Durham E-Theses

AN INTERSECTIONAL FEMINIST APPROACH TO POLITICIANS' BRAND IDENTITY

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BRAND IDENTITY**

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Thesis submitted to the University of Durham for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

May 2021

Abstract

This thesis provides an intersectional analysis of personal political brand identity from the brand creator perspective. Specifically, it offers an understanding of the construction of professional female politicians' brand identity through the intersection of multiple identity categories, in particular gender, religion and ethnicity, in the context of Turkey. In addition, it investigates how professional female politicians leverage their identities to construct their personal political brands. In doing so, this thesis blends brand identity and personal branding and applies them to political branding to generate a deeper understanding of the personal brand of politicians (Pich et al., 2020; Armannsdottir et al., 2019a). It makes use of an intersectional feminist approach, which provides a critical perspective to the exploration of professional female politicians' personal political brand identity and allows filling an identified gap in the body of knowledge, i.e., political marketing (Moufahim and Lim, 2009; Osuagwu, 2008; Henneberg and O'Shaughnessy, 2007), political branding (Pich and Newman, 2020) and personal branding (Lair et al., 2005) need more critical and multidisciplinary attention.

This thesis utilises an interpretive approach to understand the construction of the personal brands of politicians. It draws on data from semi-structured interviews held in Turkey with twenty-five politicians. The transcribed in-depth interviews are analysed using thematic analysis. The results of this thesis highlight the importance of multiple social identity dimensions in professional female politicians' desired brands. It is found that professional female politicians' brand desired identity is structured around key components, including legacy, experiences, personality and values, resilience and heritage. By considering the transfer potential (Schneider, 2004) of the concepts of brand resilience and brand heritage, this thesis contributes to the area of political branding. Brand legitimacy is also utilised to provide insights into the management and communication of professional female politicians' brand desired identities. With the concept of brand legitimacy, this research provides a deep and comprehensive approach from the brand creator perspective to managing and communicating politicians' personal brands. Overall, this thesis provides deep insights into politicians' personal brands through the lens of intersectionality and adds to the knowledge about personal political brands.

Keywords: Brand identity; identity; intersectionality; personal brands; personal political brands; Turkey

Acknowledgements

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a general overview of this thesis. The chapter first provides the reasons for studying the personal political brand identity construction through an intersectional feminist approach. Then, it discusses the context of the thesis. Section 1.2. presents the objectives of the thesis with the two research questions guiding the thesis. Section 1.3. provides a summary of each chapter. Section 1.4. concludes the chapter.

Statement of the problem: Why study personal political brand identity with the intersectional lens?

Branding concepts have been applied to various entities, such as universities (e.g., Gray, Fam and Llanes, 2003), places (e.g., Kavaratzis, 2004; Trueman et al., 2004), corporations (e.g., Balmer and Thomson, 2009), religions (Shepherd, 2004), the monarchy (Balmer et al., 2006) and politics (Lilleker, 2005; 2006). With the application of branding concepts to political marketing, the sub-discipline of political branding emerged as a novel area of research (Lees-Marshment, 2009) to conceptualise political products as brands. In this respect, political brands are considered complex and multifaceted entities difficult to operationalise (Billard, 2018; Needham, 2006; Needham and Smith, 2015; Pich et al., 2014; Pich et al., 2018; Schneider, 2004; Smith and French, 2009). In line with the challenging nature of political brands, literature mostly focused on the leader, party and policy, known as a trinity of political entities (Bale, 2008; Butler et al., 2011; Davies and Mian, 2010; O'Cass and Voola, 2011; Pich et al., 2014; Smith and French, 2009; Smith and French, 2011; Speed et al., 2015; White and de Chernatony, 2002). However, as politics mostly relies on people (Harrop, 1990), branding studies recently paid attention to political actors as political brands (Guzman and Sierra, 2009; Reeves et al.,

2006). In doing so, party leaders (Jain and Ganesh, 2019), parliamentarians (Armannsdottir et al., 2019a), candidates and legislators (Falkowski and Jablonska, 2019; Marland and Wagner, 2019; Pich et al., 2020) are conceptualised as political brands. Nevertheless, the personal brands of politicians have received little attention in political branding research (Guzman et al., 2015; Van Steenburg and Guzman, 2019).

In order to respond to the call for exploring politicians' personal brands, the concept of personal branding and brand identity come together under the area of political branding to explore political actors' personal political brand identity (e.g., Armannsdottir et al., 2019a; Pich et al., 2020). Indeed, brand identity is an important approach to provide deeper insights into the brand (Aaker, 1996; Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2002). Moreover, personal branding is identified by Johnson (2017) as a "*process by which an individual actively tries to manage others' impressions of their skills, abilities and experiences*" (p. 21). In this respect, personal branding is also an effective theoretical lens to provide deeper insights into the construction, management and communication of politicians' personal political brand identity (Armannsdottir et al., 2019a; Pich et al., 2020). Although these two are considered useful theoretical lenses to conceptualise politicians' personal brands, Pich et al. (2020) point out that employing personal branding in particular is an *uncommon* choice amongst political branding scholars. This suggests that despite the recent attention in political branding paid to the different political actors, politicians' personal brands need more attention by the blended perspective of personal branding and brand identity. Building upon recent literature in political branding, there is an explicit call for further research into politicians' personal political brands (Guzman et al., 2015; Van Steenburg and Guzman, 2019) and their relationships with the political party brands (Armannsdottir et al., 2019a; 2019b). In addition, the need for further research relates

to the exploration of personal political brands from multiple perspectives in different political contexts (Pich et al., 2020).

While scholars continue to make calls for further research in the area of political branding to develop studies in both political branding and political marketing, the call for an interdisciplinary approach to political marketing (Henneberg and O'Shaughnessy, 2007; Moufahim and Lim, 2009; Osuagwu, 2008) is still overlooked. This call for a multidisciplinary approach is further emphasised by the recent work of Pich and Newman (2020). In addition, when the focus is on the personal brands of politicians, there is a similar call made by Lair et al. (2005) for further research into personal brands in the area of personal branding. Therefore, as the use of "*critical theories of society offer… a powerful agenda*" for generating a deeper understanding of political marketing (Moufahim and Lim, 2009, p. 771), political branding (Pich and Newman, 2020) and personal branding (Lair et al., 2005), this thesis aims to address these calls, focusing specifically on the construction of professional female politicians' personal political brand through the lens of intersectionality.

The intersectional feminist approach is useful for examining the intersection of multiple social identity categories of race, gender, class, religion and others, hence providing "*an enormously challenging critique with theoretical and political implications*" (Sigle-Rushton et. al. 2013, p. 129). In this respect, the intersectional feminist approach facilitates the investigation of personal brands of politicians' brands on the basis of multiple identity categories, such as gender, race, and class. As the thesis focuses mainly on female politicians, intersectionality offers a conceptual approach for the empirical study of professional female politicians' personal political brand identity, which is built around intangible and tangible dimensions (Armannsdottir et al., 2019a). Intersectionality is considered "*the most important theoretical contribution that women's studies, in conjunction with related fields, has made so far*"

(McCall, 2005, p. 1771). For Nash (2008), intersectionality is *"the primary theoretical tool"* (p. 2) and plays an important role in understanding the interplay of multiple identity categories, which create power hierarchy and affect subjectivity (Dhamoon, 2011). Moreover, intersectionality is useful in terms of its functional implications in the real world (Walby et. al., 2012a). This thesis aims to utilise intersectionality as an approach to generate deeper insights into professional female politicians' personal political brands. It also tries to address the calls for more empirical research on intersectionality in marketing (Corus et al., 2016; Gopaldas, 2013; Steinfield et al., 2019).

Consequently, instead of examining personal political brands from the eyes of voters and citizens, scholars insistently emphasise the importance of investigating politicians' own perspectives (Armannsdottir et al., 2019a; Nielsen, 2017; Pich et al., 2020). This thesis also supports this point and attempts to explore the personal brand of politicians from their own perspectives as brand-creators through the lens of intersectionality. By making use of all these approaches, a theoretical map for personal political branding is developed for illustration of the discussed gap based upon Pich et al.'s (2020) theoretical map for personal political branding. Following on Figure 1, the next section discusses the context of the thesis.

Political Marketing and Political Branding

➔ Political marketing needs to engage actively with critical theories, concepts, frameworks and adopts an interdisciplinary approach (Henneberg and O' Shaughnessy, 2007; Moufahim and Lim, 2009; Osuagwu, 2008).

➔ There is a consensus in political marketing that it can only develop if it continues to apply new concepts or reapply advanced theories and frameworks (Armannsdottir et al., 2019; Henneberg and O' Shaughnessy, 2007; Moufahim and Lim, 2009; Nielsen, 2016; Scammel, 2015; Scheider, 2004; Speed et al., 2015). This points an indirect call for critical political branding research.

➔ Investigating the brands of politicians through the theoretical lens of personal branding remains 'uncommon' yet there are explicit calls for further research in this topic area (Guzman et al., 2015; Pich et al., 2020; Steenburg and Guzman, 2019).

➔ Personal political branding should employ a multidiscipline approach and consider using theoretical lenses from other disciplines (Pich and Newman, 2020).

Existing studies have tended to focus on the political brands of leaders and high-profile individuals rather than less prominent politicians (Cwalina and Falkowski, 2014; Marland, 2016; Nai and Martinez, 2019; Steenburg and Guzman, 2019). Current research in this area is often conceptual with calls for more empirical studies (Ahmed et al., 2015; Speed et al., 2015).

Personal Branding

➔The process of creating a desired identity and an attention getting advice (Holbrook, 1995; Jacobson, 2020; Osoria et al., 2020; Pich et al., 2020; Shepherd, 2005).

➔ Personal branding is complex, multilevel strategy which can be challenging and long term activity? Does not work for everyone-experience?

➔Personal branding is a strategy that can be used by individuals beyond business including politics (Armannsdottir et al., 2019; Pagis and Ailon, 2017; Peters, 2017; Pich et al., 2020).

➔ Personal branding needs a synthesis of relevant critical theories particularly regarding race, gender, age and class (Lair et al., 2005).

Politicians recognise benefits of branding to differentiate with competitors and allow citizens to identify with their offering.

Core Gap
The process of how politicians construct, manage and understand their personal brand through critical lens is under-explored.

Future research-explore the creation and management key dimension but research focuses on virtues and limitations and now the 'process' (Holbrook, 1995; Jacobsoon, 2020; Lopez, 2010; Misra and Kyla, 2016; Osorio et al., 2020; Pagis and Ailon, 2017; Shepherd, 2005; Vallas and Christin, 2018)

Explicit calls for further insight on the brands of politicians from an 'insider-relational' politician perspective (Billard, 2018; Guzman and Sierra, 2009; Kaneva and Klemmer, 2016; Marland, 2016; Nai and Martinez, 2019; Needham and Smith, 2015; Pich et al., 2020; Reeves et al., 2006; Serazio, 2017; Steenburg and Guzman, 2019).

Political Contexts

➔ Further research should look at different professions and settings.

➔ Future research should be devoted to contexts and settings beyond party systems. Therefore, research on how politicians create and develop their brands without the help of political parties or the party machine especially in non-party systems remains under-explored (Ahmed et al., 2015, Kaneva and Klemmer, 2016; Pich et al., 2020; Speed et al., 2015).

➔Each context is created through different and various multiple identity dimensions. Future research should consider research context's multiple identity dimensions to generate deep understanding of the political brands.

Figure 1: Theoretical Map for Personal Political Branding

(adopted from Pich et al., 2020, p. 418)

This thesis is concerned with professional female politicians in the context of Turkey. In addition to my personal interest as a Turkish woman, Turkeys' political context is a new and different context that has not been investigated before in the area of political branding. Importantly, this research is conducted during the transition process of Turkey's political system. That is, in 2014, Turkey partly left the parliamentary system and started to implement a partial-presidential government system. In July 2016, Turkey experienced a military coup attempt by the FETO (Fethullah Terrorist Organisation). Turkish civil society, Turkey's main institutions and all political parties had a high consensus against this attempt and rejected it as an assault on the country's democracy. In this respect, the July 2016 military coup attempt was a turning point for Turkey in that it increased the debate over Turkey's political system in society and politics, thereby expedited the transformation process. In April 2017, with the effect of the FETO's (Fethullah Terrorist Organisation) military coup attempt in July 2016, the ruling party of Turkey Justice and Development Party (AKP) went for a referendum to ask the Turkish people whether they would support the transformation of Turkey's partial-presidential government system into the presidential system. The referendum ended the vote passed with 51.4% YES for the new 'presidential government system'. Following the approval of constitutional changes in the April 2017 referendum, although the debates were continuing regarding the different systems' appropriateness for the country, the presidential election, general elections and parliamentary elections were held together throughout Turkey on 24 June 2018. As a result, the parliamentary system was lifted, and Turkey started to experience the presidential government system. Although it was not planned, the data collection for this study was conducted between April 2018 and July 2018. Therefore, this research attempts to understand professional female politicians' personal political brands during the transformation

process of Turkey's political system, which has provided a deep and unique perspective into the field of political branding.

Beyond the current period of research, Turkey is a country that almost experienced all political systems (Kartal and Ataseven, 2018). Starting from the Ottoman Empire, which is the predecessor of the Republic of Turkey, Ottoman society experienced monarchy for about 600 years. Following on the rooted tradition of monarchy, after 1876 with the first constitution of the Ottoman Empire, which is known as *Kanun-u Esâsî* (the Fundamental Law), a constitutional monarchy was adopted during the last period of the Ottoman Empire (Keskinsoy, 2017; Ozbudun, 2011). Specifically, there was an attempt to transform the Ottoman Empire's constitutional monarchy to a parliamentary political system before the proclamation of the Republic, but this attempt was not successful. Finally, the Republic of Turkey was founded in 1923. Turkey went through fundamental changes with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Ankara became the centre of the new Turkish governmental system with the assembly, which is known as *Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi*, *TBMM* (Turkish Grand National Assembly). TBMM performed as a "*constituent and revolutionary*" assembly that held legislative and executive power (Grand National Assembly of Turkey, 2019). The Kemalist project limited the political role of Islam in the private and public spheres, with the aim of modernisation. Religious expressions in public were banned as they were believed to threaten the secular nature of the country. In the following period, Turkey experienced a single political party period until 1950, which is considered an anti-democratic process (Kartal and Ataseven, 2018). Therefore, starting from 1950 to 2014, Turkey was governed by a multi-party parliamentary political system. In the following period, as noted above, Turkey was firstly ruled by a partial-presidential government, and the country now experiences the presidential government system.

It is also worth noting that Turkey experienced four military coups during its republic history, except the last coup attempt of July 2016. The first military coup in Turkey took place in May 1960. The 1960 coup caused dramatic social changes polarised alongside the right and left ideologies (Kutay, 2016). As a result, the 1960 coup brought the Constitution of 1961. Ten years later, in March 1971, the military delivered an ultimatum to the official government. The military's justification behind this ultimatum was to protect public order, national security and national unity (Harris, 2011). Harris (2011) argued that national security creates social problems in terms of intersectional identity categories, such as "*class, sect, religion, race or language*" (p. 206). After the 1960s, political polarisations increased with the effect of 1971's military memorandum. Turkey also experienced various restrictions, such as unions were restricted and universities' autonomy was abolished. In addition, political Islam saw a steep rise with the emerge of National Salvation Party and its ideology, known as the National Outlook Movement. Overall, after the military 1970's memorandum, Turkey's political situation worsened, and Turkey experienced another military coup in September 1980, one that is considered to be "*the most brutal of four military interventions in Turkish political history*" (Cosar and Yegenoglu, 2011, p. 558). The 1980 coup aimed at restructuring the social and political life in Turkey under the army's control. In 1982, a new authoritarian constitution was passed, restricting freedom of expression and political freedom and imposing the Turkish-Islamic identity synthesis (Cosar and Yegenoglu, 2011; Kutay, 2016). In 1997, the military removed the ruling political party from power, resulting in many negative outcomes in the social and political life of Turkey. Therefore, known as the most powerful institution of Turkey, the army took over the governments to protect the secular ideology of Turkey in 1960, 1971, 1980 and 1997.

Since this thesis's main focus is on Turkish female politicians, having an overview of the country's gender regime plays an important role in understanding the construction of their personal political brands identity. In this respect, it is the fact that the evaluation of Turkey's gender regime is associated with the evaluation of both women's movement and Turkey's political history (Cosar and Yegenoglu, 2011). Building upon Turkey's political history, the contemporary patriarchal gender regime is based on the ruling party's (AKP) gender policies, which have religious, liberal and nationalist politics intersected together, resulting in what is known today as a neoliberal-conservative ideology (Cosar and Ozkan-Kerestecioglu, 2017; Cosar and Yegenoglu, 2011). With this respect, Cosar and Yegenoglu (2011) noted that Turkeys' mode of patriarchy is the combination of religious, liberal and republican patriarchy.

During the foundation of the Republic of Turkey and the ensuing years, with the aim of modernisation, Turkey was governed by the ideology of Kemalism, a combination of authoritarian secularism, corporatism and nationalism (Gole, 1996). Although these Kemalist reforms boosted women's political, social and economic rights (Arat, 1989), the Kemalist ideology had a monopoly on women's demands; thus, women were restricted by the Kemalist republican patriarchy (Cosar and Yegenoglu, 2011). To attain their rights, women had to negotiate within the patriarchal limits. Kandiyoti (1988) conceptualises women's strategies as a sort of "*bargain with patriarchy*", which identifies women's negotiations to gain advantage and use their rights within the bounds of patriarchal gender regimes. Arat (1989) points out that during this period, "*in private life, patriarchal norms continued to be practised, perpetuated, and legitimised… Walls were kept between the private and the public realm even though… women assumed important positions within the public*" (p. 18). In this respect, women had to remain loyal to the republican norms and regulations. As correct femininity was identified in the republican context as being "*the merciful and virtuous mother of the nation*" (Sirman, 2005,

p. 163), women had to keep their position as wives and mothers, which had symbolic importance.

Following this period, with the effect of the 1980 and 1997 coups, the political and social life changed dramatically, and women were affected by these changes directly. Society faced injustices and restrictions, such as the Kemalists' headscarf ban aimed at protecting the secular nature of the republic by excluding religion from the public sphere (Gole, 1996). In this respect, specifically, Muslim women experienced discrimination and oppression because of their religion. As discussed before, the Turkish-Islamic synthesis was socially imposed; thus, different minorities were marginalised and oppressed in the public sphere. In reaction to these restrictions, oppressed and marginalised women participated in NGOs for regaining and advancing the rights of women. According to Arat (2012), Muslim women *"challenge[d] the parameters within which women were expected to practice Islam, to engage in politics, and to promote their self-interest"* (p. 115) and they also *"challenged the preconceived attributes that the secular establishment projected to Islamism, and they negotiated with ingenuity what Islam can entail in a secular democratic polity"* (p. 1). Furthermore, women also started to bargain with Islamic patriarchy and are considered as *"protagonist"* to protect Muslim women's rights (Cakir, 2000). Thus, with the institutionalisation of women's movements and the increasing demand for women rights, Turkey began to experience liberal patriarchy. However, Turkey's liberal patriarchy does not make it possible to differentiate between the public and the private sphere (being a mother and wife). In fact, it constituted to make use of both republican and neoliberal patriarchy (Cosar and Yegenoglu, 2011).

Since AKP was elected in 2002, Turkey's current patriarchal mode is identified with AKP's gender regime and is defined as neoliberal-conservative and later neoliberal-neoconservative (Cosar and Ozkan-Kerestecioglu, 2017; Cosar and Yegenoglu, 2011). Due to women's

experiences and the increasing visibility of Muslim women, Islamic patriarchy plays an important role in AKP's mode of patriarchy. In this respect, as the outcome of republican, liberal and Islamic patriarchy, AKP's neoliberal patriarchy centralises family and characterises women firstly as mothers and wives. AKP's high emphasis on the family was identified as neoconservative patriarchy, which considers the family as the main moral pillar of society, prioritising it over individuals, in particular women (Cosar, 2012; Cosar and Yegenoglu, 2011). In this respect, as an extension of republican patriarchy, women are expected to adhere to motherhood and wifehood roles and at the same time join the public life and increase the visibility of Islam in the public sphere. In politics, the lifting of the headscarf ban in 2008 by AKP saw increased participation by women in both parliamentary and local politics (Ayata and Tutuncu, 2008). Although women became more visible in politics, AKP is criticised for its female politicians' selection, particularly for choosing secular politicians who are also sensitive to Islam, female politicians portrayed as Western with high loyalty to the party leader (Sozen, 2006). In addition, this period saw high attention paid to female politicians for their lack of interest in feminist demands (Ayata and Tutuncu, 2008). Briefly, women and specifically female politicians continued to operate within the norms of private and public life.

Furthermore, AKP attempted to end the Kurdish conflict in Turkey by "*soothe[ing] Kurdish demands by way of an Islamist co-optation*" (Atacan, 2001; Cevik, 2012; Ozoglu, 2007; Turkmen, 2018, p. 6). Religion is utilised as a conflict solution (Goldberg and Blancke, 2011; Philpott, 2007) to create an ethnic identity (Mitchell, 2006). While religion dominates ethnicity and makes it invisible (Peek, 2005), sometimes it makes ethnicity apparent, reproduces and preserves it (O'Malley and Walsh, 2013). Although AKP's approach failed to utilise Islam as a conflict solution to the Kurdish conflict (Turkmen, 2018), this attempt seems important in institutionalising specific identity dimensions in the view of AKP political policies.

Consequently, based on Turkey's political history and the history of bargaining with patriarchy (Cosar and Yegenoglu, 2011), gender, religion and ethnicity are considered as the salient intersectional identity categories in the context of Turkey; therefore, they are selected to explore professional female politicians' personal political brand identity.

1.2. Research Objectives and Questions

This research aims to provide an intersectional feminist approach to professional female politicians' brand identity in the context of Turkey. It aims to understand the construction of professional female politicians' brand identity through the intersection of multiple identity categories in particular gender, religion and ethnicity. Furthermore, it aims to investigate how professional female politicians leverage their identities to construct their personal political brands. Overall, this thesis attempts to generate a deeper understanding of the brand identity of professional female politicians in the context of Turkey from the brand creator perspective.

Building upon the aims of the research and the gaps presented in Section 1.1., this thesis addresses two core research questions:

1) How do multiple identity categories, in particular gender, ethnicity, and religion, intersect to construct the identity of professional female politicians in the context of Turkish politics?

2) How do professional female politicians leverage their identities to construct their personal political brand?

1.3. Thesis Structure

This thesis is structured as follows:

Chapter 2- Literature Review- Personal Political Brand: Chapter 2 provides insights into burgeoning literature on personal political brands that blend brand identity and personal branding, applying them to political branding. The chapter critically focuses on the managerialist and functionalist assumptions that have dominated political marketing, political branding and personal branding research. In doing so, the chapter provides an overview of the extant research on political branding and personal branding. This is followed by presenting the existing personal political brand identity research. The chapter also crucially identifies the concepts from consumer branding, which can be transferred to the personal political branding context. This chapter highlights the core research gap that points out the need to examine personal political brands with a critical eye on the basis of multiple identity categories, such as race, class, and gender.

Chapter 3- Literature Review- Intersectional Feminist Approach: Chapter 3 turns its attention to the intersectional feminist approach and builds a foundation for the exploration of personal political brands with an intersectional lens. Given this aim, the chapter outlines the ongoing debates around intersectionality. Then, it provides an overview of the use of intersectionality in marketing. In drawing on existing literature in political marketing, political branding and personal branding, this chapter discusses the extensions of the intersectional feminist approach to the construction of personal political brands.

Chapter 4- Methodology: Chapter 4 presents the methodology of this thesis, emphasising a focus on the interpretive research paradigm. The chapter presents the research philosophical underpinnings, which adopt a subjective epistemology and social constructivist ontology to understand the exploration of professional female politicians brand identity. The chapter then details the research design adopted in the thesis.

Chapter 5- Finding and Analysis- Personal Political Brands' Identity Construction: In response to Research Question 1, this chapter examined the construction of professional female politicians' brand identity in the context of Turkey. The chapter explores the components of professional female politicians' brand identity through the lens of intersectionality. It also examines the transfer of brand resilience and brand heritage, which are discussed in Chapter 2. The chapter's findings and analysis present the intersection of multiple identity dimensions, particularly gender, religion and ethnicity.

Chapter 6- Findings and Analysis- Personal Political Brand Legitimacy Process: In response to Research Question 2, Chapter 6 explores how professional female politicians leverage their identities to construct their personal political brand. In doing so, this chapter applies the concept of brand legitimacy. In relation to the context of Turkey, this chapter presents how professional female politicians establish legitimacy on different grounds. Because this thesis provides insights, particularly from a brand creator perspective, the chapter also demonstrates how professional female politicians apply their individual level legitimacy judgment in the world of politics. In doing so, this chapter blends the management and communication of professional female politicians' brand desired identities with the concept of legitimacy.

Chapter 7- Discussion and Conclusion: Chapter 7 offers an overall discussion of the research findings and summarises the thesis. In addition, it outlines the main contributions of this research project to knowledge, including the theoretical, methodological and managerial. It also highlights avenues for future research. Finally, the chapter offers a reflexive comment.

1.4. Conclusion

This introduction focused on understanding the construction of professional female politicians' brands in the context of Turkey. It presented research objectives and detailed the key research

gaps with offering an overview of the research context. Then, it presented the two research questions guiding the thesis, followed by chapter summaries.

Chapter 2: Literature Review- Personal Political Brand

2.1. Introduction

The key purpose of this chapter is to provide insights into the burgeoning literature on personal political brands, which blend brand identity and personal branding, apply them to the sub-discipline of political branding. The chapter critically examines the managerialist and functionalist assumptions that have dominated political marketing, political branding and personal branding research. The chapter begins by discussing the extant literature in the area of political marketing in Section 2.2. This section builds upon the sub-field of political marketing with a specific focus on the application of political branding in Section 2.3. The chapter then continues by discussing the background literature in the area of personal branding in Section 2.4. The chapter then introduces the existing personal political brand identity research in Section 2.5. This is followed by presenting the current consumer branding literature and focuses on the transfer potential of consumer branding to the context of personal political branding. The chapter concludes with a summary.

2.2. Political Marketing: Application of Branding to Politics

As a discipline that seeks to meet individual and social needs profitably (Kotler and Keller, 2006), marketing has extended its application to broader disciplines which split them also into different sub-areas and related by common concepts and theories (Rawson, 2007; Wilkie and Moore, 2003). In this respect, political marketing is acknowledged as a discipline, the outcome of the marriage between marketing and political science (Lees-Marshment, 2001). From the outset, political marketing has been conceptualised in various ways by scholars (Baines et al., 2010; Harris and Lock, 2010; Henneberg and O'Shaughnessy, 2007; Lees-Marshment, 2009; Lilleker et al., 2006; Moufahim and Lim, 2009; Newman, 1999; Osuagwu, 2008; Panwar, 2004; Scammell, 2016; Wring, 2005). Between these conceptualisations, Hughes and Dann (2009) identified political marketing as "*a set of activities, processes, or political institutions used by political organizations, candidates and individuals to create, communicate, deliver and exchange promises of value with voter-consumers, political party stakeholders and society at large*" (p. 359).

Although marketing theories and concepts have been used for a relatively long time (Osuagwu, 2008; Panwar, 2004; Savigny, 2011; Scammell, 2016; Watts, 1997; Wring, 2005), Wring (1997) mentioned that the term "*political marketing*" was coined by Kelley in 1956 to describe persuasive political practices. Ever since the work of Lock and Harris (1996), the area of political marketing has been developed with the application of marketing frameworks, concepts and models to the political context. Beyond academia, political marketing has also received attention from managers, the public, journalists and politicians, thereby political marketing is becoming more established as a field. Although marketing application to political science has received attention, it is criticised both by scholars in the field of political science (Henneberg

and O'Shaughnessy, 2007) and by marketing scholars (Lilleker et al., 2006; Lock and Harris, 1996; Moufahim and Lim, 2009; Moufahim et al., 2007; Panwar, 2004).

In this case, the early studies' criticism centres around the discussion of how marketing can be applied to political science, resulting in pausing the theoretical and managerial application of marketing into the world of politics (Andrews, 1996; Lees-Marshment, 2001; Lock and Harris, 1996; Wring, 1997). For example, Lock and Harris (1996) noted that understanding the differences between politics and marketing will lead further studies in political marketing to the development of theories and frameworks in the area. They found that commercial marketing and politics are two different fields, and political marketing needs further research to offer both of these areas. Another study, Butler and Collins (1996), focused strategically on the application of marketing to politics. Drawing on the strategic role and value of politics, they adopted a competitive market analysis framework for the political parties. However, their work is criticised due to a lack of flexibility, illustration and explanation of framework. From a political science perspective, Wring (1997) also focused on the relationship between politics and marketing fields. He provides insights into political marketing development and considers adopting marketing concepts to interpret election campaigns. During this early period, political parties received the main attention (Baines et al., 2002; Lees-Marshment, 2001; O'Cass, 2001). For instance, O'Cass (1996) investigated how political parties adopt marketing theories, concepts and frameworks by focusing on political parties and their members. O'Cass and Pecotich (2005) argued for the utilisation of marketing concepts, theories and frameworks in politics, particularly in the area of consumer behaviour. They provided insights into how practitioners can segment voters according to their voter behaviour and consumption of political information.

In addition, with the ongoing discussion on the application of marketing frameworks, theories and concepts to politics, scholars started to call for further research with a *"comprehensive holistic approach"* (Osuagwu, 2008, p.805). This call seems to point out first that political marketing can develop by adapting existing theories, concepts and frameworks of marketing and political fields because political marketing can be developed if scholars continue to utilise new frameworks, theories and concepts (Henneberg and O'Shaughnessy, 2007; Newman, 2002; Nielsen, 2016; Scammell, 1999; 2015; Speed et al., 2015). There is another explicit call for political marketing research to require more critical and interdisciplinary research (Henneberg and O'Shaughnessy, 2007; Moufahim and Lim, 2009; Osuagwu, 2008) to which this study contributes by using the lens of intersectionality.

With respect to explicit calls for political marketing research, branding research, which could also apply concepts from other disciplines and emerge as a new area of research (Alsem and Kostelijk, 2008), has started to be adopted in the field of politics. For example, White and de Chernatony (2002) examined applying branding to the British Labour Party's rebrand to 'New Labour". They highlighted the fact that the New Labour Party could implement branding to build party values and gain more attention from voters. Since political parties' policies become similar, voters are not able to differentiate the political parties and their offerings (Reeves et al., 2006). In this respect, Reeves et al. (2006) argued that branding plays an important role in the differentiation of political parties from others. Therefore, branding is acknowledged as an important contributing application to the development of political marketing (Lilleker, 2005). In this respect, branding theory can facilitate understanding the construction of the identity of professional female politicians in the context of Turkish politics. By revisiting political branding, this study aims to highlight the gaps in the literature and consider the transfer potential of appropriate concepts to understand the construction of the identity of professional

female politicians in the context of Turkish politics. Specifically, this study will answer the calls for more critical and interdisciplinary research on political marketing, thereby contribute to the area of political marketing (Harris and Lock, 2010; Henneberg and O'Shaughnessy, 2007; Moufahim and Lim, 2009; Lees- Marshment, 2009; Lilleker et al., 2006; Osuagwu, 2008).

2.3. Political Branding: From *Trinity* (Party, Leader and Policy) to Expanded Political Branding Environment

2.3.1. The *Trinity*

Political branding has emerged as "*a critical and priority issue for research*" in the political marketing discipline (Speed et al., 2015, p. 130). This gave rise to intense attention to political branding and the application of appropriate frameworks, concepts and theories to ease identification amongst citizens, voters and political entities and differentiation of political products from their competitors (Harris and Lock, 2010; Needham and Smith, 2015). Since political brands provide advantages in the long term (Needham, 2005; Peng and Hackley, 2009), Lees-Marshment (2009) discussed that political branding could be utilised to position a candidate or a political party. In this respect, Van Ham (2001) highlights the importance of the application of branding to political entities. Peng and Hackley (2009) noted that it could also adopt politics, such as political parties, political issues, candidates and politicians. Thus, the application of branding theory into the sub-discipline of political branding grants opportunities for political brands.

Since political brands are multifaceted and complex entities that are difficult to understand and conceptualise (Billard, 2018; Lees-Marshment, 2009; Needham and Smith, 2015), they need to be "*simple, aspirational and clearly differentiated from other parties*" (Needham, 2005, p.

183), and be consistent with their brand promise to gain attention from citizens and voters (Needham, 2005; White and de Chernatony, 2002). With this respect, political brands need power to be perceived as trustworthy, act as a decision-making driver and develop awareness in the minds of their target markets (Baines and Harris, 2011; Jain et al., 2018; O'Cass and Voola, 2011). Political brands should build loyalty, strengthen existing beliefs, be consistent with their values, beliefs and message (Gurau and Ayadi, 2011; Smith and French, 2009; White and de Chernatony, 2002). In that way, political brands also develop a sense of identification (Peng and Hackley, 2009). However, if political brands do not provide a clear, coherent message and communicate with the citizens and voters, they can be perceived as ambiguous and even lost their brand authenticity (Gurau and Ayadi, 2011; Smith and French, 2009; Smith and Saunders, 1990).

The main argument in political branding research has been going on parallel with the diversifying the range of political brands. As mentioned, political brands are considered as multifaceted and complex and, therefore, difficult to operationalize brands created to differentiate from the competition (Lock and Harris, 1996; Phipps et al., 2010; Pich et al., 2018; Pich and Newman, 2020). In order to be perceived as credible and authentic, political brands should represent competitive advantage and give a clear, coherent message (Gurau and Ayadi, 2011; Smith and Saunders, 1990; Speed et al., 2015). As critical and powerful entities, political brands' positioning and orientation also need to be understood (Needham, 2006; Rawson, 2007; Van Ham, 2001; Wring, 2002). In this respect, the extant literature in political branding divided political brands into a trinity of three components, including the political party, leader and policy (Butler et al., 2011; Davies and Mian, 2010; O'Cass and Voola, 2011; Pich and Newman, 2020; Smith, 2009; Smith and French, 2009; 2011; Speed et al., 2015; Speed et al., 2015). For Pich and Newman (2020), using the trinity components, policy, leader, and the

political party, makes it easy for researchers to "*make sense of different types of political brands and serves to ground studies*" (p. 5).

Between them, political branding literature has overwhelmingly focused on political party brands. With the growing interest in branding in political marketing, White and de Chernatony (2002) explored political party as a brand that develops emotional and functional attributes to the citizens and voters. Bale (2008) noted that "*political parties are complex organisations with multiple levels, sites of authority and goals. They are also brands; heuristic short cuts for voters who have little time and little interest in politics*" (p. 280). In this respect, for example, Smith (2009) adopted Aaker's (1997) brand personality model to study British political parties. Drawing on cognitive and psychology learning theory, Smith and French (2009) utilised the associative network model of consumer memory. Smith and French (2009) implied that "*when a party becomes disunited and/or sends conflicting messages to voters, the perceived cohesion of the party brand breaks down, its credibility is lost – and voters are notoriously disinclined to support a disunited party*" (p. 213). Needham (2006), Smith (2001) and Smith and French (2009) discuss that politicians and the party brand are more important than policies and even more effective on voter behaviours. In another study, Phipps et al. (2010) examined brand equity of political parties (Aaker, 1996) in the Australian political context. Similarly, but in a different context, French and Smith (2010) focused on the New Labour Party and UK Conservative Party brand equity from citizens, voters' viewpoints by outlining their relationships with the political party brands.

Another study, Smith (2005), focused on the 2005 UK elections and examined three British political parties' positioning strategies. Baines et al. (2010) pointed out that political brands, more specifically political parties, face a positioning problem if political brands in the political party do not have a discipline. Needham (2005) also noted the ongoing, coherent campaign

model to provide a long-term advantage. Schneider (2004) considered the application of branding theory in politics, including in relevance, identity-oriented management and manifestations. Bale (2008) provided insights into how the UK Conservative Party under David Cameron's leadership changed since he had become the leader in December 2005. In addition to early studies, it is worth noting that Grimmer and Grube (2017), in an Australian context, drew on brand attributes and equity that voters link to political parties. They found that based on contemporary discussions, historical factors play an important role in the voters' mind, which make changing their mind difficult. This creates challenges for political parties when they aim to change their position (Cox and McCubbins, 2005).

Milewicz and Milewicz (2014) identified brands as "*a legitimate element of political environment*" (p. 256). Drawing on Holt's study (2002), political brands are complex and cocreated entities by different actors, such as constituencies, the media and societal events. Since media increase branding' complexity (Holt, 2002), they provide a media-based perspective between these actors. In democratic societies, media has a central role in delivering information during the election period (Spiller and Bergner, 2011). With technological improvements, media has become even the most essential part of the political process. By highlighting the effect of the media, known as the political marketing activities, and that consumers can develop their own context according to media' interpretation (Henneberg and O'Shaughnessy, 2007), Milewicz and Milewicz (2014) focused on how the media presents political brands and how branding can affect political entities' normative level of legitimacy in society. They highlighted that the media could demonstrate political brands' attitudes and behaviours consistent with the brand identity. Thus, the media facilitates political brands level of legitimacy in society.

By focusing on UK politics, Smith and Speed (2011) consider political brands as cultural brands, pointing out that political brands' stability can be observed; thus, political brands utilise competitive advantage in the long run. In this respect, they aimed to explore the longevity of parties in power. They raised the issue that although the UK political system has a unique and appropriate environment, there is a lack of attention paid to the investigation of stability. In this respect, they introduced cultural branding as a factor in developing political stability. Because politics is about values, identity, meanings, society and culture are considered as emotional appeals. In this respect, they mentioned that stability is associated with political parties' emotional appeals rather than functional brand benefits. Subsequently, they found that cultural branding is an appropriate concept for the study of political marketing.

2.3.2. Political Brand Identity

As discussed above, existing studies "*first visit*" or "*revisit*" concepts, theories or frameworks from the field of marketing and beyond, such as equity, reputation, image, engagement and positioning, political psychology and cultural branding perspective (Henneberg and O'Shaughnessy 2007, p. 26). Furthermore, scholars make explicit calls for further research from brand creator's point of view to their own political brands (Billard, 2018; Harris and Lock, 2010; Needham and Smith, 2015; Nielsen, 2016; O'Cass and Voola, 2011; Panigyrakis and Altinay, 2017; Scammell, 2015; Serazio, 2017; Speed et al., 2015). This is important because focusing on a political brand from an internal perspective and drawing on its identity plays an important role in maintaining its long-term survival. Indeed, political brands' identity facilitates providing deep insights into desired brand's values and beliefs, which political brands communicate to citizens and consumers (Cheng and Riffe, 2008; Dahlen et al., 2010; de Chernatony, 2006; Ottovordemgentschenfelde, 2017; Saaksjarvi and Samiee, 2011)

Armannsdottir et al. (2019a) identified brand identity as "*an internally created manifestation created and developed through physical properties such as communication tools and relationships and intangible properties such as actual and desired positioning, core beliefs and a brand's heritage*" (p. 5). Bosch et al. (2006) also noted that brand identity presents the brand's creator desired values and associations and highlights the "*central ideas of a brand and how the brand communicates these ideas to stakeholders*" (de Chernatony, 2007, p. 45). They highlighted the importance of communications and relationships in creating and developing brand identity (Gylling and Lindberg-Repo, 2006; Shepherd, 2005). This points to the idea that brand identity is structured around aspirations, visions and values (Dahlen et al., 2010; Gylling and Lindberg-Repo, 2006; Ronzoni et al., 2018). Additionally, brand identity needs to be durable, consistent, strong and even should be ready to swiftly respond to changing circumstances, such as crises both in the external and internal environment (Alsem and Kostelijk, 2008; Aqeel et al., 2017; Dahlen et al., 2010; Gyling and Lindberg-Repo, 2006). With this respect, brand identity is highlighted as a key approach to creating and strengthening a brand (Aaker, 1996). Therefore, brand identity has been a subject of debate in the field. Similar to political branding evaluation, political brand identity research also focuses on political party brands' identity (French and Smith, 2010; Lees- Marshment, 2005; Nord and Stromback, 2009; O'Cass, 2001; Ormrod, 2007; Pich and Dean, 2015).

In their study, Pich et al. (2014) investigated the internal political brand identity of the U.K. Conservative Party in the 2010 U.K. General Election. Pich et al. (2014) focused on exploring UK Conservative Party members' behaviours towards the development of the Conservative brand, which is characterised by David Cameron. They adopted Kapferer's (2001; 2008) brand prism as a framework and focused on the Conservative brand's different facets from the perspective of the internal perspective. Their study provides insights into the workings of

loyalty in the internal market. They found that the Conservative Party's brand identity is not clear when it comes to its internal stakeholders, and two dimensions of the party's brand identity are problematic. This points to the uniqueness of all dimensions of brand identity. However, to ensure the effectiveness of independent and internal branding effectiveness, understanding and commitment from party leadership members is necessary. According to Morhart et al. (2009), in cases when trust is developed between internal stakeholders, commitment and loyalty on the part of party members are greatly enhanced by effective internal branding. In this respect, Pich, et al. (2014) highlighted the importance of trust across the political party and creating open an environment and two-way communication to develop a mutual understanding. Furthermore, they found that the history of the Conservative Party plays an important role in creating and managing the political party brand. It shapes the internal market engagement and its internal communication.

In another study, Pich and Dean (2015) examined the UK Conservative Party's 'corporate' political brand under the leadership of David Cameron. Their study is based on Pich et al. (2014) study and utilised the UK's Conservative Party brand as the unit of analysis. They noted the inconvenience of applying the Kapferer's brand identity prism on political branding. For them, the brand identity prism was ineffective when it was adopted in its original form. Even though Kapferer's brand identity prism can be utilised by a political brand, various dimensions of the prism must be considered carefully. For example, while the dimensions of the relationship, reflection and self-image could be adapted, although difficult, physique, culture and personality dimensions are much flexible in political branding. Therefore, although they proposed that a "*political brand identity network*" can be utilised to investigate the internal orientation of a brand, their study was restricted to exploring corporate political brand identity. However, Pich and Dean (2015) made a call for studies that provide a deeper understanding of

politicians' brands. Furthermore, they asked how candidates-politicians choose to create, build, and manage their political brand in the long term.

To respond to the call for research on political brands' brand identities, which facilitate understanding of the construction and development of *new* political brands from an *internal relational* perspective, Pich et al. (2018) focused on the Jury Team' party leader perspective, a UK political brand founded in March 2008, later demised. In their exploratory case study, they provided a "*political brand development matrix*", which facilitated flexibility for different political brands. Since media greatly influences branding development (Holt, 2002), they concluded that new party brands face complications. These difficulties manifested as existing political systems, barriers from the media, and managing campaigns. Also, Pich et al. (2018) illustrated the degree of difficulty when building a political party brand: particularly if a political party is self-funded, has a non-existing ideology, and lacks a support base and policy. Drawing on Lees- Marshment's (2005) argument that noted a more strategical approach, this approach consisted of smaller political parties adapting a product-oriented approach and taking advantage of dominant niche positions. Consequently, they highlighted the importance of effective relationships with the media. They criticised that their brand message failed to overcome the established media obstacles. As a result, their failure to communicate a clear political message impede their efforts to overcome the status quo (Nielsen, 2016). This also had an influence on communicating an authentic, credible and distinctive *new* political brand. Pich et al. (2018) call for addressing the construction and management of different political brands, with respect to emerging politicians' brands from their own perspective (Billard, 2018; Jain et al., 2018; Needham and Smith, 2015; O'Cass and Voola, 2011; Panigyrakis and Altinay, 2017; Pich et al., 2018; Scammell, 2015; Serazio, 2017; Speed et al., 2015).

2.3.3. Human Political Brands

Despite the focus on trinity elements of political brands, the real-world application of branding theories (frameworks and concepts to politics) is not only restricted to political parties. The application of political branding can be expanded to the different political products, such as pressure groups, candidates, campaigns, political organisations and politicians (Ahmed et al., 2017; Billard, 2018; Guzman and Sierra, 2009; Peng and Hackley, 2009; Nai and Martinez, 2019; Scammell, 2015; Simons, 2016; Smith, 2001; Smith, 2009; Speed et al., 2015). Even though recent research started to focus on different policy brands, such as cryptocurrencies (Harvey and Branco-Illodo, 2020), political brand communities (Newman, 2020) and political brand communications (Susila et al., 2020), Pich and Newman (2020) made an explicit call for research on different political brands (beyond corporate and local-individual), sub-political brands, new political brands (such as Foodbanks, Bitcoin, political movements, trade unions, Bitcoin etc.), online political brand communities, radical movements, pop-up political brands (such as Vote Leave and Vote Remain – UK Referendum) in various contexts. Moreover, while there is an explicit call for further research on non-human political brands, the interest in human political brands is still growing (Billard, 2018; Davies and Mian, 2010; Guzman et al., 2015; Jain et al., 2018; Pich et al., 2020; Pich and Newman, 2020). Drawing on existing human political brands studies will help to understand the construction of personal political brand identity; therefore, this work will refer to various studies below.

Guzman and Sierra (2009) studied political candidates in the frame of the brand personality model (Aaker, 1997). They viewed political candidates and parties as the brands themselves. They also utilised the brand personality scale to investigate candidates' brands image in Mexican Elections in 2006. However, Aaker' s brand personality model was scrutinised given its vagueness for being too general. In this respect, Guzman and Sierra (2009) blend the Aaker's

scale with Caprara et al.'s (2001) brand personality scale to build a more comprehensive and practical scale to examine the brand image of candidates. Based on their scale, the Mexican presidential candidates were investigated through their personalities. Consequently, this led to the development of brand image framework established in the brand personality literature (Aaker, 1997; Caprara et al., 2001). Furthermore, Guzman and Sierra's (2009) study provide a useful basis for examining how and why candidates are viewed as brands by citizens. Guzman and Sierra (2009) also ended up making a call for further research in this area.

Drawing on a different context, Jain et al. (2018) investigates political leaders' brand personality from the BJP Party brand (Bharatiya Janta Party). They aimed to develop a comprehensive framework by examining brand personality and its applications to the area of political branding. The resulting framework is integral to the building of political brand personality. They found that the success of the polls relied on a strong political brand personality. They noticed a variety of characteristics that shaped the desirable political leader. For example, characteristics, such as sincerity, cheerfulness, openness, agreeableness, competence, friendliness, energy, emotional stability and conscientiousness were clearly connected to political leaders' personalities. They also observed when leaders displayed the mentioned qualities in a strong political strategy, their likability as political leaders were enhanced. On the other hand, they highlighted the least desired characteristics in a political leader. Overall, the study of Jain et al. (2018) highlights the importance of leaders' personality characteristics in shaping political success.

In Smith (2009) study of political brands in the UK, Aaker's brand personality framework was dismissed for being invalid. However, Guzman et al.'s (2015) study utilised the model and stated its validity in the Mexican political context. This variation in results is probably because of the contextual difference of political systems and the focused different political brands.

Smith (2009), in his study, focused on studying political parties as brands, while Guzman et al. (2015) examined political candidates as brands. Based on Aaker's (1997) model, Guzman et al. (2015) measured the self-brand image and the brand image of presidential candidates in the Mexico 2006 election. They found there is a close relationship between the way voters perceive themselves and the political candidates. This study revealed that the heritage of candidates' plays an important role in the way voters perceive political brand images.

Billard (2018) analysed the presidential campaign run by Clinton and Trump in 2016 in the framework of political brand networking and participants' aesthetics. He investigated how technological improvements changed the communication and strengthened the voters and citizens to participate in the brand co-creation and transformation. Another study, Davies and Mian (2010) explored this relationship between the reputation of political party and leader. They found leader's reputation is directly associated with the party reputation. Furthermore, Davies and Mian (2010) provided insights into the media's effect on leaders. They emphasized that media is controlled by different counterparts and political parties. They also noted that traditional media platforms, such as newspapers, radio and TVs, are not neutral on political issues, which tend to create direct society's perceptions on political leaders and parties. In this respect, political parties and leaders are recommended to take place in more neutral and friendly media. Like Fournier and Eckhardt' (2019) hubris characteristics of personal brands, Davies and Mian (2010) point to the idea that media can build a *"reputational bubble"* for successful political brands that political leaders have a greater belief in their infallibility that may probably eventually erupted (p. 346).

Indeed, Marland and Wagner (2019) provide a deep insight into the relationship between political party discipline and personal political brands in the context of Canada. They noted that candidates are acknowledged as brand champions or ambassadors of the political party

brand. In other words, Marland and Wagner's study (2019) provides insights to understand candidates and legislators' negotiations in the political party. The study found that legislators and candidates are asked to use more offline communication tools to echo political party's messages and perform *black arts*, which is potential liability of politicians through online media platforms. In this respect, their study highlights the importance of coherent communication. Interestingly, legislators and candidates are portrayed with a fear of being on the wrong side of the media. Thus, legislators and candidates tend to be silenced or stick to the party's and leader's messages. Thus, legislators and candidates can be viewed as a *franchise* of the corporate party brand, and they have to be disciplined from the corporate party brand to be on message. To eliminate conflicts and inconsistency, political parties should develop a balance between individual political brands' authenticity and political parties' authority. Marland and Wagner (2019) mentioned that sticking to the message lines can be a threat to individual brands' authenticity and even impede their differentiation from competitors and rivals. Moreover, they found that political actors tend to use sports analogies to clarify their approach to party politics, such as leader is the trainer, politicians and other people in the party contribute to the play with their role and make efforts as a team to win as a group. As a result, candidates and legislators have to be in line with the political party and the leader.

Furthermore, Marland and Wagner's (2019) work provides important insights into understanding minority candidates attitudes and behaviours as brand ambassadors. They found that sexual and racial minorities do desire to be candidates and that they are even not reluctant to be brand ambassadors for a political party. During the election period, minority politicians desire to voice the different groups' interests loudly. When it is appropriate, minority candidates believe their different identity dimensions, such as ethnicity, race and sexual orientation, should be reflected in their campaigns.

Falkowski and Jabłonska (2019) noted that developing favourable associations, framing messages, and imagery is strategic in a dynamic process of political brand management. This is because successful political policies, campaigns, messages need to develop relevant, framed and clear communication in order to gain attention from the voters and citizens (Falkowski and Jabłonska, 2019). They also mentioned that when the campaigns, policies and consistent messages attract voters, a successful and strong candidate image can enhance the voters' intention for both the political party and the candidate. Falkowski and Jabłonska (2019) conclude with a call for more research on the political brand management process to which this study will contribute.

In the context of Indonesia, by focusing on developing trust and help, Susila et al. (2019) study investigated how young voters viewed the candidates' messages and imagery during the election campaign. Susila et al.'s research (2019) responds to the call for research in understanding how political brands engage and communicate with voters. Susila et al. (2019) found that political communication plays an important role in building trust. Since being trustworthy ensures that political brands are perceived as believable and authentic, political brands become able to mobilise voters and citizens. In this respect, they utilise both intangible and tangible components to develop their communication.

To generate an understanding of the relationship between credibility and a political leader's image, Jain and Ganesh (2019) revealed that credibility is a continuum, which impacts the effectiveness of the political leader's ability to create strong bonds with voters. This also affects the credibility of the leader in the context of India. Interestingly, Jain and Ganesh (2019), in their study, argued that leaders need to focus on their crisis management strategy throughout with its multi-stakeholders to develop its political brand image in the minds of voters. They also stated that to create a credible, consistent political brand image, politicians and

practitioners should both adopt a professional political persona and also need humility, personal characteristics and relatable personality to communicate with voters and citizens. In their secondary research, Jain and Ganesh's (2019) made a call for longitudinal research on the political brand image credibility in different contexts.

Schneider (2004) discussed the existing research in political marketing and examined the brand from both external and internal perspectives. In this respect, Schneider's research increased the understanding of the application of branding to political contexts. For him, future research in political marketing should acknowledge the "*transfer potential from instruments developed for one branding context to others*" (p. 60). In fact, scholars recently started to blend brand identity and personal branding and apply them to the sub-discipline of political branding, to which this study aims to contribute. Thus, the next section will discuss the existing literature on personal branding.

2.4. Personal Branding

Keller (2003; 2008) particularly acknowledged that branding is appropriate to be applied to different kinds of products, such as shops, services, ideas, organisations, physical items, people or places. Another example is de Chernatony and McDonald (2003), who identified brands as recognisable entities, places, services or persons, enhanced in such a way that the consumer or user perceives relevant unique added values which match their needs most closely. With respect to the discussion of branding application to different entities, branding concepts have been transferred onto other entities like the monarchy (e.g., Balmer et al., 2006), universities (e.g., Gray et al., 2003), locations (e.g., Hankinson, 2001; Kavaratzis, 2004; Morgan and Pritchard, 2004) and religions (e.g., Rein et al., 1999; Shepherd, 2004). Scholars have also argued the potential for people as brands (e.g., de Chernatony and McDonald, 2003; Keller,

2003). As its application to politics, branding application to people emerged as an important issue in marketing. Kotler and Levy (1969) discussed that individuals could be marketed much like products, stating: "*Personal marketing is an endemic human activity, from the employee trying to impress his boss to the statesman trying to win the support of the public*" (p. 12). They also noted that "*no attempt is made to examine whether the principles of 'good' marketing in traditional product areas are transferable to the marketing of services, persons and ideas*" (p. 10).

Personal branding is a burgeoning area of research that emerged in the early 2000s. Some scholars noted the origins of the personal concept introduced by Goffman in 1959 (e.g., Khedher, 2015; Philbrick and Cleveland, 2015). In his prominent book, Goffman (1959) argued that people are actors in everyday life on a stage, each playing different kinds of roles which are considered and reacted by audiences. For him, there is a *front stage* and *backstage* similar to theatrical performances. In that way, he positioned personal branding as both backstage and onstage activity, including reflection, feedback-seeking, and impression management to affect others' perceptions. While these discussions were ongoing about personal branding, the term of personal branding is popularized by Tom Peters (1997) in his article "*The Brand Called You*," who wrote: "*We are CEOs of our own companies: Me Inc. To be in business today, our most important job is to be head marketer for the brand called You*" (Peters, 1997). Peter, who coined the original idea of personal branding, generally focused on applying branding to individuals and their conduct in business. For Peter Montoya Inc., personal brand consultant, a personal brand is identified as "*a personal identity that stimulates precise, meaningful perceptions in its audience about the values and qualities that person stands for*" (2003-2005). Another consultant Arruda (2001-2005) noted that personal brands need to be consistent,

constant and clear about the qualities and values represented by the personal brand. In this respect, it needs to be noted that personal branding has been mostly discussed by practitioners.

In academia, when people were focused on possible brands, early studies mostly focused on the celebrity brands, such as Madonna (e.g., Arruda, 2001-2005; Rein et al., 1999; Thomson, 2006) and sports personalities, such as David Beckham (Shepherd, 2005). Personal branding is strategically employed by CEO brands (Bendisch et al., 2013). Scholars are also considered as personal brands competing for entry into the job market (Close et al., 2011), different professions and occupations (Parmentier et al., 2013) and political leaders (Hughes, 2007; Omojola, 2008).

Although personal branding emerged in the field of marketing (Lair et al., 2005), it has been extended to different disciplines, such as entrepreneurship and the health sector, marketing-communications self-help management, employability (Gehl, 2011; Green, 2016; Harris and Rae, 2011; Lair et al., 2005; Philbrick and Cleveland, 2015; Resnick et al., 2016; Shepherd, 2005; Thompson-Whiteside et al., 2018). Furthermore, there are different related concepts that were consistently mentioned alongside personal branding, such as human branding (Bendisch et al., 2013; Close et al., 2011; Thomson, 2006), image and impression management (Leary and Kowalski, 1990; Roberts, 2005), reputation (Noble et al., 2010; Schlosser et al., 2017) and self-promotion (Molyneux, 2015; Bolino et al., 2016). This variety of disciplines and concepts lead personal branding to be often interchangeably referred to as celebrity branding (Dion and Arnould, 2011; Kerrigan et al., 2011), people branding (Bendisch et al., 2013; Parmentier et al., 2013) and human branding (Moulard et al., 2015; Thomson, 2006). In addition, *"narrative identity"*, *"self-promotion"*, *"self-presentation"*, *"self-branding"*, *"self-marketing"* and *"impression management"* are used interchangeably (Brooks and Anumudu, 2016; Chen, 2013;

Marland, 2016; Marwick and Boyd, 2011; Resnick et al., 2016; Shepherd, 2005; Speed et al., 2015). In this respect, there is no consensus on the conceptualisation of personal brands.

Despite the diversity in the field from many aspects, scholars recently attempted to conceptualise personal branding as a "*process of developing, harnessing and classifying personal information and providing a comprehensive narrative for others to easily understand one's identity*" (Jacobson 2020, p. 1). In this respect, personal branding is defined as a strategy that focuses on construction, management and communication of the desired identity and mechanism, which design authentic self to their target market and which could be differentiated from competitors and rivals (Casprini et al., 2020; Johnson, 2017; Misra and Walters, 2016; Pluntz and Pras, 2020; Vallas and Christin, 2018).

 "High Visibility" by Rein, Kotler and Stoller's (1997) work is considered to be one of the earliest works on personal branding, which addresses the growing competition among people who desire visibility in their field. The book pointed to the context of the USA, where political branding has received growing attention in different kinds of professions. Although various samples are presented, these samples are restricted in terms of the personal brands, which are mainly celebrities in the entertainment industry in the USA. However, their study contributed to the understanding of the transformation process. That is, they provide strategies for developing professional brands adopting the four Ps and other well-known frameworks in marketing. As one of the earliest studies, Rein et al.' s study provided some important insights for personal brands.

Another, earlier work, Lair et al. (2005) identified personal branding as it involves "*...concepts of product development and promotion are used to market persons for entry into or transition within the labour market*" (p. 309). According to Gehl (2011), personal branding is important

because "*it supplies an individualized approach to dealing with précarité*" (p. 1). Similarly, Lair et al. (2005) argued that in the late 1990s, personal branding emerged as a result of the economic forces that affected the branding of products as a communication strategy. Therefore, as marketers put efforts to present their products, branding is begun to adopt by job seekers in the highly competitive employment environment. In this respect, they examined contemporary capitalism's dynamics and drew on the flexible demand and self-marketing strategies, thereby undermine a grounded sense of self. Lair et al. (2005) concluded by making an explicit call for research on personal branding with a critical focus on both its impacts on individuals and the power relations they instantiate based on social categories, such as race, class and gender.

In his study, Shepherd (2005) defined personal branding as "*essentially an attention-getting device, and is frequently sold as the key to helping the aspiring professional to achieve competitive advantage in a crowded marketplace*' (p. 597). Shepherd (2005) presented the dilemma between a consumer-oriented approach and personal branding research. In his work, Shepherd (2005) adapted the theoretical basis of personal branding and self-marketing. He demonstrated different kinds of challenges of conceptualising personal branding, including conceptual, practical, and ethical problems. In this regard, this study demonstrated some of the difficulties facing higher education when it aims to support marketers to help them brand themselves in order to become more successful in the employment market. Shepherd (2005) argued that there were eight challenges for individuals, such as the sensitive fit between the individuals' and corporate brand, personal branding ethics and the monitoring of personal brands in the long run. One of the important challenges introduced is brand conflict. He talked about the fact that there is no clear differentiation between marketing one's organisation and themselves for people who are potentially accepted as personal brands, such as entrepreneurs. He mentioned that personal brands should not have a conflict with corporate brands. Although

these challenges emerge in a business context, they may create difficulty for those in the business world wishing to have their voice heard. Although this study will not aim to answer all of the presented challenges, these challenges will enhance awareness of the examination of personal political brands.

By focusing on the concept of *human branding*, Thomson (2006) investigated recent developments in self-determination research to identify why and how consumers create strong attachments to human brands, a term that indicates to any well-known persona who is also the marketing communications efforts' subjects. Although his research did not focus on the brand creator perspective, it provides insights into understanding how a personal brand should be created and managed by the creators of brands. It helps to understand the consumers' expectations of personal brands. Thomson (2006) mentioned that slowly and cautiously created authenticity can provide personal brands a long-term competitive advantage.

Echoing Shepherd's (2005) personal engineering challenge, Thomson (2006) indicated that when personal brands are perceived in a non-performing role, they should be careful not to be perceived as acting. Otherwise, consumers may feel manipulated and view personal brands with a lack of credibility. In this respect, personal brands should avoid being viewed as *pretenders*. Thus, Berman and Sperling (1994) highlighted the importance of regular and quality interaction among the personal brand and consumers, which creates strong bonds and even reduces uncertainty. With direct, regular and quality interactions, consumers are more likely to perceive the personal brand as approachable, increasing the chance for feelings of authenticity, relatedness and autonomy of their brand and can even reduce hierarchy (Silvera and Austad, 2004). Therefore, personal brands can have a routine, consistent interaction through online communication platforms (Thomson, 2006). For Thomson (2006), if a personal brand assures a routine, quality interaction with her/his consumers, consumers can pay more

attention to the personal brand and develop conditions under which strong attachments are likely to grow.

Bendisch et al. (2013) examined the image and reputation of CEO brands from the organisational and stakeholder perspective. Thus, their study contributed to personal branding literature by addressing the gap between the intended identity, reputation and image. They found that CEO brands are complex and related to the organisations' brands, where the reputation and identity of a CEO brand are interdependent. Due to the human nature of the brand, CEO brands display difficulties from the brand-creator perspective. Of all CEO brands' components, personality is affected less than other brand identity components. When CEO brand personality is perceived positively, consumers increase their level of loyalty and trust (Fournier, 1994). Bendisch et al. (2013) noted that although changing the brand personality of a CEO brand is complex and difficult, CEO brands are characterised by their flexibility and easy to adapt features. Thus, CEOs continue to build and rebuild their identities through changing circumstances. The need to direct and control their brand identity to achieve their different responsibilities as a CEO and satisfy the stakeholders' expectations in the external and internal environment can cause role stress for CEO brands. This undesirable situation may end up with CEO brands' undermining the value of their brand. Bendisch et al. (2013) highlighted that this potential conflict between brand identity and personal brand is unique for personal brands.

Fournier and Eckhardt (2019) investigated the distinct characteristics of personal brands. By investigating archival and secondary data, their study focused on how the personal brand of Martha Stewart is performed in different media over time. For Fournier and Eckhardt (2019), because brand and person are mutually interdependent, inseparably linked but not identical, unifying brands and persons is difficult. In this respect, they characterised a person with

mortality, *unpredictability*, *hubris* and *social embeddedness,* which can negatively affect their interdependent relationship and cause imbalance and inconsistency. As the first characteristic of the personal brand is *mortality*, i.e., the person in the human brand will die one day, they found that *hubris* is an important characteristic that impedes effective decision-making due to the threat of prioritizing the person's own self over the brand, thereby putting the personal brand system out of balance and at risk. In addition, personal brands are found risky because of the *unpredictability* of human nature that can also affect the brand's authenticity. Fournier and Eckhardt (2019), importantly, mentioned that human brands are *socially embedded*. Echoing Rein et al.'s (1997) findings, they found that personal brands show presence within complex webs of relationships. That is, personal brands are surrounded by the inner circle that knows the real person behind the brand, such as family, friends, colleagues and media, whose professionality is to disclose the person behind the brand. In this respect, personal brands cannot escape, control or ignore their webs of families. They also noted that personal brands suffer the increased possibility of *undesirable events*, including death, injury as well as potential threats of crisis and scandals. In this respect, personal brands are considered risky; thus, public relations and crisis management cannot be separated from brand management.

2.5. Personal Political Brand Identity

Personal brands are created through both tangible dimensions, such as physical appearance, style, offline and online communications and activities, and also intangible dimensions, such as values, lived experiences, charisma, life stories, apparent authenticity and authority (Armannsdottir et al., 2019a; Chen, 2013; Gehl, 2011; Green, 2016). With the progress made in the political branding area, research started to investigate the explicit call for further research on the internal perspective of political brands by focusing on candidate-politician political brands (Billard, 2018; Jain et al., 2018; Harris and Lock, 2010; Needham and Smith, 2015;

Nielsen, 2016; O'Cass and Voola, 2011; Panigyrakis and Altinay, 2017; Phipps et al., 2010; Scammell, 2015; Speed et al., 2015).

In this respect recently, Armannsdottir et al. (2019b) suggested a strategic approach for co-branding which could utilise the conceptualisation of candidate-politician brands. They defined the term "*political co-brands*" as a "*system of brands*" that emerged from the combination of two existing political brands. By building on the work of Pich and Dean (2015), they showed the creation and management of political co-brand identity over time and investigated the congruency between the political corporate brand and political co-brand. Thomson (2006) highlighted the importance of a respectful, legitimate, consistent and authentic fit among these two partners. Co-branding strategically aims to exchange desired qualities, imagery and associations from both existing brands and the new compound brand (Grebosz-Krawczyk and Pointet, 2017). Thus, all partners can facilitate opportunities and positive outcomes of this process (Baumgarth, 2018; Leuthesser et al., 2003). Therefore, Armannsdottir et al. (2019b) investigated the characteristics of the "*candidate-politician brand*" and "*corporate party brand*", which are combined to construct an authentic brand identity (Abratt and Motlana, 2002; Aqeel et al., 2017; Baumgarth, 2018; Besharat and Langan, 2014; Washburn et al., 2000). They provided insight into each political co-brand and presented both incoherency and consistency within the corporate *conservative* political brand. They found that the political co-brand identities were structured around individuals' ideologies, beliefs, values and past experiences aligned with corporate pragmatic values and "*broad church*" historical ideologies, which in turn co-create the authentic desired brand identity (p. 725).

Following Armannsdottir et al.'s work (2019b) on political co-brand identity, two recent studies Armannsdottir et al. (2019a) and Pich et al. (2020) blend two streams of commercial branding theory, namely brand identity and personal branding, to explore the construction and

management of personal political brand identity which serves as the most relevant theoretical perspective to frame the exploration.

Armannsdottir et al. (2019a) investigated the personal brand identities of two Icelandic Members of Parliament from an internal perspective. They suggested that the theory of personal branding facilitate to conceptualize personal brands of politicians. In this respect, they build on Philbrick and Cleveland's (2015) six staged *personal brand auditing framework* to evaluate and audit politicians' personal political brand identities from their own perspective. They found that personal political brand identities are structured around politicians' ideologies, personalities, key issues and political values (Johnson, 2017). As discussed in the brand identity literature, they also focused on a clear, unique brand with its values and visions (Bosch et al., 2006; Dahlen et al., 2010).

Armannsdottir et al. (2019a) also highlighted personality traits, such as positivity, diligence and hard-working which portray them as authentic. Interestingly, they pointed out that politics is not perceived as a family-friendly job; politicians indicated that they need a helpful partner, specifically if they have children. To be a desired political brand, they stated the need to be approachable to respond to all requests and all emails from the public. They also highlighted the importance of communication. Although there is clear and consistent communication between the politicians' values and their brand identity, they noted that politicians are open to developing it. They also found that politicians rely on online rather than offline channels. They found that politicians share their lives explicitly. When it comes to the management of personal brand identity, monitoring personal political brand is found difficult as it may end up with losing personal brands' own authentic identity (Armannsdottir et al., 2019a). Subsequently, they highlighted that personal political brand identities are dynamic and will continue to change and evolve as politicians get more feedback from their environments. Interestingly, although

they did not focus on the effect of identity dimensions, such as gender or age, on their political brands, their study provides some insights about how identity dimensions and their intersection will be a challenge to politicians in the coming years.

Similary, Pich et al. (2020) used personal branding as a theoretical approach to explore the construction and management process of Guernsey's politicians' personal political brands. By adopting a phenomenological approach, they focused on the politicians' personal political brand identity strategies to create, develop and communicate their own brands in a non-party political system. For them, legacy and experience, the coherency of personal values, goals and aspirations, continuous brand building, visibility and presence should come together to develop a successful and authentic personal political brand. Personality politics is considered a key trait for success (Pich et al., 2020). Echoing Speed et al.'s (2015) study, Pich et al. (2020) positioned Guernsey's politicians' personal political brands on local prominence, heritage and authority. They highlighted the importance of indirect support of family, friends and existing networks of possession of an established profile to manage a personal political brand. They added that inexperienced politicians like experienced ones applied various strategies to create, manage and communicate their desired identities (Ind et al., 2017; Vallas and Christin, 2018). Therefore, they found that Guernsey's experienced and inexperienced politicians develop their "*promise of value*" (Philbrick and Cleveland, 2015, p. 182) in a non-party political system. However, experienced politicians are appeared to have a more competitive advantage over inexperienced politicians as experienced politicians utilise their experiences of successful policies in office, thereby these experiences will add to their personal political brand (Kaneva and Klemmer, 2016).

2.6. Consumer Branding

This section considers the "*transfer potential*" of consumer branding frameworks and concepts that have not yet been applied to the area of political branding (Schneider, 2004, p. 60). Thus, this section presents three concepts, including brand heritage, brand resilience and brand legitimacy. A glossary table with these key concepts can be seen in appendix A, see pp. 264-267.

2.6.1. Brand Heritage

Hudson (2011) argued that brand heritage is an emerging concept. In marketing studies, the past is considered as a source that can increase a selling proposition (Chronis, 2005; Dion and Borraz, 2015; Goulding, 2000; Penaloza, 2000). If a brands' history is properly monitored, it can become a competitive advantage for brands (Preece et al., 2019). Heritage increases consumers' familiarity with the brands and tolerance of uncertain situations, such as the possibility of failure, faced by brands (Aaker, 1996). As a concept, brand heritage is used with brand authenticity (Grayson and Martinec, 2004; Leigh et al., 2006; Napoli et al., 2014), nostalgia in advertising (Merchant and Rose, 2013) and positioning (Hudson, 2011). Furthermore, heritage plays an essential role in developing brand legitimacy (Kates, 2004; Suddaby et al., 2017). For example, Kates (2004) found that consumers usually felt comfortable with the brands and viewed them as legitimate on normative grounds due to their long histories. Therefore, brand heritage will be an important concept for personal political brands.

To construct the brand's heritage, the brand identity, which is congruent with the brand heritage (Lowenthal, 1998), brands' attitude toward time, and the brand stakeholders' acceptance of heritage need to be considered (Pecot and De Barnier, 2017). As studied in marketing studies in relation to legitimacy mentioned above, brand heritage is understood through its acceptance

by the various internal stakeholders: family, employees, managers and owners. Brand heritage also facilitates the collective past, which is consistent with the brand identity (Schroeder et al., 2015; Pecot and De Barnier, 2017).

The source of brand heritage, called brand inheritance, is associated with what the brand provides about its own past. Urde et al. (2017) stated that brand inheritance includes a static set of both tangible, such as archives, physical objects, buildings and old advertisements, and intangible assets, such as the figure of a founder and workers' know-how that brand creators and managers have received from their predecessors.

Urde et al. (2007) stated that brand heritage associates the concept to five elements of different kinds, such as track record, core values, the belief that history is important, longevity and use of symbols. However, studies in brand heritage mostly focused on a mixture of traditions, historical roots, stability and continuity (Balmer and Greyser, 2006; Hakala et al., 2011) and the linkage of longevity and stability (Merchant and Rose, 2013). In this respect, Pecot and De Barnier (2017) proposed synthesising the elements of brand heritage around visible elements that are commonly used in brand management. For them, brand heritage is identified as a "*set of symbols and values that reinforce the identity of the brand and express its anchoring in the past and the continuity amongst past, present, and future that characterizes the concept of heritage*" (p. 77). Thus, Pecot and De Barnier (2017) indicated that the longevity and stability dimensions' combination provide a deep understanding of the brand's heritage, a point that will be used in this study.

For Preece et al. (2019), "*a brand achieves longevity when it is able to deploy strategies that prolong its life in the face of entropy*" (p. 331). Hudson (2011) discussed that many important brands, such as companies, products or corporate brands, survive beyond a single human

generation. From the identity-related perspective, the longevity dimension cannot be understood as a measure of brands' real age (Pecot and De Barnier, 2017). To achieved longevity, brands should survive for a long time (Hoeffler and Keller, 2003). Similar to longevity, the stability dimension is also not dependent on the brands' real age (Pecot and De Barnier, 2017). The stability element reflects the "*timelessness*" (p. 78) and combines both externally and internally the management of the brand's promises and values (Urde et al., 2007).

2.6.2. Brand Resilience

In assessing the unexpected incidents that threaten the survival of brands, most past research focused on concepts, such as brand crisis (Dawar and Lei, 2009; Dawar and Pillutla, 2000; Greyser, 2009; Dutta and Pullig, 2011), brand failure, product harm crisis, brand scandal, and brand misconduct interchangeably (Cheng et al., 2012; Dawar and Pillutla, 2000; Huber et al., 2010; Roehm and Tybout, 2006). Brand risk is also looked at by scholars, such as Hsu et al. (2016), who bridge firm value and the marketing strategy by evaluating different kinds of brand architecture strategies on risky situations; thereby, they highlighted four types of brand risk: brand dilution risk, brand stretch risk, brand reputation risk, brand cannibalization risk.

However, the marketing literature on brand crisis and risk management evaluates unexpected or disturbing events differently. For example, studies that consider brands as effective tools for risk management mostly focused on creating a strong brand to reduce the risk and included all efforts to prevent or absorb threats before they occur (Fournier and Srinivasan, 2018). Furthermore, crisis management focuses on developing an effective response strategy to respond appropriately in order to protect the brand in crisis and restore trust (Dawar and Pillutla, 2000; Yannopoulou et al., 2011). Overall, both brand crisis and risk management aim

to impede unexpected situations which may create a threat due to its possible short and long run negative impacts on businesses (Van Heerde et al., 2007; Xie and Peng, 2009).

While the debate in branding literature is continuing by focusing on crisis and risk management in relation to unexpected and disturbing events, crisis, risks and resilience are considered to be related in an essential way (Williams et al., 2017). For example, in organisation studies, Boin et al. (2010) stated that the quality of an organisation's response to the crisis "*critically depends on the capacity to enhance improvisation, coordination, flexibility and endurance qualities that we typically associate with resilience*" (p. 11). Resilience emerged as an integrated concept to provide support for organisations and individuals that are experiencing difficulties in dealing with the crisis, risks, shocks and stresses (Boin et al., 2010; Cooper et al., 2013). In this way, resilience seems to be a broader concept than both risk and crisis management. For example, Peterson and Seligman (2004) identified resilience as an "*umbrella term*" by drawing on its broader characteristic for individuals (p. 78). Therefore, although there are various definitions of resilience, it is mostly defined as "*the developable capacity to rebound or bounce back from adversity, conflict and failure or even positive events, progress and increased responsibility*" (Luthans, 2002, p. 702).

Resilience has been investigated in various disciplines over time, including ecology (Holling, 1973), psychology (Bonanno, 2004; Masten, 2013; Waller, 2001), sociology (Evans and Reid, 2013), the organisational studies stated above (Linnenluecke and Griffiths, 2015; Weick and Sutcliffe, 2001). However, resilience studies are rare in marketing. In one of the existing studies, Ball and Lamberton (2015) highlighted the importance of consumer resilience in consumer research, an unrecognised element in the successful consumer experience. Recently, Szmigin et al. (2020) focused on different kinds of sociological and psychological resilience theories found relevant to the marketing field.

In contrast to the discipline of marketing, the resilience concept has a long tradition in psychology, with an increasing interest in personal resilience (Lazarus, 1993; Rice and Liu, 2016; Rutter, 1987). According to the traditional view, personal resilience is a stable attribute (Linley and Joseph, 2005; Luthans et al., 2006; Luthar and Cicchetti, 2000; Masten and Obradovic, 2006). This perspective of resilience argues that resilience is a combination of sources and assets within the individuals and their environment that boost the individual's capacity to adapt in the face of adversity which "*typically encompasses negative life circumstances that are known to be statistically associated with adjustment difficulties*" (Fletcher and Sarkar, 2013; Luthar, 2006; Luthar and Cicchetti, 2000, p. 858; Luthar et al., 2000; Schoon, 2006; Ungar, 2012). Therefore, personal resilience conceptualised resilience as an outcome of the processes that underlie effective human responses to adversities, including gene and environment interaction (Rutter, 2012). While context and psychological mechanisms facilitate resilience, it is highlighted that adverse life circumstances impede positive adaptations (Fletcher and Sarkar, 2013).

However, Youssef and Luthans (2007) stated that resilience is related to both proactive and reactive responses, including learning, recovery and growth. Rutter (1981) stated that "*if circumstances change, resilience alters*'' (p. 317). Based on this differing perspective from the traditional one, Luthar et al. (2000) defined resilience as a "*dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity*" (p. 543). In this respect, although resilience is associated with personality traits, it is not a stable characteristic (Cooper et al., 2013). It may emerge at differing circumstances in different periods of life domains. In turn, it may have both a strengthening and sensitising effect (Cooper et al., 2013; Coutu 2002; Rutter, 2012; Szmigin et al., 2020). Waller (2001) also highlighted the importance of strong interactions between individuals and their environment to develop resilience. Therefore,

resilience is an individual capacity that improves over time in the context of individuals and their environment interactions (Egeland et al., 1993).

Resilience facilitates to accommodate situations positively, from daily routines and difficulties to major troubles. For Rutter (1987), psychological resilience is the "*positive role of individual differences in people's response to stress and adversity*" (p.316). Similar to Rutter, research related to resilience at the individual level found that individuals' resilience is linked to the range of positive attitudes and behaviours, including self-esteem (Kidd and Shahar, 2008), self-efficacy (Gu and Day, 2007), spirituality (Bogar and Hulse-Killacky, 2006), social support and role models (Haglund et al., 2007), extraversion (Campbell-Sills et al., 2006), positive emotions (Tugade et al., 2004), hardiness (Bonanno, 2004) and positive affect (Zautra et al., 2005). Echoing Waller (2001) mentioned above, while psychological sources play an important role in collective coping with adversities (Bartfield and Collins, 2017), social support and the quality of interpersonal relations positively affect individual resilience (Tugade et al., 2004; Haglund et al., 2007). Furthermore, in resilience research, coping strategies, such as self-distancing, self-talk, mental time-travelling, wise-reasoning play an important role in dealing with adversities (e.g., Bogar and Hulse-Killacky, 2006; Clauss-Ehlers, 2008; Kross et al., 2005; Kross and Ayduk, 2017; Leipold and Greve, 2009; Sinclair and Wallston, 2004; Tugade et al., 2004).

Another kind of resilience is also identified for professionals, career resilience. Career resilience emerged as a combination of self-efficacy, dependency and risk orientation in London's (1983) motivation theory. More recently, career resilience is conceptualised as a combination of self-reliance, receptivity to change and indifference to conventional sources of career success (Bimrose and Hearne, 2012; Coetzee et al., 2015; Lyons et al., 2015; Van Vuuren and Fourie, 2000). Instead of focusing on the interaction between the individual and

the context, studies in career resilience acknowledged resilience as a quality of the individual (e.g., Rutter, 1987; Rutter, 2012). In other words, career resilience cannot be independent of the professional context of its occurrence. In this way, career resilience differs from individual resilience; thus, an individual does not need to possess all of career resilience characteristics to be considered resilient (Van Vouuren and Fourie, 2000).

Scholars also focused on social resilience and investigated how social systems respond to adversity, monitor the changes and the structural transformation in society (Folke, 2006; Koos et al., 2017). In social resilience, social sources and outcomes in developing resilience can lead to "*changes in market demand and transformed activities and solidarities*" (Koos et al., 2017, p. 363). According to Kamakura and Du (2011), when individuals develop social resilience, they can respond in the face of a crisis to social changes in their context and reduce their consumption. Drawing on social resilience, studies focused on different countries to explore consumers' responses to long-term economic crises (Alonso et al., 2017; Boost and Meier, 2017; Castilhos et al., 2017; Szmigin et al., 2020). Recently, drawing on Golubchikov's (2011) conceptualisation of resilience, Szmigin et al. (2020) developed persistent resilience to investigate European consumers' responses to the long-term effects of austerity. Rather than bouncing back from the adversity (Luthans, 2002), their study conceptualised persistent resilience in a different way to the previous concepts of resilience. Szmigin et al. (2020) argued that even though bouncing back is an effective way to conceptualise resilience responses to unexpected events, such as earthquakes or tornados (Baker and Baker, 2014), austerities differ in terms of the types of difficulties and longevity. In this respect, austerities can require a different conceptualisation from which to examine people's viewpoints, attitudes and behaviours. Therefore, these challenges may have a long term influence and that if individuals

accept and change their way of consuming, it may continue, even when the circumstances change.

2.6.3. Brand Legitimacy

Brands are "*social objects and socially constructed*" (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001, p. 427). They are formed, experienced and changed in social environments (Harris and de Chernatony, 2001; White and de Chernatony, 2002). Consumers often judge brands by the congruence between multiple individuals and social evaluations (Kozinets, 2001). When consumers judge a brand's consumption as appropriate, it is acknowledged as legitimate (Kates, 2004; Kozinets, 2001; Luedicke et al., 2010). There is a lack of research investigating the legitimacy of different types of brands and in different contexts (Handelman and Arnold, 1999; Kates, 2004). However, it is explicitly stated that brands need to be legitimate, and consumer researchers need to reconsider the conceptualisation of the brand in relation to the concept of legitimacy (Kates, 2004). Milewicz and Milewicz (2014) indicated that "*brands are a legitimate element of political environments*" (p. 256). Although some scholars identified political brands with the idea of being legitimate, there is no attempt to implicate brand legitimacy with political branding.

Although legitimacy is a concept whose relevance is emphasised in marketing, it is still a growing area of research for brands. Research on legitimacy emerged in institutional theory and has become prominent in management and organisation studies (Harmon et al., 2015; Suddaby et al., 2017). Previous consumer studies have investigated how marginalized consumers (Kates, 2004; Sandikci and Ger, 2010; Scaraboto and Fischer, 2013) strive to attain legitimacy on relational ground. Other studies have also examined how academic fields (Coskuner-Balli, 2013), product categories, such as gambling (Humphreys, 2010a; 2010b),

cultural products (Coskuner-Balli and Ertimur, 2016), marketing activities (Ardley and Quinn, 2014), and an organisation's operational context (Handelman and Arnold, 1999) gain legitimacy.

Legitimacy is described as the "*generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions*" (Suchman, 1995, p. 574). As legitimacy is a multi-level construct, foundational research in institutional theory has focused on three dimensions of legitimacy: regulatory, normative and cognitive (Scott, 1995; Suchman, 1995). Regulatory legitimacy represents the conformation of an entity by government rules and regulations (Deephouse and Carter, 2005; Humphreys, 2010b; Scott, 1995). Normative legitimacy represents whether an entity is congruent with society's norms and values (Scott, 1995; Kates, 2004). Cognitive legitimacy is known as the essence of legitimacy and points to the absence of challenges or questions to an entity (Tost, 2011). By attaining cognitive legitimacy, brands gain taken-for-grantedness status (Humphreys, 2010b). Cognitive legitimacy indicates the degree to which an entity is understood, classified and integrated within cultural frames and existing cognitive schemas (Scott, 1995; Shepherd and Zacharakis, 2003; Suchman, 1995). More recently, legitimacy scholars paid attention to another legitimacy pillar in consumer research (see Valor et al., 2021). This is relational legitimacy. According to Tost (2011), relational legitimacy is attained "*when an entity is perceived to affirm the social identity and self-worth of individuals or social groups and to ensure that individuals or groups are treated with dignity and respect and receive outcomes commensurate with their entitlement*" (pp. 693-694).

While in marketing, legitimacy has still been discussed on the level of adopting legitimacy pillars (see Valor et al., 2021), in management studies, the interest is given on the multi-level structure of legitimacy (see Haack et al. 2020). According to Bitektine and Haack (2015),

legimacy is structured around validity (a collective-level or macro-level perceptions of appropriateness), propriety (individual-level or micro-level an individual evaluator's belief that a legitimacy entity is appropriate for its social context) and recently added consensus (meso-level legitimacy component which creates the missing link connecting the validity and propriety) (Bitektine and Haack, 2015; Haack et al., 2020).

There is a lack of interest in propriety, which refers to how individual legitimacy evaluators construe legitimacy, meaning that how they assess the propriety of certain practices, structures and organisations on a different level of legitimacy pillars (Bitektine and Haack, 2015; Tost, 2011). Although literature in institutional theory ignored the propriety, Haack et al. (2020) highlighted the importance of propriety in exploring institutional change and suggested *consensus* as a meso-level component in addition to propriety and validity. As this study focuses on the construction of personal political brand identity from the brand-creator perspective, it may provide insight into politicians' legitimacy judgement process into their own brands. Therefore, this study will add to the limited body of knowledge about individual legitimacy judgement.

As the most studied legitimacy component, validity is considered as a generalized perception of an entity that, as a legitimacy object, this entity is appropriate for its social environment, meaning that it has a high level of acceptability at the macro- collective level (Suchman, 1995). According to Zelditch (2006), validity "*has a life of its own*" (p. 346) which points out that it is substantially independent of the individuals' subjective propriety beliefs. To reach "*the objectified part of legitimacy*" (Haack et al., 2020, p. 6), which is validity, individual evaluators use "*validity cues*", which are known as cognitive shortcuts (Tost, 2011). Validity cues eased to create validity beliefs which represent an individual evaluators' judgement that an entity is assessed as appropriate by a collectivity of evaluators (Tost, 2011; Haack et al., 2020).

Furthermore, validity beliefs are strengthened by authorization and by endorsement (Dornbusch and Scott, 1975). While an authority such as a high-status actor or an expert provide authorisation, endorsement relies on the acceptance by an individual's peers. Studies also noted that "*judgment validation institutions*", such as the judicial system, government, or media (Bitektine and Haack, 2015, p. 51) and "*voices of the common man*" (Vaara, 2014, p. 506) play important roles in attaining validity. That is, others' assessments can facilitate or impede the construction of validity (Johnson, 2004). It is also mentioned that the absence or lacking visibility of contrary activities constitutes a subtle but equally powerful source of validity (Haack and Sieweke, 2018; Tost, 2011). It is worth noting that Kates (2004) explored Levi's brand level of legitimacy on normative grounds for gay consumers. He mentioned that there would be other social evaluators to judge Levi's legitimacy on different pillars. Thus, Kates (2004) used a "*matching baggage*" metaphor which pointed to legitimacy occurring when consumers become convinced that they and their brands have matching baggage (p. 464). In addition, when evaluating validity, studies noted that validity has both *bolstering* and *cancelling* effects (Zelditch, 2001; Haack et al., 2020). Bolstering effects occur if the validity strengthens propriety and cancelling effects occur when validity neutralizes or reduces perceptions of impropriety (Haack et al., 2020).

As Haack et al. (2020) noted, consensus is the "*third*", "*meso-level construct*", which is defined as "*the agreement between evaluators' propriety beliefs*" (p. 1). By focusing on the institutional change, they clarify the relationship between validity, propriety and consensus. For them, high consensus represents the situation that the majority of individual evaluators share the same propriety beliefs. Low consensus, on the contrary, represents that individuals' propriety is contested. For example, Haack et al. (2020) mentioned that in cases where the consensus is low, the cognitive legitimacy, as well as the validity of an entity, could be fragile. In this

scenario where there is a conflict between validity and propriety, individual evaluators may tend to silence their propriety beliefs because they can fear the loss of social confirmation and social sanctions (Bitektine and Haack, 2015). However, individuals believe an entity is highly improper because of their fear they can be forced to support validity (Centola et al., 2005; Willer et al., 2009).

Spillover Effects

The role of legitimacy pillars in legitimation has been discussed in both institutional theory and marketing research. Scholars pointed to spillover effects on legitimacy pillars. The relationship between normative and cognitive legitimacy has been discussed frequently (Tost, 2011). For Tost (2011), cognitive legitimacy is considered as the essence of legitimacy. In this way, cognitive legitimacy is the beginning of the legitimation process, which provides the required knowledge for the legitimacy entity in the context (Humphreys and Latour, 2013). This perspective is supported by Bitektine (2011), who argued that ensuring cognitive legitimacy on an entity or concept makes the legitimacy judgment process easier from a psychological point of view. That is, if a legitimacy entity or an organisation is known as either good or bad, individual evaluators may reduce their cognitive efforts and make a judgement based on known attributes of legitimacy entities. Bitektine (2011) indicates that "*Given the high efficiency and very general nature of cognitive legitimacy, this form of judgment is likely to be reserved for routine, low-involvement tasks where the evaluator can be satisfied with any member of the selected class of organizations*" (p. 168). In this respect, cognitive legitimacy is believed to ease attaining normative and relational legitimacy.

On the other hand, cognitive legitimacy is considered as the end of the legitimation process that pointed to the taken for the granted status of the legitimacy entity (Tost, 2011). This means

that an entity attains both cognitive and normative legitimacy. Similarly, Humphreys and Latour (2013) noted that cognitive legitimacy occurs throughout the legitimation process and enables or impedes normative legitimacy. Suchman (1995) noted that to be viewed cognitively legitimate, the entity needs some level of normative legitimacy, which in turn positively affects the entity's both cognitive and normative legitimacy.

Tost (2011) discussed the relationship between legitimacy pillars by using the term *overlap* instead of spillover. According to Tost (2011), legitimacy pillars are not *mutually exclusive,* but they can *overlap*; that is, a legitimacy entity can be "*evaluated simultaneously on all three dimensions or on some subset of the dimensions*" (p. 694). For her, the spillover effect between legitimacy pillars may be affected by various reasons, such as individuals' values, group or organisational culture. Thus, she emphasized the importance of context. Specifically, she mentioned that regulatory legitimacy varies across contexts. She mentioned that regulatory legitimacy is largely associated with cognitive legitimacy, meaning that organisations are expected to conform to regulations, and failure to do so raises questions about the nature of the organization that the organization would have otherwise avoided. However, cognitive and regulatory legitimacy is also different because regulatory legitimacy embodies validation of the organisation by some of the judgement validation institutions or voices of the common man, as mentioned before (Tost, 2011).

Subsequently, in consumer research, more recently, Valor et al. (2021) investigated the spillover effect between legitimacy pillars. By adding the relational legitimacy, they found that the loss of TdV's relational and normative legitimacy affected the level of regulatory and cognitive legitimacy of the practice.

Communication plays an important role in attaining legitimacy. Gauthier and Kappen (2017) viewed communication as a way of promotion of propriety and validity. Haack et al. (2020) stated that social interactions and trustful communications between individual evaluators play a key role in displaying the apparent consensus within a group. In cases where individual evaluators have trustful communication and tend to take collective action, individuals may feel safe to reveal their propriety beliefs. That is, although there is a low consensus situation within the reference group, impropriety beliefs can be voiced freely. On the contrary, in the absence of meaningful interaction and communication ties, individual evaluators may avoid revealing their propriety beliefs, thereby their improper beliefs may be silenced (Haack et al., 2020). By drawing on the importance of communication and interaction, Halbesleben et al. (2007) indicated that if individual evaluators are perpetually exposed to each other's propriety beliefs, silencing risk maybe disappeared. For Brodbeck et al. (2007), similarly, open communication and negotiation should be supported so that individual evaluators can feel free to voice their impropriety beliefs or concerns. For Haack et al. (2020), when the communication and interaction between group members are weak, individual evaluators may not understand others' propriety beliefs. On the contrary, in cases where individual evaluators have good communications and interactions, the effect of illusion of support validity is disclosed. However, in this scenario, individual evaluators may voice their propriety beliefs, leading to the deobjectification of validity.

In consumer research, it is also noted that individuals communicate, interact and negotiate to understand their beliefs whether if a particular brand is legitimate and valuable (Husemann et al., 2015; Seraj, 2012). In their study, Humphreys and Latour (2013) aim to explore how the media affects consumer judgements of legitimacy. They pointed to the importance of media

framing in developing normative legitimacy, which can also bridge normative and cognitive legitimacy. That is, according to Humphreys and Latour (2013), potential alterations in the framing affect cognitive legitimacy, which in turn can affect individual evaluators' legitimacy judgement on a normative level. Focusing on value creation in social media, Hakala et al. (2017) also argued that online community activities ease the building of legitimacy within online brand communities. They found that online brand communities involve individual evaluators' perceptions, activities and judgements of legitimacy. These are linked to the judgement validation institutions' beliefs and marketers' actions within both online and offline brand communities; therefore, they will shape the target markets' perceptions and judgements with respect to the brand.

2.7. Conclusion

This chapter has presented the burgeoning literature on political brands of politicians, which blends personal branding and brand identity and applies them to political branding. In the first section, the application of branding to political marketing has been discussed. In doing so, this chapter also reiterated the call for critical political marketing research. Also, the chapter has discussed the background literature in the area of political branding and personal branding. When discussing political branding literature, the chapter highlighted the explicit call for further research into investigating personal political brands in different contexts by considering a multidisciplinary approach (Pich et al., 2020; Pich and Newman, 2020). The chapter also emphasised the explicit calls for more research insight into personal political brands from the brand creator perspective (Billard, 2018; Guzman and Sierra, 2009; Kaneva and Klemmer, 2016; Marland, 2016; Nai and Martinez, 2019; Needham and Smith, 2015; Nielsen, 2017; Pich et al., 2020; Reeves et al., 2006; Serazio, 2017; Van Steenburg and Guzman, 2019). Thus, this chapter highlights that although the understanding of construction, management and

communication of personal political brands in different contexts are increasing, extant literature in this area has tended to provide managerialist and functionalist assumptions to understand personal political brand identity. Moreover, this chapter highlighted the current consumer branding literature and considered the transfer potential (Schneider, 2004) of brand heritage, brand resilience and brand legitimacy concepts to the context of personal political branding. Therefore, by combining the mentioned calls, this chapter suggests that further research is required to adopt a critical lens and multidisciplinary approach in political marketing (Henneberg and O'Shaughnessy, 2007; Moufahim and Lim, 2009; Osuagwu, 2008), political branding (Pich and Newman, 2020) and personal branding (Lair et al., 2005). This provides an opportunity to generate a deep understanding of personal political brand identity through an intersectional feminist approach. Chapter 3 now presents insights from intersectional feminist approach literature.

Chapter 3: Literature Review- Intersectional Feminist Research

3.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I reviewed the contemporary thinking in political branding and identified the gaps in the discipline for a broader understanding of political brand identities of the politicians by focusing on the consumer branding concepts of brand heritage, brand resilience and brand legitimacy. In this chapter, I turn my attention to theoretical perspective and literature that enable me to explore intersectional feminist approach in political branding. After briefly introducing the intersectional feminist approach in Section 3.2, I discuss ongoing debates on intersectionality in Section 3.3. After that, I move to the use of intersectionality in marketing (Section 3.4). Finally, I introduce an intersectional feminist approach to personal political brands' identity, and I unpack how this approach could be used in the political branding subdiscipline to understand the identity construction processes of the politicians.

3.2. Intersectional Feminist Approach

The interplay of different intersectional identity dimensions which caused discrimination, marginalisation, and oppression of groups has received attention from many different theoretical perspectives. In one perspective, postcolonial scholars, activists, black feminists, antiracist feminists and also feminist standpoint theorists investigated the problematic nature of intersectional identity categories. This resulted in focusing on the study of race, gender, class, ethnicity, and geopolitical positions (Geerts and Van del Tuin, 2013; Hancock, 2007; Lykke, 2010; Manuel, 2006). As feminist studies grew, Combahee River Collective (1983), a black feminist lesbian organisation, announced their manifesto, arguing that a single dimension of identity should not be the centre of feminist analysis. They called for the integration of different identity dimensions, particularly gender, sexuality, race, and class. These are the major dimensions of domination to be critically analysed (Brah and Phoenix, 2004; Collins and Bilge, 2016). After the arrival of this manifesto, exploring the intersections of multiple identity dimensions has been receiving a growing interest in understanding oppression and discriminations that minority groups experienced (Anthias, 2012a; Yuval-Davis, 2006).

In 1989, Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) devised the term "*intersectionality*" as an important argument in her feminist critical race theory. In her work, by using a *road crossing* metaphor, intersectionality is identified as an analytical tool to explore marginalisation and discrimination. This helped identify the various experiences of marginalised groups. In this respect, drawing on black American women's experiences, she argues that these women are discriminated against and marginalised due to the intersection of their race and gender. Furthermore, although intersections of multiple identity dimensions received attention with different terms, such as linking systems of oppression, corresponding systems, interconnections and triple oppression (Anthias, 2012b), Crenshaw's term of intersectionality

had a wide acceptance by scholars. Because it differs from the feminist scholars with its exclusive approach and political effects as well as its potential to highlight the complexity of the multiple identity dimensions, the appeal on intersectionality is growing (Davis, 2008). It seems that intersectionality responds to the concerns of feminist theorising those studies need to deal with the relationship of gender with other social identity dimensions, such as class, race, sexuality, ethnicity, age, nationality and disability (Lykke, 2010).

With its unique potential, "*intersectionality*" appeals to gender studies. In this respect, intersectionality has been investigated differently in different disciplines to explore the intersections of multiple identity dimensions and unequal moral standings. Particularly, intersectionality is empirically dominant in fields such as policy and law. For example, Walby et al. (2012a) focused on the empirical implications of intersectionality. For them, regardless of the reasons causing multiple inequalities and different identity dimensions, intersections should be investigated to achieve equality in the UK. Cho et al. (2013) explained intersectionality as a praxis, including movements, organisations, that aims to overcome intersections of gender and race-based discrimination and marginalisation. They also argued that intersectionality involves efforts to address discrimination, poverty and social justice. In this respect, the praxis of the concept of intersectionality has become important both in various political and academic debates (Cho et al., 2013). In a similar way to Walby et al. and Cho et al., Hankivsky et al. (2014) develop a novel Intersectionality Based Policy Analysis (IBPA) framework. By accepting power relations and multiple intersectional identity dimensions, their framework presents the significance and potential of operationalizing intersectionality. Therefore, they aim to enhance social justice and dismantle systematic inequity.

Intersectionality focused on the experiences which are fashioned by the intersections of multiple identity dimensions (Anthias, 2012a); thus, the importance of intersectionality has

been acknowledged by feminist scholars. Hence, it facilitates the investigation of various intersections, which creates multiple inequalities and discriminations. In this respect, it is aimed to reveal inequities and identity construction without focusing only on the most salient identity dimension, gender (Grabham et al., 2009; Mehrotra, 2010; Mohanty, 1988; Walby et al., 2012b). Similarly, Nash (2008) highlighted that intersectionality has emerged as "*the primary theoretical tool*" (p. 2) to investigate multiple social identity dimensions and their power relations, which create subjectivity of individuals (Dhamoon, 2011). Moreover, McCall (2005) indicated that intersectionality is "*the most important theoretical contribution that women's studies in conjunction with related fields, has made so far*" (p. 1771), as it facilitates overcoming multi-level and complex structures of intersectional identity dimensions.

3.3. Ongoing Debates Around Intersectionality

As intersectionality is applied to broader scopes, it has been criticised widely by various scholars (e.g., Bowleg, 2008; Chang and Culp, 2002; Jordan-Zachery, 2007; Ken, 2007; Salem, 2016). According to Cho et al. (2013), there are different issues that intersectionality needs to consider:

> *"As intersectionality has travelled, questions have been raised regarding a number of issues: the utility and limitations of its various metaphors, including the road intersection, the matrix, and the interlocked vision of oppression; the additive and autonomous versus interactive and mutually constituting nature of the race/gender/class/sexuality/nation nexus; the eponymous "et cetera" problem— that is, the number of categories and kinds of subjects (e.g., privileged or subordinate?) stipulated or implied by an intersectional approach; and the static and fixed versus the dynamic and contextual orientation of intersectional research" (p. 787).*

Davis (2008) explains the reason behind its popularity with feminists' scholars from different practical, methodological and philosophical points of view by drawing on its vagueness and

inherent open-endedness features. Despite its inclusive nature, Nash (2008) argued that intersectionality is problematic, basically due to the absence of clarity regarding an intersectional methodology. Nevertheless, it is identified as a *buzzword* for feminist researchers (e.g., Davis, 2008), which does not require an actual set of guidelines for undertaking feminist enquiries. Another line of criticism of intersectionality is that it is not proposed as an appropriate ontology for related research to explore discriminations and exclusions amongst feminist approaches (Carbin and Edenheim, 2013).

Despite these critiques, intersectionality has started to be considered as a heuristic device, for it provides insights in exploring intersecting social identity dimensions and their effects on social life (Anthias, 2012a; Lutz, 2014;). Using the term intersectional-type, Dhamoon (2011) offered a recognisable framework whilst identifying the disparities within feminism. Additionally, Hancock (2007) proposed to apply intersectionality as a problem-driven study paradigm, which aims to explore it as a research paradigm and facilitate its empirical use. Thus, it is aimed to expand intersectionality's implementation beyond theoretical arguments. However, despite its wide use by different disciplines, practices and methodologies, there is a lack of robust conceptualisation of intersectionality. There are a few conceptualisations. For instance, Cho et al. (2013) noted that "*intersectionality is best framed as an analytic sensibility*" (p. 795). Collins (2015) also noted that intersectionality could be implemented as a field of study, as a kind of critical practice, and as an analytical strategy. Furthermore, intersectionality is also conceptualised "*as an overarching knowledge project whose changing contours grow from and respond to social formations of complex inequalities*" (Collins, 2015, p. 15).

The nature of intersectional research is also discussed in relation to identity categories' characteristics, which are constructed, polysemic, dynamic, historical, standpoint specific, time-specific, and context-specific (Gopaldas and Fischer, 2012). For example, Nash (2011)

stated that although intersectionality is needed to be considered as a product of black feminism due to it is institutionalised, it is dynamic that it is historically changing. Cho et al. (2013) also mentioned: "*intersectionality has travelled into spaces and discourses that are themselves constituted by power relations that are far from transparent*" (p. 789). Bilge (2013) identifies modern dogmatic feminist academic arguments discussing intersectionality in the context of neoliberalism, which are countering its political perspective for social justice. It is argued that the neoliberal context has an important threat to achieve intersectional (Salem, 2016). The neoliberal context is also restricted with its focus on individuals, which in turn restricts intersectional analysis (Evans, 2015). In this respect, intersectionality is a reflection of political and economic power. Otherwise, according to Bilge (2013), this pointed to the fears that the concept may be depoliticized, alienated from its social-justice focused origins. This will then encourage the shallow application of intersectionality. Thus, Bilge (2013) stated that "*intersectionality becomes a tool that certain feminist scholars can invoke to demonstrate 'marketable expertise' in managing potentially problematic kinds of diversity*" (p. 408).

3.3.1. Methodological Debates Within Intersectionality

There are various methodological debates about whether researchers should choose their methods incongruent with their theoretical questions. For example, Crenshaw (1991) focused on structural and political intersectionalities. For her, structural intersectionality looks at the marginalised and oppressed groups based on multiple structural barriers. Such political intersectionality marginalises women deemed politically inconvenient because they support reference groups, such as antiracist groups and feminists, groups acknowledged as having conflicting agendas. However, these intersectional political movements do not appropriately represent disadvantaged women. Correspondingly, Hancock (2007) presents three approaches to examine the intersections of identity dimensions: (i) the unitary approach that focuses on a

single dimension which is characterised as stable, (ii) the multiple approach that focuses on various independent dimensions which are treated equally and have been built on existing relationships, finally (iii) the intersectional approach that highlights the effects of multiple categories which are not prearranged, have open relationships and are treated equally. Furthermore, Choo and Ferree's (2010) intersectional approaches are trifold: (i) the group-centred one which focuses on multiple identity dimensions intersections, (ii) the process-centred one which examines the interactions of various dimensions, and (iii) and the system-centred one which investigates dynamics of historically constructed social systems. For them, all procedures and their results are important. Another researcher, Walby (2007), offered two different intersectional approaches: (i) one focuses on the concept of systems, (ii) the other differently adopts a postmodernist position in terms of subjectivity, discourse and deconstruction. By contributing to the debate, Prins (2006) suggested: (i) a systemic approach, which emphasises systems of oppression utilizing unilateral power of social demonstrations, and (ii) a constructionist intersectional approach, which focuses on the dynamic power relations in the construction of social identity.

In addition to identified approaches by different researchers, McCall (2005) also proposed different methodological problems for the implementation of intersectionality. To ease the inclusion of multiple identity dimensions, McCall (2005) suggested a tripartite typology which is notable by its point of view in terms of categories of differentiation "…*that is, how they understand and use analytical categories to explore the complexity of intersectionality in social life*" (McCall, 2005, p. 1773). According to him, firstly, an anti-categorical approach investigates the process of categorisation. This approach argued that the dynamic nature of identity categories merited it to be essentialised. In this respect, deconstruction and genealogy are found as appropriate methods (Gopaldas and Fischer, 2012). By applying this approach, for

example, Butler (1988) focused on using a deconstructionist approach to explore how gender is performed and imposed as a taboo and social sanction. Indeed, gender should not be naturalised and universalised, meaning that gender should be conceptualised similarly to other intersectional identity dimensions, such as race and class (Butler, 1990). That is, gender is inseparable from the other multiple identity dimensions. In this respect, because creating identity process does not include various identity categories, by contrast, overwhelmingly focus on gender, Butler (1988) criticised feminist identity research for being limited. Therefore, Butler's standpoint is positioned in performative contradiction (Gunnarsson, 2017). Although she argued that multiple identity dimensions work both independently as well as mutually and reciprocally, she focused on the same term, which is gender.

Secondly, the intra-categorical approach investigates particular social groups at "*neglected points of intersection*" to uncover "*the complexity of lived experience within such groups*" (McCall, 2005, p. 1774). As previously stated, the intra-categorical approach concentrates on researching overlooked intersections; thus, the intra-categorical approach aims to examine the complexity of the lived experience of a specific group. Through this approach, marginalised groups become able to voice their concerns to be accommodated by policy, law and political movements (Choo and Ferree, 2010). Echoing Crenshaw's point, Lykke (2010) indicated that this approach aims to understand women marginalisation around salient identity dimensions, race, gender and ethnicity. Furthermore, the intra-categorical approach is found useful when conducting a case study and autobiography (McCall, 2005; Gopaldas and Fischer, 2012). For example, by conducting an autobiographical narrative approach, Ludvig (2006) investigated a migrant woman's self-presentation. He found that in a specific context of Austria, multiple identity categories, including nationality, class and gender, dynamically intersect, and the

woman negotiated within this context with her specific intersections of multiple identity dimensions.

McCall (2005) lastly stated that the inter-categorical approach investigates the "*existing analytical categories to document relationships of inequality among social groups, and changing configurations of inequality along multiple and conflicting dimensions*" (McCall, 2005, p. 1774). By mainly focusing on the process and context (Choo and Ferree, 2010), this approach compares the intersections of multiple identity dimensions, thereby building the power structures. Thus, in her macro-quantitative research, McCall's (2001a) specifically investigated diverse intersections of class, race and gender in different US cities' local financial situations. In this respect, Mc Call's (2001) research calls for an anti-equality rundown of policies and politics through identifying the most severe divisions in a specific context for preferable conditions. This approach is criticised by Yuval-Davis (2011) for being reductional in his view. That is, instead of investigating equally constitutive intersections of multiple identity dimensions, this approach points to the additive effect of dimensions. From Walby's view (2007), this approach is indicated as "*segregationary reductionist*" (p. 452), which points to that social identity categories are based on different ontologies such as "*class is grounded in the economy; gender is a discourse about sexual and biological differences; ethnicity relates to discourses about exclusion and inclusion*" (p. 453). Choo and Ferree (2010) argue that largely focusing on power systems can lead to neglect examining individuals' roles in the context, thereby understanding intersections of multiple identity dimensions and their effects on individuals' lived experiences (e.g., Prins, 2006; Staunæs, 2003). Similar to anti and intra-categorical approaches, there are also confines when only conducting inter-categorical approaches. To overcome this limitation, Knapp (2005) and Yuval- Davis (2011) offered to apply both intra-categorical and inter-categorical approaches, which facilitate the gaining of

deep insights into intersections of multiple identity dimensions given context from socioeconomic perspectives. Therefore, the combined understanding will address different intersectional concerns in the identity investigation and explore structural relations between categories.

Subsequently, the use of the intersectional framework to explore multiple inequalities, differences and power relations, is subjected to a broad array of viewpoints. There is also an ongoing debate that intersectionality does not have a clear philosophical position (e.g., Bilge, 2010; Carbin and Edenheim, 2013; Walby, 2007). The next section focuses on these philosophical issues.

3.3.2. Philosophical Debates Within Intersectionality

There is also a philosophical debate going on in intersectionality literature. Similar to McPhail (2004), Mehrotra (2010) pointed out that understanding intersectional theoretical approaches is as tumbling into an *"epistemological continuum"* (p. 422). Dhamoon (2011) identified intersectionality as facilitating novel theories of discriminations and epistemological insights as a result of disputing *"hegemonic disciplinary, epistemological, theoretical, and conceptual boundaries"* (p. 230). In this respect, intersectionality provides insights at various analytical levels, at different times and works in different social structures (Clegg, 2016).

In academia, intersectional researchers are positioned to reflect epistemological differences in which the field has halted. West and Fenstermaker (1995), drawing on social constructionist approaches, suggested adopting an ethnomethodological approach to further comprehend feminist research. The approach will shed light on understanding intersections of race, gender and class, and reflect these identity dimensions dynamics across time, thus, moving away from relying on mathematical metaphors. In opposition, from the poststructural feminist perspective,

Lykke (2010) argued that there is a need to understand the identity construction process and individual's lived experiences through discourses. Following on this argument, Collins (2015) stated that a multitude of epistemological projects could promote an improved understanding of intersectionality. This raises different perspectives' on intersectionality regarding its history, current conceptualisation and long term aims. A recommendation can be made then to utilise information and knowledge produced by intersectional scholarship to avoid future failings when using an intersectional framework (Collins, 2015). Drawing on the diversity of theoretical and epistemological perspectives, intersectionality is used with different metaphors and imagery, such as vectors of difference, axes of power and matrices of oppression (Ken, 2007; Mehrotra, 2010). However, it is found that these metaphors and imageries are related to positivist assumptions which make it difficult to comprehend the interaction between structures (Martinez et al., 2014).

Intersectionality depicts certain ambiguity when it comes to ontological debates in feminist approaches. This leaves the theoretical ground unable to address discussions specific to anti-foundationalist ontologies, such as debates going on in the poststructural and postcolonial approaches (Carbin and Edenheim, 2013). In addition, Martinez et al. (2014) discuss the different positions viewed by hermeneutic and positivist scholars. The former only acknowledges what it can observe and what is tangible, and the latter only recognises subjective perceptions and sensible processes of a social actor. Counter vase, Phoenix and Pattynama (2006) pointed out intersectionality to be a wider and complex ontology compared to other theoretical approaches. This superiority of intersectionality is due to the fact that, as an overarching theoretical lens, it is not limited to investigating a single social identity dimension at a time. Further, they discussed considering a multitude of different epistemologies when using intersectionality (Phoenix and Pattynama, 2006). Phoenix (2006) proposed an

ontological position of intersectionality relying on comprehending social identity dimensions and their relationships. Both these social positions intersect in complex ways and should be investigated through various epistemological views. Furthermore, Phoenix (2006) discussed two points of criticism relating to the mentioned divergent epistemological standpoints. He stated that some intersectional frameworks only focus on agency to the impairment of structural positioning, and others are criticised for treating structural positions as fixed. However, the postmodernist perspective to intersectionality is considered more fruitful in recognising social categories and their positions as multiple and fluid (Phoenix, 2006). Phoenix (2006) is criticised by Martinez et al. (2014) for focusing on the micro existence of identity constructions while ignoring clarifying how he came to establish this micro existence. In addition, Moore (2009) underlined the importance of the truths of inequality and discrimination to justify postmodern perspectives. Overall, Anthias (2012a), Martinez et al. (2014), Gunnarsson (20157) and Yuval-Davis (2006) acknowledged the need to comprehend social divisions and categories to create a diverse ontological structure. The following section focuses on intersectional identity categories, which are overwhelmingly discussed in the intersectionality literature.

3.3.3. Intersectional Identity Categories

The existence of many intersectional categories left the field debating the relevance in which to explore categories. In this respect, there are several ways to explore and conceptualise different social identity categories, which provide a deep understanding of power structures and hierarchies structured around intersections of multiple identity dimensions (Staunæs, 2003). For example, Anthias (2012a) mentioned that intersectional categories are chosen according to differences and commonalities. This can then be explained by the process of hierarchy and boundary-making. Intersectional identity dimensions are unlimited (Butler, 1990; Ludvig, 2006). However, scholars have focused on some identity categories; in

particular, many scholars investigate the intersections of the trinity, including gender, ethnicity/race, class (e.g., Anthias, 2012a, Dhamoon, 2011; Yuval-Davis, 2006). The trinity of identity categories is acknowledged to be more salient within a certain time and space. Furthermore, to choose the appropriate identity dimension, a theoretical framework known as "*intersectional stigma*" was produced by Berger (2004). By applying her framework Berger (2004) investigated HIV-positive women's intersections of race, gender, class and indicated that these women are marginalised beyond intersections of salient traditional multiple identity dimensions. Thus, intersectional stigma points to intersections of social identity dimensions within a group or an individual, thereby the experiences of created stigma related to these identities and their collective impact on well-being and health.

Lykke (2010) disputed the readdressing of the prioritization, delineation and inclusion of categories. He called for reflections on the categories related to the intersectional framework to then account for blind spots found during analysis. With this reflection, he strives to push beyond examining and exploring the redundant and obvious social categories. Similarly, Mehrotra's (2010) view overlaps with the previously discussed categories of differences. She discussed the structure and application of intersectional conceptual frameworks to be based on theoretical pluralism. According to her, intersectional research should focus on different identity categories away from the common categories, which are race, gender and class. Therefore, understanding complex social phenomena will be deepened when it portrays the marginalised groups of women.

3.4. Intersectionality in Marketing

In marketing theory, understanding intersectionality is still evolving. Ger (2018) argued that inequalities characterised by intersected social identity categories —gender, ethnic, national,

disability-based, social class, etc.— shape individuals' daily routines with consumers and networks of relationships in the marketplace. This points to the intersectional approach in some way shaping the works deriving from critical theory, consumer culture theory and transformative consumer research (Ger, 2018). As an extension of "*historical alignment exists between the foundations of intersectionality theory the works stemming from consumer culture theory, critical theory and transformative consumer research*", a number of studies focus on multiple oppressions and examine how social identity structures shape consumer culture (Gopaldas and Fischer, 2012; Steinfield et al., 2019, p. 368). However, intersectionality as a term has not been used for long years within marketing studies (Steinfield et al., 2019). Many examples exist of studies that are not directly utilised by the intersectionality literature; rather they are associated with the parallel literature such as feminism, critical theory, women's and men's studies, the works of Pierre Bourdieu, and Judith Butler's gender performativity, etc. (presented below). These studies investigated identity categories relationships which can create a base for intersectional research in marketing (Gopaldas and Fischer, 2012). These studies mainly focused on the intersectional categories, in particular gender and social class, in different contexts.

One of the earliest studies, Fischer and Arnold (1990), used two different methodological approaches, which are matrix analysis and among intersections analysis. Firstly, they conducted matrix analysis to choose appropriate intersectional categories within Christmas gift-shopping contexts. In this way, through broad literature review and qualitative interviews, they choose gender, sex and gender role attitudes as being appropriate identity categories to investigate how they intersect and construct the culture of Christmas gift shopping. Drawing on the methodological debates in the intersectionality research (Berdahl and Moore, 2006; McCall, 2001a; 2001b), they conducted an intersectional analysis. They presented interesting

results, such as women are more involved than men in gift-shopping. They noted that there is significant heterogeneity within social identity categories (i.e., among men and among women), which is a fundamental notion in the intersectionality literature.

Crocket and Wallendorf (2004) used ethnography to understand the role of political ideology in everyday life. They addressed the philosophical debates in intersectionality by using a well-fitting example of process analysis. Their model of social relations provides insights about socioeconomic environments being the foundations for particular ideologies: ideologies are a guiding framework for marketplace behaviour, and the marketplace is an alternate political sphere where consumers attempt to reproduce or transform socioeconomic structures to reinforce their worldviews. It is worth noting that they focus on the salient identity dimensions, race and gender, in their data; their work reflexivity provides insight into the authors' standpoints. For example, they stated: "*The first author, a black male…privileges his access to discussions of race with other blacks…because household provisioning is a predominantly female activity, his gender required him to develop sufficient rapport…The second author, a white female, provided analytical distance in both data coding and analysis*" (p. 514).

By using gender and class as intersectional identity dimensions, Holt and Thompson (2004) focused on the domain of everyday lifestyle consumptions. Their study aims to understand lived experiences and discourse of middle-aged straight white men, who just afford to buy necessary things and whose masculinity has been shaped by socioeconomic changes in small American cities. Drawing on habituation theory of Bourdieu (1984), they argue that class performs as a "*malleable interpretive framework*" that men utilise to tailor a different kind of masculinity to their socioeconomic situations (p. 438). That is, Holt and Thompson's (2004) study combines both between-intersections analysis (i.e., of working-class vs. professional-

class middle-aged, straight white men) and within-intersection analysis (i.e., of the unique experiences of middle-aged, straight white men).

Henry (2005) also focused on class, viz. the financial planning of working and professional class, young employed and childless men in Sydney, Australia. His study presents an example of a between-intersections analysis and a process analysis. Specifically, by focusing on the invisible structures in society, their process analysis shows how these structures and systems reproduce the structure of the class. They also made an explicit call for more research on class identity dimensions when they added: "*Bourdieu (1984) thought of social class as one type of class…he included gender and age as other types of classes…Bourdieu argued that…all the properties influencing material conditions and conditioning should be integrated into the analysis…Future studies should examine the intersection of multiple class types on (dis)empowerment*" (p. 776).

By drawing on Turkey's political and socioeconomic structure, Ustuner and Holt's study (2007) focused on poor and migrant village women in Turkey. They found that identity dimensions class, gender and ethnicity intersected and, as a result, blended with ideology and national culture to create a new female self-identity. To do this, they provided insights into experiences of first-generation, poor, and migrant village women in the city with their daughters, who do not have any interactions in their mothers' villages. Drawing on Butler's performativity concept, they found that the daughters still carry the markers of mothers' class, that is, their efforts neither credible nor durable within the patriarchal context. Even though their study outlined that efforts such as breaking class barriers and liberating women from domesticity are known as "*staging an ephemeral performance*" (Ustuner and Holt, 2007, p. 55), those efforts mainly target to end poverty. Other consumer research has looked at transient techniques for declaring identity and escaping constraining consumerist norms (Kozinets, 2002).

Similarly, Thompson and Ustuner (2015) deployed Butler's gender performativity, which portrayed the regulative structure of institutions and Bourdieu's gendered habitus to display power relations. They investigated how women competitors perform their "*derby grrrl personas*" (p. 240) and how they solve the conflicts among the gender resignifications in the roller derby field and everyday life. Interestingly, although they focused on gender performativity, they found that the intersection of gender, social class, space (small town vs. big urban centre) and physique (lean vs. heavier) play important roles in the context. That is, rather than gender, the intersection of gender, space, physique, social class create power relations.

By focusing on the Foucauldian notion of subjectification, Penaloza and Barnhart (2011) draw on social class, race, and country. Specifically, they aimed to understand how the subjectivity of white, middle-class consumers is created with the effect of media, financial institutions and their social environment.

Luedicke (2015) explored the relationship between Austrian indigenes and Turkish immigrants in Telfs, Austria, where the former workers arrived as guest workers in 1963. Instead of focusing on the intersection of ethnicity and social class, Luedicke (2015), in his research, provided information about the interactions among the indigenes and immigrants as encounters of ethnic difference. They pointed to the shift from invisible workers to conspicuous consumers, which are identified as social class mobility and also as an interacting source of conflict. Immigrant and indigene relationships are apt for research on intersectional class and ethnicity power relations. There are also many different power relationships in the marketplace. He concluded that intersectionality played an important role in exploring systematic inequalities in consumer research.

While the interest in the interplay of identity categories was growing, in the 2000s, the term *intersectionality* entered the marketing scholarship. In this respect, scholars predominantly developed conceptual papers (see Corus et al., 2016; Crockett et al., 2011; Gopaldas, 2013; Gopaldas and Fischer, 2012). These studies provide greater insight into how intersectionality points out an interdisciplinary field of studies that has explicating human phenomena alongside multiple social identity dimensions as a shared objective (Gopaldas and Fischer, 2012). Intersectionality is identified as an innovative approach that holds substantial promise for consumer research (Gopaldas et al., 2009). For example, by using the lens of intersectionality, Corus et al. (2016) proposed an approach that can define invisible policies and increase the effect of poverty-related policies and interventions. Their approach plays an important role in highlighting the heterogeneity of multiple identity dimensions which form the experience of consumption, poverty and the marketplace. In addition, Crocket et al. (2011) indicated the importance of the concept of intersectionality for research on immigration, culture and ethnicity and well-being research. They noted that although the focus of research has a long history in consumer research, they argued it is individual-centred, and there is a need for collective-level research. Gopaldas' (2013) conceptual paper also pointed to intersectionality as an "*interactivity of social identity structures such as race, class and gender in fostering life experiences, especially experiences of privilege and oppression*" (p. 90). Drawing on intersectionality' complex and ambiguous structure (e.g., Brewer et al., 2002; Davis, 2008; Jordan-Zachery, 2007; McCall, 2005; Nash, 2008; Staunaes, 2003), they provided insights into the origins, evolution, and contemporary meanings of intersectionality. By comparing intersectionality with traditional research on ontology, methodology and axiology, they also signified intersectionality's particular character in examining diversity in the marketplace.

In addition to intersectional categories used frequently by scholars mentioned above, the religion-market relationship has received growing attention from researchers. By pointing to "*The global religious revival*" (Asad, 2006), in their study Sandikci and Jafari (2013) highlighted the necessity of more critical research into the complexities of religion-market relationship and concluded with a call for research to investigate religion-market-society relationships at large. To respond to this call, a plethora of studies on religion as a component of identity have already examined the role of objects and consumption practices in constructing and communicating religious identities (Karatas and Sandikci, 2013; Mehta and Belk, 1991; Sandikci and Ger, 2010; Wattasunawan and Elliott, 1999). Some of these studies seem to contribute to the debates of intersectional categories and extend the use of different intersectional identity dimensions by using religion.

Although studies that responded to this call are not directly informed by the intersectionality literature per se, they exemplify the intersections of religion and other intersectional categories in consumer research. For example, in their notable study, Sandikci and Ger (2010) focused on middle-class Turkish women who voluntarily adopt one of the quintessential symbols of Islam, the veil, and focused on how religious beliefs intertwine with political tensions and historical structures to transform veiling from a stigmatized practice to a fashionable clothing choice. That is, they provided insights into the legitimization of veiling as a fashionable woman practice as a result of a growing global, middle-class of educated, urban and religious women who seek to be modern. In contrast to the totalizing approach of Islam, existing studies focus on the various interpretations of Islam and aim to understand how Islam is practised and experienced in consumers' everyday routines and also in particular socio-political environments.

By drawing on a similar context, Izberk-Bilgin (2012) discussed how Islamic, low-income Turkish consumers mobilize their religious beliefs to defy global brands which they see as oppressive; thus, they found that globalisation creates political/ideological conflicts. In another study, Moufahim (2016) discussed the intersection of gender, identity, religion and consumption within the context of a Muslim pilgrimage. Recently, Moufahim and Lichrou (2019) aimed to understand authenticity, which is evoked in Ziyara-t-Arba'een. They focused on the intersections of Belgian, female, devout, revert Shi'a Muslims from North African and Middle-Eastern origins. While they extended the traditional use of intersectional identity categories, they also broadened the understanding of authenticity and demonstrated the interplay of different identity dimensions in the pilgrimage, which is a context-bound and culturally specific phenomenon.

Although studies do not adopt intersectionality explicitly, these studies draw from different disciplinary approaches to intersectionality, such as guidelines developed by sociologists like Choo and Ferree (2010) and McCall (2005). These studies contributed to the intersectionality literature in marketing by investigating the intersections of consumers' multiple identities and by increasing awareness of the need for further perspectives of multiply marginalized consumers. Similarly, marketing scholars extend the knowledge by adding to the rich understandings of consumers' navigation and experience of oppressions, vulnerabilities and discriminatory practices (e.g., Crockett, 2017; Gopaldas and Siebert, 2018). For example, Crockett (2017) presents the most explicit examination of the intersection between race and social class (implicitly, locality) in status-oriented consumption. He argued that how black, middle-class people in the US utilise respectability as a strategy of resistance to cope with everyday racism. Through relational analysis, he illuminated the socio-historic situations that form consumer micropolitical responses to (racial) domination as well as the boundary

conditions on stigma avoidance and destigmatization efforts. In this respect, whilst Crocket (2017) aimed to examine race and class intersections, he found that the socio-historic structure of the city also makes a difference in the cultural environment. Thus, his findings depend on the intersection of class, race, and locality.

As media studies mostly draw on the notion of marketing images as reflects of racism and sexism, Gopaldas and Siebert (2018) developed the concept of marketing images as "*mirrors of intersectionality*"; thereby, they have not remained restricted to these two salient intersectional identity categories. According to this concept, it is considered that marketing images mirror all categorical forms of marginalization, including sexism, racism, fatism, colorism, heterosexism, ageism and ableism. Therefore, similar to the *intersectional stigma* (Berger, 2004), Gopaldas and Siebert (2018) argued that marketing representations reflect intersectional types of marginalisation, such as sexist ageism and racist multiculturalism, which disproportionately affect marginalised intersections, such as women over 40 and foreigners of colour.

More recently, Hardey (2019), in her interdisciplinary work, focused on the intersections of gender, professional identity, technology culture, and status to provide insights into work in three different tech cities. Importantly, her work is not limited to present only women' experiences that both women and men across different professional backgrounds are presented. In this respect, Hardey (2019) found that professional life in tech cities is shaped by "*points of contact*", characterised by heightened knowledge and awareness of a masculine culture that restricts the progression of women. She highlighted that professional identities and attitudes structured around work and social networking in tech cities outline the importance of professional environments and networks in supporting women to manage rejection and career barriers. Her findings revealed that there is a growing tension among women and men in the

tech industry about the lack of parity in job security, advancement, and skills training. Therefore, Hardey (2019) indicated this culture is difficult to change; however, it is open to improvements in professionals work life. She also emphasized the points of contact are important in defining shared experiences of the challenges faced and connections across more contentious topics, such as how complex web of families and home life intersect with professional life and career progression opportunities, which is also reminiscent of Bendisch et al.'s (2013) brand conflict concept. Hardey's (2019) work pointed that tech cities are not neutral and homogenic spaces. In contrast, as the points of contact highlight, there is hybridity to these spaces and the ways that professionals occupy them. As this study provides insights into both women and men's intersected identity dimensions and their interactions in a particular space, it may increase awareness on both intersectionally constructed identities of women and men, although this thesis's main focus is female politicians.

Although intersectionality research has been growing in consumer and marketing research, it is criticised due to the body of work that highlights facets we do not deliberate as much as we could and should. It prioritizes micro-level agency over power relations within structures and practices of domination (Ger, 2018). In that way, Steinfield et al. (2019) proposed the *transformative intersectional framework* (TIF) to help scholars and practitioners to explore sources of oppression more deeply and broadly. By focusing on organisations and businesses, they noted that inequalities, oppressions, discriminations and marginalisation are intensified when different social identity dimensions intersected. Rather than social identity dimensions, such as race and age, they argued that the structures which reproduce and reflect "-ism" such as sexism, heterosexism and racism are problematic. This research perhaps will contribute to the area of intersectionality within marketing and consumer research, in particular, research into business and organisational studies. However, acknowledging that intersectionality is

restricted around intersected various social identity dimensions, thus conceptualising it around prioritizing micro-level agency over power relations within structures and practices of domination (Ger, 2018), will probably make intersectionality look like a buzzword (Davis, 2008) within marketing, in particular consumer research. This is also clearly understandable from scholars' hesitation towards using an intersectional lens in their research. In the face of this threat, scholars seem to prioritise other concepts or frameworks instead of intersectionality. For example, Szmigin et al. (2020) focused on the consumers' experiences of austerity by developing persistent resilience from the context of austerity influenced consumption. They presented European consumers' experiences from six different countries and a range of demographics, such as age, gender, life stage and income. Although they did not focus on the intersections of different identity categories, they provided insights into how different European consumers from different age, gender and income experiences and deal with the austerity, as well as becoming persistent resilient. Szmigin et al. (2020) also concluded by making a call for further research on other contexts such as bullying, racism or chronic illness, which perhaps need an intersectional lens. At that point, it is worth noting that studies that explore coping strategies tend to use intersectional approaches implicitly. For example, Capellini et al. (2014) explore the coping strategies of women in middle-class families facing economic crisis in the Italian context. Similarly, Hill and Stephens (1997) explore the consumer environment of welfare mothers in the US. They pointed out coping strategies used by these women, which are characterised as either behavioural or emotional.

3.5. An Intersectional Feminist Approach to Personal Political Brands' Identity

Although there is not an explicit application of an intersectional feminist approach on political marketing and political branding context, there are a few research that could be discussed in line with intersectionality.

3.5.1. Intersectionality in Political Marketing

Moufahim and Lim (2009) noted that "*political marketing has the potential to emerge as an interdisciplinary subject*" (p. 771). In this respect, they proposed "*a synthesis of relevant theories relating to class, gender, sexuality, cultural and socio-economic preferences*" to be adopted in political marketing. As mentioned before, there is an explicit call for critical, critical political marketing studies which move beyond positivism and address wide-ranging issues utilising various theories, epistemologies, and methodologies (Moufahim and Lim, 2009; Savigny, 2007). In contrast to this explicit call, political marketing has not produced enough studies focusing on the synthesis of relevant theories relating to intersectional identity categories.

Nevertheless, as in line with the intersectional literature that gender, race/ethnicity and class are the most salient identity dimensions (e.g., Anthias, 2012a; Dhamoon, 2011; Yuval-Davis, 2006), Sanghvi (2019) stated that "*the hegemonic assumption within political marketing theory is that the candidate is white and male*" (p. 25). Specifically, gender is discussed broadly amongst intersectional identity dimensions in various fields, such as history, communications and political science (Herrnson et al., 2003). It is clear that gender plays an important role within the political product, and yet there is only scant research on the subject within the political marketing field. Several studies point to the negative effects of sexism and gender stereotyping on women's participation in politics (Lammers et al., 2008; Mandziuk, 2008). Women politicians' appearance has received attention from scholars; in particular, they experienced negative gender bias in the media regarding their appearance (Falk, 2010; Lammers et al., 2008; Mandziuk, 2008; Sanghvi and Hodges, 2015). Furthermore, existing studies provide insights into how candidates are judged on their ability to be congruent with the existing gender-related roles, such as being compliant, submissive, cooperative, and self-

effacing (Eagly and Karau, 2002; Mandziuk, 2008; Sanghvi and Hodges, 2015). By focusing on a candidate's gender, scholars investigate how it is perceived by voters, how it affects candidate's image, how candidates' political party position itself towards candidates' gender and how gender affects the outcome of the elections (Carroll, 1994; De Landtsheer et al., 2008; Falk, 2010; Hoegg and Lewis, 2011; Okimoto and Brescoll, 2010; Sanghvi, 2014; Uscinski and Goren, 2011). While gender has been receiving attention, many studies also avoid adopting gender and its effect on their study. For example, when O'Cass (2003) examine Margaret Thatcher in his study, he restricts the discussion to Thatcher using marketing to sell her policies but does not focus on the role of her gender played in her campaign, election, her administration, her removal, or her legacy. Busby (2012), in his work, also did not highlight the effects of Sarah Palin's gender explicitly.

Moreover, according to "*the hegemonic assumption*", the second salient identity dimension, race/ethnicity, was also not engaged within the political marketing studies (Sanghvi, 2019). For example, when Obama was elected, there was an ongoing debate about his race in political science (Sinclair-Chapman and Price, 2008; Smith and King, 2009). In contrast, within the political marketing, Obama has just received attention related to his brand image and political product without the effect of his race (Cogburn and Espinoza-Vasquez, 2011; Guzmán and Sierra, 2009; Smith and French, 2009).

Recently, there has been some progress in the area; for instance, Sanghvi (2014) and Sanghvi and Hodges' (2015) provide insights into power dynamics and gender hierarchies in political marketing. The recent work of Sanghvi (2019) aimed to engage gender studies literature and political marketing to extend understanding of the issues of gender in political marketing. He found that a feminist approach was useful for his study because it allows for the deconstruction of gender roles and the notion of identity while challenging gender stereotypes and expectations

that hinder women's career progress, especially in politics (Hoogensen and Solheim, 2006). In that way, he seems to respond to the call for more critical research in political marketing. In detail, he provides greater insights into the historical roots of intersectionality in political marketing. For him, Shirley Chisholm, the first black woman to get elected to Congress, is a good starting point to understand intersectionality in political marketing. Sanghvi (2019) noted that she leveraged her identity as a second-generation immigrant, black woman, and as someone with a working-class upbringing to organise her supporters from similar backgrounds. Although he did note that she stood for all under-represented minorities or groups, she puts efforts for people in the US to nominate people who will be the most appropriate candidate regardless of their sex, race, age, class etc. That is, for her, the candidates should not be chosen from a small pool of upper-class, white, college-educated Americans but must be just like Chisholm was a true candidate of the American people.

Sanghvi's findings (2019) provide greater insights into the intersection of gender and various identity dimensions such as sexual orientation, race, weight, age and gender expression, sometimes all at once to create structural and personal limits on the success of female politicians. Although religion is also found as an important identity dimension, he did not prefer to use it to guarantee his participants' anonymity in his research. He found that age plays an important role for female politicians. In relation to Sanghvi (2014)'s study, they stated that the intersection of gender and age is understood with regards to female politicians' appearance. This is because appearance and appearing healthy are critical in the field of politics. In this respect, he indicated that whilst young female politicians are perceived appropriate, older female politicians feel the need for Botox, hair-dye, make-up, or even plastic surgery to appear electable (Sanghvi, 2014). In this respect, another intersectional identity category, fattism, which can be considered a non-traditional category, is also discussed regarding its effect on

female politicians' appearance. While fatness has been deemed as a medical or health problem, the stigma and prejudice create real consequences for people, especially women (Fraser, 2009). Women who were fat were targeted individually and structurally through myriad means, such as campaigns, media outlets, or even their colleagues. The study highlighted the importance of intersectionality in the study of political marketing and gender. Although the study presented important findings of the interplay of gender, gender dynamics and power structures, gender hierarchies and intersectionality within political marketing, by using the feminist approach, it mostly emphasized the critical role of gender on other intersectional identity categories. It provides insights into an overlooked yet critical topic of gender and the issues female politicians face in the United States.

3.5.2. Intersectionality in Political Branding

Much like political marketing research, newly established political branding is also largely silent about gender and other intersectional identity dimensions. For example, Parker (2012) investigated the brand equity of Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, John McCain and Mike Huckabee in the 2008 election. However, in his work, he did not focus on the effect of gender on Hillary Clinton's brand. Scammell (2015) also talked about the political image. While she focused on social, cultural and psychological brand differentiators, she did not provide any insights into the gender issue. Recently, Armannsdottir et al. (2019a) focused on the two Icelandic women politicians' personal political brand identity. Although they pointed to some gender-related findings, they did not focus on the role of gender explicitly.

Furthermore, drawing on the existing literature in political branding, particularly human-related political branding studies, shows that political branding studies are mostly context-specific. Human political brands and personal political brand studies are into specific contexts.

In this respect, although studies may easily portray personal brands in their own context in relation to intersectional identity categories, such as race, ethnicity and national identity, they do not focus on these identity dimensions.

Political branding as a sub-discipline of political marketing is under the responsibility of answering the call for more critical and interdisciplinary research in political marketing (Henneberg and O'Shaughnessy, 2007; Moufahim and Lim, 2009; Osuagwu, 2008). In addition, recently, Pich and Newman (2020) make an explicit call for multi-discipline approaches. This research aimed to address these calls in some way by using an intersectional lens on female Turkish politicians' construction of personal political brand identity.

3.5.3. Intersectionality in Personal Branding

In personal branding literature, there are some studies that use intersectionality implicitly. Lair et al. (2005) were the first researchers to raise the questions associated with personal branding, focusing on intersectional categories, in particular, gender, race and culture in the US labour market. Following this study, Phua and Caras (2008) examined marketing strategies used by Brazilian-white American males and sex workers in their online advertisements and how ethnicity is emphasized as an aspect of personal branding. They found that whilst gender is not a statistically significant identity dimension, ethnicity, race, and nationality can have differentiating characteristics when it comes to personal brands. Drawing on Goffman's (1959) theory of self-presentation, Geurin-Eagleman and Burch (2016) examined Olympic athletes' Instagram photos. According to these athletes, content analysis of Instagram photos revealed that sexually suggestive photos are most popular. These studies focus on intersections of identity dimensions in different contexts.

More recently, there are books published highlighting specific intersectional categories in different contexts. For example, Diaz- Garcia et al. (2016) focused on women's entrepreneurship which is a socially embedded process. By focusing on different contexts, they provide an insightful explanation of the relationship between entrepreneurial behaviours of women and their contexts. That is, by drawing attention to the contexts in which they operate, they focused on the intersections of gender, cultural norms, and societal expectations. In Turkish context, Uygur et al. (2016) found that Turkish women who have access to resources are capable of making the best use of these through innovative and sustainable business models for creating empowerment for various stakeholders, including themselves. In an Icelandic context, Armannsdottir et al. (2016) found that the majority of the women had been affected in one way or another by the crisis, either by difficulties in getting a job or being made redundant. They highlighted that more emotional support is needed for women with already established companies. Similarly, others found that gender, environmental and social context influence women's entrepreneurship in an Italian context. Women's sense of confidence, their relationship with the credit institutions, the role of a structured system of public/ private services (such as elder and daycare services) and family support were investigated to understand women entrepreneurs' performances. These findings also echo the socially embedded characteristics of personal brands.

Different fields provide insightful studies into personal brands. For example, there is a large body of research documenting how professional work is gendered (Davies, 1996), gender norms and expectations are embedded into the structure of professional jobs and career paths. For example, recent research argued that a gender lens alone is no longer sufficient to capture the experiences of men and women in professions (Choroszewicz and Adams, 2019). By pointing to this gap, sociologists Choroszewicz and Adams (2019) adopt an intersectional

approach and explore how age and gender intersect to shape experiences of professional work and careers. In doing so, they explored the experiences of young professionals entering the workforce and the significance of gender in shaping these experiences and intergenerational dynamics in professions through contributions from scholars studying professionals in a variety of professions across national settings. The chapters in this volume focus on different professions and touch on a variety of experiences from career entry through work-family conflict and career trajectories to social media activities, emotional capital, discrimination and income. Each one provides insight into how gender and age intersect to shape experiences. The chapters reveal that men and women in different generations or age cohorts can experience professional work differently and that life stages can profoundly shape careers and professional work. The chapters also highlight the importance of time and place; experiences vary by era and country, as not only social-historical context but also gender regimes and policy environments shape professionals' opportunities. Furthermore, Hardey's (2019) study mentioned before also investigated the intersectionality of professional identity, gender, technology culture and status of both women and men who work in three different tech cities. Specifically, her work does not remain limited to focusing on only women's experiences, but both women and men from different professional backgrounds are presented. In this respect, this study outlined that tech cities are far from being homogenous environments, concluding that there is a deeply masculine culture. There is growing discontent within tech cities among men and women about skills training, advancement and the lack of job security. Hardey's study (2019) found that interaction and communication between women and men play an important role in both professional identities. Although research is rare, these studies lead the personal branding studies to conclude that intersectional categories are associated with personal branding, and they are situation-dependent.

3.7. Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the existing literature on the intersectional feminist approach and built a foundation for the exploration of personal political brands. This chapter offered a discussion of continuing debates around intersectionality. The theoretical and methodological discussions presented throughout the chapter provided insights into how intersectionality is conceptualised in different fields. The sections highlighted that there are many ambiguities when considering intersectionality as a theory and methodology. Moreover, this chapter highlighted the most salient intersectional identity categories in related research. In addition, this chapter focused upon the use of intersectionality in marketing. In doing so, the chapter revealed that the extant intersectionality literature in marketing is in line with the main discussions on the field. Based on the salient intersectional identity categories, such as gender, religion and ethnicity for professional female politicians' personal political brand identity in the context of Turkey (see Section 1.1.), and building upon the existing literature in political marketing, political branding and personal branding, this chapter discussed the application of the intersectional feminist approach in the construction of personal political brands. This thesis now moves on to present the methodological focus of this study.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

4.1. Introduction

In the previous chapters, I reviewed the literature on political marketing and branding, and I introduced an intersectional feminist approach to understand the personal political brands' identity. In this chapter, I unpack the methodologies that I used in order to answer my research aims which are to understand the construction of professional female politicians' brand identity through the intersections of multiple identity categories, in particular gender, religion and ethnicity, and to investigate the way professional female politicians leverage their identities to construct their personal political brand.

This chapter focuses on the philosophical assumptions underpinning this research to explain the research strategy and the empirical techniques used. The chapter outlines the limitations and scope of the research design and situates the research within the existing research traditions in the field of marketing. Thus, this chapter is divided into four sections. In the first section, the research paradigm of the project is discussed. The philosophical assumptions that lie behind this research are based on the interpretive tradition. This research indicates a subjective epistemology and a social constructivist ontology. The next section outlines the method of qualitative analysis utilised and discusses the main data collection methods used in this research study which were semi-structured interviews. The interviews were conducted during the period from 20 April to 24 June 2018. The following section presents the research design. Limitations and ethical research considerations are then discussed in the last section prior to the summary of the chapter.

4.2. Research Paradigm

Research paradigms demonstrate researchers' beliefs about the world they live in and desire to live in (Lather, 1986). In this sense, Lapan et al. (2012) indicate that research paradigm associates with "*sets of practices that define a scientific discipline or approach to conducting research*" (p. 7). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), three main components affect the research paradigm: firstly, ontology, the nature of reality; secondly, epistemology, the lens through which we view reality; and lastly, reflexivity, the relationship between the known and the enquirer. In this subsection, ontology and epistemology are discussed (reflexivity is discussed at the end of the thesis, see p. 261).

4.2.1. Ontology

This study aims to understand female politicians' brand identity construction and their experiences with regard to social identity dimensions, such as gender, ethnicity, and religion. Critically examining politicians' brand identity development, including through intersectional lens, is especially useful because the research questions of this study assumed a socially and historically constructed reality (Gergen, 1985; Murray and Ozanne, 1991), that once constructed, works structure the identities of individuals (Syed, 2010; Warner and Shields, 2013). That is, the aim is not to quantify or measure any data but to enhance understanding of the phenomenon by attaining information from experts, i.e., female politicians in this research, on personal experiences and critical instances. Therefore, a subjectivist ontological stance is adopted.

Social constructionism is in line with the view of interpretivism, which means reality is negotiated and formed by individuals, for they share the same objective of understanding lived experience. It also brings the ambivalent sense that concepts, however socially constructed,

correspond to something real in the world, which are reflected in our knowledge. The social constructionist epistemological view adopted refers to "*all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context*" (Crotty, 1998, p. 42). In this respect, this study tries to provide deep insights into the object underneath this study and puts emphasis on the institutional and cultural origins of phenomena. So, women politicians do not create meaning in their social environment on a case-by-case basis; however, culture and normative practices brought these issues into focus, endowed these concerns with meaning, and drove us to ignore some elements. In this sense, culture and normative practices act as an effective lens through which to make sense of the phenomenon. Therefore, the realities of the participants are seen as socially constructed. At this point, by drawing on a social constructionist ontology which aims to "*reveal the structure of meanings as constructed by individuals engaged in a social process*" (Hackley, 1998, p. 130), the research supports the view that reality is "*socially constructed, multiple, holistic, contextual*" (Tadajewski, 2006, p. 438).

The world and reality of everyday life are not to be perceived objectively and analysed statistically but can be experienced through social practices (Holstein and Gubrium, 2011). In this respect, as this research focuses on the identity construction process, Berger and Luckmann's (1966) view on the social construction of reality is key to the research paradigm. Indeed, as mentioned by Jupp (2006), in focusing upon the interpretivist paradigm, this research reflects on how "*realities, identities and knowledge are created and maintained in interactions, and are culturally, historically and linguistically influenced*" (p. 201).

Social constructionism indicates the world as waiting to be discovered, which is understood, interpreted and operationalised through language and culture (Holden and Lynch, 2004). This

points out that social actors play an important role as crucial participants in the meaning creation process (Crotty, 1998). By adding an important part of the conscious subject, they give something essential of themselves to the conscious subject so that what we came to know is not simply another subjective explanation of the phenomenon, but an explanation that reflects both our culture and the essential qualities about the phenomenon. Thus, social constructionism is characterised as the inseparable relationship between subjects, objects, society, language and culture that form one's perception. As indicated by Crotty (1998), "*no object can adequately describe isolated from the conscious being experiencing it, nor can any experience adequately describe isolated from its object*" (p. 45). The relationship between subjects and objects are highlighted as codependent and reciprocal within social constructionism. Therefore, meaningful meaning does not depend on the world or objects, human beings are central to the meanings of all things, and everything depends upon human beings. However, objects affect meaning creation if the meanings are related to them. That is, while context acts as an effective determinant to point objects' meaning, with its specific attributes, the objects may affect the meanings related to them. This demonstrates that social constructionism approves different kinds of subjectively formed meanings of the object.

Holden and Lynch (2004) indicate that "*the researcher's view of reality is the corner stone to all other assumptions*" (p. 402). By using Burrell and Morgan's (1979) influential diagram, it is possible to understand how social science scholars assert assumptions about the nature of science and society. To begin with the nature of science, researchers make a decision about objectivism and subjectivism. Cunliffe (2011) points to three problems. Firstly, according to objectivism, reality exists on its own independently of individuals' interactions. Secondly, in contrast to objectivism, subjectivism lies in the interactions of individuals, thereby the meaning is "*relative to the time, place, and manner in which they are constructed*" (Cunliffe, 2011, p.

656). Inter-subjectivism, lastly, broadens the context of subjectivism and outlines the meaning within multiple and interactional relationships. To contribute to the field of political marketing and marketing research, the study attempts to understand how female politicians' brand themselves and develop an understanding of their lived experience through the intersections of multiple identity categories. Thus, an interpretive research approach is adopted, and the research paradigm focuses on inter-subjectivism.

4.2.2. Epistemology

Epistemology provides a philosophical foundation for deciding on what kinds of knowledge are appropriate for the research aim and how the researcher ensures that the chosen knowledge is legitimate and adequate (Maynard, 1994). Drawing on the philosophical assumptions presented in the literature, research can be classified as positivist (theory-driven research), interpretivist (participant-driven research) and critical (structural inequality research) (Bryman and Bell, 2007). The epistemological point of view on interpretive approaches is that knowledge of reality is achieved only through social interactions, such as language, shared meanings, documents, instruments etc. (Bryman, 2016). In this respect, interpretive research focuses on the subjectivity and complexity of sense-making by individuals in particular situations (Silverman, 2006); that is, there are no dependent and independent variables to examine meaning. Given the interest in exploring how female politicians' brand identities are constructed, an interpretivist epistemology points to the methodology to investigate how multiple identity axes intersect, and how female politicians brand themselves in the context of Turkish politics. This research, thus, is aligned with interpretivist marketing research, which focuses more on subjectivity, providing powerful, intuitive, and emotional experiences.

Based on interpretivist philosophical foundation, this research adopts an abductive approach for analysis and interpretations. Using an abductive approach facilitates the transformation of findings into related theories and approaches and assessing these theories through live practices, thereby the researcher can be able to provide vivid links between theory and data (Morgan, 2007). Additionally, through the constant comparison approach, the researcher can move theory and data iteratively (Bluhm et al., 2011; Glaser, 1992; Glaser and Strauss, 1967). This research, therefore, attempts to utilize an adaptable research design, which allows all themes to reveal from the data (Saunders et al., 2011).

4.3. Method: Interpretive Data Analysis

Holden and Lynch (2004) indicate that the choice of a research methodology "*should be consequential to the researcher's philosophical stance and the social science phenomenon to be investigated*" (p. 397). In this respect, while methodology is identified as the theory of how the present research should be undertaken, methods are considered as techniques and tools used to generate and analyse data (Saunders et al., 2011). Building upon this distinction, the method adopted in this thesis is the interpretive qualitative analysis.

It is noted that over the past two decades employing interpretive research methods in the collecting and analysing of qualitative data has significantly gained attention (Strauss and Corbin, 2006). Many researchers argue that the preference for qualitative data is a logic preference when the end goal is to understand the social life of the researched (Davis, 2014; England, 2006; Hunting, 2014; Shields, 2008). A strategy to take within interpretive/critical research is to try to understand the people studied on their own terms. Qualitative research provides a holistic lens to interpret in-depth, contextual, non-numeric, rich and, and usually unstructured data (Mason, 2017) and brings researchers and participants together in their

natural environment (Creswell, 2009). In qualitative research, researchers focus on examining a socially constructed reality (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). Denzin and Lincoln (1998) stated that qualitative research aims to investigate problems that "*stress how social experience is created and given meaning*" (p. 8). While quantitative research sees the world from the numerically symbolised perspective, qualitative research relies on the socially structured, language-based and related representations of the world (Heppner et al., 1999).

As stated by Charmaz (2006), utilizing a social constructivist approach with qualitative research methods allows this thesis to ask the "*how-and sometimes why-participants construct meanings and actions in specific situations*" (p. 130). Therefore, the qualitative research method facilitates gaining a deep understanding of individuals' specific experiences from their own perspectives. In this respect, with the flexibility of proposed qualitative methods, researchers should devote time to explore complex experiences of participants and "*sustain a fair amount of ambiguity*" (Strauss and Corbin, 2006, p. 5). Furthermore, qualitative research enables methodologies to explore newly recognised research problems. As exploratory research aims to investigate the new, ambiguous, social experience of actors (Bryman, 2016), this thesis is exploratory in nature and attempts to understand personal political brands deeply.

4.3.1. Research Design

Considering all of the above, this study adopts the interpretivist research paradigm, and a qualitative research methodology is appropriate to achieve my research goals: to provide an in-depth understanding of the professional female politicians brand identity construction and the context that affects the social practices and meanings that are socially constructed by participants (Fairclough, 2013). After deciding on the broad approach of the research, the next step is to identify particular research design decisions that will be adopted to collect the

essential data. A research design needs to be a compelling structure that bridge thesis research questions, collected empirical data and conclusions. In this respect, Yin (1994) indicates that research design is the outline of research pointing to main problems, such as what kind of questions to conduct research, what data are appropriate and applicable, what data to gather, and how to analyse the findings. Therefore, this section discusses three aspects of the research procedure: (1) participant selection, (2) data gathering and (3) data analysis. Specifically, the discussion will highlight the research activities, which demonstrate the application of the philosophical stance guiding the thesis and methodological approach presented above.

Therefore, a qualitative research approach is chosen as the methodology because this approach supports deep understanding and interpretation of the female politicians' background, experiences, feelings and attitudes from their own perspective, which responds some way to the research questions (Schutt, 2004). As the political branding is still at the exploratory phase (Lees-Marshment, 2009; Pich and Dean, 2015; Smith, 2009), qualitative research allows the researcher to gain rich knowledge, an in-depth understanding of the phenomena under consideration and therefore unique data, accomplished by exploring deep into the participants' perceptions, attitudes, beliefs and feelings (Covaleski and Dirsmith, 1990; Malhotra and Birks, 2003; Rubin and Rubin, 1995; Warren and Karner, 2005).

4.3.1.1. Participant Selection

Bryman and Bell (2007) define sampling "*as the fragment or section of the population that is selected for the research process*" (p. 182), which is therefore an element of data collection. In the current thesis, because the aim is not to produce a representative sample and, as a result, generalize to a population or other contexts (Creswell and Creswell, 2017), a random sampling strategy would not be appropriate. However, this research intends to gain knowledge generated

from the information made available by the best people to answer its questions. To achieve this, purposive sampling is used to create the sample of the thesis. As one of the non-probability sample techniques, purposive sampling method signifies participants in terms of their knowledge, experiences and relationships in relation to a research topic. Therefore, to choose the best participants for dealing with the research questions and increase my awareness about the politicians' life, I conducted netnography at the end of the first year and through my second year of study. I spent between half an hour and one hour on each female politicians' social media accounts (including Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube) to observe their former and current activities and note down prominent observations. In addition to perusing social media platforms, politicians' individual web pages and political parties' web pages were also given observed.

In netnography, the online world is a cultural and social world that can help researchers explore online interactions by using a cultural frame of reference (Kozinets 1996; 1997; 1998; 1999; Catterall and Maclaran, 2002). Although netnography has similar characteristics with ethnography (Gubrium and Holstein, 2014; Fetterman, 2009), netnography is based on studying and understanding peoples lives online (Kozinets, 2006). It is a naturalistic, immersive, observational, participative and context-driven method (Kozinets, 2006; 2010; Kozinets et al., 2014). In this respect, by focusing on professional female politicians' social media accounts as well as on individual web pages and political parties' web pages, I gain insights into the meaning of their local contexts, which provide windows on naturally occurring behaviours. Kozinets (2010) stated that this rich understanding is captured through the researchers' observation of and participation with people as they socialise online in regular environments and activities. Therefore, professional female politicians' detailed

representations of the lived online experience inform me about many elements of their overall lifeworld.

Netnography is a more flexible approach that allows researchers to explore and explain rich and diverse cultural worlds (Kozinets et al., 2014). In addition, netnography provides a "*borderless environment where geographically dispersed members can meet and communicate*" (Ibid, p. 263). As netnography is used to research sensitive topics and given that politicians are people who have a busy agenda and are difficult to access, this accessibility transforms the data collection process from one of relative scarcity and difficulty to one of abundance. Thus, netnography does not only provide a rich and thick description of data but also facilitates the research approach.

It is of note that a critical issue for qualitative research is gaining access to the participants (Bogdan and Bilken, 1997). Conducting interviews with people in positions of authority is difficult though information about them seems more available. Thus, in addition to purposive sampling, snowball sampling is indeed employed in this study. It is aimed to take advantage of the identified participants' social relationships, thereby expanding the researcher's circle of contacts. In doing so, snowball sampling provided access between the same political party politicians and helped me get access to different political parties' politicians. Additionally, some of the participants were reached through referrals such as my former university lecturers, friends and contacts. These connections also eased gaining access to some of the participants.

Recruitment occurred in detail as follows. Firstly, I have contacted all participants by email based on the details provided by the Grand National Assembly database, political parties' official web page or politicians' personal web page. I sent a brief email about this project, and in the event of non-response, I re-sent it some days later before moving on. At the end of this

first step, I was able to schedule five interviews. Then, I telephoned politicians' offices and asked receptionists, their personal advisers or assistants to inform them about my invitation. In these calls, I provided them with background information about the project, followed by an email with an ethics clearance letter attached and a consent form (see appendices D and E, pp. 276-278) in another brief email, if necessary. At the end of the second step, six participants agreed to be interviewed. While preparing to scheduled interviews, suddenly, Turkey's President Erdogan announced plans on 18 April 2018 to bring forward the November 2019 presidential and parliamentary elections to 24 June 2018. The day following the election announcement, I telephoned all my participants' private offices in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey to have the latest updates related to my interviews. It was obvious from the first day that the campaign was meant to be vibrant and busy. Because the timescale was incredibly tight, eight scheduled interviews were cancelled by the participants, and three participants postponed interviews to a later date. Although it was not planned, the data was collected during the 24 June 2018, Turkey's general election period, which affected participants selection procedure directly. This opportunity to observe and engage with female politicians during the general election period enriched my data and turned out to be fruitful for the research. Then, I focused on the participants with whom I established a relationship and who did not refuse to be interviewed. On average, as a researcher, I spent between two hours and four hours on targeted politicians' individual social media pages to learn about their current activities. I, therefore, re-telephoned them from time to time to ask them about a convenient time for the interview.

Consequently, in total, 25 politicians were included in this research between 20 April-24 June 2018. Out of them, an interview was conducted by phone and another by Skype. A detailed participant list is presented in appendix B, see pp. 268-273.

4.3.1.2. Data Gathering: In-depth Interviews

As Kvale (1996) stated the qualitative research interview investigates "*to understand the world from the subjects' points of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples' experiences, to uncover their lived world*" (p. 1). Interviews are purposeful discussions between the researcher and participant aimed to understand participants' insights into a specific issue and, in the end, obtain a deeper understanding of their feelings, lived experiences and attitudes (Merriam, 1998). Specifically, semi-structured interviews facilitate the interview process by giving directions to both sides and also allow for openness to unpack different and probably unexpected aspects of the research question during the interview process (Rubin and Rubin, 1995).

With these in mind, this study adopted semi-structured, in-depth interviews consistent with a critical approach to exploring female Turkish politicians' brand identity through an intersectional lens. This is because, firstly, in-depth interviews are purposeful conversations used to obtain specific and in-depth information to understand participants' lived experiences (Merriam, 1998). That is, in-depth interviews are appropriate for developing comprehensive and holistic explanations, integrating several viewpoints, and explaining processes (Weiss, 1994). Interviews also emphasise the importance of agency and self-definition throughout the research process, as well as recognising the interactive nature of the researcher-researched relationship (Oakley, 1981). Secondly, because interviews provide needed flexibility, a balanced approach and rich of data collected, semi-structured interviews are one of the most adaptable ways of conducting a research interview (Gillham, 2005). Semi-structured interviews are useful tools to discover, explore and generate a deeper discussion about a research topic. Thus, for the purpose of this study, twenty-five semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with female politicians from different stages of politics, from ministers to local

politicians and different ideologies, ranging from liberalist to nationalist and secular to religious.

The interview guide was created by the researcher after reviewing the literature on political branding, personal branding and an intersectional approach (Gillham, 2005). However, the interview guide was only a broad structure that the researcher plans on covering in the interview, thereby enabling the discussion to take place appropriately and helping to make possible natural discussions rather than serving as a strict procedure, which could suppress unique conversations (Foddy, 2001; Rubin and Rubin, 1995).

To build a trustful relationship between the researcher and the participant, the interviews began with grand-tour or non-direct questions; that is, questions aim to create close ties to make participants feel comfortable and motivate them to tell their stories (Hill et al., 1997). During the interviews, floating prompts play an important role in understanding the participants' responses (McCracken, 1989). However, politicians are familiar with the interview process as well as with managing impressions; therefore, to get beyond the surface level of discussion, it is important to utilise different kinds of questions, such as modelling, hypothetical, interpretive and positioning (McCracken, 1989; Merriam, 1998; Rubin and Rubin, 1995, Sanghvi and Hodges, 2015).

Identity and politics are sensitive topics when it comes to interviews(Alvesson, 2011; Alvesson and Karreman, 2011). During the interview, both the interviewer and the interviewee explicitly and implicitly invoke an identity (Alvesson, 2011). Alvesson and Karreman (2011) argued that when interviewing people, such as a woman and a leader, different identities arise, an interviewer needs specific questions and also different tendencies to interpret the interview. Therefore, to deal with the topics' sensitivity, an interview guide was developed based on the

research objectives and the key themes from the literature to help facilitate the in-depth interviews. The interview guide included broad themes rather than specific questions as these encouraged a more natural discussion and a strong rapport between the participants and the researcher. A copy of the interview guide can be found in appendix C, see p. 274. The interview guide was piloted (Hacer, Mine and Elif), and this gave the researcher the opportunity to assess the usability of the guide and determine whether the guide would address the research objectives. Kvale (2007) stated that conducting pilot interviews allows the researcher to see if there are limitations or flaws within the interview guide, thereby the researcher can make modifications to the major study. Although there is no major change in the interview guide, pilot interviews increase my awareness about politicians' daily routines and busy agenda, particularly in the election period. Thus, conducting pilot interviews helped me to increase my ability to deal with interruptions and problems (such as phone calls, visitors or unscheduled meetings) that arise during the interview. In this respect, these interviews improved my interview management skills, helping me to reduce stress during the interview process, make my participants comfortable in unexpected events and resume the interview as quickly as possible. Furthermore, as politicians are quite capable of managing interviews, as mentioned above, pilot interviews helped me to develop floating prompts to gain deep insights into the experiences of the participants themselves. Therefore, pilot interviews increased the quality of the following interviews.

At the start of each interview, participants were asked to once again review and sign (if they had not signed already) the Consent Form and if they would permit the conversation to be recorded (see appendices D and E, pp. 276-278). In cases where the interviews were conducted over Skype or by phone, participants were sent the Consent Form and invitation letter via email. Female politicians were given time to ask further questions, then the aim of the thesis was

restated before the interview began. Interviews were semi-structured and scheduled to last approximately forty-five minutes each. However, the interviews were conversational in nature, and as the general election was due in Turkey, the actual interview times varied from twenty-five minutes to over four hours. At the conclusion of each interview, participants were asked if they would consent to provide follow-up information or to address a previously discussed topic more thoroughly. Each participant agreed to this request and shared their personal phone numbers and email addresses for future contacts.

I interviewed participants at locations convenient to them to make them feel comfortable. Because of the extremely busy election period, interview places were not pre-planned. Many interviews were conducted either in offices of female politicians in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, political parties' central buildings or politicians' personal offices in Ankara. Additionally, some interviews were conducted in restaurants, coffee shops or politicians' houses in four different cities, namely Ankara, Istanbul, Bursa and Izmit, to reach the saturation point in the research and to reflect the viewpoints of a variety of female politicians.

4.3.1.3. Data Analysis

In-depth interviews were conducted in Turkey and transcribed by the researcher. Transcription was completed within three months of the interviews. Transcribed interviews were sent to the participants to ensure the process of member checking. The aim is to attain the validity of participants, decrease bias and increase the quality of analysis (Warren and Karner, 2005).

In this research, thematic analysis is the foundation method for qualitative analysis and includes finding iterative forms of meaning from the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Butler-Kisber, 2010; Silverman, 2015). The method identifies, analyses and reports patterns in the data. As thematic

analysis is considered to be flexible, ease of application, ability to capture similarities and differences across the data set and to generate unanticipated insights (Braun and Clarke, 2006). It shows the data in detail and deals with various themes through interpretations (Boyatzis, 1998). Thematic analysis involves the practice of identifying common themes and unique codes from the findings in order to interpret and make sense of the phenomenon (Butler-Kisber, 2010; Warren and Karner, 2005). This systematic procedure allowed me to reveal numerous sub-themes and themes, such as identity construction, authenticity, legitimacy, communication tools and challenges of personal political brand management.

Although there are various approaches to thematic analysis (e.g., Spiggle, 1994; Braun and Clarke, 2006; Langdrifge and Hagger-Johnson, 2009; King and Horrocks, 2010), in this study, once data is collected, it is followed by the analysis procedures as outlined by Spiggle (1994). In this respect, data analysis was conducted manually. Firstly, as mentioned by Spiggle (1994), the data were categorized on the basis of meanings that embodied parts of the phenomenon. It is noteworthy that my, as a researcher, disciplinary and professional knowledge was essential along with the research and personal experience for enhanced sensitivity to coding and categorization (Strauss and Corbin, 2006). In this sense, my preliminary research on the research topic prepared me for categorizing and coding the material with greater sensitivity. Secondly, abstraction is adopted to create "*higher-order conceptual constructs*", take the categories and summarize them into fewer and more general ones (Spiggle, 1994, p. 493). The next step is depersonalisation, which is connected to "*identifying properties of categories and constructs*" (Ibid, p. 494). In doing so, it was aimed to explain conceptual meanings of the construct by comparing information across incidents to develop a comprehensive understanding of relationships (Ibid). As a fourth step, integration outlines relationships between conceptual elements of the data (Ibid). Although these current steps were not

sequential, I went through several iterations, I moved back and forth between data throughout this process. In line with Spiggle' thematic analysis approach (1994), I was able to organize collected data, understand the complicated meanings and reach conclusions that facilitate developing conceptual frameworks that explain the data.

Then, the data was interpreted. Spiggle (1994) states that there is no need to follow a specific procedure for interpretation, for it is intuitive and arises from digging deep in the meaning of the data. Female politicians' created meanings and experiences in the data facilitated the production of consistency in the interviews. The following is a discussion of the ethical considerations.

4.3.2. Ethical Consideration

Focusing on the perspectives of interpretive epistemology and constructionist ontology that guided this research, the idea of the "*researcher as instrument*" (Patton, 2002, p. 14) brings deeper ethical concerns into the designing of the research compared to the research designs, where there is no direct contact between researcher and participants. To conduct this research, ethical approval was obtained from the Durham University Ethics Committee. Interview procedures are considered a sensitive issue for participants; therefore, important ethical concerns were considered to prevent any mistreatment of participants.

First, all participants were given a consent form. Twenty-three participants signed the consent during the face-to-face interviews. The remaining two participants' consent forms were sent via email and were returned to the researcher, scanned, signed, and completed after the phone or the Skype interviews had taken place. The participants were ensured that their anonymity was protected in the thesis. While they signed the consent form, it was made clear that if they feel any discomfort or decide to stop for individual reasons, they could withdraw from the

project at any time. All collected data, findings and results were safely stored with the use of a password-protected external hard drive. Ultimately, no monetary compensation was provided to any of the research participants.

Bryman and Bell (2007) highlight the importance of confidentiality which enables researchers to manage the confidential information provided by participants. Therefore, the researcher paid attention not to discuss or share any information with others without the consent of the participants. Confidentiality of the participants was protected at all times, within the limits of distress and risk management. Interviews were recorded by using a secure recorder, and all recordings were transcribed by the researcher. As proposed by Bryman and Bell (2007), data were kept safe in a locked cupboard, and recordings will be destroyed on completion of the thesis.

The researcher aimed to provide privacy in all individual issues that emerged during the interviews. Individual issues might be in the form of opinions, beliefs, feelings or attitudes in addition to their identities. During transcribing, by employing pseudonyms, all data was made anonymous to keep participants' identities unknown. Anonymity gets secured once even the researcher cannot connect the participant with the data (Bryman and Bell, 2007). In qualitative research, anonymity cannot be guaranteed entirely (Saunders et al., 2015), but as a researcher, I attempted to ensure that there is no unauthorised access to the data. That is, information of the participants and raw data are protected from unauthorised access. It was only myself, as the researcher, and my supervisors who were able to get access to the data. Participants' individual responses are identified in the analyses; however, all possible precautions were taken to hide individuals' identities so that readers of the thesis will not be able to identify the individuals.

4.3.3. Limitations

One limitation of selecting participants relates to generalizability (Yin, 2014). All research design related choices made by the researcher, including the research context, size of research data, the number of interviews and participants, have an impact on the content of the data gathered. However, the purpose of this qualitative research was not to generalise the results to a broader population. Instead, it is to gain deeper insights on female politicians' identity construction and their experiences with regard to social identity dimensions, such as gender, ethnicity and religion.

In addition, for this study, the unit of analysis is mainly politicians, who are located in Ankara, where the Grand National Assembly of Turkey is, Bursa, my hometown, and cities near Bursa, such as Istanbul and Izmit. The Turkish general election was held on 24 June 2018 throughout the 81 provinces of Turkey. With the announcement of the election, politicians went to their local polling districts, which made it difficult to interview them; therefore, I conducted interviews not only in Ankara. Thus, there are limited locations when it comes to finding research participants who fit the necessary criteria.

Another limitation of the research might be the time constraint factors, such as research time. The conditions associated with schedules and time frames for conducting data collection were outside of the researcher's control. This research was conducted from 20 April through 24 June 2018, an election campaign period for the 24 June general election. Access to participants for this research was conditional on female politicians. Being respectful of a participants' time meant the researcher had to be prepared to schedule interviews but be flexible enough to handle last-minute schedule changes made by the participants.

4.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, the theoretical and philosophical assumptions underlying the research methodology were discussed. It was highlighted that this research, as outlined in the research paradigm section, is in line with the social constructionist ontology and utilises intersebjectivism to create knowledge (Cunliffe, 2011). It was also made clear that this research is based on interpretive epistemology to delve into the process of legitimation through qualitative research methods (Lapan et al., 2012). Drawing on the methodology of interpretive qualitative analysis, this chapter focused on professional female politicians' brand identity construction and their experiences with regard to social identity dimensions, particularly gender, ethnicity and religion. It then provided the research design, details of the participant selection, data gathering and analysis. In this respect, in-depth interviews were justified as the main source of professional female politicians' identity construction for analysis. Finally, the last sections discussed the ethical considerations of the research design and core limitations.

Chapter 5: Findings and Analysis- Personal Political Brand Identity Construction

5.1. Introduction

The previous chapter focused on the methodological framework of the thesis, including the philosophical underpinnings, research approach, research method and the detailing processes of research design for the research study. This chapter presents findings and analysis of the creation of the personal political brand identity of Turkish female politicians from the brand creator perspective.

When addressing these politicians' brand identity construction, five broad themes emerged that provide deep insight into how politicians conceptualised, created and managed their intended personal political brand identities. These themes are legacy, experiences, personality and personal values, resilience and heritage, see Figure 2. It is found that these five different themes are related to the construction of personal political brands and come together to form the essence of the female politicians' personal political brand: authenticity.

Personal Political Brand Identity Construction

Legacy
-Worshipping
-Political voice
-Civil responsibility

Experiences
-NGO experiences
-Professional experiences

Personality and Values
-Gender-related traits and values
-Religion-related traits and values
-Ethnicity and age related traits and values

Resilience
-NGO experiences
-Professional experiences
-Politicians' resilience in politics
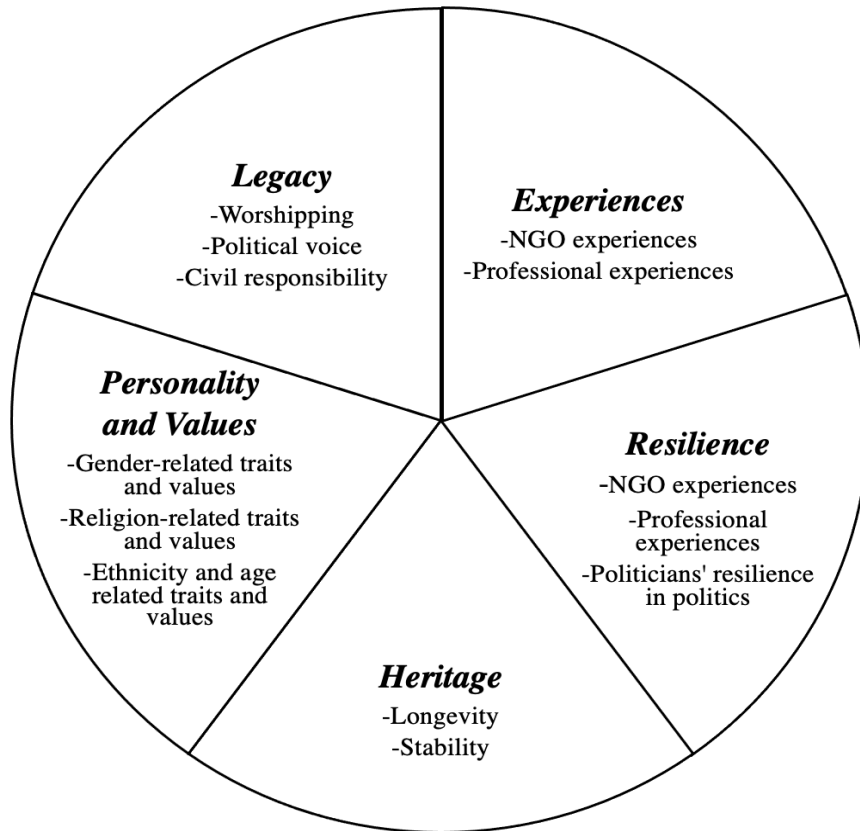
Heritage
-Longevity
-Stability

Figure 2: Key Themes of Professional Female Politicians' Brand Identity Components

5.2. Legacy

According to Pich et al. (2020), the legacy element reflects the personal political brand's background or their reasons for entering politics. They found that there are different legacy elements for politicians to enter the political arena, such as civil responsibility, desire to make a difference, and frustration with the current government. Similarly, this study found that participants have different legacies that laid the initial foundation of their brand identity. Thus, this section discusses such legacies of participants as aspiration of worship, civil duty, making things better and working for the future. It also addresses how female politicians talk about their personal political brand identity.

5.2.1. Worshipping

Many participants spoke of religion as an important factor behind their desire to enter the world of politics. When asked about how they decided to enter politics, they argued that a key driver was the fight for Allah's sake. For example, Zehra said that:

> *As women stay home to take care of the kids and do the house chores, they may feel like they are juggling a lot of things. We thought so, too, but the glorious Allah helps guide you if you are on a path to gain His favour. For both this world and the afterlife, He commands us to bring forth peace, comfort, and kindness. You may choose to do that by joining a political party. But we have sides to ourselves that are hidden from our children, relatives, or neighbours. It is true that even if one strives hard to set things right, they may still fall victim to the cravings of the human desire and not correct themselves. But, if we were to transform the whole government and all the laws in a way that will allow people at large to live in peace and in a righteous atmosphere, people would feel at ease and happy. (Zehra, 15 May 2018, Ankara)*

In this passage, Zehra talks about her gender roles in society. In Turkey's neoliberal gender regime and society, she mentioned that women are overwhelmed with domestic responsibilities (e.g., childcare, housework). At that point, she entered into a mode of self-criticism, criticising

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women for being content with the traditional gender roles. However, she mentioned that dealing with her own social circles, such as her children, neighbours, and relatives, is a rather difficult challenge. For her, these are her soft spots; thereby, her *nafs* (self or desire) induced her to ameliorate things in her circle. This seems to result in role stress for Zehra. Bendisch et al. (2013) argued that personal brands have a desire of controlling different identities, and there is a high risk of *roles stress* because of the potential conflict between personal brands of different identities. In this respect, although her religious convictions led her to make things better, she demonstrates a conflict between her gender and religious identities. However, she again criticises herself for not being strong enough to make things better. She believes that politics is a higher power, one that is able to change society, make things better, secure justice, and bring peace, both for the world and the afterlife. At this point, her religious values override, inspiring her to make a difference for *Allah*'s sake—a key driver for her to enter politics. Although Zehra seems to experience role stress because of traditional gender roles pressure, religion helps her to fuel the desire to enter politics.

By entering politics for *Allah*'s sake, many participants spoke of politics as a form of worship. For example, Betül said that:

> *...so, this is a part of the worship. Justice is one of the communal worships that is earnestly advised and accentuated; it is a duty laid upon us by the Qur'an. (Betül, 30 April 2018, Ankara)*

In her passage, Betül pointed out that politics is a "*civil responsibility*", a kind of "*worship*". However, by highlighting that worship is just "*within ourselves*", Betül differs from others and, as a result, her political party also differs. For her, while civil duty and civil responsibility were acknowledged as external legacies that they can voice publicly, politics as worship is a legacy that is individual or institutional. It seems that by acknowledging politics as worship and

highlighting the importance of this understanding in entering and taking part in politics, Betül differentiates herself from her rivals and competitors.

Further, many participants identified politics as a "*social worship*". Elif stated that:

> *... as a Muslim woman, I personally believed that fighting for justice in terms of the status of women, in terms of justice, freedom, equality, human rights not only for us but also for the others who do not share the same beliefs, ideas, or lifestyles, was in effect a kind of prayer. ... societal prayers... as a Muslim who carries on the principles of the Quran, I believe that societal prayer is the work of turning the Earth into the land of peace. And what societal prayer stands for is in effect turning the Earth into the land of peace. This is the communal worship itself. Turning the world into a peaceful place means people not lying through their teeth, not scheming, nor resorting to deception but living in a realistic, honest, moral, and just society. If people were not to steal, slander, be oppressive or unfair to people around them, discriminate based on perceived class, or take credit for someone else's efforts, then how heaven-like that society would be! Another valuable perspective I gained from Qur'an is that "You are as worthy of heaven as you turn the world you live in into one." That is what the Qur'an says. (Elif, 26 April 2018, Ankara)*

Although her key driver is to make the world better, Elif's understanding of politics is different. Apparently, she pointed out that her individual perspective is shaped by Quran. She built reasoning on the idea that "*You are as heavenly as you made the earth heaven*". In this respect, for her, as a Muslim woman, she should work for world peace. In doing so, she spoke of politics as a form of social worship. Moreover, when talking about her legacy of entering politics, Elif also provided insights about her political party. For her, similar to her desire to enter politics, putting herself forward as a prospective candidate from her political party is a result of her religious perspective. She continued:

> *About deciding on whether to join my political party...I thought that I was doing a similar enough job in NGOs. Of course, in X NGO we generally carried out our original projects, and I was feeling weight on my shoulders thinking whether I should join or not. So, I researched my*

party, its charter, programs, and practices, and I admired its stance to represent all the oppressed. I was already doing the same by myself, fighting for equality and freedom of all. What influenced my choice then was a verse from the Qur'an: "When two sides fight, you shall assume the role of a conciliator. If one side agrees to peace, but the other insists on fighting, you shall be on the side of the party who chose peace and join their struggle against the aggressors." It was one of the verses that shook me to my core. Yes, there was a side which was right, and there was a side which was wrong, but I did not have the luxury to say that I was in the middle. So, I felt a strong responsibility to stand with the oppressed. During the infamous or deal concerning the hijabs, I had to make a choice and stand with the oppressed, no matter who the persecutor was. So, I joined this party. (Elif, 26 April 2018, Ankara)

Before entering politics, Elif mentioned that she was fighting individually or in NGOs for human rights, freedom, equality, and Muslim women's rights. Although she seemed satisfied with her individual fight or being a member of NGOs, she pointed out a verse from the Quran as a key driver behind her decision to enter politics. For her, the verse emphasises support for the oppressed rather than being neutral in the battle between oppressed and oppressors. She identified this verse as a spiritual awakening, a call to enter politics. Indeed, throughout the interview, as seen in her statements above, Elif highlighted that she actively attends social movements, NGOs and fight against injustice, discrimination, marginalisation and inequalities. Since she demonstrates an aspiration of fighting the rights of marginalised and oppressed groups, she is expected to create a sense of collective identity.

However, instead of trying to have her membership recognised in these groups, Elif avoids being a member of one group or the other'. She portrayed herself as a Muslim woman activist. In this way, while she built the initial foundation of her personal political identity based on the intersection of religion and gender, her religious perspective helps her to differentiate her personal political brand identity from competitors and rivals. Instead of forming some sort of attachment to minority groups and therefore limiting herself, she expands her target market by highlighting herself as a supporter of all oppressed groups.

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5.2.2. Political Voice

When participants were asked about their legacies to enter politics, many participants highlighted that they hope to "*serve to country and people*" and "*make the future better for young people*". For example, Nilay mentioned that:

> *... regarding politics, to be honest, even when I was a state personnel, I thought that I could do this, I could be in politics. And even when I was thinking about being in politics, I always thought about how I could be of more help to my people, how I could serve them, what kind of troubles that I could remediate, and how I could contribute to the future of my country. And since I could only do these through politics, I kept thinking about being in politics... (Nilay, 22 May 2018, Ankara)*

In addition to serving the country and people, Nilay spoke about serving her political party. Leyla, another participant, talked about her decision behind entering politics as a consequence of her actions:

> *...Being sensitive towards social issues, not being able to turn a blind eye to other people's problems but trying to solve them instead brought about wanting to be a politician with it. When you aspire to become a nation's leader, or when you become responsible for a city, you must do everything in your power. I went into politics because I thought the best way to do just that was through politics. What I am saying is that I did not enter politics to become a parliamentarian, but the steps I took led me to that. (Leyla, 14 May 2018, Ankara)*

Leyla indicated that she is sensitive to social issues. Her "*sense of responsibility for the city*" and "*desire to govern the country*" were the key reasons behind her decision to enter politics. For her, a politician can strongly communicate concerns and opinions to policymakers, hence affecting public policies directly. Similarly, Hatice mentioned that:

> *...In politics, when you assume a title, you become the centre of attention. Your actions and your words are watched. And you have a potential to reach a larger audience. In fact, why people want to go into politics is because they want to be heard by more people...When you are*

elected to some office, you get to defend the rights of the people more effectively. For instance, when I was the president at the X NGO, I was in the public eye as I was giving statements to the press regularly. But, in my opinion, being a politician is more effective... To reach a larger audience, and to become more influential, I went into politics. (Hatice, 17 June 2018, Skype)

For Hatice, a politician has a position of power and can support and give voice to the oppressed and vulnerable. She added that entering politics plays an important role in reaching bigger segments of society. In so doing, she aims to be the legal, political voice of oppressed groups. Thus, she could be an example of a politician in support of different groups, in support of the weak.

5.2.3. Civil Responsibility

Another key reason for entering politics is a civic responsibility to make the country better. Interestingly, many participants stated that they had the feeling that there was an imminent threat to the country; thus, they behaved with a greater sense of civic responsibility and entered politics. For example, Hacer stated:

There was no sense of mission which would compel me to join this party or that, or I did not have a specific action that I wanted to take. This was not what it was about. At that stage, I did not believe that the country was in good shape and it was not being governed in the way I thought was right. That is why I felt obliged to enter politics and make my country a democratic and constitutional country. I feel happy with my decision. (Hacer, 22 April 2018, Bursa)

Hacer's legacy reflects Pich et al.'s (2020) findings which noted that lack of confidence and lack of belief in policy and in the government are key drivers for entering politics. That is, Hacer's frustration and concerns with the current government and even the perception of threat to the country increased her sense of civic responsibility. In that way, she enters politics with

the desire of restoring democracy and the constitutional structure of the country. Similarly, Fatma relates her decision-making process to the current situation of the country:

> *I made the decision to become active in politics after I resigned my job from the Ministry of National Education. My country was having a rough time at that time and some mistakes were being made that we did not approve of. We already knew that these mistakes would turn into bigger issues in the forthcoming period. And even if we were not officially a member of X Party, we were its supporters... We were following our leader constantly, we admired his wise attitude and we had already turned in our applications to the party. Following their discourse and principles, we had a clear picture of where our country was going. To join the path they shed light on, I resigned in 2011 and started to be active in politics. (Fatma, 3 May 2018, Ankara)*

Before entering politics, Fatma pointed out her concerns over the country's political atmosphere. However, she silenced her critics until her leader voiced the "*mistakes*" which turned into a "*bigger issue*". When the leader pointed out the problems, she apparently got a clear understanding of "*where the country was going*". By emphasizing her loyalty to the leader, she entered politics. Thus, the aspiration to make the country better and solve the problems often supported by concerns over the country fuelled her desire to enter politics. However, similar to many participants, the designation of a leader in current situations and leaders' implicit appeal were key drivers for her. Azra pointed out to the recent well-known 15 July 2016 coup d'etat attempt:

> *My decision to enter politics is in fact related to the latest penitentiary I was working for… It was a maximum-security prison for offenders who were charged with terror-related crimes, so Fetullah Terrorist Organization (FETO) members who were behind the July 15 coup attempt were there. My decision was triggered by their insistence on not changing their course; they were forming gangs in prison and were still active. However, they are not the only reason, the will, and the enthusiasm to enter politics was always present in me. I was thinking to better get myself into the national assembly than be an undercover FETO member. So, I felt like I had to get in. (Azra, 8 June 2018, Bursa)*

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As she had interaction with the members of Fetullah Terrorist Organisation (FETO), who staged an attempted coup against the democratic government, Azra showed sheer anger. In the face of their behaviours and attitudes, she was "*triggered*" to be in the world of politics. In this respect, with a sense of civic responsibility, she entered politics. Although she highlighted her desire to enter politics, the 15 July coup attempt seems to play a key role in her case.

Participants' sense of civic responsibility shaped by their concerns over the country in particular periods resulting in entering politics shows their high level of patriotism which is "*love of one's country*" (Gilbert, 1998, p. 5). As being patriots, they portrayed themselves as ready to take civic responsibility, enter politics and make efforts to restore democracy in the country. Patriotism is learned in time within a social context (Bar-tal, 1993), and an individual's sense of patriotism is generally structured around the religion, social norms, policies and education in that country (Jordan, 1904). In addition, national identity and patriotism have a strong relationship (Blank and Schmidt, 2003). In this respect, although there are possible intersections of multiple identity dimensions, they were not surfaced explicitly. These possible intersections remained embedded in their discourse.

5.3. Experience

Drawing on individuals' experiences, skills, abilities and talents, personal brands try to manage others' impressions (Johnson, 2017; Pluntz and Pras, 2020). According to Shepherd (2005), personal brands are "*attention getting devices*" (p. 597). Personal brands do "*not come naturally*", but they require "*practice, training and tools*" (Vallas and Christin, 2018, p. 18). In this respect, this study found that participants use their previous NGO and professional experiences to signal to voters not only their backgrounds as politicians. Thus, they position themselves as experienced, trained and strong politicians who differ from the competitors and

rivals. The next section presents participants' NGO experiences, followed by a discussion of their professional experiences. It is found that NGO experiences underpinned their identity and helped participants to emphasise their constructed identity to the public.

5.3.1. NGO Experiences

Political parties, religious organisations, NGOs, schools, social networks and markets are important rational and strategic activist structures that can mobilise society on social problems (Bayat, 2005; Sandikci and Ger, 2010; Wiktorowicz, 2004). In this respect, many participants talked about how NGOs are important for their own political careers. For example, Selin mentioned that:

> *I believe that NGOs have more power, and a bigger say than many other institutions, especially political parties. (Selin, 10 June 2018, Bursa)*

Selin compares NGOs to political parties but privileges the former over the latter. To her, politicians highlight their NGO experiences insistently as part of their qualities. They believe NGO experiences are the most effective way to solve society's problems. In this way, participants pointed out specific NGOs to be volunteer and thereby underpin their identity. For example, Nuran mentioned that:

> *I entered politics with the foundation of my political party. But I have been doing civil society work since I was 17. So, I can freely say that ever since the day I was able to make sense of the world around me, I was working in the field for the betterment of such issues as gender equality and poverty. (Nuran, 5 May 2018, Ankara)*

Nuran indicated that from an early age, she had been actively working for NGOs. Her work in NGOs particularly focused on women issues and poverty. Another participant, Selin, said that:

> *By the way, I am one of the founding members of the X NGO in X(city). I was active in many NGOs. I am a member of 20 to 25 different*

associations and right now I am the president of an umbrella institution that is composed of 20 associations and women's neighbourhood societies. I also lead a culture and solidarity association for women who speak our common language. (Selin, 10 June 2018, Bursa)

Similar to Nuran, Selin emphasized her active engagement with NGOs and her status as a founder of various women organisations. As seen in Nuran's and Selin's statements above, they clearly emphasized their support for women organisations rather than precisely pointing attention to their engagement in NGOs. In addition, in their NGO experiences, many participants pointed out that they are among the early women to be in a position of power. Emel mentioned that:

For example, in X, me and my friends established a lawyers' association. The national bar association, then, only included people of the same mentality and mindset. That is why we founded a lawyers' association with young friends. We worked extremely hard and created a tremendous impact in X. Later on, when X NGO was in the thought process, I became one of the founding members and when I was appointed to the head of the X division, I became the first woman director in all of Turkey. I am the first woman director of X NGO. Then, an office of X NGO was founded in my city. Again, I was one of the founding members and the first woman director of X NGO in Turkey. I still am a member of X NGO's office. While I was staying in my city, I always wondered how I could be of service to the NGOs and became members of many, all with different agendas. If I were to give examples...I was the president of the X Association, and for the X Association, I participated in the sports club administration. I worked for my city's Sports Club's woman branch. I did many different things. (Emel, 10 May 2018, Ankara)

During her work in NGO, Emel was appointed as the first woman manager many times in various positions. She seemingly thought of being the first woman manager in NGO as an advantage over competitors and rivals. Rather than focusing on her role as the first woman manager, she continued to provide insights on her reason to attend NGOs:

I started off this road with the understanding that to be a true politician, I had to be someone who was interested in X city's politics, sports, art, culture, and who promotes the works of its NGOs, who would be embraced by the public, and who was warm and genuine. A parliamentarian must represent, reflect their people's issues, and share their values and thoughts. So, as X city's Sports Club is our passion and love, I feel like I need to participate in everything related to that club. As for art, it is one of the life veins of this society, so I must do everything in my power to help support it...What I would like to achieve, in fact, is to create politics that will pave the way for everyone in society; their varied areas of interest should all be considered. Another point is to embrace everyone without discrimination. This is a highly rewarding perspective, but it is hard to achieve. (Emel, 10 May 2018, Ankara)

As NGOs represents a wide spectrum of society, Emel felt the need to join many of them. From art and sport to media and politics, she felt responsible for raising the voice of vulnerable women. In that way, she believed that she could gain professional qualities as a deputy through her NGO experiences. For her, NGOs create stronger links between herself and her cities values, culture and voters. Although it is difficult, she sees NGO experiences as a source of politics.

5.3.2. Professional Experiences

Each politician occupies a different position, such as lawyer, doctor, artist, dentist, engineer. Professional experiences underpinned their identity, for they emphasised their professional experience as part of their qualities. For example, Nur said that:

Never! But I think the reason behind it is that I am a people's person. This might be what I gained from doing my job. For 20 years, I worked as a lawyer. When I was on my way to the courthouse, in a taxi, I talked to the taxi driver. I wished him well and asked him how things were for him, or what he thought about the marketplace and so on. Whether it be politics, or any other thing, the biggest and truest source of information is taxi drivers. They know everything because throughout the day, they meet many different people. I used to stop to talk to street vendors for the same reason. (Nur, 2 June 2018, Ankara)

Nur feels privileged for being a lawyer. As a lawyer, she thinks that she was able to communicate different issues with people. Specifically, she spoke of taxi drivers who are considered key workers who understand tensions within society. In addition, Filiz mentioned that:

> *I must agree that I benefited greatly from my job. I am a doctor, so I was with people, I was in contact with them, I listened to them. Think about it like this: how can you diagnose a patient without listening to their history first? And solely making a diagnosis is not enough, too. You need to know if the patient is following the treatment. You may prescribe medication, but do they take it? Or you may need to know their social circle for if it is an infection, you need to detect where it comes from. You need to know what they do for a job; it could be an occupational disease. So, I benefitted from my job in this sense. I also believe that being a woman doctor is an advantage in itself. People treat you with respect when you are a doctor. (Filiz, 21 May 2018, Ankara)*

Filiz also stated that her occupation facilitates her political life. As a doctor, she talked about the importance of listening to patients and exploring their problems, story, and social circle. In associating the diagnosis of the patient's illness with politics, she appreciates her job. Similarly, Fatma pointed to the advantages of being a psychotherapist. She said that:

> *I have an advantage. As I am a psychotherapist and a psychological counsellor, I am well versed in communication techniques. I gave many conferences on this topic. In terms of communication, there are some set rules for politics, and I use them too, but what matters the most is face-to-face conversations. At that point, I make use of my past experiences. (Fatma, 3 May 2018, Ankara)*

As a psychotherapist, Fatma highlighted her professional communication techniques. She demonstrated a high level of self-confidence and indicated that her professional experiences led her into politics.

5.4. Personality and Values

Both personality and values emerged as important themes of personal political brand identity creation. In this respect, participants pointed out that their personalities are key traits behind their success in politics. They mentioned holding more of a personality than the other individuals. For example, Betül identified herself and her political party as "*sincere*", "*honest*", "*consistent*" and "*loyal to the values of their ideology*":

> *Because we are real, we are genuine. We do not walk back on our words or start to support something entirely different suddenly one day. Sadly, in general politicians are like that. (Betül, 30 April 2018, Ankara)*

Emel, another participant, identified herself as a different politician from her competitors and rivals:

> *I believe that I am unique and original. On social media platforms, too, you become as influential as you are out of the ordinary, as you are different. I am not a congressman in its classical sense, nor a classical woman. I do not think I am a regular politician, either. People who follow me see me and find a bit of themselves in me. When people identify with you, that is when they see you as one of their own and embrace you. (Emel, 10 May 2018, Ankara)*

In the above passage, Emel mentioned that she differs from her competitors and rivals in being genuine and extraordinary. Another participant, Nuran, stated that "*in Turkish politics, voters like to see spontaneous people*" and pointed out she has "*spontaneous relationships between herself and voters*". Thus, she believes that she is an authentic personal brand. Biel (1993) argued that positively perceived personality evokes emotions in consumers. In this respect, Nuran pointed out that if a politician avoids spontaneous relationships, they could be thought of as monotonous and not authentic. Participants highlighted the importance of being "*responsible*" (Nuran, Fatma), "*cautious*", meaning "*not speaking without thinking*" (Fatma).

Similarly, participants pointed to the importance of being honest, patient, confident and courageous.

Gender-related personality traits

In addition to the personality traits mentioned above, this study found that participants' personality traits are formed by different identity categories or their intersections. For example, many participants talked about gender-related personality traits. For example, Azra mentioned that:

> *On certain things, men listen to their logic, but women are more emotional. For instance, in my opinion, the Minister of Family shall definitely be a woman. Because this is a position that needs to be handled with emotions. I think the Minister of Health should be a woman, as well. Because women are compassionate. Men are compassionate, too, but women tend to show more of their emotions. These are my thoughts. I believe that women can excel more at certain things. (Azra, 8 June 2018, Bursa)*

Azra makes a comparison between men and women. She mentioned stereotypically that men are *"rational"*, while women are *"emotional"* and *"compassionate"*. She therefore deemed women to be worthy of being the ministers of families and health. Azra restricted the political positions that women could have. Selin, another participant, talked about gender-related personality traits, thought about them negatively, but felt regretful. She said that:

> *...Women are by nature caregivers, they take care of people, they take in people. They are more emotional than rational. This is how our brains work. In a way, women's brains work extra hard as they are both governed by reason and emotion. They use both sides of their brains. Women who use both sides effectively become academicians, directors, governors, representatives, or ministers. The key here is to follow both logic and emotion. I, too, used to be very sentimental, but I also am a finance manager, I have mathematical intelligence. However, I have used more of my emotional intelligence so far. (Selin, 10 June 2018, Bursa)*

For her, women need to feel a sense of ownership because of their nature. She added that women are "*vulnerable*", "*emotional*" and "*not able to assess situations logically*". However, she stated that some women demonstrate both analytical and emotional intelligence; consequently, they become successful professionally. In that way, she blames herself for using her gender-related personal self in her political career.

Although many participants portrayed women in politics as weak compared to men, some participants highlighted gender-related personality traits in positive terms. For example, Yasemin mentioned that "*there are certain things a woman can do and women are multi-tasking*". Similarly, Zehra stated that "*it is essential for us to tread a fine line between work and home*". Both of them, like many participants, highlighted that women have many responsibilities at home, work, professional life and even in politics. These responsibilities enrich women multitasking skills and their response to complexity. Selin stated that:

> *This is where women are superior. Women can multitask and can tackle many things. They can take care of their homes and their children. Of course, there are some who cannot, women with a sole focus. But this is wrong, as well. They need a good balance in their lives. A woman can pay attention to her husband, work, and even enter politics at the same time and be successful. I myself am an example of that, and I am not the only one. (Selin, 10 June 2018, Bursa)*

Similar to Selin's statement, Fatma also believes that motherhood has a positive impact on female politicians' brand personality. She stated that:

> *Women may think differently from others. Because of gender differences, women and men may approach things dissimilarly. Not every woman thinks the same, either. However, there are some commonalities. For example, if you are a mother, you have a heightened sense of responsibility. There are women who are not mothers, and we should not hold them separate, either. Motherhood is an instinct, and women have it innately. I also know that there are men who share the same sensitivities as me. (Fatma, 3 May 2018, Ankara)*

Although Fatma tries to avoid comparing men and women/mothers and not, she mentioned that mothers have an advantage over others. Drawing on the idea that women have a natural instinct for motherhood, she believes that mothers have a strong sense of responsibility.

Religion-related personality traits

Similar to gender, religion has an impact on participants' personalities and values. For example, Zeynep identified herself as a person who follows *Haqq* (one of the names of *Allah*, meaning truth, reality—the only sound and genuine in truth). She mentioned that:

> *What does it depend on? If they ask you, "How did you know the deceased to be," you answer, "A good person." But according to what? Truth? If we say it is the truth, everyone has their own distinct truths. And then there are the truths of God. I believe that to be able to be recalled as a good person, you need to follow the path of God without making concessions on what is just and without giving in to the authorities of power. (Zeynep, 7 June 2018, Bursa)*

Zeynep developed her values based on her personal beliefs. To be remembered as a genuine and kind politician, she believes her truths have to be parallel with *Haqq*'s truths. Thus, she identified herself as a "*determinant*" and "*loyal*" to keep going no matter what *Haqq*'s truths.

By narrating one of her experiences, Elif also demonstrates how her values and personality developed from her religious beliefs. Similar to Zeynep, instead of individuals' or her own decision, she highlighted the importance of *Allah*'s decision. Firstly, she pointed out her experience as follows:

> *...Even though the draft statement I have written against the judges was in my bag, and it was processed, the two male solicitors were insistently telling me to go back on what I said at all costs. They were saying to me that if I wanted to be released, I had to do as I was told. They were pressuring me into giving a false statement. Then I told them that I did not care about what those so-called judges were going to decide on my*

> *behalf, I just cared about the decision of the true judge. The grandest judge of all, wise and all-ruling Allah would reach a decision regarding me and those so-called judges could not help but deliver it. Allah would decide how long I would stay in prison or how long I would stay out, and that would be for my sake. For years, I have criticised and despised political writers who ate their own words. I believed in the things I had written, believed them to be right and I would never swallow them. So, I paid the price of my decision. (Elif, 26 April 2018, Ankara)*

Drawing on 28 February 1997, post-modern coup Elif mentioned that she was arrested for criticising the judges. Although she could be found guilty, her lawyers asked her not to plead guilty during the prosecution process. However, she rejected the lawyers' defence, as she did not believe in their justice. Through her personal religious beliefs, she mentioned that she believes *Hakim*'s (one of *Allah*'s names, meaning The Wise, The Ever-Wise, The Endowed with Sound Judgment) decision. In doing so, she portrayed herself as someone "*determinant*", "*dependable*", and "*responsible for her actions*" and "*who will not eat her words*". She continued that:

> *Being a mere civilian or a politician, or being a labourer, farmer, street sweeper; they do not matter. What matters is to be righteous and honest. This is definitely the first criteria. I believe that we must do justice by our works, to our licences... Being righteous and honest means being fair to both yourself and others. It entails feeling empathy. People who are at peace with themselves are also at peace with their environments and societies. They realize how dependent on peace humans are and they know how important peace is for the peoples of the world... It may cause attacks or threats, but I see naturality as an advantage as I have even seen it resonate with disbelieving people. (Elif, 26 April 2018, Ankara)*

Based on her experience, Elif emphasized the importance of being "*honest*" and "*genuine*". Following her personal religious values and beliefs, she emphasised the acquisition of some values as "*being fair*", "*feeling empathy with others*", "*being society-friendly*" and "*fighting for peace*". Thus, she draws on her personal religious values and beliefs to build broad values that may elicit the attention of non-religious people and, therefore, widen her circle.

Ethnicity- age related personality traits

Participants also pointed to the impact of ethnicity on their personality and values. Specifically, ethnicity facilitates participants' communications with their voters. For example, Nuran mentioned that:

> *Of course, it is a question of approach. It may differ according to ethnic identities. For example, people from the Black Sea region are warm people. You hug them, embrace them; that is how you communicate with them. And with Circassians, you need to be more diplomatic, you know. (Nuran, 5 May 2018, Ankara)*

As seen in Nuran's passage, it is found that politicians use different personality traits to communicate with different ethnic groups. In this respect, Nuran portrayed people from the Black Sea region as sincere; therefore, they require politicians who should be "*sincere with them*". However, in the same area, Circassians, she believes, prefer more "*diplomatic*" and "*formal*" forms of relationships and communications.

Consequently, age emerged as an important identity category that has impacts on participants' personalities. Zehra mentioned that:

> *Our young are enthusiastic. We are, too. We are a very enthusiastic party. Even our party leader...For instance, I am 53 years old, and sometimes I even reprimand our young for standing still. I go at them like, "How can you sit still? Don't you get excited?" Our leader is like that as well, he never runs out of enthusiasm. (Zehra, 15 May 2018, Ankara)*

Similar to many participants, Zehra mentioned that although she is old, she feels "*enthusiastic*". Participants believe that as young people, it is very important to be enthusiastic, motivated, committed, and able to work flexible hours for their particular position in politics. The next section discusses participants brand identity resilience in relation to their personality traits.

5.5. Resilience

Personal political brands desire to be seen as authentic and strong (Armannsdottir et al., 2019a). Specifically, politicians' professional and personal experiences are considered to be a competitive advantage over other experiences when it comes to building a brand (Pich et al., 2020). In this respect, drawing on their personal experiences within the context of Turkey, many participants highlighted the importance of being strong in politics. In addition to short-term coping strategies, participants showed the ability to rebuild their brand meanings in line with their own experiences in order to survive in disturbing environments and foster future success. They even developed new skills in disruptive conditions. Participants demonstrated the ability to maintain their coping strategies in the long term. This is because brand identity needs to be flexible, consistent and adaptable to emerging situations in both internal and external environments (Alsem and Kostelijk, 2008; Aqeel et al., 2017; Armannssdottir et al., 2019a; Dahlen et al., 2010; Gylling and Lindberg-Repo, 2006). These findings can be made sense of through the concept of resilience.

Resilience is identified as "*the developable capacity to rebound or bounce back from adversity, conflict and failure or even positive events, progress and increased responsibility*" (Luthans, 2002, p. 702). Thus, this study found that participants develop resilience, as suggested by Rutter (2006), that enables them to adequately react to unexpected and disturbing situations that could potentially threaten their survival.

Resilience is considered a process that can be exhibited at differing degrees across multiple life domains, which may, in turn, have either a strengthening or sensitising effect (Cooper et al., 2013; Coutu, 2002; Klein et al., 1998; Rutter, 2012; Szmigin et al., 2020). This demonstrates that although resilience is associated with personality traits, it is not a fixed characteristic or

trait (Cooper et al., 2013); on the contrary, resilience can be built and strengthened in response to unexpected events over time (Szmigin et al., 2020). This view is essential to understanding politicians' brand resilience because political brand building is an ongoing process of relationship-building (Dean et al., 2016). Additionally, resilience seems to be congruent with personal branding, which implies an inside-out process that encapsulates the current strengths and uniqueness of the personal brand in relation to the market (Shepherd, 2005). Thus, the findings below provide insights into how participants evaluated and developed the particular strengths that politicians bring to the political arena. Participants also demonstrated the risks that they need to manage in order to answer in a resilient way to adversities from their social environments. Rather than focusing on the participants' short term reactive, psychological and behavioural responses, this section aims to understand how participants develop and maintain their resilience over the long term. Therefore, the findings outlined below emphasise the process and outcome aspects of resilience. Drawing on participants' experiences (see Section 5.3) and personality and values (see Section 5.4), it was found that participants' resilience process included their NGO, professional, and political experiences.

5.5.1. NGO Experiences

Research focused on individuals' resilience found that individuals' resilience is largely associated with different positive behaviours, attitudes, including moral compass, physical exercise, flexibility, adaptability, receptivity, to change and a greater learning capacity (Chen and Lim, 2012; Haglund et al., 2007; Kaplan et al., 2013; Tugade et al., 2004; Youssef and Luthans, 2007). While their psychological resources play an important role in collective coping to adversities (Bartfield and Collins, 2017; McCubbin et al., 1980), social support and the quality of interpersonal relations positively affect individual resilience (Haglund et al., 2007; Powley, 2009; Tugade et al., 2004). In this respect, the data in this study shows that

participants' resilience resources are in line with their active involvement in NGOs. Thus, purposefulness, social support, and adaptability emerged as dominant resilience resources that participants deploy to gain legitimacy and cope with stress and disturbance in view of changing political situations. This section focuses on how participants developed (or adopted) resilience resources.

5.5.1.1. Purposefulness

The impacts of the September 1980 military coup d'état and that of February 28 1997 on participants' lives surfaced frequently. As stated by Erikson (1968), people who face an identity crisis turn to and intensively analyse their own self; thus, both coup periods are an important part of the participants' lives. Because they faced identity-related aggression, almost all the participants from the marginalised women groups centred their subjective life stories on these coups. To recall briefly, during these socio-political evolutionary processes, mainly through a set of bans and sanctions, the Kemalist ruling elites forced people to suppress their gendered, ethnic, religious, cultural identities in the public sphere and conform to the Sunni, Muslim, Westernised, Turkish identity (Kaya, 2015; Neyzi, 2002). Specifically, for women wearing the headscarf, gendered inequalities intersected with religious aspects of oppression, and, consequently, thousands were subjected to discrimination in schools and the workplace and expelled from public institutions. As main witnesses and even most of the time victims of these two periods, the participants noted that NGOs were the only places to raise their voices against reforms after the term 28 February 1997 process (post-28 February). By joining these organisations, they exerted efforts to gain their rights. For example, Nuran explained her reason to volunteer in these organisations as follows:

> *I entered politics with the foundation of my political party. But I have been active in NGOs since I was 17. So, I can freely say that ever since*

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I started making sense of the world around me, I have been working in the field for the betterment of such issues as gender equality and poverty...February 28 reflected on the private sector as well. A ban that is issued on the public sector has influenced the private sector; and the private sector could not get around it because it was in close contact with the public sector. So that ban had repercussions on it. That is why women could not stand out in the private sector. On the other hand, February 28 brought about a positive outcome in the sense that women like me started to express themselves through engaging in the activities of NGOs. (Nuran, 5 May 2018, Ankara)

As a woman who wears a headscarf, Nuran decided to raise her voice through NGOs. Political parties, religious organisations, NGOs, schools, social networks and markets are important rational and strategic activist structures that can mobilise society on social problems (Bayat, 2005; Sandikci and Ger, 2010; Wiktorowicz, 2004). In this sense, through NGOs, participants started mobilising people on issues related to injustice and discrimination against oppressed women. These organisations signified a place of hope where participants' perceived capability to generate pathways to attain desired goals and motivate themself through these pathways (Youssef and Luthans, 2007). They aimed to expand their base of consensus and support and gain broader visibility in line with the personal branding (Shepherd, 2005). Because identity is all about values, aspirations and vision (Armannsdottir et al., 2019a; Dahlen et al., 2010; Gylling and Lindberg-Repo, 2006; Ronzoni et al., 2018), this provides a clear purpose for participants' brand identity. Thus, participants insistently mentioned that they feel that they act in line with their moral norms and even tend to strengthen their links with society. They defend themselves through depictions of politically and morally inappropriate state's reforms. For example, Seda mentioned that:

If one thing is forbidden in one place, it must be forbidden everywhere else. But the restriction was being implemented in one place while it was not in another. I was laughing at this with my dad and I was telling him, "We are running away from our own government." ...The issues surrounding wearing a hijab did not have grounds in our laws or

constitution. It was an arbitrary practice, an arbitrary form of pressure. I do not begin to understand that. How can people adopt this practice to this extent when it is this groundless? It is something to think about. (Seda, 10 June 2018, Izmit)

Similar to Seda, participants stressed reforms' *"superficiality"* and *"lack of organic linkages with society, of Kemalism"*. In other words, they mentioned that reforms were imposed without negotiations between society and state. They considered these reforms as state-assertions since the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923 (Kaya, 2015; Simsek, 2013). For them, these reforms were *"imposing"*, *"Westernisation"* and *"social engineering project"* (participants Canan, Nuran, Seda), with the aim to destroy or change religious, ethnic and political positions of citizens. Thus, by joining NGOs, these participants focused on proving reforms' lack of organic linkages with society, becoming a driving force for change and strengthening the visibility of the mobilisation. These efforts by participants pointed to one of the important sources of individuals' resilience, that is, building a clear sense of purpose, working out what matters to an individual during stressful and disturbing events, and for future success (Snyder, 2002). Their purpose was fundamentally based on grounds to gain their gender-religion related rights. Indeed, values and high-level idealistic concerns dominate choices for individuals in the long run, in contrary, low-level pragmatic concerns play an important role in decisions for the short run (Kogut et al., 2017). In this regard, participants adopt a high-level idealistic purpose, which, in turn, shapes their perspective of future outcomes. They actively conformed to their identity, which intersects with gender, religion, law and other forms of collective regulations.

5.5.1.2. Social Support

When participants were banned in public institutions, most of them were high school or university students or employees in the public or private sectors. Therefore, they also lost their chances to interact with social groups and generate positive relational outcomes such as social

identity, self-worth or status (Sandikci and Ger, 2010). They align themselves with the groups of victims and resist oppression at the everyday level. That is, they derived a social identity, status, solidarity and belonging from their identification with the victims during the post-28 February period. Following this period, participants strengthened their identity with the groups of victims by establishing or joining NGOs such as human rights and women's organisations. It should be noted that in so doing, participants activated another resilience resource, i.e., social support. Thus, they raise more openly their concerns. Additionally, they gained new abilities:

> *If they do not make room for us, then we will come together and organize among ourselves. At that period, we established some good foundations. We exhibited some pleasant models of organizing, especially in support of basic human rights and for struggle against poverty. We made people aware and created demand. Us women gained the discipline of working together for our shared goals and taught it to my generation. (Nuran, 5 May 2018, Ankara)*

The above passage shows that participants built a strong network of mutually supportive relationships, learning to seek help when required. In line with this, as mentioned by Nuran, these groups of women learnt to be organised and make demands for social change (Bayat, 2005). For Nuran, these abilities are necessary in politics. This pointed out that NGOs facilitated for female politicians the acquisition of new skills, which boost resilience by increasing both self-efficacy and adaptability (Youssef and Luthans, 2007; Cooper et al., 2013).

5.5.1.3. Adaptability

Adaptability is one of the most widely recognised resilience components (Bimrose and Hearne, 2012; Chen and Lim, 2012; Shin et al., 2012; Szmigin et al., 2020). For participants, adaptability functions as an important resilience component to help them deal with aggression. During the representations of these disturbing experiences, participants alluded to that they felt being stigmatised (Sandikci and Ger, 2010) and confronted with adversities, such as

inequalities, injustices, oppressions and discriminations because of their identity. As they were denied access to schools, government institutions, even indirectly the private sector and were also forced to take their headscarf off, they lost their rights because of their gender-religion intersected identities. They were stigmatised as outlaws. In the literature, the marketplace actors tend to be grouped into three categories: villains, victims and heroes (Gopaldas, 2014; Valor et al., 2021). To do so, consumers align themselves with certain groups and distance themselves from others to advance their own identity projects (Arnould and Thompson, 2005; Gopaldas, 2014). In this regard, participants can be defined as victims with their stigmatised identity between these actors in the new frame. Their initial resistance and stigmatised identity as victims towards the radical reforms within the country (Sandikci and Ger, 2010) underpinned their brand identity.

It is noteworthy that participants mostly faced aggression and discrimination as part of their everyday life where their adaptability resilience component surfaced frequently. Seda stated that:

> *The first time I was faced with the issue of hijab was in X, our teachers had to remove them. But our biggest problem as a student was the class on national security; it was just that one class. Because of that we had to transfer schools. We started going to X Religious Vocational High School, because they did not teach that class in this school. So, we dodged that problem, if I may say so. In our senior year, it posed a problem again because this lecture became compulsory for all years. Then we had to transfer to yet another school in another city, to X Religious Vocational High School. The reason why this high school in X was free from this regulation was that the inspectors did not visit that school in ages, since the earthquake of 1999 to be more precise. (Seda, 10 June 2018, Izmit)*

As seen in the above passage, Seda did not acknowledge the ban on headscarf but adapted herself to different ways of dealing with daily difficulties. For her, in the face of daily aggression, she changed schools frequently to deal with the bans. According to Lefebvre and

Levich (1987), "*the everyday imposes its monotony. It is the invariable constant of the variations it envelops*" (p. 10), meaning that there is a continuity in individuals' sense-making and practices. In this regard, participants did not submit to the difficulties they faced, but developed strategies to cope with the new regulations, for example, by changing schools, even the city to study with a headscarf; some of them passed judged exams, where the use of perukes was allowed and, as a result, could cover their hair. This shows that challenges develop their adaptability and strengthen their individual everyday resilience. As a part of their everyday resilience, they identified pressures to which they were particularly susceptible and the strategies they used to manage those pressures (Cooper et al., 2013).

However, their adaptability component was not only about short-term survival strategies (Szmigin et al., 2020) or about conforming to new regulations. In fact, by joining NGOs, participants seemed to increase their adaptability and expand coping mechanisms in the long term. This perspective demonstrated that for politicians, adaptability pointed to a broader resilience resource, including social support and purposefulness. The findings show that there was a significant overlap between individual resilience resources (social support and purposefulness) and adaptability components. Adaptability included in the case of participants social awareness, self-awareness and generating new ideas and solutions (Cooper et al., 2013; Lutfans et al., 2007). The social awareness of participants seemed high, for they deal with stressful and disturbing events rationally and constructively by joining NGOs. In this sense, similar to social support, participants created a sense of purpose aimed at gaining their rights back by increasing consensus. Their self-awareness was closely related to the development and maintenance of a supportive relationship in civil NGOs. In this way, participants strengthened their links with the oppressed groups. This component is in line with the purposefulness resilience resource. Lastly, participants highlighted that NGOs helped them generate new ideas

and solutions. Even though they were forced to voice in NGOs, these organisations encouraged flexibility to think beyond their current ways of doing things (see Sandikci and Ger, 2010). Participants acknowledged this level of adaptability and flexibility as an important source of experience. Experiences differentiated adaptability from other individual resilience resources. Therefore, adaptability, including social-awareness, self-awareness and experience, seemed to increase personal political brands' resilience.

When they entered politics, which was a new frame on the individual level (Humpreys and Latour, 2013), participants acknowledged their gained experiences in NGOs as a basement of their political career:

> *Politics were not on my mind, never. I was already doing all the services a politician does through NGOs. (Selin, 10 June 2018, Bursa)*

In this passage, Selin pointed to the decision-making process before entering politics. Elif detailed these purposes as follows:

> *About deciding on whether to join my political party...I thought that I was doing a similar enough job in NGOs. Of course, in X (The Association for Human Rights and Solidarity for the Oppressed) we generally carried out our original projects, and I was feeling a weight on my shoulders thinking whether I should join or not. So, I researched my party, its charter, programs, and practices, and I admired its stance to represent all the oppressed, fighting for the equality and freedom of all... (Elif, 26 April 2018, Ankara)*

Both participants stated that they were working for NGOs to defend the rights of minorities and discriminated people. As discussed in Section 5.3.1., according to them, NGOs and politics had similar purposes. Much like Dion and Arnould (2016), who emphasized the importance of apprenticeship for the chef's personal brand, many participants acknowledged NGOs as an important apprenticeship for a woman politician. Nuran demonstrated the importance of NGO experiences for a woman politician using an interesting football example. She stated that:

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Politics are fed through some channels. First and foremost, it is fed from professional societies and NGOs. If you do not serve your time in those, you cannot become permanent at the political scene. You can neither enter, nor last long... Politics is a tough game. I liken it to football the most. Just like football, it is a team play and it is rough. Similar to a football match where you have to get up even after being tripped several times, or where even when the referee makes a wrong call and you get mad at them you have to continue to play, in politics you must chin up and play during that full 90 minutes, too. Generally speaking, if a woman politician isn't coming from these roots, if she doesn't have an NGO experience in her background, let's say if she is coming from academic circles or some other profession, she has a harder time as she doesn't have team culture. Men can adapt more easily in this case, but women usually want the game to stop whenever they trip and fall. However, in the art of politics, when forces work against you, you must set your sight forward and carry on. This kind of thinking, the team culture and politics' outcome-oriented perspective takes time to settle. (Nuran, 5 May 2018, Ankara)

Nuran defined NGOs as "*feeding channels*" for politics. For her, a woman who did an apprenticeship in NGOs was considered *privileged*. This demonstrates that she was treated with respect and dignity and received outcomes commensurate with her entitlement. Women learned to play the "*team game*" in NGOs. In this example, Nuran associated football with politics. Football is a team and also demanding game. According to her example, the football player does not give up the game for ninety minutes, and the politician should do the same and instead focus on the outcome. To become a permanent politician, women should be "*outcome-oriented*" and demonstrate the ability to survive and operate under all circumstances.

Similar to Nuran, many participants frequently used such team games metaphors. Participants expressed that through their experiences in NGOs, they became able to play not only the "*team game*" but also the "*man game*". Here, they implied the importance of being an experienced woman in the eyes of male competitors and rivals. According to Caroll (1994), men have long dominated politics as a natural outgrowth of the division of sexes within the family. This pointed to sex stereotypes, which confine women to domesticity and family rather than the

public sphere. However, in the interviews, participants provided a different justification as to why politics is acknowledged as a man-dominated arena. The reason why participants perceived politics as a man game and attributed more importance to being experienced pertains to their established habitus. For Bourdieu (1990), people absorb cultural and social norms in their everyday life, especially at an early age, with ideas about what's right and wrong become part of their behaviour, and these tendencies are what Bourdieu calls "*habitus*". In this regard, Nilay expressed women' habitus as follows:

> *I think females are different by nature, because when they are little, they play by themselves, or with their moms or grandparents, or with their toys. So, they are not born into teamwork, and they are not exposed to it as much as the boys. Generally, boys play on the streets, usually in groups, and they learn about teamwork early on. For example, they play ball, they have conflicts, they fight, but one day later or even five minutes later they reconcile and continue to play with each other. Politics is like that, too. As females tend to grow up on their own, they have a different mindset. Males, on the other hand, as I mentioned before are exposed to teamwork and they use this lesson in politics properly. So, there is this kind of an issue. (Nilay, 22 May 2018, Ankara)*

In the extract, Nilay portrayed the differences between women and men by focusing on their established individual and collective habitus. She differentiated girls from boys in their childhood. She mentioned that girls usually grow in the home environment with their female family members. They usually play with their toys; thus, they become more individualised and even distant from the outside world. This was acknowledged as the community's shared norm for girls. Thus, girls' exposure to this type of various habitues of their upbringing, related to the cultures of their family and society, results in the individual habitus of each woman politician being similar. However, boys do not share similar experiences with girls. Boys developed their collective habitus from their upbringing. They were defined by participants that they feel for the game. With their established habitus, they perform better in politics without consciously thinking about it. She implied that men have a conscious embodied type

of feel for politics; therefore, in the right situations, men's established habitus allows them to successfully navigate political situations. In this way, Nilay pointed out that while women developed their individual habitus, they remained limited in developing their collective habitus, which is necessary in politics. Such a lack of collective habitus raised questions about the nature of women in politics. Because habitus remains with individuals across contexts (Webb et al., 2002), women have a harder time adapting to politics as a team game than men. In this way, while they were portraying men as determinant and ambitious, they described women as sensitive and abdicators in politics.

This discussion of habitus demonstrates that volunteering in a NGOs with other people for a period of time involves exposure to many different kinds of unwritten and unspoken social community rules over an extended, probably intense, period. In this way, at the individual level, participants' NGO experiences showed their concerted efforts to build collective habitus. They become able to share a social fit with politics' shared norms. In other words, they become able to share a similar group habitus with men competitors and rivals. Therefore, women's exposure to collective habitus in NGOs gave rise to a new form of politics as "*team player*". It appears therefore that participants' frame was transformed from traditional gendered structure to collective habitus, which allowed them to adapt to male-dominated political landscapes. It is found that if a woman is experienced in NGOs or in the field, she could be considered eligible to play the "*man game*".

More recently, Szmigin et al. (2020) implied that contexts regarding social identity dimensions could be considered as long-term stressors which need to be examined through the concept of persistent resilience to overcome or proceed to live through them. They suggested their conceptualisation of persistent resilience may be successful in gaining insights into the experiences of life-long stressors such as racism and ableism. Persistence resilience is

particularly proposed as a solution to the pressures of modern society and as a negotiated phenomenon rather than a traditional view of resilience (Szmigin et al., 2020). According to Golubchikov (2011), persistence resilience is defined as "*a form of engagement with more enduring, lasting challenges and pressures, especially those challenges that underlie everyday life, [and] are mundane*" (p. 4). Persistent resilience is characterised as dynamic and reciprocal in which individuals proactively and continuously negotiate with the everyday routines (Szmigin et al., 2020). In this regard, as argued by Szmigin et al. (2020), marginalised and discriminated social groups due to their identities involving gender, race, etc. can be considered as life-long stressors because this study found that aggression precipitates unexpected change behaviours and meanings of participants' lives. At this point, Szmigin and her colleagues (2020) stated that rather than focusing on short-term responses in marketing and consumer research, there is a need to focus on long-term changes to values, attitudes and behaviour. However, from a brand creator perspective, findings demonstrated that in cases where long-term stressors are associated with social identity dimensions, individuals tend to hold and strengthen their identities instead of changing their values, attitudes and behaviour. Moreover, persistent resilience puts greater emphasis on everyday life (Golubchikov, 2011; Szmigin et al., 2020). In this study, although participants' day to day coping strategies play an important role in building their brand resilience, the focus on the participants' whole life makes it difficult to explore everyday coping strategies. Thus, persistent resilience is not used to explore participants' personal political brand identity resilience.

5.5.2. Professional Experiences

It is not only NGO experiences that facilitated participants' resilience in politics, but also their professional experiences helped them to develop coping strategies to succeed in their political careers. As discussed in the literature review, career resilience is presented to conceptualise

professionals' resilience. In this respect, career resilience is described as a combination of risk orientation, dependency, self-efficacy as well as receptivity to change, indifference to conventional sources of career success and self-reliance (Bimrose and Hearne, 2012; Coetzee et al., 2015; Lyons et al., 2015; Van Vuuren and Fourie, 2000). These studies also focused on resilience as a quality of an individual rather than asserting it as a process between the professional and context (Rutter, 1987; 2012). In other words, career resilience is positioned around the context of professions, thus remains limited. In this way, career resilience differs from individual resilience; thus, an individual does not need to possess all of career resilience characteristics to be considered resilient (Van Vouuren and Fourie, 2000). However, the findings in this study show that participants' resilience in their professional work is neither limited to the attribute of the individual nor to the professional context. For the most part, participants used both individual and career resilience resources. The reason for this intertwined formation of participants' resilience is that the iterative experiences of intersected social identity dimensions exceed the period of their professional work.

Consistent with what is stated above, participants in different professional groups and later in politics relayed stories of discrimination and sexism. Such stories were common throughout all interviews. Specifically, most of the participants who witnessed the coups in Turkey were focused on gendered and religion-related issues and inequalities in their professional life. These stigmatised participants' career resilience processes were intertwined with their traumatic experiences. In the previous section, it was clear that after traumatic experiences, participants sought ways to navigate these adversities at the macro level. By joining NGOs, they aimed at raising their voices against reforms after the term 28 February 1997 process (post-28 February). Rather, professional experiences in this discussion are part of the participants' resilience, which can facilitate the understanding of their personal political brands as authentic and strong

(Armannsdottir et al., 2019a). In addition, it seems that professional experiences trained participants to cope with everyday micro-aggression both in their professionality and later in politics. In this sense, many participants summarised their resilience process and outcomes in relation to the bans, which started during their education years, continued during their professional life and still shaped their political experiences. Nuran summed it up well as follows:

> *It is not a new occurring in my life. I am 51 years old and I graduated from the Department of Journalism. I was one of the first journalists who wore a hijab. As I had gone through the same thing 30 some years ago, I am not really shocked out of my wits now. It was the same when I first started my job, when I went to conduct an interview with someone, they would refuse to talk to me saying, "How could they send you? I am a modern woman." And those people were artists. Through those experiences I developed a knee-jerk reflex and now I am using that. I never let the conversation get personal. What I mean is that I do not talk about religion, hijab, or myself. I try to keep the focus always on the person I am talking to. For example, when I was faced with the issue I just mentioned, I used to tell them that "I was sent here to perform this interview with you. If I cannot go through with it and write my article, I have to write one on how and why you refused to talk to me." I didn't reply back saying "How can you even say this to me? This is one of my fundamental rights…" I did not say those. I did not make it about me and got personal. It was about me doing my job and it still is. If someone gets judgemental again, I do not take it personally. When you say my name, and ask about me, you see that people have many misconceptions. But when I begin to do my job, those start to melt within minutes. (Nuran, 5 May 2018, Ankara)*

During her professional life, as a woman who wears a headscarf, Nuran was not accepted in the logic of the law because she was a religious woman. Despite the lack of conformity to state laws in state offices, schools, and universities, she seemed to acquire some degree of acceptance in her professional workplace because, as a journalist, she conformed to existing rules and regulations as defined by her institution. In other words, her institution approved her

gender and religion-related identity. In this way, from her individual perspective, this seems to increase her desire to resist challenges and voice her personal beliefs against aggression.

Although her work institution did not marginalise her because of her gender and religion, it did not impede the adversities she faced in her professional life. On a day-to-day basis, she faced gendered and religious-related aggression from colleagues. In her statement above, she demonstrated her strategy to deal with "*hard-line seculars*" (Sandikci and Ger, 2010, p. 22) in her professional life. In the face of a hard-line secular whose beliefs are congruent with the state laws, her work institution was not enough to tackle the marginalisation of her professional identity. In doing so, she was exposed to questions about the nature of her professional work. Because of her gendered and religion-related identity, she had to deal with comments that she was unqualified for her job and not equal to hard-line seculars.

To deal with these adversities, she developed her own strategy, i.e., not to take aggression personally. This strategy points out that she adopted a self-distanced perspective (Kross and Ayduk, 2017; Kross et al., 2005). Kross and Ayduk (2017) noted that people's attempts to reflect on their negative feelings frequently fail because they look at them from a psychological perspective. This makes it hard for them to assess such feelings objectively without becoming emotionally arouse by the details of the event. Thus, through the use of self-distancing strategies, people become able to take a step back from their negative experiences and work through them more effectively. With respect to the self-distancing perspective, Nuran prefers to be work-oriented rather than expressing her feelings and emotions, especially that she felt being stigmatised. In Nuran's experience, being work-oriented appeared as a self-distancing technique used by many participants. Participants frequently talked about minding their own business ("*I just mind my own business!*") in the face of discrimination and prejudice. They tend to navigate their negative experiences to be viewed as work-oriented, an acknowledged

positive characteristic in politics. These point to participants' psychological and behavioural responses to aggression (Robertson and Cooper, 2013). In this regard, they draw a frame of mind that they are cognitively aware of the male-dominated environment. In this sense, they are not only perceived to have the ability to adapt to changing circumstances but also seem to be clear and self-confident with their personal and professional capabilities to achieve their career goals (London, 1983; Van Vuuren and Fourie, 2000). This demonstrated that participants' implied their resilience and determination were the product of cumulative gendered and religion-related experiences. Her resilience implies a low fear of failure (Van Vuuren and Fourie, 2000). In addition, her way of spraying aggression onto a basic formal work relationship demonstrates her constructive communication skills. She navigates this micro-aggression and people's level of trust to her raised in a short period of time. Thus, such resilience helped women to not only cope with everyday micro-aggression but also overcome the barriers to success.

As seen from Nuran's experience, although participants were subjected to discrimination and aggression, participants are highly motivated to cope with challenges, such as being comfortable working with different people (Van Vuuren and Fourie, 2000). While Nuran's experience shows that working with different people was a challenge, Emel's experience demonstrates how she advances a different co-operation mechanism as a resilience tool:

> *Being a lawyer who wears a hijab, I was on the lookout for a partner who did not. Immediately after that election, a friend of mine offered to become partners and as I wanted to generate solutions to problems and not drown myself in them, I accepted. We became partners; we talked to people together, worked on the cases together, but I did not participate at the trials. There are five or six aspects to being an attorney, and our understanding with my partner was that we shared every other aspect, save for trials. For 20 years, while I was co-directing one of the best offices in my city, I worked as an attorney of law without showing up at a single hearing. And my partner was a social democrat. After working*

with her for three years, I partnered up with another friend, who was also a social democrat. This experience challenged my outlook on life and how I interpret things as well as helping me improve at my job. I took on different sets of roles in my social life. (Emel, 10 May 2018, Ankara)

Brand identity has to be flexible, consistent, adaptable and ready to change in the face of adversity in the internal and external environment (Alsem and Kostelijk, 2008; Aqeel et al., 2017; Armannsdottir et al., 2019a; Dahlen et al., 2010; Gylling and Lindberg-Repo, 2006). In this respect, in her statement above, Emel stated that instead of being stuck incongruity and adopting a self-immersed perspective (Kross and Ayduk, 2017), she prefers to be a solution-oriented person. She activates adaptability and flexibility resilience sources to deal with aggression (Haglund et al., 2007; Rutter, 2012; Szmigin et al., 2020). To do so, she did a business deal with two partners in different periods. Unlike herself, the partners are social-democrats, women who do not wear the headscarf. Thus, she becomes capable of working as a lawyer on the condition that she did not lead cases in courts. Similar to Nuran, Emel also met the requirements to work as a lawyer. She studied law and obtained her license to work as a lawyer. In this regard, by working with people whose ideologies and values are different from hers, in contrast to the status quo, she proved that her gender and religion-related identity intersection did not lead to problems in society. However, interestingly, it was not only Emel who resisted discrimination but also her partners (whom she portrayed as being congruent with the state's laws about the image of women in society). Furthermore, although the partners' properties are not clear, Emel implied insistently that both of her partners differed from her. This high emphasis on the differences between her and her partners demonstrates that she is comfortable working with new and different people, and she has the ability to adapt to changing circumstances (London, 1983; Van Vuuren and Fourie, 2000). She seems to build good quality relationships that, in turn, help to build resilience (Powley, 2009; Tugade et al., 2004). In addition, she noted that working with different people increases her self- and social awareness

of these people. By observing people of different points of view, she gains diverse insights into social problems. As building self-audit is important for personal brands (Shepherd, 2005), she developed her self-audit based on a full understanding of her competitors and market. This seems to facilitate her ability to make use of discrimination and aggression in her favour.

Following interviews with the participants, there was a clear understanding that they had to navigate male-dominated environments and masculine cultures of politics. Professions like medicine, law, and engineering were defined by men for men, and they are acknowledged as having masculine cultures and structures (Dryburgh, 1999; Tancred, 1999). Participants from these professions indicated that their professional experiences facilitated their resilience in politics. For example, Hacer, as an engineer, shared her experience, which clearly demonstrates the intersection of gender and age. She stated that:

> *Hacer: Let me say it like that: I am a mechanical engineer. Mechanical engineering is generally thought to be a man's job. When you enter the industry, especially if it is a small company, there is a master who knows the job like the back of their hands and that person is supposed to tutor you. But when you first go in, they do not acknowledge you and call you "lady." After six months of hard work, they may start calling you "miss." Only after a lot of chats, exchanges, and exceptional work do they start calling you by your name. Then you think to yourself, "Finally they accepted me." Politics is the same. Its masters are generally men. So, you must make them accept you, you must cast your ambitions away. I must make a distinction between men and women here because we are indeed different. You must show them that you are there as a person, and it is up to you to do just that.*
>
> *Sibel: How would that happen Miss Hacer?*
>
> *Hacer: Men are very settled in politics. Sadly, it is the truth. So, you must create a space for yourself there, make them accept you. To do that, you need to understand human relations well. If you show up at their doors saying, "I am a mechanical engineer. My father was a former parliamentarian. I worked there and there. I own this company and that," then they won't respect you. (Hacer, 22 April 2018, Bursa)*

Hacer indicated that she experienced difficulties, especially at the early stage of her career. She did not focus on sexist comments; however, she faced passive aggression from the craftsman. In her experience, such passive aggression made her feel marginalised and ignored (see Hatmaker, 2013). It is suggested that in these situations, women tend to blame themselves (Gill, 2008). Interestingly, studies pointed to that some women downplay femininity and try to blend in with men, a strategy used to achieve success and prevent marginalisation, i.e., becoming "*one of the guys*" (Gill, 2008; Hatmaker, 2013; Powell et al., 2009; Ranson, 2005). However, for participants, these strategies were neither valid in their professional work nor in politics. Conversely, Hacer seemed to follow a different strategy. She used resilience resources as coping strategies, much like Nuran (see above). During her professional work period as an engineer, she seems to use a self-distancing technique. Instead of visualizing events happening to her all over again through her own eyes—a technique called a self-immersed perspective (e.g., Nigro and Neisser, 1983; Robinson and Swanson, 1993)—she prefers to "*take a step back*" from her experiences (Kross and Ayduk, 2017, p. 84; Kross et al., 2005). To do so, she seems to work through and cope with the challenges. With her self-confidence and social awareness, she showed patience to become a colleague (Van Vuuren and Fourie, 2000). By expressing her title transformation attached to her name, she indicated the process of becoming a colleague, meaning that she acquired her status defined as having a social identity and belonging, status and solidarity from her participation in the practice (Tost, 2011; Valor et al., 2021). The long wait proved that she had a high level of tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity (Van Vuuren and Fourie, 2000). For her, similar to engineering, politics is also male-dominated.

Furthermore, Hacer strengthened her self-distancing when she talked to herself. According to Kross and Ayduk (2017), in cases where individuals need to control their emotions, they tend

to refer to themselves using their names or other non-first-person pronouns, such as *you, he* or *she*. To do so, non-first-person self-talk enables people to think about their own experiences as they think about others (Kross and Ayduk, 2017). In that way, this technique improves individuals' self-regulation, which helps them to evaluate their experiences objectively as though they were someone else's experiences. As a self-distancing technique, self-talk, which focuses on the link between visual self-distancing and linguistic, seems to allow Hacer, similar to other participants, to reason about her emotions with relative ease. Therefore, when she enters politics, her professional work not only seems to improve her resilience but also strengthens her strategies to deal with aggression.

Overall, similar to Hacer and Nuran, many participants demonstrate that they know themselves, the first step toward becoming career resilient (Van Vuuren and Fourie, 2000; Waterman, 1994). In this regard, their self and social awareness allowed them to evaluate and improve their resilience at individual and career levels (Cooper et al., 2013). This shows that they used both individual and career resilience resources to cope with adversities that emerged from the intersecting dimensions of social identity. They expanded the processes by which they regularly assessed their skills, interests, values, as well as developed them.

5.5.3. Participants' Resilience in Political Arena

The aggression to which female politicians are subjected during their political career displays how the intersection of social identities are used effectively by politicians for both offence and defence. Drawing on their political experiences, this section aims to gain insights into how participants used their resilience components to deal with aggression and simultaneously continue to increase their level of resilience in politics. For this purpose, when asked to explain their way of dealing with aggression in everyday politics, participants started the conversation

by portraying themselves from the eyes of men competitors and rivals. For example, Filiz explained that:

> *It is something that became more pronounced after the 80s. There had been some examples of it happening before but after 1982, after the elections of 1983, political actors started to take their partners everywhere. Before we would only see and know the leading figures' wives, however, after 1983 we got to meet every actor's wife at one point or the other. And as these women began to become more and more visible at the scene, other women's demand to be a political figure increased. But I think this increase in demand will soon be balanced out. Now a point of view prevails among the scene, which goes something like, "We need to have at least a woman candidate for every post." For instance, if we are electing a mayor, there must be a woman candidate; or we must add a woman to the city council. A female should be brought to the directorship of this or that institution. Right now, they are treating women as if they are an accessory, or a salt cellar, if you will. You should definitely have a salt cellar at the table, but it is not a must and it is up to you to use it or not. It is also almost like a pack of toothpicks brought to the table, and as you know picking your teeth in front of others is considered improper in Turkey, so they just stay there, they are just for show. (Filiz, 21 May 2018, Ankara)*

In her passage, Filiz talked about a popular trend after the 80s. According to her, the increasing visibility of wives who accompany their political husbands inspires women to enter politics. However, she implied that women could not find their values, meaning that they are still guided by men and at their disposal. Similar to Filiz, Nilay also stressed that male competitors and rivals' beliefs privilege men in the political arena. She went on:

> *It is like this: men are of the opinion that politics is their turf. First, they do not want women to enter their territory. Second, they are the ones who make all the decisions concerning women, not just in politics, but in other areas of life as well. For example, how many female secretaries of state do we have, or how many female under-secretaries even? Hence, it is important to initiate a remodelling at the departments, other government agencies, or even at the private sector. Men are making the decision to give you a position or not, and they are limiting your choices, creating boundaries. I even had someone say this to me at the*

> *parliament: "What business do you have here? A woman's place is her home." One less woman at the parliament means one more man at the parliament. (Nilay, 22 May 2018, Ankara)*

In her experience in the parliament, Nilay stated that men tend to marginalise women from politics by implying gender-specific roles. However, Canan mentioned that while the period after she was elected as a deputy was manageable, the preceding period to her election was more distressful for female politicians. She said that:

> *It is problematic before you get to the parliament. In the cities you are listed as candidates, people put you down by saying, "Do we really need a woman?" Men generally see you as a complementary object. Women can hand out flyers on the streets, they can give flowers, put in the work for the party; however, if they want to be a deputy to the parliament, it is a no. Maybe for being a member of the city council you get a pass, but not for the parliament. Men think like that. They do not say it to our faces, but they make it obvious through their actions. But I can tell you that once you make it to the parliament, you are not faced with such issues. (Canan, 22 May 2018, Ankara)*

As Nilay mentioned above, men seem to evoke gender stereotypes. With respect to these stereotypes, Canan revealed that men competitors and rivals often raise such questions about the presence of women in politics as: *"Do we need women in politics?"*. Indeed, Canan portrayed how men consider women in politics, a portrayal much similar to that of Filiz and Nilay. In line with Canan's statement, Selin explained more where and how men utilise women in politics. She said that:

> *Women can enter no-entry zones. What I mean by that is if a man knocks on a door, the woman living inside would be reluctant to open it, and her husband or other men living inside would not welcome him nicely. They may end up getting into a fight and finding themselves at the police station even. But, when it is a woman who knocks on a door, both women and men welcome her and listen to her. Because they would think along the lines, "She may need help, she may have something bothering her, she may even come to ask for something as a neighbour." And within those precious seconds that the woman has their attention, she may*

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> *promote her party in any way she likes. She may give flowers, hand out stuff. So, women can open any doors. And our men, our politicians are aware of this. Hence, they use, I do not want to say use but, the most beautiful women for these kinds of door-to-door tasks. (Selin, 10 June 2018, Bursa)*

In this passage, Selin stressed that women are perceived as vulnerable in society. As such, men focused on gender-specific characteristics of women in the hope to garner political support. Due to their gender, women's political identity and self-worth are apparently not affirmed by men competitors and rivals. The common point agreed on by participants is that women are not treated with dignity and respect in politics. They even mentioned insulting metaphors used against women, such as "*toothpick, salt and pepper shakers on the table*", "*opener of all doors*", "*filler*", "*accessory*", and "*occupant of a man's chair*". These expressive metaphors show that female politicians are not accepted in politics. From my participants' perspective, the belief held by men competitors and rivals revolves around the idea that "*politics is male-dominated arena*" and "*women are not appropriate for political context*". Although women are certainly suited to govern in Turkey, their presence is questioned owing to politics being a male-dominated arena.

Indeed, participants' expressions of men's beliefs echo Janis's work on groupthink (1972). Janis (1972) defined groupthink as "*a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when the members' strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action*" (p. 9). By reviewing Esser's (1998) study, Haack et al. (2020) argued that groupthink occurs through different reasons, such as "*high group cohesiveness, directive leadership, homogeneity of group members' social background, lack of methodological procedures, high stress, and group members' low self-esteem*" (p. 15). In addition, Janis (1972) highlighted the *illusion of invulnerability*. According to him, group members tend to have a high-level of confidence and

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self-assurance in terms of the group's ability of decision making. Overconfidence in the group's decision-making powers enables individuals to produce even dehumanizing actions against the outgroup. In this sense, as my participants stated above, men's insulting metaphors pointed out men's illusion of invulnerability. Participants' way of implying men's behaviour in politics shows that men's groupthink is created by high group cohesiveness and perhaps homogeneity of group members' social backgrounds. It should be noted that, based on the emphasis on *social background* characteristics and their gender, men's groupthink also seems to be built through intersections of gender and other identity dimensions, perhaps, such as financial status or religion.

Furthermore, another common point agreed on by participants related to that men's relational evaluations of women vary according to election results. In this regard, there are three stages for a woman in politics: before being elected as a deputy, the election period (between before and after becoming a candidate for deputy), and after being elected as a deputy. Before being elected as a deputy, as stated above, participants mentioned that men utilised women and also appreciated their efforts. At this stage, because they are not a threat to men but they bolster their power, women are treated with respect and dignity in return. However, such a level of acceptance points to the "*illusion of support*", which is "*fragile*" (Centola et al., 2005, p. 1010, Haack et al., 2020). In cases where a woman decides to enter the election for a deputy position, the illusion of support becomes immediately broken, and women are therefore viewed as competitors and rivals. For instance, Hatice shared her experience from the election period. She said that:

> *For example, one of my male relatives is in politics. When I accompanied him, we never had a problem. He was very happy. However, when I decided to be a candidate for deputy, he totally changed with me. OK. You were with me, you can support me, you can follow me, but you can't be a candidate. He told me in my face... I got a*

> *lot of phone calls from other relatives… What is she doing? While I am here, she can't do anything… He was so angry with me because he was aware that I would become more successful than him. Women are few in politics. People would like to see women. I thought there was no women candidate from my city, I tried to be the first woman candidate….*
> *(Hatice, 17 June 2018, Ankara)*

Hatice's experience shows how a male competitor from the same electoral district reacted to her candidacy for deputy. She stated that while she accompanied him for political support, he accepted her. However, during the election period, she was criticised. In addition, by comparing himself to her, he seems to raise questions about the nature of Hatice as a woman in politics, thereby damaging her image. Although she did not mention there was a threat, she stated that he and their mutual social circle strongly advised her not to run for a deputy position. It seems that in cases where a man has a woman competitor or rival, the election period is perceived as a crisis period by men. Because they are awfully stressed, men increase their group cohesiveness (Janis, 1972). That is, their intersected identity, as mentioned earlier, increasingly tend to marginalise the presence of women in politics. In other words, in the face of identity threat, men become more likely to voice their unfavourable beliefs on the role of women in society.

In these discussions, participants made use of similar resilience resources. As an extension of traditional gender roles that refer to attitudes, behaviours, and beliefs assessed appropriate to women and men, they clearly portrayed women in politics from the eyes of men politicians (see Filiz and Nilay's statements above). Indeed, they are informed about women' status in politics (see Filiz's quotation). According to them, women are stigmatised; they are seen as emotional and vulnerable (see Selin's statement above). In addition, they demonstrated their high level of awareness related to how and when men utilise women in politics (see Canan's and Selin's statement above). Participants' understanding of the relationship between women and men in politics exemplifies a reflection of politicians' gendered subjectivities, which are

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formed through power relations (Kerfoot and Knights, 1994). They also have the sense and intelligence to identify political aggression within the political scheme (see Canan's statement above). They seem to be prepared to cope with the aggression at all stages. In this regard, participants demonstrate a high level of self and social awareness in politics (Cooper et al., 2013; Lutfans et al., 2007). Indeed, rather than self and social awareness, participants' awareness points to gender awareness which implies one's recognition of gender discrimination and inequalities against women.

Henderson-King and Stewart (1994) stated that people who have a strong sense of feminist identity tend to resist and reject traditional gender roles. However, hooks (2000) noted that a strong feminist identity might exclude men from negotiations aimed at gender equality. Indeed, a strong feminist identity creates a negative effect because it does not acknowledge men as "*worthy comrades in struggle*" against sexism and other different social injustices (hooks, 2000, p. 12). In other words, participants could distance themselves from male competitors and rivals, resulting in impeding communication and social interaction among participants and men competitors and rivals. At this point, although participants' high level of gender awareness implies a strong feminist identity, they seem to choose not to disclose their beliefs. They prefer silence because they represent a minority and are afraid of social sanctions. In relation to hooks' warning stated above, participants' fear points out that they may face the threat of loss of their positions, and that could potentially threaten personal political brands' survival.

In this respect, although participants complain about traditional gender roles, they do not take collective action. As personal brands, they represent a self-centred and highly individualistic approach (Shepherd, 2005). In this way, instead of actively challenging the status quo, participants tend to participate in patriarchal bargaining (see Kandiyoti, 1988). In short, participants' self, social and in particular gender awareness shows that they use their resilience

resources to protect their presence in politics. In this way, they seem not to be in danger of losing their brand's position and maintain their personal political brands' survival. Here participants resilience echoes persistent resilience because persistent resilience is a negotiating phenomenon rather than a traditional way of coping with aggression (Golubchikov, 2011; Szmigin et al., 2020). With persistent resilience, participants not only protect their positions but also allow for an interactive and continuous renegotiation of traditional gender roles and eliminate the risk of excluding men. They lead (perhaps force most of the time) men to feel "*worthy comrades in struggle*" against sexism and discrimination (hooks, 2000, p. 12).

Participants not only faced aggression from male competitors and rivals but were also marginalised by society. In this sense, this study found that as a strategy, participants tend to speak about their social identity dimensions loudly. This shows how participants cope with challenges in society. For example, Yasemin shared her experience from the election period. She stated that:

> *For some it is a fight for privileges; for some it is a fight for destruction; and for some others it is a fight for justice. For me, like I mentioned earlier, it was always for my identity; me being Sunni and Turk. To be more specific, I do not consider myself "Turk," I consider myself as someone "from Turkey." I refuse to give heed to such ethnic belongings. But, when you are doing something, you must play by the rules. When I was performing plays at the theatre or when I was an academician, I learned that when a force wants to take you out, if that force is alone, its means and tools lose their power over time. (Yasemin, 21 May 2018, Ankara)*

Yasemin mentioned that she was exposed to aggression because of her identity as a woman. She stressed her sense of experience by referring to her professional experiences in academia and theatre (see Yasemin's discussion in the previous section). Interestingly, Yasemin used medical metaphors to explain her strategy to deal with aggression. For her, the state's laws and individuals' unfavourable personal beliefs on social identity dimensions emerged as an

embolism in society. In this sense, the declaration of one's social identity dimensions works as a *vasodilator*. Thus, in the face of aggressors who attempt to marginalise her because of her social identity dimensions, she voices her intersected identity (woman/Sunni/Turk), resulting in cutting the ground from under the aggressors' feet. In other words, instead of obeying the pressure or an individual evaluator's improprieties regarding social identity dimensions, she specifically identifies herself with each social identity dimension without giving aggressors any chance to question or marginalise her identity. She continued:

> *Being the first name on the candidate list for X, especially for someone who is originally from another city, is an exceptional thing. It is of great importance under current circumstances. In X, women are being systematically silenced and imprisoned in their homes since the 1990s; they even locked women up in malls because they had high incomes. And being nominated as a candidate from a political party that is identified enormously as having a Kurdish identity, it is not a small issue. So, if need be, you need to challenge the pre-set rules by using the same language as them. In Marxist criticism, it is advised to test a thought by using its own notions. If you test that thought with different notions, then you are not being fair. Therefore, if because of the destruction policies of the government, the prevailing notion, the language among the public is like that, I must use the same language and pronounce that I am a woman or that I am from another city. Besides an Alawite, my Sunni identity and besides a Kurdish person, my Turkish identity comes to the forefront. Do you see my point? Because this is democracy. We can only talk about democracy if a Turkish person supports the rights of a Kurdish person, if a Sunni supports the rights of an Alawite, if a male supports the rights of an LGBTI person. Others add women's names to their candidate lists as a sample, but it is different here. (Yasemin, 21 May 2018, Ankara)*

In the above passage, Yasemin presented her strategy by pointing out the identity's incongruity with her electoral district and political party. On the one hand, she highlighted that she comes from a well-known city in the Black Sea region. She was nominated as a candidate for deputy from another known city in the region. Although the Black Sea region is multi-ethnic and the minority's identities and the region's cultures are protected, the state's identity

(Sunni/Muslim/Turk) attained its validity as supra-identity with high consensus (Meeker, 1971; Yaka, 2017). Women from the Black Sea region are stereotyped as devotional, courageous and strong (Kasapoglu, 2014; Yavuz and Sendeniz, 2013). In contrast, the region is also known as patriarchal (Meeker, 1971). In addition to her electoral district structure, she referred to the 90's gender policies to emphasise the incongruity. On the other hand, The Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) is a left-wing political party representing Turkey's Kurdish minority. Between this incongruity, she identifies herself as a Sunni woman from a well-known city of the region and a candidate for deputy from HDP, the pro-Kurdish party. Her personal political brand does not conflict with the political party brand (Shepherd, 2005). In this regard, through her intersected social identity dimensions, Yasemin felt in line with her adopted moral norms. She also seems to attain acceptance with her self identity. However, the intersection of her self identity with political parties' identity undermines her being accepted in her election district. That is, although people accepted her and her self identity under the effect of the political party's identity, she was also questioned about the nature of herself. This created a challenge for Yasemin, for the intersection of personal political brands identity and their political party identity facilitated the building of an authentic, legitimate, respectful and consistent fit between the two (Armannsdottir et al., 2019a; Thomson, 2006).

Following these identifications, she started her social purpose at the macro level. Since she was against marginalisation, she believed that individual evaluators' propriety beliefs needed to be changed. As a macro-level strategy, she pointed to Marxist criticism. In his study entitled "*Encoding/Decoding in Television Discourse*", Stuart Hall (1980) offers a theoretical approach to the ways in which media messages are encoded and disseminated by the encoder and subsequently interpreted by the decoders (Receivers of such media messages). In this sense, encoding is comprised of a media text with a desired meaning, and the audience decodes the

media text and interprets the contents of messages in different ways. Decoders may absorb the intended meanings or may reject them (Hall, 1980). Based on Hall's encoding/decoding model, Yasemin implied that while she is voicing her social identity dimensions, she is encoding different social identity dimensions' intersections and their visibility. Here, her encoding can be observed in the alignment of her identity with the political party's identity.

In the context of resilience, Yasemin's efforts point to having a clear sense of purpose and working out what matters to an individual during stressful and disturbing events and for future success (Snyder, 2002). With a high-level sense of belonging to her political party, she seems to develop resilience to deal with aggression. From an individual perspective, Yasemin's strategy echoes the mental time travelling technique. According to Kross and Ayduk (2017), mental time travelling is a self-distancing technique that points to shifting attitudes one's perspective from the present self to a distant future self. Through mental time travelling, "*temporal distancing downregulates distress by making salient the transitory nature of the reactions one's present self feels and thinks, shrinking the emotional significance of the experience in the here and now*" (Kross and Ayduk, 2017, p. 113). In this respect, Yasemin mentioned that "*For the days I will not voice them, I have to do so now*". In that sense, she seems to enhance her ability to control her feelings surrounding marginalised experiences and become therefore more motivated. This demonstrates that if an individual level strategy is combined with a macro-level strategy, politicians' brand identity resilience may become stronger.

In the last stage, after becoming deputies, participants stressed that they feel the necessity of voicing their intersected social identity dimensions in the face of aggression. In line with Yasemin's strategies above, participants also combine their individual level strategies with macro-level purposes. At this stage, participants are more likely to face harsh aggression by

rivals regarding their intersected social identity dimensions. For example, Merve talked about her experience in the parliament as follows:

> *Normally I do not give heed to ethnic identities. I still do not. Unfortunately, some use it to push their agenda. Like I said before, HDP, which I cannot bring myself to call a political party because it is not more than a seemingly legal branch of a terrorist organization, uses race and ethnicity as an excuse and creates a bloodbath around the country. Under such circumstances, you need to educate people. You need to show them how empty and untoward it is to fight based solely on ethnicity. That is why I used that expression. (Merve, 20 May 2018, Ankara)*

To recall briefly, while she was giving a speech in the parliament, she was exposed to oral aggression regarding her ethnic identity by her rivals. She implied that the party that promotes ethnic nationalism attempted to marginalise her identity because of her political party. She resisted aggression by voicing her ethnic identity, saying that "*Alhamdulillah I am Kurd, Alhamdulillah I am a Kurd who respects this country*". By saying "*Alhamdulillah*" (Thanks to Allah), she voices her ethnic identity by connecting it with another social identity dimension, which is religion. Interestingly, by connecting her ethnic identity with religion, she seems to respond to aggression in different ways. Instead of taking a defensive position, she insistently associates her ethnicity with her religion. Indeed, she seems to protect her ethnicity by means of her religion. It is noteworthy that religion may support, preserve, reinforce and reproduce ethnicity (Turkmen-Dervisoglu, 2016).

Although the secular-nationalist Kemalist ideology prioritises Westernised/Sunni/Turkish identity as validate identity, recently, by aiming to deal with the Kurdish conflict, the ruling party Justice and Development Party (AKP) tries to use Sunni Islam (supranational religious identity) as an overarching validate identity to unite Kurds and Turks (Turkmen-Dervisoglu, 2016). As Turkmen-Dervisoglu noted, ethnicity emphasis is blurred, and Sunni-Islam as an

overarching identity is acknowledged, which could bridge ethno-nationalist divisions between the predominantly Sunni-Muslim-Kurds and Turks. In this respect, as a member of the ruling party member, Merve holds a propriety belief (ethnicity/religion intersected identity) that is consistent with the level of perceived validity. Conforming to the validity and a high level of congruence with the political party in power facilitates her acceptance by government. In addition, her rivals aggressively try to raise questions about the nature of her political brand and consequently threaten her image. However, since the majority of people in Turkey are Muslims, her reference to the religion shows her attempt to seek society's acceptance. In this way, Zehra aims to conform to cultural expectations and society's norms.

Meanwhile, by voicing her social intersected identities, she fully embodies them. According to Kross and Ayduk (2017), focusing on one's experiences from a psychologically immersed perspective is not desired. Because this perspective makes things rather hard for people to take a step outside and think objectively without becoming emotionally involved in their events. By portraying herself as immersed in the position using religion, she believes that she adopts her ethnicity in a more straightforward way than her rivals and seems to be proud of her ethnic identity. In this way, she forces her rivals to distance themselves from the identity dimension that they used to marginalise her. This suggests a process of "*reverse distancing*". In sum, like Yasemin, Zehra noted that although she does not support using social identity dimensions, particularly ethnicity, she feels the need to voice her intersected identity in politics as a coping strategy with aggression. Canan uses the same strategy in a different way. She said that:

> *In our country there is only one political party who pleads for ethnicity. And it comes first in the powers I fight against; I do not have to name names here, you know already. I do hate ethnic nationalism. I was attacked a great many times; I am one of those who came under the fire the most because I am Kurdish. From their perspective, if you are Kurdish, you can only vote for them and you must support PKK. If you deviate from this, people's perception of you changes. They think to*

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themselves, "Oh, she is a Kurd, but she is not Kurdish." Then you get hated on because you open other people's eyes. You become the symbol that says, "You may be from Diyarbakir, or from some other place in South-eastern Anatolia, you may be Kurd, but you don't have to push a Kurdish agenda." What I care about the most here is to be integrated; integration is of great importance. Every person living in Turkey must come together. Today, the biggest Kurdish population of Turkey resides in Istanbul. Why do I have to work for a Kurdish agenda then? As I am like this, I became the target of that particular party which breathes ethnic nationalism. To be fair, I am the one who is hit the most. Every time I went up on that stand, I was attacked. However, they could not bring me down because I did not let them. Through my attitude, I made it clear to them that I was not going down and if I say so myself, they backed down a little. (Canan, 22 May 2018, Ankara)

In her statement, Canan also used the self-distancing strategy by engaging in self-talk activities. For instance, instead of using first-person, she used non-first-person pronouns ("*if you are a Kurd for them, you have to vote for them*"). As opposed to other participants, Canan also adopted wise reasoning as a strategy. Wise reasoning is used in response to specific situations, such as dilemmas and social conflicts (Baltes and Smith, 2008; Grossmann and Kross, 2014; Grossmann et al., 2013). Wise reasoning is identified "*as understanding of the socially and contextually intertwined nature of human life, including its finitude, cultural conditioning, and incompleteness; and knowledge about oneself and the limits of one's knowledge*" (Baltes and Staudinger, 2000, p. 124). In this regard, she based her reasoning on the premise that Turkey is constituted of a mosaic of identities. Additionally, she supports her opinion by giving geographical reasoning: Kurdish people are considered of mosaic identities, but she is against Kurdism. Thus, by making a distinction between Kurds and Kurdism, she insistently positioned herself as a fighter against ethnic nationalism. Like other participants, she voices her identity to deal with aggression.

Although participants voice their intersected social identity dimensions to deal in particular with ethnicity related aggression, it is found that they also voice their gender identity by

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emphasising traditional gender roles. This is interesting because participants tend to resist gender-related marginalisation and aggression. However, this study found that participants prefer to voice their gender identity and distance themselves from their competitors and rivals. For instance, Nilay stated that:

> *Once I was attending a board meeting in Ankara, after back-to-back meetings ended and everyone was going their ways, I overheard two men talking to each other. One of them said, "We are running really late. At such an hour, I don't have any energy left to go home." And I replied, "With all due respect, do not complain in front of me. I can't bring myself to pity you." They asked me what I meant, and I said, "Look, when you arrive at home tonight, your wives will welcome you at the door, they will feed you, and you will close off the night by watching TV with the remote in your hands. Do you know what it will be like for me? I will go home and do all the things your wives did, and I will not even have the whole day to do them. So, I don't pity you." They were speechless for a good minute. Then they acknowledged that I was right. As they believed me to be one of them, they could not picture me as someone who does house chores when she goes home. (Nilay, 22 May 2018, Ankara)*

Professionals are known as having a strong work-oriented identity and tend to work long hours (Choroszewicz and Adams, 2019). In her statement above, Nilay embodies these characteristics in her professional identity. By conforming to her professionality's requirements and expectations, she demonstrates a fair amount of autonomy from her work. Moreover, her gender and her age give her a high level of respect. Specifically, the fact that she was called *abla* (see the next chapter) affirms her social identity: References as such affirm "*the social identity and self-worth of individuals or social groups, or to ensure that social groups are treated with dignity and respect*" (Tost, 2011, pp. 693-694). Although she was not marginalised or discriminated against, she stresses that she and her men competitors are not equal. She prefers to distance herself from them by recalling the traditional gender order. She implied that she is a member of a traditional breadwinning family model, in which women take on the

primary role in childcare and family life; on the other hand, men are the breadwinners (Biese and Choroszewicz, 2018; Choroszewicz and Tremblay, 2018) who embody a voluntary character in the family (Vuori, 2009). In this way, she seems congruent with society's normative and cultural expectations. As motherhood and homecare taking are considered a social duty of women (Choroszewicz and Adams, 2019), she conforms to the traditional gender roles by emphasising her duties at home. Although she is not a woman who delays her professional work because of traditional gender roles, she demonstrates a clear and intense sense of responsibility at home. This is reminiscent of studies that noted that among the difficult challenges faced by women, balancing expectations of high-status careers with responsibilities at home figures prominently.

In the context of Turkey, although women were encouraged to take up educational opportunities and assume professional roles, they were also encouraged to play traditional roles (Arat, 2012). By conforming to society's norms and beliefs, she built up stronger links with society and aligned herself with the state's gender policy. This pointed out that "*in private life patriarchal norms continued to be practised, perpetuated, and legitimized, despite the formal equality granted under the civil code*" (Ibid, p. 18). Thus, while Nilay voices her gender identity by stressing traditional gender roles, she seems to strengthen her brand identity.

5.6. Heritage

This study found that participants utilised their family relationships to construct their heritage. In line with the given literature, it was observed that constructing political brand heritage through the involvement of families helped participants to construct their desired personal political brand.

In marketing studies, the past is considered as a source that can increase the chances of more sales (Chronis, 2005; Goulding, 2000; Penaloza, 2000). The resource of the brand, called brand inheritance, is associated with the brand's own history information provided. As defined in the literature, brand inheritance is constituted of different kinds of stable assets that brand creators or managers have received from their predecessors (Urde et al., 2007). These assets can be both tangible, such as old advertisements, archives, physical objects and buildings, and intangible, such as the figure of a founder and employees' know-how. As personal political brands, participants' brand inheritance differs from these material and nonmaterial elements. Rather than focusing on these types of inheritance, participants' inheritance is constructed subjectively by their experience. Thus, a family with political interest is an important element of their inheritance (see below for more details). Further, it is found that, even a family member who already has a political career, her political experience plays an important role as a brand inheritance.

Brand heritage is linked in the literature to five elements: core values, track record, belief in history, longevity, track record and use of symbols (Urde et al., 2007). However, studies in brand heritage mostly focused on the combination of stability and longevity (Merchant and Rose, 2013), a mixture of traditions, stability, historical roots and continuity (Balmer and Greyser, 2006; Hakala et al., 2011). In this sense, Pecot and De Barnier (2017) proposed that synthesising the important components of brand heritage relies on brand management literature, which is also visible to consumers. In this respect, they identified brand heritage as a set of values and symbols that strengthen the brand's identity, which also discloses brands anchoring in the past and represents the link between past, present, and future that characterize the concept of brand heritage. In this regard, this study viewed brand heritage as an intangible property with an identity-related aim (Armannsdottir et al., 2019a). The following sections are

structured around the longevity and stability dimensions, which are acknowledged as the best compromise between parsimony and comprehensiveness (Pecot and De Barnier, 2017).

5.6.1. Longevity

The family is considered as the first agency of socialisation for the young child in politics (Gelles, 1980). In accordance with this argument, when participants were asked to talk about how they entered politics, they pointed to political conversations between family members during early childhood. They specified that their origins of brand heritage started in the family. For example, Elif mentioned that she engaged highly in political conversations during her childhood:

> *... I mean before embarking on active institutional politics, when I look back, since my childhood for as long as I can remember, we, particularly my dad and I in my family, have had discussions about both our country and the world politics during different hours in a day- even in the middle of the night. I used to follow the news closely (Elif, 26 April 2018, Ankara)*

Like Elif, many participants stated that they engaged in political conversations in their families and their families gave them an environment suitable for political debates, communications and discussions (Valentino and Sears, 1998). Thus, they felt that they belonged to politics. Eda said that:

> *I was born in 1961, therefore, my starting point in politics goes way back a long way. I was a kid. My big brother studied at Istanbul Technical University, he started in 1974-75. Therefore, due to my brother, politics of Turkey had always been a topic of conversation. I have two big brothers and both of them were interested in politics; they were in politics. Therefore, I am used to being in politics since my childhood years. (Eda, 17 June 2018, Phone)*

While Elif and Eda saw their childhood as the starting point for their political career, Fatma went deeper, saying that interest in politics is inherent in human nature. Fatma went on as follows:

> *... politics is actually something that concerns society problems, country and nationality issues, and that is in everybody's mind and in everybody's agenda. It is impossible to detach politics from society itself. That is, starting from childhood, politics is something like -how to put it- it is something inherent to human nature. (Fatma, 3 May 2018, Ankara)*

In this passage, participants anchored their political brand identity in the past. The longevity dimension of their brand heritage was reflected through the narration of political memories from early childhood. Hudson (2011) discussed that many important brands, such as companies, products and corporate brands, survive a single generation. From an identity-related perspective, longevity dimension is not an indicator of brands' real age (Pecot and De Barnier, 2017). However, the issue seems different for personal political brands. Personal branding literature is aware of the problematic nature of longevity dimension for a personal brand. Because humans are mortal, one day, the person in the personal brand will die (Dion and Arnould, 2011; Fournier and Eckhardt, 2019). Despite this inevitable ending, participants tend to extend their longevity by representing the past based on their subjective interpretation, from childhood all the way into their adult life. Like Fatma, some participants mentioned that their interest in politics is inherent in their nature to express longevity. Participants' brand heritage longevity seems limited, for it is not clear how well a politician is able to anchor her brand identity in her past. It seems that personal political brand's heritage cannot be independent of their objective age. However, some participants used their family members who have a political career to expand their longevity dimension of brand heritage. For example, Asiye talked about her father's political experience as follows:

> *... my dad, along with Erbakan, was one of the founders of the National Order Party. He worked as the party leader in X. Then, I was in secondary school, I was 15-16 years old. Therefore, my life in politics had already started there. I had gained some experience during those years. I observed all the movements, achievements and studies there. (Asiye, 1 June 2018, Bursa)*

Although Asiye was not politically active in her youth, she felt experienced in politics through her father's experience. She merged her beginning of political life with her father's brand heritage. In relation to her father's political life, she mentioned specifically known political actors that played an important role in Turkey's political history, such as "*Erbakan*" and "*National Order Party*". Interestingly, while talking about particular political movements which affected women directly (such as the 28 February coup), she stressed that she came from a political tradition deeply entrenched in National Order Party. The reason behind this is that both women and the National Order Party were seen as victims of the secularists. That is, women with headscarves were subjected to discrimination and injustices due to their gender and religion, and as the first Islamic Party, the National Order Party, was banned due to being against the country's secular nature. This religion-centered and gendered perspective pointed out that she had a high level of sense of belonging to the group of the National Outlook Movement. Accordingly, she emphasised their political brand identity in the National Order Party period through her father. In addition, sharing status as brand victims gives a sense of common norms, values and beliefs. Thus, she expanded her heritage longevity and increased her belonging to that group of people.

Further, similar to Asiye, AKP participants frequently stated their sense of belonging to the National Outlook Movement. Many of them even mentioned that they started politics in parties that supported the National Outlook ideology. Indeed, AKP is seen as a continuation of the conservative line of Turkish politics (Hale and Ozbudun, 2010) rather than a continuation of Islamist lineage, which is known as the MNP (National Order Party), the MSP (National

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Salvation Party), and the RP (Welfare Party). This is because AKP does not adopt Islamist lineage's Islamist ideology called the National Outlook (Milli Görüş) and follow their economic policies, which were based on the notion of the Just Order (Cinar, 2011; Hale and Ozbudun, 2010). AKP is seen as a continuation of the conservative line of Turkish politics (Hale and Ozbudun, 2010). In this sense, although they lost their ideological bond to National Outlook, it seems that my AKP participants portrayed themselves still as representatives of the victims but with the status of hero. That is, AKP is perceived as a hero. The reason behind this is that firstly, in contrast to its official predecessors that were banned due to being against the country's secular nature, AKP survived in the Turkish state of a secular-democratic character contradictory to the Islamist state model (Eligur, 2010). Secondly, although AKP has not an Islamic ideology, it became a central party of Islamist people. In this sense, AKP is viewed as a successful political party that conforms to the law and the various forms of state regulations (Greenwood et al., 2002; Scott, 1995). Accordingly, as a part of AKP, participants' status changed from victims to heroes, and their fighting spirit increased their loyalty and belonging to these groups of people. Along these lines, brand victims and heroes provided opportunities for informants to negotiate both the political environment and participants' political and social identities (Kates, 2004). Creating strong bonds with well-known political entities as well as their history through family members increased the popularity of participants in society.

With their long history, starting from their childhood all the way into the present, they portrayed themselves as highly engaged in politics. However, women are systematically less likely to receive political encouragements from their family of origin and be therefore politically socialised. They are also less likely to engage in political conversations with others throughout their life cycle and even perceive themselves as qualified to run for office than their male counterparts (Fox and Lawless, 2011; Lawless and Fox, 2010). Although gender is an

important element of political knowledge and socialisation (see e.g., Carpini and Keeter, 1993; Mondak and Davis, 2001), for participants, their gender was not associated with the political socialisation in their family environment. Participants seem that they were not subjected by their family members to be less likely than other male members of the family to be involved in political communications. In view of Turkey's political issues, they positioned themselves mostly at the side of minorities and oppressed groups (Giesler, 2008; Gopaldas, 2014; Valor et al., 2021). Even though a participant was an audience in the stated period, positioning herself in the situation was a common narration. For example:

> *I do not think it is a problem. If someone wants to wear a hijab, they can. If they want to do it out of religious beliefs, they will make sure to do it no matter what anyway. I did not go through that because of my personal beliefs and lifestyle, but I know too well that it happened. I watched it happen and I found it exceptionally weird because I did not know why people were being forced into that. I remember them holding sit-in protests in my city, and even though I was not a part of the protests, I was observing them. I could not make sense of that ban, because even if you can force people to remove their hijab, what good would that do as long as their whole belief systems were the same? I am being repetitive, but I feel like we are running in circles; look, we ended up at the same place. According to that mentality, a man is given the right to education; however, a woman, a girl is not. They are not supposed to go to schools or work; it is opposed. This is a very peculiar way of looking at the world, I cannot even begin to understand it and I do not think I ever will. (Zeynep, 7 June 2018, Bursa)*

This passage shows that participants' legitimacy on different grounds, which will be investigated in the next chapter, was developed not only through their active participation or practices (Sandikci and Ger, 2010) but also through their mental templates (self-schemas). According to Markus (1977), self-schema refers to a long-lasting and stable set of memories that summarise a person's beliefs, experience and generalisations about the self and reflects what an individual think and care about and on which s/he spends time and energy. In the interviews, it is found that being a politician or working for society or defending the rights of

minorities and marginalised groups were one of the participants' self-schemas. From their childhood, participants perceived themselves as relevant, inherited, and capable individuals in politics, perceptions which later powerfully affected how they think about, remember and evaluate politics, other people, and themselves. These self-schemas—briefly developed on the idea of having a higher interest in politics— routinised how participants see politics, themselves, and their ways of behaving. They shared their routinised self-schemas through their long brand history. This routinisation gave participants "*a feeling of normality*" (Ilmonen 2001, p. 14; Sandikci and Ger, 2010). In addition, while they drew their long history, they identified themselves with one of the groups in the marketplace, more frequently with victims (Giesler, 2008; Gopaldas, 2014; Valor et al., 2021). Thus, they strengthened relational outcomes of established self-schemas (e.g., self-worth, social identity, status, or dignity) (Tost, 2011; Sandikci and Ger 2010). It is also found that routinisation of self-schemas was associated with the evolving frames and brands. At this point, routinisation of self-schemas through participants' long heritage facilitated their normative legitimacy, which occurs through evolving frames and at times through evolving brands (Kates, 2004).

Consequently, while participants talked about their inheritance, their male family members, such as fathers and brothers, often featured predominantly during the interview. In this sense, political conversations often took place between the participants and their fathers or brothers. Male family members were portrayed as more interested in politics than female members. This demonstrates that in the family, the diffusion of social norms might be "*inviting men to shout out the answers*" while encouraging women to "*sit in the back and keep quiet*" (Mondak and Anderson, 2004, p. 493). Specifically, mothers were ignored or noted in haste or briefly in participants' brand heritage. This suggests that during their childhood, participants possibly witnessed patriarchal hierarchy through which discourse organizes, normalizes and effectuates

its power (Foucault, 1972). In addition, they also possibly learnt gender stereotypes from their family environment and how to behave in gender-appropriate ways (Deaux and LaFrance, 1998). At this point, it can be argued that participants did not internalise gender-stereotyped characteristics, but their strategy points to patriarchal bargains.

To explain briefly, participants' conscious or unconscious invocation of male family members show that they act in line with the existing patriarchal norms. In conforming to society's patriarchal norms, they are viewed as legitimate on normative grounds. At this point, participants are expected to be consistent with traditional gender roles; otherwise, they may be perceived as against dominant patriarchal norms if they enter politics. In contrast, simultaneously, they created their brand heritage on the perception of "*a feeling of normality*", "*having a higher interest in politics*", and "*sense of experience*". With brand heritage created by these gradually implied perceptions, participants elicit audiences' acceptance and facilitate the cognitive acceptance of their political brand. They also conform to society's patriarchal norms and are consequently viewed as appropriate candidates in the eyes of people. In this way, participants appear to be participating in a patriarchal bargain by conforming to traditional gender roles to attain acceptance for their political brand. Consequently, creating a brand heritage eased bargaining with patriarchy. My participants seem to cope with this patriarchal structure by merging their male family members with their brand heritage. In this respect, participants' brand heritage seems not only important in constructing participants personal political brand identity but also facilitates their personal political brand legitimacy process, which will be explored deeply in the next chapter.

5.6.2. Stability

While most participants assessed their heritage from early childhood to the present, they constructed the representations of time on the basis of a linear view. Balmer (2011) indicated

that a linear view of time reflects the past is assumed as everything that precedes the present. Here, participants seem aware of the duration and create a time perspective that goes beyond the confines of the present. Participants' approach to representations of the past supported that brand heritage is not only a concept of the past, instead the past bridges the past, the present, and the future, embodying a sense of stability (Balmer, 2011; Burghausen and Balmer, 2014; Urde et al., 2007). At this point, the dimension of stability is constructed around participants' sense of experience and their consistent interest in politics. Yasemin, like many participants, anchored her political brand identity in her childhood and built her brand heritage in a linear way. She said that:

> *My interest in politics started when I was a kid. Because where I used to live, X, was a place where the politics before 80s was in full swing. Actually, since my childhood, I have seen the tyrant side of the government. When 1980 coup d'etat happened, I was studying last grade in secondary school. I was a secondary school student. I learned what a raid was and what bureaucracy meant during my early ages due to the status of the country and the location of my hometown. So, it has developed as an instinct. Like I said earlier, my family, my mom and dad, had a strong sense of justice. I guess my starting point in politics was the fact that I was never satisfied with the justice in this country. (Yasemin, 21 May 2018, Ankara)*

In this statement, Yasemin summarised the political situation of the country. She portrayed herself and her family in this ambiguous environment as individuals who look for justice but remain unsatisfied. During her interview, her political perspective revolves around her sense of dissatisfaction. She continued as follows:

> *I, for instance, had Kurdish friends. Through my friendship with them, I witnessed at close range the Kurdish problem. The sources that I read changed, but as I had Alawite neighbours growing up, I was already touched by the aura of desperation surrounding them. We did not get into such topics with my parents then, but through time and observation, I was able to form impressions. I cannot pinpoint exactly when I reached such a state of mind, but the first step was feeling stirred up by the*

> *quietness of the Alawite families. Then, when I moved to Istanbul, I had*
> *many Armenian neighbours, too. (Yasemin, 21 May 2018, Ankara)*

In her linear narrative, Yasemin displayed her social environment during her university years. Her earlier sense of dissatisfaction implied the minorities' situation in society. She made efforts to provide relevant information about which how her political stance is built. Thus, she identified herself with minorities. She went on:

> *I myself did not go through much, but I witnessed people from my social*
> *circle being subject to gender inequality or religious discrimination*
> *against an ethnic group. I stood along with them. As said by many, I was*
> *always on the side of the persecuted. I think this is how my political*
> *awareness developed in the first place. (Yasemin, 21 May 2018, Ankara)*

Specifically, Yasemin observed Kurdish and Alawite people since her childhood with a desire to make sense of their "*silent aura*". Indeed, her curiosity informed her interaction with these minority groups. Therefore, from the early years of her life till today, she positions herself still within the same political perspective, which increases her brand's stability.

5.7. Conclusion

This chapter has analysed how professional female politicians construct their brand identities in the context of Turkey. In doing so, the chapter explores the components of professional female politicians' brand identity through the lens of intersectionality. When addressing these politicians' brand identity construction, five broad components are revealed that come together and construct desired personal political brand identities. Firstly, legacy has emerged as an important component. Worshipping, being a political voice and civil responsibility have been discussed as legacies of participants. Specifically, participants' legacies seem to be structured around the intersections of gender and religion. Secondly, it is found that participants underpin their desired identity in their NGO and professional experience. This section also provides

insights into intersections of gender and religion in the context of Turkey. This chapter then focuses on the personality and values of politicians, including their gender, religion, ethnicity and age-related personality traits. Subsequently, this chapter examines the transfer potential of brand resilience. Professional female politicians' brand resilience is discussed around their NGO experience, professional experience and their experience in the political arena. The analysis has revealed that self and social awareness and adaptability resilience dimensions play important roles in constructing participants' personal political brand identity. Consequently, the concept of brand heritage is adopted with two dimensions: longevity and stability. The findings regarding brand resilience and brand heritage presented the intersection of multiple identity dimensions, particularly gender, religion and ethnicity. By drawing on their long-term evaluation of personal political brand from childhood all the way into their adult life, the chapter highlights the process of construction of their desired brand identity. In what follows, Chapter 6 presents now the findings and analysis, which focus on how professional female politicians legitimise their personal brands in the context of Turkey.

Chapter 6: Findings and Analysis- Personal Political Brand Legitimacy Process

6.1. Introduction

The previous chapter examined the construction of professional female politicians' brand identity through the lens of intersectionality in the context of Turkey. In doing so, the chapter presents the components of their brand identity, including legacy, experiences, personality and values, resilience and heritage. This chapter presents the findings of female politicians' brand legitimacy construction process.

This chapter found that politicians relationships, negotiations and communications provide them with the capability to reflect on their character, behaviour and attitudes when constructing and managing the desired identity. This process pointed to the management of personal brand, an idea under-developed in the literature (Jacobson, 2020; Vallas and Christin, 2018). However, participants do not only reflect on their character, attitudes and behaviour but also seek to legitimise their personal political brand on different grounds (regulatory, normative, relational, and cognitive). Drawing on the literature discussed in Chapter 2, this approach is supported by scholars that brands demonstrate legitimacy (Humphreys, 2010a; Humphreys and Latour, 2013; Kates, 2004; Scaraboto and Fischer, 2013; Valor et al., 2021). In this sense, the findings of this chapter illustrate participants' efforts to maintain their authentic brand identity in line with the ongoing, dynamic and multi-level view of legitimacy (Bitektine and Haack, 2015; Haack and Sieweke, 2018; Haack et al., 2020). This chapter found that consideration of participants' legitimacy process is an essential and necessary approach that projects the authenticity and authority of their political brand. In this regard, this chapter demonstrates how participants develop strong relationships, negotiate, and communicate in the process of legitimacy.

To recall briefly, legitimacy is a multi-level phenomenon encompassing individual-level judgements (propriety or micro-level legitimacy) and collective-level judgements (validity or macro-level legitimacy) (Haack and Sieweke, 2018; Johnson et al., 2006), and recently added consensus component (meso-level legitimacy) (Haack et al., 2020). The individual-level legitimacy judgment is a continuous construct, where individuals compare this judgment to a reference point to evaluate if the subject is legitimate or illegitimate (Finch et al., 2015). However, the individual or micro-level legitimacy hitherto received only little attention in institutional theory, organisation and management studies (existing studies Tost, 2011; Bitektine and Haack, 2015; Haack et al., 2020). Although there is a lack of interest in propriety, this chapter found that participants' individual level legitimacy judgement plays an important role in their own personal political brands. As this study focuses on the construction of personal political brand identity from the brand-creator perspective, this chapter provides insights into politicians' legitimacy judgement process into their own brands. Therefore, this chapter contributes to the limited body of knowledge on individual level legitimacy judgement.

However, for personal political brands, understanding the interplay of individual level (propriety), collective level legitimacy judgements (validity), and their agreement (consensus) is a complex issue because of the multi-contextual nature of personal political brands and the context-specific nature of each identity. Moreover, there are individual and collective actors (*judgement validation institutions*) acknowledged as the major sources of validity, such as the government, media and the judicial system, and "*voices of the common man*" (Bitektine and Haack, 2015, p. 51; Haack and Sieweke, 2020; Haack et al., 2020; Vaara, 2014, p. 506). Whereas for my participants, other judgement validation institutions differ from those identified by organisational researchers. In this study, there are multiple but interrelated social

contexts constituting validity beliefs based on which participants develop their legitimacy judgment process.

In this regard, firstly, the situations under which the social context of the participants' brands are likely to be prioritised in the judgement process need to be understood. While Tost (2011) stated that prioritization occurs in the judgment formation stage to determine which of the four legitimacy pillars is likely to be prioritized in the judgment process in a given context, it is found in this study that participants first make their prioritization decision related to the context. Based on Tost's individual-level legitimacy judgement model, I called this stage the "*context judgement stage*". In this stage, although a few participants prioritised the context of the political party, the majority of participants prioritised their families. This demonstrated that participants have a precedence order, which is in line with the social embeddedness characteristics of the personal brands to establish general legitimacy in politics. In this order, family is the first priority for participants. Participants also identified two subcontexts: politics (competitors and rivals) and society. The state's gender policy (neoliberal public patriarchy) also emerged as a macro-level legitimacy judgment context. In the neoliberal form of public patriarchy, when gained legitimacy in the family, participants pass on the negotiation stage. In this stage, participants first emphasise the importance of the leader' support. Furthermore, it is found that participants negotiate with competitors and rivals through leaders' authorisation and their age. Therefore, from the politician brand creator perspective, this study found that there are three interrelated social sub-contexts in participants' personal political brand legitimacy process: family, politics and society. Participants should deal with these three sub-contexts to establish general legitimacy in the neoliberal form of public patriarchy.

The following sections provide insights into participants' propriety and validity beliefs and the interaction between propriety, validity, and consensus. By looking into the interplay between

legitimacy components, it will be illustrated how participants comply, resist or bargain with patriarchal norms to be viewed as legitimate on different grounds. In addition, this section demonstrates that the spillover effects occur not only between legitimacy pillars (Valor et al., 2021) but also between different social contexts and these context' legitimacy pillars for personal brands. As discussed below, this study found that for participants, families are taken as the reference point to decide their brands' legitimacy status on different grounds or overall. Therefore, by (1) providing detailed information about participants' propriety beliefs in relation to their families (micro-level legitimacy), (2) connecting them to the validity beliefs (macro-level legitimacy), and (3) even adopting the meso-level legitimacy component (consensus), the following section' findings aim to provide a detailed and holistic perspective on my participants' individual-level legitimacy judgment process. Based on the idea that it is necessary and essential to consider participants' legitimacy strategies that project the authenticity of their political brand, this chapter is composed of three main sections, which can be seen in Figure 3.

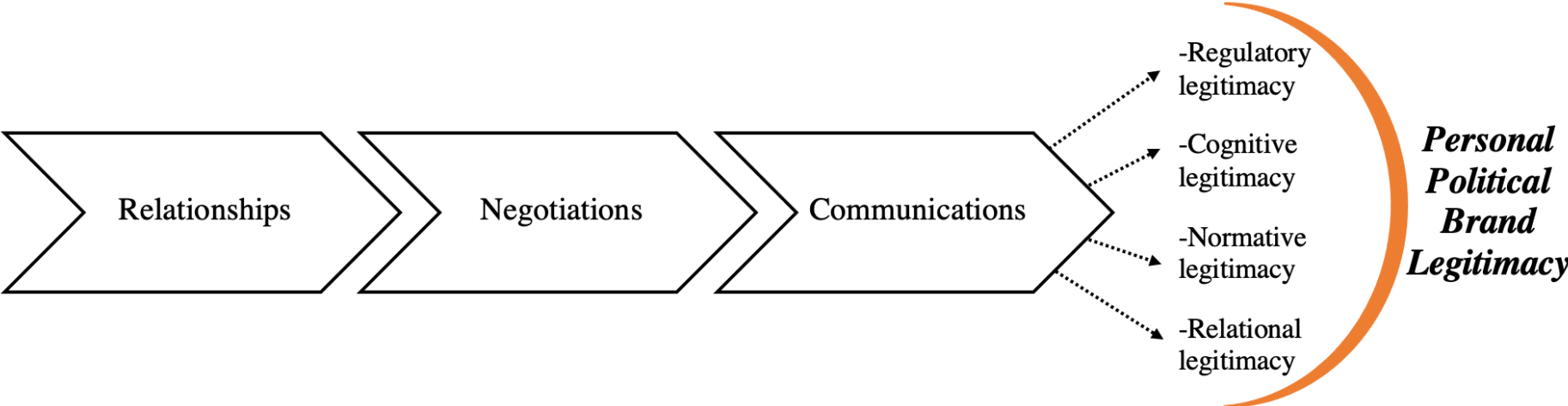# Personal Political Brand Legitimacy Process

Figure 3: Personal Political Brand Legitimacy Process

6.2. Relationships

The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 has shown that personal brands are inherently embedded in social relationships, including family, friends and colloquies from the inner circle who know the person behind the brand (Fournier and Eckhardt, 2019; Rein et al., 1997). Although few clues are available about managing the personal brand through socially embedded characteristics, existing studies mainly focused on the great risk of personal brands as they cannot control, escape, or ignore these relationships. A recent study by Fournier and Eckhardt (2019) stated that the person brand gains or loses power through its personal affiliations and relationships, in particular through how the others portray the brand. Although this study does not provide insights from the brand's inner circle, it is found that from a brand creator perspective, the family's acceptance and support of women politicians facilitate for women the establishment of legitimacy as a source of power in politics (Tost, 2011). That is, the family's acceptance of participants' political identity is understood in this work in relation to legitimacy (Kates, 2004) and plays an important role in producing power and maintaining the brand identity.

Accordingly, the data analysed and discussed in this section addresses these gaps to expand discussions on understanding the impact of social relationships on participants' political brands. Since Turkey's neoliberal patriarchal family is the main focus, participants' alignment with their families facilitated their acceptance in the eyes of society. Indeed, here normative legitimacy is intertwined with cognitive and relational legitimacy (Humpreys and Latour, 2013; Tost, 2001; Valor et al., 2021). That is, degrees of cognitive legitimacy attain throughout the legitimation process and also facilitate or impede normative legitimacy (Humphreys and Latour, 2013). In accordance with this assessment, having acceptance of normative legitimacy here also facilitated the cognitive legitimacy of participants in politics. Simultaneously, the

rising level of normative and cognitive legitimacy improved their social status, solidarity and even their dignity in politics (Tost, 2001; Valor et al., 2021). Therefore, the section below demonstrates these relationships between legitimacy pillars and how family support gives legitimacy to participants on different grounds. It is divided into three subsections: male-dominated arena, motherhood and economic security. The first brand heritage sub-section demonstrates how families play an important role in constructing participants brand heritage and gaining legitimacy on different pillars through their heritage. The second sub-section contributes to showing how families play an important role in constructing participants' individual level legitimacy judgement process.

6.2.1. Male-dominated Arena

When discussing with participants the effects of family's acceptance, the issue of men game arose frequently. In general, amongst the participants, there was a clear understanding that they had to navigate male-dominated environments and masculine cultures. All participants highlighted that without family acceptance and support, they were not able to survive in the sort of politics dominated by men. Nur pointed to specific conversations that shaped her decision-making:

> *I said that I wanted to think about it because I had to consult my family, my father, my husband, and my employer. It was just being founded, its future was uncertain, and people did not really think highly of X party then. Everybody thought that it would not be tolerated, it would be circumvented. However, when I talked to my father, he said, "I can neither tell you to accept, nor tell you to turn down the offer. I did not like politics, but it is your decision to make. If you wished to accept, and get in, I would always support you." Then I asked my husband for his opinion. He replied, "If it does not interfere with your physical health, and if it makes you happy, I will always be right beside you." Such supportive remarks are precious, I am telling you. When a woman gets into politics, it is of utmost importance to get her husband's, her family's support. (Nur, 2 June 2018, Ankara)*

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Nur expressed embarrassingly that men are the rule-makers. Like other participants, although she believes that a female politician as a legitimacy entity is appropriate for Turkey's political context that she can hold office and vote, in line with Turkey's neoliberal gender regime the validity is gendered. The validity of politics as a male-dominant arena "*has a life of its own*" (Zelditch, 2006, p. 346). In other words, the validity of gendered politics is a social fact and exists independently from individual evaluators' subjective propriety beliefs (Haack et al., 2020). As mentioned above, amongst the participants, there was a clear perception of validity (validity belief) that they have to navigate a male-dominated environment and masculine culture of politics. At this point, the idea that families' acceptance of participants' political brands may facilitate their level of legitimacy overall and is used as a validity cue, meaning "*cognitive shortcuts*" to reach a legitimacy judgment (Tost, 2011, p. 696). By pointing to a specific conversation with her father and spouse, Nur highlighted that without family acceptance and support, female politicians would not be able to survive in politics. Nur's statement also highlighted another validity belief that generally emerged with the male-dominance structure of politics. This validity belief mentioned that "*politics is difficult for women*". Leyla, another participant, also implied that as a young female individual with medium socioeconomic status, politics is a different and difficult social evaluation for her, which requires advanced skills and high-power level:

> *We reached a decision together, my husband and I. The date of the election was already moved to an earlier time, and we were thinking about whether it would sit right with us after the coup-like e-memorandum of 27 April 2007. Then we decided to go for it, because we thought "Why not?" With the support of my husband, I applied. But, many people around me were sceptical about a young, 30-year-old woman getting into politics. It raised many eyebrows. When I first decided to do it, I told my father about it, and jokingly he said, "Honey, are you sure? Your parents are humble teachers." We regarded politics as something handled by more powerful people, it could only be taken*

on by those who were of different positions in life. (Leyla, 14 May 2018, Ankara)

Both Nur and Leyla expressed the validity beliefs have emerged as an extension of the male-dominance structure of politics. They agreed on the importance of gaining the family's consent to deal with the heavily male-dominated arena. Interestingly, as seen both in Nur's and Leyla's statements, while they are talking about their families, they just mentioned the male members of their families, such as father, spouse and even the employer, who is also a male. This was a common attitude between participants that they did not mention any female members of the family who provided support, advice, and consent compared to male members in particular during their decision-making period. This echoes Arat's idea (1989) that women are politicized in Turkey through the support of men in their lives and enter politics only as a result of men's authoritative backing. By highlighting the support of men in their lives, participants aim to fit into Turkey' neoliberal patriarchal society.

Throughout Turkish feminist history, although existing patriarchal norms have shown different characteristics at different periods, they always make their presence felt. For example, as previously mentioned, during the republican patriarchal period, which began with the foundation of the Turkish Republic and ended in the late 1980s with the creation of independent feminist organisations, studies note that women had to "*bargain with patriarchy*" (Kandiyoti, 1988) by showing loyalty to Kemalist reforms and the traditional roles they reproduce (Arat, 1989). That is, although women were encouraged to take up educational opportunities and assume professional roles, they were also encouraged to play traditional roles (Arat, 2012). Arat (2012) mentions that "*in private life patriarchal norms continued to be practiced, perpetuated, and legitimized, despite the formal equality granted under the civil code*" (p. 18). In this respect, it is viewed that participants' remarks and attitudes embodied patriarchy and, consequently, participated in patriarchal bargain to establish regulatory legitimacy. According

to Dornbusch and Scott (1975), validity beliefs are bolstered by authorization and endorsement. Here, the validity belief—family's acceptance of their political brands facilitates the establishment of legitimacy in politics—took place through authorisation. That is, to be accepted as professional female politicians, they had to acknowledge patriarchal norms in their private life by asking for male family members' consent to enter politics. In this regard, participants' alignment with these patriarchal norms and high respect for family showed that they conform to the state's regulations (Greenwood et al., 2002; Scott, 1995; Tost, 2011). Simultaneously, participants' acceptance of the state's policies as an authority demonstrates that they can be viewed as legitimate on regulatory grounds. Since the state encouraged women to play traditional roles (Arat, 2012), attaining regulatory legitimacy also pointed to have a level of congruence with existing cultural expectations; therefore, they are viewed as legitimate on normative grounds in the eyes of society (see further details in the Section 6.2.2. on Motherhood). Thus, both conforming to the regulatory expectations and having unquestioned normative acceptance facilitate participants' legitimacy on cognitive grounds (Humpreys and Latour, 2013; Tost, 2011).

In addition, Haack et al. (2020) state that while an entity can be valid at the collective level, the consensus between individual evaluators in the present context can be high or low. In this respect, acceptance of state policies among participants seems high. This is because by winning acceptance of their families, participants are viewed as legitimate and suitable to run for political positions at the collective level on the state's regulatory ground. Though dealing with the heavily male-dominated arena meant for participants being viewed as legitimate on relational grounds, particularly in political party context—they will be thought of as affirming the collective sense of identity and self-worth of men competitors and rivals and ensuring that they are treated with respect and receive outcomes commensurate with their entitlement (Tost,

2011)—it seems as discussed above to first strength their regulatory, cognitive and even normative level of legitimacy.

When it comes to the political party context, participants' prioritization of families' acceptance of their political brands highlights their emphasis on relational concerns. As an extension of the "*men game*" issue, participants described in detail how they and men understand politics. In this way, they provided information on the normative and relational structure of politics. These findings are reminiscent of research that demonstrate that the four legitimacy pillars are complexly interrelated and operate in conjunction with one another (see e.g., Tost, 2011; Humphreys 2010a; 2010b; Humphreys and Latour 2013; Valor et al., 2021). Hatice lucidly summarised this overlap by highlighting the male-dominated relational and normative structure of politics. She said that:

> *Us women cover many grounds in life. We are at the core of life itself; we take care of our kids, we work, we produce, and we are present at every corner of the life cycle. But when it comes to politics, when it comes to being represented, men feel threatened by women. They do not wish it to happen, they want to be the only ones to hold political posts. That is why it is extremely hard to be a woman in politics. If you look at the places men tend to perform and discuss politics, you will see that it is in male only coffee houses, or through social gatherings at night. So, being a woman, it is hard for you to get into those places anyway. (Hatice, 17 June 2018, Ankara)*

In her statement, Hatice talked about the contradictions between women's acceptance in society and politics. For her, although women are publicly visible and normatively legitimate in everyday life, they are marginalised in politics by men. She pointed to gender norms and stereotypes that impede women's collective sense of identities and threaten their sense of self-worth in politics. Interestingly, as mentioned by many participants, Hatice talked about specific places identified in politics. She explains this in detail as follows:

It is exceptionally challenging, being a political figure as a woman. You have chores to do, and your kids are looking forward for you to come home. When you get home, you wish to rest, but your children are expecting your attention. And even if your husband does not tell you directly not to skip your responsibilities at home, he says things like, "I cannot find my stuff." If you are a woman, you are always reminded of your duties at home. And as a whole society, we acknowledge this unwritten rule, so for instance, we cannot even say to our kids, "Take this up with your father." Because they want their mothers to be present. If you are a working mom, and if your responsibilities at home are not shared, in terms of pursuing politics, you are already at a great disadvantage from the start. Doing politics comes easy for men; sharing drinks, going to kahvehane (coffee houses), hosting late-at-night gatherings. Even if your family gives you the green light to join them, there are men who do not want to see you there, because they are having manly talk. But, the people want women candidates. Still it is tough to rise to places just by the support of the people. Women have to go through a sticky patch to be someone in politics, like they have to with every other thing in life. (Hatice, 17 June 2018, Ankara)

In this passage, Hatice begins by highlighting the validity belief that women's identities are tied to marriage and motherhood (Sharp and Ganong, 2011). She mentioned that women's participation in patriarchal bargaining efforts to balance expectations of a political career, with responsibilities at home figuring prominently. In this way, compared to men, women have to deal with greater challenges in gaining acceptance and advancing their political careers (Dau-Schmidt et al., 2009; Hagan and Kay, 2010). Beyond the gender stereotypes and roles (discussed in detail in the Section 6.2.2.), the participant highlights an important point that women are normatively legitimate in public spheres. In addition, she implied that society demands the presence of women in politics, a demand that legitimises women on relational grounds in the eyes of society. However, she mentioned that men always tend to dominate politics not only in the parliament but also in places and practices associated with politics. This showed that as a judgement validation institution (Bitektine and Haack, 2015), men competitors and rivals do not agree that women politicians are suitable for the political career. This means that there is a low consensus between women politicians' propriety beliefs and their

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male counterparts' propriety beliefs. This suggests that there is a difference on normative and relational grounds towards women between society's and politics' normative and relational judgement process. This leads women to make additional and even different efforts to establish legitimacy at these levels.

Hatice, firstly, provided an example of *kahvehane*, a place of socialisation for men (Gole, 1997; Suman, 1999) and *drinking alcohol*, an activity also associated with men (Wilsnack et al., 1994; Wilsnack and Wilsnack, 1997). Interestingly, night gatherings are also associated with men. This suggests that even time is considered gendered in politics. Focusing on given places and practices, we are able to provide insights into the intersection of gender and religion in the context of Turkey. According to Suman (1999), *kahvehane* represents the traditional, local and religious public sphere, whereas "*café*" which presented as the modern, universal and secular public sphere. She also added that *kahvehane* emerged as an alternative to *meyhane*, an alcohol place mainly associated with men. Although *meyhane* became a popular destination recently for women as well and tourists, particularly in the west of Turkey, *kahvehane* is known as a lower-middle-class men's space that women never go into (Suman, 1999). Since in Islam, the main principle of social order is the spatial segregation of sexes, *kahvehane* becomes the marker of the Islamic principle of spatial segregation of sexes in public spaces (Gole, 1997). This may suggest that cultural expectations comprised of intersections of gender and religion impede women's engagement with politics in *kahvehane*, therefore their legitimacy on different grounds. Secondly, drinking as a male activity suggests what Douglas (1987) calls "*constructive drinking*". According to her, drinking is viewed as a sphere of action where social groupings and identities are formed, critical social information is transferred, and inclusion and exclusion lines are drawn. In that regard, drinking alcohol—as she mentioned, "*drinking wassails*"—are forums for discussing political topics and in creating and maintaining social

relations in politics, but just for men. Thus, through storytelling which increases validity (Bitektine and Haack, 2015), Hatice demonstrated how men competitors and rivals delegitimate women politicians by questioning their families' acceptance in a male-dominated place. She went on:

> *Not directed at me specifically, no. But I heard from other women politicians that if, for example, they were to go into a place where five or so men were present, people would be quick to judge it like, "What business could a female have among so many males?" And this is not just a political stigma, we, the society at large, have traditions. For instance, in this picture, you can see that there are many men present, and it was a late night gathering, a wedding. A woman politician friend also attended this wedding, she was one female among fifteen male colleagues who were local chiefs. I have seen people frown upon her, saying, "Why would she go there? Does she not have a husband? How did he let her attend, is he not the least mad at her?" You see, female politicians have it hard. They do not think women are cut for politics. They talk the talk, saying things like females can do politics efficiently, or they make the political scene a beautiful place. Or they praise women's compassionate nature; they say that a mother's compassionate touch is needed in politics as politics is something that should be handled with affection and love, too. But whenever women try to get into places men occupy, their territories like coffee houses, they lash out saying, "What are you doing here? You should practice politics elsewhere." They give us warnings. Maybe sometimes they do not tell it to our faces, but when they criticize other women politicians for such behavior in our company, we understand what they actually mean. Inevitably, it makes you think," So, if I were to share a table with 15 or so men even at an occasion like a wedding reception, this is what they would think. (Hatice, 17 June 2018, Ankara)*

In her statement, Hatice narrated one of her friend's experiences in a wedding ceremony, where the vast majority of invitees are men. Although women politicians saw themselves as appropriate to attend the wedding ceremony as well and establish legitimacy on normative, cognitive and regulatory grounds, they faced adversity to gain their relational legitimacy. This is because, as a "*judgment validation institution*" (Bitektine and Haack, 2015, p. 51) or "*voices of the common man*" (Vaara, 2014, p. 506), men competitors and rivals' property beliefs are

not in line with the women politicians' property beliefs. In the context of participants, the validity belief is bolstered by endorsement that means men competitors and rivals as women politicians' peers have not accepted their legitimacy in the given social context. To advance our understanding of the consensus component of legitimacy (Haack et al., 2020), a high consensus is noted because the majority of evaluators are men, and they do not share the female politician's propriety belief.

Even though for participants, families' acceptance plays an important role to be legitimate in politics, it seems to delegitimise women's political brand. That is, it is known that while entering politics, women participate in patriarchal bargain and are expected to have the acceptance of their families. In this regard, when a woman is in politics, she is acknowledged in the "*use stage*" (Tost, 2011, p. 703). According to Tost (2011), when an entity is in the "*use stage*", it is no longer judged, and cognitive legitimacy is accumulated through the assimilation process. However, she stated that the use stage endures until an exogenous jolt, contradictions in the institutional field or reflexivity at the individual level trigger the mental alarm and encourage the individual evaluators to move into the judgment reassessment stage, a more effortful and deliberate approach to judge social legitimacy entity at grounds of all legitimacy pillars. As noted by institutional theorists, conflicts and contradictions can occur between and across institutional fields because assessors are simultaneously entrenched in numerous institutional fields (Greenwood and Suddaby, 2006; Hoffman, 1999; Seo and Creed, 2002). Interestingly, men competitors and rivals seem to consciously produce contradictions, thereby triggering female politicians' mental alarm. That is, men competitors and rivals force women politicians to proceed into the judgment reassessment stage from the use stage by loudly questioning the consent of their husbands and the husbands' authority on women politicians.

As a result, women may face arising questions about the nature of their selves; thus, they are exposed to the danger of losing their legitimacy on different grounds.

It was demonstrated how participants think about family legitimacy in politics and society. Although the family plays a significant role in helping participants to establish legitimacy and strengthen their image and effort, it makes participants illegitimate as well from time to time (see also the following sections on motherhood and economic support).

6.2.2. Motherhood

In Turkey's neoliberal times, the familial circle is identified as the natural locus of women (Cosar and Ozkan-Kerestecioglu, 2017; Cosar and Yegenoglu, 2011). As an extension of republican patriarchy, motherhood has a symbolic meaning as "*the correct femininity is to be the merciful and virtuous mother of the nation*" (Sirman, 2005, p. 163). In this respect, the participants mentioned that family has greater importance in their life (see the previous section). Furthermore, participants see motherhood as an issue when it comes to politics, and this is related to the irregular and long working hours culture of politics, with the heavy consequences of the conflict between work-life and family life. This is reminiscent of the finding of Armannsdottir et al., (2019a) that politics is not a "*family friendly job*" (p. 13). For example, Nuran talked about her family as follows:

> *I have three daughters, and one of them was very young when I first started. She is now 14; we can say that she was born into politics. So, this is not only about you; it is about your family as well. Because you also steal from their time. Above all else, I feel like it is eating away from the time I would spend with my husband and children. But even if they complain from time to time, as they know what it is that I wish to achieve, they are there for me. For example, if my husband did not support me to this extent, I could not do it. During political campaigns, there are times you do not get to go home for weeks; my principal home is in Ankara, so in this case I cannot go to Ankara for several weeks.*

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Even if you are in the same city, so let's say your family lives in X and you are in X, you would not be able to leave for home before 12:00 or 01:00 PM. You are not home for dinner, your children are not brought up by a caring female figure who cooks meals and sets up the table for her family. Once in a blue moon, you create the time to do just that, but it is a luxury. On the bright side, my husband takes this very positively. May Allah bless him. Because, unfortunately, in Ankara we do not have any extended family, such as a sister or in-laws; no one to provide support when needed. Thus, I strongly believe that family support is the paramount thing if a woman wants to pursue a political career. If she is married, she needs the support of her husband, because you cannot do this job if you are arguing with your partner every day. This is also true for male politicians. If your partner is always nagging you, "Why did you go there? Why are you late again? Why do you not care for us more," you cannot get somewhere in politics. (Nuran, 5 May 2018, Ankara)

Nuran highlighted her concerns about losing precious time with her children. Since politics is a highly demanding professional activity, she feels that her time in politics is their time, a time stolen from her children. Although she deals with the gendered expectations across the life course with the support of her husband, her identity remains tied to marriage and motherhood (Sharp and Ganong, 2011). It is argued that anticipated concerns about work-life balance can alter women's career pathways (Allison and Ralston, 2018). In this sense, entering such a highly demanding professional field may make women believe that it will be too difficult for them to "*do it all*" for it requires the sacrificing of career and family goals, or even both (Gayle et al., 2012; Moen, 2011). However, as seen in Nuran's passage, participants tend to find some ways in the hope to minimise politics–family conflict. For instance, she schedules family time at least once a month, where she cooks like a traditional mother and makes efforts to satisfy her family. However, she seems to have a role stress that due to the neoliberal gender regime, she is expected to educate and have a professional life without overlooking her responsibilities as a mother (Bugra, 2008; Sirman, 2005). Nilay, another participant, also talked about how she makes efforts to balance the politics-family conflict. She said that:

There was nothing wrong. First of all, for a female to act comfortably at the political scene of our country, indeed she needs the support of her family, of her husband. This support could be material, too, but rather than that it should be moral. The reason is obvious: You cannot be at home too much. Though, you may get to spend more time with your family after dedicating a certain amount of time. It is true that you may find a balance with your family life and work life after a while. But to reach that threshold, to have that peaceful harmony, you need familial support first. I had my father's, my mother's, my sibling's, and my husband's tremendous amounts of support till I came this far. My daughter had some difficult time, she was in primary school, and she was telling me, "Mom, look, all my friends' moms are working, too, but they get paid to do that. They do not even give you money, then why do you have to go?" Of course, as she was still a child, she could not wrap her head around this. I would always tell her, "I am working for you, for your future. If I can make even a trivial, simple matter better for my country, I would be more than happy." And she got used to it with time. When I had to leave, she would make sure that I was leaving for a meeting. I did good balancing the two, if I say so myself. Even when I was busy, I would make breakfast, meals, etc. To be honest, after a while it is hard to undertake all these roles, because you are only human and there is a limit to what you can do. You may definitely get a helper to take care of things at home at one point. For example, when I reached a certain stage in my political life, it started to disrupt my responsibilities at home, so I hired a housekeeper, who sometimes helped with cooking or with keeping the house in order. With her support, we got through it. (Nilay, 22 May 2018, Ankara)

Like Nuran, Nilay acknowledges that she sought acceptance from her family to deal with the difficulties in politics. She seems to carry the main responsibility for domestic work and childcare. Both Nuran and Nilay mentioned the same points when talking about the connection between politics and family. For them, not only the nuclear family support facilitates their political life, but also extended family support plays an important role. While Nuran sees the lack of support from the extended family help because they live in different cities, she appreciates their help. In addition, they seem to be in judgement formation evaluative mode. According to Tost (2011), the evaluative mode involves thorough attempts at judgment construction. Throughout this mode, the individual evaluator is actively motivated to create an

evaluation of the entity. In line with the idea that women have traditionally been family-oriented and working in a professional field is a secondary activity for them (Arat, 2012; Cosar and Yegenoglu, 2011), participants put in extra time and effort. That is, they are highly encouraged to construct a judgement. For participants, this also results in role stress. For example, Hatice said that:

> *It is exceptionally challenging, being a political figure as a woman. You have chores to do, and your kids are looking forward for you to come home. When you get home, you wish to rest, but your children are expecting you to show care towards them. And even if your husband does not tell you directly not to skip your responsibilities at home, he reminds you by saying things like, "I cannot find my stuff." If you are a woman, you are always reminded of your duties at home. And as a whole society, we acknowledge this unwritten rule, so for instance, we cannot even say to our kids, "Take this up with your father." Because they want their mothers to be present. If you are a working mom, and if your responsibilities at home are not shared, in terms of pursuing politics, you are already at a great disadvantage from the start. (Hatice, 17 June 2018, Skype)*

Role stress refers to personal brands experience stress because of their responsibilities and high expectations of their different identities (Bendisch et al., 2013). Hatice notes that she experiences role stress between her identity as a wife and mother and her identity as a professional and politician. Since all identities have high expectations, she seems squeezed between these identities. She also emphasized that politics as a profession is not family friendly.

6.2.3. Economic Security

Furthermore, participants' patriarchal bargains also emerge as an extension of economic concerns. In other words, the draining financial cost of running for political positions seems at the beginning as another reason to seek legitimacy in the family context. However, in the end, it is found that participants seek to establish patriarchal normative grounds. They acknowledged the draining cost of politics, a fact surfaced to them after they had paid the

deposits required to stand in a general election and run their campaign. In this sense, families provide a vast economic support to participants so that they run their political campaigns. For instance, Fatma explains the situation as follows:

> *I began to be politically active while working, but things started to speed up for my political career, so I had to take a break from my job. As a family, we decided it best to concentrate on politics. So, it was not my decision alone...Of course, my husband and I reached an agreement together and with the support of our children we have come this far. That is the story of how I got an active political career...Females need to be encouraged more, and this encouragement starts within the family in the first place. Men do not start to do it on a whim, too. They consult their families, get the support and approval of their wives. So, you need to get the blessing of your partner before you set off this road, and to be honest, to run for a seat at the parliament is really pricey. First, to be a candidate for nomination, you need to pay an application fee. It seems like nothing, and anyone, who has a certain amount of income, can pay it. But, things get tricky when you get nominated and start the election campaigns. You need to even get the blessings of your children, because that money is theirs, too. So, this is what I meant by support. But, if you think about it, emotional support is more important than the material support. For example, you could be a billionaire, but as neither your kids, nor your partner supports you, you may have to give up. (Fatma, 3 May 2018, Ankara)*

Like other participants mentioned before, Fatma also believed that although both women and men need family support, she stressed that women need additional support to enter politics. As money constitutes a resource constraint faced by women in politics in the wake of their resignation from paying jobs and becoming economically active. Therefore, almost by default, household budgets are used in their political pursuit. As seen in Fatma's statement, she rationalised the economic impact of her political path on her family. With this in mind, Fatma implied ever so slightly that women who fall into this situation tend to face "*internal conflict*" between their gendered family role and political brand identity. It can be assumed that she sings to the tone required by society to reach her goal, but if you listen to the base, you hear motherhood.

Moreover, although political and financial hemorrage is the main reason for family negligence, which fits into common moral practices, her reality priorities attending to her children's needs. Participants believe the *nafaka* (an Arabic word refers to that the responsible caretaker—mainly male members of the family as the husband, father, adult son—is required to maintain the basic living standards of their wives and kids after divorce; however, participants utilise the word in the context of the daily expenses of their children, such as *aka rizq* "*expenditures*") is far more important than their political career. With respect to the previous explanations, before entering politics, Fatma stated the importance to perform *helalleşmek*, a ritual derived from the Islamic practice *haliliny*, which constitutes a passive abdication of one's rights with no future judgment in the divine court. Despite the participants' reference to these Islamic phrases in relation to their belief, it does not seem that there is a direct intersection between gender and religion regarding the participants' individual legitimacy judgment. Religion seems to indirectly intersect with gender. That is, Islam is considered as a religion that strengthens gender differences by granting men preeminence and authority over women in inheritance, financial matters, marriage and divorce (Kazemi, 2000). Hence, the gender discrimination experienced by women in Muslim majority societies has often been attributed to Islam (Kazemi, 2000). However, in the context of Turkey, an officially secular country with a Muslim majority, religion is not a major obstacle to professional women (O' Neil and Bilgin, 2013). In the case of Turkey, regardless of the religiosity of people, Islam's traditions have historically formed society's national culture, and these traditions are transferred to the society as a whole mainly through nationwide institutions even to those that are not associated with religious institutions (Inglehart and Baker, 2000). This proved that patriarchal norms go beyond the confines of Islam's direct effect (Kazemi, 2000). In this regard, participants are viewed as valid and legitimate on normative grounds since they conformed to society's religious and gendered patriarchal norms.

6.3. Negotiations

This study found that leaders' support and participants' gendered and aged identity facilitate participants' legitimacy on different grounds. They negotiate with competitors and rivals through leaders' authorisation and their age. This section presents the negotiations of participants.

6.3.1. Leader Authorisation

Leaders' support plays an essential role in political products (Davies and Mian, 2010). According to Tost (2011), authorisation provides evidence that an entity has been judged to be legitimate. An authority's views and assessments affect individual evaluators' subjective validity beliefs and play an important role in constructing validity (Haack et al., 2020; Johnson, 2004). This study's results show that as high-status actors, the approval and support of leaders are important validity sources for participants' brand legitimacy. Since regulatory legitimacy represents a form of authorisation, leaders' authority facilitates the regulatory acceptance of the participants' brand (Tost, 2011). Canan talked about leaders' support as follows:

> *Throughout my time as a parliamentarian, I was never discriminated against based on my sex. To be honest, I was both liked and respected by my male colleagues. We accomplished many things together and I think our President plays a huge part in this. Our President protects women. ... I am telling you that we may not become parliamentarians. Because men are very fixated on this...May Allah bless our President; he protects us. Right now, in X, he put women in high places, as well. That is because he values women; he loves his mother, he cherishes his wife. Like I said, such a man who treasures his mother and wife is bound to value all women. (Canan, 22 May 2918, Ankara)*

Canan points out the aggression of men competitors and rivals. In the face of her brand's marginalisation and stigmatisation by men peers, Canan feels strong with her leaders' approval. Interestingly, while she explains the leader's support, she points to the leaders' relationship

with his mother and his wife. This echoes Turkey's public gender regime, which is collectivist and family-centered (Cosar and Yegenoglu, 2011). As mentioned earlier, Walby (2020) distinguishes between public and domestic gender regimes and between social democratic and neoliberal kinds of public gender regimes. Turkey's public gender regime is identified in the neoliberal form of public gender regime, which borrows from the republican, religious and liberal patriarchy (Kocabicak, 2020). The recent mode of neoliberal forms of public patriarchy, which is characterised by the Justice and Development Party (AKP), on the one hand, is in interaction with the women's movement liberally; on the other hand, it is in line with its conservative approach to womanhood which is formed first and foremost by the familial sphere on the basis of a nationalist religious understanding (Cosar and Yegenoglu, 2011). This gender regime reflects the burden of social difficulties on the shoulders of women as well as the family, which is an important unit for creating social integration and managing social risks (Yarar, 2020).

Furthermore, Speed et al., (2015) noted that there is a perception that the leader has authority to rule over the party and deliver on the policies being advocated. They mentioned that political leaders play an important role in constructing the party's policy platform, thereby they tend to internalise and represent the policy commitments of their party. Therefore, Turkey's neoliberal gender regime is perceived to be in line with Canan's political party leaders' behaviours and attitudes. In this way, her brands' status is granted by a high-status actor, which shows her source of validity is authorisation. As Haack et al. (2020) indicated that in this situation of which Canan seems to be aware, there is a high validity and low consensus situation, that is, although she is strongly supported by an authority, she is not approved by peers and there is a significant dissent occurs between other individual evaluators regarding the legitimating her personal political brand. This suggests that she lacks relational legitimacy.

Indeed, for her, women gain some level of relational legitimacy through traditional gender roles, such as those of the *mother* or *sister*. However, this relational legitimacy seems "*inherently fragile*" (Haack et al., 2020, p. 2) and "*bipolar*" (Ibid, p. 18), meaning that it ranges from propriety to impropriety (Hudson, 2008; Suddaby et al., 2017). That is, in case a female files candidacy for a deputy, men competitors and rivals' disapproval surfaces. Interestingly, when a woman decides to enter the parliament, there is a shift in men evaluators' propriety beliefs from treating women with dignity and respect as a mother or sister to looking at them as inadequate and unqualified because of traditional gender roles. In addition to relational legitimacy, participants' cognitive legitimacy seems to be affected. Cognitive legitimacy refers to the absence of questions about or challenges to a legitimacy object (Tost, 2011). Thus, men competitors and rivals raise questions about the nature of women politicians. Participants are forced to feel like they do not belong to politics. By voicing traditional gender roles, men discredit the taken-for-granted quality of women politicians; in so doing, the participants' cognitive legitimacy is damaged.

However, with the support and approval of the leader, she demonstrates her loyalty to both the leader and the neoliberal public gender regime. In other words, she participates in the patriarchal bargain by situating herself in line with the leader and neoliberal gender regime in order to establish regulatory legitimacy. Through the spillover effect, they are more likely to establish cognitive legitimacy.

Leaders' authority in the context of the participants also emerged in relation to traditional gender roles. As noted above, leaders' relationships with their wives and mothers are used as validity cues to establish legitimacy in the eyes of men competitors and rivals. This suggests that participants encourage other evaluators to be in a passive mode. For Tost (2011), being in the passive mode—not engaging in robust information-processing activities—means that

individual evaluators either utilise validity cues as cognitive shortcuts to reaching a legitimacy judgment or passively presume legitimacy entity attain some level of legitimacy in particular normative level. Therefore, in the passive mode of legitimacy judgement process, leaders' authority as validity cue drives judgements of participants' generalised legitimacy.

In contrast to men competitors and rivals' bipolar propriety beliefs on traditional gender roles, participants tend to protect their brands through the leader's authority. They openly declare the approval and support of the leader:

> *Yes, with the foundation of our party, with the offer to join them in founding this party, I became one of the female founding members of my party. This offer came directly from our current President, the leader of our party. To tell you the truth, I had not really thought about going into politics till then...Being the founding chairman of such a committee made me ecstatic. After the end of my term there, our now President, then Prime Minister, told me that I must not be a parliamentarian, and that as long as I did not become one, he would offer me a new position. He explained that if I were to become a parliamentarian, I would not spare enough time to perform my duties at the new post. Actually he had a really nice point. But, to this day, people keep making the same mistake. They think they can do everything simultaneously simply by allocating their time, but it is not any easy matter. So, he appointed me as the head of the women's branch. (Nur, 2 June 2018, Ankara)*

In addition, although Turkey's neoliberal gender regime borrows from Islamic patriarchy, which implies the intersection of gender and religion, as seen in Canan's statement above, many participants demonstrate their gratitude to the religious notions. To name a few: *Allah razi olsun!* (May Allah bless him), *Thanks Allah we have him*. Similarly, Fatma said that:

> *For me, politics is a duty. I was given this duty by our leader, and I see it as a mission entrusted to me now. I am a person who sees every task that has been assigned to her through to the finish; it is in my nature. After all this is a relay race. You undertake a mission. Politics is not an occupation; it is a duty. (Fatma, 3 May 2018, Ankara)*

Fatma mentioned the Islamic concept of *amanah*, meaning trust, loyalty, faithfulness, integrity, and honesty. In doing so, she seems to build an intimate relationship with the leader (high validity). As indicated by Speed et al. (2015), personal brands are organisational actors and have authority meaning that they have the ability to make promises on behalf of the organisation. That is, by looking at the duty as *amanah*, she attributes a religious meaning to her brand, which also seems to strengthen her authority. As seen in Fatma's statement, using these notions also strengthen their loyalty to the leader. It makes more visible their gender and religion intersected identity. As religion is an important institution behind social norms, values and beliefs in Turkey (Arat, 2012; Cosar and Yegenoglu, 2011; Kandiyoti, 1988), acting in accordance with the neoliberal gender regime through leaders' authority leads to the establishment of normative legitimacy on the part of participants. Thus, through leader authority, another patriarchal bargain indirectly takes place between participants and society.

6.3.2. Age (Peer Endorsement)

Men competitors and rivals' endorsements also facilitate evaluators' validity beliefs (Dornbush and Scott, 1975). In cases where participants' peers have accepted their brands' legitimacy, participants feel less threatened in politics. This points to high validity/high consensus condition or high validity/consensus congruity, which means that a valid legitimacy object can be established by a substantial adherence to propriety beliefs (Haack et al., 2020). Thus, it is found that participants acknowledge traditional gender roles in order to establish their relational legitimacy. This section showed that the intersection of gender and age plays an important role in relation to bargaining with patriarchy.

As mentioned earlier, the neoliberal gender regime of Turkey identified the familial frame as the natural and main locus of women (Cosar and Yegenoglu, 2017). Women's attributed roles

as the housework, that is, acting as wives and mothers in the patriarchal traditional sense, are considered primary. As an extension of the republican context, motherhood, or "*the correct femininity*", had a symbolic meaning, which is "*to be the merciful and virtuous mother of the nation*" (Sirman, 2005, p. 163). In this respect, it is found that many participants use their motherhood and terms like *abla* (elder sister). Nuran provides a comparison between a young and an old female politician:

> *Of course, your age gives you an advantage. I am 51 years old. Let's say I was 25 or 30, I would not have it this easy then. Because when I enter a room now, I am either of the same age with many or older by a great margin. For some of them, I am even old enough to be their mothers. So, this brings you a considerable amount of weight. Being older, or being married, for instance, protects women and enforces her hand. (Nuran, 5 May 2018, Ankara)*

In comparing a young female candidate to an older candidate, Nuran mentioned that being married, a mother and an ageing woman privilege a female politician. Although it seems normal in Turkey's gender regime, which prioritises traditional gender roles and attributes such roles to women, it is interesting, especially that it has been argued that being an ageing woman is problematic in politics (Armannsdottir et al., 2019a; Sanghvi and Hodges, 2015; Sanghvi, 2019). However, participants describe their brand identity as an elder person who is called as a *mother* and *abla*. Through the intersection of gender and age, they are treated with respect, dignity, and status within the group context and through group membership (Tyler and Lind, 1992). Thus, they establish both relational and normative legitimacy.

Men consider themselves superior, more powerful and competent than women, often apply double standards to judge women (Uscinski and Goren, 2011). They are opposite to the female leadership (Okimoto and Brescoll, 2010; Uscinski and Goren, 2011). In cases where a woman come to power and attain a position, men tend to criticise women for their competence,

character and appearance (Falk, 2010; Okimoto and Brescoll, 2010; Uscinski and Goren, 2011). For example, Dittmar (2012) stated that political campaigns are mainly gendered because gender both has an important role in specifying candidates' political expectations and performance and also affects the strategic evaluations and psyche of all who attended the campaign process. In this sense, he suggested that to target voters, women are frequently required to take roles outside of theirs as mothers and daughters to engage with the public in ways not often linked with their gender (Dittmar, 2012). According to this study's findings, if women behave against traditional gender roles, they may run the risk of being perceived as illegitimate on normative grounds. As this section's main focus is to understand how participants and their peers' negotiations to establish legitimacy on different levels, it appears that acting outside of their conscripted roles as *mothers* and *ablas* also runs the risk of being considered illegitimate on relational grounds. They seem to choose not to reveal their propriety beliefs by accepting traditional gender roles in fear of social sanctions because they perceive they represent a minority in politics. In this sense, Canan reflects on an indelible experience to demonstrate how she became comfortable in politics:

> *I am an engineer. I am the head of the committee at the X. A law was being made, and I was well-prepared. I accentuated all the right parts, and gave a great speech on it. A minister came up to me and said, "Lady, I heard that you were an engineer, is that true?" It has been two years since my post. I replied to him, "Yes, I am an engineer. But you always knew me as a mother." Now I see the benefits of that. Because as they no longer regard you as a female, you can act comfortably around them. What I mean is that as your identity as a mother, as an older sister becomes more pronounced, they do not treat you as they would any other woman. It made me feel comfortable. There is that. (Canan, 22 May 2018, Ankara)*

Canan's statement above shows that she created her own comfort zone in politics by making visible her identity as a *mother* and an *abla* over other identities. It seems that while being just a woman is seen as dangerous and at some point powerful by men competitors and rivals, by

emphasising gender and aged identity as a *mother* and an *abla*, Canan minimizes her power. In

this sense, she promotes her gendered and aged identity by emphasising traditional gender roles

to protect her brand. Canan went on as follows:

> *I had it easy. I was old enough. When I first entered politics, which was 9 or 10 years ago, I was 46-ish. So, as I was a mother or a big sister figure for them, they treated me as such. And I did not face any troubles in Ankara for being a woman, because everyone called me sister. They respected me. And in the district that I was working, similarly I have not had any trouble. I was always seen as a mother or sister figure. (Canan, 22 May 2018, Ankara)*

Like Canan, Nilay and Asiye stated that being treated as a *mother* or an *abla* protects them

from facing a high level of competition. For them, using traditional gender roles as a tool to

protect their personal brand is also associated with certain personality traits. In doing so, they

even seem to strengthen their traditional gender roles and create a strong effect on their peers,

so that ensure they are not to be marginalised and discriminated against. Nilay stated that:

> *I think this has something to do with my character. When I was part of X's city staff, or when I was working elsewhere, or even at the parliament, people hardly ever called me Mrs. They generally called me big sister. People younger than me naturally called me as such, and it gave me great pleasure as I really like this way of addressing. And after time even people older than me addressed me as a big sister. I really enjoyed it. The reason why I am telling you this is that by nature I am an affectionate, caressive, and nurturant. The others run far away from men, but I make human contacts with them. I ask the young, "Son, how are you?" or "How is your day going?" and so on. I think this is the reason why. I do not shy away from having physical contact with them. When I talk to them, I look into their eyes; I embrace them. And I really do not mind people calling me big sister. (Nilay, 22 May 2018, Ankara)*

Like Nilay, Asiye emphasises her personality because she is a mum. She said that:

> *I was talking to them as their mothers, or sisters would, and this comforted them. When they came to visit next time, they were less aggressive, less hostile. They treated me with more respect, they were*

more level-headed and tender. If you treat people with kindness and reassurance, whether it be at the political scene or in the social, civilian life, you are bound to be liked. They appreciate these characteristics in me; they tell me I am calm, that I make meaningful conversation with them, and that I never look down on them. Some say that politicians have several personas; the way they behave changes once off camera. When they see that I do not change and I am genuine, they understand that I am one of them. They like me, and they also respect my boundaries. (Asiye, 1 June 2018, Bursa)

In their statements cited above, Canan, Nilay and Asiye implied that how the use of their gendered and aged political brand identity eased negotiation with men competitors and rivals. For them, being a *mother* and an *abla* seems to hinder the marginalisation of and discrimination against women because of their social identity dimensions' intersection. They acknowledged the traditional gender roles of high validity and high consensus, which can be used to negotiate with other individual evaluators. In doing so, they conformed to the validity and, as a result, gained status and respect in the eyes of men competitors and rivals. Thus, their patriarchal bargain results in both strengthening regulatory legitimacy and gaining relational legitimacy.

6.4. Communications

Both online and offline communication tools are important for personal political brands (Armannsdottir et al., 2019a; Marland and Wagner, 2019; Pich et al., 2020). It is also important when it comes to establishing legitimacy, as stated by Haack et al. (2020), to note that quality social interaction and trustful communication between individual evaluators play a key role in disclosing the existed consensus within a reference group. In this respect, this study found that participants use both online and offline platforms to communicate their identity and establish legitimacy. The majority of politicians utilised online platforms for communicating and establishing legitimacy, though they were not active users. Many participants mentioned that they use their online platforms themselves. For example, Nuran stated that:

> *I manage them myself. I make an effort to use my own words when I am sharing something concerning my friends, and my emotions. But, the posts detailing the current events we hold, or the things that we do, are shared through our friends' accounts. (Nuran, 5 May 2018, Ankara)*

Similarly, Fatma added that:

> *In terms of social media management, there is no way we can keep up with all of them by ourselves. You see, there are times when we cannot even cast a quick glance at the newspapers. So, my adviser follows the social media content and they share posts for me. (Fatma, 3 May 2018, Ankara)*

Both Nuran and Fatma mentioned that because of their busy agenda, they are not able to follow their social media accounts. However, Nuran said that when she needs to share emotional messages, she prefers to post them herself. Other informative messages are shared by their consultants or assistants. Hatice, another participant, talked about her busy agenda and home responsibilities, explaining when it has become a challenge for her:

> *We started working in an instant; if I had professional help, that would be so much better. Because then I would not have to worry about it. When I go home, which is the only time I have to check my social media accounts, my two kids are there waiting for me. So, the next morning I get up extra early and leave for work. Actually, I might think about getting professional help next time, because my work would be much easier. This would support us. So, professional help would definitely conceive benefits. (Hatice, 17 June 2018, Skype)*

According to Hatice, time limitations on the election and her responsibilities hindered her use of online communication tools effectively. For her, dealing with online communication created role stress. She believes that professional help may ease the burden of responsibility and relax her tight schedule.

Rather than differentiating their brands by sharing personal posts, many participants prefer to share their political party's message. This echoes Marland and Wagner's argument (2019) that

candidates and legislators are anxious that they will be on the wrong side of social platforms; therefore, they secure protection by sticking to the party's messages. Zeynep mentioned that:

> *Mrs. Ayse is already responsible for managing both personal and institutional social media accounts: the Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter accounts of our youth branch, women's branch and head office. The institution that makes use of social media the most must be ours. If we cannot make our voices heard in mainstream media, we go to local media; if we cannot find ourselves a spot on TV channels or printed press, we use social media platforms...So, we make our voices heard. (Zeynep, 7 June 2018, Ankara)*

By comparing her party to other political parties, she mentioned that she and her political party use online communication tools effectively, thus demonstrating strong party discipline. As noted by Marland and Wagner (2019), sticking to the party's message may stifle a sense of individuality and highlight the difficulty of developing personal political brands. In this respect, Meral's personal political brand seems to be negatively affected. Similarly, Hacer stated that:

> *There are social platforms that we use extensively, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. And we are going through a risky period. So, we pay attention to share posts that are created by our Social Communication Centres (SCCs). We do that to present a united front, and to prevent sharing a sensitive content by accident. Like I mentioned, our power base is composed of people with mixed backgrounds. There are things that may sound wrong for some of them; so we really need to analyse carefully the posts we share. That is why we generally follow the guidance of the SCCs. (Hacer, 22 April 2018, Bursa)*

Hacer explicitly highlights the importance of communication cohesion. She expresses that party members can easily be on the wrong side of their political party's position. Thus, she mentioned that they are strict with regard to their online communication style. Marland and Wagner (2019) argued that politicians are expected to express little philosophical difference with their political party. Thus, being on message, highlighting communication cohesion and demonstrating a strong level of party discipline may facilitate personal political brands

regulatory legitimacy. As the political party is endowed with authority, such authority increases participants' sense of perceived authority.

Participants were also concerned about their normative legitimacy in relation to online communication platforms. Many participants mentioned that they do not believe in online platforms and have a fear of misunderstanding or an unsympathetic attitude on the parts of people. Participants' perception is not just limited to online communication platforms. While talking about communication channels in general, Filiz stated that she does not trust online tools and continue to use traditional media platforms:

> *For example, let's say that you are being interviewed by a newspaper today, and they will publish the interview the next day. When you look at the newspaper tomorrow, you see that they printed a really old picture of you, which does not even look like your current self. But they try to justify it saying things like, "I used the old one because it is such a nice photograph." This may sound like a small issue, but look at it this way: the photograph is showing you enjoying your tea, but it is the Ramadan season. So, people criticize you. And they know that normally I am someone who fulfils the practices obligated by our religion. But, the message gets totally lost because of that one photograph. They tell you that they did it for aesthetic purposes, so there is really nothing to say to that. And what is done is already done. If you do not have the power to change it, you may get mistreated, too. And right now in Turkey, the TV channels keep showing the same people, and repeating the same news. Newspapers are like this, as well. So, you really do not wish to be a part of a choir. (Filiz, 21 May 2018, Ankara)*

Media is known as the robust platform for political marketing activities, which can effectively form the context in which other constituencies interpret political activities (Henneberg and O'Shaughnessy, 2007). In this respect, Filiz indicates that media can portray people in different ways. Since she is not able to control media platforms, she does not trust them either. As she does Ramadan—the month of fasting between sunrise and sunset for Muslims—she becomes anxious as to whether to be viewed acting outside society's religious norms. According to

Milewicz and Milewicz (2014), media can enhance the normative legitimacy of political branding tactics and strategies and further legitimize the practices in society. However, it can also delegitimise personal political brands, as seen in Filiz's example. Nuran provides more insights than Filiz into this. She said that:

> *I believe that you need to create balance. If a politician relies on social media platforms in an exaggerated manner, and the communication they form through them, that kind of an approach would hurt them in the end. On the other hand, you need to let your power base and the leadership of the party know the things that you are doing. In other words, you need to be visible and accessible. But, people of conservative stance do not feel right advertising the stuff they may happen, because they do those only to gain Allah's favour. So, this perspective is adopted both by the government and a certain amount of politicians in our country. On the other side of the coin, people of secular convictions usually disclose their good deeds to the press. But, we are especially sensitive when it comes to certain topics, like expressing our condolences, or about the help we provide to the poor. We hit the brakes on social media if the matter at hand is private. We do not share many photographs, or talk about it to other people. However, we see from others that even the smallest helping hand is extended by hosting grandiose events, by making it known to the general public. The conservatives do these kinds of things behind the curtains, if you will. But, of course, if I were to pay an official visit to a governmental institution like a ministry to solve a problem my city is going through, I want it to be known by the residents, by the electors for sure. I share a post saying, "I am here today to solve this problem." You can do that thanks to social media. Before such means of communication were invented, it was not easy to reach out to people, to get to them. But right now, you can effortlessly share your activities through such platforms as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. And when you go back to your city after your official visits, people walk up to you and ask how it went, they communicate. This brings value to your local presence in terms of politics. (Nuran, 5 May 2018, Ankara)*

Nuran highlights the importance of framing communication in social media. She believes that using intensely only online communication channels are not appropriate. However, she thinks also it is an essential tool to illustrate her achievements to voters and her competitors and rivals. She views online communication platforms as a showing area. In that way, she seems to build

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high consensus in society and politics. As noted by Johnson (2004), others' perspectives and assessments play an essential role in constructing validity. Since society is one of judgement validation systems, such as the judicial system, media or the "*voices of the common man*" (Vaara, 2014, p. 506), Nuran is aware of the importance of using online communication tools to establish legitimacy at different levels. For her, to illustrate her political achievements to her competitors and rivals, which pointed out peer endorsement. In this respect, peer endorsement, which bolsters the validity, make her appear not only legitimate on relational grounds but also appropriate.

Furthermore, she presents a different approach to the use of online communication platforms. Religion emerged as an important identity category in her online communication strategy. By pointing to ideological differences, she mentions that conservative people engage in politics for *Allah* (see Section 5.2.1.); consequently, they avoid sharing posts when they distribute aid to vulnerable people or express their condolences. She mentions that these political activities are *mahram* (private) for them as opposed to seculars. In this respect, she seems to follow her political party's ideology and have a strong communication cohesion, demonstrating her values and beliefs clearly. Since there is a high consensus between the political party and her own propriety beliefs, her personal brand seems to be effective, with its own autonomy and authority. In addition, she is aware of the importance of regular interactions, for they ensure connection between consumers and personal brands and help create the conditions under which an attachment is likely to grow between them (Thomson, 2006). Specifically, she believes that online communication tools connect her brand to local politics, so that she is viewed normatively legitimate in the eyes of conservative people. Communicating on the party's message and demonstrating a high level of party discipline facilitate her regulatory legitimacy, and with the spillover affect, her cognitive legitimacy may increase at the same time.

Media plays an essential role in developing cognitive and normative legitimacy (Humphreys and Latour, 2013). Milewicz and Milewicz (2014) illustrate this point of view in political branding, noting that media can increase the level of political brands' normative legitimacy. However, since media impacts the complexity of branding (Holt, 2002), it can also present challenges for political brands (Pich et al., 2018). My participants demonstrate a high perception that although media is effective for self-expression, it affects them negatively and, as a result, prefer not to use it and have a message instead. For example, Filiz talked about media as follows:

> *It is really bad. For example, I have not been accepting the offers coming from TV stations in a long time, because they always do the same things. The melody is the same, only the lyrics change from time to time. And they want you to show up at a program only to make you fight with others who attend. Or you talk to a journalist, and they twist your words in a way that you cannot even recognise them as your own. They are not good for self expression. I am already very open to conversation; I talk to everyone who calls. This is why I find social media pointless. I have a Twitter account, but I do not use it very often. I learned that if you are a politician, you need to use social media as an official gazette. Because, you can never get it right: If you share a picture of you smiling, people reply back saying, "The country is in tatters, and you have the nerve to smile." or you share a picture of you with a serious face and they reply back, "Who would vote for you if you wear such a long face all the time?" There is a popular saying in Anatolia that goes: "If they invite us, we will not go. But if they do not, we will be offended." It has the same reasoning. So, I treat it like an official gazette; post some things, and be done with it. (Filiz, 21 May 2018, Ankara)*

Filiz mentions that media platforms, such as TV and newspapers, portray politicians differently. To avoid being portrayed differently, she avoids media platforms and even online communication tools. Rather than using media and online communication tools, she prefers saying nothing. As noted by Marland and Wagner (2019), sticking to message lines provided by political parties or saying noting is considered safer for politicians. In this respect, Filiz seems to protect herself from falling into the wrong side of society's norms and beliefs, and, in

so doing, she seems to protect her level of normative legitimacy. This also shows that there is no consensus between media and her propriety. Haack et al. (2020) point out that in the absence of interaction and communication, individuals silence their propriety beliefs which are not congruent with the validity. However, the situation is rather complex as could be seen from participants' individual-level legitimacy judgement (see e.g., Filiz's statement above). That is, on the one hand, she believes that her propriety beliefs and society's validity beliefs are in line with each other, meaning that she is legitimate on normative grounds. On the other hand, her propriety beliefs and media's validity beliefs do not harmonise with each other. In this respect, she is aware of the media's impacts on shaping the context in which society interpret political activity or even brand identities. Thus, she prefers to be silent on online communication platforms and media. However, in contrast to the view held by Haack et al. (2020), she does not think that she is silencing her propriety beliefs and has a silenced personal brand in the eyes of society. Similarly, this contradicts Thomson's findings (2006) that ensuring regular online interaction will have a positive effect on the interaction between personal brands and consumers, creating a strong attachment between them. Since media and online communication platforms threaten participants' normative legitimacy, she avoids using them to protect her legitimacy level. Yet, she prefers to use these channels formally.

In her statement, instead of these channels, she highlights the importance of offline communications, for they eliminate the barriers and challenges presented by media platforms. She mentioned that she is also approachable by phone, thereby ensuring regular interaction with voters and citizens. Canan also mentioned that:

> *I do not use social media; I believe in one-on-one communication. I do not think highly of the TV programs, either. For example, when I show up in a program on TV, it achieves high ratings, because I do that only occasionally, when I feel like it is the right time. It may be because I need to talk about something, or something happened concerning me,*

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and the press is pressuring me. Then I participate in programs and give my side of the event. I believe myself to be a charismatic person, so I can handle these kinds of things. I do not have a hard time explaining myself. I am confident in this sense. (Canan, 22 May 2018, Ankara)

Like Filiz, Canan expresses explicitly that she does not believe in both online communication channels and media. Although she is self-confident in expressing herself on TV, she just prefers to join media in cases when there is an important issue to talk about, or she is under the pressure of media. She believes instead in face to face communication. Nuran also mentioned that:

Face-to-face communication is essential. I do not think you can talk about communication, if it is not face-to-face. I know that there are people who make use of social media, but we prefer to sit down with people and talk to them in person. If we make mistakes, if people wish to change anything about us, they tell us; if we think they are wrong to say or do something, we discuss it with them. But, we do that in a warm atmosphere. Being together in one place brings about a greater effect. In terms of politics, face-to-face communication is significant. (Nuran, 5 May 2018, Ankara)

Nuran mentioned that face to face communication guarantees an interactive process between participants, voters and citizens. It is known that off the record conversations are effective in motivating the revealing of silenced propriety beliefs (Canales, 2016). In addition, meaningful interactions facilitate trust between individuals (Cook et al., 2009). Thus, Nuran utilises "*off the record*" conversations to build trust with the individuals. In this regard, Haack et al. (2020) argued that in cases where the communication and interaction between group members are weak, individual evaluators may not understand others' propriety beliefs. By communicating and interacting efficiently, Nuran aims to present her propriety beliefs clearly and guarantee that she is understood by voters and citizens.

Participants highlighted the key role played by word-of-mouth in enhancing communication. For example, Filiz noted that:

I do not think they are the right means. For instance, I believe in the power of the grapevine. If you think about it, that is what truly makes the difference. If you meet the right people, who would speak highly of you, you would get better results. (Filiz, 21 May 2018, Ankara)

Since Filiz does not have trust in communication channels, in particular media and online platforms, she believes in the word-of-mouth instead. The word-of-mouth is effective in consumer decision making and behaviour (Richins and Root-Shaffer, 1988). In word-of-mouth situations, trust is perceived as more credible (Silverman, 1997). In this respect, she spoke of the interaction with *true* people. This is reminiscent of Marland and Wagner's work (2019) that characterised candidates and legislators as brand ambassadors who should repeat the party's message specifically in online communication channels so that they are viewed as authentic. Although in their study, politicians and legislators are characterised as brand ambassadors, my participants seem to approach some voters and citizens the same way as brand ambassadors. She expects the *true* people to pass her brand from person to person, but she relies on their initiative, which cannot be controlled.

Moreover, while talking about communication in politics and participants' own way of communication and interaction, the category of age identity surfaced frequently, yet implicitly. Yasemin mentioned that:

Getting support from your party is truly important. For example, my political party has a successful coordination group that manages social media accounts. The group is composed of young people; youngsters know how to do social media well. I am only average at social media even though I followed a certificate program to get better at it. I realised that I do not like being active on it. But, during the election campaign, I froze my previous account, and opened up a new one. I used Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook; especially Facebook. (Yasemin, 21 May 2018, Ankara)

Participants stated that young people are more likely to use online communication channels. For example, as seen in her statement, Yasemin's political party's social medial coordination

team is constituted of young people. Although she made efforts to use online communication channels effectively, she was not comfortable with it. Like Yasemin, many participants stated that the party's youth, including young politicians and legislators, use social media regularly and effectively. In this respect, they pointed that online communication channels, particularly social media, are not appropriate for their age.

Pich et al. (2020) point out that personal political brands should actively engage with local communities to build presence and maintain it as well as have recognition and visibility. They also mention that being close to the local community can raise personal political brands' approachability, awareness and relatability. In this respect, ethnicity arises as an important intersectional identity category used to engage with the local community. Nuran stated that:

> *For me it was X, and it has a big difference from other cities in Turkey. Maybe Bursa can be likened to X in this sense but it receives a large number of immigrants. For example, you may see people from the Black Sea region, and you may see Circassians together there. But how can you communicate with them in the same way? And I do not say this because they have different vernacular styles. I mean how can you treat them, approach them the same way? You have to make modifications taking into consideration the ethnic differences. For example, people from the Black Sea region are warmer, more affectionate people. You hug them, embrace them; this is how you form bonds with them. On the other hand, you need to be more diplomatic with Circassians. If you know your city well, you would not run into surprises. It is essential to be familiar with such nuances. Or else, if a person were to behave cold, you might blame yourself, but it is just part of who that person is, their identity. Similarly, you cannot be startled when someone hugs you out of nowhere as Black Sea region people express themselves through physical contact. So, after some time you learn not to be astonished. (Nuran, 5 May 2018, Ankara)*

Nuran begins her statement by expressing her city's multi-ethnic structure. She states that each ethnicity has different characteristics, and according to such characteristics, there arise different communication styles. Specifically, she points out differences during face-to-face interactions.

While she identifies people from the Black sea region—which consists of various ethnicities––as sincere and communicate by touch, she views Circassians as formal in their communication style. In this respect, she highlights being aware of these different ethnicities' characteristics play a key role in her communication and interactions. By being familiar with her election district, her own city, she feels prepared to communicate and interact in accordance with the requirements of different ethnic groups. Thus, she can communicate and interact more effectively and affect individuals' propriety beliefs. By affirming the self-worth of each ethnicity, she seems to facilitate her relational legitimacy and that she can be viewed as approachable and relatable. Therefore, she also establishes her normative legitimacy. Moreover, Humphreys and Latour (2013) argued that cognitive legitimacy occurs throughout the legitimation processes and facilitates or impedes the normative level of legitimacy. In the context of my participants, cognitive legitimacy seems to occur throughout the relational and normative legitimation process. Thus, being aware of different ethnicities' characteristics can break communication barriers, ease the building of close relationships between personal political brands and their voters and citizens, meaning that personal political brands can be viewed as legitimate on relational, normative and cognitive grounds.

6.5. Conclusion

This chapter investigated how professional female politicians leverage their identities to construct their personal political brand. In doing so, this chapter considered the transfer potential of brand legitimacy to the management and communication of personal political brands. This chapter outlined that professional female politicians legitimise their personal political brands through their relationships, negotiations and communications. Given that legitimacy is an ongoing, multi-level and dynamic process (Bitektine and Haack, 2015; Haack et al., 2020), this chapter has highlighted that the development of politicians' brand legitimacy

is also a process. Within this process, politicians' relationship with their families is revealed as the first stage of their legitimisation. Within the context of Turkey, family relationships facilitate their legitimacy on regulatory, normative and cognitive grounds. In the second stage, this chapter highlighted the importance of negotiations of politicians with the leader and their competitors and rivals. As a result of the new presidential system of Turkey, leader authorisation emerges as an important attribute required by personal political brands. For participants, having their competitors' and rivals' endorsement means attaining their legitimacy on different grounds. Consequently, the chapter provided insights into the communication of professional female politicians' personal political brand identity. This chapter also highlighted that politicians legitimise their brands through intersections of multiple identity dimensions. In addition to gender, religion and ethnicity, this chapter emphasised the importance of age. Moreover, this chapter provided insights into understanding how professional female politicians apply their individual level legitimacy judgment in the world of politics. In doing so, this chapter blended the management and communication of professional female politicians' brand desired identities with the concept of legitimacy. The final chapter will now conclude this thesis.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1. Introduction

The previous two chapters presented findings obtained from the interviews. Chapter 5 focused on the construction of professional female politicians' brand identity through the intersection of multiple identity categories, in particular gender, religion, and ethnicity in the context of Turkish politics. Chapter 6 focused on professional female politicians brand legitimacy process.

This chapter discusses the main findings emerging from the empirical analysis (Chapters 5–6) in relation to the presented literature review chapters (Chapters 2–3). In doing so, the chapter summarises key arguments, contributions and implications, and highlights further research avenues. The chapter is structured as follows: First, the research questions previously outlined are reiterated and specifically addressed in respective sections. These sections outline core findings in relation to the construction and legitimation process of personal political brand identity. Second, the chapter summaries the thesis, outlining three core contributions with regard to theory, managerial and methods. A discussion of further research avenues follows, and the chapter closes with a brief section on reflexivity.

7.2. Research Questions

The research questions addressed in this thesis revolve around the previous topics: political branding, personal branding and intersectional feminist approach. These questions go as follows:

1) How do multiple identity categories, in particular gender, ethnicity, and religion, intersect to construct the identity of professional female politicians in the context of Turkish politics? (addressed in chapter 5)

2) How do professional female politicians leverage their identities to construct their personal political brand? (addressed in chapters 6)

The following sections discuss how the thesis addressed these research questions.

7.2.1. Research Question 1

How do multiple identity categories, in particular gender, ethnicity, and religion, intersect to construct the identity of professional female politicians in the context of Turkish politics?

As this study employed an intersectional lens to understand the construction of professional female politicians' brand identity, key themes built around intersections of multiple identity dimensions, in particular gender, ethnicity and religion were addressed. The research findings revealed five broad themes related to the construction of the identity of professional female politicians in the context of Turkish politics. These key themes emerged from the findings and showed that a professional female politician brand identity includes 1- legacy, 2- experiences, 3- personality and values, 4- resilience and 5- heritage. The themes come together to construct

the initial foundation of the personal political brands' identity, which is authenticity. In the following part, I will discuss each of these five themes.

1- Legacy

In line with the recent work of Pich et al. (2020), legacy is revealed as the first theme which reflects the personal political brand's background or their reasons for entering politics. Similar to Pich et al.'s (2020) findings, this study pointed out the various key drivers, such as making things better and frustration with the current government. In this respect, the legacy theme here consists of three sub-themes: worshipping, political voice and civil responsibility. The worshipping sub-theme highlighted that professional female politicians enter politics for *Allah's* sake, which they view as a kind of worship or social worship. Drawing on their religion, they believe that politics is a higher power, one that is able to change society, make things better, secure justice, and bring peace, both for the world and the afterlife. These findings are indeed important and resonate with other studies suggesting that religion is viewed as a conflict solution (see e.g., Turkmen, 2018).

The idea of worship also revealed the intersection of religion and gender. As an extension of Turkey's neoliberal gender regime, participants referred to their gender roles in society. As stated by Bendisch et al. (2013), personal brands may feel role stress between two identities in cases where expectations of personal brands conflict with his/her own personal values. In this respect, it is found that professional female politicians feel *role stress* between traditional gender roles' expectations and their religious identity, which stresses the desire for peace. In view of this intersection, religion becomes a dominant identity category, which is therefore stressed as a factor in the world of politics. While the intersection of gender and religion impacts participants' decision to enter politics, religion is found as a key driving component.

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Interestingly, when they construct the initial foundation of the personal political brands' identity in relation to their religion, they align themselves with oppressed minority groups. However, instead of trying to have their membership recognised in these groups, they avoid doing so. In this respect, by highlighting religion, which is more of an individual choice, they present a fair amount of autonomy. In this way, the findings highlight that religion increases individuality and, as a result, personal political brands become able to differentiate their brands from competitors and rivals. This also expands Marland and Wagner's findings (2019) that if it is appropriate, minority candidates tend to reflect their multiple identity dimensions, such as race, ethnicity and sexual orientations in their brands. In so doing, as minority groups in a Turkish political context, professional female politicians reflect their religious identity in their brand to achieve authenticity.

Professional female politicians brand identities are also grounded on social issues, such as representing oppressed and vulnerable people, serving the country and people. In so doing, they aim to be the legal, political voice of oppressed groups. Since being a politician involves being in a position of power, politicians are able to mobilise the voices of oppressed and vulnerable people. Although there is no intersection of multiple identity dimensions observed in this context, politicians' stress on oppressed groups suggests the intersection between different categories.

Furthermore, civil responsibility emerged as another legacy sub-theme. Civil responsibility mainly consists of the sense of frustration and concerns with the current government, the perception that the country is under threat, which means the desire of restoring democracy and the constitutional structure of the country and the hope to make the country better. Similar to the previous legacy sub-theme, civil responsibility is not based on an explicit intersection between multiple identity dimensions. However, professional female politicians' sense of

patriotism points in some way to various identity dimensions, such as national identity and religion and the intersections between them.

In this respect, this study uncovered that professional female politicians have legacies to fuel their desire to enter politics, which also construct the initial foundation of their identity. As previously stated, this finding resonates well with the existing studies, which highlight the importance of legacy elements or key issues in constructing personal political brand identity (Armannsdottir et al., 2019a; Johnson, 2017; Pich et al., 2020). Additionally, this research demonstrates that various identity dimensions in particular gender and religion intersect and shape professional female politicians' legacies; thus, they play an important role in constructing their brand identity.

2- Experiences

Pich et al. (2020) argued that experiences facilitate and underpin personal political brand identity. Drawing on professional experiences of personal political brands in particular, they noted that these experiences of personal political brands highlight both transferable skills if elected and background information about politicians, which also increase their integration in the region. In this study, politicians' professional experiences are in line with the findings of Pich et al. (2020). However, this study not only pointed out the professional experiences but also highlighted the importance of NGO experiences. As NGOs represent a wide spectrum of society and are able to mobilise society on social problems (Bayat, 2005; Sandikci and Ger, 2010; Wiktorowicz, 2004), politicians compare NGOs to political parties but privilege the former over the latter. In this respect, NGO experiences are an important part of their qualities. Indeed, developing a personal brand needs experiences and "*does not come naturally. It takes practice, training and tools*" (Vallas and Christin, 2018, p. 18). It is found that professional

female politicians consider their own experiences in NGOs as a training process or as an apprenticeship period for their personal political brand (see Dion and Arnould, 2016).

3- *Personality and Values*

Personal political brands personalities and values play a key role in developing their brand identity (Armannsdottir et al., 2019a; Jain et al., 2018; Johnson, 2017; Pich et al., 2020; Rampersad, 2008; Resnick et al., 2016). Beyond the findings of the existing studies, this study pointed out that personality characteristics and values are related to multiple identity dimensions. For example, women are identified as being "*emotional*" and "*compassionate*" who, because of their gender, should desire specific positions, such as ministers of families and health. In addition, the woman politician is portrayed as "*vulnerable*", "*not logical*", "*weak*" and as someone who "*needs to feel a sense of ownership due to her nature*".

In contrast to these negative personality traits, politicians are portrayed positively in unexpected ways. As women are expected to assume professional roles without neglecting traditional gender roles in Turkey (Arat, 2012), they have various identities, each with its specific responsibilities, which enrich female politicians' multitasking skills. Although the responsibilities attached to the identities are big and may cause role stress, as discussed before, female politicians believe that these responsibilities are advantageous in politics because they enrich female politicians' response to complexity and help develop their impressive management skills. Thus, professional female politicians can develop a balance between work, life and politics. In other words, having traditional gender roles, professional life and even being active in the world of politics strengthened female politicians' brand identity.

Religion plays an important role in politicians' brand identity. Politicians' values and beliefs are embedded in their religion and do shape their behaviour and attitudes in politics. Based on

their religion, they focused on the fight for Allah's sake (see Section 5.2.1) and highlighted personality traits, such as "*fighter*", "*loyal*", "*determinant*" "*dependable*", "*responsible for their actions*", "*honest*" and "*genuine*". Stressing religion as a conflict solution (Turkmen, 2018), politicians indicated broad values and personality traits as "*being fair*", "*feeling empathy with others*", "*being society-friendly*" and "*fighting for peace*". In that way, much like the idea of worship (see Section 5.2.1), female politicians draw on their personal religious values and beliefs to build broad values that may elicit the attention of non-religious people and, therefore, widen their circle.

Other identity dimensions are found effective on the female politicians' brand personalities and values. For example, politicians tend to portray themselves as "*enthusiastic*" in relation to age. Indeed, politicians do not explicitly highlight their ethnicities and ethnicity-related personality traits and values. That is, instead of highlighting their ethnicity-related personality and values, they draw on their voters and citizens' ethnicities personality traits and values. In so doing, they adopt personality traits and values of different ethnicities into their personal political brands to communicate to voters and citizens effectively. For female politicians, these attitudes reflect the early period of Turkey when the Kemalist ruling elite forced people to repress their gendered-ethnic-cultural-religious identities in the public sphere and conform instead to the Westernised-Sunni-Muslim-Turkish identity (Kaya, 2015; Neyzi, 2002). Although they portrayed themselves as "*aware*", "*respectful*" and "*egalitarian*" people towards various ethnicities, they do not explicitly identify themselves with a specific ethnicity, preferring to put a distance between themselves and the ethnicity discussion.

Resilience was revealed as an important theme in the construction of the identity of professional female politicians in the context of Turkish politics. Looking into studies on brand identity, personal brand and personal political brand, there is a consensus between scholars that brands should be strong and ready for unexpected situations. For example, it is believed that personal political brands should be authentic, strong and act as a decision-making drive that supports strategy development and builds awareness in the mind of voters-citizens (Ahmed et al., 2017; Armannsdottir et al., 2019a; Baines and Harris, 2011; Jain et al., 2018; O'Cass and Voola, 2011; Pich et al., 2020). Brand identity has to be durable, coherent and consistent yet also adaptable to crisis and unexpected changes in the internal and external environment (Alsem and Kostelijk, 2008; Aqeel et al., 2017; Armannsdottir et al., 2019a; Dahlen et al., 2010; Gylling and Lindberg-Repo, 2006). In addition, crisis management is strongly recommended as a strategy for both political brands (Jain and Ganesh, 2019) and personal brands (Fournier and Eckhardt, 2019). Although there is an emphasis on personal political brand identity, such as being strong, flexible and ready to change in particular unexpected and disturbing situations and the concomitant need to develop crisis management strategies, there is a lack of understanding of how politicians respond to and survive in disturbing environments from the brand-creator perspective. In this respect, this study pointed to the concept of resilience.

Resilience is considered a process that can be exhibited at differing degrees across multiple life domains, which may, in turn, have either a sensitising or strengthening effect (Cooper et al., 2013; Coutu, 2002; Klein et al., 1998; Rutter, 2012; Szmigin et al., 2020). The findings demonstrated that female politicians' resilience is developed through an ongoing process of political brand building (Dean et al., 2016). As the main focus is on participants' resilience in

the world of politics, rather than focusing on their short-term reactive, psychological and behavioural response, the findings relating to their brands' resilience draw on how participants develop and maintain their resilience over the long run. In this respect, personal and political brand resilience consisted of politicians NGO experiences, professional experiences and their resilience in the world of politics.

As discussed earlier, both NGO and professional life experiences play a key role in constructing a personal political brand identity. Furthermore, it is found that participants' various experiences reveal resilience resources. In relation to Turkey's political context, in particular the effects of the September 1980 military coup d'état and that of February 28 1997 on participants' lives surfaced frequently. As main witnesses and even most of the time victims of this period, participants considered NGOs the only place to raise their voices against reforms after the coup 1997. Drawing on this period, participants' resilience stems from the intersection of gender and religion.

By joining NGOs, these participants focused on proving reforms' lack of organic linkages with society, becoming a driving force for change and strengthening the visibility of the mobilisation. In that way, female politicians' efforts pointed to one of the important sources of individuals' resilience: building a clear sense of purpose, working out what matters to an individual during stressful and disturbing events, and for future success. In so doing, participants activated another resilience resource, i.e., social support. Findings showed that politicians built a strong network of mutually supportive relationships, learning to seek help when required. They learnt to be organised and make demands for social change (Bayat, 2005). They considered these abilities essential in politics. Indeed, NGO experiences facilitate for politicians the acquisition of new skills, which boost resilience by increasing both self-efficacy and adaptability (Cooper et al., 2013; Youssef and Luthans, 2007). Thus, politicians also

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develop social resilience. By developing social resilience, politicians become able to respond to the broader social context, moderate their behaviour and have a chance to observe society's response in the face of adversity (Kamakura and Du, 2011). Consequently, they raise their self-control and awareness of social problems. That is, professional female politicians' personal brands are positively affected in the long-term because both NGO experiences are acknowledged as an apprenticeship for a woman politician and as enriching their skills through purposefulness and social-support resilience resources.

NGO experiences also revealed adaptability, which is the most widely recognised resilience component (Bimrose and Hearne, 2012; Shin et al., 2012; Szmigin et al., 2020). Findings show how challenges develop politicians' adaptability and strengthen their individual everyday resilience. However, the adaptability resilience component is not only about their short-term survival strategies or about conforming to new regulations. Politicians also increase their adaptability and expand coping mechanisms in the long term.

Adaptability is included in the case of participants' social awareness, self-awareness and generating new ideas and solutions (Cooper et al., 2013; Lutfans et al., 2007). It is argued that there was a significant overlap between female politicians' social support and purposefulness resilience resources and adaptability components. The social awareness of participants seemed high, for they deal with stressful and disturbing events rationally and constructively by joining NGOs. In this sense, similar to social support, participants have a high level of social awareness. Their social awareness was closely related to the development and maintenance of a supportive relationship in NGOs. In this way, participants strengthened their links with the oppressed groups. The purposefulness component is found in line with the self-awareness resilience component. Female politicians can evaluate themselves objectively, control their emotions, align with their values, and understand correctly how others perceive them. Through

greater self-awareness of their gender-religion intersected identity, they created a sense of purpose to gain their rights back by increasing consensus. This shows that adaptability points to a broader resilience resource, including social support and purposefulness. Lastly, participants highlighted that NGOs helped them generate new ideas and solutions. Even though they had to raise a voice in NGOs, these organisations encouraged flexibility to think beyond their current ways of doing things (see Sandikci and Ger, 2010). Participants acknowledged this level of adaptability and flexibility as an important source of experience. Experiences differentiated adaptability from other individual resilience resources. Therefore, adaptability, including social-awareness, self-awareness and experience, increase personal political brands' resilience.

Professional female politicians perceive NGOs as feeding channels for politics; thus, they stressed their gained experiences in NGOs as a platform for their political careers. Drawing on the adaptability resilience component, it is found that NGO experiences not only enrich politicians' skill set that they believe to be essential in politics but also prepare them to the "*man game*" or "*man life*". Participants expressed that through their experiences in NGOs, they became able to play not only the "*team*" game but also the "*man*" game. In so doing, similar to Marland and Wagner's findings (2019), politicians use sports analogies to explain their approach to party politics. However, as opposed to Marland and Wagner's (2019) approach, female politicians explain how women and men politicians behave differently due to their gender. They implied the importance of being an experienced woman in the eyes of male competitors and rivals. In so doing, findings revealed that professional female politicians' NGO experiences help women in politics to be treated with dignity and respect and consequently receive outcomes commensurate with their entitlement.

Different behaviours and attitudes between female and male politicians are explored through the concept of habitus. According to Bourdieu (1984), individuals' habitus is constructed and reproduced unconsciously, "*without any deliberate pursuit of coherence… without any conscious concentration*" (p. 173). Female politicians are introduced with their strong individual habitus, whereas men are portrayed with their collective habitus, which makes them suitable to take up political positions. Since habitus remains with individuals across contexts (Webb et al., 2002), female politicians have a harder time adapting to politics as a team game than men. However, this research found that NGOs facilitate habitus change from the individual to the collective. By volunteering in NGOs with other people for a period of time, female politicians were exposed to many different kinds of unwritten and unspoken social community rules over an extended, probably intense, period. Thus, they develop their collective habitus to be in the world of politics with men competitors and rivals.

Like NGO experiences, female politicians' professional experiences relayed stories of discrimination and sexism. Specifically, most of the participants who witnessed the coups in Turkey focused on gendered and religion-related issues and inequalities in their professional life. In this sense, many participants summarised their resilience process and outcomes in relation to the bans, which started during their education years, continued during their professional life and still shaped their political experiences. In that way, career resilience, which occurs in the vocational context (Van Vuuren and Fourie, 2000), is failed to understand female politicians' resilience in their both professional and political life. Politicians utilised both individual and career resilience resources, showing how professional experiences trained participants to cope with everyday micro-aggression, both at the professional and political levels. In addition, most politicians come from professions like medicine, law, and engineering, professions were defined by men for men, professions known as having masculine cultures and

structures (Dryburgh, 1999; Tancred, 1999). This indicated that their professional experiences facilitated their resilience in politics.

This research showed that professional female politicians have high self- and social-awareness and even are cognitively aware of the male-dominated environment of various professions, including political professions. They are not only perceived to have the ability to adapt to changing circumstances but also seem to be clear and self-confident with their personal and professional capabilities to achieve their career goals (London, 1983; Van Vuuren and Fourie, 2000). They are comfortable working with new and different people, and they have the ability to adapt to changing circumstances. Their resilience implies a low fear of failure (Van Vuuren and Fourie, 2000). Such resilience helped women to not only cope with everyday micro-aggression but also overcome barriers towards success. By drawing in view of Van Vuuren and Fourie's (2000) work on career resilience, this study also noted that professional female politicians have a high level of tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity. This can increase the competitive advantage of female politicians in the long run. Through these resilience resources, female politicians' political brand identity can be consistent, flexible, and adaptable to emerging situations in the internal and external environment (Alsem and Kostelijk 2008; Aqeel et al. 2017; Armannsdottir et al., 2019a; Dahlen et al. 2010; Gylling and Lindberg-Repo 2006).

In line with the resilience research, female politicians utilised coping strategies, such as self-distancing, self-talk, mental time-travelling, and wise-reasoning (e.g., Bogar and Hulse-Killacky, 2006; Clauss-Ehlers, 2008; Kross and Ayduk, 2017; Kross et al., 2005; Leipold and Greve, 2009; Sinclair and Wallston, 2004; Tugade et al., 2004). The use of these strategies highlighted that professional female politicians are always ready to use discrimination and aggression for their benefit. Therefore, it was found that politicians' professional work not only seems to improve their resilience but also strengthens their strategies to deal with aggression.

Professional female politicians continue to develop their brand identities in politics. They utilised their resilience resources to deal with aggression and simultaneously increase their level of resilience in politics. Here, the issue that male competitors and rivals' beliefs privilege men in the political arena surfaced explicitly. Politicians mentioned three stages for women in politics: before being elected as a deputy, the election period (between before and after becoming a candidate for deputy), and after being elected as a deputy. Before being elected as a deputy, men utilised women and also appreciated their efforts. At this stage, because they are not a threat to men but bolster their power, women are treated with dignity and respect and receive outcomes commensurate with their entitlement. Later on, when a woman decides to enter the election for a deputy position, she is viewed as a competitor and rival. During this period, women face the most blatant aggressions by their male competitors and rivals. Specifically, politicians stressed that they are marginalised by implying gender-specific roles. In this respect, this study highlighted that politicians have a high level of self and social awareness in politics, which makes their brand identity ready to accept competition and adapt to this highly competitive world easily. Although during this period, women face various gender-specific aggressions, it is found that they tend to ignore these aggressions. Because they believe that by fighting such aggressions, they could distance themselves from male competitors and rivals, resulting in impeding communication and social interaction among participants and men competitors and rivals. By not engaging in fights, they believe that they are in the game and therefore may not face the threat of losing their positions, which could potentially threaten the survival of their personal political brands.

Nevertheless, during this period, politicians use different strategies to attract voters and citizens. Rather than silencing their multiple identity dimensions, they tend to speak about them loudly. This reflects Marland and Wagner's findings (2019) that if it is appropriate, minority

candidates tend to bring up their multiple identity dimensions, such as race, ethnicity and sexual orientations in their brands. Specifically, their ethnicity stood as a salient identity dimension that they emphasised by communicating with their voters.

In the last stage, after becoming deputies, politicians continue to speak about their social identity dimensions to voters and citizens. However, they began to change their strategy from being silenced to giving voice to their identity dimensions in politics to deal with aggression. At this point, since they had guaranteed their position in the parliament, they did not fear failure; thus, they tended to speak about aggressions loudly or respond to aggressions with even aggressions. Interestingly, this study found that after becoming deputies, the aggression to which female politicians are subjected during their political career displays how the intersection of social identities is used effectively by politicians for both offence and defence.

Specifically, it is found that by using coping strategies, such as self-distancing, self-talk, mental time-travelling, wise-reasoning, professional female politicians tend to use multiple identity dimensions as an offence strategy to protect their position. However, again, politicians distinguish between their strategies for their own political party and those for other political parties' politicians. While the intersection of ethnicity and religion stands out as important multiple identity dimensions between politicians and other political parties' politicians, politicians tend to face aggressions in their own political party due to traditional gender roles. In this respect, in their own political party, instead of giving voice to their individual beliefs against aggressions, they deal with aggressions by stressing traditional gender roles. As traditional gender roles play an important role in the state's and society's norms and regulations in Turkey, politicians seem to be perceived as untouchable. They protect their personal political brand both from competition in their own political party and even from aggressions. While personal political brands protect their brand identity's authenticity, they should be viewed as

compatible with their political parties' identity (Armannsdottir et al., 2019a). Although balancing relationship is challenging between their individual personal political brands and party political brands (Ibid, 2019), politicians are expected to act in line with the party's disciplinary norms, that is, they should balance political party authority and their individual authenticity (Marland and Wagner, 2019). In this respect, this study found that professional female politicians utilise their multiple identity dimensions to be seen in line with the party's disciplinary norms. Although they face aggressions due to their gender, they do not speak aloud about their discomfort in order to minimise tensions and misalignment. They prefer to portray themselves as having a high level of awareness at individual and social levels in male-dominated politics. However, the strategies they use to deal with other political parties' politicians differ from the strategies they use in their own political party. So, when other political parties' politicians marginalise or discriminate against them due to their multiple identity dimensions, they tend to react against their aggressions.

Consequently, findings revealed that female politicians employed their resilience and determination strategies, which were the product of cumulative gendered and religion-related experiences. Professional female politicians utilised social, psychological, career and persistent resilience to develop their personal political brand resilience. In this respect, it is found that personal political brands resilience blend together different types of resilience strategies.

5- *Heritage*

Heritage is known as one of the intangible properties of personal political brands (Armannsdottir et al., 2019a). Personal political brands ground their identity on their heritage (Speed et al., 2015; Pich et al., 2020). It plays an important role in creating and strengthening personal political brands (Armannsdottir et al., 2019a; Pich et al., 2020; Speed et al., 2015).

Consistent with the literature, this study found that professional female politicians' heritage is essential to construct their brand. However, this study utilised heritage as a concept adopted from consumer branding instead of focusing on a single intangible property. In this respect, longevity and stability dimensions, considered the best compromise between comprehensiveness and parsimony (Pecot and De Barnier, 2017), were adopted to understand the construction of professional female politicians brand identity.

It is found that family relationships for professional female politicians play an important role in developing their brand heritage. They specified that their origins of brand heritage started in the family through political conversations. In this respect, the longevity dimension of brand heritage surfaced through the narration of political memories from early childhood. However, personal brands are mortal (Fournier and Eckhardt, 2019), which suggest that mortality impede long term survival. In this way, politicians tend to extend their longevity by representing the past based on their subjective interpretation from childhood into their adult life. Additionally, female politicians utilised their family members who have a political career to expand their longevity dimension of brand heritage. Pich et al. (2020) found that heritage is underscored by local surnames, and politicians used their ancestry to distinguish their brands from others. In the context of Turkey, female politicians do not directly emphasise the surnames or the roots of their ancestry. However, they prefer to attach their brand heritage to one of their family member's brand heritage; thus, they can expand their brand heritage longevity. Furthermore, by featuring their male family members, they develop their brand heritage according to Turkey's patriarchal structure. Without being perceived as against dominant patriarchal norms, they develop their brand heritage which plays an important role in differentiating their personal political brand from competitors and rivals (Armannsdottir et al., 2019a; Pich et al., 2020). It is worth noting that although in the context of Turkey, politics is considered as a man vocation

(Arat, 1989), female politicians create their own self-schemas, such as "*a feeling of normality*", "*having a higher interest in politics*", and "*sense of experience*" through their heritage' longevity dimension. Thus, they portrayed their brand as highly engaged in politics, which can provide a competitive advantage.

The second dimension of brand heritage, stability, is distinct from the longevity dimension and independent of the objective age of the brand (Pecot and De Branier, 2017). In this respect, professional female politicians claim stability through the intersections of multiple identity dimensions. Smith and Speed (2011) consider political brands as cultural brands to explain the stability of governments. They argued that politics is associated with values, identity, society and culture, which are considered emotional appeals. In this respect, they mentioned that stability is associated with emotional bonds with a political party rather than functional brand benefits. Although emotions and feelings seem important for professional female politicians' stability, this study highlighted that their emotions and feelings are the product of the intersection of multiple identity dimensions. Politicians also did not only rely on their own intersections of multiple identity dimensions. In line with the context's salient identity dimensions—gender, religion and ethnicity—they portray themselves as overly sensitive to oppressed groups' problems. Pich et al. (2020) noted the importance of coherence between personal values and personality to ensure that identity is authentic and credible. Consistent with Pich et al.'s point (2020), by highlighting their sense of sensitivity starting from their childhood all the way into the present, they appear to be in a strong and determined position, which points out to consistency, credibility and coherency between personal political brands' personality and values. In this respect, as mentioned by Smith and Speed (2011), professional female politicians can have the potential for longer-term differentiation and competitive advantage that is not available from other sources. Although there is a lack of research on stability, this

study suggests that personal political brands can achieve stability by emphasising their consistent position with the different intersectional identity categories.

7.2.2. Research Question 2

How do professional female politicians leverage their identities to construct their personal political brand?

Findings related to the leverage of professional female politicians' identities to construct their personal political brand could be made sense of through the concept of brand legitimacy. The research findings revealed three broad themes related to the female politicians' brand legitimacy in the context of Turkish politics, including relationships, negotiations and communications. Brand legitimacy helped to understand how personal political brands apply their judgment process in different contexts from a brand-creator perspective. It also helped to take a holistic approach to professional female politicians' personal political brands. That is, studies in political branding focused separately on the interactions and communications between voters, citizens or in general on society, media and political brands, such as political party, leader and recently personal political brands (see Armannsdottir et al., 2019a; Armannsdottir et al., 2019b; Davies and Mian, 2010; Marland and Wagner, 2019; Pich et al., 2020; Susila et al., 2019). Personal political brands' communications and interactions with the society, voters and political party were investigated from the brand creator perspective, emphasising the importance of consistency and coherency between personal brands' identity elements (Armannsdottir et al., 2019a; 2019b; Pich et al., 2020). However, these studies do provide insights into personal political brands' attitudes and behaviours in different contexts, thereby not giving a holistic approach from the brand-creator perspective. They provide little insight into personal political brands' attitudes and behaviours in different contexts, thereby

not giving a holistic approach from the brand-creator perspective. By adopting brand legitimacy from the brand-creator perspective, this study provides deep insights into professional female politicians' individual level legitimacy judgment process in various contexts, such as family, state, media, voters and in general society, as well as leaders and their competitors and rivals in politics.

In line with the neoliberal context of Turkey, professional female politicians' legitimacy process starts with the families' acceptance of their brands. Family is given higher importance in Turkey, and women have a primary role in the family in relation to their household responsibilities, such as childcare and household chores (Arat, 2012; Bugra, 2016; Sirman, 2005). Consistent with the personal branding literature that conceptualises personal brands as socially embedded in a web of relationships (Fournier and Eckhardt, 2019; Rein et al., 1997), Pich et al. (2020) argued that personal political brands' relationships with their inner circle who know the "*real person*" behind the brand, such as family, colleagues and friends, play an important role in constructing and managing a personal brand. According to Pich et al. (2020), personal political brands' personal relationships with their inner circle help them to be perceived as approachable.

However, this study found that professional female politicians' relationships with their families first protect their personal political brands in some ways in the world of politics. Tost (2011) noted that a positive legitimacy judgment creates power for institutions, organisations and authorities. In view of Tost's work (2011), it is found that the family's acceptance and support of women politicians facilitate for women the establishment of legitimacy as a source of power in politics. Similar to heritage (see Section 5.6.), by highlighting the support of male family members in their lives, they could be viewed as normatively and cognitively legitimate. This also points out that professional female politicians' high level of congruence with the state's

patriarchal structure legitimises politicians on regulatory grounds. Consequently, gaining family acceptance and support facilitates the establishment of personal political brands' legitimacy on normative, cognitive and regulatory grounds. Pich et al. (2020) noted that personal political brands should build their brands in line with the target market. In this respect, professional female politicians' status of legitimacy demonstrates their compatibility with their target market. Interestingly, having a family delegitimise professional female politicians on relational grounds. Female politicians face discrimination and marginalisation because of traditional gender stereotypes by their male competitors and rivals. This revealed that the status ascribed to female politicians as *minority* or to male politicians as *majority* in politics helps them be perceived as a "*judgement validation institution*" (Bitektine and Haack, 2015, p. 51) in the world of politics. Therefore, the intersection of gender and religious identities facilitates the legitimacy of participants on regulatory, normative and cognitive grounds but may also delegitimate them on relational grounds.

As an extension of Turkey's neoliberal patriarchy, motherhood is revealed as an important issue for professional female politicians. Since the family has great importance in society, in line with the arguments mentioned above, motherhood may facilitate the legitimacy of politicians on normative, cognitive and regulatory grounds. Moreover, this study found that professional female politicians' relationships with their families also eliminate the risk of role stress. However, although they seem psychologically relaxed due to family acceptance and support, this study found that female politicians put extra effort to create a balance between the family and politics. In this respect, politicians tend to judge themselves based on ideas of motherhood frequently. This showed that their identity highly remains tied to marriage and motherhood. In this respect, this study findings reflect Armannsdottir et al.'s work (2019a) that politics is not considered as a "*family friendly job*" (p. 13).

Pich et al. (2020) noted that economic support for politicians was limited. In line with this, politicians mentioned that their families provide economic security in politics. However, this study found that for female politicians in the context of Turkey, economic concerns are associated with society's norms and cultural expectations. By expressing their religion and gender intersected identity, they linked their economic concerns with their motherhood. In this respect, they highlighted their traditional gender roles with religion; thus, making them viewed as normatively legitimate. By prioritising the family over politics, they also attain cognitive legitimacy in view of Turkish society's expectations.

Importantly, this research extends the argument of Marland and Wagner (2019) that political brands, particularly personal political brands, should be in line with other political brands in order to minimise misalignment and tensions. Although personal political brands need to protect their individuality and authenticity, they are expected to exhibit the political party's identity and the leader's identity in their brand. This creates a challenge for personal political brands (Armannsdottir et al., 2019a) that they have to strike a fine balance between their own personal political brand and other related political brands. In this respect, the research revealed that female politicians utilised their multiple identities intersected dimensions to negotiate particularly with the leader and their competitors and rivals to be viewed as legitimate in the political arena. Thus, they demonstrate a high level of congruence with other political brands. As noted by Dornbush and Scott (1975), validity beliefs are strengthened by authorisation and by peer endorsement. In this respect, this study found that for personal political brands, gaining their leaders' and competitors and rivals' support or negotiating in a way that shows respect and probably less competition, hence achieving a level of legitimacy, provide a competitive advantage to politicians and bolster the validity of their brands.

Leaders have strong impacts both on voters (Jain and Ganesh, 2019) and on other political products (Davies and Mian, 2010). In this regard, personal political brands are specifically expected to act in line with the leader (Marland and Wagner, 2019). This study found that as high-status actors, leaders' support increases professional female politicians' regulatory legitimacy. Since regulatory legitimacy represents a form of authorisation (Tost, 2011), professional female politicians establish authority. In view of the work by Johnson et al. (2006), female politicians grant their brand the status of a social fact through leaders' authorisation. This study also found that professional female politicians' leaders are in line with Turkey's neoliberal gender regime. By pointing to leaders' high level of congruence with the context, female politicians tend to point out that they are also normatively legitimate. Furthermore, since the leader has the authority to command the party on the policies debated (Speed et al., 2015), leaders are perceived in line with the political party. In this respect, leaders' authorisation not only provides authority to politicians but also will keep politicians acting in line with the political party's disciplinary norms. With these strong bonds between them, the leader and the political party, participants can be viewed as normatively and cognitively legitimate. In addition, their level of legitimacy on regulatory, normative and cognitive grounds can spark their relational legitimacy. It is argued that "*judgment validation institutions*" (Bitektine and Haack, 2015, p. 51) and "*voices of the common man*" (Vaara, 2014, p. 506) play important roles in attaining validity. In this respect, professional female politicians' congruency with the leader and political party gain both leader and political party the status of judgment validation institutions for personal political brands. Therefore, although their competitors and rivals stigmatise and marginalise female politicians, they may silence their individual propriety beliefs and follow the leader and political party. This means that professional female politicians can establish their relational legitimacy. These findings extend Marland and Wagner's argument (2019) that personal political brands can be seen in line with the leaders and political

parties through their communication efforts. This study found that participants' credible and effective negotiations can help personal political brands to be perceived as legitimate on different grounds, which ensure a high level of congruence with other political brands.

This study found that the endorsement by peers (competitors and rivals) of participants' personal political brands facilitates individuals' validity beliefs. Although a leader's authorisation affects the gaining of peers' endorsement indirectly, as discussed above, participants can also gain their peer's endorsement of their political brands through the intersections of gender and age, thereby establishing relational legitimacy. Being an ageing woman is mostly seen as problematic in politics (Armannsdottir et al., 2019a; Sanghvi, 2019; Sanghvi and Hodges, 2015). However, this study found that in Turkey's neoliberal gender regime, being married, a mother and an ageing woman are characteristics desired in a female politician. As revealed in this study, if professional female politicians behave against traditional gender roles, they may risk being perceived as illegitimate on normative grounds. In addition, this study found that acting outside of their ascribed roles as *mothers* and *ablas* runs the risk of being considered illegitimate on relational grounds. Therefore, politicians accept traditional gender roles in fear of sanctions in the world of politics. Consequently, professional female politicians promote their gendered and aged identity by emphasising traditional gender roles to protect their brand from excessive competition, which even helps them achieve a competitive advantage. Thus, having a high level of relational legitimacy can facilitate the establishment of cognitive legitimacy for professional female politicians.

Communication plays an important role in creating and developing personal political brand identity (Armannsdottir et al., 2019a; Casprini et al., 2020; Johnson, 2017; Pich et al., 2020; Pluntz and Pras, 2020; Vallas and Christin, 2018). Communication is also essential to establishing legitimacy (Haack et al., 2020). In view of the existing literature, although this

study found that politicians recognise the importance of communicating their personal brand to voters, they have concerns about media and online media platforms. Politicians believe that these platforms are manipulative and difficult to control. By reflecting Jones et al. (2001), politicians noted that media platforms, such as TVs, newspapers and radios, are not neutral on political issues and tend to portray political products in different ways not coherent with their brand identity. To break these barriers, Davies and Mian (2010) recommend the use of neutral and friendly media for party leader brands; however, this study found that politicians do not even search for friendly and neutral media platforms.

Furthermore, professional female politicians hold similar views on social media. They do not believe that they can communicate their authentic brand identity through social media. By identifying themselves as ageing women, female politicians noted that young politicians and legislators have a bigger voice in social media. In this respect, they do not consider themselves eligible to use social media. Furthermore, similar to Marland and Wagner's findings (2019), politicians seem anxious that they will be on the wrong side of the online media. However, their concern is not only related to being on the wrong side, but they do not see social media as an enough and appropriate platform to exhibit their brands. At this point, it is found that politicians' religious identity has a direct effect on their participation in social media. In this respect, a politician, who introduces herself as a religious person or with a conservative and nationalist ideology, tends to avoid using social media. She does not share her personal daily routines and even many political activities, for they are too private and against the idea that they do politics for the sake of Allah. Although the existing literature noted that personal brands' regular online interaction increases the engagement between personal brands and their followers (Thomson, 2006) and helps in particular personal political brands to be viewed as approachable, in the context of Turkey, female politicians do not believe it and even they

believe that they will lose their normative legitimacy because of online interaction. This finding is also against Milewicz and Milewicz's argument (2014) that media can enhance the normative legitimacy of political branding strategies and tactics and further legitimise the practice in society. Consequently, this study revealed that professional female politicians prefer not using media and social media platforms and prefer to use them by forwarding the party's messages, which echoes Marland and Wagner's argument (2019). Therefore, they ensure the protection of their normative legitimacy.

Moreover, this study found that politicians consider communication through social media as time-consuming. Their busy schedule does not let them use their social media; their consultants or assistants share informative messages. On the contrary, politicians who prefer to use their own social media can face role stress between traditional gender roles and personal political brands due to their responsibility and tight schedule.

In contrast to media and social media platforms, professional female politicians highlighted the importance of face-to-face communication and word-of-mouth. When communicating face to face, ethnicity stood as an important identity dimension for female politicians. Interestingly, this study found that professional female politicians utilise both their own and voters' intersections of multiple identity dimensions to communicate effectively. Pich et al. (2020) argued that actively engaging with the voters in local and national arenas build and maintain presence, recognition and visibility; thus, the personal political brand can raise awareness and be perceived as approachable and relatable. In this respect, this study extends this argument by stressing the impact of multiple identity dimensions on their engaging process in society. Specifically, politicians' awareness of different ethnicities' characteristics helps them build trust and effectively communicate with their voters and citizens. In line with the recent personal political branding literature (Armannsdottir et al., 2019a; Pich et al., 2020), this study revealed

that personal political brands should tailor their message to their target market. Importantly, this research also extends the arguments made in recent literature and found that personal political brands can tailor their message through the intersection of multiple identity dimensions. In this respect, religion, ethnicity, and age featured as important identity dimensions in female politicians' communication.

7.3. Thesis Summary

This thesis addresses a burgeoning interest in political branding discipline with a novel approach: an intersectional feminist approach to professional female politicians' personal political brand identity. By considering the context of Turkey, this thesis aims to understand the construction of professional female politicians' brand identity through the intersection of multiple identity categories, particularly gender, religion and ethnicity. Furthermore, this thesis investigates how professional female politicians leverage their identities to construct their personal political brand. In order to meet these research objectives, Chapter 2 presented the existing literature, which bridges two essential constructs of commercial branding theory, namely personal branding and brand identity and applies them to the sub-discipline of political branding (Armannsdottir et al., 2019a). The chapter pointed out the current consumer branding literature with the transfer potential (Schneider, 2014) of situated concepts, such as brand resilience, brand heritage and brand legitimacy in the context of personal political branding. The chapter highlighted the managerialist and functionalist assumptions that have dominated political marketing, political branding and personal branding research. In doing so, the chapter identified the core research gap that political marketing research requires more critical and interdisciplinary research (Henneberg and O'Shaughnessy, 2007; Moufahim and Lim, 2009; Osuagwu, 2008), a gap which this thesis tried to fill.

Chapter 3 developed an understanding of intersectional feminist approaches for professional female politicians' personal political brand identity in research. By reviewing the historical development of the concept of intersectionality and providing insights into ongoing methodological and theoretical discussions about it, the chapter offered a broad perspective to use in political branding. Then, the chapter reviewed existing studies in marketing that focus on the intersection of multiple identity dimensions. Even though there is an organic relationship between intersectional feminist approaches and consumer culture theory, transformative consumer research and critical theory (Ger, 2018; Steinfield et al., 2019), it is argued that intersectionality has still been not fully made use of by marketing researchers. With this in mind, the chapter presented works that focus on different multiple identity dimensions in political marketing, political branding and personal branding, works that create the foundation for intersectional personal political branding research. Consequently, the chapter reviewed the literature on intersectionality in the context of Turkey.

Chapter 4 contextualised and rationalised the qualitative research design and philosophy underpinning the thesis, emphasising a focus upon a social constructionist ontology and interpretivist epistemology to understand the construction of professional female politicians' brand identity. Specifically, the chapter provided a detailed discussion of the methodology of interpretive qualitative analysis. The chapter also provided the research design, detailing processes of participant selection, data gathering and data analysis.

Chapter 5 and 6 presented the findings and analysis. Chapter 5 examined the construction of professional female politicians' identity in the context of Turkish politics through the intersection of gender, religion and ethnicity (Research Question 1). Chapter 6 focused on how professional female politicians leverage their identities to construct their personal political brands (Research Question 2).

As a strategy, personal branding focuses on the creation, management and communication of the brand's desired identity (Casprini et al., 2020; Johnson, 2017; Pich et al., 2020; Pluntz and Pras, 2020; Vallas and Christin, 2018). In this respect, these two chapters provide insights into the creation, management and communication of the professional female politicians' brand identity. While Chapter 5 focused on the construction of the desired identity, Chapter 6 encapsulated both management and communication strategies under the concept of brand legitimacy, which is one of the concepts borrowed from consumer branding research. In this respect, a framework will be outlined now.

7.3.1. Intersectional Personal Political Brand Identity Framework

A systematic framework is built based on the findings and aims to show how an authentic, consistent personal political brand can be created and maintained. *Intersectional Personal Political Brand Identity Framework* can be seen in Figure 4 p. 245.
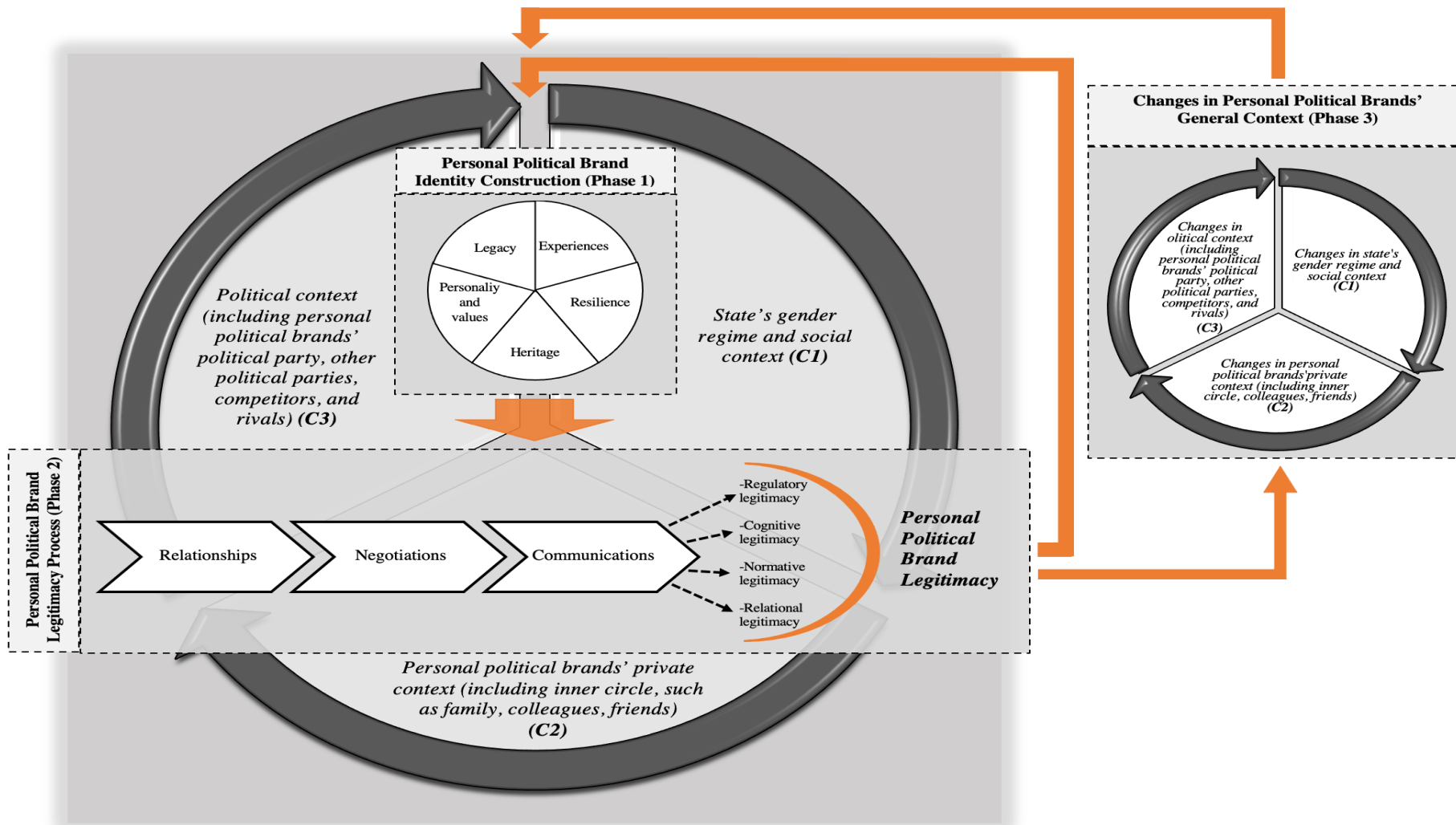
Figure 4: Intersectional Personal Political Brand Identity Framework

General Context: When building personal brands, brand creators should assess the context, target market and the environment (Casprini et al., 2020; Ewing and Allen, 2017; Ind et al., 2017; Lin and Siu, 2020; Pich et al., 2020). According to *Intersectional Personal Political Brand Identity Framework*, when personal political brands construct their brand identity, they need to focus on their brands' general context based on which they built the brands. In this study, the state's gender regime is deeply interwoven with society's approach. It is found that both the state's gender regime and society are effective contexts when constructing a personal political brand. In this respect, the combination of the state's gender regime and society (**C1**) is accepted as the paramount context for personal political brand's identity framework. Further, after evaluating (**C1**), personal political brands assess their own private context (**C2**), including their families, colleagues and friends. Personal political brand' private context (**C2**) would be followed by political context (**C3**). Political context (**C3**) includes personal political brand's political party, other political parties, competitors and rivals. For personal political brands, this flow of related contexts starting from the combination of state's gender regime and society, following personal political brands' private context and ending with political context, provides a solid foundation for the development of personal political brand identity. The evaluation of these contexts and blending them in personal political brand identity development process thorough an intersectional lens can increase brand creators' awareness of context's salient intersectional identity dimensions and their intersections. Therefore, personal political brands' identity will be more appropriate to the given context and target market. It is noteworthy that each context is important for personal political brands; however, they need to be aligned in order to develop an authentic, consistent and coherent personal political brand identity.

*Personal Political Brand Identity Construction (**Phase 1**):* When the general context is deeply explored and comprehensively evaluated, personal political brands would move to ***Phase 1*** to

construct their brand identity around personal political brand identity components. Given that this study conceptualised personal political brands' identity construction around five important components (chapter 5), *Phase 1* demonstrates them in an integrated chart.

Personal Political Brand Legitimacy Process (Phase 2): Once personal political brand identity has been constructed, the personal political brand would move to *Phase 2*, the personal political brand legitimacy process. This study found that brand legitimacy is a broader concept to understand personal political brands' management and communication. In this respect, brand legitimacy facilitates personal political brands' context evaluation process, which in turn helps them to construct the desired identity and adopt appropriate strategies. Unlike the general context, which is assessed in this study by evaluation of the country's history and current political structure, the personal political brand identity legitimacy process pushes personal political brands to judge the different contexts from their own perspective. This stage is called the "*context judgement stage*" (see p. 180). According to personal political brands' context judgement stage, this study found that the family is the most prominent context for professional female politicians. Thus, personal political brands' relationship with their families comes up as the first step toward gaining overall brand legitimacy. Once personal political brands gain legitimacy in the family through their relationships, they go into the second step, which is about negotiation with other political actors. Then, personal political brands communicate with their voters and citizens to develop their overall brand legitimacy. As mentioned before, legitimacy is a dynamic and multi-level concept, which encourages us to assess different but interrelated legitimacy pillars and components. In this respect, when personal political brands gain legitimacy at some level in the same or different steps, spillover effects occur. For example, in this thesis, personal political brands' prioritization of the family is congruent with the state's gender regime and society's approach, which facilitate personal political brands' overall

legitimacy in their family. Because family plays an important role in neoliberal gender regimes and that professional female politicians operate in line with the state's gender regime, this prioritization also facilitates personal political brands' regulatory legitimacy. Given that the state's gender regime and society's approach are interwoven, as mentioned above, another spillover effect occurs. Thus, personal political brands conform to cultural expectations and becomes normatively legitimate. As normative and regulatory legitimacy is related to cognitive legitimacy, which is viewed as the essence of legitimacy (Tost, 2011), personal political brands also attain some level of cognitive legitimacy.

*Changes in Personal Political Brands' General Context (**Phase 3**):* In cases where the personal political brands' general context is similar, ***Phase 1*** and ***Phase 2*** is repeated systemically to protect the personal political brand and continually construct the brand identity and assess the brands' legitimacy. Conversely, if there are changes in any or all of the contexts, it will have a salient impact on other contexts; thus, personal political brand identity needs to be revised. In this respect, the personal political brand should move to Phase 3 and evaluate the new general context. As mentioned above, this evaluation process requires an in-depth understanding of contexts with changes to reconstruct brand identity to attain brand legitimacy. Armannsdottir et al. (2019a) represent a similar phase in their *Personal Political Brand Identity Appraisal Framework* to facilitate personal political brands to conduct '*environmental audit*' (p. 22). However, they conceptualise changes in a broader perspective, including economic, social, political changes and technological developments, competitors' and constituents' assessments, personal political brands' relationships with their political party and other political products. Furthermore, their framework does not provide a detailed flow of evaluation of these changes. It will increase complexity and uncertainty for personal political brands to evaluate the changes; therefore, auditing personal political brand identity will also be difficult for brand

creators. *Intersectional Personal Political Brand Identity Framework*, on the contrary, focuses on the most prominent contexts and their changes as well as provides exclusive interpretations for assessing related contexts.

Beyond the political environment, the *Intersectional Personal Political Brand Identity Framework* can be implemented by academics and practitioners for personal brands from different contexts and occupations, such as academics, doctors, engineers, students, entrepreneurs, etc. who are accepted as personal brands (Chen, 2013; Cortsen, 2013; Gehl, 2011; Lair et al., 2005; Ottovordemgentschenfelde, 2017). This framework offers flexibility for personal brand creators to adopt in different contexts and become intersected with different multiple identity dimensions. Personal brands should be tailored to different contexts (Pich et al., 2020) and protect their personal brand so that not to allow competitors and rivals to create and manage negative impressions (Johnson, 2017; Pich et al., 2020). That is, firstly, this framework enables a detailed self and social observation and awareness of the different contexts with which personal brands in their lifeworld. Secondly, it facilitates the evaluation of multiple identity dimensions' intersection, which also provides a deep understanding of personal brands from their own perspective. In this respect, desired brand identities can be constructed through the framework. The framework can be used to audit and reflect on existing personal brand identities to reveal opportunities, strengths, and limitations. Once personal brand identities are constructed or audited, they can move to seek legitimacy at all levels. By gaining legitimacy, personal brands can strengthen and, consequently, manage and communicate effectively with their brand identities. According to the framework, to ensure that the personal brand identity is authentic, consistent, coherent, and clear (Armannsdottir et al., 2019a; Casprini et al., 2020; Ewing and Allen, 2017; Jacobson, 2020; Misra and Walters, 2016; Osorio et al., 2020; Pluntz and Pras, 2020), a systematic process of evaluating the contexts,

aligning them in order, constructing desired brand identity and legitimating the brand should be done routinely. During this routine check of personal brand identity, personal brands can be easily made aware of the changes in the contexts or in the established personal brand identity, then personal brands can revise their brand identities for new settings. Therefore, the *Intersectional Personal Political Brand Identity Framework* provides a comprehensive and systematic guidance for the construction and legitimation (including personal brand identity management and communication) of intended professional and personal identity, a key dimension of personal branding (Jacobson, 2020; Misra and Walters, 2016; Osorio et al., 2020; Pagis and Ailon, 2017; Pluntz and Pras, 2020; Vallas and Christin, 2018).

7.4. Contribution

The contribution of this research could be summarised and classified into three categories: (1) theoretical/epistemological, (2) practical, and (3) methodological.

7.4.1. Theoretical Contributions

Smith and French (2009) noted that research investigating the application of branding theories, concepts and frameworks to the exploration of political brands adopt a brand management standpoint, and so does this thesis. This thesis investigated professional female politicians' brand identity by blending brand identity and personal branding, applying them to political branding (Armannsdottir et al., 2019a; Pich et al., 2020;). Thus, it conceptualised politicians as personal political brands and added the underdeveloped area of political branding (Armannsdottir et al., 2019a; Needham and Smith, 2015; O'Cass and Voola, 2011; Pich et al., 2020; Scammell, 2015; Speed et al., 2015). This thesis is the first of its kind to combine personal branding and political branding with the intersectional feminist approaches. Through an intersectional lens in political branding, this thesis contributed to political marketing, which

made an explicit call for more critical and interdisciplinary research (Harris and Lock, 2010; Henneberg and O'Shaughnessy, 2007; Moufahim and Lim, 2009; Lees- Marshment, 2009; Lilleker et al., 2006; Osuagwu, 2008; Sanghvi, 2019). It also responded to the call for more critical research on personal brands (Lair et al., 2005). Moreover, by applying an intersectional feminist approach, which is borrowed from sociology, this thesis adopted a theoretical lens from different disciplines across marketing in political branding and addressed the recent call for research on multi-disciplinary approaches (Pich and Newman, 2020). Thus, this thesis also contributed to the empirical studies literature on political branding and personal branding (Ahmed et al., 2017; Falkowski and Jablonski, 2019; Jacobson 2020; Kaneva and Klemmer; 2016; Osorio et al., 2020; Pluntz and Pras, 2020; Speed et al., 2015).

Gender and race are the salient intersectional identity categories discussed in marketing research. There is an explicit call for exploring different identity dimensions intersections in appropriate contexts (Gopaldas and Fischer, 2012). By building upon intersectional feminist approaches, this thesis delved into issues of gender, ethnicity and religion. Age was also revealed as an important social identity dimension in the construction of female politicians' personal political brand identity in Turkey. Consequently, this thesis provides insights into the examination of different intersectional identity categories, hence adding to the stream of intersectional research in marketing.

Furthermore, this thesis contributed to the literature by combining the concepts of brand resilience, brand heritage and brand legitimacy and applied them to the context of political marketing. Firstly, resilience emerged as a key component of personal political brand identity. In doing so, it was suggested that personal political brands' resilience is an ongoing process in line with personal political brand building (Dean et al., 2016; Pich et al., 2020). Therefore, the

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concept of brand resilience was used in the political branding area to understand the construction of personal political brands.

Secondly, this thesis focused on the concept of brand heritage. Although scholars pointed out the importance of *heritage* in the creation of personal political brand (Armannsdottir et al., 2019a; Pich et al., 2020; Speed et al., 2015), *heritage* was not applied as a concept but as a personal political brand identity's intangible propriety in commercial branding theory (Armannsdottir et al., 2019a). However, as the brand resilience noted above, this thesis focused on the application of brand heritage as a concept with its two dimensions to the construction of personal political brand identity.

Brands seek legitimacy (Humphreys, 2010b; Humphreys and Latour, 2013; Kates, 2004; Scaraboto and Fischer, 2013; Valor et al., 2021). This research found that personal political brands also should be viewed as legitimate. In this respect, the third theoretical contribution to the literature pertains to the application of brand legitimacy to the exploration of personal political brand identity. Existing personal political brand research focused on the creation, management and communication of the desired identity by combining personal branding and political branding (Armannsdottir et al., 2019a; Casprini et al., 2020; Johnson, 2017; Pich et al., 2020; Pluntz and Pras, 2020; Vallas and Christin, 2018). This thesis blended management and communication of the desired identity and conceptualised them under the concept of brand legitimacy. Indeed, in appreciating that legitimacy is a multi-level construct (Scott, 1995; Suchman, 1995), this thesis posits that personal political brands are built on different legitimacy grounds through their relationships, negotiations and communications. Within this multi-level understanding of legitimacy, the thesis not only adopted different legitimacy pillars to understand personal political brand identity but also attempted to apply the most recent construct of legitimacy, consensus (Haack et al., 2020). Thus, the findings demonstrated that

the ongoing discussion of legitimacy, limited to the legitimacy pillars in marketing, can be broadened and deepened. Moreover, since this thesis focused on the construction of personal political brand identity from the brand-creator perspective, it has developed an empirical understanding into the exploration of individual-level legitimacy process within the area of political branding. Therefore, this thesis not only provided insights into the personal political brand identity legitimacy process but also went deeper in addressing the calls for research on individual-level legitimacy, which has hitherto received only scant attention (Bitektine and Haack, 2015; Haack et al., 2020; Tost, 2011).

7.4.2. Methodological Contributions

This thesis criticised existing studies on personal political brands, which provide insights from the managerialist and functionalist perspectives. Instead of following the flow to explore the creation of political brands, this thesis expands the empirical understanding of personal political brands through the intersectional lens from the brand-creator perspective (Harris and Lock, 2010; Needham and Smith, 2015; Nielsen, 2016; O'Cass and Voola, 2011; Scammell, 2015). Although adopting an intersectional feminist approach has still been an issue in marketing research, this thesis offers a comprehensive examination of different intersectional identity categories in female politicians' personal brand identity. In this respect, this thesis added to the conceptualisation of intersectionality in marketing research. This thesis addressed the explicit call for further research on a larger sample size in different political contexts, which may increase the understanding of personal political brands (Armannsdottir et al., 2019a). By focusing on the context of Turkey, a secular democratic parliamentary republic system allowing multiple political parties, this thesis provides deeper insights into the understanding of personal political brands in an unexplored context and setting. It responded to calls for more empirical research in both personal political brand and intersectionality research.

7.4.3. Managerial Applications

This thesis makes a managerial contribution to knowledge by shedding light on both the everyday life and the long-term application of the brand identity construction process. This thesis revealed that personal political brands constructed their identities by intersecting multiple identity dimensions. In addition, it provided insights into how these female politicians leverage their identities to construct their personal political brands. In this regard, a deeper understanding of the intersection of multiple identity dimensions and adopting a comprehensive approach in the management and communication of personal political brands using the concept of brand legitimacy can facilitate the development of more coherent and consistent personal political brands. That is, by applying brand legitimacy, this thesis identified more strategic approaches to the management and communication of personal political brands. This can also be used to create, manage and communicate different political products, such as political parties, leaders, candidates and legislators.

Furthermore, by developing an *Intersectional Personal Political Brand Identity Framework*, this thesis also aimed at providing straightforward managerial applications for not only politicians but also other personal brands, such as academics, doctors, engineers, students, entrepreneurs, etc. who are accepted as personal brands (Chen, 2013; Cortsen, 2013; Gehl, 2011; Lair et al., 2005; Ottovordemgentschenfelde, 2017). Through this systematic framework, individuals and practitioners can become capable of combining all concepts mentioned above to construct and manage their desired brand identity. Indeed, this thesis strongly highlighted the importance of personal brands' context and their congruence with other contexts. Therefore, beyond applying the concepts to construct a consistent and coherent brand identity, *Intersectional Personal Political Brand Identity Framework* provided a holistic view of the social environments of personal political brands. The framework also made possible reviews

and changes if necessary. Subsequently, the dynamic structure of the framework and clear implications for brand creators can facilitate the development of authenticity, credibility and consistency of desired personal political brands.

7.5. Future Research

Professional female politicians are the main focus of the thesis. This thesis is the first of its kind to understand the construction of a personal political brand through intersectional lenses. In so doing, this thesis addressed explicit calls for looking into how individuals develop their personal political brand in different political contexts and from multiple perspectives (Pich et al., 2020). By focusing on the context of Turkey, this thesis addressed this call but provided insights into multiple perspectives from brand-creator perspectives only. Although a deeper understanding of the brand-creator perspective plays an important role in developing a coherent, consistent and authentic personal political brand, future research should deeply focus on personal political brands from multiple perspectives, such as voter-citizens and competitors, as recommended by Pich et al. (2020). Further research should focus on other political brands construction through the lens of an intersectional feminist approach, for this would provide a deeper understanding of political brands.

This thesis "*first visits*" three novel, burgeoning concepts from the field of marketing (Henneberg and O'Shaughnessy 2007, p. 26): brand resilience, brand heritage and brand legitimacy. These concepts are potentially useful in the study of personal political brands' exploration. Furthermore, these concepts would generate a greater understanding of political brand identity. They would be advantageous in developing strong and trustworthy political brands with a high sense of awareness. Specifically, brand legitimacy would help political brands to be viewed as consistent and understand inconsistencies in multiple contexts. Thus,

future research should adopt brand legitimacy to gain a comprehensive approach to managing and communicating political brands. Furthermore, brand heritage and brand resilience need to be investigated to generate a greater understanding of political brand identity.

Personal political brands have a busy and unstable agenda. In addition, they are not easy to approach and are difficult to fully capture or understand. However, there is a need to understand personal political brands in the long term. Conducting observations, ethnography or autoethnography through longitudinal analysis and comparing ideological or political platforms will generate a deep understanding of personal political brands. This thesis used interviews as a data collection method to understand the construction of professional female politicians' brand identity. In addition to the use of interviews, further research should collect different types of data and adopt intersectional feminist approaches.

In the field of marketing, Tadajewski et al. (2014) argued that instead of using a single paradigm, using multiple paradigms provides greater insights into the exploration of the relationship between development and consumer practice. In this respect, they offered critical transformative marketing research with a multi-disciplinary and multi-paradigmatic agenda. With this in mind, political marketing is also considered an appropriate field for the application of critical and interdisciplinary theories of society (Moufahim and Lim, 2009). By employing intersectional feminist approaches, this thesis acknowledges the critical nature of personal political brands. For example, it was found that time and place, and at times sound, play an important role in developing personal political brands. In this respect, employing different paradigms and approaches, such as *rytmanalysis* (Lefebvre, 1992) or *sonic turn* (Patterson and Larsen, 2019), which enable researchers to understand the effect of place, energy, time and blend them with intersectional feminist approaches, would generate a greater understanding of

personal political brands and even political brands. Therefore, future research could use multiple paradigms to continue exploring political brands in different contexts.

7.6. Final Words: A Reflexive Comment

As a female researcher from Turkey, the choice of focusing on female politicians in the world of politics was based on my personal interest in understanding why female politicians do not put enough effort to enhance the rights of women, though women are oppressed and marginalised in politics. This was a question for me that I could not understand for years. Starting from my high school years to the last year of my bachelor's program, I was one of the stigmatised and thereby oppressed women because of my headscarf. In this respect, my own experiences motivated me to work on this project.

Being a Turk, a Muslim who wears a headscarf, and a woman researching women in political positions me as an insider (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Although being an insider provides both advantages and disadvantages for the research, being an insider who experiences partly the same difficulties allows me to benefit from the advantages of being in this position. By highlighting my own experience with participants, I utilised "*experiential reflexivity*", that is, participants and the researcher share their experiences and aim to increase their knowledge of the topic (Bettany and Woodruffe-Burton, 2009, p. 669). However, this was not my main approach in data collection.

My religion and gender intersected identity allowed me to fully understand my participants who experienced stigmatisation and oppression due to the intersections of their multiple identity categories. I experienced that my mutual intersectional identity categories with these female politicians make them more approachable and relating. Even my participants noted that we were hurt by the same ideologies. I believe that their efforts to count me in their own

personal journey allows me to provide deeper insights into their personal political brand. Interestingly, during the interviews with female politicians who did not experience discrimination and stigmatisation revealed also that these politicians made efforts to empathise with me. Although their attitudes surprised me, after a while, I found myself also seeking mutual points and showing empathy to not only female politicians but also to everyone I met to build rapport and have fruitful conversations.

As I mentioned above, although this was not my main approach to the data collection, I employed it during the data collection process to reach more people and encourage participants to provide more details and expand their narrations. In this respect, it helped me build trust with my participants (Braun and Clarke, 2013).

At this point, I became more aware of the process of intersectionality and my own intersectional identity categories in the context of Turkey. Thus, introducing myself just as a Turk and a Muslim woman remained very restricted. Moreover, I found myself giving details of my own intersectional identity categories, such as I am a Turk, Muslim, single, 28 years old, a woman researcher, at the same time still a student abroad, a person from the west of Turkey or in particular from Bursa originally and still lives in Bursa, and a member of a middle-class family. Although gender was the mutual identity category, I felt like an outsider in cases where I could not find any other mutual intersectional identity categories with my participants. This made me aware of other important identity dimensions in politics. Specifically, as a young woman researcher, I received extra attention from ageing female politicians and even other women, such as their consultants and assistants. In line with my research findings, they perceived me as a student who is at the beginning of her career and approached me from the perspective of *motherhood* or *abla*. In this respect, they were more willing to give details. Due to my age, they were open to sharing their stories and narrating their successful journeys. In this respect,

this warm interaction does not only help me to generate a greater understanding of the intersection of multiple identity categories and explore female politicians' brand identities in the context of Turkey and increase my understanding of my own intersectionally created identity. In addition, this thesis increased my self- and social awareness.

Furthermore, although there are many mutual points highlighted above and as a researcher, I was familiar with the context of Turkey, I did not need to distance myself from the participants. This occurred naturally through my intersecting multiple identity categories. Specifically, the intersection of my age and occupation positioned me as someone from outside the world of politics. Thus, I became able to ask further explanations during the interviews, which let them think of me as an outsider who looks for detailed answers on account of having no background in this culture. Therefore, both as an insider and outsider, I aimed to understand their personal political brands.

Consequently, I perhaps found the answer to my question that I could not understand for years. Additionally, this thesis is an individual self-discovery journey. While I started my journey by identifying myself with a few salient intersectional identity dimensions, I became able to express myself through many different intersecting categories at the end of the journey.

Appendices

Table 1: Glossary Table with Key Concepts

Concepts	Definitions	Concepts' Dimensions		Definitions of Related Concepts
Brand heritage	Brand heritage is defined "*as a dimension of a brand's identity found in its track record, longevity, core values, use of symbols, and particularly in an organisational belief that its history is important*" (Urde et al., 2007, p. 4). Brand heritage is an important component of personal political brand identity, which enables brand creators to connect the past to the future in order to construct a credible, consistent brand identity. According to Pecot and De Barnier (2017) "*longevity and stability represent the best compromise between comprehensiveness and parsimony*" (p. 77).	Dimensions of brand heritage	*Longevity*	Longevity is presented in relation to the given market in which the brand operates (Pecot and De Barnier, 2017). For personal political brands, longevity is understood in relation to the personal brands' ability to launch their brand identities whenever possible.
			Stability	Stability dimension reflects "*timelessness*" and combines both the brand promises and brand values to internal and external audiences (Urde et al., 2007, p. 78). Personal political brand identity stability reflects personal brands' consistency on core values and beliefs that drive the personal political brand.

Brand resilience	Resilience is mostly defined as "*the developable capacity to rebound or bounce back from adversity, conflict and failure or even positive events, progress and increased responsibility*" (Luthans, 2002, p. 702). Personal political brand resilience is defined as personal brands' individual developable capacity to bounce back from adversities, including marginalisation, stigmatisation, and oppression.	Resilience resources of professional personal political brands	Purposefulness	Purposefulness refers to a personal political brand's ambition and commitment to bounce back from the experienced adversities.
			Social support	Social support refers to a personal political brands' ability to notice its social potential and mobilise power towards her/his own purpose.
			Adaptability	Adaptability is composed of both self- and social awareness combined with the ability to generate new ideas and solutions. It is defined as personal political brands' capacity to evaluate changes or refinements in the context, conduct a self-audit and adjust to new ideas.
Brand legitimacy	Brand legitimacy is related to brand identity and is defined as the "*generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity [a brand, in the present context] are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions*"	Legitimacy pillars	Regulatory legitimacy	Personal political brands' regulatory legitimacy emphasizes personal brands' conformity with law, states' gender regime and their organisations' rules and regulations.
			Cognitive legitimacy	Cognitive legitimacy of personal political brands emerges when the target market has a level of awareness of personal political brands, and they are perceived as taken for granted.

		Normative legitimacy	Personal political brands' normative legitimacy derives from congruence between personal political brand and society's values and cultural expectations.
(Suchman, 1995, p. 574). Personal political brand legitimacy reflects personal political brands' congruence with different contexts in which they perform their brand identity.		Relational legitimacy	Personal political brands are viewed as relationally legitimate when they are perceived to affirm the collective sense of identity, self-worth of social groups or individuals and to guarantee that they are treated with dignity and respect and receive outcomes commensurate with their entitlement.
	Legitimacy components	Validity (Collective or macro-level legitimacy)	Validity refers to personal political brands' contexts, including states' gender regime, political context, their family contexts' perception of appropriateness.
		Propriety (Individual or micro-level legitimacy)	Propriety refers to personal political brands' individual beliefs that their brand is appropriate for their social contexts.
		Consensus	Consensus refers to the agreement between personal political brands' contexts and their propriety beliefs.

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			(Meso-level legitimacy)	

Table 2: Participant List

Interview No	Pseudonym	Age	Interview Place	Interviewee's Major	Experience of Interviewee
1	Hacer	43	Bursa	Engineer	- Many years of experience as an engineer - She has worked in NGO's since she was at university - Experience at one of the political party's youths branches - Currently, she has an executive position in her political party - She is nominated as deputy in the forthcoming elections
2	Mine	47	Ankara	Nurse	- Many years of experience as a nurse - Managerial experience in health organisations - NGO experience in different organisations - Currently, she is a member of parliament
3	Elif	58	Ankara	Writer	- She is actively working as a writer - NGO experience in local, national and international organisations - Currently, she is a member of parliament - She has managerial positions in different commissions in the parliament - She is nominated as deputy in the forthcoming elections
4	Betül	47	Ankara	Dentist	- Many years of experience as a dentist - She has years of managerial experience in her political party's youth branches - Currently, she has an executive position in her political party's women branches - She is nominated as deputy in the forthcoming elections

5	Fatma	50	Ankara	Psychologist	- Many years of experience as a psychologist - She has years of experience at her political party's local organisations - Currently, she is a member of parliament - She has managerial positions in her political party - She has managerial positions in different commissions in the parliament - She is nominated as deputy in the forthcoming elections
6	Nurcan	44	Ankara	Pharmacist	- Many years of experience as a pharmacist - She has different managerial experience in NGOs - She has managerial experience in her political party - Currently, she has an executive position in her political party - She is nominated as deputy in the forthcoming elections
7	Zehra	53	Ankara	Housewife	- She has many years of managerial experience in her political party's youth branches - She has managerial experience in her political party's women branches - She is currently holding an executive position in her political party's women branches
8	Merve	46	Ankara	Economist	- Many years of experience as an economist - NGO experience in national and international organisations - Currently, she is a member of parliament - She has managerial positions in different commissions in the parliament - She is nominated as deputy in the forthcoming elections
9	Nuran	51	Ankara	Journalist	- Many years of experience as a journalist - NGO experience since high school years in different organisations - She has managerial experience in her ex- and current political parties - Currently, she is a member of parliament - She has an executive position in her political party's women branches - She has managerial positions in different commissions in the parliament

					- She is nominated as deputy in the forthcoming elections
10	Ceyda	49	Ankara	Lawyer	- Many years of experience as a lawyer - NGO experience in different organisations - She has executive experience in her ex-political party and current political party's women branches - She has various managerial experience in her political party - She was a member of several parliaments of Turkey - Currently, she is a member of parliament - She is nominated as deputy in the forthcoming elections
11	Emel	49	Ankara	Lawyer	- Many years of experience as a lawyer - NGO experience in different local and national organisations - She has managerial experience in her political party - She has managerial positions in different commissions in the parliament - She was a member of several parliaments of Turkey - Currently, she is a member of parliament
12	Azra	46	Bursa	Dentist	- Many years of experience as a dentist - NGO experience - She has experience in her political party's women branches
13	Eda	57	Phone	Housewife	- Many years of experience in her political party's women branches - She has managerial experience in a different political party - She has managerial experience in her political party's local women branches
14	Hande	42	Bursa	Entrepreneur	- Many years of experience as an entrepreneur - NGO experience since university years - She has managerial experience in her political party's women branch - Currently, she has an executive position in her political party's women branches

15	Seda	34	İzmit	Journalist	- She is actively working as a journalist - NGO experience in local and national organisations - She has experience in her political party's youth branches since her high school years - She has managerial experience in her political party's women branches - She is nominated as deputy in the forthcoming elections
16	Asiye	62	Bursa	Educator	- Many years of experience as an educator - NGO experience at different local, national and international organisations - She has many years of experience in her political party's women branches
17	Zeynep	48	Bursa	Draftsperson	- Many years of experience as a draftsperson - She has managerial experience in her political party's youth branches - She has years of executive experience in her political party's women branches - She is nominated as deputy in the forthcoming elections
18	Nur	58	Ankara	Lawyer	- Many years of experience as a lawyer - She was a member of several parliaments of Turkey - She has executive experience in her political party - She has managerial experience in different commissions in the parliament - She served as a minister in several national governments - Currently, she has an executive position in her political party
19	Filiz	65	Ankara	Doctor	- Many years of experience as a doctor - She was a member of several parliaments of Turkey - She has managerial experience in different commissions in the parliament

					- She has years of executive experience in her political party - Currently, she has executive positions in her political party
20	Canan	56	Ankara	Engineer	- Many years of experience as an engineer - She was once a member of parliament - NGO experience in local and national organisations - She had managerial experience in different commissions in the parliament - She has managerial experience in her political party - Currently, she has an executive position in her political party - She is nominated as deputy in the forthcoming elections
21	Nilay	64	Ankara	Manager	- Many years of experience as a manager - She was once a member of parliament - She had managerial experience in different commissions in the parliament - Currently, she has an executive position in her political party
22	Yasemin	51	Ankara	Academic	- Many years of experience as an academic - NGO experience at different local, national and international organisations - She has managerial experience in her political party - She is nominated as deputy in the forthcoming elections
23	Selin	53	Bursa	Economist	- Many years of experience as an economist - NGO experience at different local, national and international organisations - She has managerial experience in her political party's women branches
24	Hatice	35	Skype	Lawyer	- Many years of experience as a lawyer - NGO experience at different local, national and international organisations

					- She has different managerial experience in different organisations - She is nominated as deputy in the forthcoming elections
25	Leyla	41	Ankara	Economist	- Many years of experience as an economist - She was a member of several parliaments of Turkey - NGO experience at different local and national organisations - She had managerial experience in different commissions in the parliament - She had executive experience in her political party - Currently, she has an executive position in an institution

Opening - Introduction

- Research aims and outline
- Informed consent, contact details for participants, audio tape

Main Part of Interview

- How did your interest start to politics?
- How/ why did you enter politics?
- How were you perceiving politics before and how are you perceiving it now?
- What is the meaning of politics for you?
- Did your inner circle support you? How?
- What kind of challenges have you faced since?
- Part choice? Ideology?
- Other roles and jobs?
- Current roles?
- What does it mean to be a politician?
- What does it mean to be a woman in politics?
- How do your beliefs effect you in politics?
- Day in the life of an (ethnicity) female politician in Turkish politics?
- Values?
- Key issues?
- How do politicians differ from their competitors and rivals?
- What makes you different from your competitors and rivals? Do you think being a woman differs you from competitors and rivals? Or being from other ethnic or religious groups?
- How do you communicate with your voters, followers, etc.? Offline? Online?
- How do your identity dimensions effect your communication?
- How do you feel in your political party?
- How do you feel in the parliament?
- How do you communicate with your competitors and rivals? Challenges?

- What makes you powerful in politics?

- Target market?

- How a woman can be successful in politics?

- How do you manage politics and private life?

- Future goals?

- How can you identify yourself in politics?

Closure

- Questions for me
- Summarize findings
- Recall ethical procedures
- My contact information

NB: This form will be translated into Turkish

1.2.2018

Participant Information Sheet for Interviewees

This research aims to understand the construction of professional female politicians brand identity in the context of Turkey. You are invited to take part in an interview relating to political brand identity construction in Turkish politics. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in the study. The study is conducted by Sibel Orhan as part of her PhD studies at Durham University. This research project is supervised by Dr. Mona Moufahim and Prof. Mark Tadajewski from the Business School at Durham University.

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to give an appointment for an interview; the interview will be conducted face to face.

The discussion will last about one hour. With your agreement, I will make a digital recording of the interviews. This is solely for the purposes of research and help me in remembering what you and other people tell me. The recordings will be destroyed on completion of the research. You are free to decide whether or not to participate. If you choose to participate, you have a right to decline the invitation or to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences for you.

Any information you supply will be held in strict confidence, viewed only by the researchers (Sibel Orhan, Dr. Mona Moufahim and Prof. Mark Tadajewski) and then anonymised. The records of this study will be kept secure and private. All files containing any information you

provide are password protected. In any research report that may be published, no information will be included that will make it possible to identify you individually. There will be no way to connect your name to your responses at any time during or after the study.

* This study is not funded/sponsored by any organization; however, I'm supported by the Republic of Turkey Ministry of National Education to pursue a doctoral degree in the Business School at Durham University, UK.

If you have any questions, requests or concerns regarding this research, please contact me via email at (---), or by telephone at (---).

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Business School Ethics Sub-Committee at Durham University (date of approval).

Participant Name-Surname: Signature:

Sibel Orhan

NB: This form will be translated into Turkish

Dear Ms. (Participant surname),

This is Sibel Orhan, a PhD candidate at Durham University in the UK. This letter is an invitation to consider participating in a study I am conducting as part of my Doctoral degree in the Department of Marketing at the Durham University in the UK under the supervision of Dr. Mona Moufahim and Prof. Mark Tadajewski. I would like to provide you with the attached information sheet and what your involvement would entail if you decide to take part.

This research is conducted to investigate how female politicians construct their personal brand identities. We are trying to capture your thoughts, experiences and perspectives on creating your professional brand identities in the context of Turkish politics. Therefore, please note the following;

- The interview will be recorded, and a transcript will be produced.

- All data collected will be stored on the University's secure portal.

- All questions are voluntary, and you can stop at any time you like.

- Once the interviews are complete, the data will be held for a maximum of three years before being deleted.

- The data will be used only after it is fully anonymised.

- The transcript of the interviews will be analysed by Sibel Orhan as a researcher.

- Access to the interview transcripts will be limited to Sibel Orhan, Dr. Mona Moufahim and Prof. Mark Tadajewski.

Your participation will be a valuable addition to my research and findings could lead to greater understanding of the people in the field. If you are willing to participate, please suggest a day and time that suits you best before the April 15, 2018. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Business School's Sub-Committee for Ethics at Durham University.

Yours sincerely,

Sibel Orhan
PhD Candidate
Durham University Business School
Mill Hill Lane
Durham
DH1 3LB, U

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