked my participants to narrate their life stories. When participants dwelled on some memories, such as issues with a mother-in-law, I gently changed the direction of the conversation, as we were stuck on a personal issue for quite a long time. When I felt that a participant did not say much about issues, I asked questions such as: 'If you had a magic wand, how would you change the organisation?'.

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They mainly responded to this question by referring to patriarchy. I tried not to be a researcher asking many questions, but a good listener. As I mentioned in Chapter Two, many Kurdish women have experienced trauma. Questioning my participants who had been sexually, psychologically and physically assaulted would have given them a feeling of being in the police station where they had been assaulted. They might not have wanted to talk about what they had experienced or might have lied to hide the reality.

I made a pre-fieldwork assumption that participants might feel uncomfortable speaking about issues they had in the organisations. Interviews were conducted in places chosen by the participants. Not surprisingly, the majority of participants were willing to be interviewed in the café shops they designated. Apart from boosting comfort, meeting outside the organisation enhanced the participants' anonymity as their participation in the research was not known by their colleagues. Some participants who had limited time preferred to participate in the research when they were in the organisations, so I interviewed them in a separate, private room. Two of my participants invited me to their homes to cook traditional food and Kurdish tea for me. We started the interviews after having delicious food.

Interviews with the second generation took less time. They mainly preferred to mix Turkish and English when speaking. They were not comfortable speaking Turkish but were willing to communicate with me in Turkish. When they could not express themselves in Turkish, they continued in English. The second-generation participants were willing to talk mainly about their issues, such as being pressured to marry by the community. On the other hand, the first-generation participants mainly started their narratives with how their life was in their homeland. Coming to the UK in their adulthood enabled the first generation to make comparisons between their homeland and the diaspora. This resulted in longer interviews being conducted with the first-generation Kurdish activists.

All interviews took place face to face, which helped the participants to share their thoughts and feelings beyond the power of words. As stated by Chamoisea (as cited in Denzin and Lincoln, 2011): '… as performance ethnographers, we all reach across the distances separating the linearity of language – written or spoken – from the flux of experience' (p. 326). In some interviews, we laughed together. My 'insider-ness' (which I will discuss more in the following sections and knowing the community) helped me to notice witticisms in conversations and join in my participants' joy. Sometimes, when my participants cried, I stopped the voice recorder

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and joined my participants in silence and pain. It is impossible to express how difficult it was for a mother to leave a 15-month-old child behind and start a new life in a new country as an asylum seeker. I felt her agony through my motherhood. We did not need words to share our feelings. As expressed by Sarawasti (2019):

> If language is always implicated within violent ideological processes, then, shouldn't we, as feminist scholars, find ways to speak beyond language, to bypass language, to create spaces outside ideologies and discourses that could better help us engage with emotions and pain? (p. 1)

Similarly, O'Reilly (2012) rightly asked: if we cannot understand and empathise, how can we explain the actions of others? O'Reilly (2012) also criticised social sciences by observing that objectivity, which means detachment, is emphasised in social sciences, but it is difficult to completely detach oneself when researching something that you, as a researcher, have experienced or been involved in. Women have found involvement and empathy to be a useful way to understand each other, and O'Reilly questioned why this does not work in social sciences.

I believe that empathy and emotions are important in feminist research. One of my participants suggested setting up a project that would involve collecting the life stories of Kurdish women from across the world and publishing them as a book to make Kurdish women more visible in literature. She asked me to write my life story as a Kurdish woman from Turkey who currently lives in a Western country. I accepted her offer, but I confess that writing my story was more difficult than I presumed. I imagined that I was one of my participants and interviewed myself. I was not only engaging with my life story during the writing process; my past was with me for days and nights. I confronted myself. I then understood perfectly that as a researcher, I left people with many questions in their minds after interviews. I also noticed that touching on sensitive points might cause danger and harm to participants, and that is why the ethics of research are far more important than even I had thought.

4.3.1.2. Observations

Observations were an essential part of this research as the information I obtained through observations enriched the data. I observed my participants' body language during interviews.

I also observed Kurdish activists in organisations, in special events, such as festivals and demonstrations. My focus during observations was on Kurdish women's accessories and dresses, which slogans they were shouting, which slogans were written on posters, which symbols Kurdish women carry in demonstrations, how organisations were decorated. I also focused on Kurdish women's practices such as how women activists' relations were with male activists in organisations, what they did during demonstrations and what activities they conducted. I used my notebook during observations and participants knew that I was observing them for research. I had two aims in my observations: having more information and seeing possible conflicts between what my participants told me and how they reacted in practice.

Obtaining information through observations: I applied mission-driven observations during my participants' indoor and outdoor events (Nipper-Eng, 2015). According to this approach, each day I had a mission to achieve what I was looking for that day (Nipper-Eng, 2015). On a day when I went out to observe demonstrations, I noted which slogans were being shouted by Kurdish woman activists and which slogans were written on posters that were carried by Kurdish women.

During demonstrations, firstly, I considered what the purpose of the demonstration was, then I assessed slogans or messages written on posters placed in the foreground. As stated by Paternost (1992), these slogans are verbal symbols and important signs with ideological meanings. Alikhani (2013) analysed how popular slogans and songs affected young Iranian volunteers during the Iran-Iraq War and found that popular slogans and songs, which evoke a very vigorous emotional reaction, are a way to gain access to the social habits of young volunteers. Alikhani's study made me question whether slogans awake Kurdish women's emotions.

I also observed Kurdish women's clothes and accessories during their outdoor events. Some of the women wore traditional Kurdish clothes that they would not wear on a daily basis during demonstrations. Their aim in attending demonstrations in traditional clothing was to emphasise their national identity. Besides the demonstrations that Kurdish women organise, they attend events organised by feminist groups with their national symbols.

Seeing conflicts through observations:

I also applied observations to see whether there were any conflicts between what my participants told me and how it is reflected in their practices. Because this study focuses on some sensitive topics, such as patriarchy in organisations, I presumed that my informants might be inclined to show signs of patriarchy in organisations. Gender egalitarian perspectives of organisations might be emphasised through interviews. However, participant observation of male and female activists' relations, the number of women in administrative communities, how women's activities are supported by the organisation, and whether women are comfortable in raising their voices give clues about the patriarchy in organisations. Hence, participant observations give great opportunities to see whether there are any conflicts between the information given by informants and how those materialise in practice.

4.4. Recruitment of Participants

4.4.1. Negotiating Access

As a woman and as a Kurd, I entered the field as an insider researcher. Compared to an outsider researcher, an insider researcher brings special engagement and sensitivity to the research process because of experiences shared with participants and being aware of rules of conduct and understanding nuances of behaviour (Merton as cited in Beoku-Betts, 1994). Shared experiences reduce the distance between researchers and participants by creating trust.

On the other hand, the question is whether sharing common experiences is enough to be an insider researcher. There are multiple gates through which a researcher must pass to reach a participant. This suggests that an insider researcher's acceptance is not one-dimensional or certain but needs to be negotiated (De Andreade, 2000). Researchers with an insider status might be advantaged by having shared experiences with participants not available to outsider researchers or they may be disadvantaged by being close to participants, which can cause a subjective interpretation of the data gathered from the field. However, academics, who have been in the field as insider researchers have experienced that there are various reasons related to their identities that affect their status in the field. The identities of the researcher, such as his/her profession, gender, class/status, religion, marital status, and cultural history, might not be similar to the participants' (Beoku-Betts, 1994).

The similarities between my participants' identities and mine outweighed the differences. However, dissimilarities in our identities were revealed in the field. Few Kurdish women have chosen to enter academia in Britain, and I was in this minority group. Concerning scientific research, native researchers encounter the complexity of balances, whereby a Third World academic in a white institution is perceived as being 'white' in their native community (Kanuha, 2000). In this situation, there is no privileged insider's perspective because all attempts to draw insider/outsider boundaries in knowledge are power moves, not moves toward truth (Haraway, 1988). As a consequence of the relationship between power and knowledge, researchers who research their communities become outsiders as a result of studying/working in Western institutions. On the other hand, compared with being researched by a Western researcher, Third World communities might be more welcoming to a researcher from their community. Most minority people are aware of the realities that result in minority suspicion of the motives of academic research (Zinn, 1979).

I have discussed why Kurdish women are suspicious of Western academia in Chapter Seven. In this section, I share my experiences related to the Kurdish woman activists' suspicions of researchers. Because of my gatekeepers who introduced me well, I entered the field more easily than I had anticipated. Entering the field through the gatekeepers was important to gain informants' trust as this study focuses on a highly politicised community. Potential participants would reject participation in the study, or if they accept, they may be hesitant to share everything with me as a result of me not building the initial trust with them. Gatekeepers who were also members of organisations, or have a close relationship with members of organisations, personally know me, and this helped greatly to build the initial trust. One of my gatekeepers was a Kurdish woman who does not have any duty in organisations, but she participates in activities and personally knows many members of organisations. She was amazed by my research as she thinks that more Kurdish women should be in academia and focus on the community's issues. She has a very good relationship with women activists from different organisations including Halkevi and the Kurdish Community Centre, and she phoned some of the women activists to introduce me and arranged the first meeting with me and one of my participants. My second gatekeeper, who was a co-chairperson in the Kurdish Community Centre, knows me from Istanbul as we were in the same student group and we both voluntarily work in the same NGO. When I talked with him about my project, he was happy to introduce me to some activists as he supports academic research. He also asked me to send a copy of my thesis when I completed it as he wants to see how their activism was

analysed. When I met with him in the Kurdish Community Centre, he introduced me to a group of Kurdish activists who were sitting around a table to discuss some matters. He mentioned some of our common memories from our student life when we were both students at Istanbul University. This was a great introduction for me as the activists were happy to hear something about me, a new face at the organisation. Through this introduction, he not only created a friendly atmosphere but also highlighted that I am one of them. This was important for gaining the trust of this highly politicised community. My gatekeepers facilitated my appearance in organisations by highlighting that I am trustable. I also enhance trust during the fieldwork. To illustrate, during the interviews, some of my participants referenced guerrilla names or discussed guerrillas' journals. They were pleased when they noticed that I had read some of the guerrillas' diaries and was familiar with those names. This increased their trust towards me.

However, my invitation to participate in the research was rejected by two activists. I was in the field for months, and they saw me at different events. At separate times I spoke with them, and they both told me that they did not trust researchers. I found their distrust of academia interesting and questioned their reasons. The Kurdish Community Centre had been visited by many researchers, and the two activists had participated in some research. They subsequently discovered that the researcher was working for the Turkish Government and probably shared information about the participants. In other research, the activists were disturbed by the researcher's questions which created a feeling that the researcher had a view about them and just wanted to prove his prejudgements. Also, during a meeting in which I participated as an observer, one of these women emphasised that Western academics could not understand them.

To manage this situation, I clearly explained that I was not working for any government. Also, I explained that my discussions were not much different from the discussions they had in Jineoloji. Some of my participants asked if they could read my research after it was complete. I replied that I would gladly send a copy to the organisation. I noticed that they wanted to know how they were analysed in the research as they had participated in research previously but had not heard anything after it was completed. Also, some of my participants asked to meet me in a pub to have an informal conversation. This was an opportunity to reduce the distance between us. They wanted to know who I am really and how I was accepted into the university. I shared my experiences, and we talked about education and adaptation processes in Britain. My motherhood also reduced the distance between myself and the participants.

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4.4.2. Sampling

This research was based on a purposively selected sample of participants and organisations. The participants included 28 Kurdish activists, three males and 25 females, who were from Turkey, Iran, and Iraq. The organisations were based in London and organised activities for Kurds and Kurdish women.

4.4.2.1. The Selection Criteria of Organisations

I chose London as the research location because the Kurdish community from Turkey had established its organisations mainly in north London to solve their social and economic problems, ease their homesickness by organising social and cultural activities, and adapt to Britain's way of life (Demir, 2012). London also hosts many Iranian and Iraqi Kurdish organisations. Al-Ali (2007), for example, stated that London represents the centre of Iraqi social, political and cultural activism with substantial Iraqi communities in Manchester and Birmingham. Many Iraqi women organisations and diverse women's peace and anti-war movements have flourished in Britain (Al-Ali, 2007). Hence, participants for this research project were selected from Kurdish organisations in London. These included the Kurdish Community Centre (KCC), Halkevi, the Roj Women's Foundation, the Roj Women's Assembly, the IKWRO, the Kurdish Women's Project/Organisation (the KWO), and the Culture Project.

The Kurdish Community Centre and Halkevi are mixed gender organisations, while the others are women's organisations. The division between organisations in which Kurdish women worked, being mixed-gender or single-gender, is noted because I aimed to analyse how women's demands differed according to the type of organisations in which they worked.

There were a few other Kurdish and Turkish organisations, such as Gik-Der and the Day-Mer Turkish and Kurdish Community Centre, which were established to support Kurdish and Turkish migrants both socially and culturally. Also, the Imece Women's Centre indicated that it aimed to improve the quality of Kurdish and Turkish women's lives. Nonetheless, these last three organisations were excluded from this study because I could not establish whether they

had any salient link with the Kurdish Movement when perusing their websites and their activities.

4.4.2.2. The Criteria for Selecting Interviewees

Ethnicity was the distinctive criterion for selecting participants. This research project was focused mainly on Kurdish women from Turkey's Kurdistan. However, Kurdish women from different parts of Kurdistan, Iraq, and Iran were also included. The main reason for identifying Kurdish women according to the state territories that they are from is to analyse the differences among those women. Although Kurds are from the same ethnicity, being from different state territories might affect their activism.

I divided the fieldwork into two phases. First, my focus was on Kurdish organisations that were founded by Turkey's Kurds. I interviewed the Kurds from Halkevi, the Kurdish Community Centre and the Roj Women's Foundation. In this phase, I conducted 21 interviews.

The focus of the second phase was on Kurdish women from Iraq and Iran. I also wanted to interview Syrian Kurdish women. My gatekeepers gave me names of Syrian Kurdish women who worked actively in the Kurdish Community Centre, but because of the ongoing war in their homeland, they were not comfortable with participating in any research. Only one of these women accepted my invitation, but before arranging a meeting with her, she lost some members of her family in Syria and postponed the meeting for approximately a month. I did not want to revive her agony and cancelled the interview. In this phase, I conducted seven interviews: four with Kurdish women from Iraq and three with Kurdish women from Iran.

The second criterion for selection was gender. The majority of the interviews were carried out with women because the focus of the research was on women. Male members of organisations were also included in the statement by Yuval-Davis (2010) that referring to women without mentioning men is 'like clapping with one hand'. In other words, if one is speaking about patriarchy, one is also inherently referring to men. Therefore, making claims about patriarchy without men's opinions would be one-sided and insufficient for a thorough assessment of the topic. For this purpose, three male members of the Kurdish organisations were interviewed.

The membership status of participants was the third criterion. Before the fieldwork started, the aim was to focus only on the Kurdish women who are members of organisations. The main purpose of conducting in-depth interviews with members of the community was to obtain their knowledge and experience. It could be assumed that people who worked actively in organisations had more knowledge concerning what Kurdish women activists do within the organisations. During the fieldwork, I met with Kurdish women who were not members of such organisations but had some sort of link with them, such as taking part in their activities. I noticed that although those women did not work actively in those organisations, they knew of the organisations and the Kurdish community in London. I applied to the Ethics Committee for amendments to include non-members of Kurdish organisations. Having obtained the approval, I interviewed a Kurdish woman who was not a member of any Kurdish organisations but took part in their activities, such as festivals and demonstrations. This interview enabled me to see that some women supported the Kurdish Movement but preferred to stay away from the organisations because they did not feel comfortable in them. The reasons why she felt uncomfortable supplied me with another aspect of those organisations.

The fourth criterion for selecting participants was generation. I met with 22 first- and six-second generation community members. My focus was on both the first generation, who came to the UK in their adulthood, and the second generation, who were born in the UK. The first-generation participants gave me comparative information about what they had experienced in both the diaspora in the UK and the homeland. Their experiences in the homeland pre-migration traumas enabled me to analyse the reasons that led them to engage with activism in London. The second-generation participants also drew my attention to their issues which were necessary to consider. I was surprised at how they had a strong link with their country of origin, although they had never lived there. Also, the second generation's evaluation of the first generation helped me to reach a richer analysis of the Kurdish women's situation in the organisations.

The fifth criterion was the reason for migration. Most participants in this study stated that they arrived in Britain for political reasons. They had to leave their country because of their political activism in their homeland or that of members of their families. Only two women activists arrived in London because of marriage, and three activists migrated for economic reasons. One woman came to London as a visitor but was not planning to stay in Britain. However, while she was in London, her Turkish passport was revoked because of her activism in Turkey. She

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had to apply for status as an asylum-seeker as she would have been imprisoned if she had returned to Turkey.

Table 1 Demographic Background of the Participants

	Date	Language of the interview	Length of interview	Gender	Country	Organisation	Generation	Reasons for migration
Newroz	29.03.2018	Turkish	59.50 min	Female	Turkey	The KCC.Roj Women's Assembly	First	Marriage
Arin	30.03.2018	Turkish	53.52 min	Female	Turkey	The KCC	First	Political
Ronahi	07.04.2018	Turkish & English	46.46 min	Female	Turkey	The KCC (woman and diplomacy)	Second	Economic (family)
Roni	07.04.2018	Turkish	53.59 min	Male	Turkey	The KCC	First	Political
Sara	08.04.2018	Turkish	61.39 min	Female	Turkey	The KCC	First	Political
Berivan	14.04.2018	Turkish	50.14 min	Female	Turkey	The KCC	First	Political
Jiyan	16.04.2018	Turkish	38.02 min	Female	Turkey	The KCC (Youth)	Second	Politic (family)
Beritan	26.04.2018	Turkish	30.39 min	Female	Turkey	The Roj Women Assembly	First	Political
Şilan	28.04.2018	Turkish	33.32 min	Female	Turkey	The KCC (youth)	Second	Political (family)
Sarya	28.04.2018	Turkish	56.04 min	Female	Turkey	Halkevi	First	Political
Avaşin	30.04.2018	Turkish	47.35 min	Female	Turkey	The KCC (diplomacy)	First	Political
Çıya	05.05.2018	Turkish	50.59 min	Male	Turkey	The KCC	First	Political
Helin	09.05.2018	Turkish	66.59 min	Female	Turkey	Non-member	First	Political
Xezal	10.05.2018	Turkish	61.54 min	Female	Turkey	The KCC (youth)	Second	Political (family)
Berfe	11.05.2018	Turkish	67.05 min	Female	Turkey	The Roj Women's Foundation	First	Political
Dilda	14.05.2018	Turkish	78.43 min	Female	Turkey	The Roj Women's Foundation	First	Economic
Hevi		English	33.46 min	Female	Iraq	The KCC	First	Political
Evin	21.05.2018	Turkish & English	78.29 min	Female	Turkey	The Roj Women's Association	Second	Economic (family)
Siyar	23.05.2018	Turkish	76.10 min	Male	Turkey	The KCC	First	Political
Solin	25.05/30.05.2018	Turkish	137.54 min	Female	Turkey	Halkevi	First	Marriage
Nudem	30.05.2018	Turkish	44.15 min	Female	Turkey	The KCC	Second	Economic (family)
Heval	24.06.2018	English	75.19 min	Female	Iraq	The Culture Project	First	Politic
Bejna	28.09.2018	English	54.21 min	Female	Iran	The IKWRO	First	Political
Delal	21.10.2018	English	79.44 min	Female	Iraq	The KCC	First	Political
Amara	21.10.2018	Turkish	65.60	Female	Turkey	The KCC	First	Political
Havin	26.01.219	English	151.44	Female	Iraq	The KWP (Kurdish Women's Project)	First	political
Dicle	01.02.2019	English	58.41	Female	Iran	Non-member	First	Political
Viyan	16.02.2019	English	58.57	Female	Iran	Non-member	First	Marriage

4.5. Positionality in the Field and Objectivity

I started the fieldwork by observing the rally called 'Million Women Rise' on 10 March 2018. Similar to other women's groups, Kurdish women were involved enthusiastically in this rally. I met my prospective participants for the first time at this colourful event which gave me a joyful start to the fieldwork. I introduced myself to Kurdish women for the first time and left the rally with some names and contact details of possible participants. I also explained the purpose of this project to some of my friends who had connections with the organisations and enquired whether they wished to participate in the interviews. After the interviews with them, I reached the rest of my participants by using a snowballing technique. This means that I asked them to enquire about their colleagues and whether they would be interested in participating in the interviews, and continued from there. I used unstructured interviews and observations as the instruments to collect data for this study. The fieldwork ended with the last interview on 16 February 2019 as I felt I had reached saturation point.

4.5.1. Positionality in the Field as an Insider Researcher

As I mentioned in Section 4.4.1, I entered the field as an insider researcher. However, the question that arises here is how much I was an insider researcher. I believe that researchers cannot be entirely insiders or outsiders because of their multiple identities. Even though I was a Kurd and a woman who lived in the diaspora, I was not an unmitigated insider. With the passage of time, my relations with my participants reduced the distance between us. I asked myself at what stage I became an insider researcher and felt that it was the night when I attended a wedding ceremony. One of my participants invited me to her son's wedding ceremony. While I was there, I saw many of my participants in the hall, and they were happy to see me at an event that was outside of my research. We danced together and talked about some topics that were not related to my research.

Positioning oneself in the field as an insider researcher leads to discussions about objectivity. Researchers with insider status are commonly accused of being subjective and biased while gathering and interpreting data (Zinn, 1979). More importantly, even the researcher might not be able to distinguish where reality begins and where it intertwines with his/her views (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009). Dwyer and Buckle (2009) referred to Watson, who admitted that 'I remain

unclear whether this is my interpretation of the actual phenomenon, or if I am protecting my own need' (p. 59). At the beginning of the research, my focus was on Kurdish women's national and gender identities. I did not consider that Kurdish women's religious identity might also shape their activism. My main consideration was the PKK is a secular movement and there is not a salient effect of religion on Kurdish women's activism. My personal views about the PKK affected my focus. However, I began to consider Kurdish women's religious identity after hearing more stories related to their religion. To illustrate, one of the Kurdish women used 'Muşlular' – people from the city Muş- to refer to traditional Kurdish women activists. I ignored this part of the interview as my initial thought was, she was belittling Kurdish women from Muş. However, I heard 'Muşlular' in some of the other interviews and started to question why this group was mentioned by many Kurdish women. What I noticed is that Kurdish women used Muşlular when they refer Sunni Kurdish women. Even though these women were participating in some activities their activism was limited by their religious and traditional families. This information can not be omitted and I analysed the function of religion in Kurdish women's activism.

There is another perspective from some scholars who accept that the subjectivity of a researcher is a problem but that this situation should not be equated with insiders as being subjective researchers. Subjectivity is not only a problem of insider researchers. Outsider researchers also enter fields with their personal beliefs and views. Whether the researcher is an insider, sharing similar experiences, characteristics, and roles with participants, or an outsider to the commonality shared by participants, the crucial thing is the personality of the researchers (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009). Considering the discussions above, the question is whether precise objectivity is possible. According to Rose (as cited in Dwyer and Buckle, 2009, p. 55), 'there is no neutrality. There is only greater or less awareness of one's biases. And if you do not appreciate the force of what you are leaving out, you are fully in command of what you are doing.

As regards to how I supplied the subjectivity, I read Öcalan's books many years ago when I started my PhD. I have closely focused on the Kurdish women's movement and have admired the Kurdish women's struggles in every single area of their lives. During interviews, I also heard how the movement supported women's emancipation. Nevertheless, I asked my participants how the movement's gender ideology was being practised in organisations and the possible issues they encountered. I questioned the patriarchy in organisations rather than

emphasising how the movement supports women's freedom. I also interviewed male activists to understand how they feel about women's emancipation and patriarchy.

4.5.2. Power Relations Between Researcher and Researched

O'Reilly (2012) emphasises that the link between feminist ethnography and ontology and epistemology is that the purpose is not only to describe women's lives but also to challenge how we might know them. This brings another connection between epistemology and method, which is that epistemology influences how a researcher defines her/his roles in the research, how a researcher interprets and informs consent and ensures confidentiality, and what she/he considers to be ethical research processes (Naples, 2003).

This study aimed to analyse Kurdish women's activists' demands. At the very beginning of the research, I was warned by my supervisors and a member of the university's ethics committee about the challenges of studying in a highly politicised community. I was ready to face up to the difficulties. As I mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, I chose the topic for personal reasons. I was willing to uncover Kurdish women's activists' demands and help Kurdish women's voices to be heard in academia. However, the challenges were back-breaking. The sensitive content of the study taught me how to respond to challenges and helped me to improve my academic skills. Through this study, I analysed the power relations in three groups; firstly, between Kurdish women and Kurdish men; secondly, between Kurdish women and Western women; and lastly, between Kurdish women. There was also a possible power relation between me and my participants as I was also a part of the research, and this was the main challenge I needed to respond to.

During the fieldwork, I kept in mind that a researcher and participants are constituent parts of the research. Even though my participants were happy to participate in this research, I was aware that the mutual satisfaction between my participants and I could not efface the power relations between us. As I mentioned earlier, I was not entirely an insider researcher as I share dissimilarities with my participants as well as having similarities. I was one of few Kurdish academics in Western institutions. In this sense, feminist objectivity, which is about situated

knowledge and limited location, not splitting of object and subject (Harraway, 1998), comes to prominence.

I was disturbed by Harding's words (2009): "*engaging with the needs and desire arising from the daily lives of a less advantaged citizen of the globe and learning how our projects impact on their lives*" (p.198). I wrote in bold her words 'our' and 'their' and asked who we are and who they are. She points at two groups: on the one hand, there are disadvantaged groups who are in need. On the other hand, there is a group of researchers whose works are claimed to help the former group. The division of we and them is dangerous because "the imagined 'we' are the embodied others, who are not allowed to have a body, a finite point of view, and so inevitably disqualifying and polluting bias in any discussion of consequence outside our own little" (Harraway, 1988, p.575). I believe that this division may cause an unfillable gap between researchers and their participants who become subjects.

As I mentioned earlier, I made an effort to reduce power relations between my participants by using a specific methodology. I used unstructured interviews to listen to Kurdish women's voices. Through unstructured interviews, my interference with my informants' stories was reduced. I gave a detailed quotation from transcriptions with my interpretation linking to the relevant literature, which allows the reader to discuss my interpretation. This study is designed on the basis of what Kurdish women have highlighted about their experiences. There were multiple truths and multiple forms of knowledge (Hekman, 1997). However, I was the one who decided which stories are to be presented in the study and which ones are to be excluded. This means I chose which knowledge should be more visible. This would cause another issue of power relations. To overcome this issue, I clearly stated that this study has a specific aim, which is to explore Kurdish women activists' relation to nationalism and feminism. This means the study revealed multiple issues and truths about Kurds in London, such as adaptation issues of the first generation, the different desires of Kurdish men and women to return home, and specific issues of the second generation, such as families' pressure on second-generation women to get married. However, because of the specific aim of the study, such issues are deliberately left out for further studies.

4.5.3. Being a Mother During the Study

I entered the field as a mother. Reinharz (2011) quoted Warren's analysis of motherhood which stated that 'motherhood is a potentially powerful source of mutual identification between women respondents and researchers' (p. 67). Reinharz stated further that motherhood is much more than that. During my fieldwork, my son, who was 13 months old at the time my fieldwork started, travelled with me between Nottingham and London all the time. I stayed in London, but we visited our home in Nottingham for two to three days fortnightly. Although it was exhausting for both of us, it was necessary to complete my fieldwork. I had dual responsibilities as a mother and as a PhD student. My son was in London with me, staying in his grandparents' house when I was in the field. However, because of childcare issues, I had to take my son with me to the Zilan Fest. I felt strongly that my motherhood generated respect from my participants. It was not only among mothers but non-mothers that motherhood came into the conversation.

I was surprised that my motherhood helped me to relate more closely to my participants. My participants were quite happy to see my son in the organisation. I was one of them in their eyes, and from my side, I was one of them too. A childcare service was provided during the festival to enable more women to attend. I reflected that although women are active in organisations where they emphasise women's emancipation, in practice, the responsibility of caring for their children belongs mainly to women. That is why the organisers provided childcare for the women's festival, which was not common for other activities. I was in the same situation as those women, and providing childcare during the festival also facilitated my participation.

Motherhood is a crucial category of analysis for understanding the oppression of women (O'Reilly, 2016). The festival was just one example during the fieldwork where I found myself adding the words 'including myself' to my analysis of Kurdish women activists. Fortunately, my friend's mother was happy to look after my son during the festival. As a mother, she understood my situation and told me that I should focus on the festival for my research and not worry about my son. After a few months, I finished my fieldwork, and I presented my study at the IMISCOE Conference in Malmo. My friend's mother travelled with me and my son to Sweden to help me with childcare so that I could attend the conference. She helped me without expecting anything in return because she highly respected women who study.

4.6. Data Analysis

I gathered rich data about the reasons for the migration of Kurdish women to London and their activism in this city. The data were obtained mainly from unstructured interviews and conversations, and my observations of Kurdish activists, places, such as organisations, and events, such as demonstrations, festivals and congress. In all cases, I sought permission from the participants to be recorded, and I gave them the consent form and participant information sheet before the interview. I carried my university ID in case they wanted to see it. In all cases, no informants objected to being recorded.

I recorded the interviews but could not record daily conversations. I noted important points drawn from conversations immediately after leaving the venue. During observations, I used a camera to take pictures of posters and flags. I took pictures of activists, but I did not want to photograph anyone individually. Some of the women were disposed to be seen wearing their traditional clothes, but I preferred to take pictures mainly of activists, specifically those who carried the PKK's flag in their headscarf, from a back angle to maintain their anonymity.

I analysed the data using a thematic approach to identify the commonalities, differences, and relationships that existed across the entire data set (Gibson and Brown, 2009). The main reason for using this approach was that it was broad and not linked to any theoretical framework. Hence, the approach provided flexible research tools that enabled me to obtain detailed, rich information (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Also, thematic analysis, which is based on the systematic observation of a person, a group interaction, an organisation, a situation, or a culture (Boyatzis, 1998), was relevant to the aim of this research project.

Thematic analysis is a process of coding qualitative information (Boyatiz, 1998). Hence, in this research project, data were categorised by using codes. Using the code categorisation of Gibson and Brown (2009), codes were classified as either *a priori* or empirical. The *a priori* codes were based upon my own 'expectations and experiences' (p. 132). These codes were formed before the fieldwork began and included categories, such as activism, sisterhood, nationalism, traumas, Kurdishness, and womanhood. The empirical codes were created in the field based on the interview process and my observation notes. At this stage, I used NVivo to create categories that enabled me to view codes more clearly. Then I created mind maps to

identify relations between concepts. I also read and highlighted transcriptions several times to ensure that no important point was missed.

As a result of coding, categorisation and analytic reflection, themes emerged (Strauss, 1987). During the analysis, themes were identified inductively since no data existed in the field regarding this research project. Instead, the data were collected from interviews and observations (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Therefore, themes, such as patriarchy, hegemonic masculinity, intersectionality, and universal sisterhood were created in the field. In the next stage, those themes were considered as pieces of the whole story. Narrative analysis examines not only the storyteller's point of view but also the dynamics of how they make sense of the narrative they're presenting. I linked different themes to create the story to present. In the final stage, I developed arguments concerning the literature.

4.7. Ethical Issues

This research study was conducted following the British Sociological Association's Ethics Guidelines and Collated Resources for Digital Research (2016) and the BSA Ethical Guidelines (2017). For my participants' safety, I maintained their confidentiality and anonymity. To ensure that participants were confident about being involved in the research, I explained verbally and in writing who I am and why I was conducting this research project. Participants were informed clearly that their participation in the research project was voluntary. They had the right to refuse to participate. Also, they could withdraw from participation at any time, as stated in the BSA Ethics Guidelines (2017):

> Research participants should be made aware of their right to refuse participation whenever and for whatever reason they wish. (Article 22)

The anonymity of my participants was maintained following the BSA Ethical Guidelines (2017) as follows:

> … methods for preserving anonymity should be used including the removal of identifiers, the use of pseudonyms and other technical means for breaking links between data and identifiable individuals. Members should also take care to prevent data from being

published in a form that would permit the actual or potential identification of research participants without the prior written consent of participants. (Article 31)

To ensure the anonymity of participants, each interview transcript was anonymous; it did not contain the participant's name or any information that gave a clue about their identity, such as the initials of their names. Unique codes, which were only known to me, were used to differentiate which interview transcript belonged to which participant. If participants mentioned the names of their family members, friends or any person from the community and universities from which they graduated, I wrote those names as X or Y. At the very beginning of the research, I planned to analyse Kurdish women's self-immolation for political purposes, such as protesting Öcalan's imprisonment. There is a Kurdish woman who attempted self-immolation a day after Öcalan's arrest on 15 February 1999. This woman's participation in the research would enrich the data. However, there was an issue with anonymity related to her identity. Also, she was not ready to talk about that day. Re-traumatising participants was avoided as much as possible. Therefore, Kurdish women who attempted self-immolation did not take part in this study.

Using photographs can be a critical ethical issue, so I used only public images, which included identifying information, after receiving my participants' consent, as stated in the guidelines:

> Researchers obtain informed consent from research participants, students, employees, clients, or others before photographing videotaping, filming or recording them in any form, unless these activities involve simply naturalistic observations in public places and it is not anticipated that the recording will be used in a manner that could cause harm. (BSA, 2016, p. 10)

Also, as explained clearly in the BSA Guidelines (2017), the participants knew that they could reject the use of cameras and recorder devices to secure anonymity and confidentiality.

> Research participants should understand how far they will be afforded anonymity and confidentiality and should be able to reject the use of data gathering devices, such as tape recorders and video cameras. Anonymity can also be compromised by the use of photographs and particularly, online platforms and social media (including platforms such as Facebook). (BSA, 2017, Article 26)

Transcription is another process where participants' safety must be considered. I did all the transcribing myself without asking for any help. I transcribed records shortly after each interview and used codes to identify the participant. My safety was also a concern that could not be underestimated. Accordingly, I informed my partner and my close friends when I started and finished the interviews and observations.

4.8. Conclusion

In this chapter, I described how this research was designed, and I explained the research process of this ethnographic study. I argued that feminist ethnography was the most suitable method because investigating Kurdish women's activism needs analysis of the unspoken experiences. To be able to analyse Kurdish women's unspoken experiences, I used observations and unstructured interviews. I also explained how I managed the ethical dilemmas of studying in a highly politicised community. My positioning in the field was another important part of this study, and I explained how I gained the trust of my participants.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE ROLE OF PRE-MIGRATION TRAUMAS ON KURDISH WOMEN'S POLITICAL ACTIVISM IN THEIR HOMELAND AND IN LONDON

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I will examine Kurdish women's activism in London. As stated in Chapter Three, the reason for migration has a significant effect on migrants' adaptation and settlement process. More specifically, some scholars, such as Al-Ali (2007), have linked the traumas of migrant women with their political and emotional attitudes and claimed that traumas might differentiate them from women who have not had traumatic experiences. However, the link between women's backgrounds and their settlement process has not been addressed in detail. Related to the first research question, what is the role of Kurdish women's background in shaping their subsequence activism in London, in this chapter, I have examined the link between the traumas of Kurdish women and their attitudes to political incidents in the example of London-based Kurdish organisations. In doing so, I have taken into consideration how differences among Kurdish women depend on which state territory they are from.

5.2. Shaping National Identity

Karner (2007) stated that political practices that challenge existing power structures but perpetuate existing inequalities of wealth, status and the ability to implement decisions were recurrences of the definition of ethnicity as a politicised culture. As Karner rightly claimed, inequalities and exclusion create a politicised community whose focus is on both local and homeland politics. Existing inequalities and exclusions have played a significant role in Kurdish migrants' political activism. In this section, I have examined closely how pre-migration experiences and traumas have shaped Kurdish women's activism. In this study, it is evident that Kurdish woman activists' pre-migration traumas motivated them to continue their activism in London. Their unforgettable memories can be grouped into language issues in primary school, witnessing human rights breaches, gendered experiences in prisons and police stations, and being a member of politicised families. Those themes were created through commonalities in Kurdish women's life stories.

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5.2.1. Language Issues in Primary School

The documentary film, *On the Way to School (İki Dil Bir Bavul)* (2009), starts with the first primary school teaching day for a schoolteacher, Emre, who is a native Turkish speaker appointed to a Kurdish village where Turkish is barely spoken. Children from years 1 to 5 are educated in the same class by the same teacher. This situation is not common in Turkey, and in the film, Emre probably did not know how his job would be harder than that of other primary school teachers when he started teaching. The difficulties in his job are not only about teaching all primary students in the same class. The children do not know Turkish. Specifically, year 1 students could not understand what Emre said and timidly looked at the teacher. They need older students' help to get permission to go to the toilet. Emre feels disappointed in his students' slow progress. During the film, Emre's feelings surface in telephone conversations with his mother. In a conversation, he says that he could not follow the curriculum; in a year, he could only teach his students reading, writing and speaking in Turkish. This situation illustrates how Kurdish children start educational life behind their peers from other parts of Turkey. As a result, as claimed by Yüksel (2006), there is a distinction between Turks and Kurds in terms of their education level. Hence, the word 'ignorant' is one of the most used words to describe Kurdishness in Turkish cities and can be viewed as being an exclusive recognition of the Kurds (Saraçoğlu, 2009). The language issues that Kurdish children met were not only a childhood trauma, but it was also a determinant that showed these children that they are nationally the others. This is why, the majority of this study's participants started their stories from their primary school experiences.

As a Kurdish woman who was raised as a Turk and never learnt Kurdish, I did not encounter any language issues when I started my education. However, when I was a primary school student and had to shout the Turkish national pledge every morning, I was not comfortable doing so. Even though my family claimed that we were Turks, I remember perfectly that once I changed the pledge and shouted: 'I am a Kurd'. Although no one around me was supporting the Kurdish identity, I did not know the reason for my reaction and why I was uncomfortable with shouting the pledge. All I knew was that my parents and grandparents spoke another language when they were alone. My family was different from my friends' families. When I went out to do the fieldwork for this study, I met Arin, who was among the

first-generation Kurdish women who migrated to London from Turkey for political reasons. Surprisingly, Arin's memories were quite similar to mine. We had similar contradictions in our childhoods.

> Throughout the time I lived in Turkey, specifically until the high school years, I grew up as a Turk. I recognised myself as a Turk and my language was Turkish. But over time, when I got older, I became aware of a number of things. My grandmother was talking Kurdish, and Kurdish was spoken in the place where I was born; a different language was spoken but we were expressing ourselves as Turks. We chanted the national pledge: 'I am a Turk, I am honest, I am hardworking, may my existence be a gift to the Turkish existence,' or we sang the Turkish national anthem. If we were Turks and spoke Turkish, which language did my grandmother speak? I had many contradictory thoughts about why all these things happened. (Arin)

Arin expressed that she noticed dilemmas in her life during her adolescence. Arin and her family identified themselves as Turks, but the language they spoke mainly was not Turkish. Arin's questioning of her identity was not unusual; as stated by Brown (2017), the formation of ethnic identity is likely to be important during childhood when children's self-concept becomes more complex, and their attitudes towards themselves are being influenced by schools and by comparing themselves with others, and they can comprehend prejudice and discrimination towards their ethnic identities. Minority status children enter their middle childhood and early adolescence with the message that their culture is perceived as being inferior to the dominant ethnic culture (Ponterotto, 1988). What is important to analyse is how children react to ethnic discrimination. They have two options: accept the perception of their identity and continue their lives as marginals, or challenge the valuation of their ethnic identities. Many Kurdish women who participated in this study chose the latter and challenged the perception that their ethnic culture is inferior to Turkish ethnic culture.

Unlike Arin and I, who did not encounter any language issues in primary school, most Kurdish women I interviewed were aware of their ethnic identity as it caused many problems when they started primary school. The source of the issues was speaking Kurdish. The ban on using the Kurdish language led them to question their ethnic identity. Berivan, for example, started narrating her life story from the year she started primary school. Berivan was born in a Kurdish village. When she became eligible for primary school at the age of seven, her family sent her to Istanbul, where her brothers were studying at a university at that time. The first day of school

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was clear in her memory. The only language she spoke before starting school was Kurdish. She then had to learn Turkish. This was not an easy process as she often mentioned that her educational life was full of traumas stemming from her ethnic identity.

> I stayed in a village until I was 7. After 7 years, we moved to Istanbul. I did not speak Turkish when I started primary school. I did not understand anything the teacher said. And my teacher started to beat me. And for the first time, I understood the ban on the language there. At the age of 8, I was a child who was beaten for not being able to speak Turkish. And it created something seriously deep in me. For example, I know Kurdish, but I still feel uneasy when I'm speaking it. (Berivan)

Berivan was beaten as she could not speak Turkish. Facing violence when speaking her first language deeply affected Berivan, as she still felt the effect of the language issue she encountered in primary school. Berivan was not the only Kurdish child who was oppressed because of her language. Yilmaz and Şekerci (2016) conducted a study on Kurdish children's language issues and found that students who did not know Turkish when they started school had low self-esteem, low academic success, and negative attitudes towards the school and the teacher. Kurdish children's insufficient level of education led to unemployment or lowly jobs and being identified as ignorant (Saraçoğlu, 2009). Berivan was fortunate because her family removed her from the school after they learnt that teachers routinely beat her and re-enrolled her in another school where there were other Kurdish students. The new school was relatively more welcoming of non-native Turkish-speaking students. Therefore, contrary to the findings of Yilmaz and Şekerci (2016), Berivan studied hard, focused on Turkish essay writing, and came top of her class in secondary and high school. This was an effort to close the gap with other students. She said that it was an effort to prove herself.

After hearing traumatic primary school experiences of Kurdish women from Turkey's Kurdistan, I wondered whether Kurdish children from Iraq and Iran also had language issues. I found that Kurdish children from Iraq had different memories depending on the city in which they used to live. Heval, for example, stated that, because of self-determination, she was educated in Kurdish, and Arabic was an optional class. However, Hevi, who was born in Kirkuk and migrated to the UK when she was 14, said that their language of education was Arabic. However, unlike in Turkey, the use of Kurdish language was not strictly prohibited in Iraq. Therefore, she encountered bilingualism in her childhood.

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It was like under the state, everything was Arabic. Our schools were Arabic, we had to sing the national anthem every morning, so it was quite happened… I started to understand even realise it (Arabic) because all TV channels were Arabic. So even if my parents were speaking Kurdish at home, when you have been forced to watch all channels in Arabic, no Kurdish channels available. So you have no choice to stand to learn it. (Hevi)

Hevi understood Arabic when she started primary school because of the TV channels, so she did not face any serious language problems. However, she knew that her Kurdishness was a problem, especially with one of her teachers. She was still not sure why the teacher, who was not Kurdish, was so brash towards her and her sister. What was common to Kurdish women's narratives was that non-Kurdish teachers were harsh to them. Yilmaz and Şekerci (2016) claimed that these students use sentences that describe ethnic differences, and they criticise their culture and the teacher's culture. The issue was how differentiating the teacher's ethnic culture from their own ethnicity affects the formation of Kurdish children's identity. Primary schools are the first official places where Kurdish children encounter this issue. Teachers' approaches to children are a reflection of how the state behaves towards them. Therefore, many participants in this study who were from Turkey linked their primary school experiences with Kurdish issues and their ethnic demands.

Based on what I observed and obtained through interviews, Kurdish women's primary school experiences influenced them in two ways. Firstly, there is a link with the issue of language and women's activism. Experiences of Kurdish women from Turkey's Kurdistan caused them to think about the oppression of their ethnic identity and, hence, led them to become politically active. Those Kurdish women started to question their national identity when they started school. They noticed that their mother language is different from Turkish, and this was not welcomed by teachers who punished them for not speaking Turkish. They began to emphasise their national identity more in their activism as a result of the language ban. As discussed in the chapter that follows, they raise their voices for their nationality-related demands, such as stopping military operations in Kurdistan, addressing human rights violations that the Kurds were subjected to, as well as gender demands. This is because as Yılmaz (2016) stated it's common to accept language as a symbol of one's ethnic and national identity and universal symbol of the fusion or division of groups, nations, and ethnicities. Therefore, the experiences of these Kurdish women in primary schools can be linked to their highly politicised activism.

On the other hand, Kurdish women mainly from Iran and Iraq stated that their primary school experiences were not traumatic. Kurdish women Iranian and Iraqi Kurdistan mostly emphasise their gender identity in their demands.

Secondly, I observed that many Kurdish women activists insist on speaking Kurdish with their children. Unlike what they experienced in their childhood, these activists support their children in using Kurdish in London. As a result, many Kurdish children were very fluent in Kurdish and even performed theatre at the Zilan Fest.

5.2.2. Witnessing Human Rights Breaches

In this study, I also found that Kurdish women activists were commonly faced with human rights breaches during their pre-migration process. Their migration to Britain was linked to these experiences. I met with Berfe in the Roj Women's Foundation and was amazed by Berfe's life story. Berfe and her older sister did not have a chance to continue their education after primary school due to economic reasons. When they arrived in the UK, the family encouraged their five children to continue their education. Berfe re-started school when she was 15 and was quite successful. She and her four other siblings obtained university degrees in the UK. Berfe was quite a merry woman. As a first impression, she came across as having had a cheerful life. However, besides poverty, Berfe witnessed tragic incidents in her childhood. When she was a child, the Maras massacre occurred in her hometown. This was followed by the military coup of 1980. Those incidents stuck in Berfe's memory. She could not forget soldiers coming to their village to search their houses, ordering people to be divided into groups according to their gender. The sight that wrenched her heart was people scared and grovelling at the soldiers. In her words: 'as a child, witnessing that your parents who give you care can be scared and desperate, because you think that they are fearless, it is not an easy feeling.'

Berfe stated that facing the reality that her parents do not have superpowers is not an easy feeling. Children might develop different reactions to this realisation (Erden and Gurdil, 2009). Children might become angry with people who were responsible for what they experienced, or they might become angry with their parents, who had a responsibility to protect them, for failing in this duty. Children might lose confidence in adults, society, and institutions. Children who survived might feel guilty and regret that others could not be saved. Older children might

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feel guilty as many of them expressed: 'I should have done something' (Erden and Gurdil, 2009). Berfe did not develop a feeling of anger towards her parents as she always explained that they were poor, they were desperate. However, she may have felt guilty for not doing anything because, after obtaining a university degree, she returned to Turkey to work for human rights. However, after living in Turkey for six months, she realised that she had two identities: Kurdish and British. She returned to London as she thought that London was the place where she could live with her dual identities. However, Berfe did not renounce her aim to help Kurdish women. She worked voluntarily in the Roj Women's Foundation to help Kurdish women and children who were experiencing violence.

There is no doubt that war and political disturbance affect children immensely. Participants in this study fully remembered the war between Iraq and Iran (1980-1988) and the Gulf War (1990-1991). Heval, who remembered those days, expressed that talking about what she witnessed was not easy. Heval was born in 1973 and, when she was seven years old, the war between Iran and Iraq started and lasted for eight years. This was followed by the Kuwait or Gulf War. From a very early age, she witnessed war, conflicts and economic sanctions. Heval described those times with a powerful sentence: 'I've never seen one day of peace.' Witnessing the war should not be ignored as some participants in this study, such as Heval, continued their lives with war memories from their childhood. Children who lost a family member, a teacher, or a friend most likely experience bereavement. Also, change of place and habits, being away from home, street, and school, losing toys, and poverty might cause mourning. Anger and uneasiness can be seen as a general reaction in post-trauma (Erden and Gürdil, 2009). Heval did not know what it was like to live in peace. She witnessed violence during her childhood and probably normalised it as, when the Kurdish Uprising occurred in 1991, Heval was happy because she thought it was time for revenge. Heval described the Kurdish uprising in 1991 as follows:

> When the uprising happened, we saw all these Ba'athist being killed, hanged. We were celebrating, we were so happy. We just could not believe it, there was a feeling of revenge in Kurdistan. Even in the children, feeling of revenge of those, all those years of our lives that were lost, that was, that we were so badly terrorised for the simple reason for being Kurdish, so it was like because we were Kurdish.

Heval was happy when she witnessed Ba'athists being killed and hanged. According to her, this was revenge for what Ba'athists had done to the Kurds. Heval witnessed severe human rights breaches during her childhood. As a child, she knew that she was experiencing violence because she was a Kurd. When she had just come of age, she witnessed the violence of the Kurdish uprising and responded positively as she considered the violence to be revenge. The violence did not disappear from Heval's life with the uprising. After the uprising, Heval's family and all other *Peshmerga* families were targeted by the State. Each of the members of Heval's family separated and hid in various places. The Saddam Regime was seeking *Peshmerga* families to arrest. Soon after the uprising, Heval migrated to the UK to save her life. In the UK, Heval's feelings changed completely; the young girl who celebrated the revenge became an activist who helps Kurdish women to discover their talents.

The Kurdish uprising in Iraq also changed Iranian Kurdish women's lives. Dicle was living in KDP-I *Peshmerga* camps in Iraqi Kurdish areas, which were controlled by the PUK (Patriotic Union of Kurdistan). Dicle was emotionally affected by the post-uprising oppression.

> Basically, the uprising in 1991 [then] Saddam and after that everything changed. I remember that our [community] became insecure, then I think, as a person, as a woman, my feeling changed, transformed. I think I lost the hope that we were going to win this war. And I felt when I was very, very young, was 18 at that time, I felt stuck there. And in that year, it was a way for a new chart in my life. (Dicle)

Like many other Kurdish children, Dicle felt insecure when she was in the homeland. The uprising was the last hope for Dicle to live freely as a Kurd. The Saddam Regime's harsh response to the uprising shattered Dicle's hopes of living in peace in Kurdistan. Similar to Heval, Dicle lived in the war zones during her childhood. She was raised listening to how the Kurds will be free. However, after the uprising, like many other Kurdish families, Dicle's family felt insecure. She had to move to the UK alone, then she reunited with her family there. Dicle and her family members were still politically active after their migration. For example, Dicle introduced her mother and brother to me in a rally where I first time met with her.

In this sub-section, I reviewed the stories of three Kurdish women from Turkey, Iran and Iraq respectively. The reason for sharing their stories was to highlight that these women witnessed a war, coup, and massacre in various places and, today, when they tell their stories, they feel the same agony. This agony moves them to do something for the people whom they left in the

homeland, and those who were able to escape to London but still experience the effect of the war. Through grassroots activism, women in conflict-torn societies and diasporic communities discover methods to work for peace and reconciliation. Women from many walks of life join in these informal peace-building efforts, despite the fact that their actions are frequently categorised as "social" or "charitable", even if they have political consequences (Al-Ali, 2007).

5.2.3. Prison

Prison is an experience that politicises political women prisoners further, especially in terms of women's emancipation and feminism (Alison, 2009). This is because women who experienced prison because of their nationalist and political demands were treated differently in prisons and police stations because of their gender. Amara, for example, was imprisoned many times. During the interviews, we talked mainly about her prison experiences. This was the most difficult interview for me. I had difficulty controlling my feelings when Amara talked about the torture she was exposed to. I could not transcribe this interview immediately after our meeting as I did not feel ready to hear her story again. When I transcribed the interview, I felt the same sorrow I had when I first heard her story.

Amara was 15 years old when she was detained for the first time for being a Kurdish activist. In the police station, the first thing she was told was: 'There is no God here, the prophet is off'. This was a sign of how harsh the interrogations would be. On the first day, she lost six teeth when police hit her chin with a walkie-talkie. She fainted and opened her eyes to find herself in a prison cell. The moment she regained consciousness, she saw the blood on her clothes. Amara's first thought when she came to is a summary of how being under investigation is different for women than men.

> When I opened my eyes, I never forget, I had a light green shirt on me. I had a look at
> myself and saw the blood on me. I heard that our friends were raped during detention. First,
> I thought this. I did not realise my teeth. (Amara)

Amara's initial thought was that she had been raped while she was not conscious. Police used different torture methods for women than men, and rape was one of those, just as rape and other forms of sexual violence are being used to control and terrorise ethnic minorities (Oosterhof et al., 2004). Amara was exposed to several methods of torture, such as the

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Palestinian hanging and electric shocks to the body through fingers. Amara was not as stressed by the physical and psychological torture as she was by the sexualised torture that she was subjected to.

Amara was naked many times. Her skinny teenage body and her small breasts became an object of derision to the police. Her body was not strong enough to withstand torture, so she fainted many times and opened her eyes in the cell and saw that she was naked. She was suspicious of being raped. However, for Amara, the most unendurable torture was again related to her gender. On her third day in the police station, she learnt that her two brothers, who were 10 and 13 years old at that time, had been detained, and they were in the same police station. Amara and her brother, who was 13 years old, were put in the same room. Amara was in shock when she saw her fatigued brother. She could not speak much with her brother as four or five policemen came into the room. They ordered Amara to strip naked. She refused because her brother was there. She was beaten badly. Her brother told her, "Take off your clothes. If they are not ashamed, why are you?" When she was completely naked, the police ordered her brother to look at his sister. It was his turn to be embarrassed. Amara told him: "Don't be ashamed, look at me." Amara has never forgotten that moment. Whenever she was with her brother, she remembered that day. After seven days of detention, Amara and her brothers were imprisoned.

Amara's story illustrates that women have been disciplined and socially controlled through their bodies. Using power over women's bodies is not only limited to identifying the shape of how the body should be or how to dress. Forcing them to be naked is another way of using power over women's bodies to punish them. The aim of male power was to punish Amara by ridiculing her tiny breasts. Displaying Amara's naked body was another use of power over her body. Amara's brother was forced to look at his sister's naked body, which was a form of social control. The message given to Amara's brother was that the police had power over his sister's body. Through this message, families would be in fear that their female relatives could be tortured sexually while imprisoned and were directed to prevent their female relatives' involvement in the nationalist movement.

The message successfully reached some of Amara's relatives. When Amara narrated her first detention, she said: "My family saw the state for the first time." She was not the first person in the family who was arrested. Her father, for example, was a political prisoner when

she was taken into custody. I questioned her why she used that sentence. Her response was short: "Because I am a woman." Many feminists believe that male violence is in the hands of the state, but, actually, state violence is in the hands of men (Alison, 2007). Men use their position and power, given to them by the state, against women. In this sense, rape can be considered to be a result of female and male power relations and motivated by male tendency to generalise masculine desire to sustain the system that socially controls all women (Alison, 2007). Amara's story also explains how women are socially controlled by the state through rape. Rape was used as a form of political torture on the Kurdish identity.

Nevertheless, Amara had another fight when she came out of prison. The day Amara was released, her mother was there. Her mother was quite anxious and did not want Amara to go to the city in which they lived. As a woman who had been imprisoned, there was a possibility that she had been raped, which was regarded as an honour matter by her uncles. Amara's mother was anxious because her daughter might become the victim of an honour killing. Amara rejected her mother's advice and went to her home with her. When they arrived in their neighbourhood, Amara changed her direction and went to her uncle's house. She was angry and kicked the door. She started to shout, 'Uncle, if you want to prove your manhood on me, here I am, come out'. Her cousins came out and accused her of being disrespectful. Amara told them that, on that day, someone, she or her uncle, would die. Her uncle came out and accused her of defiling their family name. However, when he saw that Amara was not the same woman that he had seen last, he could not say anything. Since that day, he has had a good relationship with her. Her uncle was the head of a large, extended family, which had approximately 500 members. The family followed him and did not say or do anything to her. Amara expressed that day as:

> … if I did not encounter with the ideology of the movement, I would not say anything to my uncle, I would not rebel, sit at home all times. (Amara)

Amara's meeting with the movement and imprisonment as a result of her political activities changed her life. Amara gained the self-confidence to challenge traditional authorities. She was successful in her fight against her relatives. This fight also changed her family and relatives, who accepted Amara back into the family, instead of killing her for the sake of honour. Amara could fight against her relatives and the community. She believed that the ideology of the PKK gave her bravery.

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However, not all Kurdish women had the courage to fight against the community. Similar to Amara, Havin, who was from Iraqi Kurdistan, was imprisoned several times. She was 23 years old and a mother of two when she was taken into custody because of her family's political background. Her brothers were *Peshmerga* and the police noticed that Havin had been visiting them in the mountains. Havin was clever and attractive which helped her all the time. She acted as though she had never been in the mountains and frequently cried to show the police that she was scared.

> I was scared but not the way like I was pretending, crying, begging, 'Please let me go, I don't have nothing to those things.' … In the end, I cried a lot, he [policeman] came and said I know why you are crying. I am not a man who touches you and will never let anyone touch to you. Just tell me information. I said I do not have any information. I started crying, 'Please let me go, I have kids.' After three days, they let me out. But in a condition of becoming an agent: I signed and then they just let me out. (Havin)

Havin was scared of being raped during her detention. A policeman knew her fears and assured her that no one would touch her if she worked for them. She would be released without any sexual torture on condition that she provided information from *Peshmerga* camps. Havin had a plan. She accepted their offer and, when she was released, she escaped from Iraq with her children and brother to avoid becoming an agent. Political Kurdish women were being raped when they were in custody in Iraq. Havin was fortunate that no one touched her. However, she remembered fully the day on which one of her female relatives, who was working for the Kurdish Political Party, was detained. Havin's whole family was scared and shaking when they thought of what might be happening to her. After a month, she was released. Havin's relative concealed her rape.

Many reasons can be listed to explain why Havin's relative concealed the sexual torture to which she had been exposed. She might have decided not to report the sexual violence as she felt ashamed or might have feared that her testimony would lead to her being subjected to more abuse (Oosterhof et al., 2004). On the other hand, as mentioned in Amara's story, being a victim of sexual torture can become a matter of honour in the community. This is because:

> Rape is used not only to attack and humiliate the 'enemy woman' but, through her, to attack her supposedly male protectors. With women being universally used as symbols of a nation's honour and pride, raping a community's womenfolk traumatises and violates women individually and humiliates and attacks the whole community. (Al-Ali, 2007, p. 50)

Havin's story confirms the latter possibility suggested by Al-Ali (2007) above. Havin's brother, who was a political activist, and 10-15 other political men proposed marriage to her. Their aim was to clear her name as she might have been raped, in which case she would be a victim of honour killing. The girl responded to them as though nothing had happened and she was still a virgin. After a short while, Havin's female relative committed suicide. In the autopsy, the rape was reported.

The similarity between Amara and Havin's stories was that both women were from nationalist political families who were supposed to be gender egalitarian. However, the imprisonments of both Amara and Havin's relatives were regarded as an honour matter. Kurdish women who were in a struggle for their nationalist demands also needed to struggle with members of the community, who were also nationalists. Amara and Havin had to migrate to London. Both were active in raising their voice for Kurdish women in London and, occasionally, they pursued their activism in their home countries. Amara participated in political events in Turkey, while Havin focused on stopping honour killings and opening shelters for women during her visits to Iraqi Kurdistan. Even though they spoke broadly of their experiences in police stations and prisons, they did not mention any projects regarding sexual violence against female prisoners.

Kurdish women have experienced prisons even when they were not imprisoned. They were sexually harassed when they visited their relatives in prisons. Helin was 7-8 years old when her brothers were imprisoned. Before entering the prison, visitors were divided according to their gender for a strip search.

> Female guardians were swearing at us. They were putting women in a different place. I was a child. My mum and my sister were stripped. I was a child but will never forget this scene. They were swearing at us when we put our clothes on and off. (Helin)

Helin was naked with her mother, sister and other female visitors. Female guards were watching and swearing at them while they were taking off or putting on their clothes. As

mentioned above, sexual violence against women in prisons is a result of men's use of state power against women. However, in Helin's story, it was evident that female staff members were also using male power against women. The female guards' violence against female visitors could be based on two reasons. Firstly, they might have considered their action to be part of their duty given by the state. Secondly, these female guards might have had Turkish nationalist feelings and regarded visitors of political prisoners as terrorists and traitors whose aim was to destroy the country. The common aim behind both of these reasons for violence was to use power to protect the unity of the state and to show the power of the state. The women guards could not physically damage the female visitors, but they caused psychological damage. Helin completely remembers that scene and never forgot that her mother was crying when they were being abused. Helin's mother became sick for a long time. Helin also contracted pneumonia after visiting the prison and being naked in a very cold place. The guards' treatment of their families was another torture for prisoners.

For some Kurdish women, such as Havin and Helin, prisons were the second official institution, after primary schools, where they encountered oppression. Prisons were the first official places where Amara encountered the abuse of power, as she did not go to school. As mentioned earlier, Kurdish women's primary school experiences left many unforgettable memories. After primary school, some of those Kurdish women, in Amara's words, saw the state for the first time through prisons. These experiences might also have led them to question the power held by the state. Schubiger (2021) underlined that indiscriminate state violence played roles in the hands of rebels by evoking indignation, forming and reinforcing grievances, driving retribution dynamics, and bolstering the attacked group's collective identity. She linked the state's power over civilians to victimised people's participation in armed groups. However, Helin, Amara, and Havin's stories showed that those Kurdish women who were victims of state violence in prisons chose to be active in organisations rather than involved in armed groups. Their activism focuses on their national and gender identities. This is because, as claimed by Schubiger (2021), state violence led them to consolidate their collective identity (Kurdish and women) which was being attacked.

Helin, Amara, and Havin all also explained that their families were politicised. Indeed, when I considered all my participants, I noticed that most of my participants expressed that their families were also politicised. Hence, in the following section, I have examined how their families' political views affected their activism.

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5.2.4. Family Background

Another finding drawn from the interviews and related to factors that shaped the national identities and activism of Kurdish women is that the majority of participants in this study were from politicised families and because of their parents' and relatives' activism they grew up in a political environment. This finding concurs with the claim by Çağlayan (2009), who specified that women became involved in the Kurdish Movement as a result of the effect that their families and relatives had on the formation of their identity, as politicised families tended to produce politicised women. Kurdish women who experienced the 1980 military coup or the political situation in the 1990s may have become involved in the movement because of their families' personal experiences of those events. Çağlayan (2009) arrives at this conclusion by considering Kurdish women from Turkey. In my study, as well as the life stories of Turkey's Kurdish women, I also analysed Iraqi and Iranian Kurdish women's childhood experiences and their family lives. Even though I expanded the scope further than Çağlayan, I reached the same conclusion as Çağlayan.

The armed struggles in which the Kurds were involved started in 1984 in Turkey, and some of the participants in this study were born as children of fighters. Their parents' political engagement influenced their lives since their childhood. Delal, for example, was born in Iraqi Kurdistan. Both her parents were freedom fighters and took up arms to free Kurdistan.

> My parents were fighters, freedom fighters. My father met with my mum. And both have a very political view. You know fighting for free Kurdistan. So they took up arms. And then they got married. And the family started. My point is my family has always been a political family. When I was only 14 days old, my family were deported from my hometown in Kurdistan to down south of the country. (Delal)

Delal stated that her family had always been political. Delal was not the only Kurdish woman whose family was politically active. Neyzi and Darıcı (2015) claimed that, in the Kurdish context, the family and politics were inseparable. This is because victimhood, which stems from state violence, and the resistance against the State are experienced in the familial realm. Delal was the victim of the political situation, as she was 14 days old when she was exiled with

her family to the South of Iraq for five years. After their sentence ended, Delal and her family returned to Kurdistan. Delal was a child when the first Kurdish revolution started in 1974. She went to meetings with her father, and she became part of the resistance against the state through her family. She said she did not understand much, but she was aware of why those people met and what they were talking about. Delal experienced being a victim of the state and resisted it through her family.

Iranian Kurdish woman, Dicle, was also a daughter of a political couple. After the Islamic Revolution in 1979, her parents left her in her grandparents' house and went to the mountains. She was watched by sisters of Zeynep women, who were appointed by the Islamic Regime to control the Kurdish areas. She was insecure in the city because of her parents' political activities in the mountains and was reunited with her parents when she was 8 years old and started to live in camps. For the sake of security, they moved 30 times.

> So, after those 30 places, sometimes we lived in villages that were called as liberated areas. These villages initially belonged to Iranian Kurdistan. Then we moved to Iraqi Kurdistan. There we also stayed in some villages which belonged to Iraqi Kurdish liberated forces, like the PUK. Saddam Hussein wasn't there. Then we settled in the KDP camp. KDP had several camps. We moved occasionally because of the security, bombardment, canon fights. And these camps were located in different places but usually in the border places. In one camp, we settled for three years; I went to school there. We had houses, we built houses but no wonderful houses. We had houses, we had schools, we were bombed every day, every single day we were bombed. (Dicle)

Dicle was chased by the Sisters of Zeynep who aimed to reach her political parents. When she was under 8, she felt unsafe and targeted by the police. When she was 8, she met with her parents and felt that she would be safe with them. However, living with the family led to another feeling of insecurity in Dicle's life. The places in which they lived were bombed often, thus they had to move to new locations frequently. Changes of accommodation, obstructing habits and rituals, losing toys, being away from the home, school and street they used to live in, and economic deprivation can cause sadness and mourning in children by making them weaker and more insecure (Erden and Gürdil, 2009). Dicle felt insecure but did not question or blame her parents for not providing her with a settled and secure life. Through her child's eyes, the state was to blame and was the source of what she experienced.

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5.2.4.1.   Shaping National Identity of Second-generation Kurdish Women

As stated by Reynolds and Zontini (2016), the link of an increasing number of young migrants with their country of origin is more than just symbolic. These young migrants maintain their contact with their parents' homeland, but they also identify with their country of settlement and express this in their daily lives. Children of refugees do not participate in relations with their homeland in the same way as their parents. They perform several repertoires that they can produce in response to the challenges and opportunities they encounter. If these children are not active protagonists in this migration, they are at least witnesses (Levitt, 2009).

Second-generation Kurdish women's activism for their homeland is quite interesting. I consider the second generation as being those who were born in the UK or those who migrated to the UK in their early childhood as part of the family. Their activism is fascinating because they have not experienced the violence, war, and human rights breaches that the first generation experienced in the homeland. However, these women are interested in the homeland's politics. The significant factor that links these women with their homeland is that they were raised listening to their families' migration stories. These stories are Kurdish refugees' children's first link with their homeland. The first information they receive about their ancestral homeland is through their families' stories. These stories have motivated the second generation to do something for the Kurds in the homeland. Jiyan, for example, who was born in London, told me that her father did not want to talk about his background. However, she learnt many things about her father from her uncle. Jiyan still could not understand one of the stories she heard from her family. The story was about when the soldiers came to search the village, and her aunt was burying Jiyan's father's books about socialism, communism and Kurdishness. Jiyan could not make sense of why her father's books were buried. In her words:

> It is so weird for me. I read books about socialism, communism and about Kurdishness.
> Imagine reading those books in fear. This feeling is terrifying. (Jiyan)

This feeling drove Jiyan to learn more about her family's background. Jiyan's effort to learn more about her family's background was a common action of second-generation migrants who had nostalgic relations with their parent's place of origin. Children of migrants expected to find the ideal homeland where they could feel a strong sense of belonging during transnational

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childhood and adolescence (Wassendorf, 2003). However, obtaining more information about what Jiyan's family experienced created a feeling of frightfulness rather than belonging. This feeling led Jiyan to take part in the Kurdish organisation when she was a secondary school student. This was because, as explained by Başer (2013), the second-generation Kurds are less successful in forgetting injustices and oppressions that their families experienced than the first-generation Kurds. Jiyan's family preferred not to talk about their past, possibly thinking that those experiences should remain in the past. However, Jiyan did not want to forget her family's background and considered that working in an organisation to do something for the Kurds gave meaning to her life.

Similar to Jiyan's family, some of the second-generation Kurdish women said that their families did not want to talk about their experiences. Families were aware that their stories might lead their children to become involved in political movements. Unlike the first-generation, who were born in a political situation, the second-generation Kurdish women's families mainly tried to keep their children away from politics. Şilan, who was also born in London, was a politically active Kurdish university student. During demonstrations, she used a megaphone to direct the demonstrators' actions, enthusiastically shouting slogans. I met with Şilan in a coffee shop, where she was studying for her exams. Even though Şilan was active during demonstrations, she was not talkative and seemed to be a shy person. Şilan mentioned that, even though her father was political, he preferred not to talk about what he experienced in Turkey to keep her away from politics.

> My family explains what they experienced in a quite basic way because they do not want me to become involved in this movement. They want to continue this struggle, but they do not want to see us there because they have seen the dangers. (Şilan)

Despite the family's objection, Şilan started to work in the Kurdish Community Centre and told me that the movement rescued her. When I asked why she thought this, she replied that there were Kurdish youths who did not have any link with the movement and who had been assimilated to lost country. She thinks that she would be one of them if she had not met with the movement. The assimilation rejected by Şilan was defined as straight-line assimilation by Warner and Srole (as cited in Harker, 2001), whereby migrants and their children must acculturate and seek acceptance among the Native-born as a precondition to achieving economic and social advancement (Harker, 2001). Şilan rejected assimilation as she wanted to

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protect her Kurdish identity. This was because Şilan felt she belonged more to the Kurdish culture. However, Şilan never mentioned her visits to Turkey, while second-generation Kurdish women generally mentioned their visits to the homeland or their plans to return to the homeland.

Evin, for example, who was also born in London and has never lived outside of the UK, made an attempt to live in Rojava. Unlike Jiyan and Şilan, Evin was raised in an organisation as her mother was an activist in the Halkevi. Evin attended classes such as Maths, Science, Kurdish and Folk Dance in the Halkevi. She said that she was happier in the organisation. Evin did not have any language issues when she was in primary school, she had many English and non-Kurdish friends, but she was more comfortable with her Kurdish friends. She said that she did not like the school, but she was more willing to listen to teachers in the organisation. Evin explained that this was because her Kurdish identity was predominant. On the day I met with Evin, she was 24 years old, and I would say that her Kurdish identity was still predominant.

Actually, when I first time arrived in Rojava (Syria Kurdistan), the feeling of belonging was so beautiful. You do not feel it in Bakur (Turkey's Kurdistan) because there is still the effect of Turkishness there. But when I arrived at Rojava for the first time, being stopped by the security forces and speaking in Kurdish, I mean this is really a good feeling. The feeling of belonging. (Evin)

Evin felt a sense of belonging when she was in Rojava. I could see her happiness when she was talking about her experiences in Rojava, probably because she felt she belonged somewhere. Evin was a Master's student at a highly ranked university in London. She returned to London to complete her degree. Levitt (2009) might have been correct in her claims that most of the immigrants' children have no plans to return to their country of origin as they are not fluent in speaking their mother language. However, Evin said that she wanted to go back to Rojava because she felt that physiologically she was healthier in Rojava than in London, where she did not have any plan to follow. What is highlighted here is that, as mentioned in the first section, the reason for migration is important in the analyses of migrants' post-migration processes. The second-generation migrants should also be analysed considering their families' migration stories. Second-generation Kurdish women, such as Evin, might be more likely to develop a distinct perspective on the host country than a child of a voluntary migrant family.

The purpose of this section was to examine how the family background of first- and second-generation Kurdish women influenced their activism. Families of these women were involved in political activism to highlight the oppression of their national identity. In addition to their national and gender identities, some Kurdish women were also oppressed because of their religious identity. Accordingly, the following section explores how Kurdish women's oppression of their religious identity shaped their activism.

5.2.5 Religion as Another Form of Oppression

As it was previously discussed, different forms of oppression against Kurdish women in various states influenced their identification with nationalism. The persecution of Kurdish identity led to a greater politicisation of Kurdish women in Turkey. However, what was evident in this research was that Turkey's Kurdish women have not been oppressed to the same degree or in the same dimensions. For instance, Alevi Kurdish women in Turkey have been oppressed through their religious as well as national and gender identities. The Alevi religious minority in Turkey included both Kurds and Turks, as explained in Chapter Two, who were oppressed because of their religious affiliation. Consequently, in the case of an Alevi Kurdish woman in Turkey, it was necessary to discuss three different dimensions of oppression: Alevi, Kurdish, and woman. These identity divisions are autonomous and prioritise diverse spheres, albeit they might overlap, and some aspects are more prominent than others (Yuval-Davis, 2006).

In this study, I have considered the function of religion in Kurdish women's participation in political activism. While being aware of the oppression of Alevi women, Sarya admitted that she might not feel their oppression as she was not an Alevi; thus, her activism might not focus on Alevi oppression.

> I am oppressed as a woman, as a Kurd. I am not Alevi. If I were, I would be oppressed
> for this [in terms of religion]. I am not interested in Alevi-Sunni because I do not have
> any oppressed side on this. A Turkish woman cannot understand what Kurdish women
> have been experiencing. It is the same. I cannot understand what an Alevi woman has
> been experiencing. (Sarya)

Sarya's expression gave me an overview of how religion differentiated Kurdish women and led to the rise of some form of oppressed identity. Sarya stated that she had been oppressed

through her national and gender identities. Although she was not a practising believer, her ethnic identity, as belonging to the Sunni Sect of Islam, kept her from being oppressed in terms of her religion in the Kurdish cultural context. Thus, Sarya did not consider her religion in her activism. Her activism is based on her identity, which had been oppressed. The question arose whether a woman could not raise her voice for oppression to which she had not been exposed. According to Sarya's quotation, this is not impossible, but a woman who is not oppressed would not understand an oppressed women's experiences entirely.

The oppression of Kurdish women according to their religious identity also affected Kurdish women's participation in political movements. Arin, an Alevi Kurdish woman, talked about all of her identities which were oppressed when she was in Turkey, and these oppressions motivated her to participate in the movement:

> I defend myself on my three identities: I am a Kurd, I am a woman, and I am an Alevi. Because there was an attack on my three identities, from the state, I am a citizen of it in society's view. There was an attack. Naturally, because I am a part of this, I developed a stance against this. (Arin)

Arin underlined that her Alevi, Kurdish, and gender identities have been attacked by the state. Therefore, she became a part of the nationalist movement to respond to state oppression. Arin affirmed Waylen's (1996) claim that complex and interwoven identities relating to sexuality, class, race, and gender cause individuals to react differently at different times; furthermore, when women react politically, they do not limit their focus to their gender, rather they also focus on their race, ethnicity, and class in this complex interaction. While conscious of her identities, Arin did not distinguish between them in addressing attacks on her as a whole, based on the intersection of her different identities. The stories of Sarya and Arin confirmed the oppression of Kurdish Alevi women. This oppression was also a factor in Kurdish women's participation in the Kurdish Movement.

Along with the first research question that aims to analyse the role of Kurdish women's background in shaping their subsequence activism in London, in this section I analysed traumas that shaped Kurdish women's national identity. Many Kurdish women (23 out of 24) became aware of their officially unrecognised national identity, which was different from the official identity, in primary school. Women's second encounters with the state occurred through tragic

incidents, massacres, and wars. Prisons were another official place where Kurdish women encountered the state's policies. Kurdish women were imprisoned because of their nationalist activism, but they were treated differently from political men because of their gender. Besides their national identity, Kurdish women witnessed that their gender identity was also oppressed. This study also found that Kurdish women were oppressed differently depending on their religion. Hence, this study analysed Kurdish women's activism considering the intersection of Kurdish women's national, religious, and gender identities. Kurdish women were oppressed differently, but what was common in these women's stories was that they migrated to the UK because of their political activism in the homeland. In the following section, I have focused on why these Kurdish women participated in the Kurdish movement.

5.3. Arriving in Britain

The majority of Kurdish women I interviewed told me that they arrived in the UK for political reasons. The background information about migration, as discussed in Chapter Three, relates to the migrants' settlement process in the new country. As stated by Malkki (1995), wars and state practices of violence, human rights, censorship, challenges to state sovereignty, identities, memory, travel and diaspora are some of the issues and practices that generate human migration and displacement today. Malkki criticised many refugee studies as researchers do not consider the background information of migrants by stating that these root causes are beyond the scope of their study. In accordance with Malkki's criticism, I noticed that, without the background information which I analysed in the previous section, Kurdish women's activism could not be analysed entirely. Thus, I sometimes refer to the previous section during my analyses of Kurdish women's activism. In this section, I have explored why Kurdish women started or continued their activism in London.

It is difficult to claim that Kurdish women started their activism in London. This is because many Kurdish woman activists were already active during pre-migration. Therefore, Kurdish women's activism in the host country is more of a continuation of their activism in the homeland. It is important to note that these women continued to be politically active as soon as they arrived in the UK. What should be considered is why these women insisted on

continuing their activism in the new country. Based on this study, I found three reasons why Kurdish women continued their activism in London. Firstly, activism mitigates Kurdish women's homesickness and strengthens Kurdish women's feelings of belonging in Britain. Secondly, Kurdish women view activism as a way to express their experiences in the home country. Thirdly, Kurdish women feel obligated to be a voice of the Kurds who have been oppressed and could not leave the home country.

Firstly, Kurdish women mitigate their longing for their home through activism. Bejna, who is a first-generation Iranian Kurdish woman, for example, was a *peshmerga* in the KOMALA. After the Islamic Revolution, the state attacked the Kurds, bombed the Kurdish regions, and started to search for Kurdish activists to kill. Bejna escaped to *peshmerga* camps to continue her activism there. However, she had to move on many times for her security. In 1998, she had to migrate to the UK in both legal and illegal ways. She applied for status as an asylum-seeker when she landed at Heathrow Airport. After a week, she arrived in London, sought Kurdish activists and started to work in an organisation. Bejna explained why she continued her activism in London as follows:

> … my activities in the woman's right, the work I do it helps me to cope with that side. But of course, human being, so many friends, my family, I miss the pace, miss friends, all the stuff. (Bejna)

Bejna's Iranian citizenship was revoked by the Iranian State on the grounds of her political activities in Iran. Bejna was not able to visit her family, friends, and places where she was born and lived. Bejna's activism in London helped her to cope with her longing for people and places she left behind. Brah (2005) differentiated between homing desire and desire for the homeland, as they are not the same thing. Brah (2005) rightly asked where home is. On the one hand, home, as a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination, is a place of no return. On the other hand, the home contains lived experiences of a locality. Bejna's home was a place of state violence, fear of being killed, escape from violence, and being imprisoned, but this home was also the place where loved ones lived and held many warm memories. The reality of there being no way to return home created a home for Bejna in London. Bejna reached her new home through her activism. This was how she coped with her homesickness. Therefore, I did not observe Bejna to be nostalgic for home.

Furthermore, Bejna's story raises the question of where Kurdish women can locate their homeland. The homeland in this study refers to Kurdistan. This is because study participants named Kurdistan entirety when they mentioned home. They were, however, referring to the district of Kurdistan from which they are originally from. Bejna, for example, was prohibited from returning to Iranian Kurdistan. Except from the Iranian component, there are no formal restrictions on her visit to different parts of Kurdistan. She did, however, establish a home in the United Kingdom because she is unable to travel to her home in the Iranian part of Kurdistan. As a result, the homeland means the part of Kurdistan where Kurdish women are originated.

Secondly, Kurdish women's activism in London created a space for them to express and fight against what they experienced in their home country. In the previous section, I mentioned the sexual torture to which Amara was exposed in the police station. Amara was imprisoned three times, and she would have been imprisoned more if she had stayed in Turkey. She had two options: to join the guerrillas or to escape to Europe. To her, both options meant maintaining political activism in the new place. Amara chose the latter. The next day after she arrived in London, she visited Halkevi to meet Kurdish activists and decide which tasks she could undertake. Amara explained why she insisted on being politically active in London as follows:

> … if I did not experience oppression, the cruelty in my first detention, I would not be active here. I would be a supporter of the movement as I am a Kurd, but I would not be active as much as I am. (Amara)

Amara linked her activism in London to the sexual torture to which she was exposed by the police in Turkey. Amara asked herself what her guilt was that she should be oppressed, tortured, and exiled. She considered that, because she was a Kurd, like many of other Kurds she was exposed to all these types of violence. Thus, Amara's reason for being an activist was to raise her voice against the injustices of which Kurds have been the victims.

Thirdly, some of the Kurdish women viewed activism in London as their obligation to be a voice for other Kurds who stayed in the home country. Many Kurdish women with whom I met mentioned that they had a responsibility to the Kurds who were still in the struggle against the state violation of the home country. Delal from Iraq was one of those. During our interview, Delal consistently criticised Kurdish women who do not take part in activism. She emphasised that Kurdish women should cling to their oppressed side and should not fall into the fallacy

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that they were rid of oppression because they had migrated to the West. They should think about the Kurds who were still struggling. She criticised Kurdish women who think that, when they come to Britain, their difficulties are over and they can relax.

> We mustn't forget what we are. Because while I have it easy here, good life here, whatever the journey I've taken, I must not forget my fellow woman back home in whichever part of Kurdistan are suffering. They do not have, you know, the benefit of the freedom we have. Everything is ok [here]. Everything is great. It might be good and ok for me but an actual case of my nation, an actual case of the women in my nation has not changed. As we speak, unfortunately I do not know how about in other parts of Kurdistan as we speak women are being tortured and killed, brutalised back home and that does not make me happy, the situation. I wake up here, you know, the life is okay because the system helps me to make my life is easier. Because on two hands, on two levels, women are still struggling and my women are struggling. They've been unfairly, you know, killed. They've been taken out of this life. Not given a chance, an opportunity to make a difference, you know. (Delal)

Delal considered that arriving in Britain might provide Kurdish women with individual freedom. However, without national freedom, individual freedom does not have any meaning. Thus, she emphasised that Kurdish women should not be relaxed because many Kurdish women are still victims of state violence, being killed and tortured. Delal believed that diasporas have the power to change situations in the homeland. Kurdish women in diasporas should consider their status as an opportunity to stop ongoing violence against Kurdish women who were still in the homeland.

To summarise, Kurdish women, who were politicised in the home country, continued their activism in London. Their activism was a result of their efforts to cope with their homesickness, by raising their voice against human rights breaches to which they were exposed and feeling obligated to draw attention to state violence in the home country. The reasons for their activism might be different, but what they had in common was that their activism created transnational ties (Faist, 1998) with the home country.

I also met with Kurdish feminists who were born in Britain. They had not experienced what the first-generation Kurdish women had endured, as discussed above. However, they were engaged with Kurdish women's experiences in the homeland and started their activism to raise

awareness about these women's issues. Therefore, I have examined their engagement with the issues in the homeland separately.

5.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I questioned the reasons that lay behind Kurdish women's activism in London. I found that Kurdish women's activism has been influenced by their past in their homeland. Kurdish women's experiences in the homeland, such as having language issues in primary school, being victims of human rights breaches, and being exposed to gendered torture in prisons and police centres, traumatised Kurdish women's lives. All first-generation Kurdish women claimed that they were traumatised before their migration. This is because the majority of these women stated that they migrated to the UK for political reasons. Kurdish women whose reason for their migration is their marriage also were traumatised during their childhood, they had the issue of language in primary school. Second-generation Kurdish women did not have traumatic experiences; however, they were affected by their families' pre-migration experiences.

Some of the Kurdish women chose to be political activists as a reaction to what they experienced. However, their activism led to more state oppression against them and resulted in their migration to the UK. Most of the participants in this study stated that the reason for their migration to Britain was political. Those Kurdish women continue their activism in London-based Kurdish organisations for three reasons: mitigating their homesickness and strengthening their feelings of belonging in Britain, expressing what they experienced in the pre-migration process and feeling obligated to be a voice of Kurdish women who stayed in the homeland. In the next chapter, I have focused on what Kurdish women demand through their activism.

CHAPTER SIX. THE DEMANDS OF KURDISH WOMEN

6.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I illustrated the reasons that led first-generation Kurdish women to move to the UK and continue their activism. Those women work in women's organisations and also mixed-gendered Kurdish organisations to raise their demands. In this chapter, I have focused on what Kurdish women want to express through their activism. I have divided Kurdish women's demands into extra-organisational and intra-organisational demands.

Kurdish women's extra-organisational demands are more about what Kurdish women aim to express through their activism to non-Kurdish people, institutions, states, NGOs. Kurdish women's extra-organisational demands enable us to understand to what extent Kurdish women maintain their link with the homeland (demands related to the homeland politics) and what issues they have in the receiving country (the UK). Through analysing Kurdish women's extra-organisational demands, this study also aimed to link Kurdish women's demands with their reasons for migration. In line with this, it is revealed that Kurdish women's demands are different. Hence, I have divided Kurdish women's extra-organisational demands into two groups: demands of Kurdish women from Turkey's Kurdistan and demands of Kurdish women from Iranian and Iraqi Kurdistan. Based on this study, I found that Kurdish women activists from Turkey's Kurdistan raised their voices for their nationalist and gender demands, while Iranian and Iraqi Kurdish women activists commonly focused on demands related to their gender.

Intra-organisational demands are more about Kurdish women's gender demands that are raised in organisations. Contrary to Kurdish women's extra-organisational demands, which seek to be heard by non-Kurdish individuals and institutions, intra-organisational demands are made by Kurdish women in mixed-gender organisations to get the attention of Kurdish activists. This study focused on mixed-gender Kurdish organisations that were founded by the Kurds from Turkey's Kurdistan. Hence, intra-organisational demands were referred to the PKK's gender perspective and how it is practised in these organisations.

Talking about Kurdish women's demands in general might limit us to analysing their extra-organisational demands and ignore the issues that those women face within the organisation. For this purpose, I have examined what kind of experiences Kurdish women have had in London-based Kurdish organisations. Analysing Kurdish women's intra-organisational demands contributes to the literature on women and nationalism. As discussed earlier, some scholars such as Enloe (1990), Grewal and Kaplan (2006), Alarcon et al. (1999), and McClintock (1991) are sceptical about women's emancipation struggle in national movements. A specific focus on Kurdish women's intra-organisational demands gives us knowledge about what those women in the national movement have experienced and how they express their issues. In line with this, I have focused on the forms of patriarchy that Kurdish women activists encountered in mixed-gender organisations. This focus places this study in discussions about whether nationalism is antithetical to feminism. However, talking about patriarchy does not sufficiently support my analyses. Hence, I have examined how Kurdish women that participated in this study react to patriarchy. I have divided their reaction to patriarchy into three groups: internalising patriarchy, dealing with patriarchy, and challenging patriarchy.

6.2. Extra-Organisational Demands

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the formation of Kurdish women's ethnic identity was different depending on which state territory they were from. In this section, I have examined closely how Kurdish women's different ethnic and national identities influenced their activism in London. Hence, I analyse women's demands by considering the part of Kurdistan they were from. Wahlbeck (1998) claimed that the Kurds are one of the most highly politicised communities in London. Based on my observation, I could claim that Kurdish women are among the most highly politicised women's groups in London. However, Kurdish women are not politicised at the same level. More specifically, it can be claimed that when comparing them with Kurdish women from Iranian and Iraqi Kurdistan, Kurdish women from Turkey's Kurdistan are politically more active in raising their demands. I have analysed the demands of Turkey's Kurdish women activists in Section 6.3.1, and Iraqi and the demands of Iranian Kurdish women activists in Section 6.3.2. I have not analysed the demands of Iraqi and Iranian Kurdish women activists' separately because their demands and activities show similarities.

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6.2.1. Demands of Kurdish Women from Turkey's Kurdistan

Turkey's Kurdish women's activism was shaped according to their national and gender demands. Their national demands were more about the recognition of Kurdish identity and drawing attention to the up-to-date political situation of the Kurds. Their gender demands entailed drawing attention to women's experiences in the war areas and facilitating Kurdish women's lives in London. Understanding how these Kurdish women raise their dual demands is complex. As observed by some scholars, such as Grewal and Kaplan (2006) and Barlow (2006), national political activities might take precedence over activities for their gender demands. I considered whether Kurdish women's national demands overshadowed their demands regarding their gender identity. I was told that not all the time but occasionally, such as during the time that the Turkish state conducted military operations in Kurdistan, Kurdish women prioritised their Kurdish identity. Beritan, for example, stated that because of the political intensity, their nationalist demands sometimes overshadowed their demands relating to gender.

> We have been in a war for a long time. Therefore, our focus is more on the war. We do not have time to introduce ourselves as Kurdish women. (Beritan)

Beritan frankly stated that because of the Kurdish National Movement's ongoing war with the Turkish Army and recently with ISIS, Kurdish women's focus was more on Kurdish national demands. This was not a choice for them. They felt obligated to focus on the war, which resulted in putting gender identity second. Avaşin clarified Beritan's claim by talking more about their activities. According to Avaşin, every activity had its aim but, in general, the main aim of these activities was to draw attention to gaining the status of the Kurds. Besides this, the banning of PKK flags and putting the PKK on the terror list in the UK were also protested by the Kurdish women. Activities involved mainly organising demonstrations and conducting lobbying activities, such as meeting with MPs and representatives of NGOs. According to what I observed during demonstrations, I could say that even in feminist rallies which were organised to draw attention to women's issues, Kurdish women activists referred to the war through the slogans they shouted and posters of female fighters that they carried. At first glance, it can be considered that Kurdish women prioritise national demands over their gender equality demands as they carry their national issues to feminist rallies.

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However, as will be discussed in detail in the following chapter (Chapter Seven), in the case of Kurdish women, it is difficult to distinctly separate these dual demands. National demands might contain gender equality demands, or gender equality demands might link to nationalist demands. Similar to many Kurdish women activists, Berivan drew attention to the fact that the most oppressed people in the war were women and children. Therefore, raising their voices to stop the war could be seen as a national demand, since this war has been continuing in the Kurdish region, and the Kurdish National Movement was one of the warring factions. On the other hand, Kurdish women's activism in the war was also gendered, as the aim of women activists, such as Berivan, was to influence public opinion about women's experiences in the war. Omitting this nuance of Kurdish women's demands would lead to making a general analysis of Kurdish women's aims as being nationalist only. It is necessary to add that Kurdish women are not happy with this kind of generalisation that is made by academics and some Western feminists, which will also be discussed in the next chapter.

Kurdish women activists were aware that demonstrations would not stop the war directly. However, raising awareness about the war could change the situation. As Jiyan said, they aimed to inform as many people about as much of what was happening in Kurdistan as possible.

> Our aim in the protest is not to damage something or create issues, only that our voice is heard and understood by states or people around us. For example, we give people leaflets related to the protest on pavements. When I give leaflets to people, I am always asked, 'What is this protest for and why do you do this protest?' When I explain, I know that person knows this. If he/she gets interested, go and make research about it. (Jiyan)

Jiyan stated that their protests did not damage anything. The main aim of organising demonstrations was to raise awareness, which was mainly about the Turkish Army's attack on Afrin during my fieldwork, to as many people as possible. Jiyan knew that not everyone who saw them would be interested in what they demanded, but at least they would reach some people who cared about what issues they raised. Kurdish women organised demonstrations as alternative ways of making the problem more visible. For example, during the demonstration where activists protested against the Turkish Army's operation in Afrin, a male activist approached me to say, 'We are doing here what the BBC did not do.' He meant the media did not give a proper platform to their demands. Therefore, they used alternative ways to reach more people. This coincides with the claim by Başer and Swain (2008) that stateless diaspora

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groups, who are from a conflictual homeland and are willing to draw the attention of the receiving country's government and the international community, consider protests as a way of influencing the policy makers and public opinion through their concerns. Protest, by its very nature, has the potential to maintain a certain amount of support and attention for the diasporic cause. Firstly, it is regarded as a novel way of interfering in a government's decision-making process. Second, it influences decision-makers in indirect ways.

Apart from demonstrations, Kurdish women raised their demands by organising meetings with MPs. The diplomacy commission within the body of the Kurdish Community Centre engages mainly in lobbying activities. The salient point about the commission was that members of this commission were mainly women. Those women activists prepared documents to give to MPs or academics whom they visited. Beritan, from the diplomacy group, explained that their demands were mainly about the oppression of the Kurdish identity. However, they also prepared a file to inform politicians whom they visited about what the women's revolution was, what Kurdish women in Rojava have done, and what they wanted.

Turkey's Kurdish women appeared to be more concerned with raising awareness of what was happening in the homeland through their political activism. However, they also organised activities to help Kurdish women in London. The Roj women, for example, had dual organisations: the Roj Women's Assembly and the Roj Women's Foundation. Newroz summarised the dual organisations of Kurdish women as: 'the Roj Women Assembly's focus is more on the social union, while the Roj Women Foundation, which is located in a different place than the Kurdish Community Centre, prepare projects'. Thus, the Roj Women's Association raised nationalist demands, and their focus was more on the political situation in Turkey, while the Roj Women's Foundation focused more on gender, and their concern was more for Kurdish women's adaptation issues in London.

I met two Kurdish women activists at the Roj Women's Foundation to discuss their projects. The foundation was located in Tottenham, while the association was in the Kurdish Community Centre in Harringay. The reason for locating the Roj Women's Foundation in a different place was related to their work. The Roj Women's Foundation was focused more on Kurdish women's issues, including domestic violence in London. Therefore, meeting with women activists in a separate building provided confidentiality for Kurdish women who were victims

of domestic violence or had issues with their families, as they might not want to be seen by the community members in the busy Kurdish Community Centre.

In Section 6.3, I will discuss the forms of patriarchy that Kurdish women encountered in Kurdish organisations. I will refer mainly to the experiences of women from the Kurdish Community Centre and Halkevi, which were mixed-gender organisations. Kurdish women activists from the Roj Women's Foundation stated that they met with male activists from the KCC, but they had not encountered any patriarchal behaviour. On the contrary, Kurdish men were quite respectful towards women activists from the foundation. No doubt, working in different places had an effect on this. Berfe summarised the foundation's activities in two groups: social enterprise and prevention. The aim of projects under the name of social enterprise was to find and create jobs for women and facilitate women's adaptation. As part of this aim, the foundation prepared the women's restaurant, textile, and cheese production projects to create jobs for women and language and well-being projects to help women's adaptation. The prevention project was more about raising awareness about domestic violence. The foundation had a different place from the community centre so that women who were victims of domestic violence could go to the centre more comfortably to seek help.

6.2.2. Iranian And Iraqi Kurdish Women's Demands

Iranian and Iraqi Kurdish Women's activism had similarities with the activities of the Roj Women's Foundation. Dicle from the Kurdish Women's Project, which had not been active for three years, summarised their aim as being to change the situation of Kurdish women from being victims to being agents. Dicle stated that in the diaspora during the 1990s and the early 2000s, the tendency of Kurdish Nationalism was to portray Kurdish women as victims. Kurdish women broke this perception through their conferences, which a large number of Kurdish women attended. There was no doubt that women's activism had broken many patriarchal codes. However, Kurdish women's ongoing activism against patriarchy indicated that Kurdish women were still challenging patriarchy in the community.

Bejna, who was a first-generation Iranian Kurdish woman, had been working actively in the Iranian Kurdish Women's Rights' Organisation (the IKWRO). The organisation's name might indicate that its focus was on Iranian Kurdish women, but it has also helped many women from

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the Middle East; for example, an Afghan 9-year-old girl who was forced to marry was helped by the organisation, as was a Turkish woman who was a victim of domestic violence. The organisation also prepared a campaign against Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), which aims to control women's sexuality by preventing their sexual pleasure and satisfaction. Hence, similar to other physical and physiological violence against women, such as rape, infibulation and sexual assault, FGM is a human rights' issue (Mohanty, 2003).

FGM is an example of oppression that not all women share. It is common in the Middle East and Africa. However, women in those areas do not face the same level of oppression as FGM is not common in all these areas. Even Kurdish women, who are from the same ethnicity, are not all victims of FGM. Women's encounters with FGM are different according to the state territories in which Kurdish women live. According to the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey in 2012, in Iraq, the estimated prevalence of FGM was 42.8% in Kurdish areas and 1.2% in the rest of Iraq (Lunde et al., 2019). There are no population-based surveys in Iran. However, according to a study by Ahmady (as cited in Lunde et al., 2019), FGM is documented in Iran but not in Kurdish areas. Lunde et al. (2019) stated that there is limited research on FGM in Turkey and Syria; thus, even though it might be practised in these countries, there are no current studies that support this claim. Although, the reason that there are no supporting data on FGM in Turkey and Syria is that it might not be practised in these countries.

As a result, the percentages given of the practice of FGM indicate that FGM is not the primary issue for all Kurdish women. Hence, stopping FGM was not the primary demand for all Kurdish woman activists in London. Turkey's Kurdish women activists did not mention FGM, and I did not observe any activities about FGM organised by Turkey's Kurdish women. On the other hand, in the study by Lunde et al. (2019) mentioned above, it was stated that FGM was not practised in Kurdish areas in Iran. However, the IKWRO focused intensively on the issue. This might have been because not only did the IKWRO address Kurdish women's issues, but also their focus was more on women from the Third World. Bejna from IKWRO stated that they put FGM on their agenda as it was practised illegally in the UK. Today people take girls to African or Arabic countries for FGM as it is difficult to practise in the UK. This means that some people believe that FGM should be practised. Therefore, IKWRO helped women who were victims of FGM through their advice and advocacy services.

Another issue that has been campaigned by Kurdish women is honour killings. Killing Kurdish girls for the sake of so-called honour was the subject of the documentary film, *Banaz: A Love Story*, directed by Deeyah Khan and Darin Prindle in 2012. Banaz was an Iraqi Kurdish girl who was born in Iraq in 1985 and migrated to London in 1995 because of the Saddam Regime. Banaz was a victim of FGM as she was circumcised with her sisters before migrating to London. Her sister described the feeling she had on that day as: 'You would not wish this even for your enemy' (2012). Banaz was married when she was 17 years old. This was an arranged marriage. Banaz was sexually, physically, and emotionally abused by her husband. She asked her family for shelter, but the family returned her to her husband and advised her to be a good wife. Divorcing was taboo in the community. Banaz reported to the police several times the violence to which she was exposed. She escaped from the home and asked medics for help. The police took her to her family home and questioned the father in front of her. Banaz was returned to the family house again. A few days later, she was murdered by her cousins with orders from her father and uncle. Subsequently, an Independent Police Complaints Investigation in 2008 criticised heavily two police forces for failing to help Banaz.

Banaz's story was an important example that illustrated the issue in London. Kurdish women were being killed for the sake of so-called honour; their homicide could not be prevented as the British Police did not know about the honour killings. Bejna, from the IKWRO, for example, said that social workers sometimes put girls in a risky situation by sending them back to the family house, as they do not know the culture and the community. Therefore, the organisation contacted authorities to protect these girls from honour killings. Accordingly, Kurdish women's activism played a role in bridging relations between the British authorities and Kurdish women.

Havin, who was an Iraqi Kurdish woman who worked in the Kurdish Women's Project, KWP, told various informative stories about her activism. The interview with Havin took approximately two and a half hours. Havin used the majority of this time to talk about examples of how Kurdish women were oppressed by the community. Havin dedicated her life to rescuing oppressed women. When we spoke about honour killing, I saw the agony in her eyes. She mentioned the death of a Kurdish girl in London, which had greatly affected her. She tried to help the girl when she was alive. Havin was worried about the girl's safety as she knew the community. The girl who had a relationship with a man without her family's approval would become a victim of an honour killing. Havin could not reach the girl, and a few days later, she

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heard that members of ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) had killed the girl in her home, and her father was injured. Havin said that the police believed this scenario as they did not know about honour killings much. Havin spoke to the detective to explain why they believed that this was not a political incident but that she was a victim of honour killing. Havin and other women activists' work was significantly important because they informed authorities about the background. The police attended seminars later in the organisation to learn about the community. As a result of Havin's efforts, the father was found guilty of killing his daughter.

Banaz and Havin's stories might seem to affirm that many anthropological concepts, for example 'honour societies', are believed to be a sign of 'traditional' communities, which are different from 'modern' communities (Grewal, 2013). The police members of 'modern' society are far from understanding victims of honour killings who were members of honour societies, as modern society is different from the traditional. However, transnational feminists, such as Grewal (2013), warned researchers about their approach to honour killings as they might produce an understanding which regarded non-Western societies as being primitive and backward, which might lead to racism in Western countries. At the end of the documentary on Banaz's killing, Dianna Nammi, a woman activist from the IKWRO, said that those who advocated honour killing were the minority in the community, but they were strong and controlled the majority to remain silent. Hence, Kurdish women's activism against honour killing was of great value. Even though Kurdish women, such as Bejna and Havin, were threatened on the grounds that they disgraced the community, they maintained their struggle against honour killings. Therefore, in this section, I focused on Kurdish women's brave activism to stop honour killing and female genital mutilation.

To summarise, in this section, I emphasised that Kurdish women's priorities in their activism were different depending on which parts of Kurdistan they were from and which type of organisation they worked in. Differences among Kurdish women's extra-organisational demands can be linked to why they participated in the national movements that were analysed in the previous chapter. Kurdish women's national identities were shaped during their childhood because of the pre-migration traumas that led them to participate in Kurdish movements and continue their activism in London. Kurdish women's different experiences in different parts of Kurdistan directly or indirectly differentiate the demands that they raise in London. Kurds in Turkey were completely denied their identity as Kurds, but Kurds in Iraq were given political and cultural independence (Harris, 1977). In line with this, Kurdish women

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from Turkey's Kurdistan were stuck in the childhood traumas they experienced in primary school. Kurdish women learnt how their national identity is different from their teachers' identity when they were harshly punished because of talking Kurdish in school. Today, the Kurdish language is still not recognised in schools in Turkey. Moreover, there has been still an ongoing war between the Turkish army and the PKK guerrillas that shapes Kurdish women's activism in London as Kurdish women put the Turkish army's attacks on their agendas. On the other hand, Kurdish women from Iraqi Kurdistan experienced having a Kurdish regional government that indicates the freedom of the Kurdish identity. Different levels of recognition of Kurdish identity differentiate Kurdish women's emphasis on their national identity in their demands.

Moreover, having a relationship with different Kurdish movements shapes Kurdish women's demands differently. That's to say, Kurdish women participated in different Kurdish movements and each Kurdish movement has different gender perspectives. On the one hand, the KDP (Iraq), the PUK and KDP-I (Iran) aim to maintain Kurdish traditions along with national dependence struggles. Demands of Kurdish women from Iranian and Iraqi Kurdistan mainly focus on breaking traditional oppression such as the FGM and honour killing of women. On the other hand, the PKK underlines that Kurdish national freedom comes with Kurdish women's freedom. Hence, Kurdish women from Turkey's Kurdistan raised their voices for both their gender and national identities.

Another point that is highlighted in this chapter is that the types of organisations that Kurdish women work in have a role in shaping their demands. The aim of Kurdish women from single-gender women's organisations was mainly to facilitate women's adaptation and help women with specific issues, such as domestic violence and female genital mutilation. To achieve this aim, women from these organisations prepared projects to raise awareness about honour killings, female genital mutilation and domestic violence and to help victims through their consultancy and legal services. Their projects aimed at women's adaptation, such as cheese-making and textile workshops, created spaces for women to sell their products. These Kurdish, single-gender organisations served the process of adjusting to a new environment and establishing a two-way dialogue between refugees and the receiving society – a process that is referred to as integration. Kurdish women benefit from the assistance of these single-gendered immigrant organisations, especially in the early stages of settlement. Support from these organisations relieves boredom, fosters a sense of self-determination, and identifies unmet

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needs for migrants, particularly for forced migrants who are unsure of their future. These organisations occasionally assist refugees and asylum seekers in understanding the welfare system and assimilating into their host nation (Griffiths et al., 2006). Kurdish women's activism illustrates that these women develop transnational ties (Faist 1998) through preparing homeland focus agendas as well as local social activism (Keles 2015).

On the other hand, Kurdish women from mixed-gender organisations raised their voices on issues of the Kurds and specific issues of Kurdish women in the homeland. These Kurdish women who worked in mixed-gender organisations were mainly from Turkey's Kurdistan. Unlike single-gender originations, Kurdish women from mixed-gender organisations encounter patriarchy in said organisations. In the following section, the forms of patriarchy that these women encounter and their reactions to it will be analysed.

6.3. Intra-Organisational Demands

As mentioned in Chapter 5, Kurdish women are involved in political activism to express their traumatic experiences and to be the voice of the Kurds who stayed in their homeland. Their demands related to the reason for their involvement in political activism mainly was analysed under extra-organisational demands. Hence, Kurdish women were mainly enthusiastic about talking about their extra-organisational demands. Talking about intra-organisational issues and demands would not be easy as those demands had not been put into words as much as extra-organisational demands. Some participants implicitly point to their dissatisfaction with the organisations. I encouraged Kurdish women to talk more about issues in the organisations by asking, 'If there is a magic wand in your hand, what would you change in the organisations?' These Kurdish women mainly aimed to change masculinity and patriarchy in mixed-gender organisations. This study focuses on mixed-gendered organisations that were founded by the Kurds from Turkey's Kurdistan and have a link with the PKK. Hence intra-organisational demands were analysed considering the PKK's gender perspective as Kurdish women pointed at the PKK's approach to women when they talk about how gender relations should be in organisations.

When discussing the perspective of the PKK on women, many women activists referred to Öcalan's well-known saying: 'Killing the dominant manhood'. According to Öcalan, the

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struggle for democracy, freedom, socialism, and equality requires an analysis of gender hierarchies (Jongerden, 2017). The movement viewed gender equality as the fundamental step toward freedom and democracy. In this sense, killing the dominant manhood was placed at the forefront. Some of the Kurdish women who participated in this study felt honoured as the movement aims to break patriarchy by killing the dominant manhood. I questioned whether killing dominant manhood is possible and how killing dominant manhood is practised to analyse patriarchy in organisations.

Avaşin, who was a first-generation Kurdish woman from Turkey, replied that if we think globally, it is not easy to achieve. According to Avaşin, the main reason why killing the dominant manhood is not easy is because the system is masculine. In regions where religion is dominant, women are quite invisible. Even in developed countries, such as the UK, women are not equal to men; they are still treated as second-rate citizens in these countries. The movement could not kill the dominant manhood yet, but Avaşin stated that in the Kurdish Movement, there was a tremendous effort to break masculinity.

> There is a tremendous effort on this (killing the dominant manhood). If this movement did not succeed (breaking patriarchy), Kurdish women would be quite behind in Kurdistan. Today, we have women MPs, women's assemblies, women executives. (Avaşin)

According to Avaşin, killing the dominant manhood has not been achieved by the movement yet. The movement's efforts to kill the dominant manhood broke patriarchy in the Kurdish community, which helped Kurdish women to appear more frequently in the political arena; however, appearing in the public sphere is not sufficient to kill the dominant manhood.

Similar to Avaşin, Sarya, who is the first-generation single political migrant, also mentioned that the movement helped women to fight against the dominant manhood. She illustrated changes in the Kurdish women by referring to Simon de Beauvoir's famous words: 'One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman'. According to Sarya, the movement proved that one can become a woman. Unlike Avaşin who emphasised that Kurdish women have had significant achievements but the dominant manhood has not been killed, Sarya stated that Kurdish women achieved freedom in Rojava. According to Sarya, women in Rojava were free, and those women were beautiful, not only in appearance, but their inside was also beautiful. In the capitalist world, in the state systems, women were beautiful in appearance but, on their inside,

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they were deprived. In Rojava, women walk in harmony with nature. She explained how the movement helped women to reach freedom as follows:

> It is quite charming to see re-establishing yourselves, re-building. You see this, the movement does not force you to do this; offers you to find your freedom; leave your freedom yourself and see how you transform yourself. (Sarya)

Sarya defined the movement's role on the Kurdish women's freedom as: 'The PKK is about seeking something you lost.' Kurdish women found ways to reach their freedom through their meeting with the PKK and, in Rojava, women have been practising freedom. Sarya defined freedom that women in Rojava reached as re-establishing themselves. Women in Rojava did not only reach freedom through their fights and victories against ISIS in Rojava; ideas of freedom, equality and grassroots participation of women were important in addition to the armed struggle (Tank, 2017). Hence, Sarya viewed freedom as transforming yourself in harmony with all the factors.

The examples above were more about how the PKK had touched Kurdish women's lives in general. My purpose was to focus more on Kurdish women in London. Kurdish women activists in London also emphasised that the perspective of the PKK on gender helped them to be more visible in organisations. Some of my participants stated that Kurdish women had raised their voices more and had been more active than they were in the past. Hevi, who was from Iraq and worked in the Kurdish Community Centre, for example, stressed that Kurdish women became stronger and freer after they met with the movement.

> They honestly believe as an organisation that women should take decisions into their own hands. We are seen as strong in an individual which we are. Unlike we are talked to believe in which women are not strong enough to make their own decisions they should be, you know, told by someone else what to do. So, women here are able to make their own decisions, to fight for themselves and also for the people around them. So, they are people who refuse to be told what to do. People who refuse to just be housewives and go bring children out, living in the house for the rest of life, these people fight for liberation. Not for the women in Kurdistan, for women in everywhere else. (Hevi)

Hevi illustrated how women's lives have changed since they got involved with the movement. Kurdish women were expected to raise children and engage in housework in the past. The movement helped women to be aware of patriarchy by pointing it out. Following this, Kurdish women started to fight against patriarchy. Their fight was not only to relieve the male-dominant oppression against themselves. They also fight for women around them. Those women learnt how to make decisions about their lives that led them to gain self-confidence. Similar to Hevi, Kurdish women activists commonly highlighted that because of the movement's perspective on gender, Kurdish women activists were stronger and had more self-esteem. The effect of the movement's support on Kurdish women could not be under-valued. However, I felt it necessary to discuss whether the movement's perspective on gender had been practised seamlessly. As I mentioned above, Avaşin stated that the dominant manhood had not been killed yet. In the next section, I have analysed why this was so, by considering the forms of patriarchy that Kurdish women activists encountered in London-based organisations.

6.3.1. Patriarchy in the Organisations

Before starting the fieldwork, I assumed that my participants would not be eager to discuss patriarchy in the organisations, which would overshadow the movement's gender-egalitarian perspective mentioned earlier. I might have been under the effect of some scholars, such as Enloe (1990), who claimed that women's criticism of patriarchal attitudes and practices can be silenced in the name of national survival. However, I was surprised that both male and female participants wanted to talk openly about patriarchy. I noted that the criticism of patriarchy by Öcalan (2013), which he called 'the first major sexual rupture' (p. 30), affected Kurdish activists to talk more about patriarchy in the organisation. Öcalan (2013) stated that patriarchy had not always existed in society. Before the rise of civilisation, women's situation in society was different because society was matriarchal. Civilisation resulted in the development of authority and hierarchy, where men were seen as being stronger. What should be noted is that Öcalan referred to the Kurdish culture, which was matriarchal, to facilitate the ease of patriarchy in the movement. However, Öcalan's thoughts on patriarchy seem to have affected Kurdish activists as Ronahi's sayings evoked Öcalan's books.

> If we talk about 5,000 years old system of patriarchy of course it is [going to] come up in
> many ways even in your own movement that claims to be fighting against that system that

where your success is linked to is if you are able to overcome patriarchal mentality internally, then your enemy has no chance. The enemy only still has a chance because internally we still struggling within ourselves and with our own selves personally and also interpersonally as well we are struggling with ourselves. That's a part of this movement. (Ronahi)

Ronahi viewed the patriarchal system as the sole enemy of the Kurds. The enemy would be beaten by challenging patriarchy in the Kurdish community. However, challenging patriarchy was not as easy as the majority of the male activists were still patriarchal. But they accepted women; they had to take women seriously. Ronahi described this situation as: 'This is the beauty of the movement.' The issue was how having a patriarchal background and accepting non-patriarchal practices worked together. As Ronahi specified, some members of the organisation could not internalise the women's emancipation perspective of the movement, potentially resulting in a paradox between their private and political lives.

On a personal level, some men might respond to feminism positively while, on the other hand, their attitudes towards feminism might contain contradictions and complexities when they focus on men as a gender (Ramazanoğlu, 1992). This might relate to their internalising of the sexual division of their roles – something which might produce differences depending on the culture. That is to say, the sexual roles being referred to can be identified as that of hegemonic masculinity, which was 'the culturally idealised form of masculine character' (Donaldson, 1993, pp. 646-647). On the other hand, Connel and Messerschimidt (2005) mentioned that although hegemonic masculinity relates to cultural ideals, it should not be assessed simply as cultural norms. Beginning from these points, in the case of the Kurdish male activist, masculinity might incite a conflict between their cultural and political identities. In other words, a Kurdish man who is himself a part of a male-dominated society might feel compelled to advocate gender equality because the nationalist movement emphasises the importance of women's emancipation for the nationalist movement.

To exemplify, during demonstrations, I observed which flags were being carried during demonstrations. Besides the PKK's flag, Abdullah Öcalan's pictures and the YPG's flag, I noticed that the two different Kurdish women's flags were also carried in all demonstrations. The YPJ (Women's Protection Unit) flag is green and has a red star in the centre, and the KJK

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(Komalen Jinen Kurdistan) flag is purple with the feminist symbol as an emblem. The feminist symbol has a half sun and half branch with a red star in the emblem.

Figure 1 The KJK Flag

I noticed that the YPJ's flag was carried by Kurdish men and women, while the purple KJK flag was carried by women only. I noted that the YPG is a women's army which might be linked to militarism by Kurdish men, and so they might be happy to carry this flag. On the other hand, the KJK flag might appear to be feminist to Kurdish men, resulting in their refusing to carry this flag. I did not see a Kurdish man carrying the KJK flag until the demonstration on 21 April 2018. In that demonstration, I saw a Kurdish man who was holding the KJK flag and I was walking close to him and observing him. When he noticed me, he reacted quite anxiously and said, 'Who gave this [flag] to me? Give me another one' (meaning the YPG flag). The man next to him replied, 'Give it [the flag] to me. I am proud of carrying our women's flag.' He took the flag and continued walking with the flag. Those two men represent the view of male Kurdish activists. Some of them still regard feminism as being taboo, while others link women's emancipation with Kurdish national freedom and support women's struggles.

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Figure 2 The YPJ Flag

Some male activists were not comfortable with Kurdish women's activism; however, they could not reject the role of women directly as the movement highlighted the importance of women's work for Kurdish national freedom. Those male activists somehow reflected their dissatisfaction with women's presence in the organisation in their behaviour towards them. Solin was one of the women activists who was disturbed by male activists' impolite attitudes. Solin had been working in Halkevi since its foundation in the late 1980s. She met various activists in the organisation. She claimed that men were involved in the movement but could not understand its perspective. Solin explained the attitudes of these male activists in the organisation as follows:

> Men could not understand it – the movement's women perspective. Even some of the male activists who were in the leading position could not understand it. I mean, you can feel this through their practice, attitudes and approaches. Some men are spokesperson or co-chairperson but their approaches to women are different. As a woman, you are scared to ask something to them, they are not humble. (Solin)

Solin was uncomfortable with male activists, including those who occupied a leading position in the organisations. According to her, those activists were part of the organisation to practise the ideology of the movement. However, they were far from understanding the movement's perspective on gender. As a result, they reflected their discrepancy with the movement's perspective on gender in their attitudes towards women. These male activists raised their voices or belittled women through the words they chose in their speaking with women. This sent a message to women to emphasise that as a woman, you were at the bottom of the hierarchy

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while men's place was at the top. Their attitudes towards women can be linked to their family structure and how they were raised. The family and tribe were perceived as the sources of security for the Kurds, who were mainly from South-East Turkey. Women were at the bottom of the tribal hierarchy, which was sustained by the patriarchal system (Tank, 2017). More interestingly, those men knew that the hierarchy they had internalised since their childhood was on shaky ground. As mentioned above, Kurdish women activists' lives changed after they met with the PKK; they became stronger and felt more confident. Accordingly, Berivan's analyses of why Kurdish men adhered to patriarchy can be elucidating. Berivan had many clashes with male activists in the organisation. She observed Kurdish male activists intensively and summarised their attitudes to women's role as:

> They have a fear that women can go ahead in the politic. If women will be in the front, they [men] feel that they are a loser. They cannot overcome this understanding as they were raised like this by their mother since their childhood. They have been told that you are a man, your wife needs to be behind you. For example, we [women] organised an activity. We did everything, but a male friend put his name under the report of the activity. When we asked the reason, he replied, 'Heval, I cannot overcome my mentality'. (Berivan)

Losing their privileged status was not easy for Kurdish men. They were also told that they must abandon this comfortable place voluntarily as this was a condition for reaching national freedom. Kurdish men accepted this ideal, but they saw that Kurdish women could be more in the forefront than men in politics. Participation in women assemblies at a local level enabled women to participate in mixed-gendered politics more effectively by giving women representatives effective decision-making power (Erel and Açık, 2020). This meant that men losing their status had a deeper meaning than they thought. The most salient point in men's and women's work is that women's work was double that of men's. Every woman who is a member of an assembly is also automatically a member of the Women's Assembly. This means they worked for the assemblies and also for the Women's Assembly. Even though women worked harder than men, male activists put pressure on women by criticising or belittling their activities. Some of the Kurdish men interpreted Kurdish women's hard work as leading to men's disappearance from activism.

Kurdish male activists reacted to women's political activism in different ways. Belittling women's activism was one of those reactions. Sara, for example, had many memories related

to the attitudes of patriarchal male activists. However, one of the stories she told me illustrated a male activist's dissatisfaction with Kurdish women's coming to the forefront. Kurdish activists were invited to the Labour Party's Conference in Wales. Sara went to the conference with one of her male colleagues. She narrated that day as follows:

> I went with a Kurdish male activist. It was just the two of us. He introduced me as the women representative of the Kurdistan National Congress (KNK). He nearly said, 'I brought her to participate in with her woman identity, to be known as a Kurdish woman.' The MP replied to him, 'Hang on a second, the whole world is watching Kurdish women curiously to see what they do, and what we are going to learn. The whole world already knows Kurdish women. The friend said 'OK, OK! I did not mean that. I would say you are a [expletive]; you know.' (Sara)

The male activist intended to illustrate that Kurdish men allowed Kurdish women to be politicised by bringing them to political events. In this man's view, men had roles in nationalist movements as liberators and protectors, while women were reproducers of the nation and those women needed to be protected. Women acquired their privileged status through being a member of nationalist movements (Alison, 2009). The male activist preferred to ignore Kurdish women's fights and achievements as he did not want to share his status as protector of the nation with women. In the meeting, when he was advised that Kurdish women also protected and liberated the nation, he could not insist on his view as it was opposite to the movement's perspective and could be disproved quickly. He dropped the subject.

The dilemmas between male activists' ideologies and their practices were reflected in the areas of the organisations. In the Kurdish Community Centre, for example, some gendered places were created. Siyar, who was a first-generation male activist, stated that some male activists were still not comfortable with sitting at the table with women. As a result, women and men used different places. Siyar illustrated how the place was divided and used differently according to gender.

If you notice, women have a chat in here (drew a place on the table) while men play snooker here (used his fingers again to show a different place). Men freely block the entrance for smoking, while women are smoking in the corridor secretly. They do not say we smoke in secrecy. But when you initially enter the organisation, you feel that it is a male-dominant organisation. (Siyar)

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Similar to what Siyar mentioned, I also observed that there was always a group of male activists around the snooker table. They were chatting while playing snooker. Women and men sat at the same table when they were discussing the activities they organised. However, they were sitting in different places in the organisation when they were talking about non-political matters. On the other hand, the youths, who were mainly second-generation Kurdish activists, had a spare room at the back of the Kurdish Community Centre. The youths can access this room without using the entrance of the Community Centre's building. Having a spare room that was independent of the building influenced the relations of second-generation Kurdish youths. The second-generation male and women activists sat together all the time and had warmer relations than the first-generation Kurdish activists. They were chatting, laughing and enjoying the garden in front of the room.

I included male participants' views on patriarchy following the understanding of Cohen (as cited in Yuval-Davis 1997) that if one is speaking about patriarchy, one is inherently referring to men as well. Therefore, making claims about patriarchy without men's opinions would be one-sided and insufficient for a thorough assessment of the topic. I met with first-generation, married, male political migrant Çıya in Harringay, which was known as the small Kurdistan/small Turkey. Çıya commonly referred to his mother when he talked about Kurdish women. Çıya was very proud of his mother, who was divorced and worked for her children, which was not common among Kurdish women at that time. He highlighted that many things had changed in Kurdish women's lives in Kurdistan. When I asked for his impression of Kurdish women in London, he was not satisfied by the women activists' work. According to him, in Kurdistan, there were women's co-operatives, workshops, villages and women's foundations. Even though Kurdish women had more opportunities in London, there were none of those sorts of women's activities. Çıya explained that this was because the Kurds in London were quite politicised. They followed what was going on in the homeland but only in terms of practices. They could not understand and internalise the theory behind their practices. This was ironic because many Kurdish women pointed at male activists' patriarchal practices and claimed that those men could not understand the PKK's perspective on gender. Now I met with a male activist to listen to his perspective, and he claimed that female activists could not understand the ideology that supported women's emancipation.

I met with a second male activist, Roni, who had to flee to the UK for political reasons. Similar to Çıya, Roni was not pleased with Kurdish women's activism in London. However, Roni said that the source of the issue was not being able to practise the ideology of the movement within the UK system. Roni summarised the main issue as follows:

> The movement and the struggle is askew here... There is no place for our movement and struggle in this system. We have women's assemblies, we have struggles, aims, but our working places are quite limited. In the homeland we rule a council, of course, we apply the co-chairpersonship system there. In Rojava practices shape theories, but here we do not have any practices which force us to produce a theory. (Roni)

Roni accepted that the movement's perspective on gender was important, but he underlined that they had issues in practising the ideology in Britain. The main reason behind this was that their practice was limited within the organisation only. Unlike in the homeland, where the councils were governed by the Kurds, and the movement's ideology could be practised, in Britain, Kurdish activists could not find any place apart from the organisation to practise their ideology.

The third male activist I met was Siyar who is the first-generation male political migrant, . Compared with Roni and Çıya, during our conversations about patriarchy, Siyar criticised himself. He had been in a struggle to get rid of patriarchal behaviours since he had been working as a human rights activist in Istanbul when he noticed that, unwittingly, he spoke loudly to women. I observed that unlike many male activists, Siyar had good relations with women activists. Siyar's approach to women evoked a statement by Hunnicutt (2009) of theories of patriarchy where she highlighted that the concept of patriarchy ignored differences among men, treating men as a singular group. Indeed, I noticed that Kurdish men did not react to women's activism as a singular group. Unlike Roni and Çıya, who analysed women's situation in general and criticised Kurdish women's activism in London, during our conversations, Siyar acknowledged the existence of patriarchy in the organisation and said that women activists worked hard in the organisation. Besides their activism, they worked hard when they were at home. They could not share their responsibilities of caring for their children with their husbands. For example, women participated in activities, but they had to leave early as they must fetch their children from school.

Similar to what Siyar told me, I observed that Kurdish male activists were more relaxed in their responsibilities to their families. In a rally, where the UK visit by the president of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, was protested by the Kurdish activists, I noticed that the number of protesters decreased at approximately 2:00 pm. When I asked why specifically women left the area, the response was indicative of Kurdish women's daily life and their responsibilities. Kurdish women activists had to leave the protest because they had to fetch their children from school. I also witnessed a telephone conversation with one of my participants who did not want to leave. She anxiously asked one of her close friends to fetch her son from school, while her husband, who was also in the demonstration, was seemingly unconcerned about who would fetch his son from school.

To summarise, based on this research, I found that although the movement emphasised the importance of women's emancipation and had improved strategies to support women's visibility and emancipation, in practice, activists had difficulties in abandoning patriarchal behaviours. Analysing patriarchy places us in discussions about whether feminism should be free from nationalism as nationalism is detrimental to women's emancipation (Grewal and Kaplan, 2006, Alarcon et al., 1999, and Enloe and McClintock, 1991). However, drawing certain borders between women's emancipation and nationalism is not easy as this relation is more complex and different in the Third World (Al-Ali and Pratt, 2011). Women perceive feminism and nationalism differently as their relation to national movements and women's movements are different. The forms of patriarchy that women encounter and their reactions to them differ as a result of how they perceive patriarchy.

At this stage, I felt that questioning how women negotiated with patriarchy was as vital as analysing patriarchy in organisations. Kandiyoti (2004) analysed women's reaction to patriarchy and pointed out that women activists in nationalist movements might feel compelled to express their gender concerns as well. They might, however, have to self-censor their radical demands (Kandiyoti, 2004). This, though, seemed to be a way of bargaining with patriarchy (Kandiyoti, 1988, p. 275). Bargaining with patriarchy does not only refer to incorporating with patriarchy as Kandiyoti (1998) underlined that the nature of patriarchal systems can be captured in their class-specific, temporal specificity, and revealed through systematic analyses of women's coping mechanisms. These analyses can also show how women counter, incorporate, adapt, and conflict with different sources, rights, and commitments. Kandiyoti's study and

analyses were important to encourage further analyses as she motivated me to analyse Kurdish women activists' reactions to patriarchy.

In line with this, my research revealed that Kurdish women's responses to patriarchy did not only display bargaining with patriarchy. Kandiyoti (1988) was right as she underlined how women's coping mechanism with patriarchy includes challenging, conforming, accommodating and struggling. However, bargaining with patriarchy does not cover all those actions of women across patriarchy. Therefore, I grouped women's reactions to patriarchy as: dealing with patriarchy, internalising patriarchy and challenging patriarchy. However, those groups were not disjointed but intersected sometimes. This meant that a Kurdish woman who had a deal with patriarchy might also challenge it.

6.3.1.1. Dealing With Patriarchy

Dealing with patriarchy is more about women's conscious strategy to appear in national movements. However, women's conscious strategy about how they appear in movements does not mean these women chose this strategy among many other options. To clarify, women's presence in a national movement may not be easy for every woman as their community and traditional families disallow women from taking part in those movements. Those women choose ways to make their participation in national movements' more acceptable by the community. Appearing in the national movements through traditional roles like as being mothers is a way that is applied by women. As mentioned in Chapter Three, scholars, such as Alison (2009), Parker et al. (1992), Heckman and Gelder (2011) and Çağlayan (2009) discussed how motherhood facilitates women's presence in national movements, and how women use their motherhood status as a way to bargain with patriarchy. Çağlayan (2009) analysed the effect of the concept of motherhood on Kurdish women's involvement in the movement and their activism. She underlined that gender equality was emphasised in constitutions of Kurdish political parties. However, women's gender identity was not considered independently from women's status as mothers. Indeed, Arin, who was an activist in a pro-Kurdish political party in Turkey in the 1990s, explained their issue in those years: 'women who were seen as mother and sister were never seen as comrades'. I asked Arin whether Kurdish women had become comrades yet. She replied, 'Certainly, we became comrades, even we are commanders.' To update Çağlayan's findings, in accordance with what

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Arin told me, I did not observe any women who appeared in the movement through national motherhood or sisterhood. The question was whether women used other methods to bargain with patriarchy.

Dicle's life-story gave an indication of the methods women have used to appear in nationalist movements. Dicle grew up in Peshmerga camps on the border of Iran and Iraq and stated that she always wanted to be a guerrilla. When I asked why, she replied as follows:

> I love freedom. I love the fact that entering the men's world, that was very interesting for me. And I wanted to be like other women guerrillas, to sit in men's meetings and have a cigarette. (Dicle)

Freedom was related to entering the men's world for Dicle. She hated every sign of womanhood – makeup, colourful clothes etc. She wanted to step out of her femininity by wearing guerrilla clothes and carrying *tasbih*. She even had a gun that she never used. She described her attitudes as a feeling of power. Although Dicle stated that she was 16-17 years old when she had those thoughts and that her lifestyle, thinking and feelings had changed, I observed that she still admired a mannish appearance. When she was talking about the person she wanted to be when she was a teenager, I noticed that she was still excited. I defined her excitement about the mannish behaviours that she claims she abandoned as 'hidden patriarchal codes'. According to hidden patriarchal codes, women might believe that they broke the patriarchal mentality in their minds and were in a struggle against masculinity. Women may stop carrying symbols of masculinity, they may be inclined to create an image of non-masculine appearance, and they may also emphasise that they challenge masculinity. However, women may still carry elements of masculine understanding which they might not even confess to themselves. Women's body language, the way they show their feelings, and the selection of words that they use may be an indication of the masculinity that they have.

Connel and Masserschmidt (2005) rightly emphasised that masculinity is only framed under a heteronormative conception of gender, which mainly focuses on the differences between males and females and ignores their exclusion within gender categories. Some Kurdish women in London still use masculinity against other Kurdish women. Sara, for example, noted that even though women's presence in the struggle was important, some women, willingly or unwillingly, dressed like a man and their attitudes were quite mannish. They thought that they

would be more respected through their masculine appearance. Sara warned one of the women activists whom she described as being masculine.

> I told her, Heval, you try to be like a man. What about women's perspective. You may like to dress like this but you just overdo it, trying to be like one of them. You always speak with men, sit with men, I have never seen you while you are speaking with a woman. I am not convinced by your talking about women's perspective. (Sara)

It was interesting to see that even though the movement supported women's presence and criticised patriarchal attitudes, some women activists participated in organisations with masculine behaviours and appearance. Kurdish women's inclination to be masculine was not groundless. The community viewed masculine women as being strong women. Kurdish women might have considered that their masculine appearance facilitated attaining power that they did not have before. As mentioned earlier, on the one hand, some Kurdish women activists view patriarchy as being the result of the system that must be demolished. On the other hand, some Kurdish women activists noticed that the patriarchal system consisted of labyrinths of power dynamics (Hunnicut, 2009) where women hold the least power. Instead of demolishing patriarchy to get rid of the oppression of women collectively, they preferred to use power to reduce the oppression on them individually. They imitated the Kurdish men to attain power. In this sense, Hunnicult (2009) was correct in her claim that violence against women cannot be understood by considering the formula of the oppressor men and the oppressed women. The power of the patriarchal system is used by men and women in varying degrees. The power that Kurdish women aim to obtain through their masculine appearance would bring those women more respect.

A second-generation Kurdish woman, Jiyan, helped me to analyse Kurdish women's masculine tendency from another perspective. Similar to Sara, Jiyan criticised masculine women in the organisation. However, in her criticism, Jiyan included herself when she spoke about masculine women. Although I did not observe that Jiyan had any masculine attitudes, she admitted that when she participated in political activities, she dressed differently. Jiyan preferred to wear black jeans, black boots, a green jacket, tied her hair back, and did not use any makeup. When I asked why she goes to demonstrations in this style, she replied that she felt more secure. Jiyan stated that she was not the only woman who wore these clothes and that many Kurdish women

attended demonstrations dressed in that way. Jiyan explained why Kurdish women activists preferred to have a masculinist appearance during demonstrations:

> I think Kurdish women's masculinity is related to media and social media. There is a sexual interest in Kurdish women fighters. Look, they wear military uniforms; they hold weapons like men. Maybe, this affects Kurdish women in diasporas. They may think that I need to be like a man to be accepted. Ideologically, women's freedom is not like this. Women's freedom aims to demolish Western sexist, fascist, capitalist interest, but I do not know how our women's masculinity can be demolished. (Jiyan)

Indeed, Kurdish women have appeared in international media. The BBC, for example, used the headline: 'Kurdish women fighting Islamic State in Syria' (5 September 2014). Approximately a month later, the women's magazine Marie Clare reported Kurdish women's fights as news under the headline of: 'YPJ Soldiers fighting ISIS' (1 October 2014). Besides reporting Kurdish women's armed struggles, the media highlighted the victories of Kurdish women against ISIS. Over the course of time, the Western media emphasised the significant roles of Kurdish women in the war. The Guardian reported that the Kurds' victory in Kobane, the town in Rojava, was because of brave Kurdish women: 'At least according to this report, Kobane did not fall due to its brave Kurdish women' (The Guardian, 30 October 2014). Five years later, the same newspaper featured the headline: 'Kurdish female fighters are once again pawns in a bigger political game' (Temelkuran, The Guardian, 22 October 2019).

In line with this, Jiyan stated that Kurdish women fighters' victories affected Kurdish women activist's appearance in London. They tended to wear clothes that reminded them of female fighters in Rojava. Even though Jiyan preferred to appear in masculine clothes during demonstrations, she was not comfortable with the news that was focused on fighters' armed struggles only. Jiyan affirmed Dirik's claim (2018) that these portrayals erased the political nature of women's struggle by omitting the ideological reasons that motivate those women to be involved in the fight. According to Jiyan, Kurdish women have been fighting for freedom which could be achieved through demolishing sexist capitalism, which was not evident in the news.

In summary, entering the nationalist movements through motherhood and sisterhood was not evident in the Kurdish organisations in London. Instead, some women activists preferred to be

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masculine in the belief that it facilitated their presence in the organisation. I identified two reasons for this belief: being respected and the effect of social media and mainstream media.

6.3.1.2. Internalising Patriarchy

Internalising patriarchy is another coping mechanism for women in relation to patriarchy. Unlike dealing with patriarchy, where women consciously react to it, internalising patriarchy is more about women's unconscious support of patriarchy. The main reason behind their support of patriarchy is that they adopt it in their lives and are sometimes not able to identify their approach as patriarchal. To clarify, as mentioned earlier, Kurdish male activists had difficulty putting the movement's perspective on gender into practice. Based on this study, I found that some women activists were in a similar situation to the male activists as these women internalised patriarchy. Kurdish women activists' internalisation of patriarchy was evident in two places: in their family lives and in the organisation. Firstly, Kurdish women appeared to be in a dilemma between supporting the movement's perspective on gender and practising this perspective in their daily lives. The first issue arises in how they raise their children. Avaşin stated that women raise their children differently according to the children's gender. Women were more tolerant of their male children than their female children. Raising children differently according to their gender should have been common knowledge among Kurdish women as seminars about this had been organised at the Kurdish Community Centre. Berivan gave an example of women who admitted that even though they attended seminars, they could not break the perception that male children had superiority.

> They say we cannot do this. Even though I have been in many seminars, I know this perfectly, I have been in this movement for a long time. I cannot break this. I do discriminate between my male and female kids. I mean I can say to my son you can go out for 2-3 hours, but if my daughter goes, I call her 10 times. Because I was raised like this. (Berivan)

Raising children differently according to their gender was probably a common issue in the community as the KCC organised seminars to prevent this issue. Even Kurdish women who had been in the movement for a long time and knew the PKK's perspective on gender might have had difficulty breaking the traditional perception. The reason behind the gender discrimination among children might have been related to protecting honour. As I have

discussed in an earlier chapter, families might try to control the sexuality of female members to prevent them breaking honour codes (Meetoo and Mirza, 2007). Mothers might be trying to protect their daughters from being victims of possible honour crimes.

Kurdish women activists' relations with their husbands were another way to analyse their internalisation of patriarchy. I met with Solin twice. The first interview took approximately one hour, and Solin did not finish her life story as she had many stories to talk about. She ended every story with the words: 'My life can be a book'. We arranged another interview which took more than an hour. Solin had been working actively in Halkevi since its establishment. Solin had had many conflicts with her husband because of her activism. During our conversation, it was as though Solin was putting her self-criticisms into words. She mentioned her weaknesses and powers during her struggles with her husband. One day, when Solin was about to leave home to participate in a demonstration, she noticed that the house's lock did not work. Her husband did not want to stay at home as he planned to go to a social club. After discussions, they both stayed at home, but her husband sneaked out when Solin was smoking on the terrace. The next day, 10-15 women activists were smoking in the organisation. They were surprised by Solin's absence from the demonstration as she never missed any demonstrations. Solin explained frankly what happened. The women laughed at Solin, which made her angry. Solin's response to the women revealed how women activists internalised patriarchy in their family lives.

> I asked them, 'Why you are laughing? What is odd to you? You are the same. All of us sit and stand up according to what a man says. We serve men.' One of the friends admitted. She said, 'You are right, if I am not at home evenings…' The other said, 'I still wash my husband's feet.' I said them: 'Do you see? Why do you hide these? Why do you not share these? You have been in this Women's Assembly for 15 years, in this organisation for 20-25 years. If we do not belong to ourselves, have been serving someone, there is no meaning for us to come to this struggle.' (Solin)

Solin confessed that there were clashes between her gender perspective and her practices in daily life. Solin's frank confession led other women activists to talk about their lives. They had hidden their patriarchal family lives until they spoke with Solin. Walby (1997) stated that private patriarchy is misleading in that it is the exclusion of women from the public sphere. Patriarchal relations outside of the household are important for forming patriarchal relations

within it. However, Solin's story indicates that Kurdish women's relations outside of the household did not overcome patriarchy inside their households. Kurdish women divide their private and public lives and the patriarchies within those spheres, instead of applying interaction between them. This might have been because those women internalised patriarchy in the household and preferred to hide it to be able to maintain appearances. On the other hand, Solin, who affirmed Walby's claim mentioned above, allowed her relations outside of the household to shape her private life. Hence, she questioned her experiences on the day of the rally.

Women activists' internalisation of patriarchy was evident also in their relations with other activists in organisations. Berivan emphasised that even though the Roj Women's Assembly was quite strong, some women activists felt the need for men's approval. Those women knew perfectly that their decision to be involved was right, but they still asked men for approval. According to Berivan, specifically Kurdish women from rural areas of Kurdistan perceived that men were right. They viewed men's opinions as though they were facts.

Newroz elaborated on Berivan's claims by giving more specific examples. Newroz, who was a first-generation Kurdish woman who migrated to London in the late 1980s, had been working in the Kurdish organisation since the beginning of the 1990s. Newroz had taken on many duties during her activism. She was a chairperson in the 1990s. She had many difficulties as a female chairperson. In Newroz's words, the community did not see her as a woman; they accepted her as a woman who had become mannish. To them, a mannish woman is a woman who is strong in terms of willpower, physical appearance, and decision-making. This kind of person is regarded as someone who acts as a man, not a woman. She was respected as if she were a man, not as a woman. In a meeting that Newroz attended as a co-chairperson with a male co-chairperson, she spoke about an issue. A woman from the Roj Women Association interrupted her speech and said, 'Heval, why do you not allow him to speak. Let him speak'. Newroz explained her friend's reaction as: 'She finds his speech right; she finds his decisions more effective. Because he is a man'. Hooks (2014) called the internalised sexism 'the enemy within'. Hooks stated that women know that patriarchal thinking has socialised females to see men as being superior, to see themselves only in competition with one another for patriarchal approval and to regard each other with hatred, fear, and jealousy.

Another way of internalising patriarchy was volunteering to do a task which was described as being a women's job by my participants. I heard the same story from a male and a female participant. Roni's male version of the meeting on planning the Newroz reception could be regarded as an example of Kurdish women's internalisation of patriarchy. On the other hand, Arin mentioned the same meeting and, according to Arin's female version of the planning of the event, Kurdish women activists challenged patriarchy that day. Kurdish activists from all assemblies had a meeting to plan the Newroz reception. Roni stated that while they were discussing the distribution of tasks, he noticed that the Women's Assembly took the duty of preparing food for the reception. Roni rejected the plan by stating that:

> If women take this duty just because they are women, this is a wrong understanding. All activists can prepare foods, but female activists were volunteers for this task. If this was urged because of necessity, it is fine. But if they have that mentality, this is wrong. Even, if there is a necessity, we should say female activist should not do this to overcome that mentality. The spokeswoman told me, 'Heval, don't you want us to come to the reception?' I was in a struggle for them, but she was not aware of this. She considers that coming to the reception physically is a representation of women. As a method, she plans to come to the reception by preparing foods. This is not gain, this is a step back for our struggle. (Roni)

Roni was not comfortable with the segregation of gendered duties. Roni claimed that women volunteered to prepare foods because they considered that women should take this duty as, in the traditional Kurdish communities, women were excluded from the public sphere by giving them household work. Roni considered that women should take other duties, apart from catering, to challenge the traditional mentality. However, Kurdish women rejected Roni's proposal as they believed that food preparation would facilitate their appearance in the public sphere.

On the other hand, Arin, who was in the same meeting, claimed that this task was given to women by saying: 'Let the Roj women prepare foods'. This was not the only case. Arin said that there was an understanding that women's place was in the kitchen and women were expected to prepare foods. Arin was angry about the categorisation of the task according to gender. This was an example of patriarchy of which Arin was aware. Similar to Arin, many women activists were aware of patriarchy in the organisation and had been challenging it. Hence, in this study Kurdish women's challenge to patriarchy is the third way in which they

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react to it. In the following section, I will discuss Kurdish women's challenge to patriarchy further.

6.3.1.3. Challenging Patriarchy

Even though, as I mentioned earlier, some women prefer to deal with patriarchy to facilitate their participation in the movement or to internalise patriarchy unconsciously, in these reactions, women do not see patriarchy as a real threat to their gender identity and are not harsh towards patriarchy. Challenging patriarchy is slightly different, as women can view patriarchy as a compulsion to their gender identity and fight against it. Unlike internalising and dealing with patriarchy, women are entirely conscious of their challenge to patriarchy. Kurdish women activists have also been challenging patriarchy individually and as a group.

Kurdish women's individual challenge to patriarchy occurs mainly between a woman and other male or female activists. The tension between activists derives mainly from interfering in a woman activist's activities by using political discourses. I have used Sara's story to clarify this point. According to what Sara told me, some of the male activists interfered with women whom they thought dressed differently from Kurdish women in the community. These men intervene in the way women dress by using political terms as they do not want to draw criticism to themselves. For example:

> Sometimes a man can say to you, Heval, you are the most bourgeois Heval in the community. He means you are dressing like... I replied to him, 'Do you not like my dressing? Next time when I go shopping, I will ask your opinion.' (Sara)

Sara's dress codes were subject to a male activist's criticism. His reaction was not rare; as stated by Yuval-Davis (as cited in Al-Ali, 2010), gender relations were central to the diasporic communities, where women were regarded as being border guards. Specific codes of women's dress and sexuality portrayed women who were 'proper' and were carriers of a diasporic community's honour. The male activist's aim was to control how Sara dressed by using political terms, such as 'bourgeois'. His reaction to Sara's clothes was an example of collective appropriation. As distinguished by Guillaumin (as cited in Walby, 1997), there are differences between collective appropriation and private appropriation. Women who could escape from private appropriation were likely to be subject to collective appropriation. Restrictions on

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women's sexuality and bodies are a patriarchal way to control women. Women who escaped from the family's restrictions were subject to public forms of patriarchal control (Guillaumin as cited in Walby, 1997). Sara showed her anger at the activist's expression with a satirical response. Sara's response was a form of struggle against this mentality.

Kurdish women's attempts to challenge patriarchy could also occur collectively. The Roj Women Assembly, which was in the Kurdish Community Centre's building, worked with different mixed-gender assemblies. Kurdish women from the Roj Women's Assembly sometimes found themselves challenging patriarchy as a group. For example, Newroz mentioned the same meeting where a woman activist's behaviour was assessed by five male and one female activist. Newroz was angry when she learnt about the meeting. Newroz spoke to other female activists and they went to the meeting room to stop the meeting. Firstly, they spoke to the female activist, who attended the meeting without informing the women activists, and told her that she could not represent the Women's Assembly as there was no gender equality in the meeting. Then they argued with male activists by stating that:

> You were about to make a decision about a woman; you do not have a right to do this; you cannot make a decision about a woman. You may have a thought and you can forward it to the Women's Assembly. The Women's Assembly speaks about the woman's situation with that woman and makes a decision, then informs you about the decision. Today, you as five men meet and take a woman friend with you and try to have this kind of decision, this is a serious issue. They tried to deny it, they could not advocate what they did. They said this was just a pre-meeting. No, you do not have to do a pre-meeting. There is the women's movement here. If the women's movement did not exist, you would take some women and organise a meeting. You cannot evaluate a woman with your male perspective. (Newroz)

The women's reaction to the men's approach to women had an outcome. As Newroz said, they were successful, and the men could not finish the meeting. The male activists could not organise a meeting to assess women's behaviours without women. Newroz explained the reason for their success was the collectiveness in the women's movement. In this case, Kurdish women struggled against patriarchy as a group, and they were successful.

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6.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I analysed what Kurdish women demand through their activism. It is seen that Kurdish women have dual demands in the form of intra- and extra-organisational demands. I highlighted that intra-organisational demands are more about patriarchy in mixed-gendered organisations which were founded by Turkey's Kurds. Even though many of the participants stated that the nationalist movement broke the traditional life and patriarchy in society, they also mentioned patriarchy in the organisations. Kurdish women encounter patriarchy as an individual reaction of a man or a group and assembly. Kurdish women react to patriarchy in three ways. They deal with patriarchy, internalise patriarchy or challenge patriarchy. Dealing with patriarchy is one of the Kurdish women's coping mechanisms with patriarchy. Kurdish women consciously have a deal with patriarchy to appear in national movements. Internalising patriarchy is slightly different as it refers to Kurdish women's unconscious reaction to patriarchy. Kurdish women support patriarchy unconsciously as they consider their reaction is a part of the culture. Lastly, challenging patriarchy is women's conscious struggle against patriarchy. Challenging patriarchy is used in cases where Kurdish women are aware of patriarchy and struggle against it as an individual or as a group.

Kurdish women's extra-organisational demands are more about which issues have been raised by Kurdish women to be heard by people, states and organisations. In this chapter, it is seen that Kurdish women's prioritisation of demand show differences according to the type of organisation and the state territory they are from. Turkey's Kurdish women are more engaged with political developments related to Kurds and women, while Iraqi and Iranian Kurdish women mainly challenge patriarchy in the community and aim to help women with their issues such as domestic violence, honour killings, adaptation, and the FGM. In the next chapter, I will continue to talk about differences among Kurdish women.

CHAPTER SEVEN: KURDISH WOMEN'S POLITIZATION THROUGH THEIR GENDER, NATIONAL AND RELIGIOUS IDENTITIES

7.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I will explore transnational feminist critiques of universal sisterhood, which argue that universal sisterhood is not possible because women face different oppressions, depending on their multiple identities (Walby et al., 2012; Choo and Ferree, 2010; Cockburn, 1998; Conway, 2011, 2013; Hancock, 2007; Kaplan and Grewal, 1999; McCall, 2005; Walby, 2007; Yuval-Davis, 1997, 2006; Bhopal, 1997; Mohanty, 2003, Patil, 2011; Waylen, 1996). In this chapter, I concur with choosing transnational feminists who emphasise the intersectionality of women's multiple identities, such as ethnicity, race, and class in analysing different oppressions on Kurdish women activists that led them to conceptualise feminism and nationalism differently.

To analyse why the universal sisterhood is not possible, in the first part of this chapter, I will analyse differences among Kurdish women by considering their multiple identities. Despite being from the same ethnicity and race by definition, Kurdish women live under different non-Kurdish national states, which have shaped their life stories, experiences, and perspectives. In Section 7.2.1, I will analyse how these differences can affect Kurdish women's approach to nationalism and their activism. The function of religion is seen as another factor that differentiates Kurdish women, as I will explore in Section 7.2.2. Based on this study, I found that religion was particularly instrumental in differentiating the lives and activism of Kurdish women in Turkey. Alevi Kurdish women generally have more social freedom than Sunni Kurdish women.

Kurdish women have also been oppressed in different ways than their Western peers. This also led me to question the possibility of universal sisterhood as different oppressions on women resulted in their different approaches to nationalism. In Section 7.3 I will mention the negotiation between Kurdish women and some Western feminists. What needs to be stated here is that in terms of goals, interests, and analyses, neither Western feminist discourse nor Western feminist political practice is distinctive or homogeneous (Mohanty, 2003). I do not intend to view Western feminists as monolithic. I used 'Western feminists' to refer to non-Kurdish

feminist groups that are mainly English but have many members from different nationalities and meet with Kurdish women in some activities.

Kurdish feminists in London have been criticised by some feminist groups, whom they meet in some activities, in terms of their engagement with Kurdish nationalism. In this section, I will focus on how Kurdish women activists discuss their engagement with Kurdish nationalism with feminist groups. This will be examined in three sections. Section 7.3.1. focuses on why Kurdish women emphasise their loyalty to the male leader; as a result, some feminist groups criticise them for following the male leader. Section 7.3.2. is more about discussions on whether nationalism is antithetical to feminism and focuses on why Kurdish women from Turkey's Kurdistan raise their gender and national demands together. Kurdish women's relation to militarism and their discussions with some feminist groups is given in Section 7.3.3. Lastly, Jineoloji, which was founded by Kurdish women with the claim of being women's science, is addressed. Jineoloji is viewed as the response of Kurdish women to discussions with some Western feminists.

7.2. Differences in Interpreting Politicisation among Kurdish Women

7.2.1. Kurdish Women's Different Approaches to Nationalism

In the previous chapter, I explained the heterogeneous demands of communities of Kurdish women according to their geographical distribution. For example, Iranian and Iraqi Kurdish women fought against FGM, while this was not a common practice or issue among Kurdish women in Turkey. Other differences between Kurdish women relate to their politicisation. In this study, I have shown that Kurdish women's experiences and their situations in their homelands were related to the extent to which they were politicised. In this section, I will examine specifically how being from different homelands affects Kurdish women's politicisation and their engagement with nationalism and militarism.

Kurdish women from different parts of Kurdistan were politicised in different ways, which was reflected in their approaches to and engagement with political activism. The participants' contributions illustrated how they viewed differences in Kurdish women's activism. For instance, Sara, a first-generation single and childless Kurdish woman from Turkey, observed

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differences between women fighters from the PKK and the *Peshmerga* in Iraqi Kurdistan when she worked for a German-French television channel as an interpreter. Sara described her impression of women fighters from the PKK as: 'It was quite interesting to see how they have self-confidence, how their attitudes were, how men cannot interfere with them'. Sara had difficulties interpreting for *Peshmerga* women, as they spoke a Sorani dialect, which Sara had difficulty understanding fluently. They obtained help with the translation from a young male fighter who was approximately 25 years old, who interpreted for a *Peshmerga* woman who had been fighting for 25 years. Sara understood when the man changed the women's words or did not translate everything that she said, and she caught him telling the woman: "They asked you that have you felt equal to men during your 25 years in the *Peshmerga*, but I will respond to them instead of you". Sara then interjected, and the man was shocked when he understood that she could understand him. Sara said that neither he nor any other man could say these words to a woman from the PKK, as the PKK had significant respect for women, while the *Peshmerga* interviewee had been belittled by her male *Peshmerga* colleague after dedicating her life to the organisation for decades, having lost her husband and children to the conflict.

Sara's observation parallels the finding by Bengio (2016) that Iraqi Kurds are more traditional than those of Turkey. According to Sarya's story, this division also affects Kurdish women's position within movements. As mentioned in Chapter Two, traditional Kurdish Movements, such as the KDP and the PUK in Iraq, did not welcome women's participation in military activism; thus, a male *Peshmerga* fighter interfered with a woman fighter to direct her speech. As discussed in the literature review, in some schools in these movements, women face hegemonic masculinity, which aims to suppress women's voices.

However, leftist Kurdish movements, such as the PKK, ideologically purported to support women's emancipation, which was why Sara claimed that the male *Peshmerga* combatant talking over the woman being interviewed would not be accepted if he were a member of the PKK. However, the issue of feminism and nationalism is complex and nebulous, and it must first be asked how many nationalist movements support women's emancipation. As discussed earlier, even though the PKK supported women's freedom, Turkey's Kurdish women activists have also encountered patriarchy in organisations and reacted to it in different ways. Secondly, this understanding creates a view where Kurdish women are seen as passive receivers of political freedom, such as the PKK protecting women and offering them freedom. Contrary to this view, many of Turkey's Kurdish women who participated in this study stated that their

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movement supported women's emancipation, but no one can give freedom to women on a silver plate. Kurdish women have also been fighting for their freedom within nationalist movements.

Sara claimed that the Iraqi *Peshmerga* women did not challenge the male *Peshmerga* as they were not politicised as much as female fighters in the PKK. On the other hand, Iraqi Kurdish women found Turkey's Kurdish women's politicisation questionable. Heval, for example, stated that she visited Diyarbakir in Turkey and noticed that the highly politicised nature of Kurdish women in such areas resulted in their dismissing their demands.

> From what I see, I see that they are very active, very proactive in trade unions, in political parties, in generally organising. I mean, I like that aspect. But for me, I am always scared about too much politicisation of women. That they will forget about personal, individual lives. You see what I mean. So, I couldn't figure out if all politicisation affects their demands for personal liberties. You see what I mean… In Bashur, we have a lot of women's representation, but it does not do anything for women if they became men in the process. That's why I am always sceptical. (Heval)

Heval believes that without personal freedom, which women must have, being politicised for nationalist demands and obtaining national freedom ultimately do not bring freedom to women. To understand why Heval was sceptical about women's politicisation in Kurdish Nationalist Movements, it is necessary to consider what Kurdish women had experienced in the homeland. As highlighted before, the Kurds in Turkey experienced the absolute denial of Kurdishness, while Iraqi Kurds received political and cultural permissiveness (Harris, 1977). The no-fly zone after 1991 and the formation of a provisional Kurdistan Regional Government from 1992 onwards fostered nationalist expression and aspirations of nationhood among the Kurds of Iraqi Kurdistan, unlike neighbouring Kurdish communities in Iran, Syria, and Turkey.

However, according to my participants from Iraqi Kurdistan, having self-governance did not change Kurdish women's situation positively. From 2003 onwards, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq witnessed the mushrooming of NGOs, with Kurdish women being recruited as managers, directors, and officers. Iraqi Kurdish women, such as Heval, Hevi, and Havin, explained in detail how working in NGOs and official institutions distracted Kurdish women from their gender struggles. Kurdish women who were fighting for their ideologies before 2003 changed

their demands according to the perspectives and goals of NGOs and political parties. What I was commonly told by my participants was that even though Iraqi Kurdish women have been increasingly visible in the political arena, their perspectives on their gender identities have been less articulated. They commonly cited having official governance as the reason for the relative decline in Kurdish women's struggles. They claimed that Kurdish women's activism for their emancipation was misdirected by the nationalist movement. I found in this study that these experiences of Kurdish women were linked to the type of activism in which they engaged.

Regarding the stories of Sara and Heval, it could be said that Sara was a highly politicised woman who attended international meetings, such as conferences and receptions, to explain what the Kurds wanted, and Heval helped Kurdish women on a personal level, to include them in cultural projects, such as poetry writing. Heval focused on Kurdish women's gender identity as well as their national identities. Heval's approach to identity could be an example of 'nested identities' (Brewer, 1999, p. 190) as Heval's gender identity was super-ordinate, and her national identity was sub-group or sub-part. The two identities might function in a complementary manner. The gender identity (superordinate) needed to secure inclusion in a large collective, while the Kurdish identity (sub-group identity) contributed to the need for differences within the larger social category (Brewer, 1999).

On the other hand, Sara conducted activism by highlighting her dual identity (Brewer, 1999). According to this explanation, when both identities are salient, the person holds some form of dual identification, which reflects how inclusively those identities are defined for that person. The dual identities of Kurdish women from Turkey's Kurdistan are also reflected in my observations. During my observations, I noticed that those Kurdish women attend feminist rallies with accessories that carry national symbols. For example, they attended the rally, 'Million Women Rise', with their red-green-yellow accessories, colours of the PKK's flag, as well as their purple accessories to symbolise feminism. In this way, they mix their gender and national identities through the accessories they wear. Kurdish women also participated in national fests like Newroz with national clothes and accessories. Kurdish women's specific choices of clothing in specific events evoke Giddens' (1991) claim where he stated that dress is a kind of regime, as in all cultures, clothing serves a specific purpose besides just covering one's body; it also serves as a means of symbolic exhibition and a channel for self-identity narratives to take on a physical form. In line with this, we need to consider the dress of the woman in the below picture (Figure 4.2), who attended Newroz in 2018 wearing national

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clothes, which were not her daily outfit, and the headscarf with the PKK's emblem which is how she identifies herself.

Figure 3 A Kurdish woman with the PKK flag on her headscarf at the Newroz celebration in Finsbury Park, 26 March 2018

What needs to be asked here is why Kurdish women from Turkey's Kurdistan emphasise their national identities even though they conduct gender-related activities. As mentioned widely in previous chapters, the political situation of Turkey and the Turkish government's attitudes to Kurds affected Kurdish women's activism in London. The oppression of identities directed Kurdish women's activism. Sarya explained the reasons for her political activism as follows:

> I would not like my national identity to take precedence over my gender identity. I would never want that. I would like to be only a woman – not only a woman, only a living creature. But I need to advocate my parts which have been oppressed. I have been wounded by my Kurdishness and my womanhood. Wherever I was injured I need to heal that part. I need to sort out my issues with the power, with the state, with the men. (Sarya)

Sarya explained that the demands that they raised were not a matter of choice. Kurdish women's national and gender identities have been oppressed, causing unhealed hurt emotions

for people. Kurdish women might have many other grievances, but their priority was to focus on healing hurt emotions. Thus, their gender and national identities have been more salient. Sarya believed the way to heal the hurt was to address the root problem, the power held by men and states. Thus, as Cho et al. (as cited in Weber, 2015) observed, issues that have sameness and differences related to power require an intersectional way of thinking. This entails conceiving categories as fluid and not rigid, always in the process of creating and being created by power. This means that nationalism and gender identities were salient for Sarya and other Kurdish women, but in the future, nationalism and gender **hurts** might be healed, and other **hurts** might occur.

Another salient point from Sarya's quotation was that being in a fight for their identities was tiring for Kurdish women. Sarya expressed that she did not want to have any identities to fight for, which was why she just wanted to be a 'living creature'. During our conversation, Sarya mentioned a rally on International Women's Day when she decided not to join the cortege of Kurdish women or any other group; she chose to walk independently. She did not want to belong to any group on that day. She just wanted to participate in the rally individually. Sarya stated that this was the first time that she had enjoyed a rally. Sarya's story affirmed Heval's claim that the high level of politicisation of Turkey's Kurdish women caused them to forget their personal lives. Sarya was not happy to not focus on her personal life, but this was not her choice.

Unlike Iraqi Kurds, Turkey's Kurds were still fighting for national recognition. Kurdish women in Turkey still faced routine human rights breaches, and Sarya's eyes were filled with tears when she was talking about how her close friends lost their lives during their activism in Turkey. We paused the conversation as she was not able to speak for five minutes. Becoming a political activist was not easy, but as I mentioned in Chapter Six, Kurdish diaspora women felt obliged to be the voice of other Kurdish women who stayed in the homeland. Even though Sarya was emotionally and physically exhausted from the struggle, she continued her activism in London to be a voice for Kurdish women who stayed in the homeland. She mentioned that even though she enjoyed herself more when she did not join any group in the International Women's Day rally, she wore a *kufiyah*, which she would not normally wear on a daily basis, when she participated in rallies and demonstrations to emphasise her Kurdish identity.

What also needs to be underlined is that Kurdish women's different experiences in their homeland also shaped their approaches to militarism, war, and participation in armed groups. Kurdish women experienced decades of armed and political struggle in Iraq prior to gaining semi-autonomy but had failed to achieve major progress under the auspices of Kurdish Nationalism. Heval verbalised her scepticism of Kurdish women's future role in Rojava as follows:

> I think it is a very important thing that we also worry about. In so many revolutions women had a leading role, but after that when the revolution happens, women are either symbolically [present] in some places, but the majority continue to suffocate, which we worry about as well. Because it is still in transition in Rojava, it is still a project where we do not know how it will develop later. (Heval)

Heval was sceptical about how Kurdish women's lives would change after the revolution, based on Kurdish women's experiences in Iraqi Kurdistan. Similar to Heval, some Iraqi Kurdish women who participated in this study believed that nationalism overshadowed feminism. Their perspective was reflected in their activism in London. I have not seen many Iraqi Kurdish women in demonstrations related to Rojava, while Turkey's Kurdish woman activists in London were quite active in protesting the military operations.

To understand what those Kurdish women (from Turkey's Kurdistan) have emphasised, I focused on the slogans they shouted and those written on posters. The fieldwork of this study coincided with the Turkish Army's military operation in Afrin. Hence, the focus of Kurdish women was to raise their voices for the people in Afrin and Rojava. The Kurdish women's agenda was about the war, and their slogans were mainly linked to Kurdish women fighters in Rojava. Kurdish women activists showed their solidarity with the Kurdish Women's Army (the YPG), which had been fighting against ISIS in Syria, through their slogans, such as: 'We are YPG, YPG is us', 'Women Fight for Afrin', 'Jin, Jiyan, Azadi (women, life, freedom)'.

These slogans emphasised the victorious female fighters. For example, in the big poster shown in Figure 4.1 below, there were pictures of three female fighters – Arin, Avesta and Barin – with the slogan: 'With the spirit of Arin, Avesta and Barin, the Era's Resistance in Afrin will be victorious'. On the day the fieldwork for this research started, 7 March 2018, the news agency, ANHA, published its interviews with Kurdish women in Afrin. The women in Afrin said that they would dedicate International Women's Day (2018) to three female fighters –

Avesta, Barin and Arin – and they would greet this occasion in the spirit of these fighters and the resistance of free women. I argue that the Kurdish women's use of the pictures of the three female fighters, and their emphasis on the victories of these fighters, was not a coincidence. Simultaneously with the Afrin women's announcement, Kurdish women in London attended rallies, such as Million Women Rise, with the poster.

In another demonstration where people gathered to protest the Turkish Army's operation in Afrin, there was a big poster with the slogan 'Defend the People of Afrin' which demanded support for the Kurds in Afrin. This poster is linked with other big posters signed by Kurdish women in the UK with the slogans 'Defend Afrin for Women's Liberation' and 'Defending Afrin Means Defending the Women's Revolution'. These slogans could be read together to mean that the military operation would ruin women's liberation, which existed in Afrin and Rojava. Kurdish women's demands to stop military operations can be viewed as women's relation to militarism through feminism. Kurdish women are therefore drawing attention to women's situations in wars.

Figure 4 Kurdish women in the rally: 'Million Women Rise', 10 March 2018

Kurdish women from Turkey's Kurdistan who participated in the study mainly observed that the female fighters in Rojava had been changing the political structure, not only in the movement but also in the region. Therefore, victories against ISIS have been called a women's revolution. Unlike Kurdish women from Iraqi Kurdistan, who were sceptical about nationalist movements, Kurdish women from Turkey's part mainly stated that women's freedom would be achieved together with national freedom. Therefore, they do not see the PKK as an obstructer to their feminist demands, and they believe that after achieving national freedom, no one could take women's freedom back. There were two reasons behind this belief. Firstly, according to many of the Kurdish women from Turkey who participated in this study, the PKK is a gendered movement, and women's freedom would be achieved together with national freedom. Secondly, Kurdish women have been fighting for their demands, and they would protect their freedom. Berfe, for example, stated that:

'*After the Rojava revolution, no one can put women down. Kurdish women gained self-confidence. The rights were not given to us, we gained them. No one takes them back.*" (Berfe)

Berfe believes that Kurdish women have learnt many things during the struggle, and they are not the same people they were when they first participated in the movement. No one would give Kurdish women their freedom; rather, they fought for and took it, and no one could take back the achievements they gained through their struggle.

To summarise, as Al-Ali and Pratt (2011) stated, there are a variety of experiences relating to feminism and nationalism in the Middle East. Even though Kurdish women were from the same ethnicity, they expressed nationalism and feminism differently. Thus, Kurdish women's perception of politicisation differed depending on how they approached the relationship between feminism and nationalism. Their experiences and activism were not the same. Many participants from Turkey, for example, considered that Kurdish women's emancipation and national freedom went hand in hand. However, this study found that the activism of Kurdish women from Turkey's Kurdistan was not the same. Religion was an additional cultural factor that differentiated Kurdish women's experiences. Hence, in the following section, the effect of their political activism will be analysed.

7.2.2. The Effect of Religion on Political Activism in London

In this section, I will analyse how religion affects Kurdish women's activism in London. The starting point of this study was to explore Kurdish women's activism considering their multiple identities, of which Kurdish women's gender and national identities were the most salient in shaping their demands. However, I have investigated religion as a third identity that shaped Kurdish women's activism because, during the conversations, I noticed that Turkey's Kurdish women commonly talked about the impact of religion. This surprised me because before carrying out the fieldwork, I had not considered the function of religion in Kurdish women's movements, which were generally characterised by a secular orientation. Therefore, in this section, I have analysed how religion differentiated Kurdish women's activism.

Kurdish women's differentiations among themselves were based on discussions about being secular and more tolerant. Evin, a second-generation Kurdish woman, was one of my participants who frequently distinguished Kurdish women according to their beliefs. Evin claimed that Alevi women are more comfortable with being engaged in activism as they are less restricted by their families compared with Sunni Kurdish women.

> In Britain, Kurdish women are mostly of an Alevi background. Compared to Sunni-Muslim women, Alevi women have been less restricted in the community. Therefore, they have more self-confidence. Alevi women can be in the front and impose themselves when they talk about Kurdish women's consciousness. (Evin)

According to Evin, Sunni Kurds control women (even when they are activists) by using Islamic rules. This was surprising as the movement is secular. However, the movement's secular ideology does not mean that all activists were secular in their personal lives. As argued by Spivak (as cited in Weber, 2015, pp.29-30), practising secularism and being merely secular are not the same. A considerable number of Sunni Kurdish activists followed Islamic rules. Therefore, Evin claimed that Alevi Kurdish women have more self-confidence, and they are more at the forefront, as Alevi communities do not refer to traditional Islamic rules and mores. Similarly, Ronahi, who was also born in London, stated that she is an Alevi woman, and similar to most Kurdish Alevis, she was raised in a secular environment. She described Alevi women's lives as follows:

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We were raised as secular. There are some habits that emerged because of this. According to my observations, Alevi women are more relaxed. We are more comfortable in the family and among other men. (Ronahi)

According to Ronahi, Alevi Kurdish women could mingle in the community more easily as a result of practising secularism. Alevi women are more visible in the family and the community. Ronahi also made a comparison between the Kurdish women's situation in Britain and Europe by considering their religion. When Ronahi became an activist, she started to attend meetings in European countries, where she noticed that Kurdish women in Britain were freer than Kurdish women in other European countries. Ronahi thought that the reason for this was religion, as the Kurds in Europe were mainly Sunni Muslims, unlike in the UK, where the majority of Kurds were Alevis.

The question is how religious differences among Kurdish women affected their activism. Some participants in this study claimed that Sunni Kurdish women were more traditional and, thus, they were not as politically active as Alevi Kurdish women. I was also told that some Kurdish women activists used the term '*Muşlular*' (people from the city of Muş) when they talked about Sunni Muslim women, referring to a Sunni sect of Kurds from Muş. Some Kurdish women advised me to talk with them. I met with some women from Muş in a condolence meeting for a family member of an activist in the Kurdish Community Centre and invited them to take part in my study. They winced at my question and did not accept my invitation. I felt that they were not comfortable talking with a researcher. However, this response cannot be generalised as, during the fieldwork, I also met some Sunni Kurdish women who had self-confidence and were quite active.

Similar to Ronahi, Nudem who is a first-generation Kurdish woman from Turkey's Kurdistan, also mentioned that religion differentiated Kurdish women activists. Nudem explained her point by mentioning a scene she had encountered. Approximately six years before, Nudem and her mother had joined Kurdish activists to go_to Germany from France to attend political activities. They were in the coach, which was rented by the Kurdish organisation in France and heading to Germany. Nudem described the scene in the coach. There were five women, while the rest of the passengers were male. A male activist approached Nudem and her mother and said: 'It is really good you are attending the meeting'. Nudem replied to him, 'Your wife can attend too", to which the male activist responded, 'Our women cannot come'. According to

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Nudem, this male activist was a Sunni, and his response showed how Kurdish Sunni women's lives were different from those of Kurdish Alevi women.

These reflections indicate that despite being from the same ethnicity and race, Kurdish women have different perspectives and experiences. Living under different state territories is the significant factor that differentiated Kurdish women's experiences. As a result of having diverse experiences, Kurdish women formed different perspectives. Thus, Kurdish women's approaches to nationalism and militarism were different. In this study, I have also shown that Kurdish women from the same country are also oppressed on various levels. In the case of Turkey, Alevi Kurdish women are oppressed more through their religion. Differences among Kurdish women's religions also affect how much they engage in activism. Kurdish women's different oppressions on their gender, national and religious identity is a significant example of the intersectional approach as it analyses intragroup disparities to highlight the experiences of women who have been marginalised multiple times (Choo and Ferree, 2010). Even though Kurdish women have experienced diverse forms of oppression, these disparate experiences made us wonder how women may come together to fight the rigid patriarchy that is the basis of the universal sisterhood.

In this sense, Kurdish women's experiences are also important to validate transnational feminism, which claims that women experience diverse forms of oppression, including those related to sexuality, gender, class, race, and nationality (Conway, 2013). However, some of these distinctions may overlap, and some may become more obvious than others (Yuval-Davis, 2006). This study found that Kurdish women's gender, national and religious identities have been salient in their activism; some of these identities overlapped or have been priorities at different levels. Even though this study was fed by transnational feminism theoretically, it differs from transnational feminism regarding women's relation to nationalism. Transnational feminists consider women's national identity when they emphasise women's multiple identities. However, they ignore the role of women's national identity in women's experience by claiming that feminism should be free from nationalism. This study found that Kurdish women's national identity has a significant effect on their activism and should not be ignored.

Along with theoretical debates about women and nationalism, what was surprising in the fieldwork was that on a practical level Kurdish woman activists were also discussing their relation to nationalism with their Western peers. In the next section, I have analysed how

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Kurdish women differentiated themselves from Western feminists, considering Kurdish and Western feminists' approaches to women's relations with nationalism.

7.3. Kurdish Women and Western Feminists' Different Approaches to Nationalism

Western feminists are often insensitive to the very real and active oppression faced by women from non-Western cultural backgrounds. Feminists from developing countries might not identify themselves as feminists all the time, and, as discussed earlier, feminism itself is still a taboo in many cultures, being associated with Western cultural imperialism and subversion, as well as being associated with Eurocentric, bourgeois, racist and heterosexist elements (Harding, 1991). Kurdish women sometimes distance themselves from some Western feminists because they feel excluded by the latter. Western transnational feminists actively reject nationalist forms of feminist expression among feminists in developing countries by rejecting universal sisterhood because of the claim that women's multiple oppressions create different struggles depending on their multiple identities (Herr, 2014). In this section, I will discuss how Kurdish women activists relate to non-Kurdish feminists who are geographically and culturally from the West. I grouped discussions between Kurdish women and Western Feminists in three groups; a male leader, free feminism from nationalist discourses and woman and militarism. Lastly, I will analyse Jineoloji, which can be seen as a response to Kurdish women who believe that theories of feminism and feminist groups in practice ignore their issues and perspective.

7.3.1. Loyalty to a Male Leader

The fieldwork of this research started with an interesting observation. I went to Marble Arch, where Kurdish women gathered with many other feminist groups for the rally called 'Million Women Rise'. I arrived at the meeting point early and waited for the women to be ready for the march. Suddenly an argument started between a Kurdish woman and the organisers. This scene was contrary to the goal of the rally because, on the website of the event, organisers called women by emphasising: 'We need to be strong together and in large numbers. Solidarity is strength, the voice of many are louder together than a single voice'. I was trying to understand why the organisers were angry with the Kurdish woman.

The Kurdish woman noticed that I was observing them, and she came closer to me and started to talk with a mixture of sadness and anger. She was expressing that she could not separate her national identity from her womanhood, but other demonstrators had complained of her self-identification as a Kurd because of the Western feminist critique of nationalism as a tool of the patriarchy. I was surprised that she chose me and was spontaneously responding to my research questions, even though I did not ask anything. I asked her whether she knew me and why I was there. She replied, 'I just wanted to talk to you.' Later I understood that she was angry with other Kurdish women who did not support her. She wanted to talk with someone to mitigate her anger. This was the reason why she chose me, as she witnessed my interest in observing the altercation and my Kurdish appearance. I asked her to participate in my research, and she accepted my invitation, so we met later to talk more. She is referred to by the alias Beritan. Beritan first time migrated to a European country (because of supplying the anonymity, the name of the county was not written) with her family because of her parents' political activism. Even though her family settled in the country, Beritan migrated to the UK because she felt that she cannot continue her activism in the previous country. She got married in the UK.

Beritan was a first-time participant in the eleventh Million Women Rise rally in 2018. Beritan was carrying a flag and poster with Öcalan's pictures. She had witnessed some discussions with feminists and consulted with other Kurdish women about the organisers' reactions to expressions of nationalism, but Kurdish activists reassured her that the poster would not cause any problems. Beritan was determined not to put down the poster if someone asked her to. After a couple of hours of demonstrating, the organisers noticed the poster showing the male leader and asked Beritan to put the poster down. Beritan tried to express why she was carrying the poster. She explained her sentiments as follows:

> I try to say if 'I say I exist, this is because of him. Creating the existence of Kurdish women, Middle Eastern women, is thanks to him'. I do not know how much they understand this. Finally, an organiser woman came and persistently said 'Take this poster out, put it down!' I said, 'I will not.' I tried to explain the existence of Kurdish women, and how the Kurdish women's struggle is strong; there were posters of women fighters who fight in Rojava. Posters here, those martyred women are for this ideology, women could say, 'I can fight too, I am stronger than men.' All this happened thanks to Öcalan. From his ideology, by believing him. (Beritan)

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Beritan tried to explain how Öcalan's support for Kurdish women had a significantly positive impact on Kurdish and broader Middle Eastern women's gender equality struggles. However, the organisers did not want to listen to her and asked Beritan to leave the rally. Beritan left the rally with the poster and did not understand why the organisers had maltreated her and denied her right to expression. In the eyes of Western feminists who organised the rally, Kurdish women had been fighting for their demands under the shadow of the nationalist movement and with the influence of a male leader. Newroz, who was my first participant, mentioned that Western feminists held different views from them on the position of women concerning nationalism. Newroz stated that in the past, feminists viewed them as women walking behind a man.

> No matter what they say, no matter whether they say Kurdish women follow a male figure, the Kurdish woman movement analysed this properly. Kurdish women have been struggling for women under the leadership of Öcalan, by following the women's ideology created by Öcalan. The first female participants of the PKK were socialists and well-educated. This ideology was shaped through discussions with those women. The struggle against the backward Kurdish men started in these years. (Newroz)

According to Newroz, being inspired by a male leader's ideology and receiving his support do not damage Kurdish women's gender equality fights. The PKK is a gendered movement, and Öcalan is the person who created and promoted roles and avenues for Kurdish women to fight. Newroz also stated that while Western feminists historically criticised Kurdish women for their nationalist relations, they increasingly understand why Kurdish women had been conducting their fights within the nationalist movement. However, Beritan's story showed the opposite. I observed that the organisers were quite harsh in their suppression of Beritan.

The question is why feminists were disturbed to see a male leader's picture. A male source of influence is positioned as a threat, which Vernet et al. (2011) explain in terms of inner-group sensitivity. An outer-group source (a male influencer) is more threatening than an inner-group source (a female influencer) for female targets. The feminist organisers of the rally probably viewed Öcalan's picture as a threat simply because he is a man, and it is unlikely they had any understanding of the deep meanings of Öcalan for Kurdish feminists in the political and social context.

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Because of their direct experiences of more extreme forms of persecution over recent decades, compared with most Western activists, Kurdish women have a more pragmatic approach and do not view male influencers as intrinsic threats. Those women activists explained that they do not deify Öcalan, but they acknowledge him as their comrade who had provided significant support for women. In Chapter Two, I discussed in detail why Öcalan supported women's involvement and emancipation. Öcalan always acknowledged that the Kurdish national freedom struggles and Kurdish women's emancipation struggles together enabled the social and political transformation of the Kurds (Şahin-Mencütek, 2016).

7.3.2. Should Feminism Be Free from Nationalism?

Apart from following a male leader, the position of Kurdish women activists concerning nationalism also causes difficulties in their relating to Western feminists. Specifically, Kurdish women from Turkey, who participated in this study, do not see any harm in their gender demands being expressed through their nationalist demands. Sarya, for example, emphasised that their relation to Kurdish nationalism does not damage Kurdish feminism, as Kurdish Nationalism is not antithetical to feminism. Kurdish women's focus on nationalism was a necessity, as those women had been oppressed for their national identity.

> There are no big differences between the feminist movement and the Kurdish movement. The point is the Kurdish movement's focus is on women's freedom. Most of our issues stem from our Kurdishness. Who wants to come across issues all the time? I would not. (Sarya)

Sarya did not understand some of the Western feminists' approaches to nationalist movements. Feminism and nationalism do not have to be mutually exclusive; they can complement and strengthen each other (Kim, 2009). Kurdish women emphasise their national identity along with their gender identity as their issues are related to those identities. Sarya was not the one who had difficulty understanding the need to abandon their national demands. What I noticed during the fieldwork was that Kurdish women mainly did not understand why they should separate their identities. Fighting for identities was a necessity, not a choice for them. Dicle from Irani Kurdistan referred to colonialism, which also affects feminist demands. In this sense, the Kurdish Question, colonialism, and Kurdish women's gender identity were intertwined, and Dicle had difficulty imagining these three factors separately.

> Well, the Kurdish Question is a question that cannot be separated from its colonised structure, that's how I see it. I would say that the way Kurdish structure at least for the last hundred years has been shaped, and its gender identity, and gender positioning as well, cannot be distinguished from its colonised entity. I would say that for me it is difficult to imagine what it would be like because it is the same. (Dicle)

Dicle viewed her nationalist and gender identities as being intrinsically connected and overlapping, becoming more prominent than her other identities (Hancock, 2007). It is necessary to understand that Kurdish women have autonomous, multiple identities that are related to each other. The relations between some identities were more intense, and the relations between Kurdish women's national and gender identities can certainly be regarded as being inter-connected, but Dicle viewed these identities as completely overlapping.

Women in nationalist movements are not only excluded from theories of feminism. In practice, feminists' criticisms of nationalist feminists indicated that women's dual struggles could be problematic for Western feminists. Sara participated in many feminist meetings around the world to represent Kurdish women, and she talked about these meetings in detail. She noted that the most common issue that Kurdish women encountered in these meetings was feminists' prejudicial views toward them. According to Sara, in every single meeting, Kurdish women were challenged to justify Kurdish feminism's relation to Kurdish nationalism. Sara emphasised that they faced difficulty in expressing Kurdish feminism to Western feminists, who considered the proper role of feminism to be rescuing oppressed women and putting them in shelters because they see these women as victims.

Kurdish feminists reject Western feminist understanding by highlighting that feminism does not only involve putting women in shelters. Sara mentioned an international feminist meeting in Oslo, where many women sex workers and lesbians raised their issues. Sara was not satisfied with the understanding of freedom articulated in the conference, and she criticised feminists for seeing freedom as being only physical, as a sense of dress, and as sexual freedom. It did not make sense to Sara because if a woman does not have fundamental freedom, freedom in dressing does not have any importance. Therefore, Sara underlined that Kurdish feminists are different from Western feminists. Kurdish women have experienced being oppressed

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intensively for decades, in their homelands and diaspora: as Kurds, as women, and as stateless women.

The reason why Sara and many other Kurdish women thought that they were different from Western feminists is that the oppression they suffered was different from that of their Western peers. As noted by Viyan, who is a first-generation political migrant from Iranian Kurdistan, the Kurdish cultural milieu was one in which forced marriages, swapping women, and honour killing still occurred, and Kurdish feminists have to fight against honour killing, FGM, and child marriages, as well as against the general patriarchy that Western feminists struggled against. Also, as mentioned in Chapter Five, Kurdish women have been living with political turmoil in their homelands since their childhood as war victims or combatants. Based on Kurdish women's experiences, a feminism that is free from nationalism is not possible as Kurdish women cannot express some of their gender-related demands without mentioning their national demands. They experienced discrimination because of their nationality and gender. Kurdish women and Western feminists also disaccord in their approach to militarism. Many Western feminists are sceptical about militarism, as they claim that the processes of militarisation primarily give men privileges but necessitate women's participation (Enloe, 2000). On the other hand, as was mentioned in Chapter Six, Kurdish women from Turkey's Kurdistan raise their demands to support Kurdish armies. To reach a deeper understanding of Kurdish women's activism, the following section will analyse how Kurdish women consider militarism to be different from Western feminists.

7.3.3. Women and Militarism

Enloe (2011) views militarisation through different aspects. She highlights that women receive access to spaces where they can hone their political skills through militarisation processes. This is important for specifically Third World women who may have limited access to political participation. On the other hand, Enloe (2011) highlights that males modify nationalist theories and tactics to strengthen their privileges; through these ideologies, men silence the voices of women. Enloe's analyses of women and militarism point out that this focus comprises positive and negative aspects for women. Kurdish women and Western feminists' different approaches to militarism enable us to analyse women and militarism in detail.

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As mentioned earlier, Kurdish women in Britain cannot turn their backs on women who are still in the war zone, organising demonstrations to raise their voices in support of women who remained in the homeland. During my observations of demonstrations, I witnessed a discrepancy between Kurdish women activists and Western feminists. Contrary to the Western cultural construct of women as peacemakers, Kurdish women aggrandised female fighters involved in armed struggle. This reflected the different ways in which feminism could be understood:

> Although the diversity of feminism makes it as a whole dynamic and creative and arguably constitutes one of its virtues, it also means that there is no all-inclusive singular feminist approach to issues of war and peace or women's relation to and role in them. (Alison, 2009, p. 85)

Women have been characterised as peacemakers seeking to nurture a peace that is shattered by men (Begikhani et al., 2018). Women are conceived to be victims of male, masculine violence; hence, feminist populism in the West often presents violence and war as artefacts of toxic masculinity of which women are passive victims (O'Keefe, 2013). As a result, women's active participation in armed struggles poses a problem for many feminists (O'Keefe, 2013). Anti-militarist feminists assert that women's participation in military struggles does not serve women's emancipation. Rather than focusing on the deeper underlying issues of conflict in human societies, feminist critiques superficially discuss matters of military organisation to support their claim that women should not be involved in the armed forces. Duncanson and Woodward (2016) cite the main anti-militarist feminist critiques as being: women are never fully equal in the military, facing abuse and discrimination and difficulties in promotion; increased women's participation in the military does not transform the institution into an enlightened and benign feminist force, as the institution is masculinist, and military training relies on the identification of inferior and opposite others. Despite the number of women in the military increasing, misogyny, including sexual harassment, is also considered inevitable.

On the other hand, Kurdish women argue that women in war zones must take up arms to protect themselves and their communities. Therefore, Kurdish woman activists believed that Western feminists were unable to understand their situation. For example, in a meeting in Southern Cyprus, Greek socialist feminists criticised Kurdish women for using weapons much like men, considering violence to be a male attribute, as explained above. Sara replied to them as follows:

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I am against weapons too. Let me ask something. As women, please think: 7,000 Yazidi women were kidnapped; it is still not known where they are; thousands of them were sold, and thousands of them were killed. If you were left no choice but to choose one of two options: being raped, being sold in slave markets, being tortured, or taking arms to protect your family and yourself… you have only two choices, we are talking about the region like this, what would you do? (Sara)

Put simply, Sara stated that Kurdish women took up arms because they did not have any other choice. Kurdish women have to defend themselves and their families, communities, and other people. Sara confirmed the claim by Begikhani et al. (2018) that Kurdish woman activists might consider that women's participation is part of an increase in the militarisation of Kurdish society and the formation of an understanding which perceives violence to be the sole provider of hope and justice. Kurdish women's participation in armed struggle is also a result of women having lost belief in the ability to stop violence through passive resistance or acquiescence. Western countries continued to supply Saddam Hussein with the weapons he used to exterminate Kurdish families during the Anfal Genocide of the 1980s, while the Iraqi Army abandoned Kurdistan (and indeed Mosul) to its fate during the peak of the ISIS advance in 2014. Over many painful decades, the Kurdish nation has learned that it must rely on its defence to avoid annihilation (Begikhani et al., 2018).

National and international laws do not mitigate violence against women, which leads women to train in self-defence (Aydin, 2019). Kurdish women in Rojava created their self-defence against ISIS. Kurdish women's activism in London has also been shaped in the shadow of this war. Thus, Kurdish women activists' priority was mainly achievements of basic human rights rather than the particular issue of women's rights (Begikhani et al., 2018). As mentioned earlier, this scene disturbed some Western feminists who claimed that women represent peace in nature. However, women like Sara could not understand feminists' reactions to their fight for survival. The difficulty that Kurdish women have in expressing their activism to other feminist groups leads them to criticise theories that do not include their experiences.

To conclude, Kurdish women and Western feminists disagree on women's relation to nationalism, specifically on Kurdish women's loyalty to a male leader, whether nationalism is detrimental to feminism and women's relation to militarism. Kurdish women claim that

Western feminists do not understand why their national identity is salient in their activism. In this sense, it is important to analyse Jineoloji, which was founded by Kurdish women, to understand why Kurdish women feel that they are not understood by their Western peers.

7.3.4. Jineoloji: Kurdish Women's Response to Some Western Feminists

Kurdish women established Jineology, the science of women, which is active in Britain as well as in Turkey, Syria, and Europe. Kurdish women activists attend Jineoloji meetings, but few Kurdish women are members of the Jineoloji group. It needs to be highlighted that Jineoloji is not independent of the Kurdish National Movement as it emerged as a result of the Kurdish Movement's theoretical and practical restructuring, seeing women as revolutionary agents to support emancipation in every area (Rasit and Kolokotronis, 2020). This gives us a brief idea about Kurdish women's approach to nationalism. Since Kurdish women perceive their experiences as relating to the intersection of their identities, they do not separate their multiple identities, including their national identity. This means the emancipation of women is not only about gender identity, hence, revolutions need to cover all identities.

Secondly, Kurdish women define Jineoloji as the science of women as they view it as an alternative to Western theories. This is because Kurdish women in Jineloji groups point out that the social sciences fail to address all women, and Western theories of feminism ignore Third World women's issues. Kurdish women highlight the hierarchy in science and claim that 'sexist gender domination is not only created by the state and power-oriented mindset but also by scientism' (Jineology, 2018: 13). Jineoloji's emphasis on power relations in science is important for this study, as these Kurdish women view themselves as invisible in science, which results in the dominance of Western women. Kurdish women's negotiations with Western Feminists mentioned earlier can be understood in this way. Kurdish women found it difficult to justify their relationship with nationalism to their Western peers, because theories on women emphasise nationalism as being dangerous for women's emancipation and do not specify Third World women's reasons for having relations with national movements.

To elaborate, among all the Kurdish women who participated in this study, only Evin was actively working in the Jineoloji group. Evin stated that the group focused more on feminism's weaknesses. The common weakness of feminism is that there are many feminist groups, such

as liberal, black, radical, and socialist feminism, which do not offer an inclusive framework as they are disconnected. In Jineoloji, this weakness is understood, and how to overcome it in practice is discussed. Therefore, Evin stated that Jineoloji was not only about Kurdish women's emancipation; rather, it actively sought to transcend narrow interests. In Jineoloji, all women from South America to Europe are considered. They aim to develop and discuss theories on women, as many feminists have done, but could not practise those theories. According to Evin, Jineoloji filled this gap.

> It is about giving the gender perspective to women. Feminists have done some analyses, but in terms of practising these, it couldn't be institutionalised in a form under the structure, so *Jineoloji…* for example, the Jindar women's village is an example of how all of this is institutionalised in practice. And how it has been. (Evin)

Evin highlighted that the Kurdish women's Jineoloji group *was* different from other feminist groups as they actively sought to practise what they discussed in theory. Jineoloji groups organised meetings in Turkish and English in Britain to explain their purpose and claims. I participated in a meeting on 2 March 2019 in a Kurdish Community Centre. The meeting was in Turkish, as all participants were from Turkey. I noted two salient points in the meeting. First, the link between the PKK and Jineoloji was clear. Women who were not from the Kurdish movement would not have been able to understand what Jineoloji was. Therefore, an activist from the Jineoloji group presented Kurdish women's struggles, the Kurdish Movements' perspective on gender, and killing the dominant manhood. Secondly, there was dissatisfaction with academia in terms of ignoring non-Western women's issues. A couple of times, the presenter referred to feminist academia, implying that feminist academics could not understand what she said.

7.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I shared my findings on the different approaches of women to nationalism. As argued by transnational feminists, it is necessary to analyse women's multi-dimensional oppression by considering their multiple identities, such as ethnicity, race, religion, and class. In this chapter, I pointed out that even though Kurdish women are from the same ethnicity and race, their perspectives on women's relation to nationalism and militarism could be different,

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depending on which part of Kurdistan they were from. This also affected how they interpreted politicisation. Turkey's Kurdish women activists, for example, emphasised their nationalist demands as well as their gender equality demands, while Iraqi Kurdish women activists were focused more on gender-related issues. The experiences and activism of Turkey's Kurdish women activists were not homogenous. Religion affected the differences in Turkey's Kurdish women's perspectives and activism.

Lastly, I underlined that there is tension between Kurdish women and some Western feminists regarding Kurdish women's national demands. This tension evokes discussions on whether nationalism is detrimental to feminism in the literature. Kurdish women from Turkey's Kurdistan underlined that separating their gender and national demands is difficult as their experiences are related to both identities. The tension between Kurdish women and some Western feminists could be analysed in three groups: being influenced by a male leader, free feminism from nationalist discourses and women and militarism. This tension is related to Jineoloji, which was founded by Kurdish women. Kurdish women who believe that their experiences, issues and perspectives have been ignored by many feminist theories and practices aim to be visible through Jineoloji.

All these discussions on different oppressions among Kurdish women and Kurdish women's different experiences from Western feminists raise a question about the possibility of universal sisterhood. This chapter highlights that women develop different approaches to nationalism depending on how they have been oppressed. Therefore, it is difficult to unite these women against a monolithic oppression.

CHAPTER EIGHT: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

8.1. Introduction

This thesis analysed how Kurdish women activists negotiate feminism and nationalism in London-based organisations. The thesis touched on several issues; however, the main argument was based on whether nationalism is antithetical to feminism. This chapter argues that Kurdish women's relation to nationalism is more complicated as Kurdish women have multiple relations to nationalism(s). Hence, claims that nationalism is detrimental to feminism or that nationalism enhances feminism cannot express Kurdish women's relation with nationalism.

The intersectionality of Kurdish women's identities was considered. To clarify the significance of this work, I have combined the research findings with theoretical arguments and review of literature. Section 8.2 analyses whether nationalism is antithetical to feminism and highlights the place of this study in these discussions. Subsection 8.2.1 argues that Kurdish women have different perspectives on nationalism because they encounter different state nationalism and different Kurdish nationalisms. Kurdish women's different approaches to nationalism can be seen in their activism. Hence, Section 8.3 addresses Kurdish women's activism, which is shaped by their different perspectives on nationalism. The sub-section 8.3.1 explores Kurdish women's intra-organisational demands, while 8.3.2 discusses Kurdish women's extra-organisational demands by highlighting Kurdish women's demands.

8.1. Discussions: Intersections of Gender and Nationalism

Women's relations to nationalism and, more specifically, women in national movements have been debated in many ways. Discussions of the special link between women and nationalism have mainly focused on whether nationalism is antithetical to feminism and, more specifically, on how much women are represented in national movements. On the one hand, women's feminist struggles in nationalist movements have been viewed with suspicion through the claim that nationalist movements are regarded as sources of patriarchal and male privilege (Enloe, 1990; Grewal and Kaplan, 2006; Alarcon et al., 1999; McClintock 1991). According to this view, all nationalism is dangerous as it represents associations with the technologies of violence and political power. No form of nationalism can claim that women and men have the same access to the nation-state (McClintock, 1991). Even nationalist movements which were

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formed to end racism and colonialism have treated women as symbols of the homeland rather than as active participants (Enloe, 1990; Grewal and Kaplan, 2006).

On the other hand, nationalism may not be antithetical to feminism for Third World women (Jayawardena, 1989; Herr, 2003; Kim, 2009). It should be noted that not all women gain from nationalist movements (Jayawardena, 1989), or that there is an asymmetrical conflict between nationalism and feminism (Kim, 2009). Yet, nationalist movements support women against traditional constraints (Jayawardena, 1989), and feminism does not need to be opposed to nationalism; they might be compatible and strengthen each other (Kim, 2009). This is because, according to this perspective, the oppression of women is not distinct from capitalism, racism and colonialism (Kim, 2009). Along with those arguments, this study found a gap in these studies. My main argument is that Kurdish nationalism is not antithetical to Kurdish women's gender equality struggles all the time, but it also does not serve women's freedom on a silver platter to Kurdish women.

Kurdish women's relation to nationalism is more complex than the argument of whether nationalism is antithetical to feminism. This is because there is not a sole nationalism that Kurdish women could possibly meet. As there is not an officially recognised Kurdish state, Kurdish women have lived under different state territories. Their experiences with state nationalism are different depending on which state territory they are from. Secondly, there are different Kurdish movements, and each movement's approach to women's emancipation is different.

8.2.1. Kurdish Women's Meetings with Different Nationalisms

There is not an officially recognised Kurdish state, and the Kurds live under different state territories – Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria – and so they in encounter different forms of state nationalism. Through the collaborationist matrix of capitalism, patriarchy, and the nation-state, these regimes perpetuate various forms of racist, gendered, and socioeconomic violence (Dirik, 2017). The Kurds were victims of different nationalisms and have developed different relations to nationalism based on which part of Kurdistan they are from. Kurdish women's different meetings with different state nationalisms are not only homeland issues. Through analysing the

role of Kurdish women's background in shaping their activism in London (the first research question), this study highlighted the fact that the official status of the Kurds and being stateless is not only meant to give background information on the Kurds. This knowledge is directly linked with Kurdish women's activism in London.

In other words, there is a correlation between the degree to which Turkey, Iran, and Iraq recognise Kurdish identity and the level to which Kurdish women are politicised. Kurdish women emphasised Kurdish identity in different ways and to varying degrees in relation to how states approached Kurdish identity. The Kurds in Turkey encountered absolute denial of the Kurdish identity while there was political and cultural permissiveness in Iraq. The Kurds' experiences in Iran were moulded by combining what the Kurds had gone through in Turkey and Iraq (Harris, 1977).

Kurdish identity was frequently seen by such states as a danger. This resulted in massacres, displacements, and conflicts between Kurdish forces and state forces. Kurdish women do, however, adhere to their national identity to varying degrees depending on the severity of the state violence they experience. Also, Kurdish women experience political upheavals differently because of their gender. This is because state violence is in the hands of men (Alison, 2007). State repression involves sexual violence, including rape, to not only control women but also humiliate and attack them. Through sexual attacks on women, the whole community could be attacked as women are thought of as a symbol of the nation (Al-Ali, 2007). As a result, Kurdish women view state violence as a dual attack on their national and gender identities.

Kurdish women's marginalization because of their ethnic identity by the state led them to get involved in Kurdish movements. Yet, as a result of their involvement in various Kurdish groups, Kurdish women also experience many forms of Kurdish nationalism, which can influence how these women view nationalism. There are different Kurdish movements, and each movement has different gender perspectives. On the one hand, The KDP (Iraq), the PUK and KDP-I (Iran) aim to maintain Kurdish traditions along with national independence struggles. On the other hand, the PKK and KOMALA underline that Kurdish national freedom comes with Kurdish women's freedom. Kurdish movements' different gender approaches have a role in Kurdish women's relation to nationalism. Questioning Kurdish women's interactions with various Kurdish nationalisms is related to the third research question of this study as it helped to analyse how Kurdish women activists conceptualise feminism and nationalism.

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Kurdish women from Iraqi Kurdistan are sceptical about Kurdish nationalism. The main reason behind their scepticism is that the Kurds have recognised the regional government in Iraq. Before the establishment of the Kurdish regional government, Kurdish women participated in Kurdish movements in different roles, even as fighters/peshmergas. However, their roles were confined to nurturing, sanitary and hinterland jobs. This confirms Grewal and Kaplan's claim (2006) that national identity serves the interests of many patriarchies. These patriarchies' scepticism about transnational feminists' national demands overshadows feminist demands. Women who have campaigned for more genuine gender equality in the movement and at home have been told that now is not the time, that the country is too insecure, and that the danger is too close. Women must be patient and wait until the national aim is achieved before discussing their concerns. Many nationalist women have heard the advice: 'not now, later' (Enloe, 1990).

Kurdish women from Iraqi Kurdistan witnessed the 'later' term after the 1991 Gulf War Kurdish autonomous regional government was established in Iraqi Kurdistan. The question that arises here is whether Kurdish women have had their freedom after reaching the national aim. Kurdish women's situation has not significantly changed. According to this study's participants, Kurdish women had a shift in their roles, from carers to administrative roles in NGOs and many official institutions. However, Kurdish women could not reach freedom; in contrast, Kurdish women's freedom has shrunk after having the regional government. They were offered so-called freedom by placing them in specific areas. Kurdish women who fought in national movements and who raised their voices about gender issues are now expected to be satisfied with the so-called freedom that they received. These Kurdish women have become an iconic national symbol for the material, corporeal, and passive, to be venerated, safeguarded, and controlled by those who have the power to recall and forget, preserve, define, and redefine (Alarcon et al., 1999).

As a result of their experiences with Kurdish nationalism, Kurdish women from Iraqi Kurdistan perceived nationalism as gendered and dangerous. Nationalism is dangerous as it constitutes relationships to political power (Kurdish nationalism) and uses violent technologies (Iraqi nationalism). Nationalism is gendered as women are frequently portrayed as scenic backdrops to the huge corporations of masculine armies and revolutions in the histories of male nationalism (McClintock, 1991). Kurdish nationalism failed to give Kurdish women equal access to resources of the state; hence it has been based on strong gender constructs

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(McClintock, 1991). Kurdish women's relations to Kurdish and Iraqi nationalism may support the claim of transnational feminists, such as Grewal and Kaplan (2006), who suggest that feminism and nationalism are counter-discourses, thus, feminism should be from national discourses.

Kurdish women from Iranian Kurdistan have different approaches to nationalism. Kurdish women from Komala mainly emphasise the importance of gender freedom for national freedom. These women's focus is on women's freedom which will accompany national freedom. On the other hand, Kurdish women from KDP-I mainly emphasise that Kurdish women's freedom will come with national freedom. Hence, their priority is to obtain national freedom first.

Even though these women approach nationalism differently, their identity formation can be explained in the same way. In other words, Kurdish women from Iraqi Kurdistan and Iranian Kurdistan (Komala) prioritise their gender identity, while Kurdish women from KDP-I give primacy to their national identity. All those women's identity formation can be analysed using the 'nested identities' approach (Brewer, 1999, p. 190). According to this approach, the superordinate identity filled the need for secure inclusion in a large collective, while the sub-group identity contributed to the need for differences within the larger social category (Brewer, 1999). For those women from Iraqi Kurdistan and Komala, gender identities are superordinate over their national identity, which is the sub-group. For Kurdish women from KDP-I, their identity formation can also be considered a nested identity, as their Kurdish national identity was superordinate, and their gender identity was sub-group or sub-part. The two identities might function in a complementary manner.

Kurdish women from Turkey's Kurdistan, on the other hand, strongly emphasise their national and gender identities as their issues are related to those identities. The formation of these Turkey's Kurdish women's identities could be explained using Brewer's dual identity (1999). According to this explanation, when both identities are salient, the person holds some form of dual identification, which reflects how inclusively those identities are defined for that person. Feminism and nationalism, in the opinion of Kurdish women, need not be antagonistic to one another; rather, they can support one another (Kim, 2009). This is because their lives and political activism have been changed positively with the effect of the PKK's gender perspective; they are stronger now and gained self-esteem. Unlike Anthias's claim (1998) that

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women participate in national movements as symbols of ethnicity, Kurdish women underlined the fact that they are not a symbol of the nation but active participants in the struggle. They are even more active than male activists, as they are members of the Women's Assembly and mixed-gender assemblies, such as diplomacy and finance. What is salient in the activism of Kurdish women is that they are highly politicised and attend international meetings, such as conferences and receptions, to explain what the Kurds want. In addition to Griffiths (2000), who claims that the Kurds are one of the most highly politicised communities in London, this study found that Kurdish women from Turkey's Kurdistan are among the most highly politicised women's groups in London.

Experiences of Kurdish women from Turkey's Kurdistan indicate that the approach of feminism free from nationalist discourses is problematic in many aspects. It is important to emphasise here that the relationship between feminism and nationalism is different in the Third World from its Western context (Al-Ali and Pratt, 2011). The national movement is the only option for many Kurdish women to raise their demands. As mentioned earlier, Turkish state nationalism was dangerous for Kurdish women as their gender and national identities were oppressed by the Turkish state. These women were victims of human rights breaches and oppression which caused them to migrate to London. These women have been in a struggle against Turkish nationalism, which targets their national and gender identities.

Also, this claim ignores Kurdish women's acquirements in the movements. Many women have found a place as transnational actors due to nationalism. Many have gained the confidence to participate in public organisations and debates for the first time in their life as a result of national consciousness (Enloe, 1990). The majority of this study's participants stated that the PKK challenges patriarchy in the community. Patriarchy has not vanished, but at least it has been broken in some ways that highlight Kurdish women's activism. Kurdish women are deeply involved in national programmes and mobilisation, not merely as symbols of the nation or passive beneficiaries of nationalist ideology, but as active nationalists (Alison, 2009). These women also started to raise their voices about gender-related issues, struggling for their gender identities.

The study's intriguing finding is that the assertion that feminism is free of nationalism is more than just a theoretical debate. Kurdish women also discuss their relation to nationalism and why they cannot ignore their national identity with Western feminists in seminars, conferences,

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and feminist meetings. Western feminists' arguments are related to the claim that feminism is free from nationalist discourses as they advise these women to not get involved in national matters and encourage them to be engaged in a limited number of matters. To highlight Virginia Woolf's phrase, these discussions may allocate women 'a room of their own' to discuss their issues (Indra, 2008), but the rest of the house is male-dominated. Based on this study's participants' experiences we need to raise some questions: if nationalism is in every single cell of the world, from politics to economics and from community to individual lives, why should women be blind and deaf to nationalism? If nationalism is dangerous, who is going to criticise nationalism? Instead of retreating to protect themselves and being victims of nationalism, women should become actors in combating nationalism as women know perfectly well from their own experiences how dangerous it can be. In this sense, Kurdish women's activism in the Kurdish national movement is important. Kurdish women are engaged in activism to show the dangerous side of nationalism and to be actors in their political lives. Ignoring these Kurdish women's struggles as they are participate in national movements is limiting and restrains them in certain areas.

To conclude, Kurdish women develop different approaches to nationalism depending on their encounters with different state nationalisms and Kurdish nationalisms in many Kurdish movements. Analysing Kurdish women's relation to nationalism is significant as Kurdish women are marginalised through their national identity as well as their gender identity. Developing different perspectives on nationalism shapes Kurdish women's activism differently. Compared to Kurdish women from Iranian and Iraqi Kurdistan, Turkey's Kurdish women emphasise their national identity along with their gender identity more intensively. In addition to Griffiths' claim (2000) that the Kurds are one of the most highly politicised communities in the UK, I stated that Kurdish women, more specifically Turkey's Kurdish women, are among the most highly politicised women's groups in London. This study analysed Kurdish women's demands in relation to their gender (in organisations and outside of organisations) and national identities in order to gain a deeper understanding.

8.2. Kurdish Women and Activism

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As mentioned in the previous part, Kurdish women encounter different forms of nationalism that shape their perspectives on nationalism and feminism. Kurdish women's different approaches to nationalism are best seen in their activism. Hence, I analysed Kurdish women's activism through their demands to comprehend their relation to nationalism in detail. This section is related to the second research question, which aimed to analyse how Kurdish women activists in London articulate their political and social demands. The demands of Kurdish women were segmented into intra- and extra-organisational demands.

8.3.1. Intra-organisational Demands

Intra-organisational demands demonstrate Kurdish women's reactions to the patriarchy. These are internalising patriarchy, dealing with patriarchy and challenging patriarchy. Kurdish women's different reactions to patriarchy in organisations let us rethink women's relation to nationalism and the claim of feminism free from nationalist discourses. Those women face multiple patriarchies at home and are subject to patriarchal national legal systems and institutional constraints (Herr, 2014). Through analysing Kurdish women's pre-migration experiences, this study highlighted that the claim that feminism free from nationalist discourses ignores the background reasons that lead women to get involved in national movements, raise their demands and challenge patriarchy.

Kurdish women participated in Kurdish national movements to get rid of the patriarchal traditions of states and/or the community. They also continued their activism in London for three reasons. Firstly, activism mitigates Kurdish women's homesickness and strengthens Kurdish women's feelings of belonging in Britain. Secondly, Kurdish women view activism as a way to express their experiences in their home country. Thirdly, Kurdish women feel obligated to be the voice of the Kurds who have been oppressed and could not leave their home country. Kurdish women's activism needs to be considered through nationalism, feminism and migration. Diaspora studies may fail to pay specific attention to gender by focusing on migrants' nationalism-based activism. As mentioned earlier, women experience diasporas differently than men (Anthias, 1998). Kurdish women's reasons for involving in political activism and their experiences as migrants are different of Kurdish men. Hence, those women's activism also needs to be analysed through feminist theories besides theories of nationalism

and diasporas. However, some feminists' scepticism about those women's relation to nationalism causes the ignoration of these women's activism.

This study also analysed the rationale for the claim nationalism is detrimental to feminism. Transnational feminists, such as Grewal and Kaplan (2006), are sceptical about women's relation to nationalism, as the concept of national identity serves the interests of many patriarchies in various locales, and these alliances take varied forms in different areas. This research does not claim that that their arguments are not valid. As mentioned earlier, Kurdish women from Iraqi Kurdistan encounter patriarchy that limits their appearance in the movement. Even though Turkey's Kurdish women's freedom has been supported through their activism, Kurdish women meet patriarchy individually or as a group during their activism. Patriarchy appears in organisations through creating gendered spaces, and men's jealousy of women's status and productivity. However, unlike Enloe's claim (1990) that patriarchal practices are covered in national movements in the name of national survival, the movement uncovered patriarchy to remove its structure from the community. Besides, the movement's effort against the patriarchy, Kurdish women are also challengers of patriarchy. Hence, the claim that feminism free from nationalist discourses ignores the challenges of Kurdish women against patriarchy in organisations. It does not matter whether these women identify themselves as feminists; their challenges against patriarchy are important and should not be ignored as the struggles take place in a national movement.

What is important to emphasise is that women should not be portrayed as victims because of the existence of patriarchy in the movements. The claim 'feminism free from nationalism' omits why women develop different attitudes when they encounter patriarchy. Besides challenging patriarchy, women may internalise patriarchy as they do not see patriarchy as problematic completely. They may view some patriarchal attitudes as a part of their culture and do not feel they need to abandon them. This is because, as stated by Jayawardena (1989), feminism can be viewed as a Western invention. Also, women may believe that they destroyed the patriarchal mentality on themselves as they believe that women should challenge the patriarchy. These women might, however, still be influenced by patriarchy. I used 'hidden patriarchal codes' for the first time to point out the patriarchal behaviours of women who believe that they challenge the patriarchy. The concept helps researchers whose focus is on patriarchy to consider that women may develop complicated reactions to patriarchy. This concept underlines that women may internalise matriarchy while challenging it.

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Women also have a deal with patriarchy as they want to appear in the movement. Women wittingly or unwittingly have a bargain with patriarchy to hold power to consolidate their place. Analysing reasons for women's dealing with patriarchy and internalising patriarchy in organisations informs feminists about women's different attitudes against patriarchy at local levels and why some women keep a distance from feminism.

8.3.2. Extra-Organisational Demands

Extra-organisational demands illustrate what Kurdish women express to people, institutions and states. Kurdish women's extra organisational demands are linked to their gender and national identities and address the third research question that examined how Kurdish women activists conceptualise feminism and nationalism. These demands emphasise women's different approaches to nationalism. These differences are between Kurdish women and Kurdish women and some Western feminists. The first differences are among Kurdish women. As mentioned earlier, women's different experiences with nationalism created different forms of consciousness. On a practical level, as emphasised by Sandoval (2000), differential consciousness is the basis for differential social movements and differential activism. As mentioned earlier, Kurdish women have different identity formations, nested identities, and dual identities.

Kurdish women's different identity formations reflected their activism. Kurdish women from Iranian and Iraqi Kurdistan mainly draw attention to gender identity-related issues such as honour killings, FGM, and domestic violence in their activism. On the other hand, Kurdish women from Turkey's Kurdistan put gender and national identity-related issues such as the war into their agendas. Turkey's Kurdish women show their support to the Kurdish armies in Rojava more intensively than Iranian and Iraqi Kurdish women. Kurdish women from Turkey Kurdistan link their political activism to Kurdish women's military activities in Rojava.

Different approaches of Kurdish women to war are remarkable. As mentioned earlier, Kurdish women linked their traumas with their oppressed identities, which had a significant effect on their engagement in activism. Traumatised Kurdish women developed emotional reactions. As a result of their experiences with violence, women support the armed struggle or fight for peace (Al-Ali, 2007). However, there is still a need to explain why Kurdish women develop different

attitudes to armed struggles. In this sense, Turkey's Kurdish women's reaction to the war can be linked to Cohen's claim (1996) that diaspora politics refers to those who are unable to participate in politics in their home country or who do not have a political regime to support or oppose. The Kurds are still under the Turkish state's oppression. The PKK is still actively conducting armed fights in Turkey and Syrian Kurdistan. Kurdish women from Turkey's Kurdistan are enthusiastic about the Kurdish government in Rojava, where the PKK's ideology is practised. Kurdish women from Iraqi Kurdistan seemingly were not excited by the free Rojava as a result of their experiences with the Kurdish government.

The second dissent on women's relation to militarism is between Kurdish women (Turkey) and Western feminists. Kurdish women have had some discussions with other feminist groups (mainly Western feminists) who criticise Kurdish women's relation to Kurdish nationalism and their support of the Kurdish army. Kurdish women emphasised that these groups do not understand the reasons behind their engagements with Kurdish nationalism and why separating gender and national identities is difficult for them. The Kurdish women's movement does not view self-defence solely as a measure of physical protection. People must organise and self-determine themselves to genuinely be themselves and live freely, ethically, and autonomously (Dirik, 2017).

The main reason behind arguments between Kurdish woman activists and some Western feminists is to do with how they approach armed struggles. Women's active roles and participation in war and militant organisations in defence of their communities, nations, and nationalist projects are also highlighted by traditional feminist approaches used by Western feminists, which emphasise that women's bodies and sexualities are violable objects used as war techniques. (Begikhani et al., 2018). The first approach stems from the traditional perspective that views men as active fighters, soldiers, and warriors, on the other hand, women as passive mothers, victims and vulnerable to slavery and rape. The second approach considers women as active participants in military activities (Begikhani et al., 2018). This approach mainly leads to tension between Western feminists and Kurdish women activists. Western feminists viewed women's participation in military activities as dangerous as it consists of violence (McClintock, 1991). Their approach is related to the question of how much military activities could support women's emancipation. Unlike Alison's claim (2009) that women acquired more equal positions in the military wing compared to the political wing, Western

feminists believed that political activities empowered women rather than their involvement in the military (Hasso, 1998).

On the other hand, this study found that Kurdish women activists from Turkey's Kurdistan do not view practices of armed women as contradictory to feminism. Kurdish women's involvement in the military is considered a form of equality, as women could fight as much as men do. This is because Kurdish women mainly referred to women fighters in Rojava when they talk about women's emancipation. Also, there is a belief that women can change the armed groups by making them more democratic, compassionate, and less hierarchical (Stiehm, 1989).

Similar to Western feminists, Kurdish women also referred to women as victims of wars. However, unlike Western feminists who argued that women should not use violence, Kurdish women underlined that women should fight to protect women against slavery and rape. War is a reality in their land. Instead of being victims of the wars, armed women chose to be active fighters against male-dominated wars. The main reason behind Western feminists and Kurdish women is that Kurdish women challenge the understanding that women's nature is peaceful. Kurdish women's support for Kurdish armed groups, specifically the Kurdish women's army, dissents from the understanding that characterises women as peacemakers (Begikhani et al., 2018).

Differences in women's relation to nationalism take the focus off the discussions on whether universal sisterhood is possible. The main argument behind the idea of universal sisterhood is that women could build a unified front against universal patriarchy and combat women's common experiences of oppression around the world (Mendoza, 2002). The concept of the universality of sisterhood has caused feminist studies to fail when considering how gender and class processes influence women differently, depending on the ethnic and racial groups to which they belong (Anthias et al., 1992).

In line with this, Kurdish women's relation to nationalism gains importance in studies of universal sisterhood. Kurdish women develop different perspectives from those of Western feminists on nationalism and, more specifically, militarism. The main reason behind these differences is that Kurdish women have experienced patriarchy and nationalism differently depending on the intersection of their multiple identities. Moreover, Kurdish women become different from each other. This is because there is not a single form of patriarchy even among

Kurdish women. Encountering different patriarchies form Kurdish women's activists' agendas differently. Differences among Kurdish women indicate that not even all ethnic groups are homogenous, postulating that a single ethnic group might constitute different cultures (Cockburn, 1998), different experiences and different forms of consciousness. All these differences indicate that universal sisterhood is dangerous as it ignores differences among women.

Lastly, according to Transnational Feminism, women have many oppressions coming from their multiple identities such as sexuality, gender, class, ethnicity, and nationality, among others (Conway, 2013). Some of these categories may overlap, while others may grow more apparent (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Despite transnational feminists accepting that such identities may overlap, they contradict their claim by ignoring ethnic/national identities and the possibility of the intersection of women's national and gender identities. In line with this, Weber (2015) noted the trend of scepticism about all identities derived from positions of privilege but claimed that such perspectives ignore the importance of strategic identities for political activism. The relationship between categories – especially those of ethnicity and gender – plays a crucial role in shaping political institutions, the relationship between individual actors, and the relevant categories themselves (Hancock, 2007). Indeed, national and gender identities have had an immense influence on Kurdish women's political activism. Transnational feminists' scepticism about nationalism led them to overlook Kurdish women's experiences and reactions when they overlap their national and gender identities.

8.3.Conclusion

Kurdish women have developed different perspectives about nationalism depending on their experiences in different parts of Kurdistan and different Kurdish movements. Claiming that nationalism is antithetical to feminism or vice versa leads to insufficient analyses of women's relations to nationalism. There is not a single type of nationalism. Some nationalists have been the victims of racism and colonialism; others have been the perpetrators of racism and colonialism (Enloe, 1990, p.45). Kurdish women encountered different nationalisms. On the one hand, they were victimised differently by Turkey, Iran and Iraq's state nationalisms. On the other hand, they have been engaged with Kurdish nationalism differently depending on the Kurdish movements' different women's perspectives. Developing different perspectives on

nationalism shaped these women's activism and their relations with other feminist groups. All these differences among Kurdish women and between Kurdish women and Western feminists question the universal sisterhood that women should unite against the patriarchy.

CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION

9.1.*Introduction*

The purpose of this research was to critically assess Kurdish women's activism in London. I conducted unstructured interviews with a total of 28 activists (25 females and three males) and used a variety of ethnographic techniques, including observations. I presented the analyses of empirical data in three chapters, which focused on the root causes of Kurdish women's migrations and activism and Kurdish women's demands. Despite the structural division, those chapters were inter-connected. In Chapter Five, I analysed Kurdish women's experiences before migration. Those experiences led them to participate in nationalist movements and continue their activism after their migration. In addition to analysing the background reasons for Kurdish women's activism, this study also focused on what Kurdish women expressed through their activism. In line with this, in Chapter Six, I explored how Kurdish women's demands relate to their gender and ethnic identities. In this chapter, I pointed out Kurdish women's different demands, which are the product of different encounters with nationalism.

However, Kurdish women's relation to nationalism led to some discussions about whether Kurdish women's national demands overshadow their gender demands. Hence, in Chapter Seven, I analysed how Kurdish women negotiated feminism and nationalism in London. This chapter focused on Kurdish women's different approaches to nationalism based on the approach that feminism should be free from nationalist discourses. Kurdish women from Turkey's Kurdistan do not view Kurdish nationalism as antithetical to feminism and had difficulty separating their gender demands and national demands from each other. On the other hand, Kurdish women from Iranian and Iraqi Kurdistan and some Western feminists who have a relation to Kurdish women argued that feminism should be from nationalist discourses. Chapter Eight links the findings of this study with theoretical discussions to underline where this study lies in the related literature. Lastly, Chapter Nine gives a brief conclusion about the study. Following this introductory section, Section 9.2 highlights the research questions that triggered this study and how these were answered. Section 9.3 points out the original contributions of this study, and Section 9.4 gives recommendations for further research agendas.

9.2. Revisiting Research Questions

The aim of this thesis was to develop knowledge about how Kurdish women activists in London interpreted and practised nationalism and feminism. In analysing Kurdish women's demands, their relationship with nationalism, precipitating causes of their activism, and power relations in groups were the main elements to be uncovered. Initially, the goal of the study appeared to be simple and clear. However, the review of the related literature showed that the topic required detailed and inter-related analyses of women's relation to nationalism, patriarchy, intersectionality, and migrant woman activism in diasporas.

The complexity of the study was managed through the following sub-questions:

1. What is the role of Kurdish women's background in shaping their activism in London?
2. In what ways do Kurdish women activists in London articulate their demands?
3. How do Kurdish women activists conceptualise feminism and nationalism in London?

Firstly, the participants' pre-migration experiences were brought to light by asking what role the Kurdish women's background has in shaping their identities and their engagement in activism in London. This first sub-question aimed to go beyond generalisation on migrant women's activism. Two important theoretical postulates drove the decision to focus on Kurdish women activists who arrived in the UK as migrants. However, considering migration as a linear journey that starts from the homeland led to questioning of the root causes of migration. It is considered that women who had traumatic experiences during the pre-migration process should be differentiated from those who did not have such experiences (Al-Ali, 2002). On the other hand, pre-migration traumas may direct migrant women to develop different political attitudes. Women may be engaged in activism to fight for peace or support the armed struggles in the host country as a result of their experiences with violence in their home country (Al-Ali, 2007).

The initial focus was on what caused Kurdish women's migration. All first-generation Kurdish women who participated in this study were politically active or were raised in a political environment before their migration, and the majority of them migrated to the UK for political reasons. The reasons for their engagement in political activism and migration are not different. Those Kurdish women were traumatised by their pre-migration experiences which were

grouped in Chapter Five as language issues in primary school, witnessing human rights breaches, prison experiences, and being from political families. Kurdish women's pre-migration traumas confirmed the study by Başoğlu et al. (1994), where they specified the nine most common stressors during political and social upheavals. These are persecution and harassment by the authorities, loss of educational and occupational opportunities, displacement, uprooting, loss of economic and social status, death threats to self and family, refugee status, and bereavement.

This sub-question also probed how such traumas of Kurdish migrant women were linked to their political attitudes in the host country. Studies by Silove et al. (1997) and Steel et al. (1999) importantly analysed refugees' pre- and post-migration traumas and highlighted factors that cause Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. They underlined the fact that these migrants met the full criteria of post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of pre-migration traumas, such as witnessing killing, suffering torture and captivity, and post-migration traumas, such as fear of deportation delays in processes of refugee applications, racial discrimination, and feelings of loneliness. These studies are important as they helped me to analyse the background reasons for Kurdish women's activism in London. The majority of Kurdish women who participated in this study stated that they were victims of state-led violence, which led them to migrate to the UK as political refugees. These studies also contributed to migration studies by considering migration as a linear journey starting from the homeland and the underlying effects of traumas on migrants and their migration processes.

Yet, those studies failed to address the gendered perspective of migration. This is because analysing refugees through the gender categories is still uncommon in refugee literature (Calson, 2008). Differentiating refugees by gender but without other defining characteristics also causes exclusions. As stated by Indra, "how people respond to forced migration will be gendered, but it will vary given that they come to the experience with a different cultural and individual notion" (2008, p.2). Hence, this study focused specifically on Kurdish women activists to avoid generalisations that can mask differences among women in terms of class, ethnicity, power, and race (Indra, 2008).

Secondly, this study differs from the above-mentioned studies in that it asks how Kurdish women managed those traumas and considered their activism as a way to channel their feelings. After analysing the reasons that motivated Kurdish women to continue their activism in

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London, I aimed to show what it is that Kurdish women tried to express through their activism. This enabled me to explore any possible link between the root causes of Kurdish women's migration and the demands that they raise through their activism. Also, by raising this question, I aimed to analyse whether different pre-migration experiences give rise to different demands. In order to reach an answer, I asked the second sub-question: In what ways do Kurdish women activists in London articulate their political and social demands?

This question aimed to create knowledge from specific refugee women (Kurdish women) in a specific area (London). The focus on a specific area led this study to analyse Kurdish women's local everyday practices (Smith, 1997). London was chosen as a local place; however, it is a transnational place, for it has become a host of Kurdish migrants. In this sense, transnational feminism, which is interested in women's activities at the supranational level, including international feminist networks and international women's movement (Herr, 2014), would help to analyse Kurdish women's activism in diasporas. To re-emphasise, the focus of this study is on Kurdish women who conduct activities a thousand miles away from their homeland.

Kurdish women's activism in London is not an untouched area of study. There is a study that focused on Kurdish women's activism in London. Turkey's Kurdish women's activism in the London-based Roj Women's Association was analysed by Taş (2013a). In his study, Taş focuses on the role of the Kurdish Peace Community in solving Kurdish communities' issues unofficially.

Taş's study makes an important contribution to Kurdish women's studies and specifies how the Kurdish women's organisation solves the community's issues. More importantly, he underlines that Kurdish women's activism in the diaspora fulfils an important duty through solving Kurdish women's sensitive issues. However, Taş's focus is only on how Kurdish activists work for specific issues in a particular Kurdish organisation. This study differs from Taş's in that it expands the focus on Kurdish women's activism by highlighting dilemmas, encouragements, and discouragements that Kurdish women activists meet as well as a variety of issues with which they deal. This study filled the gap in the literature about Kurdish women's activism in London by analysing how Kurdish women interpret specific issues, why they interpret them in this way and how they react, instead of focusing on what activities they conduct.

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The analysis of Kurdish women's activism and their demands fills the gap in research about Kurdish women, but it also fills the gap about refugee women's political involvement. Women that were supposed to be represented in the politics, such as refugee women, who constitute two-thirds of refugees (Enloe, 1990), are also invisible. Refugee women's activism is a way of challenging international hierarchical politics. However, these refugee women are expected to join campaigns for peace, for refugees and against hunger, and they are not allowed to define the problem; many politically engaged women lose their connection with their communities and their daily battles (Enloe, 1990). In other words, refugee women need to define and raise their voices for their issues as well as those of their communities, rather than just joining general campaigns.

In this sense, this study analysed how Kurdish women define their issues as well as those of their communities. Chapter Six argued that Kurdish women have dual demands related to their ethnic and gender identities. Kurdish women's ethnic demands are being shaped according to the political situation of the Kurds. During the period of the fieldwork, there were attacks by the Turkish army on Rojava. Kurdish women raised their voices against these military operations.

Participants in the study also considered that their gender identity is in danger in the community and in the organisations and raised their voices for their gender identity-related issues. Those demands were twofold. On the one hand, Kurdish women fight against patriarchy in the community through organising activities against FGM, honour killings, and domestic violence. These women's activities also aim to support women's well-being and self-esteem. On the other hand, Kurdish women activists fight against patriarchy in the organisations. Chapter Six underlined that it is not only Kurdish men who are ambivalent about supporting women's emancipation or traditional gender roles, as some Kurdish women also feel the same way. Hence, Kurdish women raise their voices against patriarchy that they encounter at home and in organisations.

Lastly, Kurdish women's dual demands related to their national and gender identities evoke the third sub-question: How do Kurdish women activists negotiate feminism and nationalism in London? In light of discussions on women and nationalism, Chapter Seven questioned Kurdish women's relations to nationalism in London, a point that received little attention. It was argued that Kurdish women do not react to nationalism in the same way. In connection

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with Kurdish women's multiple identities, Kurdish women view nationalism differently. This is because Kurdish women encounter different forms of nationalism.

On the one hand, the Kurds living under different state territories encounter different forms of state nationalism. Kurdish women from Turkey's Kurdistan encounter denial of their ethnic identities. As a result, these women are highly politicised and have difficulty separating their national and gender identities. The ethnic identities of Kurdish women from Iranian and Iraqi Kurdistan have not been harshly attacked as much as the Kurdish identity has been attacked in Turkey. As a result, Kurdish women from Iranian and Iraqi Kurdistan prioritise their gender identities. On the other hand, Kurdish women meet with different Kurdish nationalism in different Kurdish movements. Kurdish women's encounters with different states and Kurdish nationalism lead them to develop different approaches to nationalism and militarism.

Kurdish women's relation to Kurdish nationalism (specifically from Turkey's Kurdistan) gave rise to discussions with some Western feminists, who argue that feminism is free from nationalist discourses. Differences in women's relations to nationalism raise the question of whether universal sisterhood is possible. According to universal sisterhood, women should unify against mono-patriarchy. However, this study highlighted that there are many forms of patriarchy. Women encounter different forms depending on how their multiple identities intersect. They perceive patriarchy differently; Kurdish women develop many perspectives regarding their oppressions. It is difficult to unite against oppression as there are multiple oppressions encountered by women.

9.3.   *Original Contribution to Knowledge*

Women and men have separate roles in diaspora states (Anthias, 1998). This is because women experience life in the diaspora differently to men. Women's different experiences in the receiving country may stem from their different relations to the ethnic group and nation (Anthias, 1998). Therefore, Kurdish women's different relations to Kurdish nationalism and their distinct reasons for taking part in political activism need to be analysed separately from Kurdish men's activism. Even though Kurdish women have the potential to significantly influence international women's movements (Mojab and Hassanpour, 2002), many political activities and aspirations of Kurdish women in diasporas have received insufficient attention. As a result, the study's value stems from the fact that it examines a group of people (Kurdish

women activists) who raise their voices about their demands in London-based Kurdish organisations and who have received relatively little academic attention.

The importance of this study lies in the conceptual contributions that it has made. This study underlines two points. First, women from different ethnic groups may encounter different forms of patriarchy. Hence, the focus is on Kurdish women activists and the forms of patriarchy that they have met. Second, women do not solely react to patriarchy; they develop multiple reactions when they encounter patriarchy. The intersectionality of Kurdish women's multiple identities was considered in analyses of patriarchy. Women's reactions to patriarchy have been analysed under the concept of bargaining with patriarchy (Kandiyoti, 1988). This study went beyond these analyses by grouping and expanding women's reactions to patriarchy. In addition to the concept of bargaining (I used dealing) with patriarchy, this study stated that women also internalise and challenge patriarchy. In internalising patriarchy, 'hidden patriarchal codes' were used for the first time. This concept enables studies to analyse patriarchy in more detail by pointing out that there can be different realities behind what is seen.

There is a vast number of studies on patriarchy. Even though their common aim is to highlight the oppression of women, feminists discuss patriarchy differently. Patriarchy is seen by radical feminists as a system of power relations, which shows society as being divided into unequal relations between oppressed women and oppressive men (Batson-Rollock and Soares, 2010). Marxist feminists link women's unpaid labour with the capitalist economic system to examine the rise of patriarchy (Whelehan and Pilcher, 2004). These studies have made an important contribution to knowledge; however, the forms of patriarchy encountered by Kurdish women could not be analysed through such studies. Analysing oppressions faced by Kurdish women through capitalism or power relations would lead us to make generalisations and ignore more local/specific issues encountered by Kurdish women.

Hence, together with transnational feminism, this study considers that women face different forms of oppression depending on the divisions of ethnicity, race, sexuality and class (Walby et al., 2012; Choo and Ferree, 2010; Cockburn, 1998; Conway, 2011, 2013; Hancock, 2007; Kaplan and Grewal, 1999; McCall, 2005; Walby, 2007; Yuval-Davis, 1997, 2006; Bhopal, 1997; Mohanty, 2003; Patil, 2011; Waylen, 1996). In analysing multiple patriarchies, I criticised the concept of universal sisterhood. According to this concept, women face universal oppressions, and they should therefore unify against universal patriarchy. The idea of universal

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sisterhood has led feminist researchers to overlook how gender processes influence women differently, depending on the ethnic and racial groups to which they belong (Anthias et al., 1993). Therefore, it is difficult to identify a unitary women's movement.

Accepting that there are multiple patriarchies enabled this study to analyse women's different experiences. This approach also enabled this study to analyse women's different reactions to patriarchy as researchers fail to assess women's reactions to patriarchy in detail. They mainly underline oppressions faced by women in a way that victimises them. Women's efforts to deal with patriarchy or challenge patriarchy have drawn researchers' attention but in limited numbers.

Women's attempt to deal with patriarchy has been highlighted by some scholars. Kandiyoti (2004), for example, stated that women activists in nationalist movements might feel compelled to express their gender concerns as well. Therefore, women might frame their gender-specific demands using the framework of those nationalist discourses (Jacoby, 1999). They might, however, have to self-censor their radical demands (Kandiyoti, 2004). Yet, this seems like a way of bargaining with the patriarchy (Kandiyoti, 1988, p. 275).

In line with Kandiyoti's study (1988), this study found that Kurdish women also had a deal with patriarchy, and how they participated in nationalist movements indicated the nature of the deal. The literature on women and nationalism has emphasised motherhood as a criterion for appearing in nationalist movements (Heckman and Gelder, 2011; Parker, as cited in Saigol, 2011; Çağlayan, 2009). Indeed, the well-known study by Anthias et al. (1983) defined five ways in which women appeared in nationalist movements, by highlighting the link between motherhood, women and nationalist movements. These ways were listed as the biological reproducers of ethnic groups as transmitters of the culture; as signifiers of ethnic and nationalist groups; as participants in economics; and as symbols of ethnic political and military struggles. The first four ways emphasised motherhood and women. Indeed, scholars, such as Heckman and Gelder (2011), Parker (as cited in Saigol, 2011), and Çağlayan (2009), showed motherhood as a criterion for appearing in nationalist movements. According to this view, mothers could access national states/movements by bearing sons who were prepared to sacrifice their lives for the homeland, which could be perceived as a deal with patriarchy.

However, patriotic motherhood was not a widely applied method for Kurdish women to participate in London-based organisations. Instead, some Kurdish women became mannish in their appearance and in their attitudes to be more visible in the organisations, which can also be considered as a deal with patriarchy. In contrast to femininity, which is perceived as a weakness by some Kurdish women, masculinity is seen as a tool for reaching power. Kurdish women who were invisible and not respected in the traditional family and community chose to have a mannish appearance in the organisation so that they would be heard and respected. Kurdish women's mannish appearance points at a failing in gender studies, as masculinity is analysed under the frame of the heteronormative conception of gender, which focuses on the differences between females and males and ignores the exclusion among genders (Connel and Masserchimidt, 2005). Some Kurdish women activists consider patriarchy as a result of the system and fight to demolish it. On the other hand, those women also noticed the labyrinths of power dynamics in the patriarchal system (Hunnicut, 2009) and, on a personal level, aimed to hold power in organisations and the community.

Kurdish women also challenge patriarchy on a personal level and as a group. Kurdish women's challenge to patriarchy is important to analyse (as discussed in Chapter Three, there are many forms of patriarchy). Kurdish women experienced the hardest form of national and gender oppression. Experiencing the savage aggression of nation-states in the Middle East, including genocide and anti-ethnic cleansing, Kurdish women are in a unique position to disassociate themselves from male-centred politics. Hence, their challenge to patriarchy can contribute to international women's movements, which have an anti-racism tradition, as these women have already struggled against national patriarchy (Mojab and Hassanpour, 2002).

Lastly, feminist theories have not touched on women's internalisation of patriarchy. This is because women who identify themselves as feminists are assumed to have broken all links with patriarchy. However, in this study, I have shown that breaking all links with patriarchy is not easy for women. Women are raised according to their communities' rules, which might be influenced by patriarchy on different levels. Women who have encountered ideas of gender equality might attempt to abandon patriarchal norms. However, they do not succeed all the time as they internalise some patriarchal norms. I also used the concept of 'hidden patriarchal codes' for the first time. 'Hidden patriarchal codes' can be used to understand a situation where women believe that they have broken patriarchal norms in their lives, but they might display aspects of masculinity. These women might not even be aware of the traces of patriarchy in

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their views. This concept can help feminists to analyse hidden masculinity at a personal level or in organisations. After identifying hidden patriarchal codes, more analyses on what gives rise to such hidden masculinities and how to fight against them can be conducted.

This study also has provided some contributions that have increased the empirical understanding of Kurdish women's activism. Firstly, as is discussed, the root causes of migration can be traumatic for refugees. Traumatic experiences have a direct link with refugees' settlement and adaptation processes. Pre-migration traumas, such as detention, abuse, and conflict, and post-migration traumas, such as adaptation issues and fearing loss of culture cause post-traumatic stress disorder among refugees (Steel et al. 1999). This study differs from previous research on Kurdish migrants in that it asked how those migrants deal with their pre-migration traumas. Accordingly, the strong link between Kurdish women's traumas and their activism has been revealed. Kurdish women talk about their traumas by raising their voices to stop state violence, the main cause behind such traumas. Hence, those traumas shape their activism. This study did consider migration as a whole journey that started from the homeland and specified how homeland issues shaped migrants' post-migration experiences by pointing at migrant activism. In this sense, this study contributes to refugee studies by linking the root causes of refugee women's political tendencies.

Another empirical contribution of the study is its uniqueness in analysing Kurdish women's relation to nationalism comprehensively. This differs from most studies on Kurdish women, which focus mainly on specific areas, such as Turkey, Iran, Iraq, or Syria, in that it studied Kurdish women from all parts of Kurdistan. Because of the ongoing political situation in Rojava, Syrian Kurdistan, Kurdish women from this part were excluded. However, this study was still able to underline similarities and differences among Kurdish women as Kurdish culture is neither monolithic nor homogenous (Mojab and Hassanpour, 2002).

In their fascinating study, Mojab and Gorman (2007) argued that diasporas should be understood as a historical as well as a cultural phenomenon. This study also contributes to the knowledge as it discusses that transnationalism and diaspora are both political and historical categories of social organisations, which involve complex forms of international, national, and transnational political-economic relations. Even though Mojab and Gorman underlined the fact that the Kurdish nation in its homeland was divided internally by borders, such as alphabet,

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gender, class, dialect, religion, and externally by the international border of four states (Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria), their focus is more on Iraqi Kurdish women.

This study underlined how political events and conflicts in the countries of origin continue to influence and divide refugee communities (Wahlbeck, 1998) by analysing Kurdish women's activism. Even though Kurdish women are from the same ethnicity, they act like they are from different communities because they are used to living under different state territories. The division that they express leads to different experiences and perspectives, which also differentiate their settlement processes and their activism in diasporas.

Besides their different countries of origin, this study is the first of its kind to argue that Kurdish women's different beliefs and religions also lead to differences in their approach to activism in diasporas. This is because, like ethnic and gender identity, religious identity involves a sense of 'who I am' (McGuire, 2008). Accordingly, along with McGuire (2008), this study considered religion as both official and non-official.

"*Alternative practices appeared most frequently as nonofficial religious expressions because official religions come to represent the viewpoints and interests of privileged, dominant, and comparatively educated social classes, as well as males, colonial powers, and dominant ethnic groups. The experiences and interests of subordinate groups generally were relegated to non-official religious expressions that were marginalised or actively suppressed'* (p.167).

Marginalised, non-privileged, oppressed non-official religious groups seek alternative practices, and activism is one of those practices. Religious differences among Kurdish women are an important example of official-non-official religious division and how this division affects their activism. Some Kurdish women are from the Sunni sect of Islam, which is official, while others are unofficial Alevi, who are marginalised and subordinated. This study analysed the effect of religion on Kurdish women's activism among immigrants from Turkey in the UK; Alevis are superior in number, even though in Turkey, they are estimated to be between 15 and 30 per cent of the population (Akdemir, 2017). This study highlighted the fact that these Alevi Kurdish women, who are marginalised through their religion, as well as their ethnic and gender identities, developed different engagement in activism than Sunni Kurdish women.

The non-homogeneous structure of Kurdish women's identities led this study to analyse Kurdish women's activism through the intersectional approach. Similar to transnational feminists, this study underlined that women's activism needs to be analysed through the intersection of their multiple identities. Kurdish women's experiences and activism are complicated to analyse through their single identity, ethnicity, or gender. This is because women's identities are complex and comprise multiple interactions of gender, class, sexuality, religion, and ethnicity, which make individuals react in different ways at different times (Waylen, 1996). Each of these divisions is autonomous, but they might overlap or might become more prominent (Yuval-Davis, 2006). This led to an understanding of why Kurdish women prioritised their ethnic and gender identities and to see at which points these identities overlapped and were difficult to separate.

However, much like transnational feminists, I argued in this study that ethnic identity might not refer to commonalities in the case of Kurdish women. As mentioned earlier, Kurdish culture is not monolithic. Even though Kurdish women are from the same ethnicity, their experiences, perspectives, and traumas are different, depending on which state territory they are from and on their membership in an official or non-official religious group. Therefore, this study underlined that each category of transnational feminists' fragmentations must comprise sub-categories.

9.4. Further Research Agendas

As a result of my study, further research into Kurdish women's relation to nationalism might be conducted in order to analyse the role of road stories of Kurdish women in their activism. In this study, I analysed Kurdish women's migration experiences from pre-migration to post-migration processes. I claimed that Kurdish women's migration backgrounds differ. Forced migrant women arrive in new countries with their traumas, which shape their settlement process. On the other hand, it is necessary to consider that forced migrant women arrive in the new country in different ways from those used by voluntary migrant women. Forced migrant women who apply for status as asylum-seekers arrive in the host country in illegal ways. Their stories of experiences on the road, from dealing with smugglers and their departure from the home country to arriving in the host country and living in refugee camps, are significant when

analysing the migration process of women. However, because of the limitations of this study, Kurdish women's road stories were excluded.

It would be useful, for example, to consider Kurdish women who are engaged in activism in different Western countries. In this study, I focused on Kurdish women activists in London. London was chosen as the only research area. The ethnographic approach I used for this study, which required listening to participants' life stories, making observations, and analysing related documents, such as autobiographies, films, and documentaries, resulted in a massive amount of data being gathered. An additional research area would have made managing the data very difficult. Therefore, the location of the study was limited to London only. However, as stated by Al-Ali (2002), different host countries might also lead to different migrants' settlement processes. This is because each country has different migration policies and different policies regarding migrants' activism. Hence, to understand the implications of this study's results better, future studies could address Kurdish women's activism by making a comparison among different host countries.

Also, for further research, I would consider refugee women from different communities. In this study, I compared Kurdish women's activism based on the state territory they were from. Even though Kurdish women have the same ethnic background, I found that their perspectives and position on nationalism were different. Making a comparison between two different nationalist movements, such as Sri Lankan Tamils, that are also politically active in London, and Kurds would lead to an understanding of how and why women activists from highly politicised communities display commonalities or differences in their activism.

Lastly, this study focused on Kurdish mixed-gender and single-gender organisations: the Kurdish Community Centre (KCC), Halkevi, the Roj Women's Foundation, the Roj Women's Assembly, the IKWRO, the Kurdish Women's Project/Organisation (the KWO), and the Culture Project were selected. The main aim behind this section is that their link with national movements and the title of some of them includes the word 'Kurdish'. Many other organisations were founded or co-founded by Kurds. The Kurds from the same town established organisations that carry the name of towns in their homeland, such as El-com (Elbistan Community Centre, Kırkisraklılar Derneği, Koçgirililer Derneği, and Dersimder). Those organisations were not included in the study as there was no salient link found with

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Kurdish movements. However, further research that includes these local-town organisations would highlight why these Kurdish migrants establish town organisations rather than joining already-established Kurdish organisations.

APPENDICES:

APPENDIX 1: DEMOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND OF THE PARTICIPANTS

	Date	Language of the interview	Length of interview	Gender	Country	Organisation	Generation	Reasons for migration
Newroz	29.03.2018	Turkish	59.50 min	Female	Turkey	The KCC, Roj Women's Assembly	First	Marriage
Arin	30.03.2018	Turkish	53.52 min	Female	Turkey	The KCC	First	Politic
Ronahi	07.04.2018	Turkish & English	46.46 min	Female	Turkey	The KCC (woman and diplomacy)	Second	Economic (family)
Roni	07.04.2018	Turkish	53.59 min	Male	Turkey	The KCC	First	Politic
Sara	08.04.2018	Turkish	61.39 min	Female	Turkey	The KCC	First	Politic
Berivan	14.04.2018	Turkish	50.14 min	Female	Turkey	The KCC	First	Politic
Jiyan	16.04.2018	Turkish	38.02 min	Female	Turkey	The KCC (Youth)	Second	Politic (family)
Beritan	26.04.2018	Turkish	30.39 min	Female	Turkey	The Roj Women's Assembly	First	Politic
Şilan	28.04.2018	Turkish	33.32 min	Female	Turkey	The KCC (youth)	Second	Politic (family)
Sarya	28.04.2018	Turkish	56.04 min	Female	Turkey	Halkevi	First	Politic
Avaşin	30.04.2018	Turkish	47.35 min	Female	Turkey	The KCC (diplomacy)	First	Politic
Çiya	05.05.2018	Turkish	50.59 min	Male	Turkey	The KCC	First	Politic
Helin	09.05.2018	Turkish	66.59 min	Female	Turkey	Non-member	First	Politic
Xezal	10.05.2018	Turkish	61.54 min	Female	Turkey	The KCC (youth)	Second	Politic (family)
Berfe	11.05.2018	Turkish	67.05 min	Female	Turkey	The Roj Women Foundation	First	Politic
Dilda	14.05.2018	Turkish	78.43 min	Female	Turkey	The Roj Women Foundation	First	Economic
Hevi		English	33.46 min	Female	Iraq	The KCC	First	Politic
Evin	21.05.2018	Turkish & English	78.29 min	Female	Turkey	The Roj Women's Association	Second	Economic (family)
Siyar	23.05.2018	Turkish	76.10 min	Male	Turkey	The KCC	First	Politic
Solin	25.05/30.05.2018	Turkish	137.54 min	Female	Turkey	Halkevi	First	Marriage
Nudem	30.05.2018	Turkish	44.15 min	Female	Turkey	The KCC	Second	Economic (family)
Heval	24.06.2018	English	75.19 min	Female	Iraq	The Culture Project	First	Politic
Bejna	28.09.2018	English	54.21 min	Female	Iran	The IKWRO	First	Politic
Delal	21.10.2018	English	79.44 min	Female	Iraq	The KCC	First	Politic
Amara	21.10.2018	Turkish	65.60	Female	Turkey	The KCC	First	Politic
Havin	26.01.219	English	151.44	Female	Iraq	The KWP (Kurdish Women's Project)	First	politic
Dicle	01.02.2019	English	58.41	Female	Iran	Non-member	First	Politic
Viyan	16.02.2019	English	58.57	Female	Iran	Non-member	First	Marriage

APPENDIX 2: CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM
(Draft Version 15.02.2018 / Final version
1.0: 06.03.2018)

Title of Study: Kurdish Diasporic Women
and Nationalism: An
Ethnographic Research
About London Based
Kurdish Organizations.

IRAS Project ID: 1718-072-PGR

Name of Researcher: Berrin Altin Soran

Name of Participant: **Please initial box**

1. I confirm that I have read and
   understood the information sheet
   version number   dated
             for the above study
   and have had the opportunity to
   ask questions.

2. I understand that my
   participation is voluntary and that
   I am free to withdraw at any time,
   without giving any reason, and
   without my medical care or legal
   rights being affected. I
   understand that should I
   withdraw then the information
   collected so far cannot be erased
   and that this information may still
   be used in the project analysis.

3. I understand that relevant
   sections of my medical notes
   and data collected in the study
   may be looked at by authorised
   individuals from the University of
   Nottingham, the research group
   and regulatory authorities where
   it is relevant to my taking part in
   this study. I give permission for
   these individuals to have access
   to these records and to collect,
   store, analyse and publish
   information obtained from my
   participation in this study. I

200

Participant Information Sheet
(Draft Version 25.01.2018 / Final version 22.03.2018)

Title of the Study: Kurdish Diasporic Women and Nationalism: An Ethnographic Research about London Based Kurdish Organisations

Name of Researcher(s): Berrin Altin Soran

I would like to invite you to take part in my research project. Before you decide I would like you to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve you. I will go through the information sheet with you and answer any questions you have.

What is the purpose of the study?

The main purpose of this study is to analyse how Kurdish women express their national and gender equality demands. For this purpose, I would like to apply your opinion through interviews and also observe your activities, such as demonstrations, festivals.

Why have I been invited?

You are being invited to take part because you have been working in a Kurdish organisation. You will have knowledge about the organisation

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. This would not affect your legal rights.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you accept being part of this research project, you will be interviewed by myself. Interviews can be in Turkish or in English depends on your choice. Turkish and English interviews will be conducted by myself. If you want to be interviewed in Kurdish, an interpreter will help me. After that, I will participate some of your activities.

APPENDIX 4: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET TURKISH

Katılımcı Bilgilendirme Formu
(Draft Version 25.01.2018 / Final version 1.0:22.03.2018)

Çalışmanın Başlığı: Diasporadaki Kürt Kadınlari ve Milliyetçilik :
Londra'da Faaliyet Gösteren Kürt Organizasyonları Üzerine
Etnografik Bir Araştırma

Araştırmacının adı: Berrin Altın Soran

Sizi araştırma projemde yer almaya davet etmek istiyorum.
Karar vermeden önce, araştırmanın neden yapıldığını ve neleri
içerdiğini anlamanızı istiyorum. Bilgi formunu yanınıza alacağım
ve sahip olduğunuz soruları cevaplayacağım.

Çalışmanın amacı nedir?

Bu çalışmanın temel amacı, Kürt kadınlarının ulusal ve toplumsal
cinsiyet eşitliği taleplerini nasıl ifade ettiklerini analiz etmektir.
Bu amaçla görüşünüzü görüşmeler yoluyla öğrenmek istiyorum.
Aynı zamanda sizin tarafınızdan düzenlenen gösteriler,
festivaller gibi faaliyetlerinizi gözlemlemek istiyorum.

Neden davet edildim?

Bir Kürt organizasyonunda çalıştığınız için katılmaya davetlisiniz.
Sizin organizasyon hakkında bilgi sahibi oldugunuzu
düşündüğümden bu çalismaya davet edildiniz.

Katılmak zorunda mıyım?

Katılıp katılmayacağınıza karar vermek size kalmış. Katılmaya
karar verirseniz, bu bilgi formuna verilecek ve bir izin formu
imzalamanız istenecektir. Katılmaya karar verirseniz, herhangi bir
zamanda ve sebep göstermeden de çekilebilirsiniz. Bu yasal
haklarınızı etkilemez.

Katılırsam ne olacak?

Bu araştırma projesinin bir parçası olmayı kabul ederseniz, sizinle
röportaj yapacagim. Röportajlar, Türkçe veya İngilizce olabilir,
tamamen sizin seçiminize bağlı. Türkçe ve İngilizce mülakatlari
ben yapacagim. Kürtçe görüşmek istiyorsanız, bir tercümanın
yardımına başvuracağım. Daha sonra bazı faaliyetlerinize gözlem
amacıyla katılacağım.

Giderler ve ödemeler

APPENDIX 5: CONSENT FORM TURKISH

**RIZA FORMU
(Taslak Versiyonu
15.02.2018 / Son
Versiyon 1.0:
06.03.2018)**

Çalışmanın Başlığı :
Çalışmanın Başlığı:
Diasporadaki Kürt
Kadınlari ve Milliyetçilik :
Londra'da Faaliyet
Gösteren Kürt
Organizasyonları Üzerine
Etnografik Bir Araştırma

**IRAS Proje No: 1718-
072-PGR**

Arastırmacının Adı :
Berrin Altın Soran

Katılımcının Adı :

**Lütfen kutuyu
isaretleyiniz**

1. Yukarıdaki
   çalışmanın soru
   sorma olanağına
   dair   sayılı ve
   tarihli bilgi formunu
   okuduğumu ve
   anladığımı teyit
   ederim.

☐

2. Katılım
   ımın
   gönüllü
   olduğu
   nu   ve
   herhan

☐

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