THE CHANGING DYNAMICS OF THE HEADSCARF QUESTION IN TURKEY: THE WOMEN'S STRUGGLE TO TAKE OFF THE HEADSCARF

by
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ABSTRACT

THE CHANGING DYNAMICS OF THE HEADSCARF QUESTION IN TURKEY: THE WOMEN'S STRUGGLE TO TAKE OFF THE HEADSCARF

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The thesis aims to question the changing dynamics of the headscarf question in Turkey. Based on in-depth interviews with women who took off their headscarves, the research primarily focuses on the women's experiences of the practice of veiling and un-veiling to analyze personal and social intricacies behind women's decisions to take off their headscarves. The narratives of un-veiled women is contextualized through an analysis of continuities and ruptures between their experiences of veiling and un-veiling practices. This thesis mainly seeks to answer the following questions: Why do young veiled women, who were grown up in religious families and socialized in Islamist community circles, decide to take off their headscarves? How do the symbolic meanings of the headscarf create the complicated social expectations for veiled women? How do the current social and political conditions, if any, affect the women's decisions to un-veil? How do they narrate their veiling and un-veiling practices in relation to the normative understanding of Islam and secularism in Turkey? The thesis, therefore, concludes that the decision to take off the headscarf arises from mainly two motivations: First, an Islamic stigma symbol (Goffman 1963; Göle 2003), or the social aspects of veiling in terms of the representation of pious identity in a consistent way, has rejected by taking off the headscarf. Second, the fieldwork finds out another reason behind removing the headscarf as the rejection of religion itself and religious obligations as well.

ÖZET

TÜRKİYE'DE BAŞÖRTÜSÜ SORUNUNUN DEĞİŞEN DİNAMİKLERİ:
KADINLARIN BAŞÖRTÜSÜNÜ ÇIKARMA MÜCADELESİ

SÜMEYYE KOCA

SİYASET BİLİMİ YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ, AĞUSTOS 2020

Tez Danışmanı: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Nedim Nami Nomer

Anahtar Kelimeler: başörtüsü, başörtüsünü çıkarma, damgamala, toplumsal beklentiler, gündelik hayatta din

Bu tez Türkiye'de başörtüsü sorunun değişen dinamiklerini sorgulamayı amaçlamaktadır. Başörtülerini çıkaran kadınlarla yapılan derinlemesine görüşmelere dayanan araştırma, öncelikle kadınların başörtülerini çıkarma kararlarının ardındaki kişisel ve sosyal karışıklıkları analiz etmek için kadınların başörtüsü takma ve çıkarma pratiğine odaklanıyor. Başörtüsünü çıkaran kadınların anlatıları, başörtüsünü takma ve çıkarma deneyimlerindeki sürekliliklerin ve kırılmaların analizi yoluyla bağlamsallaştırılmıştır. Bu tez, başlıca şu soruları yanıtlamayı amaçlamaktadır: Dindar ailelerde yetişen ve İslami sosyal çevrelerde sosyalleşen kadınlar neden başörtülerini çıkarmaya karar veriyorlar? Başörtüsünün sembolik anlamları başörtülü kadınlara yönelik nasıl toplumsal beklentiler yaratır? Mevcut toplumsal ve politik koşullar kadınların başörtülerini çıkarma kararlarını nasıl etkiler? Kadınlar kendi başörtü takma ve çıkarma pratiklerini Türkiye'deki normatif İslam ve sekülerlik anlayışları bağlamında nasıl anlatıyorlar? Bu sorular doğrultusunda, tez başörtüsünü çıkarma kararının başlıca iki motivasyondan kaynaklandığı sonucuna varmaktadır: Birincisi, İslami bir sembol (Goffman 1963; Göle 2003), ya da dindar kimliğin tutarlı bir şekilde temsil edilmesi açısından başörtüsünün toplumsal yönleri, başörtüsünün çıkarılmasıyla reddilmektedir. İkinci olarak, saha çalışması, başörtüsünü çıkarmanın ardındaki başka bir nedeni de dini inancın ve dolayısıyla dini yükümlülüklerin reddedilmesi olarak ortaya koymaktadır.

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To all women
who are in pursuit of their own ways,

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Statement of the Problem

On February 8, 2018, Büşra Cebeci, who is a young journalist, published an article series with an impressive headline, "Başörtüsü Mücaledesinin Değişen Yolculuğu" (The Changing Journey of the Headscarf Struggle) on Bianet which is an online news platform. The headline, in the first place, is outstanding because the deep-rooted debate on the headscarf question was reawakened in the current context where the headscarf is no longer a political problem. It is also a salient headline because it was the first time someone publicly mentioned of a change in the veiled women's struggle. It is still a struggle, not to wear the headscarf, but to take off the headscarf for this time. The article series consist of the interviews on the changing debates on the headscarf in relation to women's decisions to un-veil themselves with two well-known figures in Islamic community, Ayşe Çavdar and Fatma Bostan Ünsal, four anonymous women whose personal stories on veiling and un-veiling are different from each other, and a veiled woman, Hadiye Yolcu. All stories are challenging and thought-provoking, but one is critically important to the first motivation behind this thesis. Ayşe Çavdar, as a veiled woman in the 1990s, struggled against the headscarf ban in universities, and later on, decided to take off her headscarf. She explained the reason behind her decision as "... when I was veiled, everyone greeted my headscarf first, then me. I had to increase my voice a lot to make my own voice heard. So the headscarf was speaking on behalf of me, and what's more, we were not agreed on many issues (with the headscarf)." (Çavdar 2018) This thesis arises out of my concern about an interesting perception on the headscarf and the self as two different living ones in the same body and the pursuit of one's own voice beyond the headscarf, or only a part of one's many identities.

Another turning point that deepens my interest in diverse reasons behind women's decisions to take off their headscarves was small, but important, debates on un-veiling on online platforms. When I started to delve into the issue of un-veiling, I first realized that there were hundreds of women who took off their headscarves, or decided to take off it but have not actualized yet due to various reasons. It became a current topic in non-mainstream media since the beginning of 2018 with the Cebeci's article series and an online blog *Yalnız Yürümeyeceksin* (You Will Never Walk Alone) which have published hundreds anonymous letters written by these women.[1] Throughout the following year in 2019, it gained more popularity on internet-based media through "hashtag movements" which were *10yearschallenge* on Twitter and *1yearschallenge* on Instagram, and many interviews, news, discussion programs and opinion columns (Altunkaya 2019; Çakır 2018, 2019*a*,*b*; Düzkan 2018; Elçin 2019; Kalafat 2019; Kasapoğlu 2019; Kıvanç 2019; Tatari and Çiçek Kösedağı 2019).

I would like to particularly mention of the blog *Yalnız Yürümeyeceksin* because it is the main source of my motivation that brings this thesis into existence. A group of women who met each other via Twitter initiated an idea of collecting women's stories on a blog to make them visible. The admins of the blog are not known with their names except a few who preferred to give the interviews to above mentioned sources with their full names. Some of them took off their headscarves and openly declared that they were no longer believers of Islam; some are still struggling to take off the headscarf; and some do not have such religious backgrounds and veiling experiences, but want to act in solidarity with these women. They clearly explain their aims as "... to know and share stories of women who either wears the headscarf, or remove their headscarves, or have experienced *the headscarf oppression* in various ways, and to act in solidarity with all these women." (*Kimiz?* 2018)(emphasis added). They want to be more visible, and invite all women to share their stories with either their names or anonymous to voice their struggles. Since July 2018, the blog published hundreds of anonymous letters written by women who struggle to take off their headscarves. The letters on the blog reveal that a few women decided to wear the headscarf by their own choice, but most of the women did not wear the headscarf voluntarily, but upon their families' insistence. Not all women writing their stories have taken off their headscarves yet; some of them still wear the headscarf, but have already decided to take off it, and wrote on why they could not actualize it. There is a variety of reasons behind their decisions regarding their particular life-conditions,

[1] I should specify that an anonym online-publishing is a critical issue, because it carries a potential risk to question verification of information and reality of the subjects. Having possible concerns on reliability of anonymous letters, one way can be getting contact with the editorial group to minimize the risk by requesting them for detailed information on their editorial processes and verification methods.

but what is the salient common point in all letters is the pressure of family and close community they are part in, and their economic dependency to their family.

Considering the popular debates on the headscarf, but in an unusual way, on online media, the decision to take off the headscarf deserves to academically study for two reasons at least: First, all individual stories evidently show that it is not only a personal decision on a woman's dressing, but has personal, political, social and religious dimensions. Second, since the women's stories visible on the media emphasize that these women's struggles to take off their headscarves take place mostly in the realms of their families and close social circles, it is perceived not as a social or political, but as a private matter regarding individual life choices. However, as the headscarf question in relation to the headscarf ban in the 1980s and the 1990s, the struggle to take off the headscarf is also a context-bounded experience in the sense that the changing social and political context possibly transforms the meanings of veiling and affects these women's decisions in a way. In the current context where the headscarf ban in universities and public institutions was cancelled long time ago, and the headscarf debate in a conventional way has lost a public as much as an academic interest, this thesis comes out of a concern about personal and social intricacies behind women's decisions to take off their headscarves. The main aim of the thesis is to make these women's experiences of veiling and un-veiling more visible and to bring the changing dynamics of the headscarf debate in Turkey into question.

The headscarf as an Islamic dress-code has been a complicated issue in Turkey since the 1980s. Apart from the theological debates on the headscarf, the headscarf question in the literature is approached in a political framework in Turkey in relation to discussions on modernity, secularism, Islamist politics, and the private and the public spheres. What makes the headscarf a question, or a source of political controversy, was the headscarf ban in universities and public institutions. A visible and substantial increase of veiled women in the public sphere threatened the secular and modern character of the Kemalist nation-building project. The headscarf, thus, became a state matter to which the National Security Council took an action on 28 February 1997 to protect the secular regime against the Islamic threat (Cindoğlu 2011; Gökariksel and Mitchell 2005; Öztığ 2018). The post-modern coup, or conventionally called the February 28 process, strictly imposed the headscarf ban in universities, which required veiled women to take off their headscarves if they wanted to enter into university campuses. The headscarf ban, however, paved the way for a strong resistance of veiled women who emphasized their right to education and their freedom of religion against the secular state policies. Contrary to the state discourse framing the headscarf as a political symbol, veiled women insisted on that

they wore the headscarf to perform a religious obligation, not for a political aim. In a similar vein, the prevailing assumption in the secular-Kemalist communities resembled with the state discourse, and veiled women's agency was ignored on the basis of a stereotyped judgement that they did not wear the headscarf because they freely preferred it, but because of either their parents' or their husbands' insistence. The previous researches which opened a space for veiled women to speak for themselves revealed that women coming from traditionally religious families built their religious believes different from their parents by their own conscious efforts to directly read the Islamic sources (Cindoğlu 2011; Göle 1996; İlyasoğlu 1998; Özdalga 1998; Özyeğin 2015).

The literature, discussed in Chapter 3 in depth, mainly focuses on how the headscarf question became a highly controversial topic in Turkey in the 1980s and the 1990s. The course of events is framed into the political reflections of the pious women's dressing choices so that the headscarf ban is taken into consideration as the core of the public debates. The well-known story on how the headscarf issue cannot be imagined without considering intertwined debates of the public sphere and secularism related to Turkish modernization is discussed in a conventional way. Although the headscarf ban was part of the stories that the previous generation of veiled women, it was not a big deal for the participants of this research. Yet, as discussed in the literature, it was the headscarf ban that made the headscarf as a means for women's struggles to make their pious agency visible and as the most important sign of a pious identity for veiled women. From that time, the headscarf is not seen as a simple dressing choice, but as a manifestation of an identity. On the one hand, the previous generation of veiled women politicized this identity and performed this distinctness vis a vis others, which probably denoted the secular one; on the other hand, the secular other became more aware of and familiar to particular demands of veiled women with their increasing visibility and voices that told their own stories.

The historical background of the question shapes multiple social aspects of veiling and reconstructs veiling as an identity for pious women. This is not only one-way determination of veiled women by the structural conditions, but pious women manifested their agency through making their demands visible, challenging the established views on veiling, and struggling against the legal obstacles towards their right to education and to freedom of religion. This is a social identity that veiled women reconstructed as a response to the social and political conditions they lived in and as a result of actual and/or imaginary dialogues with others. The headscarf as "a stigma symbol" (Göle 2003) became the most visible bodily sign of the identity of pious women. Thus, veiling as a distinctive marker rooted in this stigma reawakened a discussion on pious women's agency and subjectivity, but, at the same

time, became a flag that represented the public presence of pious women who were educated, modern and urban contrary to the established image of veiled women who were supposed to be "… subservient, silent and docile…" and also "… inferior to men and passive and secluded in interior domestic spaces…" (Göle 2003, 816-817).

The reason why the literature is presented in this way is that un-veiling stories of the participants of this study did not start after they took off their headscarves. Rather, the practice of un-veiling was embedded to their veiling experiences. The fieldwork showed that their veiling experiences, which shaped their decisions to take off the headscarf, were not imagined as if they were out of the context that the previous generation of veiled women framed. Since the primary motivation behind the un-veiling practice was to reject not pious identity in most cases, but the visibility of this identity, it is essential to understand how this identity came into existence and embodied what kind of social and political intricacies. It was not only identity of veiled women, but also the perception of others' gazes on this identity that affected why un-veiled women gave up such a visibility. No matter the participants were directly exposed to particular experiences of their veiled mothers or veiled women in their close environments, un-veiled women in this study were surrounded by the existing headscarf narratives. It was not the headscarf ban or the secular state policies that directed the participants to take off their headscarves, but the historical background of the headscarf question that left an undeniable impression on these women and became a burden they had to deal with.

The context of the previous generation of veiled women matters to understand why some veiled women feel a social burden arising from pious identity that the headscarf brings along. It is important to note two critical issues at the beginning: First, the participants in this study did not have to struggle to construct an identity stemming from their religious faiths, and to manifest their distinctiveness to challenge the image of veiled women mentioned above. They found themselves within in a context in which pious identity was already shaped, and took over this identity from the previous generation. Second, however, the participants did not experience the legal obstacles that the previous generation of veiled women were exposed to. In both situations, it was not only experiences of the previous generation that were shaped the context of the participants, but also the perceptions of others on veiling and the category of veiled women were transferred to the new generations. In addition to the past narratives that the participants were surrounded, what they experienced as veiled women in their social lives became a burden. The main motivation behind their decisions to take off their headscarves was the rejection of the stigma symbol, or in other words, the social, and consequently visible, aspects of pious women identity. The social burden that they felt stemmed from how veiling was perceived by others

in society. Most of the participants frankly stated that they did not want to be socially marked by the headscarf anymore; but as discussed in Chapter 4 in detail, the question of visibility was not part of the narratives of only two participants who did not have an experience of the social aspects of veiling.

The thesis focuses on young, university educated, urban women who wore the headscarf in early parts of their lives, and then decided to remove their headscarves. Drawing on qualitative research data consisting of in-depth interviews, the thesis approaches to find out personal and social intricacies behind women's decisions to take off their headscarves. This thesis seeks to answer the following questions: Why do young veiled women, who were grown up in religious families and socialized in Islamist community circles, decide to take off their headscarves? How do the symbolic meanings of the headscarf create the complicated social expectations for veiled women? How do the current social and political conditions, if any, affect the women's decisions to un-veil? How do they narrate their veiling and un-veiling practices in relation to the normative understanding of Islam and secularism in Turkey? Based on particular experiences of the participants, the main focus of the thesis is to contextualize the practice of veiling and un-veiling and to provide possible explanations for a newly emerging phenomenon of un-veiling.

The thesis firstly suggests that despite various reasons behind removing the headscarf, most of the participants decide to take off their headscarves because they do not want to be visible with the social aspects of veiling. In addition to the rejection of a visible identity, another reason revealed in the fieldwork is to question religion itself and the necessity of the headscarf in particular. Second, the symbolic meanings of the headscarf in relation to the representation of pious identity for the women only create a social burden that the participants do not carry out over their bodies. The performance of piety through veiling is not a personal cultivation in the religious realm for the participants, but becomes a struggle to identify themselves beyond veiling. This struggle arises from the most emphasized expectation from veiled women to present a consistent identity in the sense of consistency between one's actions, behaviors and appearances with the headscarf. In other words, one is expected to behave proper to her headscarf by reducing an individual veiled woman to a category of veiled women without considering how she performs her piety and how she regulates her life in and outside veiling. Third, the current context has an incredible effect on the decision to take off the headscarf in the sense that most participants want to distinguish themselves from in-group people. Their conscious efforts to show that they are not like the people in their own communities arise from how Islamic community is associated with the ruling party, or some religious orders. This is not a categorical rejection, but they are uncomfortable with that

wrong doings, or corrupted behaviors of pious people in power are attributed to all veiled women just because of their visible outlooks with the headscarf. Lastly, the practice of veiling and un-veiling in the participants' narratives presents an alternative understanding beyond the binary opposition between secularism and piety, or Islam, in Turkey. Since most of the participants still perform other religious obligations, and reject only the visible part of their piety, it is not considered as the secularization of these women's life styles. Or, even if the reference points in some areas are not directly religious sources, their experiences reveal that these two realms are not mutually exclusive, and the practice of un-veiling is the question of both realms.

1.2 Organization of the Chapters

In Chapter 2, the field is presented with brief information on the participants, a general overview of the fieldwork and my positionality as a researcher in this research. In the first section, each participant is briefly introduced with their backgrounds to provide a general picture of their narratives. There are eight participants in this research: Deniz, Sevgi, Jasmine, Burcu, Elif, Duru, Nilay and Ahsen. The pseudonames are used for confidentiality reasons. The age range of the participants is between 22 and 30; three of the participants are undergraduate students, and two of them are graduate students in different fields of social sciences; three participants have a professional carrier in different sectors. In addition to their personal information, such as their ages, occupations, families, and etc., when they started to wear the headscarf, what the motivation behind their veiling was, and how they decided to take off the headscarf are briefly presented in this section. Also, their particular focuses and turning points on the practice of veiling and un-veiling are discussed to make sense of their narratives in the wider framework of the thesis. The aim of this section is to give an early introduction of the participants to avoid much detailed background information in the analysis section, Chapter 4. In the second section, the general overview of the fieldwork is presented. This overview relies on common and distinctive points in the life courses of the participants and my observations in the field. In relation to their personal backgrounds in the first section, the themes in this section revolves around the preliminary questions asked to the participants during interviews. Since the participants were asked for their veiling experiences in the first part of the interviews, they started to talk about their childhood years first

because they had internalized the very necessity of the headscarf at very early ages. Yet, most of the participants frankly stated that they willingly wore the headscarf, in other words, they were not exposed to the family pressure in an explicit way even if veiling is the accepted norm in family and close social circles. The second part of the interviews focuses on the practice of un-veiling, and they described the first day they went out without the headscarf as a normal, ordinary day. Because the most emphasized point in their different experiences of un-veiling is that it is not one-day decision, but a process that resulted in taking off the headscarf. So that the practice of un-veiling is not an initial act for them, and for this reason, the thesis focuses on these processes to understand why they decided to take off the headscarf. In the last section on my positionality as a researcher, I situate myself in this research starting from the veiling stories of my mother which have a critical role on my personal story of veiling and un-veiling. Then, I openly discuss what the headscarf means to me, and how I experienced veiling and un-veiling to clarify my positions as both an insider who shared similar experiences with the participants and a researcher who has to approach these experiences in an academic way.

In Chapter 3, the literature is addressed to discuss the historical background of the headscarf question in Turkey. This chapter comprises of five sections in relation to the main discussions on the headscarf question, and the sixth section points out concluding remarks. First, the foundation of the Turkish Republic in relation to modernization, secularization and Westernization is briefly discussed to understand what makes the headscarf a political question. At the beginning of the establishment of a new nation state, an identity for the state and the imagined nation was constructed by adopting the Western civilization as a role model, and thus, the new nation state was projected as modern, Western, and secular through social regulations over state institutions and citizens' outlooks and lifestyles (Arat 1998; Kandiyoti 1997; Özdalga 1998). Since Islam and religious symbols in relation to the non-modern and non-Western, and non-secular past perceived as the main obstacles to modernization, they were excluded from the public sphere to the private spheres of individuals (Atasoy 2005; İçduygu and Soyarık 1999). The nation state also required a strong sense of national belonging, and brought forward the critical question who included in and excluded from the national identity. In this sense, veiling as the most visible symbol of Islam became a powerful sign that marked the women's bodies as contrary to the ideal representation of the Republican women, and it resulted in the exclusion of veiled women from the new social imagery. Second, the controversial debate on the naming issue, whether it is *başörtüsü* or *türban* in Turkish, is discussed to address the politicization of the headscarf. The differentiation arises from the traditional and the modern depiction of veiling. In other

words, it is perceived as while *başörtüsü* is traditionally worn by women in rural sides as both a religious and a cultural custom, *türban* signifies urban, educated, middle-class women who visibly manifest their religiosity and their political existence in the public sphere (Akboğa 2014; Bayram 2009; Çarkoğlu 2009; Kalaycıoğlu 2005; Saktanber 2006; Secor 2002). Throughout the thesis, the headscarf having meaning of *başörtüsü* is used to denote the object women cover their hairs with because both the participants prefer to name it as the headscarf, and *türban* is part of the secular state discourse ignoring women's deliberate choices on naming what they wear. Veiling (tesettür in Turkish) is also used to indicate the Islamic covering, or the practice of modest dress for pious women. Third, the social meanings of the headscarf are discussed in the sense of how it became a social and political symbol that represented more complicated issues than piety. The focus of this section is how the headscarf embodied social aspects while veiled women insisted on the personal character of their decisions regarding their piety. Also, a comprehensive discussion on veiled women's agency is presented in two ways: On the one hand, the Kemalist state discourse and some secular feminist groups framed veiling as the visible political manifestation and the symbol of backwardness (Aldıkaçtı Marshall 2005; Gökariksel and Mitchell 2005) in a reductionist way. On the other hand, scholars point out the construction of the self through claiming their pious agency and performing their piety over their bodies (Çınar 2008; Göle 1997a; Saktanber 1994). Fourth, the political environment of the 1980s and the 1990s is briefly presented to shed light on the context that made the headscarf a complicated and serious challenge to the secular character of the state as a security issue. The rise of political Islam in relation to the Welfare Party's electoral success and its reflections on the social layer is also discussed to reveal the transformation of the headscarf question and the context-bounded practice of veiling. Fifth, the 28 February process in relation to the rise of political Islam is presented as a milestone for the headscarf question, and two iconic cases of Merve Kavakçı and Leyla Şahin are discussed with regard to intricate debates on the public sphere and secularism. The aim to reawaken these two cases in this section is to show how the headscarf ban paved the way for both the politicization of the headscarf on both sides, the state and Islamist community, and the rising political consciousness of veiled women. Yet, the headscarf question revolves around the above mention debates, and became a symbol, or a flag, that represented the struggle of a generation of women depending on the context and their experiences. So that it produced an identity burdened with what made veiling a matter of question, and was transmitted to the later generations. This is the starting point of the thesis, discussed in Chapter 4 in detail, which manifests the participants' rejection of this identity. As concluding remarks in the last section, the family dimension is discussed with reference to the previous researches. The

remarkable point on this dimension is the socio-economic backgrounds of both generations of veiled women, and different attitudes of families towards their daughters' preferences to wear the headscarf (Aktaş 1992; Cindoğlu 2011; Göle 1996; İlyasoğlu 1998; Özyeğin 2015). While the families of the previous generation of veiled women were traditionally religious and did not have a particular insistence on their daughters' veiling, the families of the participants of this research are modern, pious, and politicized subjects, and have a future projection for their daughters' life styles, in terms of their veiling and religious education in particular.

Chapter 4 is the analysis chapter of this ethnographic research. The aim is to provide a critical understanding of the participants' narratives on the practice of veiling and un-veiling in a broader framework. This chapter aims to shed light on personal and social intricacies behind the participants' decisions to take off their headscarves, and comprises of five main sections. In the first section, to clarify the participants' conscious rejection of a visible identity, the practice of un-veiling is framed as experience, not as a new identity for women who took off the headscarf, with reference to Scott (1991). The main reason to focus on experience is that it enables to understand what lies behind the particular experience of un-veiling. In the second section, different meanings that the participants attributed to the headscarf are presented to contextualize their experiences of the practice of veiling. The participants' narratives reveal that the headscarf does not denote a fix and stable meaning, but its meaning is formed depending on personal and familial conditions. The common point in the narratives is that all participants wore the headscarf because they thought that it was a religious obligation at the beginning of their decisions. It is not an unusual way of thinking at their early ages because all participants are raised in pious families and Islamic communities in which veiling is a normal, accepted, and expected dress-code for a pious woman. Yet, the meanings of the headscarf in a religious sense transformed in time to the social sphere through different encounters of the participants with diverse social circles. The third section focuses on this transformation and discusses veiling as an Islamic stigma symbol with reference to Goffman's theory of stigmatization (1963). Stigma is defined as attributes having extensive discrediting effects on one's body, character, or tribal characteristics of race, nation, and religion (Goffman 1963, 3-4). These attributes are rooted in one's physical or identity-related characteristics, are given by outsiders, and become stereotypes in time. When individuals encounter with each other in a social situation, they face with one's visible appearance first. In this framework, veiling as a stigma denotes not a bodily handicap or a characteristic feature, but a religious symbol that is attributed to pious women. It is a sign that marks a woman's body and is also gendered that reveals stereotypes peculiar to pious women only. The

aim of this section is to reveal how the participants confront with stigmatization of veiling in relation to stereotypes on veiled women and social anticipations regarding their appearances with the headscarf. In this sense, the critical importance of others' thoughts on veiling and the category of veiled women is discussed to find out the social aspects of veiling that the participants had to cope with to identify themselves. Who the others are in this context is crucially important, but the participants did not specifically name a particular individual, rather, sometimes referred to a group, i.e. the secular people. To avoid a binary distinction between pious and secular, the categories of in-group and out-group are used with reference to the Goffman's concepts of stigmatized and normals respectively. One substantial thing to note that the cases of two participants who did not take formal education after completed the compulsory education, which was four years for the one, and eight years for the other, but trained in Quran Courses for many years manifest the huge difference from other participants. The lack of mixed social contacts, or socialization in different contexts, shape their perceptions on veiling without its social aspects. So that the social expectations, stereotypes, and the rejection of visibility of pious identity are not the focuses of their narratives. In relation to the others' judgements on veiled women, the fourth section presents the realm of everyday as a ground on which the participants encounter with the particular expectation of consistency in their behaviors, actions, and appearances with the headscarf. Thus, the concepts of everyday religion and everyday Islam are discussed to make sense of the participants' ambiguous feelings towards their practices of veiling in their everyday life experiences. Deeb (2015) defined everyday Islam as "...the ways in which people draw on ideas that they understand to be rooted to varying extents in Islam in order to figure out how to handle everything from handshaking to prayer, from dress to which cafes to hang out in and what social invitations to accept." (94). Since pious individuals need to regulate their daily life activities within the realm of their fate, they also need reconsideration, reinterpretation, and re-adaptation of religious norms. The aim of this section is to show that the realm of religion and the realm of everyday are not mutually exclusive, but are embedded to each other (Basarudin 2013; Fadil and Fernando 2015; Orsi 2012). Yet, this embedded realm is where the participants felt excessive uneasiness because of the common judgement that they did not act proper to what they represented with the headscarf. In the fifth section, the core of the thesis is presented as most of the participants took off their headscarves because they felt overburdened with social expectations from themselves with regard to their visible identities with the headscarf. The only exception is two participants' personal reasons behind taking off the headscarf as they became non-believers of Islam by questioning their religious faiths. The complex issue of representation as the critical question for most of the participants is approached in relation to the sense of

belonging, in-group identity, and the rejection of visibility. In contrast to the findings of profound researches on Muslim women's experiences of distinctiveness and in-group attachment through the visibility of the hijab in non-Muslim majority contexts (Chapman 2016; Hopkins and Greenwood 2013; Jouili 2015; Wagner and Howarth 2012), the participants' narratives reveal that pious identity with the visibility of the headscarf is not an affirmed marker that provides a sense of belonging to in-group identity for the participants. Another important issue discussed in this section is that the rejection of visibility through the headscarf reflects the participants' claims on being invisible. This outstanding claim points out the changing reference points in relation to the significant others in the sense that where the participants situate themselves and how they reflect on themselves through the others' gazes. When they thought that they were invisible without the headscarf, they actually became more visible in the realm of in-group, but reconstructed a new self in the realm of out-group. This is the most distinctive contribution of the thesis to the existing literature on the headscarf issue and veiled women's subjectivity. I argue that the women who took off the headscarf used various strategies to challenge in-group religious norms by critically questioning the existing norms that they were born in on the one hand, and they willingly accepted out-group norms to some extend with a critical scrutiny on the other hand. In this sense, I offer to consider their agency in the grey area between resistance and submission **to what** by looking at both the self-questioning processes of the participants that led them to take off their headscarves and their reconstruction of the self vis a vis the significant others from both in-group and out-group. In this sense, the participants of this research manifest their critical subjectivity by employing what was ascribed them and what they reconstructed by their own. And, the moments in which they had to reach an ethical decision about everyday life behaviors and choices in relation to their appearance with the headscarf are the moments they revealed their agency.

1.3 Methodology

The thesis aims to find out the following questions: Why do young veiled women, who were grown up in religious families and socialized in Islamist community circles, decide to take off their headscarves? How do the current social and political conditions, if any, affect the women's decisions to un-veil? How do the symbolic meanings of the headscarf create the complicated social expectations for veiled women? How

do they narrate their veiling and un-veiling practices in relation to the normative understanding of Islam and secularism in Turkey?

To present a meaningful narrative on these questions, I address the relevant literature on the headscarf question in Turkey in a comprehensive way, and I conduct an ethnographic fieldwork which incorporates semi-structured in-depth interviews. The extensive literature review contributes to this thesis to show not only the fruitful academic debate with a great variety of approaches but also a significant void that the thesis points out. I aspire to incorporate this thesis in the literature by redefining a new and controversial aspect of the existing headscarf question. The ethnographic fieldwork makes a great contribution to the thesis in the way that diverse personal narratives of the participants embodies a newly emerging phenomenon of un-veiling. Their personal experiences of veiling and un-veiling shapes the way how I frame this thesis into the relevant literature.

I conducted eight face-to-face interviews with women who wore the headscarf in a period of time in their lives and took off it due to various reasons. I started conducting interviews in early September 2019, and it took time until February 2020. Though I was planning to make ten interviews as an optimum number in the limited time of the M.A. program, I could only reach eight women and had to finalize the fieldwork in March 2020 because of the global outbreak of the corona-virus pandemic. Apart from some anticipated difficulties to make contact with possible participants because of the sensibility of the thesis subject, the pandemic was not predictable, but an important interruption to the planned course of the fieldwork.

To reach out my interviewees, I got in contact with my social and academic circles such as friends, fellow students, e-mail groups, online feminist blogs and women's associations. Initially, I sent an information e-mail to all my contacts with a short description of the thesis and my pursuit of meeting with possible participants who took of their headscarves, and I requested them to disseminate my e-mail to those who might be willing to participate in this research. After I started interviews, I also asked my participants for whether they could know someone else who might be a volunteer for this study at the end of the interviews. Through these methods, I aimed to meet women from different social groups by snow-ball technique. Within this period, I contacted Reçel Blog (a pro-Feminist Muslim online blog), Kadına Şiddete Karşı Muslumanlar İnsiyatifi (A Muslim Initiative for Violence against Women), Yalnız Yurumeyeceksin (an online blog publishing veiled and un-veiled women's letters on their decisions to take off their headscarves), and Havle Kadın Derneği (the first women association formed by Muslim feminist women in Turkey) via e-mail

to ask them for circulating my message to their networks.

I was aware that since the thesis subject could be a sensitive topic for the participants since they might have traumatic memories of both their veiling and un-veiling experiences. That's why my first aim was to build a trust relationship between us and provided them a comfort zone to tell their stories as they wished. Since I reached each of the participants through different intermediary persons who knew me and the participant, I had already known that the participant was willing to be a part of this thesis. I made a first contact with a participant via a phone call or a WhatsApp message to introduce myself and the purpose of the study, and I received her approval to join the interview one more time on the phone.

All interviews were based on the principal of confidentiality. At the beginning of the interview, the consent form was given to the participant, and their oral and written consent was taken. They were informed that the audio records and the transcription texts will be accessible to only me for the exclusive use of the thesis, and I will archive the data gathered from the participants at least for five years Also, the information that I may publish other studies made out of this thesis, but identifying personal information will not be disclosed was given to the participants. On the form, they wrote their names, but the use of their real names in the thesis was depend on their consent. Even if some of them allowed to that, I prefer to use pseudo names for the participants due to make sure of their privacy, and I clearly specified this issue to them. Additionally, they were informed that they could skip any question which they did not want to answer, the interview might be terminated at any point, and they could withdraw from the research whenever they wanted to. In the case of withdrawing from the study, the audio record and the transcription text of the interview would be destroyed and be excluded from the research. One other thing to note that I shared the personal contact addresses of mine and my supervisor with the participants in the case of they would like to ask to both of us for any question regarding the thesis.

During the interview, I attached great importance to ensure a comfort zone to the participants for their long talks or long silences without any interruption. The silent moments were notable no less than our dialogues, but where they stopped their narratives and how they dealt with the issues caused to such silences were much worth to emphasise, too. I also made a great effort to create for the participants a free space in which they were expected to and also encouraged to tell their narratives not in a consistent way from the beginning to the end through the pre-determined questions, but in the way they constructed their stories on their own. What is equally important that this thesis does not anticipate any potential harm to the

participants. Since the voluntary participation to this study and the participants' consent are the key principals, the participants were informed about that they always had the right to skip questions that recalled their traumatic experiences in the past, or terminated the interview whenever they wanted to. I assumed that they might also had an opportunity to cope with their negative experiences by sharing their personal stories and to felt that they were not alone in such a struggle by knowing that there are some other women who participated to this research to share similar experiences of un-veiling.

One of the most important objectives in the field was to reach women from different age groups and diverse social backgrounds in order to reveal multifarious reasons behind their decisions to take off their headscarves. Due to the limited time allocated for the fieldwork, I was not able to make interviews with women from several cities other than İstanbul. Yet, to reflect the diversity of women's experiences of un-veiling, I conducted six interviews in different districts of İstanbul (Kadıköy, Üsküdar, Şişli, Eyüp, Beyoğlu), one interview in Kocaeli; and one of the interviewees lives in a different city which is not named at the participant's request, but our interview took place in İstanbul upon her request. I met the participants in coffee shops that were mostly chosen by them; yet, if they did not offer a place to meet, I suggested somewhere in their neighborhoods to make them more comfortable. Besides, before starting the fieldwork, I did not define the age limit for the participants to show variety in the field, but I assumed that the possible age range would be 20 to 30 because of the scope of my social circles and their possible contacts. As I expected, the youngest participant in this study is 22 years old, and the eldest one is 30 years old.

The average duration of the interviews was around one and half hour, and all interviews were digitally recorded with the participants' permissions. I was very careful on that I avoided to take notes during the interviews on purpose since it might possibly create a sense of formal meeting and a sense of being subjected to a list of questions. If a participant talked on an issue for a very long time, instead of interrupting the course of conversation, I only noted down specific points or some questions that I would like to focus later as a quick reminder for myself. The most important priority in all interviews was to provide a comfort and secure environment to the participants; for this reason, at the very beginning of our conversations, I paid utmost attention to introduce myself first, and then, to continue with a small talk as long as the participants wished. This took nearly 40 minutes on average, but it sometimes extended to an hour at most. At the end of all interviews we also continued to talk on several issues from more personal experiences to the thesis subject to personal questions about my life. Two participants did not prefer to talk

about some questions during the interview, but just after the record, even though I did not ask for an explanation to what they uncovered, they willingly and frankly clarified those subjects and the reason behind why they wanted to keep them off the record. In such cases, when our meeting was done, I stayed in the place where we met to write down what we talked about after the record as much as I remembered.

Since the fieldwork relied on the semi-structured in-depth interviews, I did not ask a set of questions one by one to the participants though I had a preliminary question template (see in Appendix I). Rather, the purpose was to focus on their individual narratives to understand similarities and differences based on their particular experiences. To avoid a long story-telling on a specific issue, I directed the interviewees' attention to the focus with small questions, if necessary. I aim to shed light on mainly three episodes in an individual narrative: The first part is to understand the women's experiences of veiling: How did they decide to wear the headscarf? Why did they veil themselves? How did they construct the meaning of the headscarf? How did they relate veiling to their daily-life practices? The second part is to delve into the family dimension: What was the role of family on women's decisions to wear the headscarf? Besides, I did not directly ask for the parents' levels of education or their occupations to the participants; rather, I asked for a general description of the family members. Thus, the context that they narrated, I hoped to get meaningful inferences about the changing socio-economic structure of the family and the families' attitudes toward the visibility of religious identity through the headscarf. I believed that this would provide with an invaluable source to contribute to the previous research on the veiled women who struggled against the headscarf ban in 1990s through a comparison of both groups of women's families' attitudes towards the veiling and un-veiling practices. The focus of the third part is to understand the complicated processes behind the women's decisions to take off their headscarves: Why did they choose to remove their headscarves? In this part, even if they did not mention of it, I specifically asked the participants for whether the current social and political conditions had a role on their decisions to take off the headscarf.

For the analysis of the fieldwork, I used InqScribe to transcribe the recorded interviews, and made a first few close reading of the transcripts on by own to contextualize the narratives and to identify similarities, differences, ambiguities, patterns and particularities in each story. While I was transcribing the records, I did not simultaneously translate the interviews into English; I rather preferred to translate only the parts that were quoted in the following sections. After I came up with a draft of the categorized subjects, I coded certain words such as identity, visible, invisible, neutral, individual/collective belief, etc. by using NVIVO. Lastly, to analyze the fieldwork in a theoretical frame, I aim to establish multiple dialogues

between theories and different subjects of this thesis. So that I do not present a separate chapter for a theoretical discussion, but embed it into the analysis of the fieldwork in Chapter 4.

2. THE FIELD

2.1 Brief Information on the Participants

Though each participant's narrative was analyzed in its uniqueness, it is crucially important to briefly refer to their backgrounds and their particular focuses on some issues, and to make a mention of peculiar moments, or turning points in other words, in the course of their life. Additionally, some of the meeting notes including our relationship during the interview and major points that attracted my attention in the narratives was provided for each participant. The aim of an early introduction of the participants one by one was to pave the way for the contextualization of each narrative into the wider framework of this thesis, and to avoid much detailed information on the participants' backgrounds in the analysis section. In this section, all participants without their real names and personal information that might uncover their identity were introduced in the same order I interviewed with them. Anything that the participants talked about off the record or did not want to be included in the written records will not be disclosed in this thesis.

Deniz

I first conducted an interview with Deniz in Üsküdar. She is a graduate student and live in İstanbul for many years. She was the eldest child among her siblings, and she did not live together with her parents who were in a foreign country for a while. During the interview, she asked for stopping the record only once when we talked about her family that she would not prefer to talk about in detail. Since she was a graduate student, we had more common points for small chats before and after the interview. She mentioned of her fieldwork research done in her senior year about the changing consumption patterns of the conservative people in Turkey. We,

thus, talked on the research and its incredible effects on her decision to take off her headscarf. She did not ask me for any question related to my background so that I did not mention of my experiences of veiling and un-veiling.

Deniz willingly wore the headscarf when she was 18 years old and took of the headscarf two years later. Her parents did not interfere in both of her decision-making processes. She believed that she completely practiced all religious requirements except the headscarf, and this was the only lack in her life. With her friend's encouraging support behind her decision to wear the headscarf, she wanted to fill this deficiency. Since she grew in a pious family, and most of women in her social environment were veiled, she was not exposed to compelling wishes on veiling from her parents. The first thing she emphasized about her veiling was that she exerted to distinguish herself from "the prevalent pattern of veiled women". To form an authentic style as a young veiled woman, she refused to follow the veiling fashion in those days (the essential four items, which were silk scarves, satin shirts, fabric pants and high-heel shoes, were necessary to be stylish in her description) because she did not want to be included in "a class of veiled women". Her thoughts on an outsiders' perception on the headscarf and on an imaginary class of veiled women that she defined as uneducated, but stylish in a combination of modern and traditional became the driving force behind her decision to exclude herself from this group identity by taking off her headscarf. She assumed that she could define herself without a category anymore so that she felt herself free from an identity by taking off the headscarf. The only concern she overthought on while questioning her religious believes for almost a year was her deeper sense of leaving something incomplete. She felt that wearing the headscarf was a kind of duty, but she did not perfectly perform this duty.

Sevgi

I conducted an interview with Sevgi in Kocaeli. She is an undergraduate student and live in Kocaeli for three years. She was the eldest child among her brothers. She came from a conservative family, but her mother wore the headscarf at her 30s, and her father never prays though he always takes a stand on being pious, she said. During the interview she was very excited to tell her experiences in a very detailed way. I did not mention of my experiences of veiling and un-veiling after the interview, but she curiously asked many questions on how I approached this issue with regard to my observations on and interviews with other women. One thing to note that she was the only participant -among those who knew my background-who wanted to get my opinion on whether I could offer a "solution", in her words,

to hardships un-veiled women had to undertake.

Sevgi willingly wore the headscarf at 16 years old. Her mother explicitly objected to her decision to veil, because both of her parents thought that she was younger and this was a simple whim. Yet, the strong motivation behind her decision to veil was a need or a desire for identifying herself, she said. She needed a sense of security deeper her inside and thought that the headscarf, which could potentially draw defined boundaries, could protect herself from the outside world which was so complicated and unpredictable for her.

During the high school years, she lived in Eskişehir so that she highlighted how the spatial differences left a lasting impact on her journey from veiling to un-veiling. She defined her school as mostly populated by students who came from leftist families, and together with her two veiled friends, they were the minority there. That's why she remembered these years as she struggled to be recognized in such a social environment. When the headscarf ban was removed in her final year at the high school, she was wearing the headscarf as she wished, "... but something that I fought for disappeared", she said. Since freedom not only for the headscarf, but also for all casual dresses in schools was ensured, each student started to wear whatever he/she wanted; that's why wearing the headscarf, for Sevgi, was normalized and lost its particular meaning. After that her questioning of why she pursued to wear the headscarf increasingly continued when she came to Kocaeli for the college education. She felt that she blended into the crowd in the way that she was not the one who was pointed at because of the headscarf there.

Sevgi took off her headscarf when she was 22 years old. At the first few months, she could not explain her decision to her family; and, when she told that she did not wear the headscarf for a while to her mother via phone-call, her mother could not believe what she heard and immediately got worse. The strong motivation behind her decision to un-veil was her idea that the headscarf could provide a comfort zone and keep her out of evil was disenchanted since she realized that the headscarf created a limited world in which she had no chance to get know the real world behind a wall that she put up. She said that the headscarf identified herself in a particular form in which she could not express who she was or what she wanted. When she came up with an idea that "You cannot talk within veiling which is an obstacle to develop yourself." after almost a month which was full of a dense questioning, she took of the headscarf to find her path.

Jasmine

I conducted an interview with Jasmine in Şişli. She had recently completed a graduate program, and had a professional career in a pro-government media organization. She is the eldest child among her sisters, and is married for almost a year. She chose a table far from the crowd in the café. Whenever a waiter walked along our table, she lowered her voice at every turn. It was the first time that she talked about her un-veiling experiences with a stranger so that she was excited at the very beginning. Before the interview took place, when we first met via Whatsapp, she asked me for whether I had such an experience of veiling. After the interview, she curiously asked me for my story and especially my mother's reaction to my decision to take off the headscarf. During the interview, she wanted to skip only one question about her workplace environment because of her security concerns. In the evening of the same day, she texted me on Whatsapp to say that though she gave permission to use her real name on the consent form, she did not want me to include her name in the written documents. I reminded her that I will use a pseudo name for each participant instead of the real names, and I offered that she could choose a name for herself as she wished. She chose Jasmine, and explained the reason as it was the only princess who was Middle Eastern in Disneyland.

Jasmine willingly wore the headscarf when she was 14 years old. She was not exposed to her parents insisting urges on veiling, but she said that it was a normal transition process for her since it was as if there was no other possibility like not wearing the headscarf. All adult women in her extended family wore the headscarf so that she did not even once think of veiling in her childhood. She described her family as political Islamists; her extended family as her mother's side was more traditionally pious, so called Anatolian Muslims in her words, and her father's side were dedicated followers of a religious order so that they were more extreme and strict in religious sense. She remembered to watch news on the women's struggle against the headscarf ban on television in her childhood, and she also attended to such demonstrations organized against the YÖK's (Higher Education Council) regulations several times with her family. Thus, she said that she believed in that the headscarf was a religious requirement that she should necessarily do, and she intentionally was part of this struggle.

Jasmine took off her headscarf when she was 24 years old. The first question she asked to herself when un-veiling as a blurred idea came to her mind was, "Do I live as if I haven't appeared?" In this process, she could not talk about her complicated questions with anyone from her family or from her friends so that she received a psychological support with the help of her sister after a while. She overemphasized

that the strong motivation behind her decision to take off the headscarf was a desire to be invisible with her appearance. Since she realized that veiling was not an ordinary dress in Turkey, but was "a flag that identified a standardized representation" in her words, she felt herself trapped in that.

Burcu

I conducted an interview with Burcu in Kadıköy. She is an undergraduate student and live in İstanbul for four years together with her grandparents. She is the eldest child among her brothers. She described her mother and father as pious persons who consciously chose Islamic way of live through meeting pious people after they went to the university. Her grandfather from the father's side was a retired soldier, and she defined her father's side as secular and liberal and her mother's side as not-religious. Her mother wore the headscarf when she was 28 years old after few years of her marriage. Burcu gave many details about her parents and her extended family before talking about how she came to a decision to un-veil, because her grandparents from the father's side had an incredible role in her life.

Burcu willingly wore the headscarf at 15 years old after she had first menstruation, because she knew that it was a requirement from now on, she said. An interesting point she mentioned at the very beginning of our conversation was that she still believed in that the headscarf was an obligation she should perform. Despite her mother's objections, she preferred to go to İmam Hatip High School, and all her friends were veiled there. Thus, she deeply felt a sense of belonging to a particular group with her headscarf, and she said that it might be related to a need for being approved in her social environment. The situation of gaining acceptance turned to the opposite way round for her when they moved to İzmir where her friends were totally different from those in her previous high school. She eventually became more noticeable in her new habitus. During the period of adaptation to both veiling and the changing social sphere, she had to cope with her grandfather's humiliations and her aunt's offending conversations. She was also exposed to verbal harassments from her grandparents' neighbors who criticized her veiling by deprecatingly asking for how she could dare to wear the headscarf as a grandchild of a soldier.

Burcu decided to take off her headscarf in her last years in İzmir before attending to the university in İstanbul, and she mentioned of her changing opinions on her veiling to her father. Since she faced with his negative reactions, she postponed her decision to sometime in the unknown future. Her motivation behind her decision to un-veil was to question who she really was and why she performed this practice. She was not sure whether this was only because of her peer's influence or because of her faith. In the summer she made an exact decision to take off the headscarf

after she went to İstanbul, she experienced two turning points that triggered her to perform the decision. One of them was her first taste of alcohol with her aunt, and the other one was the coup attempt in July 15, 2016. Drinking alcohol as a veiled woman created a strong feeling of guilt deeper her inside since she saw herself as if she acted like a two-faced person who deceived herself first and others who saw her a Muslim woman, but never knew what she did. Additionally, the coup created a sense of distrust to the community which she felt belonging to. It was because her father was taken into custody for no concrete reason. After almost a month of dense self-questioning, she took off her headscarf at 20 years old.

Elif

I conducted an interview with Elif in Eyüp. She is a graduate student and lives in İstanbul since she was born. Before the interview, I knew that Elif made a research on un-veiled women as a research project in the college. I wanted to ask her for an interview for my study, but if she did not want to be involved in this study, I would prefer to have an informal conversation with her to exchange views on our studies. Yet, she gladly accepted to participate in my research. Hence, what we talked during the interview was sometimes more academic since she was experienced both as a researcher and as a subject who overthought on herself and other un-veiled women, too. Before the interview, we did not talk about her research project. Yet, after the interview, we spent almost three hours to have a talk, and she mentioned of the different framework of her research, her participants and some of her interview questions especially on sexuality of women which is beyond the scope of my thesis. One thing to note that she did not pursue to work on the same subject since this is a new phenomenon in Turkey, and she did not want to be remembered as a pioneer with this subject of un-veiled women in the forthcoming years of her career in academia.

Elif came from a middle-class, conservative family, and all women in her extended family were veiled. She willingly wore the headscarf at 15 years old; and she said that she was familiar with the headscarf since her childhood so that it was not difficult for her to adopt veiling. She overemphasized a sense of belonging as the motivation behind her decision to wear the headscarf. Yet, her self-questioning process arose from the same sense again, because she started to think that she did not feel belonging to the pious community especially after she went to the college. Her university was a small, foundation university which was mostly populated by students coming from pious families. The thing that complicated her socialization in such a university circle and confused her mind was her first encounter with the upper-class Islamist community. She categorized students in the university into

three groups: those who were students of Islamic Sciences, a group in a "glass bell" in her words; those who were pious, but wealthy snobs; and those who were ordinary conservatives closed to the ruling party, and perpetuated the discourse of victimhood. She mentioned of these categories in a very detailed way, because what she observed on the community which she felt a sense of belonging to caused a disappointment, or a sense of nothingness. She first questioned the place of women in religion and God's particular expectations from women, then the headscarf, and her self-questioning finally reached to the fight with God. She frankly expressed that in this process of an "existential crisis", she became "alienated from her body" in her words. Since she had already burdened with being a veiled woman in a defined form, she wanted to neutralize her body. This burden for her was mostly rooted in the established expectations of outsiders on how a veiled woman should act in a particular situation. After almost two years of self-questioning on her faith and the role of women in Islam, she took off her headscarf at 20 years old.

Duru

I conducted an interview with Duru at a bar in Beyoğlu. Since it was early in the day, it was not a noisy and crowded place and we could easily keep our interview in the garden. Duru is an undergraduate student and lives in a city where she goes to the university. She is the only woman who goes to the college in her extended family. She is the eldest child among her sisters. She was married for three years, and had in the divorce process for a while. She is also the only woman who get a divorce from her husband in her extended family, so her family did not take her side during this process.

When I learned that she did not live in Istanbul in our first conversation on Whatsapp, I offered to go to her town whenever she was available. Yet, she did not want to meet me in the city she lived in. When she came to the meeting, she did not wear the headscarf; and since she already knew that I made interviews with women who took off their headscarves, I did not even think of something else. In the middle of the interview, however, I realized something unusual in the course of her narrative. Then, I learned that she took off her headscarf almost a year ago, but her family did not know it yet. Since she lived with her grandmother and her uncle in the same apartment, she was veiled there and also veiled in her parents' house, too. Apart from the places where she was together with a member of her family, she was un-veiled. She made a decision to explain herself to her family last summer, but her younger sister requested her to wait some more time until she got into university. Her fear was that if her parents knew that she took off her headscarf after going

Duru wore the headscarf at 14 years old. Her first sentence at the beginning of the

interview was, "…it was me who wanted to wear the headscarf, because all role models I have seen in my life are veiled and faithful. I wanted to do this in order to be more important and grown in their eyes." After she successfully completed the primary school, her father sent her to a boarding Quran Course instead of high school. After almost four-five years of education on complete memorization of the Quran, there were two options waiting for one, she said; one should either be an instructor in the course or marry with a proper man. Since she did not want to stay in the course anymore, she chose to marry with a man who was her distant relative, but she did not meet beforehand. She described her marriage as good enough because this was her place in which she was accountable to a person only instead of her family's place in which she was controlled by many people. Yet, she became skeptical on her faith when someone gave advises to her problems in the marriage by reminding her of some hadiths on the women's duties to please her husband.

When she started the college at 22 years old in the last year of her marriage with her husband's support, too, it was the first time that she became socialized in a mixed-gender place. Her encounter with different people and a great variety of life-styles brought along a long, complicated process of questioning everything she believed in so far. She had an important turning point in her life, which was, a summer trip to Europe. She realized that not-veiling was not even noticeable there since the norm was not being veiled for women, and people did not consider manifesting one's body as it was strange, but were familiar with that appearance. More importantly, nobody looked at anyone on the streets, she said. After such an experience, she questioned that the reason behind wearing the headscarf is because they should hide their bodies from the male gaze. Since she took off the headscarf at 23 years old, she only wore the black one where she had to wear it. She said that if she continued to fashionably dress up or to wear colorful headscarves, people could think as if she was pleased to do it. She described her situation as "… I felt that I created such a perception that though I lived in a prison, I could embellish it. I did not need to do that. Sure, I am in the prison, and I do not have to paint the walls of the prison. … "

Nilay

I conducted an interview with Nilay in Kadıköy. She completed graduate education and had a long-term professional carrier. After she lived in Ankara for many years because of her university education and professional life, she moved to İstanbul. She is the eldest child among her brothers, and she is married. She comes from a conservative family; her mother is a well-known preacher, and her father comes

from a politically activist family. Both of her parents were dedicated followers of a religious order before they got married. The concept of family, and the role of mother in particular, was so important in her life, so Nilay portrayed her family through a great variety of memories. She described her father as supportive in every way, and her mother as inaccessible for her in the way that she was a perfectly admired woman in her broad social circles and was very busy with her job.

Nilay wore the headscarf at 12 years old even before she had first menstruation. Since all women in her mother's side were veiled, and veiling was incredibly important for her mother, she decided to wear the headscarf to establish an intimate relationship with her mother. She said that she always thought she could strengthen her relations with her mother if she became more pious. She never saw the headscarf as an imposition, and she got easily used to veiling in time. During the high school years and the first half of university years, Nilay was exposed to the headscarf ban. She was uncomfortable with such a duality of veiling in weekends, but un-veiling in weekdays. It might be more difficult to deal with it, because she preferred not to share that she was veiled with anyone in the school. It was not because she was ashamed of herself, she said, but because she did not want to be different in any way. She was very easy going and adaptable, so she did not want the headscarf to pose an obstacle between the people and her sociability. Yet, at the university, she took off the headscarf until the ban was cancelled. She said, "I never think of wearing a wig for even a second." They were allowed to take off their headscarves in toilets at campus (it was forbidden to enter the campus in some universities without taking off the headscarf at the entrance doors.), so she could do her hairs that was so important for her.

Nilay defined herself as a pious woman. She regularly prayed since her childhood; she learned how to read the Quran from her friends at the university; she was highly sensitive to not lie, not gossip, not be unfair which all were equally important and necessary religious requirements for her. Yet, she clearly expressed that she embraced all these practices as she willingly and consciously performed because of her faith. Since it did not arise from her faith, but from her mother's insistence, the headscarf was not one of them.

Nilay took off her headscarf at 30 years old. The strong motivation behind her decision was her reflection on two selfs inside her; one was pious Nilay with her religious practices and her faith, and other was deceptive Nilay with her headscarf. She wanted to be herself without reflecting something that she could not internalize on her body. When she un-veiled, her mother and her grandmother did not want to see her for a while. This was the most painful reaction that hurt her deeply in this

process. Yet, she frankly expressed that she felt better because she relieved herself of such an obligation to represent a religion, or a belief system, as a whole; "I am representing only myself anymore", she said.

Since she worked with a deputy from the ruling party in Ankara, she closely observed how things worked in politics. The issue of representation was another remarkable point in her narrative, because she did not want to be included into a group of people who became rich in the last few years, manifested themselves as pious and dominated most of key positions in public offices. For a long time, she thought that she was not one of them. Yet, she emphasized that it was neither AKP nor conservative people nor the changing piety which was more visible, but less substantial that led to changes in her mind. All these triggered her self-questioning process, the ultimate reason was her wish to be without a visible identity.

Ahsen

I conducted an interview with Ahsen in Üsküdar. She completed the college education in Ankara, and had a professional carrier. She lives in İstanbul for a while and was looking for a job when we made the interview. She is the youngest child among seven siblings. She came from a pious family, but she described a particular point of "transformation" that led her mother and elder sisters became more pious when they met a religious order.. During the interview, she requested to pause recording two times when she had difficulty to talk on. We had long silent moments in these breaks, and then had some regular chats that made her more comfortable. Whenever she was ready to continue, I started recording again.

Ahsen wore the burqa at 10 years old. It was the burqa, not a simple headscarf, because she went to a Quran Course of a religious order that made the burqa obligatory as a uniform. Since there was no compulsory education after primary school at that time, her family did not allow her to attend the school after the fourth grade. Rather, she was sent to the boarding Quran Course together with her twin sister. Though she spent early childhood with her family in Van, she and her twin at 12 years old had to move to İstanbul at the request of the course authorities. Yet, she did not stay with her twin in the same course, but they were sent to different courses of the same order. She was exposed to an excessive training on the Quran and teachings of the community leader. She described the course as it was not allowed to use phones, to read books or to do anything outside the course schedule; there was no chance to communicate someone outside those women who trained in the same course and no possibility to go out of the course. She said that beating was accepted normal in the course and was like a part of the training as well. Since she was not aware of a world outside the borders of the course, she did not question

the essence of what she was exposed to, she said. When she and her twin got beat up by the head of instructors in different times in different places, this "incidence" became the turning point. Her older brother took them from the course, and they returned to Van. Yet, this time, they were sent another course of a different religious order there. Ahsen did not want to stay in the course anymore, and continued her religious training on by own in the home.

After a long time in different courses, she realized that she did not directly read the Quran even once. She looked at the meaning of some sections of the Quran, and found nothing that satisfied her questions. At the same time, she read Tolstoy's books and said, "I could not explain how I felt relieved when I noticed that there was a person who questioned the existence of God [apart from me]; these were my sentences, this was exactly my mind." She did not direct her questioning to only the headscarf, but to her faith and religion itself. Since she knew that she could not take off the headscarf while living with her family, so she postponed it until she went to the college in Ankara. It was very difficult to convince her mother of going to another city by herself, because she did not go out of the home even once by herself alone, she said. Yet, she succeeded it through the help of a distant relative and her persistent efforts. The most powerful motivation behind entering the college was her decision to un-veil. At the end, she took off her headscarf at 23 years old. She frankly expressed what she felt at the first day she went out without the headscarf by simply saying, "[I felt] completely free. It was incredibly beautiful."

2.2 General Overview of the Fieldwork

All participants wore the headscarf at their early ages. Although they have still some questions on the necessity of the headscarf, Deniz, Sevgi, Jasmine, Elif and Nilay thought that the headscarf was a religious duty for women; Burcu still believes in that it is an obligation that she should do. Duru and Ahsen who wore burqa and face veiling when they were veiled said that there was no other choice than wearing the headscarf, but they frankly expressed that they are no longer believers of Islam, and they do not believe in the necessity of the headscarf as well. At the beginning of our conversation, I asked them for their experiences of veiling, and they obviously stated that their families did not force them to wear the headscarf. Only Ahsen said, "I did not decide to wear the headscarf. I was 10 years old. ... Indeed, I did not willingly to wear it." This is how she evaluated her decision from now,

but at that time, it was not a matter of unwillingness for her. They grew up in conservative families[1], and all women they know around themselves, their mothers in particular, wear the headscarf. Wearing the headscarf is, thus, a smooth passage to adulthood and a "natural" step that follows a religious norm for women in their pious environment.

A notable difference on the family dimension from the previous research is that the participants' parents do not practice religion as custom, or are not traditionally conservative Muslims. Their parents are conscious believers, and they thought the Islamic teaching to their daughters. Yet, the existing research on the previous generation of veiled women who had struggled against the headscarf ban in 1990s showed that these women came from mostly traditionally religious families, and then consciously adopted the Islamic way of life by reading directly the Quran and religious sources as well, or by meeting with a religious friend, or by socializing in a religious order after they went to the university. The participants in this study, however, did not follow the same path to learn the necessities of the Islamic life, but they already had to shape their choices within the Islamic borders since their early childhood. They indicated that there was no other choice than wearing the headscarf at a certain age, which might differ from a family to another, but the widely accepted norm is the age that they entered puberty. Even if they were not directly told to wear the headscarf, they inherently knew that they should do it. All participants also talked about how they were exposed to various restrictions on dressing during the childhood years even before their menstruation period. They mostly gave the same example of that they could not wear miniskirts, shorts even in their homes if their fathers were at the home, or any clothes that their peers wore. Only Nilay emphasized that she did whatever she wanted at her adolescence period in which she was wearing piercings and having her hair dyed in different colors as a veiled teenager.

All participants are university educated, and Ahsen, Jasmine and Nilay have a good career in their professional life. Only Deniz and Burcu went to Imam Hatip High School without they exactly knew what kind of education such schools offered. Yet, Deniz changed the school in the third grade because she did not get used to the conservative arrangements of the school, did not feel a sense of belonging to that social environment, and even did not overcome "immorality of the teachers that they covered with their headscarves" in her words, and went to a private college in which she decided to wear the headscarf. She underlined that she did not wear the headscarf during her years in İmam Hatip High School, and she never wanted

[1]This word, conservative, is the participants' choices to denote that their families are religious.

to do it there, because she felt a strong reaction to pious people in the school. Burcu willingly preferred to go to İmam Hatip High School because of her peers' influence though her mother was against her will. Among other participants, Sevgi graduated from a Social Sciences High School (Sosyal Bilimler Lisesi); Elif from an Anatolian Teacher High School (Anadolu Öğretmen Lisesi); Nilay from an Anatolian High School (Anadolu Lisesi); Jasmine from an Anatolian High School which was "located in an elite neighborhood and mostly populated by the students coming from secular families" in her words, and she insistently underlined that she never thought to go to İmam Hatip High School, because she was very successful and thought that only unsuccessful students went to such schools; Duru and Ahsen did not take formal high school education because they went to boarding Quran Courses of different religious orders. Among those who trained in such religious orders, Duru completed the primary education before going to the course; Ahsen was 10 years old when she left the school and went to the course. They both attended the university later on.

Since the headscarf ban was cancelled in 2013, the participants -except Nilay- were not exposed to the ban during their university education; but some of them had to take off their headscarves in the school during their primary and secondary education except those who went to İmam Hatip High Schools. One thing to note that a partial-practicing veiling created an inner conflict and a practical hardship by taking off the headscarf in the school five days in a week and being a veiled woman, at the same time, outside the school and full-two days on weekends. Only Sevgi thought of the ban as a space for her struggle, but when the ban was cancelled at the time she was in the last year in the high school, she felt that she lost what defined her. Jasmine and Nilay felt confused of this partial veiling, because their friends saw them unveiled in the school, but veiled outside of the school. This led to a complex question in their minds of where to draw such ambiguous borders between veiling and unveiling. Also, it poses another question to the bases on which how to regulate their conducts. Sevgi, for instance, liked playing basketball during lunch breaks in the school. Yet, when she started to wear the headscarf in the school after the ban was cancelled, she felt uncomfortable while playing basketball with her headscarf not because of the headscarf physically limited her move, but because of feeling one's glance over herself that she interpreted as she did wrong, or acted inappropriate to the headscarf. She stopped with playing basketball, because "a veiled woman should not do such activities." in her words. Although she was a veiled woman before that time, it was not a problem for her because she did not directly face with a regulative social mechanism over her conducts, or did not feel being criticized by the third gaze. Such duality complicated their identity formation at their early ages

in the way of confusion between being oneself with one's own choices and being one who is expected to behave according to what socially accepted on and religiously appropriate to her veiling.

While the first part of the interview focused on the women's experiences of veiling, the second part focused on their experiences of un-veiling by questioning why they decided to take off their headscarves and how they passed through the processes of un-veiling. After we talked about their stories on the headscarf, the first question I asked was, "Do you remember the first day when you went out without the headscarf? How did you feel?". Though their answers varied, all participants -except Jasmine and Burcu- stated that it was not a weird day, but an ordinary day like the day before when they were veiled outside. Sevgi said,

> "I was out of my town, because I wanted to try it where nobody knew me. I went to a shopping-mall which seemed to me more crowded than any other day. I was not veiled for the first time, and I expected that everybody will look at me and point at me. No. Nothing happened. Everything was in its usual flow. It was normal and ordinary." (Interview with Sevgi, September 21, 2019).

Duru who took off her headscarf for the first time out of her town said,

> "It was a night. I took off first my bone [a small size, special wearing that is used under the headscarf to avoid the exposure of one's hairs], the headscarf was still on my head. After I walked for a while, I took off my headscarf, but my hood still covered my head. I did not do it at one time. When I took of my hood too, the first thing I felt was that my ears were cold. This was the first time I realized that ears can get cold, too! While walking without nothing covering my head, it was like someone appreciated me. I strongly felt that someone divine, maybe God, said 'Well done, keep going.' and supported me, because I eventually became myself." (Interview with Duru, October 27, 2019).

Jasmine barely talked about her first day of un-veiling. Since she had to go to her workplace, which was a pro-government institution and mostly populated by conservative people, she only said, "It was so difficult.". Even if she decided to take off her headscarf for a long time, the only concern for her was that how her co-workers, especially veiled women, would possibly react to her decision. It was not an unreasonable fear for her, because she was fired from the workplace after two

months.

I supposed that even if they thought on this issue for a long time before removing their headscarves, it was not easy to practice it at the first time since it is not only a longtime habit, but also rooted by their religious fates. However, their emphasis on that it was not an immediate decision that one made in a day, or a first action to change one's life, but the last visible step of a long, challenging and on-going process of self-questioning on the headscarf, or the very necessity of some religious obligations, or religion in itself in some cases. None of them remembered what specifically triggered them to think of removing the headscarf, but this process started with a feeling that this was not me. I heard varieties of this sentence from each participant several times during the interviews. Some of them questioned whether the headscarf is really an obligation for women; some questioned that even if it is a religious obligation, what the real motivation behind their practice was; and some questioned the verses of the Quran, the prophet's sayings, and the God's will for only women to cover themselves in particular. In this process of self-questioning, which took up time from 2 months to 2 years depending on their particular conditions, they asserted that they have already changed, and removing the headscarf was not a big deal anymore. One thing to note that when they came up with the decision to unveil, all -except Jasmine- did not worry about reactions that might possibly come from their families, members of their extended family, or their social environment. Yet, the process was not over when they took off their headscarves, but it became more complicated with the direct involvement of their families into a new process they tried to become familiar with un-veiling. When I asked them for whether they talked about their thoughts on removing the headscarf before they did it with someone from their family members or their friends, I realized that their decision to take off the headscarf at the end of the day turned to a kind of strategy in itself that they had to deal with and find an easy way-out. Their strategies differed from each other depending on how they imagined the possible scenarios in which what kinds of reaction they might face with when they came out. Deniz, Jasmine, Elif and Sevgi did not talk about anything related to their changing views on religion or the headscarf with their family members until they took of it; Duru and Ahsen tried to make a little talk with their mothers, or with fathers in rare cases, but when they did not take supportive, or positive reactions at least, they desisted from their effort to express their inner world. Only Deniz did not even argue her decision to take off the headscarf with her parents since they did not have a conversion on veiling and un-veiling at all. Although Jasmine was not experience extreme hardship because of her un-veiling in her family, her extended family on the father's side cut off communication with them for almost a year. All young and adult women in her extended

family were veiled, and some of them undertook “endless speeches on the Quran or exemplary religious stories” in her words, as a duty to dissuade her from her “wrong and sinful” decision. Nilay said, “My mother did not want to see me for almost a year. . . . I could understand her pain, but it was devastating for me.”. Ahsen could not figure out the changing relations with her elder sisters who wanted to keep her away their children; and, she said, “Why were they scared of me? They thought that I could brainwashed their children with my thoughts. This was not about me, but about either they did not believe in themselves or they were not sure of their religious fate.”

One other thing to note that even if they questioned the very necessity of the headscarf or their religious believes, only Ahsen and Duru, who were trained in the boarding Quran Courses, explicitly asserted that they are no longer believers of Islam now. Their distinct experiences of such religious orders and of the very isolation from the outside world for years made their self-questioning process different from other participants and more unique and challenging at some point when they got in multiple encounters after they went to the university. Elif said that she became an agnostic at the beginning of her questioning, but she continued praying sometimes for a while after she took off her headscarf. During our conversation, she underlined that she believed in the existence of God, she defined herself as a Muslim woman, but she had still some questions on the prophet’s sayings and some religious obligations for especially women. Burcu and Nilay put more emphasis on that the headscarf is only one practice that they could not do any more. Yet, they were practicing believers who never give up praying which they perceived the most essential pillar in Islam and still pay more attention on their modest dress (tesettür in Turkish) by which they separated wearing the headscarf from modest dress in the way that they thought that a woman can be modest in her dresses without the headscarf. Sevgi and Jasmine did not talk about any change in their religious believes, or they did not relate their decision to remove the headscarf to their self-questioning of religion.

When they talked about their thoughts on the role and/or the function of the headscarf, I realized two related issues. When I asked them for the possible changes in their lives after they took off their headscarves, Deniz, Sevgi, Burcu and Nilay made a similar mention of the sense of security within the modest dress and the need for protection from the male gaze or from a potential harassment in the public sphere. Ironically, it was only after they went out as un-veiled women that they felt defenseless and vulnerable to the male gaze in particular, but they frankly stated when they were veiled, they never noticed that the headscarf created such a comfort zone. The common argument among those who unintentionally attributed the functional role of the protection to the headscarf is that a woman is always vulnerable to the

sexual or verbal harassment while walking in the street, waiting for a bus, or doing anything in the public sphere, but if you are a veiled woman, men do not find you much attractive, or they suppose that you are not interested in them. All these women said that after they removed their headscarves, they were more exposed to that men stared at them outside. Nilay told a story that she did not make of why she acted in this way even today: After a while she took off her headscarf, she was alone in her home shared with her friends, and waiting for the host and electricians. When the bell rang, she looked through the peephole and saw two men at the door. She said,

> "I felt myself so vulnerable. I did not know vulnerable to what, but the first thing before I opened the door was to wear a headscarf. It was a strange moment for me. I was un-veiled outside for a long time, and hundreds of men saw me like this. Yet, in my private sphere, when I was alone there, I did not want them to see me un-veiled. This was the moment that I wanted to wear the headscarf for the first time of my own accord. If I were veiled again one day in the future, this could be due to such willingness coming from my faith in it." (Interview with Nilay, October 29, 2020).

One thing to note that Duru and Ahsen did not mention of the protective role of the headscarf or the male gaze at all. It may be because of their socialization was within the borders of the course in which books, TV, internet and mobile phones were forbidden, and a woman was not allowed to go out for any reason. In such courses, it was not possible for a woman to go to her home in weekends, for instance, and she had to stay there for a year except religious holidays. As these two women did not communicate with the outside world for years, they did not experience any kind of social interaction with men in particular and all other people outside their exclusive community. Although the courses were women-only places, everybody was obliged to wear the headscarf all the day even when they went to sleep. Even if they were used to such a rule since it was a regular daily habit, this turned, in time, to a breaking moment that led them to question the reason behind this rule which was neither religiously required nor practically applicable. That's why they did not perceive the role of the headscarf by relating it to how they experienced being a veiled woman on the streets. Their perception on the headscarf both as a veiled and an un-veiled woman did not stem from the social discomfort and pressure, but from their personal feelings of being trapped in such a world. After they took off their headscarves, they could not feel the male gaze over their body more than the past, or they did not mention of the headscarf as having the protective function

avoiding the possibility of harassment. As they stated, they started to learn the life outside the world they trapped in, or how to interact with the people from the very beginning when they took of their headscarves.

To my observation, recognition by others (which are both the Islamic and the secular gaze at the same time) and understanding of the self (which is what they want to present as the authentic-self) go hand in hand in this process of un-veiling. In terms of both, the sense of integrity might be a question in two ways: The personal integrity of a woman into what she had performed as in her experience of veiling, and the social integrity of a woman as in her experience of un-veiling into the society on the basis of a changing reference point that points out a binary perception of the Islamic and the secular social environments.

2.3 My Positionality as a Researcher

The analysis of the fieldwork relied on the participants' experiences of un-veiling, but their stories were narrated through multiple mediations: Firstly, they experienced the veiling and un-veiling practices, and they constructed several stories on by own in their minds; secondly, they preferred to convey parts of their stories in a particular way to me; and lastly, I made of their narratives with my interpretations to present a consistent analysis in an academic way without leaving their confusions, inconsistencies and ambiguities out. For this reason, I would like to clarify how the limits and potentials of my vision as a researcher and a woman who had an experience of veiling and un-veiling might possibly affect the fieldwork by situating myself within this knowledge production in line with the questions Haraway (1991): "How to see? Where to see from? What limits to vision? What to see for?" (194).

My choice on the subject of this thesis was not a mere coincidence, but originated in a sense of necessity, which was conscious only to a certain extent, to study on un-veiled women. An unconscious side of the motivation in part behind my inquiry may not be outside my story of veiling and un-veiling. At the very beginning of her book, Georgis (2013) pointed out why each individual story is worth to express:

> "In our stories we imagine our safety, we resist threat, we construct the terms of community, we find ego ideals. Our stories offer psychic consolation to pain. They are indeed our strategies to abate suffering

> and difficulty. We live by our stories; sometimes we even die for them. Though we are often slavishly committed to our stories, story is also the principle of freedom. In stories, we work out the events that change us. It is our means of becoming and the effect of our creative impulse." (2)

Following Georgis, it was explicit that this complicated process consisting of remembering my story, sharing the participants' stories in the fieldwork, and writing this thesis was the principal of my freedom all together. Yet, my vision on the headscarf question was constructed in a limited social framework, and this might partially affect how I framed this thesis. To make my positionality in this study clear, I would like to present a big picture of the headscarf question in my background that led me to question un-veiling as another aspect of the same issue.

My mother, who is 49 years old and a primary school teacher, wears headscarf since she was 13. During her college years between 1989 and 1993, the headscarf was not strictly forbidden at the university, but she had difficulties with some of her professors in her last year because she wore her headscarf in the classes. Yet, she did not have to take off her headscarf at the university. For a while, she wore her headscarf at public schools in villages with the help of the school principals who tolerated her within the school and informed her when the inspectors from the Directorate of National Education came to the school for some reason. Yet, she was exposed to several investigations because of not obeying the regulation on dress codes. When she started to work at schools in central cities, the real trouble was on the stage. It was not possible for her to wear her headscarf anymore. Until the headscarf ban at the public institutes was lifted, she preferred to remove her headscarf to keep at her job. The only sentence that I heard from her about what she felt at the first time she had to take off her headscarf at the school was, "I was ashamed and humiliated." This was her individual decision, but under the state oppression. During my childhood in early 2000s, I had met with many women who shared similar experiences of the headscarf ban with most of women in my family. I grow up with hundreds of interesting stories about how they suffered from the headscarf ban during either their university education in the 1990s, or in their careers, or sometimes in both of them. I do not remember a woman who preferred to give up her university education or quit from her work around my mother's social environment. My vision on the headscarf ban was, thus, shaped by the stories of mostly university educated, middle-class women who were victims of the ban on the one hand, and kept their relative social advantageous, on the other hand, by pursuing their education and work compared to some veiled women who either preferred to give up their education or were fired from their jobs.

Where am I in this story? Like my mother, I am a middle-class and educated woman, too. I was wearing the headscarf for eight years since I was 16. I decided to wear the headscarf one day on my own, but this was not a matter of personal choice for me, because I inherently knew that I should wear the headscarf as a religious duty one day or another. Yet, I never told anyone that this was out of my free will, but always justified to wear the headscarf as if there was another option like not to wear it. During my high school years, I took off the headscarf at the school without a sense of shame or humiliation. At the time I started to the college, the headscarf ban was lifted, so I did not directly experience possible consequences of the ban. I never faced with any challenge as a veiled woman in the public sphere so that I did not have a story of victimhood like my mother's endless stories comprising of a full of anger, pain and traumatic scenes. She had intentionally or unintentionally transmitted her memory to me; or, what I rather preferred to say was that I had been exposed to the one's experiences that I could never exactly make sense of. In the end, I realized that I was in a position that required me to undertake such a heavy burden of my mother's struggle that was not my cause.

On 30 August 2018, I took off my headscarf. On that day I went out without the headscarf for the first time after a very long time, I deeply felt that this was real me without any label on my body. It was the most intense feeling that captured my body and my mind as well. I could not explain what the real meant to identify un-veiled me, but the thing that made me more comfortable without the headscarf was that my body was no longer a representation of a religious identity. This was not because I threw over all my religious believes, but because of I did not want to signify something transcended who I was. I did not face with any trouble regarding my decision in my social environment, but it was not an uncomplicated process that I easily coped with in my family.

Since this issue matters to me in a very personal way, I, as a researcher, had some difficulties during the interviews while remembering my previous experiences; yet, at the same time, I, as an insider, benefited from my position to better understand how they made sense of what they experienced and to easily contextualize their narratives. One important thing to note that before the interviews, I decided not to talk about my personal experiences of un-veiling before the interview, if they did not directly ask for it in order to eliminate the sense of that "You already know it.", or in other words, participants' possible assumptions that I could easily understand what they meant without a detailed expression of their stories. Yet, one of the participants directly asked for whether I had such an experience of veiling when we first met via Whatsapp. As she said, this was important to her, because she did not talk about her un-veiling with someone who took off her headscarf up to that

time. Three of the participants did not asked for my personal background before or after the interview, and I did not share my story with them. One of the participants had emotionally hard time that prevented her to keep talking; and, after some moments of silence, I mentioned of some difficulties I had experienced when I wore the headscarf to feel her more relax if she thought that I could understand what she had to come through. Thus, I shared part of my story with her in the middle of the interview. Three participants did not directly ask for my background, but I touched briefly on my experiences during our regular conversation after the interview. Having prior knowledge of my experiences of veiling and un-veiling did not show a notable difference in the course of the interviews. Yet, the one who asked for it before the interview considered it as a step to feel herself comfortable and safe and to connect a close relationship with me, and those who learned it after the interview posed many questions about me and my personal opinion and observations on the issue of un-veiling. To present a meaningful narrative on these questions, I address the relevant literature on the headscarf question in Turkey in a comprehensive way, and I conduct an ethnographic fieldwork which incorporates semi-structured in-depth interviews. The extensive literature review contributes to this thesis to show not only the fruitful academic debate with a great variety of approaches but also a significant void that the thesis points out. I aspire to incorporate this thesis in the literature by redefining a new and controversial aspect of the existing headscarf question. The ethnographic fieldwork makes a great contribution to the thesis in the way that diverse personal narratives of the participants embodies a newly emerging phenomenon of un-veiling. Their personal experiences of veiling and un-veiling shapes the way how I frame this thesis into the relevant literature.

I conducted eight face-to-face interviews with women who wore the headscarf in a period of time in their lives and took off it due to various reasons. I started conducting interviews in early September 2019, and it took time until February 2020. Though I was planning to make ten interviews as an optimum number in the limited time of the M.A. program, I could only reach eight women and had to finalize the fieldwork in March 2020 because of the global outbreak of the corona-virus pandemic. Apart from some anticipated difficulties to make contact with possible participants because of the sensibility of the thesis subject, the pandemic was not predictable, but an important interruption to the planned course of the fieldwork.

To reach out my interviewees, I got in contact with my social and academic circles such as friends, fellow students, e-mail groups, online feminist blogs and women's associations. Initially, I sent an information e-mail to all my contacts with a short description of the thesis and my pursuit of meeting with possible participants who took of their headscarves, and I requested them to disseminate my e-mail to those who might be willing to participate in this research. After I started interviews, I also asked my participants for whether they could know someone else who might be a volunteer for this study at the end of the interviews. Through these methods, I aimed to meet women from different social groups by snow-ball technique. Within this period, I contacted Reçel Blog (a pro-Feminist Muslim online blog), Kadına Şiddete Karşı Muslumanlar İnsiyatifi (A Muslim Initiative for Violence against Women), Yalnız Yurumeyeceksin (an online blog publishing veiled and un-veiled women's letters on their decisions to take off their headscarves), and Havle Kadın Derneği (the first women association formed by Muslim feminist women in Turkey) via e-mail to ask them for circulating my message to their networks.

I was aware that since the thesis subject could be a sensitive topic for the participants since they might have traumatic memories of both their veiling and un-veiling experiences. That's why my first aim was to build a trust relationship between us and provided them a comfort zone to tell their stories as they wished. Since I reached each of the participants through different intermediary persons who knew me and the participant, I had already known that the participant was willing to be a part of this thesis. I made a first contact with a participant via a phone call or a WhatsApp message to introduce myself and the purpose of the study, and I received her approval to join the interview one more time on the phone.

All interviews were based on the principal of confidentiality. At the beginning of the interview, the consent form was given to the participant, and their oral and written consent was taken. They were informed that the audio records and the transcription texts will be accessible to only me for the exclusive use of the thesis, and I will archive the data gathered from the participants at least for five years Also, the information that I may publish other studies made out of this thesis, but identifying personal information will not be disclosed was given to the participants. On the form, they wrote their names, but the use of their real names in the thesis was depend on their consent. Even if some of them allowed to that, I prefer to use pseudo names for the participants due to make sure of their privacy, and I clearly specified this issue to them. Additionally, they were informed that they could skip any question which they did not want to answer, the interview might be terminated at any point, and they could withdraw from the research whenever they wanted to. In the case of withdrawing from the study, the audio record and the transcription

text of the interview would be destroyed and be excluded from the research. One other thing to note that I shared the personal contact addresses of mine and my supervisor with the participants in the case of they would like to ask to both of us for any question regarding the thesis.

During the interview, I attached great importance to ensure a comfort zone to the participants for their long talks or long silences without any interruption. The silent moments were notable no less than our dialogues, but where they stopped their narratives and how they dealt with the issues caused to such silences were much worth to emphasise, too. I also made a great effort to create for the participants a free space in which they were expected to and also encouraged to tell their narratives not in a consistent way from the beginning to the end through the pre-determined questions, but in the way they constructed their stories on their own. What is equally important that this thesis does not anticipate any potential harm to the participants. Since the voluntary participation to this study and the participants' consent are the key principals, the participants were informed about that they always had the right to skip questions that recalled their traumatic experiences in the past, or terminated the interview whenever they wanted to. I assumed that they might also had an opportunity to cope with their negative experiences by sharing their personal stories and to felt that they were not alone in such a struggle by knowing that there are some other women who participated to this research to share similar experiences of un-veiling.

One of the most important objectives in the field was to reach women from different age groups and diverse social backgrounds in order to reveal multifarious reasons behind their decisions to take off their headscarves. Due to the limited time allocated for the fieldwork, I was not able to make interviews with women from several cities other than İstanbul. Yet, to reflect the diversity of women's experiences of un-veiling, I conducted six interviews in different districts of İstanbul (Kadıköy, Üsküdar, Şişli, Eyüp, Beyoğlu), one interview in Kocaeli; and one of the interviewees lives in a different city which is not named at the participant's request, but our interview took place in İstanbul upon her request. I met the participants in coffee shops that were mostly chosen by them; yet, if they did not offer a place to meet, I suggested somewhere in their neighborhoods to make them more comfortable. Besides, before starting the fieldwork, I did not define the age limit for the participants to show variety in the field, but I assumed that the possible age range would be 20 to 30 because of the scope of my social circles and their possible contacts. As I expected, the youngest participant in this study is 22 years old, and the eldest one is 30 years old.

The average duration of the interviews was around one and half hour, and all interviews were digitally recorded with the participants' permissions. I was very careful on that I avoided to take notes during the interviews on purpose since it might possibly create a sense of formal meeting and a sense of being subjected to a list of questions. If a participant talked on an issue for a very long time, instead of interrupting the course of conversation, I only noted down specific points or some questions that I would like to focus later as a quick reminder for myself. The most important priority in all interviews was to provide a comfort and secure environment to the participants; for this reason, at the very beginning of our conversations, I paid utmost attention to introduce myself first, and then, to continue with a small talk as long as the participants wished. This took nearly 40 minutes on average, but it sometimes extended to an hour at most. At the end of all interviews we also continued to talk on several issues from more personal experiences to the thesis subject to personal questions about my life. Two participants did not prefer to talk about some questions during the interview, but just after the record, even though I did not ask for an explanation to what they uncovered, they willingly and frankly clarified those subjects and the reason behind why they wanted to keep them off the record. In such cases, when our meeting was done, I stayed in the place where we met to write down what we talked about after the record as much as I remembered.

Since the fieldwork relied on the semi-structured in-depth interviews, I did not ask a set of questions one by one to the participants though I had a preliminary question template (see in Appendix A). Rather, the purpose was to focus on their individual narratives to understand similarities and differences based on their particular experiences. To avoid a long story-telling on a specific issue, I directed the interviewees' attention to the focus with small questions, if necessary. I aim to shed light on mainly three episodes in an individual narrative: The first part is to understand the women's experiences of veiling: How did they decide to wear the headscarf? Why did they veil themselves? How did they construct the meaning of the headscarf? How did they relate veiling to their daily-life practices? The second part is to delve into the family dimension: What was the role of family on women's decisions to wear the headscarf? Besides, I did not directly ask for the parents' levels of education or their occupations to the participants; rather, I asked for a general description of the family members. Thus, the context that they narrated, I hoped to get meaningful inferences about the changing socio-economic structure of the family and the families' attitudes toward the visibility of religious identity through the headscarf. I believed that this would provide with an invaluable source to contribute to the previous research on the veiled women who struggled against the headscarf ban in 1990s through a comparison of both groups of women's families' attitudes towards

the veiling and un-veiling practices. The focus of the third part is to understand the complicated processes behind the women's decisions to take off their headscarves: Why did they choose to remove their headscarves? In this part, even if they did not mention of it, I specifically asked the participants for whether the current social and political conditions had a role on their decisions to take off the headscarf.

For the analysis of the fieldwork, I used InqScribe to transcribe the recorded interviews, and made a first few close reading of the transcripts on by own to contextualize the narratives and to identify similarities, differences, ambiguities, patterns and particularities in each story. While I was transcribing the records, I did not simultaneously translate the interviews into English; I rather preferred to translate only the parts that were quoted in the following sections. After I came up with a draft of the categorized subjects, I coded certain words such as identity, visible, invisible, neutral, individual/collective belief, etc. by using NVIVO. Lastly, to analyze the fieldwork in a theoretical frame, I aim to establish multiple dialogues between theories and different subjects of this thesis. So that I do not present a separate chapter for a theoretical discussion, but embed it into the analysis of the fieldwork in Chapter 4.

3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE HEADSCARF QUESTION IN TURKEY

The headscarf debate is not reducible to a religious framework, as it brings along many discussions regarding modernization, secularism, political Islam, the public and the private spheres, subjectivity, feminism and the women's rights and freedoms. What made the headscarf a source of political conflict was the headscarf ban at universities and public institutes starting from the mid-1980s, deepening in the 1990s in which the political Islam was also on the rise, until the headscarf ban was lifted in 2013. Pious women had struggled against the headscarf ban to enter the universities, or to work in the public institutions, by wearing their headscarves. After the ban was lifted in 2013 under the rule of Justice and Development Party, which has politically, socially and culturally Islamic and conservative tendencies, the headscarf debate was out of the state matter. Yet, the way of the headscarf debate in Turkey has been slowly changing.

In this chapter, therefore, the relevant literature on the headscarf debate in Turkey is discussed. Firstly, the historical background of the foundation of the Republic is briefly mentioned to understand what lies behind the headscarf debate with regard to the complex processes of modernization and Westernization. Secondly, the controversial debate on naming the headscarf, whether it is *başörtüsü* or *türban* in Turkish, is revealed to point out how the headscarf became a question in a politically constructed framework. Thirdly, veiling is reviewed in detail to draw attention to the multiple meanings of the headscarf by questioning the binary distinction between whether it is a personal choice or a social choice. Fourthly, the political environment in the 1980s and the 1990s is concisely explained to consider the political context in which the headscarf question came into existence. This section will also shed light on the rise of political Islam as part of identity politics in Turkey with reference to the Welfare Party and the National Outlook Movement. Fifth, in relation to the rise of political Islam, the military memorandum given to the pro-Islamist government on 28 February 1997, which was called the post-modern coup, or the February 28 Process in common usage, is discussed in depth to highlight the turning point

for the headscarf question. In this part, the symbolic cases of Merve Kavakçı and Leyla Şahin is represented to clarify the intricate debates over the public sphere and secularism respectively. Finally, by building on the previous research, the gap in this literature is pointed out to show the core of this thesis which is the changing dynamics behind the headscarf question.

3.1 The Headscarf: A Simple Dress or an Existential Crisis?

The headscarf points out both the most visible symbol of religiosity for the Islamist communities, and the most complicated and destructive religious symbol for the secular state. Yet, for both sides, it is something more than an object that pious women choose to wear it to perform what they believe in as a religious requirement. Whether women struggled to wear the headscarf against the headscarf ban or to take off the headscarf against their families' wishes, this is not a personal matter, but paves the way for the public concern in any way.

The origins of the headscarf question go back to what lies behind the establishment of the Republic of Turkey. The state elite followed the way that they first situated the new nation-state into the Western civilization to establish a modern and secular identity for the nation (Arat 1998; Göle 1997a; Kandiyoti 1997; Özdalga 1998). Among the founders of the Republic Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and the state bureaucrats served as ideal models for the Turkish citizens by manifesting their modern outlooks and encouraging to adopt the Western manners such as wearing suits for men and fashionable dresses for women, organizing and/or attending classy dance-parties, changing cultural tastes etc. All these transformations revealed that "The Kemalist Westernization project has relied more on symbols than substance." (Cizre and Çınar 2003, 310). On the one hand, the Republic of Turkey as a new nation-state needed to indoctrinate a powerful national identity that was imagined to possibly give to its citizens a sense of belonging to the unity. On the other hand, the need for the sense of national belonging was not an obstacle to a great effort to get involved into the Western civilization so that a modern citizen was depicted as a Western individual in his/her appearance, manners and mindset, but also having a strong sense of national belonging. In line with the Elias (1994)' account on a theory of the state formation and the changing manners of the people in Western Europe, what experienced during the process of Turkish modernization was similar to its European counterparts with regard to how the certain attitudes were in a constant

change. Yet, this change was different from them to the extent that it was a result of the top-down modernization project of which European model was imitated on the surface to create civilized bodies and to adopt civilized manners. The most visible way of adopting a modern civilization was to change the public manifestation of citizens. Modernity was not limited to how a new Turkish citizen looked like, but was corresponded to Westernization in all aspects and "They [Turkish modernizers] were not satisfied simply with increasing rationality, bureaucratization, and organizational efficiency; they also professed a need for social transformation in order to achieve secularization, autonomy for the individual, and the equality of men and women." (Keyder 1997, 37).

In addition to the Westernization aspect of the Turkish modernization project, two other components, secularization and the regulation of gender roles that were assigned men and women citizens in different ways, were also embedded to this process. Secularism, or *laiklik* in common usage in Turkish, was one of the founding principles of the state so that many reforms were initiated to rule out the role of Islam in governance, education, law and civil society by abolishing the Caliphate, adopting a national education system and the Western judicial codes, closing down religious orders, and establishing a state-led Directorate of Religious Affairs (Sunar and Toprak 1983). In this way, religion lost its instrumental power in governance since the secular logic behind the political rule confined religion outside the state affairs. This transformation brought along the construction of the secular way of life through the particular regulations of body, family, daily-life, the public sphere and the state institutions. Since Islam and religious symbols which were perceived as the main obstacles to modernization and progress evoked the Ottoman memory, they were excluded from the public sphere to the private spheres of individuals (Atasoy 2005; İçduygu and Soyarık 1999). This means that an individual can perform what he/she believes in his/her personal life, but the national identity is constructed outside this realm, and an individual as a citizen is expected to be visible in the public sphere as purified from all the non-modern belongings. That's why the formation of the secular national identity was not outside the citizenship debates. This was rooted in the core question: Who was included in and excluded from the national identity? Or, in other words, who was the "other"? Kadıoğlu (2007) pointed out "three sets of 'others' of the Turkish national identity" that maintained continuity from the beginning of 20th century to the Republican years: First was the non-Muslims in the Ottoman Empire, second was the non-Turkish Muslims, and third was those who represented the backwardness of the Ottoman times (286-289). As mentioned before, Islamic symbols, such as the headscarf, was the most visible representation of the non-secular, non-modern and non-Western outlook for the ideal women-citizens;

"Hence, women who have openly embraced these symbols of 'backwardness' proved themselves unable to be full citizens of the Turkish Republic." (Kadıoğlu 2007, 290).

The secular formation of the state and the national identity manifested its distinctiveness over gender roles, but particularly over the visibility of women in the public sphere and their national duties. As Göle (1997a) indicates, "The penetration of secularism in daily life is best illustrated by women's physical and social visibility. ... In Turkey's modernizing program, women were depicted as the builders of a 'a new life,' a modern way of living both in the private and the public spheres" (51). Thus, women with their modern outlook and secular life styles were assigned a great responsibility to shape the modern families and to raise the new generations of the Republic. As "... gender appears as one significant site of intervention for the state's secular power" (Dağtaş 2016, 73), the women's bodies became a means that presented an ideal image of the nation. On the one hand, women were depicted as carriers of the Republican reforms as modern, urban, well- educated citizens; on the other hand, they were expected to perform the role of cultivated wives and mothers at their homes. Thus, women had to undertake both "the burden of being 'mothers' of the nation" (Kandiyoti 2004, 45) and the "burden of representation... as the symbolic bearers of the collectivitiy's identity and honour" (Yuval-Davis 1997, 57). This national role of women also reproduced the distinction between the private and the public spheres by attributing the essential role of nation-building to men who were the ultimate possessor of the public sphere and the great duty to women who both made personal effort in the private sphere and represent the nation's achievements in the public sphere (Altınay 2004; Kandiyoti 2004; White 2003; Yuval-Davis 1997).

In this sense, the extensive reforms to modernize the family and to regulate the private lives of individuals, including marriage, divorce, inheritance and the right of custody, were initiated with the new Civil Code in 1926; and the full suffrage was granted to women in 1934 for the formal equality of men and women (Arat 1996, 2010b; Dağtaş 2016; Güneş-Ayata and Tütüncü 2008; Kadıoğlu 1994; Özyürek 2006). As the secular and modern image of the Republic, women were expected to be "professionally and politically active, making full use of her rights granted by the new republican constitution and legislation" (Gökarıksel 2009, 663). Yet, these reforms and political rights were not achieved by the struggle of women as in the Western counterpart, but were granted by the state elite to create the ideal Republican women and to westernize the new nation. Hence, these regulations did not provide the substantial equality to women, but remained symbolic to manifest the democratization process was advanced (Tekeli 1981, 299), because a very little group of the privileged women who already had economic and social capital, excluding veiled women, enjoyed with these reforms (Turam 2008, 479).

The headscarf, in this context, became a sign that marked the women's bodies as contrary to the ideal representation of the Republican women since the beginning of the 1970s. Veiled women, thus, were excluded from this new social imagery, because the headscarf was neither suitable to a modern and secular dress-code nor represented the Western outlook. As the public visibility of veiled women increased when they entered the universities and/or when they worked at public institutes without leaving their religious identity aside, the headscarf was perceived as a challenge for the secular order and "... for the Kemalists' project of modernity which assumes that education will liberate women from religious restrictions" (Akboğa 2014, 621). This was a failure of the modernization project on that issue since it was seen that the headscarf was not only a traditional custom that symbolized the backward, ignorant and uneducated segments of the society, but also was worn by well-educated, urban, and modern pious women. The veiling problem arose out of questioning the agency of veiled women and not questioning the inherently secular character of the public sphere (Bracke and Fadil 2012, 47). In this sense, the headscarf was seen as an instrument of oppression that was taken for granted, and thus, it was ignored that the veiled women's decision to wear the headscarf could be a conscious choice. This approach to the headscarf brought along the liberation discourse that veiled women were subjected to religious freedom that was ensured by the secular outsiders. At the same time, despite its secular representation, the public sphere was depicted as a neutral space in which veiling as a religious symbol threatened its very neutrality. According to Bracke and Fadil (2012), "the hijab in itself is void of social meaning..." (48), but this problem of subjectivity of veiled women and neutrality of the public sphere results from that veiling was framed into a fixed meaning in a certain discourse though it carried various meanings that are produced by particular intentions of the subjects and that may differ in different contexts (50-52). The problem of neutrality is not peculiar to the formation of the public sphere, but also the body of non-veiled women is presented as a neutral space (Fadil 2011). Since non-veiling is constructed as the norm, veiling poses a challenge to the prevailing secularist norm that also draws the boundaries of the public sphere. Veiled women, however, asserted their authentic subject positions against the politics of differentiation and exclusion by performing their conscious choices to publicise their pious identities as they wished. This was "the subversive effect of the Islamic headscarf" (Çınar 2008, 903), that was reproduced by veiled women in an alternative discourse in the face of the public gaze.

The headscarf debate was not only about the veiled women's struggles against the Kemalist state policies to transform the secular public sphere to more inclusive space for themselves, but the way of debate changed its direction to broader contexts

starting from the early 2000s. Though it was all that the headscarf was framed into a security question as a powerful Islamic symbol that threatened the secular establishment, it was then noticed that what the headscarf signified changed into something more than a political crisis with the diversifying demands of veiled women, the transformation of Islamism, the changing power relations between the secular elite and the newly emerging Islamist elite, the growing veiling-fashion industry and the changing consumption culture of pious women. Apart from the political meaning of the headscarf, scholars made the material and the aesthetic aspects of the headscarf apparent; and thus, the established narrative on the headscarf changed into how the headscarf was commodified in a growing fashion industry, and how the changing consumption patterns interacted with the new visibilities and subjectivities of veiled women and the new significations of the headscarf as well (Gökarıksel 2012; Gökarıksel and Secor 2009, 2014; Kılıçbay and Binark 2002; Navaro-Yashin 2006; Sandıkçı and Ger 2005; Sayan-Cengiz 2018; Ünal and Moors 2012).

Lastly, Göle (2000) precisely pointed out the complex dynamics behind the changing way of the headscarf issue by defining the period after 1990s as the "post-Islamic stage":

> "In other words, Islamism is concomitant with the formation of new middle classes and is on the way to creating its own intellectual, political, and entrepreneurial elites, drawing on their increasing public visibility and commercial success. We can speak of a post-Islamist stage in which Islamism is losing its political and revolutionary fervor but steadily infiltrating social and cultural everyday life practices. Islamism, which made its appearance with the headscarf issue in the secular bastions of modernity on university campuses at the beginning of the 1980s, is today expanded to many spheres of public and cultural life. As can be observed in the Turkish context, not only are Islamists using the latest model of Macintosh computers, writing best-selling books, becoming part of the political and cultural elite, winning elections, and establishing private universities, but they are also carving out new public spaces, affirming new public visibilities, and inventing new Muslim lifestyles and subjectivities." (94)

The rise of the Islamist elite, or the transfer of economic wealth to the Anatolian local businesses, challenged the existing status quo of the Republican elite; and what's more, this transformation revealed the intertwined boundaries of the pious and secular life-styles. The Islamist elite, or the new bourgeoisie, carried their religious attainments to the public sphere where they became more active and visible through higher education and professional life. It was not only the transformation

of economic wealth to new classes, but was also sharing cultural capital by creating alternative ways for entertainment, fashion, and so on. Korteweg and Yurdakul (2014) specified exactly what a new issue regarding the headscarf might arise not from the political message that was attributed to it, but from a cultural message that signified a social status anymore: "They go on vacations in five-star hotels, but they swim at gender-segregated beaches. Their daughters drive expensive cars but wear a headscarf while doing so. The rise of the Islamic elite has led many pro-seculars to see the pro-religious as a challenge to their elite status." (60). These alternative ways -such as night clubs without alcohol in their menus- both provided the Islamist elite an easier access to the public life and brought out a new way of differentiation and exclusion into the open by creating their own life styles and new cultural boundaries for themselves.

3.2 Naming the Headscarf vs. Shaping the Headscarf Question:

Başörtüsü vs. *Türban*

Throughout this thesis I use the word headscarf (*başörtüsü* in Turkish) to denote the object women cover their hairs with, and veiling (the Islamic covering, or *tesettür* in Turkish) to indicate the practice of the modest dress for pious women. It is important to remark the naming issue at the beginning, because how to name it is a key part embedded to the symbolic meanings of the headscarf. *Türban* is another Turkish word that is commonly used instead of the headscarf, but a specific word that points out to the modern and urban style of the modest dress involving the political connotations apart from its religious meaning. Although veiled women use the word *başörtüsü* for what they wore, *türban* was a widely accepted usage in the secular-Kemalist narratives of the state discourse that was in a broader circulation through the mainstream media. Scholars agree on the differentiation between *başörtüsü* and *türban*: While *başörtüsü* is traditionally worn by women in rural sides as both a religious and a cultural custom, *türban* signifies urban, educated, middle-class women who visibly manifest their religiosity and their political existence in the public sphere (Akboğa 2014; Bayram 2009; Çarkoğlu 2009; Kalaycıoğlu 2005; Özyeğin 2015; Saktanber 2006; Secor 2002). The traditional headscarf is depicted as relatively small-sized and not necessarily covering one's all hairs, shoulders, and neck; and thus, women practice it as part of custom that they are used to in their close communities. Yet, *türban* is depicted as a much larger-sized fashionable style,

covering one's all hairs, shoulders, neck, and chin, and integrating it with the rest of the modest dress; and women wear it as part of "engagement with Islamism as both a lifestyle and political movement" (Secor 2002, 10). This new style of veiling popularized in cities mainly after the massive migration from urban sites to rural areas starting from 1950s (White 2003, 150). Once the traditional headscarf was seen as a rural lower class value, *türban* appeared as a new and modern fashion of urban middle classes (Kalaycıoğlu 2005); and this visible change was perceived as a sign of class mobility (Çarkoğlu and Kalaycıoğlu 2009; White 2014). Veiling as a visible manifestation of Islamic orientation in the public sphere contradicted with the state perception on its traditional form and paved the way for such a distinction between the headscarf as a 'harmless' religious attire and *türban* as a 'dangerous' political symbol. In this sense, *türban* is perceived as a threat to the secular regime while *başörtüsü* is traditionally accepted (Korteweg and Yurdakul 2014; White 2014).

Whether it is the headscarf or *türban*, veiling is the most visible symbol of "Islamization of the Turkish life-world" (Göle 1997a, 53). It is not the way that Islam became more pre-dominant in social life, but the public visibility of religious symbols as part of the identity claims of the pious Muslim citizens unprecedentedly increased together with the rise of the Islamist politics in 1990s. To highlight the political aspirations behind veiling, scholars make a differentiation between Muslim/Islam and Islamist/political Islam/ Islamism. While the former does not point out the social and political identity for the believers, the later denotes "a political ideology rather than a private religious belief system" (Arat 1998, 123); "a horizontal form of bondage and social imaginary among Muslims who are socially disembedded" (Göle 2003, 815); and "an alternative to Western-oriented secular modernization, while also attempting to displace the republican discourse of national authenticity" (Çınar 2005, 21). In this context, veiled women became the representatives of the rising Islamist politics, and their headscarves also became a controversial symbol which signified the contested debate on the agency of veiled women; the ambiguous relationship between secularism and religiosity, and modernity and tradition; and the blurred boundaries between the public and the private spheres.

The increasing visibility of veiled women and the politicization of the headscarf became a matter of state with the problem of women's religious appearances at universities. In 1967, the first politically significant headscarf issue appeared in the Faculty of Theology at Ankara University when a veiled student, Hatice Babacan, wanted to attend a class without taking off her headscarf. She was prevented to enter the classes, and this paved the way for student demonstrations at the campus. In 1968, she was dismissed from the university, and some students who were engaged in these demonstrations were exposed to the disciplinary procedures (Cumhuriyet

2010). This headscarf crisis appeared on the mainstream media which propagated the label of sıkmabaş (squeezed head in English) for women who covered not only their hairs with a scarf, but also covered their ears, necks, and shoulders (Çarkoğlu and Kalaycıoğlu 2009, 100). While sıkmabaş was in use especially on the media coverage of the headscarf issue during the mid-1960s and 1970s, the term *türban* entered into the headscarf terminology by replacing with sıkmabaş in the period after the military coup d'état in 1980 (Çarkoğlu 2009, 451). The Director of the Higher Education Council (Yüksek Öğretim Kurumu-YÖK), İhsan Doğramacı, stated that he made a reference to *türban* with Kenan Evren's suggestion to differ the headscarf from *türban* which was seen similar to a bonnet or a turban style in France that was desired for women if they would like to cover their hairs (Bianet. 2008).

Though there was no specific regulation or ban on the dress codes for women in the constitution, several regulations were issued to define the public boundaries where women could/not wear their headscarves. Veiling in the primary and secondary schools was banned for female students with a regulation on the dress codes in the schools on July 22, 1981 (Resmi Gazete 1982a); a Regulation on the Dress Codes for Civil Servants in the State Institutions and Organizations was promulgated on July 16, 1982, which was clearly stated that women should be unveiled at work (Resmi Gazete 1982b); the YÖK issued a circular letter on the dress codes at universities which should be in accordance with the Atatürk's revolution and principles and which was openly indicated that students' heads should not be covered; and which referred to a disciplinary procedure to those who did not wear proper modern dresses that excluded the headscarf (Benli 2011, 13).

3.3 Veiling: Boundaries between Personal, Social and Political Choices

In this thesis, I argue that young veiled women have felt overburdened in the sense of too much responsibility and pressure because of the symbolic meanings and historical background of the headscarf, and one of the main reasons behind their decisions to take off their headscarves is that they no longer want to represent what the headscarf socially and politically symbolizes for the out-groups they come into contact with. To understand why un-veiled women reject to carry out a visible religious identity, it is important to point out how the symbolic meanings of the headscarf that creates a heavy burden for these women is constructed, and what kind of background the headscarf as a particular symbol embodies. Since there is no exact answer for

these questions to define the symbolic meanings, the headscarf issue becomes more complicated for especially un-veiled women who have problems with that. Following Hoodfar (2001), I trace "contradictions and multiple meanings" of veiling which is a "lived experience" (421).

Does a woman's dress denote a personal or a political choice? Does a state have the right to interfere women's dressing choices or regulate the dress codes for women in either case? The headscarf as part of the Islamic dress-code for women is the most visible and contested symbol that complicates both questions. On the one hand, it cannot be only reduced to a personal choice of women, because dress as a "situated bodily practice" (Entwistle 2000a, 10) always signifies "the boundary between self and other, individual and society. ... [this boundary] is also social, since our dress is structured by social forces and subject to social and moral pressures" (Entwistle 2000b, 327). Dressing always points out a socio-cultural norm in a particular society. Veiling in this sense is not outside of certain regulations both by the state officials as a regulative force and by the pious community itself as the practitioners of religious obligations. Veiling is, thus, always context-bounded and is subject to change in its forms and meanings in time. Veiling as an Islamic image is constructed not as solely a dress, but as an embodied practice that is supposed to regulate a woman's whole life. It is both an Islamic dress code that requires a subjective cultivation of the self and a regulative mechanism that frames a woman's social relations with especially men. This second dimension puts a woman's body under the "social and moral pressures" as Entwistle (2000b) indicated, or under the particular norms, since it is directly related to when and where a woman should cover her body, and how she orientates her conducts to a particular situation. Hence, a veiled woman is always subjected both to the normative regulations of religion itself and to the social norms that are reproduced both by the religious community with reference to religious doctrines and by the secular community with reference to non-secular ones. On the other hand, the practice of veiling is, thus, not only limited to the private spheres of pious women. Rather, it is under the control of formal rules in the public sphere. That's why the headscarf debate in Turkey blurs the distinction between the public and the private by questioning what makes a woman's choice personal or political. Yet, the state's regulations of formal rules on the women's dressing choices are not directed to what women can wear. It aimed to draw boundaries between where women can and cannot wear their headscarves, and to control the visibility of religiosity in the public sphere (Korteweg and Yurdakul 2014). The headscarf in the state discourse was excluded from the public sphere, and veiling was not a matter of the state as long as veiled women did not pose a challenge to the well-defined boundaries between the political sphere that was strictly framed as

secular and the personal sphere in which piety was desirable. Since "veiling has been cast as a particularly visible manifestation of a non-secular, 'expressive' political subject position…" (Gökariksel and Mitchell 2005, 153), it is not perceived only as a personal choice of pious women, but also as a political manifestation of one's piety and an expression of one's demand to be a visible and an active participant with her modest dress in the public sphere. These two aspects made the headscarf as a source of intricate political conflicts in Turkey.

On the one hand, some secular feminists frame veiling into a reductionist discourse that is parallel to the state approach to the headscarf such as "the backwardness of Islamist ideology" or "the sexist status quo" (Aldıkaçtı Marshall 2005, 109,116), and "a means of control over women's bodies under the pretext of religious dictates" (Arat 2016, 130). While they may support the freedom of women to wear whatever they want, their fear is the possible consequences of this freedom that may result with the imposition of the Islamist ideology to those who do not adopt it. Similar to that approach, some secular-Kemalists interpret veiling as "incompatible with the clothes of the "modern" world" (Akboğa 2014, 618); it is understandable given that in the Kemalist modernization project, the Western civilization is the role model to modernize women-citizens whose visibility is the representation of the modern Turkish nation. However, the increasing visibility of veiled women whose socio-economic status had been in change through a wider access to higher education and professional career was an interruption to the established power relations. These veiled women challenged the prevailing discourse on veiling which reproduces the fixed binary categories of women defined as either "uneducated, lower class, traditional and religious" or "educated, middle class, modern and secular" (Özyeğin 2015). Their struggle also disrupted a common view on that these women could not choose to wear the headscarf on by own, but it was imposed to them by either their families or by their husbands. In this sense, wearing the headscarf was not seen as a result of free will that veiled women were able to process.

On the other hand, scholars point out the construction of the self by emphasizing agency and subjectivity of veiled women (Akbulut 2015; Bilge 2010; Gökarıksel 2009; Gökarıksel and Secor 2014; Saktanber 1994). In the colonial contexts, the imagination of the self, the veiled body in particular, was framed by the direct interference of the Western gaze. Since the West tried to encompass what was unknown to itself, the Oriental body of veiled women was perceived as the site, the mysterious site, which was not accessible and visible to the one's gaze (Yeğenoğlu 1998). A veiled woman was thus constructed as an Oriental subject first, not as a woman who had an authentic self beyond her dress in the eyes of the Other. That's why veiling in the Western narrative "became the symbol now of both the oppression of women

... and the backwardness of Islam" by creating the binary discourse of freedom as the liberator West and the oppressed Muslim women (Ahmed 1992, 152). The modernization process at the foundation years implied the similar imaginary of the modern, Western and secular body on the basis of the women's outlook in particular though Turkey does not have a colonial past. In this context, the body as "a means to the formation of the self" and veiling, apart from the traditional clothing, as "an embodied spatial practice that transforms the self through bodily performances" (Gökarıksel 2009, 658,661) revealed the "new Islamic subjectivities" (Çınar 2008, 89) and "the new consciousness of the Islamic self as it resists secularism" (Göle 1997b, 89). Veiled women made this new imaginary of the Islamic-authentic-self visible by preferring to hide their body within the modest dress which thus provided them more visibility in the public sphere. Veiled women formed their pious identity by challenging the secular imaginary on the women's bodies excluding the headscarf from the modern outlook. Saktanber (1994) pointed out how Muslim women reconstructed their subjectivities in a secular sphere through their close experiences of being Other in the sense of being oppressed "as a perceived threat to the prevailing social order", in the sense of being denied as "the right to express their political demands", and in the sense of pride that shows one is on the right way (105). With the active resistance to the control over their bodies through the headscarf ban, veiled women gave an open message to claim their agency by challenging "the boundaries between religion and secular, private and public, oppression and freedom, or submission and agency in their greater struggle for cultivating a pious self in the way they conceptualize it" (Topal 2017, 595).

Göle (2003) discussed the social meaning of the headscarf as a stigma symbol by emphasising on "... a shift from a symbol of submissiveness to one of assertiveness" (810), and argued, "In proposing to use the notion of stigma, what matters here is the simultaneous reference both to private and public realms; stigma as a bodily sign is personified and embodied, but at the same time it conveys a meaning in the public." (811). Relying on Göle, I will later argue that the rejection of carrying such a stigma symbol by a woman who adopted it for a time either voluntarily or by force also transmits a social meaning beyond a personal choice. The most socially important reason behind un-veiling of the participants whom I conducted interviewees with was to manifest themselves in the public sphere without a visible identity. They thought that the headscarf marked them in a particular way before outsiders were aware of their voices. This is a self-claim of authenticity that they thought of the headscarf covered up. Although the headscarf was a powerful means for constructing the subjectivity of veiled women in the 1980s and the 1990s in which they gained the public visibility through it, what the headscarf signified evidently

transformed into a means that eliminated the subjectivity for some veiled women. They had a common idea on that the headscarf defined a woman as a part of a particular community in which almost all veiled women shared similar opinions on several issues and had similar attitudes towards various situations no matter what they individually had. The way to declare who they were, or to manifest their selfhood, was to take off the headscarf that always spoke for them without their consent.

The absence of the Islamic stigma symbol for this time becomes another bodily sign which points out a different narrative about the symbol itself. The women who participated in this study made blurred the distinction between the discourse of submissiveness and of assertiveness, which will be discussed in the next chapter in detail. Yet, one thing to note that they frankly manifested that they no longer accepted to represent what the headscarf was burdened with the past experiences of the older generations of veiled women by emphasizing how they liberated themselves in some way from the established narratives on the headscarf. This is the same with how veiled women manifested their assertiveness with the same bodily sign. This sign, however, sends a message through the struggle of women to take off their headscarves to both Islamist communities by breaking the unity of their strong narrative on the headscarf victimhood and to secular communities by shaking the established believes on veiled women as a homogeneous group of women. As an example Ayşe Çavdar who had experienced both struggles to wear and to take off the headscarf in different paths. During the process of February 28, Çavdar was a veiled university student whose struggle was against the headscarf ban at universities to have the right to education; then, she took off her headscarf which "always speaks before me on my behalf to be myself" in her words (Çavdar 2018). She overemphasized the political meaning of the headscarf apart from its religious context by arguing that the headscarf is not a simple issue just belonged to women; rather, a complex issue which combines religion and politics on the political ground. She also insists on the idea that the headscarf is still a political question in Turkey, and explicitly states that "the mere difference is the political position of the headscarf which was the opposition during the process of February 28 and is now on the power." (Çavdar 2018). Çavdar's perception on the political meaning of the headscarf deserves attention, because it directly speaks to why taking off the headscarf is not a personal choice. She points out body as a public manifestation by emphasizing that when a woman wears or takes off her headscarf, everybody -veiled women, secular women, Islamist men, and secular men- take it personal. Since a woman wearing the headscarf sends a message to the secular world, and a woman taking off the headscarf poses a question to the Islamist world with their bodies, everybody responds to that (Çavdar

2018).

3.4 The Political Context of the 1980s and the 1990s

The increasing political polarization rooted by the economic and political instability and the security concerns regarding the increasing violence associated with terrorism and the political disturbance between the left-wing and the right-wing groups established a ground for the military to take over the government on 12 September 1980. The political parties were closed down, the party leaders and most of the politicians were banned in politics, the constitution was suspended, and all activities of civil society organizations were ceased by the military-led National Security Council (Milli Güvenlik Kurulu-MGK) under the rule of General Kenan Evren who was Chief of the General Staff. Since the priority was to re-establish the political stability and to eliminate the expansive impact of the leftist groups in the society, Islam was used as an efficient tool to rule the masses and to consolidate the post-coup government. The 'Turkish-Islamic synthesis' was introduced as a new ideological strategy to restrain the religious extremism under the state control and to prevent the spread of communism in the country in relation with the wider global context of the time (Ahmad 1993; Çetinsaya 1999; Zürcher 1993). In this sense, the religious education was standardized as a compulsory course in the primary schools' curriculums, and the budget allocated for and the institutional role of the Directorate of Religious Affairs was highly increased (Öniş 1997). These regulations, however, aimed to bring Islam under the state control. In the following three years' period under the rule of the National Security Council, a new constitution, which was more narrow in terms of individual rights and liberties compared to the 1961 Constitution, was made in 1982; and the Council of Higher Education (Yüksek Öğretim Kurulu-YÖK), which aimed to regulate all affairs of the universities, was established in 1981. As the military had always taken an active role in Turkish politics by overthrowing the democratically elective governments when it regarded necessary to interfere in the governance as in 1960 and 1971, it was obvious that in this short period after the 1980 coup, the new constitution established under the military rule "... allowed military and subsidiary institutions like the National Security Council and Council of Higher Education to emerge as the main guardians of secularism." (Gökariksel and Mitchell 2005, 152).

The post-1980 context in Turkey in parallel with the global developments witnessed the increasing impacts of globalization in both economic, cultural and political

spheres. Though the state had always remained active in the economic sphere in Turkey, the state-led economic model slowly shifted to neo-liberal economy which led to enhance private capital and international trade, and to increase the chance of small businesses and entrepreneurs to involve in the market. In addition to the changing economic trends, the powerful ideas of nationalism and nation-state did not stay out of a substantial transformation that "led to two seemingly conflicting but parallel tendencies: sub-national (e.g., ethnic or tribal) separatist movements and supra-national (e.g., religious or civilizational) revivalist movements" (Gülalp 2001, 435). These economic and political developments had also weakened the established class politics of 1960s, and paved the way for new social cleavages rooted by identity-based claims that differed based on particular social formations in different contexts (Kadıoğlu 1996).

In Turkey, social cleavages arose from mainly ethnic and religious identity claims: The rising awareness of "the Kurdishness of the Kurdish question as an ethno-political question" (Yeğen 1996, 216), together with a significant focus on the cultural rights such as the right to native language, made a changing impact on a dominant state perception of the Kurdish question as a terror problem, or "... 'a regional problem' stemming from the pre-modern and tribal formation of the economic and cultural backwardness..." (Keyman 2012, 471). As Kurds came out as "politicized ethnicity" (İçduygu and Sirkeci 1999, 994) that imposed their identity claims on the state, the question of representation and recognition became a controversial political tension. The newly emerging identity politics took its another source from the division between seculars and Islamists. With the rise of the Islamist political parties, pious people's demands on their Islamic identity came to public appearance. Contrary to the modernization project of the Republican elite, as Göle (2003) indicated, "... Islamism problematizes the universalistic claims of 'Western civilization', which excludes Islamic difference as a source of modern civilization." (19). In this sense, Islamist social groups highlighted their differences by way of both criticizing the established understanding of secularism and modernity and offering an alternative social imaginary which was culturally local and Islam-oriented in the name of authenticity as opposed to the Western-oriented social formation.

3.4.1 The Rise of Political Islam: The Welfare Party and The National

Outlook Movement

The rise of political Islam, rooted by the National Outlook (Milli Görüş) ideology, came about in the post-coup period starting from the 1970s and gained popularity during the 1990s. The National Outlook Movement shared similar trends with other Islamist movements that were effective in the Muslim world, especially in Egypt, Iran and Pakistan since the late 1960s (Göle 1997a, 53). Yet, it did not mainly glorify the return to the original sources, the times of the prophet, as the essential vision for the society, but prioritizing the traditional restructuring of the society with reference to the Ottoman times; the Movement was thus both nationalist (with religious connotations), modernist, Islamist and Ottomanist (Yavuz 2000, 34). Politicians with Islamic orientation took to the political stage early in 1970 with The National Order Party (Milli Nizam Partisi-MNP) which was closed down by the military memorandum in 1971; then the National Salvation Party (Milli Selamet Partisi-MSP) took the place of the previous one during the 1970s, but it was also closed down in 1980. The underlying reason of the political bans to these parties was that they posed a serious challenge to the secular character of the regime on the ground of their ideological stand and their Islamic discourses. Both parties were established under the leadership of Necmettin Erbakan who became the symbolic name of the political Islam within the rising and politicised Islamist groups. After the 1980 military coup, Erbakan was banned from politics for 10 years as required by the constitution in 1982, but few years later with a referendum in 1987, he re-entered politics within The Welfare Party (Refah Partisi-RP) which was established in 1983 and took an incredible role to shape the future of Islamic movement during the 1990s.

The Welfare Party was the embodiment of political Islam which was institutionalized as a modern political movement that reawakened Islam but as a part of political identity. It adopted a modernist political ideology similar to the secular Kemalist ideology by way of their ultimate aim to "transform society towards an ideal future" (Çınar 2005, 7) though they differed on the ground of the ideal social imagery that should be internalized. The turning point for Turkish politics was the municipal elections in 1994, that was, the Welfare Party captured the mayor's offices in two major cities, Ankara and Istanbul. Its unforeseen success proceeded in the general parliamentary elections with a dramatic increase from 7,2% in 1987 to 16,9% in 1991 to 21,4% in 1995 (Yüksek Seçim Kurulu 2020). It became the leading party in 1995, but it was not sufficiently enough to establish the government on its own. After an unsteady transition period in which several parties in the parliament made an enormous endeavor to form the government, the Welfare Party made a coalition with the center-right True Path Party (Doğru Yol Partisi-DYP) under the leadership of Tansu

Çiller who became the deputy prime minister, and Necmettin Erbakan became the prime minister of the Refahyol government in 1996. It was not only an electoral success, but also a symbolic victory of political Islam in the secular establishment. The Welfare Party's electoral success was explained with reference to several economic, cultural and social factors: The increasing impact of globalization on the economic realm and of post-modernism on the social realm brought along the rise of petit bourgeoisie in Anatolia, the strengthening of pro-Islamist MÜSIAD (The Association of Independent Industrialists and Businessmen) against pro-Kemalist TÜSİAD (The Association of Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen), the cross-class alliances among various segments of the society that shared different economic and cultural capital, but the same status, or feeling, of exclusion, and the populist Islamic discourse and the 'Just Order' program having a strong influence on the party grassroots (Gumuscu 2010; Öniş 1997; Toprak 2005). With regard to Mardin (1973)'s framework of the confrontation between the center and the periphery to explain the underlying factor of social cleavages in Turkish politics, the rise of the National Outlook Movement, institutionalized by the Welfare Party, was seen as "the movement of the periphery" of which "Black Turks" who were excluded from the center, but claimed to be in power (Yavuz 2000, 34). This perspective pointed out that the Republican elite, called White Turks, constituted the Kemalist ideology and secularism as the founding principles of the state, and prevailed over the cultural and symbolic capital whereas Islam and the various Islamic groups were excluded from the center for a long time. Yet, the Welfare Party brought the Islamic groups in the periphery to the center by representing their political existence at the highest level in politics and making their demands more visible at the societal level. The changing economic structure and relative liberalization in the political sphere after the 1980s paved the way "... to expand its [the state's] social base by incorporating Islamic voices into the system" (Yavuz 1997, 66). The Welfare Party, thus, benefited from the opportunity of the expanding social and political space for the Islamic Movement that was growing through outstanding efforts of the newly visible Islamist intellectuals. In a similar vein, Göle (1997a) explained the rise of Islamism as the result of power relations between the secular modernist elites and the Islamists counter-elites who were recently visible on the public sphere. The Islamist counter-elites were the new intellectuals who had modern education as secular modernists, gained a prestigious social status in the society, but criticized the established understanding of modernity and secularism corresponded to the Westernization. In this regard, they suggested an alternative social imagery for the society, formed a new identity that did not exclude their piety into the private sphere, made their life-styles visible, and offered a re-making of the public sphere that was more democratic and inclusive for the excluded segments of the society

Göle (1997a).

3.5 A Milestone for the Headscarf Question: The February 28 Process

Though the spirit of the National Outlook Movement lasted a period of time till the first few years of the 2000s, the Welfare Party was not exempt from the eventual end of its predecessors. On 28 February 1997, the National Security Council gave a memorandum to the True Path-Welfare Party government to implement a list of measures that aimed to weaken the public presence of Islam and to secure the secular establishment against *irtica*, the Islamist reactionism. The military generals' advisory decisions at the MGK meeting regarding the danger of political Islam were mainly based on "... to increase obligatory secular education from five to eight years, restrict Kur'an schools and İHLs [İmam Hatip High Schools], and control religious orders" (Tuğal 2009, 46). It was not a military coup same as the previous ones, but was another military interference in the civilian politics, which was, referred a soft coup, or the post-modern coup, or the February 28 Process in common usage. In this process, Islamic and Kurdish groups were defined as internal enemies that might pose a danger to the secular national identity. In this sense, the Islamic reactionism became a national security concern that "... altered the meaning of democracy in Turkey by subordinating individual and group rights and liberties to demands of security" (Cizre and Çınar 2003, 321). As a result of the February 28 process, the prime minister Necmettin Erbakan was forced to resign; and eventually, The Constitutional Court closed down the Welfare Party on January 16, 1998 and banned its politicians, including Erbakan, from politics for five years by the reason of their engagement with anti-secular activities. The Welfare Party was succeeded by the Virtue Party (Fazilet Partisi-FP) established in 1997, but it engaged in several closure cases in its short period of time until it was closed down in 2001 due to the same reason as the previous ones, which was, the political and social activities against the secular regime. The beginning of 2000s witnessed the split of the Islamist movement into different political parties: The Felicity Party (Fazilet Partisi-FP) established in 2001 was not successful as much as its predecessors in the parliamentary elections and became a minor party supported by the very few within the Islamist communities. The Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi-AKP) established in 2001 broke with the political Islamist tradition of National Outlook Movement by portraying itself as a conservative democratic party. Though most of politicians in the party shared the Islamist background, what differed AKP from its predecessors was its pro-Western approach in foreign policy and liberal democratic implementations in domestic politics at its foundation years. After all, the February 28 process was the turning point of the course of political

Islam and changed all political dynamics of the Islamist parties in the 2000s. It was the institutional failure of political Islam at its heyday, but at the same time, paved the way for strengthening symbolic power of the Islamist groups in the society. The democratic way in which their demands could be represented into politics was prohibited, and their voices through their representatives were silenced. It meant that their political identity was ignored, and that reawakened the sense of exclusion that they had felt for a long time. Yet, their exclusion from the political scene led them to organize in the Islamist civil society.

In the late 1990s, it was more common to see that the headscarf ban in the universities was widely carried out. Some of veiled students protested against the ban by taking a risk to receive disciplinary punishment, or to be dismissed from the university, or to be taken into custody. While some of them preferred to take off their headscarves during the classes, some decided to leave the university instead of entering the classes without their headscarves. After several public gatherings and sit-in-protests in the university campuses, a march, called İnanca Saygı Düşünceye Özgürlük İçin El Ele (Hand in Hand for Freedom of Thought and Respect for Religious Faith), was organized to demonstrate against the ban across the country in 11 October 1998. The protestors created human chain including a broad participation from different ideological groups, but mainly from veiled women and Islamist men (Özyürek 2006). Though it was a democratic way of raising the public awareness for their demands, over two hundred of the protestors were taken into custody and many of them were interrogated by the anti-terror branch (İnce 2014); and the protest was depicted as a political provocation (Hürriyet 1998) or was highlighted by giving wider coverage to heated debates among the opposition (Milliyet 1998) by the mainstream media. In addition to a wide range of the women's struggles against the headscarf ban at universities, the two symbolic cases, Merve Kavakçı and Leyla Şahin, triggered the controversial debates on the vague boundaries of the public sphere and secularism and kept the public attention on the issue alive.

3.5.1 The Public Sphere in Question: The case of Merve Kavakçı

The February 28 process was the milestone for the headscarf issue. Though the serious disputes on veiling was already on the political agenda since the late 1970s, the rise of political Islam together with the Welfare Party's achievements that were perceived as a threat to the secular establishment reawakened the headscarf question. The case of Merve Kavakçı intensified the public debate on the politicization of the

headscarf and the position of veiled women in the society. In the 1999 parliamentary elections, Kavakçı was elected as an Istanbul deputy from the Virtue Party, and she joined to the Grand National Assembly for taking her oath of office with her headscarf on May 2, 1999. She was not the only veiled deputy in the parliament, but Nesrin Ünal who was a deputy from the National Action Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi-MHP) preferred to take off her headscarf during the oath ceremony in which she was vigorously applauded by members of all parties except the Virtue Party. The deputies of the Democratic Left Party (Demokratik Sol Parti-DSP) protested Kavakçı's political stance by hitting their hands on the tables rhythmically and chanted "Get out! Get out!" to prevent her from taking oath as a veiled deputy. It was remarkable that Bülent Ecevit, who was the prime minister and the chairman of the Democratic Left Party, read his prepared speech by reminding the clear cut boundary between the public sphere and the private sphere:

> "... In Turkey, no one intervenes with women's dresses and headscarves in their private lives. Yet, this place is not anyone's private sphere. This is the most exalted institution of the state. Those who work here have to comply with the rules and traditions of the state. This is not a place to challenge the state. Please put this lady in her place." (Yeni Şafak 2017).

After this speech, the protest continued with noisy handclaps, and two women deputies from the Democratic Left Party surrounded the rostrum for a while. Kavakçı had to leave the Parliament without taking the oath. Even the last sentence in the above speech was a reflection of the top-down, didactic and partial understanding of modernization in the way that the state elite by itself was entitled to put someone in his/her place and undertook a mission to correct 'wrong' behaviors of anyone who acted in a particular manner outside the well-defined boundaries in which an ideal citizen was expected to act accordingly. Göçek (1999) pointed out the Ecevit's speech for an embodiment of the implicit fear that showed up when the founding principles that were inherently fragile were challenged, and she argued,

> "... since the western legal system was one of the foundation stones of the Turkish republic, any criticism of the system may be directly associated with the nature of the republic itself. Hence any attempt to reflect upon, criticize and possibly alter the legal system is dismissed and sanctioned as if it were pulling away the foundation stone of the republic." (532)

As Ecevit stated, the state did not care about women's headscarves while they were going to shopping, walking in a street, or meeting with their friends in cafes. Yet, these women were not welcomed in certain places like "the most exalted institution of the state" even if they were qualified as much as other women and men to do the same job with them. If these women wanted to be included in the system, they were expected to leave a part of their identity apart. In this sense, Ünal was accepted and also supported in the Parliament with her unvisible pious identity by taking off her headscarf to swear the oath whereas Kavakçı's visible pious identity did not. These women deserved to represent different parts of the society in the Parliament, but as Göle (2002) highlighted what mattered was that ". . . it was Merve Kavakçı's physical presentation in the Parliament, not her election, that provoked a public dispute, a blowup." (178). It was all about visibility of a part of identity in the public sphere for a woman whose piety was necessarily visible if she wore the headscarf. The case of Merve Kavakçı revelaed the state aim to clean the visibility of the religious symbols from the public sphere. The public sphere is thus constructed as a secular place in which the veiled women's bodies became "the site of symbolic confrontations between a re-essentialized understanding of religious and cultural difference and the forces of state power. . . " (Benhabib 2010, 453). The visibility of veiled women, however, in the public sphere with their political demands to participate in the public life without removing their religious identity challenged the secular and modern ideals of the state. Unlike the Habermasian liberal understanding of the public sphere which is the neutral place in which deliberation, dialogue and participation are possible, and democratic freedoms are guaranteed (Habermas 1991, 2005), the public sphere in Turkey signifies the power relations between the secular and religious communities, but by silencing the religious one and particularly ignoring the veiled women's subjectivity (Baban 2014; Çınar 2005; Göle 2002).

3.5.2 Secularism in Question: The Case of Leyla Şahin

The question arose one more time: What did make the headscarf a kind of existential threat in Turkish politics? There had never been the question of the traditional veiling practice, but when it came to the veiled women's demand to be visible with their religious identity at universities, this revealed the failure of the modernization project. This failure stemmed from an ambivalence on whether to adopt the liberal and democratic Western values or to sacrifice liberal aspects for the sake of preservation of the secular regime (Arat 2010a; Saktanber 2002). Yet, unlike the Anglo-Saxon secularism, in which the state is already strong, but both the state

and the religious institutions autonomously exercise their power, secularization in Turkey was similar to the French laïcité which denotes the strong separation of the church and the state to make the state the absolute power (Berkes 1998; Davison 2003; Roy 2007). In reality, secularization in Turkey did not mean the exact separation between the religious affairs and the state affairs, but aimed to take religion under the state's strict control as well as making religion the useful instrument for the state elite to govern the society when necessary (Gökarıksel and Secor 2017; Keyman 2007; O'Neil 2008).

The case of Leyla Şahin revealed that it was always a preferred way to sacrifice liberal aspects of the Western values for the protection of the secular establishment and the state integrity. After the Higher Education Council advised the university rectorates to put the circular on the dress codes at universities into effect to prevent the veiled students' attendance to the classes with their headscarves, Istanbul University issued a circular letter that banned wearing the headscarf on campus on February 23, 1998. The rector, Kemal Alemdaroğlu, also warned academics to obey the dress codes by a written instruction; in a few months, some of the academics were exposed to investigation since they were in disagreement with the rector's implementations, and a veiled academic was dismissed from the university because of her headscarf (Belge 2001). At the very same time, the expression of persuasion rooms (*ikna odaları* in Turkish) where professors or members of the university administration tried to persuade veiled students to remove their headscarves became a current issue.

What kept the public interest to all these practices of the headscarf ban alive for a long time was the case of Leyla Şahin, a medical faculty student at Istanbul University. She insisted on not taking off her headscarf in her classes, but she was not allowed to attend the classes and to the exams; and she was ultimately received a disciplinary punishment due to not obeying the rules of the dress codes. On 21 July 1998, she appealed to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) by asserting that the disciplinary punishment that she was exposed to because of her headscarf was against her right to religious freedom and right to education. In particular, she sued the state at ECHR by claiming that the regulations on the headscarf at universities violated Articles 8, 9, 10, 14 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms Right and Article 2 of Protocol No.1[1] (European Court of Human Rights 2005). After the Chamber made a decision in favour of the state by concluding that the headscarf ban at universities, which was consistent with

[1] Article 2: Right to education
Article 8: Right to respect for private and family life
Article 9: Freedom of thought, conscience and religion
Article 10: Freedom of expression
Article 14: Prohibition of discrimination (Council of Europe 1950)

the national law, did not violate freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 9) and the indicated articles of the Convention on 29 June 2004, Şahin requested to take the case to the Grand Chamber. Yet, the Grand Chamber referred to the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey (Article 2, 13, 14, 24, 42 in particular) and the decisions of the Turkish courts with emphasis on the principle of secularism, equality and pluralism that were necessary for a democratic system, and concluded again in favour of the state that "The regulations on the Islamic headscarf were not directed against the applicant's religious affiliation, but pursued the legitimate aim of protecting order and the rights and freedoms of others and were manifestly intended to preserve the secular nature of educational institutions." (European Court of Human Rights 2005). The ECHR's decision in line with the state discourse on the headscarf ban that was a precaution to avoid Islamic threat against the secular establishment brought along controversial public debates. By prioritizing the state integrity and the secular order to individual rights and freedoms, the ECHR both affirmed "...the terms and methods of the Kemalist project of producing modern, secular subjects..." (Gökariksel and Mitchell 2005, 158) and also reproduced "... the secularist and Western conceptions of the headscarf as embodying a radical form of Islam that seeks to destroy secularism." (Vojdik 2010, 672). By highlighting "... the values of pluralism, respect for the rights of others and, in particular, equality before the law of men and women..." (European Court of Human Rights 2005), the ECHR justified the headscarf ban and strengthened not plurality or equality among women in the society, but essentially silenced veiled women's voices in the public sphere. Drawing on Butler (2004), the question regarding veiled women's voices arose: Whose demands count as demands in Turkey? As Seçkinelgin (2006) pointed out "a tacit consensus" on "that a woman can have a voice in public only as a secular individual" (762), the ECHR' decision reproduced the constructed social hierarchy between secular and pious women by positioning veiled women as a threat against secular women's rights and freedoms (Baldi 2016; Gökariksel and Mitchell 2005). The controversial debate on the ECHR's decision and the national legislation regarding the headscarf ban in the scope of freedom of religion in particular did not pertain to the Turkish case only, but brought veiled women's subjectivity and the headscarf problem to public attention in several European countries like Germany, Switzerland, Netherland, France, Belgium, and Italy (Bracke and Fadil 2012; Brems 2014; Jouili 2009; Koyuncu Lorasdağı 2009; Moors 2009; Möschel 2011; Salih 2009).

3.6 Concluding Remarks

The previous researches on the veiled women's struggle against the headscarf ban at universities in 1990s' Turkey reveal that these women consciously decided to wear the headscarf on their own, and this became a part of political identity. However, since these women were raised in religious families where most of women wore the headscarf, their decisions to veil were not surprising, but compatible with Islamic dress-codes that they were already familiar to (Akbulut 2015; Cindoğlu 2011; Göle 1996; O'Neil 2008; Özyeğin 2015). While the prevalent belief in public was that these women wore the headscarf not because they freely wished to do it, but because of their parents' incessant urgent, interviews with veiled women in these studies made an invaluable contribution to literature by opening a free space for these women to speak for themselves.

The elaboration on these women's families' socio-economic structure sheds light on veiled women's agency and provides more questions for further researches. First, these women's families were lower or lower-middle class families. Hence, they were eagerly supporters of their daughters' higher education that possibly paved the way for social mobility with higher status and sufficient income for both their daughters and the rest of family members. That's why they did not encourage their daughters' struggles against the headscarf ban which eventually made a trouble in their daughters' life, and even insisted them to take off their headscarves till they graduated from the university (Göle 1996; Özdalga 1998, 57-68; İlyasoğlu 1998, 246; Cindoğlu 2011, 55-57; Özyeğin 2015, 188-190). Second, while these women's families were traditionally religious and/or conservative,[2] this new generation of women became urban, well-educated, modern, religious and politicized subjects. Although most of women in their families wore the headscarf, and encouraged them to veil at early ages, when daughters were in a struggle against the headscarf ban, the family members advised their daughters to comply with rules to continue their education. Thus, some of the veiled women "characterized their parents' generation as conformist and silent, passively integrating into a secular society and unquestioningly adopting secularism" (Özyeğin 2015, 191). Some of them accused their parents of practicing religious requirements as only a part of custom, but they learned what they should do from directly reading Quran and religious sources, and they consciously practiced wearing the headscarf as a religious obligation (Aktaş 1992; Göle 1996).

[2]It should be specified that not all veiled women came from religious families, but some of them from secular families, and struggled to wear the headscarf against their families' wishes. For a comprehensive discussion: Yeşim Arat (2005), *Rethinking Islam And Liberal Democracy: Islamist Women in Turkish Politics.*

On the one hand, the participants of this research come from middle-class families in which most of the family members got a college education, too. Some participants experienced the headscarf ban in their high-school years, but the headscarf ban was lifted when they entered university; some of them were never exposed to the ban in their educational background. Thus, the struggle against the headscarf ban was neither the question for both groups of women nor the issue that complicated the relationship between daughters and parents in family. However, this research reveals that the university education does not associate with a means of either social mobility or high social status. On the other hand, the previous generation of urban, modern, religious and politicized subjects are now parents of these un-veiled women, so they are the conscious subjects who framed what headscarf symbolizes in Turkey. Even if mothers of these women are not directly victims of the headscarf ban, the headscarf is still the most visible and important part of the Islamist cause for them. Thus, when their daughters would decide to take off the headscarf, this might rapture the previous generation's future projection on pious identity of their daughters.

A small, but remarkable, detail in Cindoğlu's study (2011) is worth to notice to understand how the previous generation of veiled women wished to transmit their Islamic cause to their daughters. Her interviewers clearly specified that unlike their parents' discouragement upon their decisions to not take off the headscarf for proceeding the university education, they will always support their daughters even if the headscarf ban will not be cancelled at the time of their daughters. Some of them also stated that they could send their daughters to abroad for study in the case of the headscarf ban would not be lifted at the time their daughters will enter the university. The interviews Cindoğlu (2011) conducted with several women revealed similar views on their daughters' choices on wearing the headscarf: A woman said that she was afraid of hearing from her daughter if she wanted to go to school by taking off her headscarf (61); the other woman said that she did not want her daughter to take off the headscarf to achieve a better career (63); another woman said that her daughter knew all about her struggle, and why she had to go to abroad for study (64); and the other woman said, "She will go through the processes I did. I didn't take off my headscarf during my school years, and I wish upon her that she does the same thing." (65). However, what is striking is that they had no other option in their minds for their daughters' choice to veil like what if their daughters would not want to wear the headscarf, and they did not, thus, have such a problem. This thesis aims to reveal how this specific future projection in the family draws certain boundaries in which women wore the headscarf as taken for granted, and how veiling, as an identity taken over from the previous generations, creates a heavy

burden that the later generation of women do not want to carry out in society.

Furthermore, a question that Arat (2010a) posed is remarkable: "Can women increase opportunities for self-enhancement within the context of religious communities?" (879). This would be a starting point for this thesis to understand the un-veiled women's sense of being trapped in the Islamic identity. The previous researches showed that veiled women were defined only by their religious identity because of the headscarf's apparent visibility that hindered their individual differences (Özyeğin 2015). In the same vein, this visible identity, apart from its religious context, sets social boundaries in which veiled women are expected to behave accordingly. Even if the headscarf does not limit in a religious sense one's hobbies, for instance, Arat (2010a) argued, "head covering restricts women's engagement in many activities such as sports, dance and ballet. They might not express interest in these engagements but many women who do not have substantive options do deny interest in alternatives that seem beyond their reach." (878). This might be true for some veiled women in the context in which Arat made her research, but this is a critical point to fill a void in the literate. My fieldwork shows that even veiled women are not interested in such activities, they want to choose whether they dance or not because they personally wish it; and they want others to consider their preferences of not dancing as their individual decisions, not as it is because of their religious identity.

What is critical for this thesis is that while the state controlled what veiled women could not wear in the public sphere, and excluded veiling into the private sphere, the family plays the same role in the private spheres of women and ignores their daughters' agency by limiting their wearing choices beforehand. Thus, although the veiled women's struggle against the headscarf ban was seen as a resistance to the secular order of the public sphere, the un-veiled women's struggle to take off their headscarves poses a challenge to the power relations in both spheres and paves the way to reconsider the ambiguous boundaries between the public and the private, and between the secular and the pious.

4. “INVISIBLE” IDENTITIES:

UNFOLDING THE NARRATIVES OF THE WOMEN WHO TOOK OFF THEIR HEADSCARVES

In this chapter, the focus of this ethnographic study is discussed with a critical scrutiny of the participants’ narratives. Throughout the analysis of the fieldwork, I aim to make sense of their experiences to provide a consistent narrative of personal and social intricacies behind the practice of un-veiling. This does not mean to consider these experiences as if they were necessarily consistent, fixed and stable; rather, all ambiguities and inconsistencies in their experiences were taken into consideration. Yet, both commonalities and distinctiveness in the participants’ narratives make possible to bring the practice of un-veiling into question.

This chapter aims to shed light on personal and social intricacies behind women’s decisions to take off their headscarves. First, the practice of un-veiling is framed as experience with reference to Scott’s conceptualization of experience (1991) to emphasize that the practice of un-veiling is not constructed as a new identity by the participants. Since veiling as the most visible part of pious identity for veiled women was constructed as part of identity question in a complex historical process, the participants’ experiences of veiling was not outside the existing narratives of veiled women. Yet, the most emphasized motivation by the participants behind their decisions to take off the headscarf is the rejection of visible identity through the headscarf. By refusing the visible aspect of the headscarf, they also declare that it is not a new identity they construct through the practice of un-veiling, but they critically point out the process in itself that makes the experience of un-veiling possible. In this sense, without considering the particular experience of un-veiling itself as the subject of the study, the focus is to contextualize their experiences and to provide possible explanations for a newly emerging phenomenon of un-veiling.

Second, the meanings that the participants attributed to the headscarf is discussed to understand their motivations on the practice of un-veiling. Their narratives reveal that the headscarf was perceived as a religious obligation when they started to wear it since they were raised in pious families and Islamic communities. Yet, they realized

the social aspects of veiling through multiple encounters with diverse social circles. So that with the huge impacts of the socialization processes and mixed contacts on their daily lives, the meaning of veiling in a religious sense became a more individual matter for most of the participants.

Third, the changing meanings of the headscarf from a religious obligation to a social marker is discussed with reference to Goffman's theory of stigmatization (1963). Stigma is defined as attributes having extensive discrediting effects on one's body, character, or tribal characteristics of race, nation, and religion (Goffman 1963, 3-4).These attributes are rooted in one's physical or identity-related characteristics, are given by outsiders,and become stereotypes in time. When individuals encounter with each other in asocial situation, they face with one's visible appearance first. In this framework,veiling as a stigma denotes not a bodily handicap or a characteristic feature, but are religious symbol that is attributed to pious women. The headscarf is framed as an Islamic stigma symbol, and the participants' relations with their stigma are critically examined. Also, to clarify who others are in this context, it is important to indicate that the participants did not specify a particular individual, but they sometimes referred to a group, i.e. the secular people. To avoid a binary opposition between the pious and the secular, I identify categories they mentioned by following Goffman's concepts of "stigmatized" and "normals" as in-group and out-group people respectively. One thing to note that "the normal and the stigmatized are not persons but rather perspectives. These are generated in social situations during mixed contacts by virtue of the unrealized norms that are likely to play upon the encounter." (Goffman 1963, 138). The focus of this section is what kinds of stereotypes and anticipations based on their visible identity the participants were exposed to, and how they coped with what others' thought on them regarding their appearances with the headscarf and their actions. In relation to the second section, the only exception is the cases of two participants who did not take formal education, but trained in Quran Courses for many years. As discussed later in detail, their perceptions on veiling were constructed as the headscarf was a religious requirement only without its social aspects. Since they did not experience being a veiled woman in the public sphere, and did not encounter with out-group people in diverse social situation until they entered university at relatively later ages, the social meanings of the headscarf as well as the social expectations in relation to their visible identities were not the focus of their narratives.

Fourth, the concept of everyday religion/Islam is discussed to understand the participants' ambiguous feelings towards their practice of veiling and their everyday life experiences. Also, the practice of un-veiling is not approached with a focus on piety, but with a focus on everyday religion. Everyday religion refers to what happens not

in specific boundaries of holy places, or in particular times, i.e. holy days, but in daily life of an individual (Orsi 2012, 150). Everyday religion is not only related to normative questions on religion itself, but is also embedded in daily questions of practitioners. The concept of everyday religion does not imply an opposition between everyday practices and religious realm, but brings religion into the realm of everyday (Basarudin 2013; Fadil and Fernando 2015; Orsi 2012). In relation to the previous section on the effects of out-group people's judgements, this section reveals that the practice of veiling is different from other religious practices since it is more embedded to everyday life regulations. The prominent issue in the narratives is that they were expected to present consistency between their appearance with the headscarf and their daily life preferences or actions. It also reflected another anticipation from the veiled women who were supposed to perform their pious identity as much as proper and perfect. Thus, all these expectations showed up in the realm of everyday, and positioned the women in social life as the representatives of Islam.

Lastly, the focus of this section is how the participants engage with the visible aspects of pious identity. In the first place, several ways to cope with stigmatization in different contexts are discussed in relation to the sense of belonging and the perceptions on one's positioning among in-group and out-group people. The participants' narratives reveal that they questioned their sense of belonging to Islamic community depending on their experiences of the current social and political changes, and this became one of critical turning points that triggered their decisions to take off the headscarf. The prominent difference showed up in Muslim women's experiences of pious identity and their relations to veiling in non-majority Muslim contexts is that the visibility of Islamic identity is an affirmed marker that signify Muslim women's distinctiveness, and the representative aspect of veiling strengthens their in-group identity and motivates them to challenge stereotypes in society. Yet, the participants of this research do not perceive veiling as an identity-affirmed marker that strengthens their in-group attachments. The rejection of visibility through the headscarf reflects a claim on being invisible. In the sense of invisibility, a critical question of where they situate their reference points in relation to the role of significant others is discussed. When they thought that they were invisible without the headscarf, they actually became more visible in the realm of in-group, but reconstructed a new self in the realm of out-group.

4.1 Un-veiling as Experience

Throughout the thesis I emphasize the importance of the women's experiences of veiling and un-veiling to make the practice of un-veiling visible over the personal narratives. Yet, this approach has always a possible risk to prioritize individual experiences, or in other words, to consider the experience in itself as the subject of the study. To avoid such a danger, I frame un-veiling as an experience by following Scott (1991)'s critical approach:

> "It is not individuals who have experience, but subjects who are constituted through experience. Experience in this definition then becomes not the origin of our explanation, not the authoritative (because seen or felt) evidence that grounds what is known, but rather that which we seek to explain, that about which knowledge is produced. To think about experience in this way is to historicize it as well as to historicize the identities it produces." (780).

In this sense, the thesis aims to explain the practice of un-veiling by analysing social intricacies behind that experience. It is also important to note that un-veiling is not framed as an identity for women who took off their headscarves. Though the experience of un-veiling reproduces subjects who manifest a particular difference through that experience as a group of un-veiled women, the most emphasized demand of the participants in this study was the rejection of an identity; and thus, they did not identify themselves with another identity that un-veiling brought along. It is not a new identity that the participants pointed out, but the process in itself that made the experience of un-veiling possible. In addition to other participants' general questions on a new identity based on un-veiling, this was most obviously showed up in the Elif's narrative. Elif mentioned of an identity of un-veiled woman, and questioned the process of re-defining herself because of such a new attributed label that had precedence over her actions. She explained why she hesitated that un-veiling might possibly turn to another identity that might describe all un-veiled women as a fixed category:

> "...But I was so annoyed when I saw the platform Yalnız Yürümeyeceksin. As I wanted to be Elif only when I flung the society's (expec-

> tation) off by taking off that headscarf; on the other hand, there is something else, a new identity, the identity of un-veiled women. So, are we such incapable? Are we such unable to define ourselves on the basis of this (un-veiling) only? For instance, when I wore the headscarf, I felt this so much: I had to overcome one's perception first, then I had to construct who Elif was; and this was so overwhelming process for a person. Now, I do not feel like this, because a woman who does not wear the headscarf could be secular or pious; she starts from the scratch. Yet, it does not apply to the concept of women who take off the headscarf, because they are perceived in a certain category again. Let us to walk alone. We can walk alone, why not? Why do we use a discourse of victimhood again? ... I was alone, and I overcame this process by my own. ... There are many women who get over this processes (of un-veiling) alone. ... The formation of another identity based on this (un-veiling) is also another overburden for me." (Interview with Elif, October 5, 2019).

It is argued that veiling as the most visible part of pious identity for women was constructed in a complex historical process. The discursive construction of this identity produced a position, which is a subject position, of veiled women like working class or black people. The problem arises when an identity is essentialized. The essentialized identity, veiled women for instance, is thought as fixed, stable, and consistent in itself by neglecting ambiguity, fluidity, complexity, and the endless process of identification as well. Yet, social identities are not formed a priori, but formed in a process in which they are always subject to deconstruction and reconstruction through articulation of identities (Laclau and Mouffe 2001). The fields of psychoanalysis, with the Lacanian reconfiguration of subject and subjectivity, and of linguistic, with the concepts of Saussure on the construction of meaning and the language system, contribute to the literature on the discursive construction of subject positions which fragmented the idea of a unified subject. In this regard, Laclau and Mouffe (2001)'s substantial contribution to the literature on subject positions is critical to consider openness, instability, and contingency of subject position through different articulations of identities. Though the discursive construction of an identity and the notion of subject positions that break the unity, or the wholeness, of an identity is meaningful to pay attention to relationality of different identities for a subject, there is always a potential risk to ignore different experiences, or fragmented identities, of subjects within a subject position. This is why un-veiled women are not framed as a subject position in this thesis. It is not the reproduction of the patterns that constitute a category of un-veiled women by essentializing that difference; rather, the focus is to make sense of "... the discursive nature of 'experience' and on the politics of its construction" (Scott 1991, 797), and to contextualize the experience of un-veiling. The study of un-veiling comes out through the participants' peculiar ex-

periences, but these experiences express nothing more than personal stories without diverse interpretations. As Scott (1991) indicated, "Experience is at once always already an interpretation and something that needs to be interpreted. What counts as experience is neither self-evident nor straightforward; it is always contested, and always therefore political." (797). Hence, the possible explanations to comprehend a new social phenomenon, un-veiling, provided in this thesis can lead alternative ways to make sense of the changing dynamics of the headscarf debate in Turkey.

4.2 The Changing Meanings of the Headscarf:

"There is no chance to be pious by yourself."

Most of the participants perceived veiling as a religious requirement in itself at the beginning they started to wear it since they were raised in pious families. However, when they encountered with out-group people in diverse social situations and realized that veiling became the only label that defined them in a very limited sense at the first encounter, the meaning of veiling in a religious context became an individual matter which became less important to them in time. To reveal diverse motivations behind taking off the headscarf, the focus in the first part of the interviews was the participants' experiences of veiling. What did the headscarf mean to young veiled women? This question is initially important to understand why they wanted to take off their headscarves.

The meanings that the participants attributed to the headscarf varied. Ahsen, Sevgi and Burcu embodied veiling in its religious context; it was a "self-sacrifice", for Ahsen, that she thought of she would be rewarded in afterworld; it served a purpose, for Sevgi, which was to avoid "the exposure of femininity"; it was an "identity", for Burcu, that of a Muslim woman. Though Nilay and Jasmine did not reject the religious necessity of the headscarf, they reinterpreted the general opinion that the headscarf was the essential part of veiling. Nilay thought that the headscarf was not necessarily a part of modest dress, and said, "... I believe in that veiling (tesettür) is a woman's self-awareness of her body and is to style what she wears accordingly." Jasmine over-thought of what the verses on veiling in Quran exactly meant, and came to her own conclusion:

> "...I wore (the headscarf) in a way, but is my way convenient to its standard? Do the verses really indicate this way? What does 'which necessarily appears' mean? If it would be so much explicit, there could be a picture of it. Throughout history, women around the world have worn the headscarf in many different ways... I have decided on that there is no standard for modest dress; I mean that the headscarf is not the only part of veiling. I start to think in this way, and thus, I do not place myself to where I am not myself." (Interview with Jasmine, September 25, 2019).

The participants' perceptions on the role of the headscarf were linked to how they thought of the religious obligations on the basis of the individual vs. collective practices, and of religiosity on the basis of worship vs. morality and spirituality. First, most of them made such a differentiation between the individual and the collective practices by giving an example of praying and the headscarf:

> "... For example, you can pray or perform the salaat; (the way you practice them) is totally up to you. Even if there is a particular format for these, you can express yourself (during your practices). For instance, you are told to read sections of the Quran (in the salaat), you can choose among them. Yet, you cannot express yourself only in veiling." (Interview with Sevgi, September 21, 2019).

The participants thought that praying, even if it can be practiced collectively in mosques, is an individual practice. A woman can pray without no one can see her; and when an unveiled woman prays five times in a day only in her home, no one has to know that she is a practicing Muslim. It necessarily follows neither a social etiquette on one's piety nor a social expectation from a praying woman. At the same time, if an unveiled woman prays, it is not necessarily assumed that she does not drink alcohol, or she votes for a particular political party, or she has to wear the headscarf, or she has to arrange her daily conducts with reference to Islam. Yet, there are many presuppositions on both the daily life habits and a veiled woman's piety like what a veiled woman can/not do and how she should live her life. Deniz explicitly stated,

> "...there is no chance to be pious in yourself. ... (It is like that) one cannot be alone with God, cannot think by oneself, cannot pray by oneself, but if you practice a religion, it is as if you practice all together... It is such impossible that people individually feel something and perform

> it. As I cannot wear the headscarf by my own here, I cannot take off it, too. It is not me who decide on it. I would say that since I thought that this decision did not belong to me, the change I did (by wearing the headscarf) was not mine, and it turned a something that went inside the stream, I gave up my decision (to wear the headscarf). ... What I felt against the current was ... that it created dis-identification. ... I did not belong to anything. I was not obliged to respond to anyone. As I do not wear the headscarf I can be conservative or secular or something quite different, it is not visible anymore." (Interview with Deniz, September 21, 2019).

Also, when a pious woman misses one or two of the five prayers in a day, or has a break for performing prayer for a while, it does not mean that she is no longer pious. On the other hand, veiling is not perceived as a practice that one does it for a month, for instance, then has a break for two days, but requires to be regular and permanent. The participants agreed on that even if a devout Muslim is expected to perform all obligations regularly and continuously as much as possible, a woman is not socially free to practice the headscarf deficiently. That's why the headscarf is not only a religious practice that a woman individually shapes according to the degree of her piety, but a social symbol that conveys a message out of the practitioner's intention and creates a bunch of expectations that a woman should satisfy. Hence, the headscarf cannot be seen at the same status with one of other religious practices, but eventually becomes a social burden that a woman has to undertake.

Second, most of the interviewees, Duru and Ahsen in particular, made mention of spirituality, morality and faith apart from worship as ignored parts in the conventional religious teaching. They complained that piety was directly corresponded to worship and especially to the headscarf for only women. For the participants, telling a lie or being corrupted in one's business, for instance, are equally wrong compared to not praying or not wearing the headscarf; piety is, however, defined with a person's visible actions only. Ahsen said, "...I had learned that good morals come first, then faith, and the last one is worship. Yet, we always start with worship, and it is not praying or fasting that are taught the essential pillars, but the headscarf only for us as a starting point." Sevgi sincerely asked, "When a non-Muslim woman convert to Islam, why is the first thing that she is expected to do wearing the headscarf? Is it the only sign for being a Muslim?"

The questioning of veiling in a religious realm became linked to their questions on the visibility of pious identity ascribed to them by way of the headscarf only. Sevgi thought that this identity drew the line that was expected her to follow:

> "…I think that even praying is not a limitation, because you can give up praying. No one sees it. You do not proclaim yourself (with praying). Yet, when you wear the headscarf, you proclaim yourself; I mean (you say) this is me. This is a kind of identity card, or a family register like you are from Çorum, or like a skin color that manifests you. It is obvious that you are not from Scotland, it is not possible, you are an easterner person… So, even if I want, this is not something that I can overcome. … This (identity) provided me a path and drew a line. Let me think whether (my idea) changed. I did not like that it always defined me, I mean, (I did not like) someone started to say that you represented a particular thing. He/she could not say this to me because I had already struggled against many things. Why (did I hear) 'you represented' over and over again?" (Interview with Sevgi, September 21, 2019).

Sevgi perceived pious identity in relation to veiling that was attributed her as "an inborn stigma" (Goffman 1963). Though the headscarf is neither congenital (like skin color) nor permanent (like maiming) sign, but more like "a convict's head-shave" (46) which is impermanent and situation-bounded as in the example of Goffman (1963), Sevgi framed it as a permanent part of the women by relying her experiences of the veiling practice and the general perception on the headscarf. In her narrative, the headscarf was not only a religious sign, but a symbol that pointed out more than one's piety. Goffman (1963) distinguished stigma symbols from signs on the basis of social information that they conveyed "against the will of the informant" (46). To put it another way, signs, whether congenital, permanent or impermanent, convey particular information, and may or may not work "against the will of the informant", but the distinctive characteristic of social information that transform signs to stigma symbols is its relation with the will of the informant. Sevgi thought that the headscarf conveyed social information about where one is from, for instance, and such an information is already there whether the woman wants to convey or to intentionally keep to herself. This was what she complained about because it was not a particular information, but directly affected what others' thought on the veiled woman by relying on many information the headscarf conveyed.

Jasmine stated that she was always against the idea that the headscarf is a political symbol. She then bitterly realized that it was gradually made into an explicit political symbol that was always in the political agenda as a means for political campaigns during each electoral period. She clarified her perception on this identity that provided her a distinctive position which made her uncomfortable afterwards:

> “It (the headscarf) put me in a position. It situated me as a Muslim woman, but a powerful woman who did not abstain from joining the public life. So, it gave me an identity. Actually, it was like being different, I mean, it distinguished me from others. Since I did not go to Imam Hatip or to such a university [she meant a foundation university mostly populated by pious students], this (veiling) was a characteristic made me distinctive at least. It ascribed me uniqueness and individuity. I thought that if would go to Imam Hatip, the process of taking off the headscarf could probably take place faster. Maybe, I would earlier face bad sides of the people in my community that I came to realize later.” (Interview with Jasmine, September 25, 2019).

Sevgi and Jasmine pointed out a noticeable appearance which gave them the marked identity in the first place. It was not only in relation with their physical appearances, but became something that defined their positions in society even before they consciously situated themselves in a social position. Unlike Sevgi, Jasmine drew attention to her sense of uniqueness since she attributed a self-affirmative meaning to such symbolic marking at the beginning. Yet, the remarkable point is where she felt herself unique through the headscarf. She said that someone saw her as a Muslim woman because of the headscarf at the first encounter, but she then added what she thought on herself to her visibility “a powerful woman who did not abstain from joining the public life”. These two characteristics were portrayed as if contrary to each other so that being a powerful woman with the headscarf in the public sphere made her different from others. Others in this sense are both the women with the headscarf, but not powerful in the sense that joining the public life, or having a good career as Jasmine mentioned elsewhere, and the women without the headscarf she met outside her in-group social circles. Uniqueness is, thus, a characteristic that she attributed to herself among out-group people and out-group social environments as well. Though she did not become socialized in pious communities during her high school and undergraduate years, she started to work in a prestigious media organization which was pro-government and mostly populated by Islamist executives in her words. Her experiences in the workplace were the turning point that triggered her decision to take off the headscarf because she experienced the transformation of this uniqueness in her mind to something that compelling and restrictive in her social life.

Nilay’s mother was a well-known preacher who gave Islamic speeches in women only communities. She took off her headscarf to complete her undergraduate education. She thought that she did not willingly remove the headscarf, but it was a state obligation so that it was not a sin. Her motivation was to be an educated mother for her three children. She was taken into the persuasion room (ikna odası in Turkish)

several times, and Nilay remembered what her mother wrathfully said after she went out of the room: "One day I will admit all of them in burqa to the university." Nilay said, "It should not be like this. The day (my mother dreamed about) came true; and, we started to marginalize unveiled women, and we became more cruel than cruel. . . " Nilay also did not give up university because of the ban, and she preferred to take off the headscarf at the university campus until the ban was cancelled. This was not a big deal for her, and she did not feel bad while she was unveiled in the university since she thought that the headscarf was only a means to practice religion, not everything at all. Her conversation with her mother showed how the meanings attributed to the headscarf varied depending on different experiences of and perceptions on veiling. When Nilay told to her mother that she took off her headscarf, her mother responded that she was carrying the headscarf as "a flag". Though her mother expected her to take over this flag, that pointed out Islamic cause, and to carry it as proud as her, Nilay never perceived veiling as the flag. Yet, it was what she wanted to free from, which was, the transformation of a religious duty into the flag. She first realized veiling lost its religious meaning, but turned to a simple means that apparently signified one's identity during her college years, and thus, questioned if it was not part of one's religious self-cultivation, but a piece of cloth in appearance only, then what the aim and meaning of veiling was:

> "...the number of veiled women increased. No, it was actually the visibility of veiled women that increased. For instance, we were sitting in a place together with ten veiled women, but this was only me who went to masjid (for praying). I could not tell how it hurt me, because they either prayed at their homes or never prayed at all. . . . In the college years, we came to Istanbul one day. There was a huge protest against the headscarf ban. . . . Though I was never "a headscarf defender" who insisted on that the headscarf would be free everywhere, I mean, I was not an activist, we attended the protest (with my cousin and her friend). . . . After the protest, we went to my cousin's friend's home, and I asked her for kiblah (for praying) and she did not know it. But, she was in the protest. Only then I wonder if it was necessary to separate these two. I asked (to myself) for whether this (the protest) was as if women having pink hairs could go to the university. If this aimed to do something that Islam obligated, it was an unbelievable contradiction. Because Islam obligates praying which is one among five pillars before veiling. I thought that if one struggled for something just formal (veiling), she must have already done it (praying)." (Interview with Nilay, October 29, 2019).

As discussed later in detail, Nilay's narrative points out the changing meanings of the headscarf that was a context-bounded change as in her comparison with her

mother's experience on the one hand, and a formal and practical change as in her comparison between a visible increase of veiled women and a superficial character of the headscarf. In the first case, she rejected to carry out her mother's memory and anger which was peculiar to the mother' experiences, and did not embrace the headscarf as the flag which was instrumentalized to realize higher Islamic aims. The latter case confused her because she noticed that the headscarf was still a kind of instrument for the women in her generation, but quite meaningless for this time in the sense that it was neither the flag that represented the Islamic cause nor even a religious obligation. What triggered her to question the meaning that she attributed to veiling was the transformation of the headscarf into a visible marker only.

4.3 The Headscarf as a Stigma Symbol:

"How come you did not go to İmam Hatip High School!"

Goffman (1963) defined stigma as attributes having extensive discrediting effects on one's body, character, or tribal characteristics of race, nation, and religion (3-4). These attributes are rooted in one's physical or identity-related characteristics, are given by outsiders, and become stereotypes in time. When individuals encounter with each other in a social situation, they face with one's visible appearance first. In this interaction, each individual arranges her/his behaviors depending on whether she/he is in a position in which she/he has demands something from the other one or in a position in which she/he has to respond the existing demands. In this sense, Goffman (1963) argued that demands and expectations are constituted by normals who are also able to shape stereotypes so that stigmatized are expected to behave according to pre-determined anticipations. That's why stigma "constitutes a special discrepancy between virtual and actual social identity" (Goffman 1963, 2). In a particular social situation, a character burdened with demands constitutes a virtual social identity while an actual social identity is these attributes that an individual could undertake. Though both sides do not know each other in such an encounter, stigmatized individuals present themselves while normals have prior-knowledge about them. It is obvious that the social ground on which normals and stigmatized come together is not an equal ground for both sides, but is constituted by one side, and the rules and conditions are set on behalf of the same side as well. A simple social situation, but having multiple social dynamics, thus, uncovers complex power relations which are invisible at first sight. Even though both normals

and stigmatized arrange their acts depending on the situation they are part in and on the other side's behaviors, Goffman (1963), "Presumably this will have larger consequences for the stigmatized, since more arranging will usually be necessary on their part..." (12), because "...the stigmatized individual is likely to feel that he is 'on,' having to be self-conscious and calculating about the impression he is making, to a degree and in areas of conduct which he assumes others are not." (14).

In this framework, veiling as a stigma denotes not a bodily handicap or a characteristic feature, but a religious symbol that is attributed to pious women. It is a sign that marks a woman's body and is also gendered that reveals stereotypes peculiar to pious women only. The most important aspect of veiling is its distinct visibility that manifests differentness since veiled women are more noticeable than pious men whose appearance mostly does not give a social message about their piety. When a veiled woman gets in contact with someone, her headscarf presents itself first. She is, thus, considered as one in the category of veiled women, not as an individual one who might have nothing shared with other veiled women except her headscarf. Therefore, in any social situation, an interaction is not between two people who do not know each other, but between the one who directs her/his already existed knowledge to a veiled woman and the one who is already defined and categorized because of her headscarf before she identifies herself. Though the headscarf gives a message first about pious identity, the veiled woman is still in a responsive position. She responds to demands and expectations that are attributed to her identity. In the case of previous generation of veiled women, this response was to embrace the visibility of pious identity and to meet other qualifications like being well-educated, internalizing modern and urban lifestyles that were reinterpreted in Islamic ways, participating to the public life by challenging particular anticipations towards them. Still, these qualifications were the qualifications that they proved to be able to have with and despite their headscarves.

On the other hand, the participants from the new generation of veiled women in this study presented a distinctive reaction to the Islamic stigma. First, they did not embrace the pious identity, but obviously rejected to carry out the visibility of this identity. Rather, they perceived this identity as a social burden over themselves. Second, they did not make an endeavour to show that they were qualified to satisfy the standards of normals since they already had them. In this framework, veiling as a stigma denotes not a bodily handicap or a characteristic feature, but a religious symbol that is attributed to pious women. It is a sign that marks a woman's body and is also gendered that reveals stereotypes peculiar to pious women only. The most important aspect of veiling is its distinct visibility that manifests differentness since veiled women are more noticeable than pious men whose appearance mostly does not

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Most of the participants mentioned of pre-judgements in relation to their appearances that masked who they were, what they thought and/or how they wanted to behave. These judgements that they complained about came not only from out-group people, but also from in-group people. What others thought about veiled women became a critical matter that triggered the participants to overthink on the relationship between their actions and their appearances. Deniz told about prejudices that mostly secular people around her had in their minds. She defined these prejudices as a general pattern like "...if you wear the headscarf, you think in this or that way", and explained how she felt during first encounters with out-group people:

> "...the biggest problem about the people outside was that they believed in that I was really over qualified in religious sense just because I wore the headscarf, and (they posed) questions or political things based on this (the headscarf). My opinions were perceived as if they came out a single pattern. ... I realized that they broke down their prejudices

> only after we got to know each other, and this made me feel good, but I wish there was not any at the first encounter." (Interview with Deniz, September 21, 2019).

Jasmine gave more details about prejudgements she was exposed to when she entered into new social environments. These judgements came from both in-group and out-group people in her case. When she started a job in a pro-government media organization, though her qualifications were more proper to other branches of the organization, she was asked to work in a department that designed religious content for a magazine. She underlined her curriculum vitae showing internships in many different fields and her area of expertise that could not fit to that department so that she thought of her outlook was the only reason that she was considered as a more suitable candidate to work in that department. None of unveiled women who were employed at the same time with her, she said, was asked for working in the same department. Jasmine had a similar experience in an English course, too. When she demanded a private lesson from the course, a female teacher was appointed to her lesson. At the end of the course, however, she learnt that a male teacher normally gave the private lessons in the course. She said that the female teacher whose expertise was to train students who prepared for international language exams was appointed for her lessons without even asking for her preference. Jasmine thought that since she was veiled, it was automatically assumed that she preferred to work with a female teacher in one-to-one class. She was exhausted with all these prior-assumptions, and frankly described how she felt over time:

> "... when the subject came to political issues, (people asked for that) you were veiled, but (how come) you did not vote for the ruling party, or you were not part of that party either. You were veiled, but you did not do this or that. If you were not from this (Islamic) community, you should definitely belong to that (Islamic) community. ... How come you did not go to Imam Hatip High School! You realized that even if you were normal, it was not possible to get rid of the patterns that people had in their minds. You made an effort (to explain) that I was like you, like an ordinary person... You wanted to be lucky as much as a man. Though you wanted to seem like anybody with any clothes, you could not be freed from all these. For instance, your friends tried not to swear when they were with you, or they asked for a question or an opinion to only you when the subject was about religion because they thought that you knew better. I did not know, I could not know so much, maybe you know it better, but I did not know, sorry (laughing). ... something attributed to you was so automatic, and you could not even realize it sometimes, but it was a character that was put up on

> you. This judgemental attitude became overwhelming at one point, and you did not even want to defend yourself, you did not feel necessary to explain yourself, because it was so tiresome. How many people could you do that (express yourself)?" (Interview with Jasmine, September 25, 2019).

Elif had similar experiences at first encounter with people, but from her own community, and complained about the existing patterns she was included in. Her mother quitted her job during the headscarf ban was implemented, and she particularly underlined that she was not exposed to a discourse in her family that maintained victimhood even after the headscarf ban was lifted. Yet, she was criticized by her veiled friends who she met at university, which was heavily populated by people coming from pious families, because she did not embrace the Islamic cause as a strong defender. She felt that she was out of a group pattern:

> "...there were people who said that I was different while I was wearing the headscarf. Why was I different? Because I was not in conformity with a pattern (in their minds). ... they expected something from you; for instance, (they said) Elif, you had many victims of the 28 February process in your family so that you should be like this or that. This is like a pattern." (Interview with Elif, October 5, 2019).

And, she mentioned of a need to construct herself over and over again in each social situation. When I asked what she meant with constructing the self, she described why she needed it as:

> "In fact, it was quite simple that a person introduces herself/himself either with her/his speech, acts, or thoughts. In anyway, another person has an idea (through your doings). Yet, when you are veiled, the person has already a view on you even without she/he notices it yet. The person anticipates from you a way of behaviour at least, but she/he does not shape (the ideas about you) from scratch." (Interview with Elif, October 5, 2019).

A kind of perfection in a religious sense was attributed to Deniz and Jasmine, and they were expected to behave accordingly. This kind of over-qualification made them vulnerable to more questions and anticipations. In this sense, at her first few encounters with such questions, Deniz felt that she had to act more proper to her outlook, and this deprived her of making mistakes, doing wrong, or acting

contrary to what she represented with the headscarf. Yet, Jasmine ridiculed such questions, and made fun of them as a strategy to protect herself. An interesting point is the noticeable change of others' thoughts as a result of a first impression only after they knew Deniz. An important question is this: What information that they gained in a personal interaction did break down their prejudices? In the particular case of Deniz, such an ice breaker moment was like that they saw only veiling on her at the beginning, but they met the "real" Deniz behind veiling. Deniz had a prior-knowledge about, or predicted beforehand, what others had in their minds when she was in a new social environment, and she also knew that she was not like what they thought. Thus, she intentionally or unintentionally started to break the patterns attributed to her in the first place, and to construct who she was through her actions and/or words that showed she was not like that. Yet, the reality here does not mean that there are two different persons of which one who Deniz wanted to show is the real, and the other one who veiling masked was not. Deniz embraced herselfs with and without veiling as what made her who she was in different times. The reality is about one's own intention and will to manifest herself. Also, as discussed later in detail, her effort to manifest herself as she wished was a strategy to handle with her stigma. Goffman (1963) suggested various ways that the stigmatized person respond to her situation from direct correcting "the objective basis of his failing" (9), for instance, if stigma is about a physical deficiency, blindness let's say, the stigmatized person may choose to get an eye treatment, to indirect correcting "his condition by devoting much private effort the mastery of areas of activity ordinarily felt to be closed on incidental and physical grounds to one with his shortcoming" (10), for instance, a blind person put much effort to be qualified in some other activities like swimming to cover up his/her deficiency. Yet, neither Deniz nor Jasmine followed these ways. Are there different kinds of stigma? Are all in some way stigmatized? Are all stigmas debilitating? Are there helpful ones? Is veiling to being blind? If so how? Their strategies were not to directly or indirectly correct their behaviours, but to destruct what others thought on them. None of the participants followed the second way either which was more appropriate strategy to the first generation of veiled women who tried to actively engage in public life in order to show that they were able to do everything that all other women did with and despite their headscarves. The crucial difference here is that the participants did not have a question on whether they were qualified or not to do something with their headscarves. Their questions were mainly about how others reacted to them when they acted upon their wishes.

Unlike Deniz, Jasmine did not exert much effort to explain herself since she was tired to show what she had inside of her. While Deniz felt good when she was

in personal interactions with others because of disappearing prejudices, Jasmine's problem started after she broke down the first impression about her. Her political views and even her school preference were questioned only because these were not compatible with the image of veiled women. Having these distinct attributes made her different from in-group women in the eyes of others, which was the difference shaking the stigma as well. Her wish to show that she was like an ordinary person originated from her observation on that one's political views or school preference was out of matter if one was not categorized into a group. What she meant with "ordinary" was being uncategorized due to a noticeable sign. It was not the headscarf only, for Jasmine, but a facial piercing, colourful hairs or something that made one as more noticeable. That's why, for instance, she decided to remove her photograph out of her curriculum vitae after she took off the headscarf because she did not want to be judged with automatic reactions to her outlook even when she was not marked with a symbol.

In the case of Elif, the gaze over her was not the gaze of out-group people. She was expected to behave in a pattern by in-group people. So that the critical issue here is not only about an encounter with out-group people who set the ground on the basis of their expectations, but Elif also faced with anticipations that required her to act in an expected way. She was more familiar with these people since they shared the same group identity, and they came together on relatively more equal ground compared to the case of Jasmine and Deniz, but it was not a safe space for her to present herself as she wished. She became an outsider in her group because she did not perform the group norms. She was expected to carry out the group identity in the way that most of group members did like being a defender of the Islamic cause, or maintaining the previous generation's memory on the headscarf ban. However, what she emphasized in relation to not-conforming to these expectations was that she was aware of her reality that was subject to her peculiar experience of veiling and the group identity as well. Thus, she thought that her friends who criticised her only followed the path that they took for granted without an effort to shape it, but this path was not in the same direction of her path that came into existence and was in a flow in the current context.

Goffman (1963) indicated that normals feel anxious, too, in a social situation with the stigmatized person because their actions become open to "unintended meanings" attribution by the stigmatized one who is "either too aggressive or too shamefaced" (18) because of her/his stigma. That's why normals "...may feel that if we show direct sympathetic concern for his condition, we may be overstepping ourselves; and yet if we actually forget that he has a failing we are likely to make impossible demands of him or unthinkingly slight his fellow-sufferers." (Goffman 1963, 18).

What appeared in Jasmine's narrative about the assigned job and teacher, and her realization of over-courtesy that people intentionally showed to her, like being careful on not swearing along with her, was a general issue most of the participants complained about. In other stories, it was the example that when a group of friends went out for a dinner, for instance, they chose a café or restaurant that did not serve alcohol if a veiled woman was in the group. Because they thought that she did not go to such a place even without asking her preference. Following Goffman's portrayal of how normals behave in an anxious social situation, I call the people's unintentional way of interaction with a veiled woman as over-courtesy. The people tried to show that they knew something about veiled women's preferences with reference to their prior-knowledge and they probably thought that they did not leave these women in a difficult situation by making a decision beforehand on behalf of them. Yet, this was not perceived as kindness or respect to everyday life choices by the participants, but was interpreted as that the categorical assumptions on their preferences ignored their individuality and silenced their voices in the first instance. The participants who experienced similar situations in which their preferences on even a restaurant for dinner, for instance, were underestimated frankly stated that they rather preferred to be asked for their opinions. Sevgi said that it could be seen as a tactful manner for some veiled women because they might think that people already knew how to behave to a veiled woman, but she still wanted to give voice to her decision to not go to such a place if she did not want.

One thing to note that Sayan-Cengiz (2014) published her doctoral research on veiled women in retail jobs by critically analysing the culturalization of the headscarf. While the literature on the headscarf issue extensively focuses on middle class, university educated veiled women, her study contributes to the literature by making lower middle class and non-university educated veiled women visible. Another salient point is that while the headscarf in the existing literature is presented as an identity issue and a cultural difference, Cengiz also looked at the class dimension, and her research concluded that the role and meanings of the headscarf for these women changed depending on their economic class and social status. This research is particularly important for my thesis in two ways. First, it is a recent study, and the social and the political context in which our participants experienced veiling is similar. Thus, it can be expected that social expectations that the participants in both researches were exposed to share similarities, too. Second, the participants' socio-economic backgrounds in two studies are different; my participants share more similarity in the sense of social status and educational level with the previous generation of veiled women who were the subjects of the existing literature. In this sense, strategies that the participants developed to cope with stigmatization may

differ depending on their conditions. Yet, considering the findings of this thesis together with the Cengiz's research is still outstanding for further questions on the practice of un-veiling. In her dissertation, the chapter named "Distancing from the Essentialized Meanings of the Headscarf: The Desire to be Unmarked" is seminal for this thesis. The participants' narratives in both researches show what they were expected to present was to "prove their piety, or undertake the mission to display a coherent identity marked by religious difference" (Sayan-Cengiz 2014, 195). This social anticipation is different from the previous generation of veiled women's experiences in the sense that they were seen oppressed, submissive, or uneducated so that they struggled to challenge these stereotypes. However, the participants in both researches did not prove whether wearing the headscarf was their own choice or not. Rather, as Sayan-Cengiz (2014) clearly stated,

> "What is at stake here is that by being marked, women with headscarves are subjected to an enduring process of scrutiny regarding the consistency of their appearance and behaviour with the claims they are supposed to be making by wearing the headscarf: How much do they cover? What are the shapes of their headscarves? ... Are their attitudes in line with their headscarves? Are they properly religious? ..." (200-201).

One of her frames regarding the desire to be unmarked is about "headscarf skeptic interventions" (202). In this framework, her participants' narratives show that they complained about judgements pointing out incoherence between their appearance and their doings. This is the same point that my participants felt uneasiness in a social situation where they were in between what others thought of how a veiled woman should behave and what they actually did. One of her participants, for instance, mentioned that one criticized her because of her make-up which was not congruent with her appearance with the headscarf (Sayan-Cengiz 2014, 205).

Though the participants in both researches complained about similar social expectations emphasizing incoherence between their appearances and their actions, their strategies to cope with stigmatization of veiling are different from each other. Sayan-Cengiz (2014) concluded that her participants perceived the headscarf as "a contingent, negotiable practice that is not essentially inseparable from piety or identity", and they negotiated the practice of veiling "vis a vis opportunities of finding high status employment and concerns related to the patriarchal notion of modesty" (196). Yet, my participants perceived veiling as an identity question in a discourse of difference, which is similar to the patterns regarding the practice of veiling in the

context of the previous generation of veiled women. Thus, their strategy was not a kind of negotiation with the practice of veiling to make it functional for them, but was to eliminate the visibility of pious identity. It is not reducible only to the socio-economic positions of the participants, but I can safely argue that as the meanings of veiling are shaped in the particular conditions of veiled women, the perceptions on whether it is a social identity or not also affects how women cope with the similar expectations from and assumptions on them in a similar context.

4.3.1 Experinces in Quran Courses:

> **"I only knew how to individually study by my own. I could not focus in the class."**

One of the most salient points regarding stigmatization and its affects showed up in "'mixed contacts' -the moments when stigmatized and normal are in the same 'social situation"' (Goffman 1963, 12) is peculiar experiences of Duru and Ahsen in Quran Courses. Their narratives revealed different perceptions on the practice of veiling and un-veiling than all other participants. The Quran Courses are exceptional Islamic sites that have their own communities and particular communal rules and regulations in relation to both an understanding of Islam and an Islamic way of life. The Quran Courses that Duru and Ahsen attended were the women-only boarding courses of two different Islamic communities. In the courses, members get an Islamic training, but with a focus on the Quran itself and teachings of the community leaders. It is critically important to note that all members of the courses stayed there for a whole period of training depending on the purpose of one's education. To put it in a more concrete way, despite different regulations of the courses, it was the same in both that when a girl started to get education in these courses, she was not allowed to go to her house or somewhere else whenever she wished, or during weekends, for instance. The course Ahsen attended sometimes allowed the girls to visit their parents once in a month. Yet, Ahsen only went out the course two times in a year during religious holidays. Another important institutional rule in both courses is that books, cell phones, laptops, internet, or doing anything outside the course schedule were forbidden. So that there was no chance to communicate someone outside the course community, teachers and other students in the course, and no possibility to interact the outside world. While Duru was sent to the course after she completed the elementary school (8 years' compulsory education) so that she did not take a formal high-school education, Ahsen was sent to the course at 10 years old after she completed the fourth grade (there was no compulsory education

after 4 years' primary school at her time). That's why their socialization at their very early ages came true in such places, and their perceptions on the practice of veiling in particular and on the world in general were shaped within the borders of the courses. Their in-group people were also different from how other participants perceived, or in other words, in-group people was defined as not Islamic community, but as the course community in a narrow sense. What's more, they did not encounter with out-group people in a social situation as other participants experienced until they entered university at relatively later ages compared to their peers.

Their perceptions on veiling were, thus, constructed as the headscarf was a religious requirement only without its social aspects. Since they did not experience being a veiled woman in the public sphere, the social meanings of the headscarf were not the focus of their narratives. For instance, neither Duru nor Ahsen mentioned of the representation aspect of the headscarf. They did not feel themselves as they represented Islam and pious identity as well. The headscarf was not a distinctive marker, or an identity question for them, and they did not also complain about stereotypes and prejudices on their appearance as other participants. In a similar vein, their uneasiness regarding veiling did not arise from the social anticipation that required them to regulate their actions proper to their appearances. Hence, what others thought on and expected from them was not a critical point that led them to question visibility of their piety. The headscarf, for them, became neither a social burden in relation to the significant other's perception on veiling nor a regulative identity practice in relation to in-group women's experiences. Yet, it was still a burden over their bodies that they wanted to get rid of.

Despite different socialization processes and experiences of the veiling practice, Duru and Ahsen shared the same pursuit of the authentic self with other participants. And, they made a conscious decision to take off the headscarf. This diversity in a small-size fieldwork reveal that there is no one-way explanation of a social phenomenon, but is important to make the complex and diverse social causes and processes visible. Though I provide a framework on the social meanings and aspects of veiling and stigmatization of the headscarf to understand the headscarf question with a new perspective focusing on the women's deliberate action of removing the headscarf, the experience of the Quran Courses reveals other dimensions which definitely offer alternative explanations for further researches on the subject. Yet, in the scope of the thesis, I would rather focus on the lack of mixed social contacts through which Duru and Ahsen were not exposed to out-group people's judgements and anticipations. What triggered them to take off the headscarf was more personal questioning on the necessity of the headscarf, the normative and practical correctness of religion in relation to the strict training they received, and the reality of the

world that they found themselves in and realized the limitations afterwards. First, the limitations they mentioned of were not about how to properly behave with the headscarf as in other narratives, but about how to regulate daily life and social interactions outside the course. They overemphasized that they were not familiar with "normal" life, and they did not know what they did in "normal" social situations. So that they had to learn "basics" of the life, in their words, that everyone lived and learned in the course of their lives. Duru exemplified her sense of the limited life-experience as:

> "I see the way I was raised in as a disadvantage. I was not prepared (to confront with) a danger. How to say... I still do not know ways because I always go to somewhere with my mother or my sisters or as a group, and I could not remember ways. ... or, when I was outside, someone disturbed me, and I do not know how I should react it. Since we raised as much isolated, we did not learn how to reach them..." (Interview with Duru, October 27, 2019).

Ahsen told how she had in difficulty to accommodate herself to the flow in daily life after she went to university:

> "... I got depressed. The university life did not like as I dreamed, I was not successful at the first tear by the way. It was so difficult because I went to the school every day, and when I returned to the dorm I could not recover myself, I had a headache for two hours. Because I did not familiar with such traffic or noises. I was always at home, worked at home; I only knew individual study by my own. I could not focus in the class. You know, (there were) men for the first time (in the same room with me). It was not the first time, there were men in dershane (private teaching institution), but they were boys; those (who were in the university class) were adults..." (Interview with Ahsen, January 11, 2020).

Second, their questioning of the headscarf arose from their critical questioning on what they were religiously taught in the courses, or in other words, self-questioning of their faiths. When they encountered with the outside world, they realized incompatibility between the world they were surrounded and the world they newly entered in. They had already questions on the existence of God, religion itself and the practice of veiling in their minds, but they frankly stated that they feared even to think of these, and they did not explicitly admit that they questioned their faith.

For instance, Ahsen read Tolstoy's book, *A Confession*, and it became a turning point for her self-realization. She told how she felt enlightened through the book: "I could not explain how I felt relieved when I noticed that there was a person who questioned the existence of God [apart from me]; these were my sentences, and this was exactly my mind." Similar to Ahsen, Duru also did not direct her questioning to only the headscarf, but to her faith.

4.3.2 Two Main Motivations behind Decisions to Take off the Headscarf

Considering the most important motivation behind taking off the headscarf, the participants' narratives revealed two axes depending on their particular experiences of the practice of veiling. One is related to questioning of the social aspects of veiling, which rooted in the visibility of pious identity, and the other one is related to questioning of religious faith, which ended up with the rejection of practicing a religious obligation. The point that differed the two axes shows the particular conditions they lived in and the socialization processes that shaped their perceptions on the practice of veiling. When they were asked about how they started to think of removing their headscarves, all participants stated that they realized at some point that this appearance with the headscarf did not reflect who they were. "This was not me", all said over and over again during our conversations. I found it surprising when I heard the same sentence from all of them, and, what's more, this is the sentence that the women who took off their headscarves in Malaysia made, too, and the same feeling that the participants of this thesis shared with women in a different context. To my knowledge, there is literally one academic research on why Muslim women decided to take off their headscarves done by Izharuddin (2018) in the context of Malaysia. Similar to my participants' narratives, her participants disclosed their feelings on their veiled-self as follows:

Adiba: "I was uncomfortable with it. . . . I felt like I wasn't being myself."

Aina: "It feels like I'm bound to a set of rules and practices. It feels like I have to act in certain ways, like I can't shake hands or give or receive hugs from anyone."

Zanariah: "I felt like I was losing myself, not being true to myself and constantly needed to behave in certain ways expected by others..." (Izharuddin 2018, 164-167).

In line with her participants' narratives, Izharuddin (2018) argued, "Rather than being passive and indifferent to the significance of Islamic symbols, women who unveil perform affective and ethical labor. This labor is called upon in the feeling of

insecurity with one's own spiritual identity and when rationalizing a new ethics... " (158) through the transformation of "truth-claims" from the necessity of the headscarf in Islamic ethics to non-essentiality of the headscarf in liberal ethics (Fadil 2011, 99). So that Izharuddin (2018) conceptualized the participants' decisions to take off the headscarf as "radical moral failure" (158), but together with the formation of "a critical subjectivity" (164). Following Izharuddin's conceptualization, I argue that the participants of this research manifested their critical subjectivity by employing what was ascribed them and what they reconstructed by their own. Yet, their self-perceptions cannot be framed as moral failure in the sense that they did not feel the failure in their piety in relation to their practices of veiling and the others' expectations of religious perfectness. So that they did not perceive un-veiling as the failure to embody Muslim identity.

To make the two axes discussed above more concrete, it is important to understand the meanings that the participants attributed to the headscarf. The first group of participants shared the same meaning of veiling as a marker of pious identity. They did not want to be seen as veiled women in the first place, and they were also uncomfortable with that the headscarf always spoke before them. What bothered them was that before they talked about themselves when they were in a new social situation, whether it was a circle of friends or a job interview, someone directly got early assumptions about a veiled woman. It is not an opinion on a particular individual, but a kind of pre-judgement directed to a category of women whose only commonality may be wearing the headscarf. This is both reducing all veiled women into a homogenous, stable and fixed identity group and ignoring individuality and diversity of the women in the group. That's why these participants had to make an enormous effort to identify themselves on the basis of who they were not like, and to construct their senses of the self in their everyday relations by performing it as a negation of their visible identity. On the other hand, the second group, Ahsen and Duru, reconstructed their senses of the self by rejecting not only the visible aspects of veiling, but also their pious Muslim identity at all. Since they did not socialize in mixed social circles when they were veiled, they did not experience the grey area between in-group and out-group. That's why their struggles to take off the headscarf were in relation to their inner-questioning of their religious faiths, and their narratives revealed that the focus in the self-questioning processes they came through was not the gaze of the significant others as well. It is also worth to note that among other participants they were the only two who explicitly declared they were no longer believers of Islam. Their particular experiences of religious orders for years made their decisions to take off the headscarf more unique and challenging when they got in multiple encounters after they went to university.

4.4 Everyday Religion:

"I did not like to go to such places serving alcohol because I represented Islam with the headscarf."

Veiling as a bodily practice of religion cannot be confined to a particular time and place, but requires continuity in one's practice. The participants of this study perceived this continuity as a woman either wears the headscarf or does not wear it. It is not like five time praying in a day, or pilgrimage to Mecca in a limited period of time, but is embedded to every part of one's daily life. The participants' experiences of veiling and un-veiling show that they did not distinguish religious realm from social life, or from everyday life practices. The un-veiling practice is, thus, not approached with a focus on piety, but with a focus on everyday religion. In this thesis, veiling is not discussed with reference to normative debates of Islam, since it is not a theological debate in the scope of the thesis, but with reference to the participants' experiences of it in daily life by following Schielke and Debevec (2012)'s view of the everyday practice of religion on the basis of "actual lived experiences and their existential significance for the people involved" (2).

The remarkable debates on everyday religion and everyday Islam have recently gained more popularity in the field of anthropology of religion, and of Islam as well. The concept of everyday religion does not imply an opposition between everyday practices and religious realm, but brings religion into the realm of everyday. Orsi (2012) explicates it by way of what it is not:

> "'Everyday religion' is not solely or primarily what happens in specially designated and consecrated sacred spaces, under the authority of religious elites, but in street and alleys, in the souvenir stalls outside shrines, and in bedrooms and kitchens; 'everyday religion' does not happen at times determined by sacred calendars or official celestial computations, but by the circumstances and exigencies of people's lives. The everyday religious is not performed by rote or in accordance with authority; it is improvised and situational." (150-151).

The practices of religion are not outside religious doctrines, but they are situational in the sense that individuals who believe in religious norms interpret them and shape their practices based on their perceptions. It does not mean that each individual always comes up with her/his personal interpretation of the rules and the norms, but they may also perform religious practices by referring to religious authorities

and/or deep rooted cultural and historical traditions. Also, everyday religion is not only related to normative question on religion itself, but is also embedded in daily questions of practitioners. Lived experiences are context-bounded, and pious individuals' questions pertaining to everyday life regulations circumstantially differ from one social context to another. The point here is how individuals' lived experiences which may be different from each other, or "... the integration of Islam into their daily lives, work ethics, community activism, and political participation..." (Basarudin 2013, 23) take place on the ground.

Deeb (2015) clearly defined everyday Islam as "...the ways in which people draw on ideas that they understand to be rooted to varying extents in Islam in order to figure out how to handle everything from handshaking to prayer, from dress to which cafes to hang out in and what social invitations to accept." (94). Since pious individuals need to regulate their daily life activities within the realm of their faiths, they also need reconsideration, reinterpretation, and re-adaptation of religious norms. Because the norm does not directly answer to which cafes to hang out in, for instance. This is a grey area between one's piety and one's everyday life. Fadil and Fernando (2015) critically approached the complex relation between piety and the everyday with a detailed discussion on the scholarship of everyday Islam. Their critique mainly suggests that debates on everyday Islam reproduces the opposition between piety and the everyday. Aside from their profound critique, which is beyond the scope of this thesis, I regard their point of "ethical decision-making" (63) important:

> "...everyday life presents a series of challenges that require ethical decision-making: should one meet a colleague in a café that serves alcohol? Should a woman alone ride in a taxi with a male driver? Should one got to a mosque study group one's husband is firmly against it? These are all questions that pertain to piety as much as they do to the domain of the everyday." (Fadil and Fernando 2015, 63)

As they noted, these questions could be handled by following possible answers of religious authorities and Islamic sources like Quran and the prophet's sayings (the Sunna). Yet, such questions locate individuals in a position in which they should decide on what they do in particular situations in the first place. Their responses to these questions reveal their agency in the sense that they are critically engaged with Islamic sources and show a capacity for action towards the challenges of everyday. In this sense, agency is approached as a modality of action by following Mahmood (2005)'s framework of pious agency. Scholarly debates on pious women's

agency (Abu-Lughod 1990; Deeb 2006; Mahmood 2005; Rinaldo 2014) take piety as one among multiple ways of being for women's agency beyond the dichotomy of resistance and submission. By following this line of agency debate, I argue that women who took off the headscarf used various strategies to challenge in-group religious norms by critically questioning the existing norms that they were born in on the one hand, and they willingly accepted out-group norms to some extend on the other hand. In this sense, I offer to consider their agency in the grey area between resistance and submission by looking at both the self-questioning processes of the participants that led them to take off their headscarves and their reconstruction of the self in the face of others from both in-group and out-group. Without romanticizing resistance (Abu-Lughod 1990), I argue that moments in which they had to reach an ethical decision about everyday life are the moments they revealed their agency. They may not necessarily be consistent in their decision-making processes since "... everyday practice is complex in its nature, ambivalent, and at times contradictory" (Schielke and Debevec 2012, 8) and everyday religion is "... an especially dynamic, unstable and highly fluid psychological and social reality" (Orsi 2012, 157).

Second, and more important to the discussion of the un-veiling practice, is that an individual is not the only agent in such a decision-making process. The concept of everyday Islam is an important framework to understand the participants' ambiguous feelings towards their practice of veiling and their everyday life experiences. However, at a moment an individual decides on what she should do in an everyday situation like meeting with a friend in a café that serves alcohol, she also encounters with others' judgements that have a critical role on her/his decision. The presence of others in a given social situation complicates the existing challenge that one undertakes. One's ethical decision-making is, thus, complex in the sense that she has to find a proper answer to satisfy her inner world, and at the same, she has to pay attention a proper way that others draw for herself. To make sense of one's inconsistencies in everyday practices, I suggest to follow the way Schielke (2010) offered:

> "To understand what is going on, it is helpful indeed to look at the ways people cultivate emotional affects, the ways sensual experience structures daily life and the ways people try to solve, circumvent or cope with complex moral dilemmas. It is not helpful, however, to work with idealised oppositions, such as revivalist piety vs. liberal secularism, because most people adhere to something of both (and something of many other things as well), to different degrees at different times." (12).

In this sense, veiling is not framed as a matter of piety only, but is approached in the way how the participants make sense of it and face with challenges that others' perceptions on veiling poses within their experiences of everyday life practices. Yet, the presence of others on the decision-making processes adds another dimension on the ways women try to overcome moral challenges of everyday practices. And, ethical questions become associated with what veiled women should/not do, or to what extent they can engage in everyday practices as normals.

The prior-knowledge about veiled women, or "patterns" in the participants' words, becomes more concrete in their daily-life experiences. The participants faced with social boundaries in which their behaviours were judged based on the others' perceptions on what a veiled woman should not do. In fact, even if they did not have a problem with what they did, when they looked at themselves through others' eyes, it turned an inner conflict between their own perceptions and broadly accepted perceptions on the headscarf. A salient point in such a complex process is that even if these women agreed with other's judgements on that a behaviour was improper to their faiths, they wanted to give up it not because they were judged by other people, but because they really believed in that it was a mistake. In other words, they wanted to be the one who decided on what they could/not do by their own to realize their agency.

Most of the participants underlined that their actions were not considered as a result of their personal decisions, but as a result of the representation of Islam and pious community with the headscarf so that they had to pay more attention on whether their actions were proper to their visible identities. Burcu compared how she felt when she was in a public house as a veiled woman in the past and as an un-veiled woman now:

> "I did not like going to places serving alcohol (in the past) because I represented Islam with the headscarf. Drinking alcohol is forbidden in Islam, then I do not think that it is proper to present myself in a place that sells alcohol. When my friends or someone in my (extended) family took me to such places, I felt uneasiness. Yet, (when I took off my headscarf) I thought that I could be more comfortable." (Interview with Burcu, October 4, 2019).

Though Burcu did not drink alcohol, she was not comfortable in such places because she thought that her action could probably damage what she represented. When someone sees Burcu with her headscarf in a pub, for instance, she/he probably forms an idea about not only Burcu in particular, but also about veiled women in general.

What was the problem with this situation for Burcu was not about a conflict between her action and her religious faith, but between her action and the possible social outcomes of her individual action that might stigmatize all in-group women. Sevgi experienced a similar inner conflict arising from a kind of inconsistency between who she was and who she should be with the headscarf:

> "...the headscarf requests you to be in a particular form. Maybe, it is not about that you will either do exactly or nothing, but I interpreted it in this way. (It is not possible) to do everything exactly. Maybe, I limited myself to do something, but I wanted to run, I wanted to go to a fight club. Maybe, my nefis (desire) needs (to do) all these. We necessarily make mistakes, and these mistakes teach something to us, too. Yet, the form we are in does not correspond to the headscarf anyway, and we absolutely find ourselves in a conflict. If you wear the headscarf, (this conflict) cannot last forever." (Interview with Sevgi, September 21, 2020).

She thought that she did not have a right to make mistakes because she should present a perfect model with the headscarf. Her idea of perfectness came from the sense of necessity to do whatever she did in the most proper way. Since running and going to a fight club, for instance, were out of the proper way, which she meant improper to what the headscarf required from her, she had to give up such activities. Yet, she did not exactly define her perception of properness, and her interpretation did not take its source from her faith. It was more about a sense of being an outsider when she engaged in these activities. For instance, she liked playing basketball during lunch breaks in high school at first few years in which she did not wear the headscarf because of the headscarf ban. After the ban was lifted, and she was veiled during lunch breaks, she felt that she had to give up basketball since it was not suitable to her outlook anymore.

The idea of appropriateness and the sense of uneasiness arose from an inner obligation which was not rooted in their religious concerns about whether it was wrong in Islam or not, but rooted in their social concerns whether they properly acted to the label that they carried out as veiled women. Deniz similarly mentioned of her unveiled friends' explicit confusions when they saw that she was going to concerts and even riding a bike. She said, "... People who come from conservative families say that if you wear the headscarf, you should wear it properly, but your hair is seen. (This) restricts you. People who do not belong to there (her group) and do not ever experience these always criticize you." Jasmine exemplified the similar reactions against her make-up and nail polish, and she felt that she forced herself

to be a good model and to maintain this representation that she had in difficulty to act proper to her outlook with the headscarf. Nilay expressed how she became aware of self-realization after she got rid of the sense of representation:

> "In the past, veiled women were not asked for drinking alcohol, but it can be asked now, because veiling does not prevent you to drink alcohol. (Social) dynamics have unbelievably changed. In the past, you could not see a veiled woman in a place serving alcohol so that this is what I mean with representation. This (the headscarf) gives me responsibility so that I cannot drink in a public house with my headscarf. ... If I beware to show my hair... so I am doing something (drinking), which is obviously forbidden by religion, but at the same time, I want that men do not see my hair. This was so inconsistent to me. I never wanted to drink; I was not tested on this; it was not something I needed or I was curious about it, but I could be curious. Now, I do not wear the headscarf so that I can easily go to a pub to drink. Only then I could say that I did not prefer to do it. It was not because I was veiled, but this was me who did not prefer to drink by my own choice. This is so precious to me. It is more valuable not to go to a pub as an un-veiled woman than not to go to a pub because of the headscarf. I would not go to a pub when I was veiled not because I did not want, but because I represented something. But now, I did not because this was my choice not to be in a pub. The difference between the two was what made me." (Interview with Nilay, October 29, 2019).

As shown in the participants' narratives, the normative expectations and demands from these women are two-sided: Veiled women are expected to properly represent a pious identity by in-group people; and they are also anticipated to properly act on this pious identity by out-group people. A simple, but well-accepted, perception on alcohol is an explanatory example to understand how society's normative expectations work for an individual. The participants generally perceive that alcohol is forbidden by religion so that believers should not do that. Yet, it is not only drinking alcohol, but shopping in a grocery that sells alcoholic beverage, or having dinner at a café or a restaurant that serves alcohol are not approved even though a person does not drink. While the first one is a religious rule that they consider, the second one is an extensive interpretation of this rule and it depends on how a believer practices it in her/his life.

This simple rule becomes more complicated, and its implication is gendered as well when it comes to how a veiled woman practices it. First, if a veiled women drinks, it is more open to the others' judgements. Due to the visibility of her piety, she is more vulnerable to criticism than a pious man who an outsider does not have a clear

idea on his piety at first sight. Second, it could be interpreted that the woman does not practice one of the religious rules while she practices the headscarf, but drinking is a kind of an apparent act, unlike lying or cheating which the participants consider forbidden by religion as much as alcohol, so that the woman is expected to present a consistent identity. This is a very simple logic for outsiders that if she veils, she should not drink. In addition, the participants in Okuyan and Curtin (2018)'s recent study were exposed to similar limitations from both secular and pious communities. Their narratives show that anticipations from pious women and their strategies to cope with these anticipations may differ depending on diverse social situations, but the common point that most of pious women mentioned of is that they feel a social burden because they are expected to present permanent consistency between one's appearance and actions. "Some participants observed that pious women were subject to more social control than secular women. Others criticized the idealized prototype of an ultra-pious and well-mannered Muslim woman as restrictive and leading to stricter scrutiny by their religious communities." (Okuyan and Curtin 2018, 9). Third is similar to the second one, but a minor distinction, and more relevant to our discussion. When the woman goes to a pub with her friends, for instance, but she does not drink, she is probably judged in her pious community because she acts against what she represents with her headscarf. At the same time, she is also judged by outsiders in the pub because she does not fit into that social circle. The outsiders' gaze is on the "weird" woman because she does not act according to what she represents with her appearance, again. Even if the pub community does not care or believe in the religious rule on alcohol, or they do not judge the woman because of her "sinful" behaviour, their reaction towards the woman is rooted in the social expectation that demands a consistent identity showing coherence between her action and her appearance. Yet, when the woman does not care about having fun without alcohol in a pub, she unsettles stigma that is already attributed to her.

In her profound study on Muslim women in Germany and France, Jouili (2015) mentioned of hijab as part of both piety and socially constructed pious identity in terms of representation:

> "... the self-cultivating aspect and the representational aspect of hijab should not be considered side-by-side in an isolated and conflicting manner. The women's effort to resignify the stigmatized headscarf through a certain type of conduct was embedded ... in a discourse of Islamic ideals of social conduct. Although a veiled woman's "good conduct" has a representational function, it also requires practicing certain embodied

> virtues. The women acknowledged the difficulty of living up to the irreproachable social conduct required of them... All the veiled women insisted that their representative position as visible Muslims constituted an important motivation to live up to these ideals. Because the headscarf was not only a self-fashioning practice but also a representational practice, we have to attend to the complex articulation of both dimensions." (167-168).

In German and French contexts where Muslim women are in a minority position, the representational aspect of veiling is embedded in such a framework of how Islamic ideals of social conduct is reshaped by Muslim women who experienced their piety and represent "good conduct". That's why their representational position strengthen their self-cultivation in religious sense. However, in the case of the participants of this study, a certain type of good conduct that is expected to display from these women is less embedded in the self-cultivating aspect, but more in the representational aspect. For these women, one's self-cultivation is an individual matter, but representation of Islamic ideals exceeds the self-cultivation aspect of veiling and becomes a social responsibility. That's why the consequences of what others think of and expect from veiled women are reflected on the participants' sense of responsibility and representation. A complicated issue arises at this point. The divisions between one's appearance, action and faith create a social burden. Most of the participants mentioned of a heavy burden rooted in representing religion with their appearance that masked their actions and their faith that they practiced in the ways they chose. Their sense of responsibility towards in-group women and religion itself directed them to present themselves as much as proper to their outlook with the headscarf. In this sense, veiling predominated each part of their lives. They felt themselves responsible because they perceived themselves as the role models, or the representatives of Islam. Jasmine felt herself more "fragile" and "sensitive" under this representation; Nilay thought that the idea of representation was overwhelming and turned women into "unhealthy" persons so that she now felt herself more "kimliksiz", free from an identity; Burcu said that it was not even a matter of choice to represent Islam, but if one wore this symbol, the headscarf, she should properly carry it; which was the reason behind she felt suffocated. On the one hand, these women unsettled the established views on themselves when they acted contrary to stigma by which they were surrounded, on the other hand, their fragmented identities were still subjected to the normative expectations that labelled them as deviants, or distinguished them from their in-group women by re-marking them unusual one more time. Thus, they started to perceive a disunity between their actions and their visible representation. This discrepancy, however, did not lead them to "correct" their behaviours, or bring them in compliance with what they represented. Or, they did

not try to prove that they could do whatever they did not see a conflict with their faiths as a personal choice despite social anticipations. Rather, they overexerted themselves to manifest who they really were apart from veiling. Since this was what the participants were tired of, they preferred to get rid of this representation by taking off the headscarf. For most of the participants, the decision to un-veil did not mean that they gave up their piety, but they rejected the visible part of their piety, or of pious identity.

4.5 Visible Manifestation and Representation of Pious Identity

As coming to light in the Nilay's narrative, the transformation of veiling from a religious requirement to the flag that represented only a part of these women's identities before anything else formed a basis for their uneasiness. The headscarf was not only the flag that they were expected to take over from their mothers, but was also a significant marker that provided a sense of belonging to a particular community. This community was not exactly identifiable in the narratives, but many participants defined it as the community they lived their early socialization in. Since they had pious families, their close social circles consisted of mostly pious people, too. So that I would prefer to name it Islamic communities, which is, to refer in-group people. Yet, they neither experienced the group identity as their mothers nor experienced the practice of veiling as any other member of this community. Their experiences of veiling and their rejection of the group identity are situated and contextualized. Taylor (1994) defined identity in a dialogical sense by arguing that,

> "We define our identity always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the things our significant others want to see in us. Even after we outgrow some of these others—our parents, for instance—and they disappear from our lives, the conversation with them continues within us as long as we live. Thus, the contribution of significant others, even when it is provided at the beginning of our lives, continues indefinitely." (32-33).

The dialogical character of pious identity works within both in-group and out-group people for the participants. This identity was constructed in a dialogue with their

families and close social circles at the beginning, but they reshaped pious identity for themselves within the particular area subjected to their lived experiences. The second phase is the encounter with out-group people. The dialogue with these people provide the participants a contradictory space in which they are exposed to prejudgements about their appearances with the headscarf and anticipations regarding their visible identity through which they are supposed to declare where they belong to. Yet, it is contradictory for the participants because this dialogue turns to an inner struggle that leads them to question their identity, their in-group position and their position in out-group. The first reaction of the participants in the process of self-questioning is not the rejection of their identity, rather, they want to define themselves on their own beyond the headscarf conveys a message on them. Yet, it is inevitable to avoid such a powerful signifier that marks their identity at first sight. In this stage, it becomes a critical matter to whom the participants give priority as the significant other, because it constitutes a reference point through which the participants self-reflect on their identity. Though the participants' dialogue with and struggle against in-group people continue in this process, they prioritize out-group people as the third gaze that sets imaginary boundaries in which they are expected to carry out social anticipations on how a veiled woman should behave. As discussed later in detail, their wish to be invisible with their appearances is critical in the sense of their reference points. Taking off the headscarf is a strategy to become invisible vis-a-vis the significant other and to cope with stereotypes on the practice of veiling. They make a conscious decision to undertake possible consequences of taking off the headscarf and thus becoming more visible within their own community by breaking up the in-group norms. In both spheres of in-group and out-group, however, they achieve recognition by claiming their agency in the sense of deconstructing the visibility of their identity, or the norms that they took for granted on the one hand, and reconstructing their identity, which is not necessarily apart from their piety, or their public presence that they shape as they wish. Yet, this is different from Taylor's framework of recognition of particularities on the basis of the group identity, and consequently, the politics of recognition. Since a particular distinctness in this framework defines a group that struggles for recognition of their difference, it attributes this difference to a group identity only, and does not take it into consideration at individual level. That's why authentic group identity that is defined on the basis of its particularity covers one's authenticity within a group. This is what the participants complained about: Their authenticity gets lost under the group identity through which they become stigmatized without their significant others' consideration on their own particularities. Their dialogues with significant others directly affect their sense of belonging, their perceptions on their positioning and in-group people, and their strategies to cope with stigmatization.

There are possibly several ways to cope with a particular stigma. One of the strategies that a stigmatized individual makes to handle with her stigma can be coming together with other individuals who share the similar stigma with her in a group. As Goffman (1956) mentioned, by forming "we" or "our people", group identification can make her daily life easier. However, it was not the case for the participants in this study. They did not apply this strategy, or in other words, they did not use group identity to cope with their stigma. The stigmatized group, veiled women, did not offer them a space in which they could eliminate their uneasiness.

In the cases where Muslim women are minority, another strategy may take a shape of resistance to stereotypes or stigmatization by strengthening a sense of in-group Muslim identity. Chapman (2016)'s study on how minority Muslim women in non-Muslim majority contexts, Denmark and the UK, performed their identity showed that the representation of veiling as oppression led many women to affirm their in-group identity, to become more decisive on their choice of veiling and to insist on their right to veil (359-360). In another study on how British Muslim women's performance of identity is affected by the other people's perceptions on them, Hopkins and Greenwood (2013) interviewees framed veiling as a means to visibly declare Muslim identity for a woman and performance of this identity on the basis of the recognition of others. Many interviewees in this study "... reported that making one's Muslim identity visible through wearing hijab had implications for how one's behaviour would be judged." (443). In those contexts does the "stigma" function the same way? In contrast to my participants' sense of non-attachment to visibly pious identity, many of the interviewees in this study responded to such judgemental attitudes on their behaviours by feeling accountable to this visibility and became motivated to wear the hijab as well. Hopkins and Greenwood (2013), thus, concluded hijab as an identity-consolidating performance by arguing that "... how the decision to make one's identity visible (itself an identity performance) can be consequential for one's awareness of oneself as a group representative and how this can, in turn, motivate identity performances in which one's behaviour more closely conforms to identity-related ideals." (446). In a similar vein, Wagner and Howarth (2012) studied on the performance of Muslim women identity in Indonesia, a Muslim majority context, and India, a Muslim minority context. Based on the narratives of women they interviewed with, they concluded that veiling is not a contested identity question for women in the Muslim minority context whereas it is "part of identity construction" for women in the Muslim minority context (536). This difference arises from the relationship between in-group identity construction and stereotypes coming from out-group in the way that minority Muslim women's identity which is also a representation of the in-group identity is shaped in and as a response to dom-

inant expectations and stereotypes of the majority (525). Hence, while the minority context strengthened the in-group Muslim identity as opposed to discrimination and stereotypes, Muslim women in the majority context perceive the hijab in less religious terms, but more in terms of fashion and convenience. Similarly, Jouili (2015) studied on Muslim women in the non-Muslim contexts, Germany and France, and her participants, whether they wore the headscarf or not, agreed on that veiling was a necessary religious obligation. Yet, though they wished to be veiled, some did not feel that they were able to wear the headscarf because the common social fear that they pointed out was the possible reactions that might come from the majority of society. Jouili (2015) argued:

> "In such a context, many Muslim women linked their inability to wear a headscarf with their lack of courage to confront the majority society. Overcoming one's fear and becoming capable of wearing the headscarf publicly was often described as "liberating" oneself from the gaze of the Other. In this sense, wearing the veil in key institutions of the public sphere (such as in school, at university, or in the workplace), similar to claiming a prayer space, was increasingly understood as an act of autonomy vis-a-vis the majority society, an act of self-confidence, and a refusal to let the majority society's negative perception of Islam determine one's own conduct and impede the exercise of one's religious duties." (161-162).

In her case, the participants' perceptions on veiling was formed in a "liberating" framework in which they overcame the gaze of the Other. In this context, the Other is out-group people, or in other words, the majority of society as in other studies mentioned above. In a similar vein, an important social dynamic of being minority works in European context, too. Veiling as the representation of Islam in the non-majority context is perceived as "an act of autonomy" because Muslim women present themselves with their visibly pious identity, and their authentic self-presentation affect their self-confidence as they express their social existence in a way that their appearance, faith and action are consistent as they wish.

As shown in above mentioned studies, stigmatization of veiling, or negative perceptions on Islam in the non-majority Muslim contexts positively affect the sense of in-group identity and the meanings of veiling for veiled women. Visibility of Islamic identity is an affirmed marker that signify Muslim women's distinctiveness, and the representative aspect of veiling strengthen their in-group identity and motivates them to challenge stereotypes in society. In Turkey where Muslims are not minority, however, the previous generation of veiled women in the 1980s and 1990s similarly

pursued recognition for their Islamic difference. The existing literature focused on the headscarf issue in a culturalist approach with an emphasis on cultural difference and recognition (Aldıkaçtı Marshall 2005; Göle 1996; Özdalga 1998; Özyürek 2006; Saktanber 2002). The rise of political Islam, the headscarf ban, and pious women's struggles to claim their agency shaped the previous context that is extensively discussed in Chapter 3. The group identity was formed in and as a social and political outcome of that context. It is definitely not a stable and fixed group identity, but always opens to transformations with changing subjects and structural dynamics in time. The context the participants of this study live in is different from the context of the previous generation of veiled women. However, how it has undergone a change is beyond the scope of this thesis since it is also not a substantial matter for the participants. What matters is how the participants became involved in the context that shaped their senses of belonging and their performances of pious identity.

Before a detailed discussion on how the participants' contextual experiences of the practices of veiling and un-veiling, I would like to disclose the salient sentences from the participants' narratives:

Deniz: "If I could stay in America, I would be still wearing my headscarf."[1]

Sevgi: "If I could continue playing basketball in a professional club, I would not be veiled."

Jasmine: "If I could live in a foreign country, I would not take off my headscarf. ... If I could go to İmam Hatip Highs School, I would not probably wear the headscarf."[2]

Elif: "If I could spend less time with Muslims [she meant the Islamist social circles], I would be veiled now."

Nilay: "If I could enter the Middle East Technical University [she graduated from Gazi University], I would probably continue my undergraduate study without the headscarf during the headscarf ban. ... If I could live in Kazakhstan, I would be wearing the headscarf."[3]

Deniz and Nilay had living experiences in Muslim-minority contexts, and Jasmine did not, but they shared the same self-projection on the practice of veiling after they took off the headscarf. A wide range of diversity in Boston impressed Deniz in

[1]She went to Boston for language training, and lived there alone for almost two months.

[2]She did not have a living experience in a foreign country.

[3]A common view on the social environments of universities is that Middle East Technical University is known as heavily populated by the leftist students whereas Gazi University is known as heavily populated by the nationalist-conservative students. Also, she spent a short time in Kazakhstan for a business trip. She did karaoke with her co-workers there, and said, "I could never do that in Istanbul." A common view on the social environments of universities is that Middle East Technical University is known as heavily populated by the leftist students whereas Gazi University is known as heavily populated by the nationalist-conservative students. Also, she spent a short time in Kazakhstan for a business trip. She did karaoke with her co-workers there, and said, "I could never do that in Istanbul."

the sense that her distinctness was not much noticeable, or in other words, nobody cared her appearance, questioned her motivations to wear the headscarf, and judged her actions on the basis of what she represented. She exemplified her observations that led her to think in this way with her particular experience of praying in a public park. She said that when she prayed in the park in Boston, nobody looked at her because nobody cared what one did. Yet, if she could pray in a park in İstanbul, for instance, her action would be probably seen as something that intentionally gives a message beyond her simple act. Someone would probably try to read her covered intention, though there was not, she said, or in other words, they attributed a particular meaning to her praying in the park. That's why she did not feel free to live as she wished, but she had to think what a stranger thought on her. At the same time, she frankly stated what lied behind her sense of freedom in Boston was that she thought of people did not pose their prejudices to her since they did not have well-established prior-knowledge on veiling, or anticipations from veiled women. Similarly, Nilay mentioned of such freedom in Kazakhstan in the sense that people did not judged her when she sang karaoke because they did not have an assumption on that a veiled woman should not do this. She said that she could never did it in Istanbul because she knew that it would challenge the image of veiled women. So that Deniz and Nilay imagined that if they would be socially free from others' expectations and judgements they could probably continue to wear the headscarf. Interestingly, though Jasmine did not have an actual lived experience in a foreign country, she also thought that she would feel herself socially free to practice her piety in another context where people did not attribute higher expectations or particular meanings to the headscarf, or they were not interested in a veiled woman's appearance and daily life activities. These similar perspectives point out the critical importance of the particular context on a personal decision of one's appearance. Yet, it is not only a simple dressing choice, but is bound up with one's piety, and more importantly, the practice of piety in the presence of others. Considering their narratives in line with the studies on Muslim women in non-Muslim majority contexts discussed above, the participants' perceptions revealed two distinct points. First, Muslim women in these studies stated that they were exposed to categorical stereotypes on Islam, and the majority's prejudices had a strengthening effect on their performances of visibly pious identity. However, Deniz and Nilay felt more comfortable with their headscarves not in the context in which Muslims are majority, but in the contexts in which Muslims are minority, but part of the larger diverse societies. Their future projections on the possibility of wearing the headscarf in such contexts were not tested so that it is not easy to say that if Deniz could live in Boston, for instance, she experienced a similar affirmative effect of being minority on her performance of visible Muslim identity. Yet, the participants'

narratives on this projection did not emphasize the social structures of these societies that were more inclusive to their pious identity, but the social conditions in their societies that limited them. The limitations they felt arose from stereotypes on veiling and prejudices on the category of veiled women similar to what Muslim women complained about in the studies mentioned above. The second point is linked to these limitations. While it strengthened in-group identity of Muslim women in minority contexts, and they valued the hijab practice to manifest their positions in society, it had a reverse effect on the participants' experiences. At this point on the contextual difference, the narratives of Sevgi, Elif and Jasmine revealed another dimension on why stereotypes and prejudices on veiling triggered their decisions to take off the headscarf rather than strengthening their in-group identity. Jasmine and Elif made mention of the same point in the sense that their experiences within their own social circles led them to question the practice of veiling. It was not a question of veiling in a religious sense, but their critical observations on in-group people directed them to distinguish themselves from these people on the basis of their appearances. What Jasmine thought of the community of Imam Hatip High Schools and Elif experienced in the Islamic social circles were something outside their idealizations of Islam and pious people. To put it in a more concrete way, Jasmine thought that only unsuccessful students from pious families went to such schools, and they did have an aim to advance in career, or gain a place in public life, for instance, so that girls in these schools could receive education and then probably get married at the end of the day. Yet, she was highly successful and aimed at having a higher social status with her carrier as an independent, but pious woman, and she did not prefer to go to Imam Hatip High School. So that her idea that if she could go there, she would not probably wear the headscarf revealed that even if she was pious at that time, she did not perform veiling to distinguish herself from her image of a veiled girl in such school. Where did this image come from? Why did Jasmine have a general idea, or self-stereotype on in-group women? As discussed later in detail, Jasmine's perception was in line with out-group people's perception on İmam Hatip High Schools and the girls with the headscarf. Having a higher social status with the public presence was constructed in the realm of out-group people so that the significant other's gaze was internalized and transformed the reference point that one realized the sense of self. Moreover, Elif's observations on in-group people within the Islamic social circles were mainly about how these groups isolated themselves with group norms and rules in a particular understanding of Islam which was not open to questions and diversities. That's why Elif did not feel free to express herself and to find her way. All the groups she got involved in expected from her to adopt group norms and to act in a way the group followed, but Elif who was in an ambiguous process of searching her way by looking at many ways as much as possible always

felt herself as outsider. Lastly, Sevgi's view on the relationship between veiling and professionally playing basketball is complementary to what Elif and Jasmine experienced within their own identity-groups. In this case, the limitation was about both the group norms and the significant other's perception. Sevgi internally learned that a veiled woman should not be a professional player in a sport club because such an activity was not convenient to how a Muslim woman should live her life. On the other hand, this idea was not only peculiar to the group norms, but less visibility of veiled women as professional players, for instance, became a "norm" in wider society. So that Sevgi thought that if she could be a professional player with the headscarf she would challenge the expectations of in-group people and would be perceived as "weird" by out-group people. In either case, even if she did not see a problem with playing basketball with the headscarf, since she was attributed an expectation to be a proper veiled woman, she concluded that she would not wear the headscarf as if she would be a professional player. These cases revealed that the participants had problems not only with out-group people's prejudices, but also the overwhelming majority of Muslims, or their Islamist social environments in particular, were one of main concern that led them to question the visible part of their identity. Thus, in contrast to the findings of Wagner and Howarth (2012), what the participants experienced in the majority Muslim context show that veiling is part of identity question, and these women struggled to identify their senses of the self on the basis of the practice of veiling and un-veiling as well. This is because how the headscarf became a source of political and social intricacies in Turkey, and was framed as an identity question. These women, thus, did not perform pious identity independently from social expectations that rooted in the historical background of the headscarf issue.

An interesting, but meaningful note is that only Duru and Ahsen who trained in the Quran Courses and Burcu who had a secular extended family did not talk about such a possibility to continue wearing the headscarf in another context. Firstly, as veiling is an ordinary practice in the Islamist communities, it is not common in the secular contexts. That's why when Burcu whose parents are the only pious practitioners in their extended families took of her headscarf, she did not feel a sense of personal isolation in her family, or exclusion from in-group. Rather, she satisfied what the people, her aunts in particular, expected from "a pretty, young, educated woman" in her words. Her veiling was never normalized, but was always a subject of critical debates in her family so that she was not exposed to a regulative guidance or pressure over her appearance and actions in her daily life. Thus, it might be the reason behind that she was not overwhelmed with an obligation to represent a wider community of Muslim women. Secondly, one reason behind their perceptions on the

headscarf might be in relation to that Duru and Ahsen were exposed to the strict and restrictive religious teaching, unlike Burcu, within the very narrow settings which were carefully isolated from the outside world. Since they did not become socialized outside the courses, and they did not get in interaction with the diverse social circles, they were not aware of how being a veiled woman was perceived in the society, or they did not face with the particular expectations and stereotyped judgements of both in-group and out-group people. It is because they did not perceive veiling as a social identity, or visible marker on their bodies, they did not feel a burden of the representation. Thus, the context did not matter to them in the sense that if their actions could not be judged on the basis of their appearance only, they would still wear the headscarf.

4.5.1 Challenges to Sense of Belonging:

"You can neither be included in them nor turn back to where you came from."

The participants' narratives revealed that veiling was a performative action and a visible practice of the self that transformed the sense of belonging. The role of presenting a membership to a group was attributed to the headscarf, and it was one's appearance only that provided a comfort zone in which the participants felt a secure attachment to a group identity. Yet, their sense of in-betweenness did not appear after they took off the headscarf, but it was already a matter for them during they questioned the practice of veiling and the re-formation of in-group identity. Since the in-group attachment was defined with the performance of veiling, when they decided to take off the headscarf, the common ground that the participants shared with veiled women in the group disappeared. In some cases, the participants tried to socialize outside their existing social circles, and felt them more fit into that environment; in some other cases, the social circles did not much change related to one's decision to take off the headscarf, or after their willing attempts to be included in out-group social circles, they did not feel comfortable, or adoptable there. They additionally experienced a grey area between in-group and out-group after taking off their headscarves. Though the aim of un-veiling was not to change where they belonged to, their social circles and life-styles changed to some extend even if it was not a radical change. Yet, they could not build up a sense of belonging to the other group as well as they did not feel belong to their own group, or in-group identity. Some of the participants described the grey area that they found themselves in after they took off the headscarf as "a state of in-betweenness" which was the same

statement, which arose from similar ambiguous feelings, of one of the interviewees in Okuyan and Curtin (2018)'s study. They discussed it in the sense of "the formation of an 'in-between' subjectivity characterized by restriction and criticism" (15). The narratives of their participants showed that the sense of exclusion from both religious and secular settings that rooted in the gendered constraints aimed at regulating a woman' life in religious groups and the rejection of pious identity in secular groups had a deeper impact on their little, but ambiguous, sense of belonging to either one (10).

Burcu explained the most important reason of why she felt a sense of belonging to a group as the headscarf that signed she held opinion with the people in the group. She thought that her opinions did not change a lot after she took off her headscarf, but she changed her social environment for a while:

> "... my friends on the other side did not make me feel good so that I did not feel I belonged to that group. Being un-veiled did not put me into that group. What I mean with that group is my unveiled friends whom I became more close to... To be honest, their lifestyle did not satisfy me because it was not like mine. For instance, I did not continue to drink after my first experience with my aunt because I did not like that. For a while, I was more comfortable in our summer resort, I wore summer clothes that were shorter, but all these did not make feel good then. Maybe, it was about the ways I was raised since my childhood, or maybe, it was about that I secretly believed in that they were sinful, I did not know. When I did not feel to belong to that group, I continued to be with my own (old) friends..." (Interview with Burcu, October 4, 2019).

Duru also associated her sense of belonging to the conservative community in her words with her appearance only:

> "... you do not have a style in veiling. I mean that you have very limited choices to express yourself (with her authentic appearance). Now, choices may be more diverse to create your style, but it was not like that (in my time). You do not have your own style. For instance, I felt more comfortable by wearing ferace [burqa] because ... otherwise I did not reflect my style. So that it was comfortable to wear ferace like a uniform. At least, I felt more that I belonged to a particular (group), I mean, (they thought that) she was a conservative girl so that she wore like this, like unstylish." (Interview with Duru, October 27, 2019)

Nilay described the sense of in-betweenness as:

> "... it hurt me a lot that my friends who were not pious unbelievably flattered me... it was terrible (to hear from them): Come to us! Though I love each of you, but I was not one of you. I have limits that make me (who I am). ... Even though they say you to come to us, they never exactly embrace you. You can neither be included into them nor you can turn back to where you came from. I do not want to be in-between since I am still the same person..." (Interview with Nilay, October 29, 2019).

The search for a new social space provides them a chance to present the new self they tried to construct by removing the headscarf. Yet, they felt uneasiness when out-group people treated them on the basis of their particular action of taking off the headscarf only. Since most of the participants did not perceive it as a radical change in their lives, but only a change of a particular performance. It was not also a radical rejection of the self, for them, but a rejection of a visible part of the self which did not consist of one's piety only.

4.5.2 Rejection of Visibility with the Headscarf:

"I wanted to do something not as a veiled woman, but as myself."

The second related issue concerning the group identity is how the participants' experiences of the current context affects their decisions to take off the headscarf in particular and their relations to in-group identity as well. Some pious women in recent studies mentioned of prejudgments "in relation to their religious appearance, such as being treated as a threat to secularism, as a supporter of the ruling Islamist party, as a puritan, a conservative, or as 'backward'" (Okuyan and Curtin 2018, 8), or prejudices about veiled women's secret intentions that they cover with the headscarf or "ulterior political motives behind the headscarf" (Sayan-Cengiz 2014, 206). For the participants in this research, however, it is no longer about that veiled women are seen as oppressed, submissive, backward, uneducated, or a threat to the secular establishment as in the past. Their narratives show that it has changed through which more veiled women are able to get university education, and the middle classes in Muslim communities have more access to cultural and economic capital in the last decades. This increased their visibility everywhere, and opened a way for dialogue between Muslim and secular communities. While they perceived

that these stereotypes did not reflect the current social antagonism between veiled women and out-group people, these were still at stake for some other pious women in a similar context. Thus, it is obvious that how stigmatization works and is came through is subject to personal experiences that are shaped in different conditions. The problem of collective stigma that the participants complained about is not how the out-group members saw them as oppressed or uneducated, but as the representatives of Islam, the political power and Islamic community. The other's gaze is still over veiled women not through insulting them, but through expecting more from them to fit in the category of veiled women and so that ignoring their agency as well. Yet, contrary to the established view on Muslim women as a homogenous category without considering differences and particularities (Bracke 2008; Hoodfar 2001), the participants in this study exerted much effort to demonstrate their individuality within the group identity. The content of collective stigmatization differs in several contexts, but the responses to collective stigma is similar in the way that one who is exposed to a particular stigma by the hegemonic majority tries to challenge what is attributed to her. Ryan (2011) studied on how Muslim women in Britain cope with collective stigmatization, and her participants were exposed to categorical stereotypes on Muslims in the British context. Some of her interviewees tried to show that Muslims were good people, too, in their daily encounters with non-Muslims to demonstrate not all Muslims are terrorist (1052), for instance. In a similar vein, the participants of this study tried to show that not all veiled women should necessarily perform religious duties in a perfect way, carry out Muslim identity as expected, be part of religious orders, or be supporters of the ruling party. This is still a challenge to categorical stereotypes, but the challenge within a category of veiled women to distinguish themselves from other in-group women. What matters how the participants became involved in the changing context that transformed their relation to in-group people and visible aspect of pious identity through questioning of the self in relation to the practice of veiling.

The first, but critical, contextual change is about the political environment. Since the beginning of 2000s, the political party, Justice and Development Party (AKP) which has conservative and Islamist tendencies, has been in power, and the newly emerging political elite is more tolerant to the headscarf issue. All the participants witnessed to the transformation of political power from secular elites to Islamist elites and its reflection to social layers. Second, in relation to the changing political and social atmosphere, the headscarf ban was lifted in 2013 by the ruling party's gradual efforts since the beginning they came to power. So that many participants did not expose to the legal obstacle to wear the headscarf in universities and public institutions. Some of them had to take off the headscarf during high school years,

if they did not go to Imam Hatip High Schools, and one participant faced with the ban during her first few years in the university. Third, the visibility of veiled women in public life is ever increasing for the last decade. Veiled women, and pious people in general, become actively and visibly engaged not only in politics, but also in each sphere of social life. Many women in this study observed that, on the one hand, these changes made the stigma that gave a distinctness to them more visible in the sense that the out-group people became more familiar to veiled women and had a chance to review the imaginary category of veiled women who they had in their minds and veiled women who identify themselves as they wished. On the other hand, the stigma was still a stigma that differentiated them from normals, but was now related to the political power and its reflections on the society. The participants' perceptions on the group identity and their senses of belonging to the Islamic community had shaped in such a context.

After a while Jasmine started to work in a pro-government media agency, she had several questions on the workplace, her qualifications and her appearance which was in relation to all the process of self-questioning. She said that each time when she came close to the main door, she started to think that a random person in the street probably thought that she was employed there not because she was qualified to get a job, but because of her headscarf. It was not her outlook that made her uncomfortable, but she tried to see and judge herself through someone's eyes. It was not anyone, but a particular one from out-group people whose gazes were taken as a reference point. Her workplace was in Beşiktaş, and this was important for her because she overemphasized the neighborhoods like Beşiktaş, Kadıköy, or Moda with reference to places of out-group people. So that every morning she entered the main door with a bunch of questions in her mind and her in-door experiences triggered her decision to take off the headscarf. What disturbed her was that she did not want to be identified like one of those people in the workplace when she witnessed to corrupted work ethic and unprofessional personal relations:

> "... So as the institutional policy, veiled women were made more visible at some times, but unveiled women were placed in visible positions at other times. For instance, if there was a launching meeting, more charming and presentable women (were assigned to represent the institution), or veiled women were sent to some other occasions... It was so annoying to be positioned based on your clothes... because you cannot prevent that your appearance took precedence over all your successes, career, and whatever you did." (Interview with Jasmine, September 25, 2019).

Jasmine portrayed in-group people within her workplace as two-faced and corrupted in the sense that they abused their institutional power strengthened under favor of close relation with the incumbent party. She projected her views that were shaped by her direct observations and experiences in the workplace onto out-group people by distinguishing herself from the workplace community. She strongly believed that she was not like them, but she wanted out-group people to realize it, too. Though she could not be sure what others thought about her on the basis of her work, she cultivated excessive self-awareness on her actions. Her self-awareness rooted in her sense of discomfort because of her ambiguous position between in-group people and out-group people. As Goffman (1963) stated, "Each potential source of discomfort for him when we are with him can become something we sense he is aware of, aware that we are aware of, and even aware of our state of awareness about his awareness; . . . " (18), Jasmine transformed her memories from her other experiences on different situations, or the general prejudice on her workplace and the incumbent party into herself, and this self-awareness became the most critical point in her subjective sense of the self. To understand the significance of the changing reference point for the participants' evaluation of their visibility, it can be illustrative to look at how Goffman (1963) described two phases of the socialization process:

> "One phase of this socialization process is that through which the stigmatized person learns and incorporates the standpoint of the normal, acquiring thereby the identity beliefs of the wider society and a general idea of what it would be like to possess a particular stigma. Another phase is that through which he learns that he possesses a particular stigma and, this time in detail, the consequence of possessing it." (32)

The standpoint of the normal in the participants' narratives became a turning point for their self-realization. They learned out-group people's believes on them through either directly confronting them in a social situation or indirectly forming an idea from in-group people's experiences. In both cases, the possible consequences of having an Islamic stigma directly affected their reflections on themselves and relatedly their actions in multiple social situations.

Sevgi complained about the manipulation of the headscarf by both in-group and out-group people by emphasizing that the antagonism between two sides ignored her positioning in the sense that she felt as if she was not the agent who had the right to claim on veiling.

> “The political process was disgusting because (the headscarf) was exploited and needlessly exaggerated. It was exaggerated by our culture and the politicians. I did not understand why leftists exaggerated or rightists exaggerated. It was as if limited freedom, but it was not possible. This was men’s shallow opinions that restricted (our) freedom. ... (Religion) was ascribed to women only and (pious) men tried to preserve religion over women. Other people tried to ascribe all evils associated with religion to women. I was alienated from both sides. When I was a veiled student at a high school in Eskişehir in which the left was dominant at first, people argued about religion and belittled (us) over Ak Parti [AKP, the ruling party at the time] ... I was underage, high-school student, wore a uniform, but still, a man was execrably looking at me. He was an old man, why did he execrably looked at me? He could look at my family in this way, and thought like that they brainwashed me. But why me? I knew that AKP took advantage of me, too. I exactly felt that the director of the school manipulated me. He requested from (veiled students) to kiss his hand by (saying that) we were free now. [What she meant with free was the cancellation of the headscarf ban.] So, someone else said (the headscarf) was forbidden and deprived us of (wearing the headscarf), and other one said you were free and gave it to us... there was nothing that we could do by ourselves.” (Interview with Sevgi, September 21, 2020).

Sevgi did not want to be seen as a means for the bigger aims of both groups. She felt that she, not as an individual one, but as a veiled woman, was instrumentalized to represent religion by in-group people in a positive sense and by out-group people in a negative sense. Though she willingly wore the headscarf and portrayed herself as a representative as well, when she was insulted by a stranger and was valued by the school manager because of her veiling, what she felt was the same: She was not even in the picture for both sides, but only the headscarf was there. So that she was nobody, but someone with the headscarf. This experience was the turning point for Sevgi since she started to question who she really was beyond the headscarf. And, she frankly stated that she decided to take off the headscarf to find and learn who Sevgi was, what she thought, and how she behaved.

Since veiling was an important sign to be part of a group, for Burcu, the group identity and the sense of belonging that arose from her appearance in veiling were questioned in relation to her personal experiences of the current political atmosphere. After the coup attempt on July 15, 2016, her father was taken into custody for a week by within the scope of FETÖ investigations, then, he was released in a week. It was the summer in which Burcu had already started to question why she wore the headscarf at the beginning, and whether she wanted to continue to wear it. Yet, she came to recognize divergence between her position and the position of in-

group people through her direct encounter with a social repercussion of the political conditions. Though she was a supporter of AKP beforehand, she then hated the ruling party, and what's more, she felt strange from the group that she was part of. So that her questioning on veiling was triggered by her feelings that she was no longer bound up with this identity. She explained the reasons behind her disassociation with the group identity as:

> "...honestly, I was disappointed in the AKP's attitudes toward innocent people, because too many people were sentenced at that time. There were prolonged arbitrary detentions, custodies, lawsuits that were processed for two years... Some people died (in this process), some others were already innocent. ... It was a huge injustice, and a foregone conclusion. ... At that time, I perceived AKP as (consisted of) the people who really represented Islamic circles, conservative circles, but after that, my views on AKP had completely changed. I recognized that conservative circles were something, and AKP was something else, because what AKP did (at that time) was not something that was acceptable in a religious sense. They unjustly oppressed the people, and this oppression was not acceptable." (Interview with Burcu, October 4, 2019).

Nilay also sympathized AKP at early days the party came to power because she thought that it was a party that cared about Islamic values and came from "the people, us" in her words. Yet, she had a chance to observe how things were going on inside the party and its circles through her close work with a deputy from AKP. She frankly talked about what she observed in the workplace and how it affected her self-questioning process:

> "...I observed veiled women working in the state departments and municipalities; their pert relationships with men, their exaggerated (ostentatious) clothes and make-up, and unbelievable mercenariness... I astonishingly said that I was not like this and God saved me from being one of them. If veiling was this, and everyone perceived it in this way, I did not want (to wear) it. I wanted to be more invisible, more kimliksiz (unidentified). ... I was thinking that favoritism or employing someone in an unjust way were secretly actualized in the past, but it was so apparent now. There was no shame anymore. ... I knew how many deputies argued with each other (to employ his/her own contact) just for a cleaner position in the airport. After that I was disgusted all of these, and decided to move to Istanbul (from Ankara)." (Interview with Nilay, October 29, 2019).

Nilay underlined that it was not the only reason behind her decision to take off her headscarf. She had friends who said that they did not believe in or practice religion anymore if this was Islam that some of in-group people transformed in their own interests after AKP came to power. Nilay, however, clarified that she did not take off her headscarf only because of the political atmosphere, but the idea that veiling provided her such a visible identity that might be considered as the same with the people who she defined as corrupted heavily predominated her life. As in the narrative of Jasmine on her co-workers and the workplace environment, Nilay also saw herself "... from the point of view of a second grouping: the normals and the wider society that they constitute." (Goffman 1963, 114-115).So that her observations on in-group people that she was assumed to be part of and her assumptions on out-group people's judgments on the category of veiled women that Nilay reflected on her own presence in the face of her significant other triggered her self-questioning process that gave rise to her decision to remove the headscarf in order to become invisible.

Deniz experienced the same sense of invisibility and the rejection of in-group identity with Nilay through her fieldwork research on the consumption patterns of the newly emerging Islamist bourgeoisie and Islamic cafes that she conducted in her final year of the undergraduate study. She categorized cafes as Islamic and secular ones, and made participant observations in the Islamic cafes, mostly in Huqqa.[4] Though she had some blurred questions on her faith and the meaning and role of the headscarf in particular for a long time, this research became a turning point in the process of her self-questioning, and triggered her decision to take off her headscarf. She explained how the research process might affect her un-veiling in detail:

> "... It was the day [when she first went to Huqqa] that I took of my headscarf. The research might be effective on it, because I was saying that these (what she observed there) were not what I believed in; they were completely opposite to me... why was I included to that class. Because if you do not wear the headscarf, you are not directly categorized into a class. However, if you are veiled, there really is a class as a category. ... I realized that ... how the people [she meant Muslim/conservative people by using both terms interchangeably] adopted a life style totally outside religion through their enrichment. ... It was very disturbing for me to see people who sacrificed things, or who took advantage of their faith for such wealth." (Interview with Deniz, September 17, 2019).

[4]Huqqa is one of the first luxury places designed as an alternative entertainment place for Muslims' preferences. It is like a night club, similar to well-known clubs Sortie and Reina around in Bebek/Beşiktaş, but instead of alcohol, it serves a variety of cocktails without alcohol and hookah as well.

When I asked for how the research affected her, she mentioned of the current context as well:

> "I was saying that it (her un-veiling) was not political, but maybe, (in relation to) those who were getting rich at the same time with the rising AKP. ...veiling actually means being invisible, but the recent period was the period in which with such invisibility on the one hand, women became visible in the society and exhibited themselves on the basis of their consumption patterns. I am still thinking of it in the same way. I was already annoyed with their dressing styles, and then with places like such cafes that they all went to. (They moved on) in the way that they emulated other people's life styles, the secular people. . . . There (in Huqqa) not only an orange juice was served, but a mojito without alcohol was also served. That is to say you enjoy it in another way by paying the same money. Or, it was located somewhere just near the night clubs and you internalized it as your own cafe. . . I felt like that as if it was what they wanted to have in fact, but they could not reflect this and they were always encircling it." (Interview with Deniz, September 17, 2019).

When I asked for whether she felt something different when she went to Huqqa without the headscarf, Deniz frankly stated:

> "I was veiled during the research, but I took of my headscarf when we went to such cafes. I would say that possibly I did not want to be there as one of these people. . . . I felt myself better. . . . Apart from this, I felt I would be freer. I mean that (I felt) there would no longer be anything before my name on my researches or whatever I do. I thought that I would identify myself without a category." (Interview with Deniz, September 17, 2019).

Similar to the narratives of Jasmine and Nilay, Deniz also overemphasized that she did not want to be seen as one who was associated with a particular group of Islamist people. She did not criticize pious people in general, but observed a category of Islamic bourgeoisie whose visibility increased more with their changing consumption patterns. This was what bothered her even when she wore the headscarf so that she presented herself with a different style of veiling outside the general patterns of veiling fashion in her words. She defined the general pattern of veiling as "silk scarfs, satin shirts, fabric pants and high-heel shoes" that provided respect and reputation to a veiled woman through an elegant style. Similarly, Sevgi also mentioned that she

distinguished herself from in-group veiled women by not adopting a stylish modest fashion that most of veiled women followed. For the participants, the style of veiling became another marker that denoted a class position among in-group women as well. With a different style of veiling, they presented themselves as distinct within their own group by breaking the group-norms on one's expected outlook; and at the same time, they sent an intentional message signifying that one could make a conscious choice on her appearance different from other veiled women to out-group people. Through differentiating herself from a class of veiled women on the basis of the style of veiling, Deniz wanted to show that she wore the headscarf not as a result of her parents' insistence, or because of gaining a social status in her own interest, but by own choice, and presented her choice with "an authentic style" in her words. In this sense, her observations in Huqqa strengthened her search for an authentic self. By authenticity, I do not mean the self totally isolated from or outside particular conditions and structures that surrounded one, but what the participants tried to reconstruct was the self after a critical realization of the structural conditions. Thus, most of the participants related the search for an authentic self to their pursuit of invisibility since they perceived that veiling covered the self that they wanted to present. Jasmine explicitly defined invisibility, mentioned by Nilay and Deniz, too, as "being free from her appearance", and said, "I wanted to do something not as a veiled woman, but as myself." In addition to the word "invisible", she used the word "normal" to define what she meant to be herself: "I mean very normal. I try to be a simple, invisible person like (normal) one who does not live in the extreme edges, does not belong to a radical political life, does not wear extreme (ostentatious) clothes, but is a Muslim in itself who either practices worships or not, neither show off (with one's worships) nor imposes (one's own faith) nor conveys it to anyone." Yet, the demand to be normal was formed in the ground on which Jasmine came together with not her in-group people, but with out-group people.

As shown in the narratives quoted above, the participants -except Ahsen, Duru and Burcu- overemphasized that they no longer wanted to have a visible identity, but they wanted to present themselves as invisible. In this sense, how they framed invisibility, where they wanted to be invisible, and who the significant others that became a mirror for these women to reconsider their selfhood had a critical importance on their decisions to take off the headscarf.

Firstly, though they did not draw clear cut boundaries between the secular and the pious, or their desires and intentions in the first place were not to change their life styles to the secular one, their wishes to be invisible pointed to the secular environments, or the out-group social circles. It is because veiling is the accepted norm in Islamic communities, being a veiled woman is not something that attracts attention

of pious people. Yet, it is mostly the secular environments in which one, as a veiled woman, becomes visible with her pious identity. What triggered the participants' wishes to be invisible was that they were distinctively marked with the headscarf which made them more noticeable. The paradox, on the other hand, is that when they became invisible in some way by taking off their headscarves, they became more visible, at the same time, in their own communities. While they became unnoticeable by appearing similar in looks to women who does not wear the headscarf, in other words, by becoming one among out-group women, the presentation of their bodies and their life styles became a highly controversial topic within the family and pious community as well. Although they suffered from visibility they newly gained by removing the headscarf within their families, workplaces, and close social environments, they never mentioned of their difficult times as an obstacle for themselves.

Secondly, being invisible with one's appearance is understood by corresponding it to being not veiled. Veiling is, thus, perceived something that denotes an identity, but not-veiling, for the participants, is a neutral outlook in the sense that it does not give a message about one's piety even if she is a pious person. In a similar vein, what they problematized was not performing piety, even in this case most of the participants were still practicing Muslims, but was visibly carrying what they believed on their bodies. Jasmine frankly told an inner dilemma she tried to puzzle out for a long time:

> "When I went to an art gallery while I was veiled, I was the only veiled woman in such places almost all the times. At the beginning, I was proud of myself, because I secretly thought that I was showing that I was also interested in art contrary to what they thought of me in the first place they saw me. Yet, in time, I felt that I undertook a mission by myself and this was overwhelming. After I realized it, I did not want to go such places, because I thought as I was dissemblingly acting." (Interview with Jasmine, September 25, 2019).

As shown in this case, most of the participants categorized certain places, like an art gallery, a concert area, or a pub, or even certain districts in Istanbul, like Moda or Cihangir, as places in which their presence had a particular meaning. Since they were more visible with their headscarves in such places, even if they did not face with an actual trouble there, they thought that the headscarf in itself was not an obstacle to go to such places, but the problematic issue for them was to be there with a visible identity. Another critical issue is that one might easily assume that

these women desired to have a secular life style that they emulated for years. Based on their narratives, I can safely say that this is not what they wanted to achieve after they took off their headscarves. Yet, their reference points, or a symbolic mirror on which they reflected their sense of the self, is something or someone that has been already critical on their headscarves. The significant others from both their own communities and more of out-group people had a transformative effect in their self-perceptions on themselves. Even so it does not mean that they only saw themselves through someone's eyes, but what they experienced in and confronted to the Islamist social circles and mixed social situations became a driving force for the construction of their senses of the self.

5. CONCLUSION

This thesis set out to explore diverse reasons behind the practice of un-veiling among young, university educated, urban women who wore the headscarf in early parts of their lives. I had initially aimed to reflect on women's narratives on the practice of veiling and un-veiling to analyze personal and social intricacies behind women's decisions to take off their headscarves. The main question that the thesis seeks to answer is: Why do some veiled women, who were grown up in religious families and socialized in Islamist community circles, decide to take off their headscarves? Drawing on qualitative research data consisting of in-depth interviews, the thesis suggests that the social aspects of veiling in terms of the representation of pious identity in a consistent way has rejected by taking off the headscarf. By taking individual experiences of veiling and un-veiling as a point of departure, I seek to show diversity of motivations among women having different social and personal backgrounds. Focusing on this diversity, the thesis finds out another reason behind removing the headscarf as the rejection of the religion itself. I argue that the difference between two approaches to the practice of un-veiling arises from the perceptions on the headscarf which are shaped through personal experiences. For the women who encounter with stereotypes on veiling in mixed social situations, it is the significant others' perceptions that they also have to take into consideration when they reflect on their identities with the headscarf. The multiple encounters in diverse social situations create a social burden for these women; it a burden of the representation that covers their authenticity under the headscarf. On the other hand, for the women who do not socialize through diverse encounters in mixed social situations, the headscarf is free from the social meanings. So that veiling is not an identity related question for them, and they do not feel overburdened with the representation of pious identity. What differentiates their perceptions on veiling is their particular experiences in Quran Courses in which their early socialization takes place with only women from the course community. Since these women frame veiling into the religious realm only, their motivations to take off the headscarf arises from the questioning of its necessity in particular and of their religious fates in general. It is important to note that their perceptions on veiling and un-veiling are not dis-

cussed in the thesis with reference to the lack in their experiences. In other words, multiple encounters in mixed social situations, as taken from Goffman's theoretical framework on stigmatization, is only an explanatory tool for this differentiation of two motivations.

In this thesis, three other questions are addressed to contextualize the women's experiences of the practice of veiling and un-veiling: How do the symbolic meanings of the headscarf create the complicated social expectations for veiled women? How do the current social and political conditions, if any, affect the women's decisions to un-veil? How do they narrate their veiling and un-veiling practices in relation to the normative understanding of Islam and secularism in Turkey? Following the women's narratives to shed light on these questions, the thesis reveals that the symbolic meanings of the headscarf are framed in the expectations of others from veiled women in their daily life activities. The most emphasized anticipation is to present a consistent identity with the headscarf and a perfect religiosity in the sense that a veiled woman is always expected to behave proper to her appearance with the headscarf. The prominent example in the narratives is whether a veiled woman can hang out in a café or a restaurant serving alcohol. No matter the woman prefers to drink alcohol or not, her presence in such a place is subject to the others' gaze. In this social situation, the veiled woman's decision to hang out in a café serving alcohol is not a personal decision depending on how she performs her piety and regulates her daily life, but is a more complex decision-making process in which she has to find an answer to satisfy her inner world, and she also has to consider what a proper conduct in relation to her veiling that others expect from her should be. To understand such a complexity in this kind of ethical decisions, I elaborate on the concept of everyday religion/Islam by framing veiling not as a matter of piety only, but as a social label that poses challenges in everyday life in relation to the visible aspects of veiling.

The second question pertains to how the context the women experience the practice of veiling and un-veiling in affects their perceptions on veiling and their strategies to cope with stigmatization of veiling, stereotypes on and anticipations from the category of veiled women. The current social and political context is different from the previous context that shapes the headscarf as a political question in the sense that the ruling party has conservative and Islamic tendencies in regulating social life, there is no legal obstacle to prevent veiled women from entering universities or working in public institutes with their headscarves, and veiled women are more visible in public life. The previous researches show that veiled women were assumed to be oppressed, submissive, backward, uneducated, or a threat to secularism in the past. Yet, the narratives of the women in this research find out that it is no longer

such stereotype that they are exposed to, but it a critical problem that they are assumed to be the representatives of Islam by properly carrying out the headscarf. This assumption is directed them by out-group people so that the women exert much effort to identify themselves beyond veiling and to show that not all veiled women should necessarily perform religious duties in a perfect way, carry out pious identity as expected, be part of religious orders, or be supporters of the ruling party.

Third, the thesis suggests that the women's narratives on the practice of veiling and un-veiling present an alternative understanding on the headscarf beyond the binary distinction between the secular realm and the religious realm. I argue that considering veiling in the religious realm and un-veiling in the secular realm in a conventional understanding makes difficult to realize the complexities, instabilities and ambiguities in both practices. What most of the women complain about the expectation on consistency and properness between their actions and appearances with the headscarf arises from seeing these two spheres as mutually exclusive. Since they still continue to perform some of religious obligations as they wish, and reject only the visible part of their piety, their decisions to take off the headscarf is not considered as the secularization of life styles. The narratives on what trigger the self-questioning processes resulted in removing the headscarf show that the practice of un-veiling is the question of both realms. The thesis is organized as follows: Chapter 2 consists of three sections and delves into the field with brief information on the participants, a general overview of the fieldwork and my positionality as a researcher in this research. First, each participant is introduced with her background, personal information, and turning points on the practice of veiling and un-veiling. This section aims to give an early introduction of the participants to avoid much detailed background story in the analysis section. Second, the general overview of the fieldwork presents common and distinctive points in the participant's narratives and my observations in the field. Lastly, I situate myself into the research process with my personal experiences of veiling and un-veiling. In Chapter 3, the literature review is presented in five main sections to show the historical background of the headscarf question in Turkey. The Westernization and modernization process is firstly discussed to reveal what makes the headscarf a matter of political debates. Then, a critical debate of the naming issue on *başörtüsü* and *türban* in Turkish is presented to manifest how the headscarf debate is shaped in relation to the political context. In the third section, the multiple meanings of veiling are reviewed with reference to the previous researches on veiled women. Then, the political contexts of the 1980s and the 1990s are briefly mentioned to point out the politicization of the headscarf and veiled women in relation to the rise of political Islam and the headscarf ban in universities and public institutions. Lastly, the 28 February process is discussed

with reference to the symbolic cases of Merve Kavakçı and Leyla Şahin to clarify the intricate debates over the public sphere and secularism respectively. Chapter 4 is the core of the thesis and focuses on the analysis of the ethnographic fieldwork. This chapter aims to scrutinize the participants' narratives on the practice of veiling and un-veiling in a broader framework. The chapter comprises of five main sections: First, un-veiling is framed not as a new identity, but as experience with reference to Scott (1991)'s conceptualization of experience. Second, the participants' different perceptions on veiling are presented to understand how they give meaning to the headscarf in their narratives. Third, veiling is considered as Islamic stigma symbol with reference to Goffman (1963)'s theory of stigmatization. This section aims to find out how the participants confront with stigmatization of veiling in relation to stereotypes on the category of veiled women. The critical role of others on the participants' reflections on themselves is also discussed to point out a huge influence of the significant others and the changing reference points in terms of the participants' claims on visibility and invisibility. How the peculiar experiences of two participants in Quran Courses differ their perceptions on veiling and un-veiling is also addressed in this section. Then, the concept of everyday religion/Islam is explained to show that the realm of religion and the realm of everyday are not mutually exclusive, but are embedded to each other. Lastly, the main argument of the thesis is presented as by taking off the headscarves, most participants reject visibility that is attributed to them through the headscarf because they feel overburdened with social expectations regarding the visible aspects of pious identity. The problematic issues, for most of the participants, of representation, a sense of belonging, in-group identity and out-group stereotypes, claims on visibility and invisibility in relation to changing reference points are also analyzed in detail in this section.

The thesis will make two key contributions, at least, to the field: First, even though there is a plethora of researches on wearing the headscarf in the public sphere and veiled women's subjectivity, there has been literally one academic research, to my knowledge, done by Izharuddin (2018) on Muslim women who decided to take off their headscarves in Malaysia. Although veiling is not mandatory in Malaysia, it is a socially accepted norm, or dress-code, for Muslim women, and they feel pressure over themselves "to wear the hijab in school as part of the institutional uniform, a mode of disciplining bodies" (163). Veiling, thus, forms the identity of Muslim Malayness for women. Izharuddin (2018) argues that un-veiling in this context challenges "hegemonic gendered practices of Malay Muslim femininity" and symbolizes "a new gendered subjectivity" through the un-veiled women' resistance to what is imposed on their body (158). As she approached on the practice of un-veiling by emphasizing reconstruction of subjectivity, this thesis sheds light on how stigmati-

zation of veiling becomes a social burden for some veiled women, and triggers the processes of reconstruction of subjectivity. In addition to her study in the Malaysian context, this thesis also finds out how the current social and political context affects women's perceptions on the meanings of veiling and their engagements with the visible aspects of pious identity. Second contribution of the thesis pertains to the un-veiled women's struggles not against secular state policies as in the experiences of the previous generation of veiled women, but against both Islamic norms regulating social life and others' stereotypes and anticipations based on their visible identity in relation to the headscarf only. In this sense, while the literature revolves around the political framework, emphasizing on exclusion of veiled women from the public sphere, the thesis points out a new framework of everyday life, emphasizing the performance of pious identity in a consistent, perfect and proper way, to approach the new headscarf question.

Lastly, there are, at least, two limitations of the thesis: First, I conducted only eight in-depth interviews with un-veiled women, and I had to narrow down the field of my research to Istanbul and the nearby cities due to the limited time and the scarce funding. Despite the snow-ball technique, the participants of the thesis are not diverse in the sense of social status, age and level of education, but are young, urban, university educated, and having middle-class families. Second, although the thesis focuses on the women's struggle to take off their headscarves, the subjects of the research are limited to those who already took off their headscarves. Thus, veiled women who have already decided to remove their headscarves, but have not done yet due to several reasons are outside of the scope of the thesis. For further researches, these women's experiences in the grey area between the practice of veiling and un-veiling, and possible social challenges and particular familial drawbacks that they are exposed to will make invaluable contributions to understand diverse and comprehensive motivations behind the decision to take off the headscarf.

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APPENDIX A

Preliminary Interview Questions

- Could you please tell me about your experiences to wear the headscarf?
  - How old were you when you first wore the headscarf?
  - What do you remember about the first day in which you went out as a veiled woman? How did you feel?
  - What were reasons behind your decision to wear the headscarf?
- Could you please tell me about your school years after you wore the headscarf?
  - Were you exposed to the headscarf ban?
  - How did your friends react to your new wearing-style?
- Could you please tell me about changes in your life after you wore the headscarf?
- Could you please tell me about your family reaction to your decision to wear the headscarf?
- Could you please tell me about people's in your close environment (neighbors, relatives etc.) reaction to your decision to wear the headscarf?
- Could you please tell me about your family?
  - What are your parents' occupations?
  - What is the level of education of your parents?
  - Do women in your family, and in your close environment as well, prefer to wear the headscarf?
  - Do you have sisters/brothers?
  - How is your relationship with your parents and, if any, with your sisters/brothers?

  - Did your decision to wear the headscarf affect your relationship with your parents?

- What do you think about the role of the headscarf in your life?

- What do you think about whether the headscarf is a religious requirement or not?

- Could you please tell me about the process in which you first realized that you did not want to wear the headscarf?

  - How and why did you decide to take off the headscarf?

  - When did you actualize it after you decided to take off the headscarf?

  - Did you talk about your decision to take off the headscarf with someone (from your family members or your friends) before you did it?

  - How did you feel when you first went out as a woman without the headscarf?

- Could you please tell me about reactions (from parents, relatives, friends etc.) you got when you took off the headscarf?

  - Did your decision to take off the headscarf affect your relationship with your parents?

- Could you please tell me about changes in your life after you took off the headscarf?

- Could you please tell me about what you thought of possible impacts of current political and social conditions in Turkey, if any, on your decision to take off the headscarf?