

CONSTRUCTION OF GAY IDENTITY AMONG DIFFERENT CLASSES: A  
CASE STUDY IN ANKARA

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **CONSTRUCTION OF GAY IDENTITIES AMONG DIFFERENT CLASSES: A CASE STUDY IN ANKARA**

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This thesis mainly aims to understand how construction of gay identity differentiates in terms of class inequalities. Regarding the conceptual framework of Deniz Kandiyoti, it inquires in what way class position reshapes the experience of gay sexuality and how gay men of different classes bargain with heteronormative order through different perceptions of homoeroticism and gender identities. In discussing this issue, how gay men identify themselves, how they represent their body, how they interact with and perceive other gay men, how they perceive masculinity and femininity in construction of gender identities engender as primary questions to understand plurality of gay experience. These featured aspects of gay experience in Turkey entail a dynamic process in the way of both multiple formation of gay experience due to class differences and contradictory character of such plurality. Perception of other forms of gay experience is included to the discussion for understanding a comprehensive analysis for plurality of gay experience.

**Keywords:** Heteronormativity, gay, class, coming out, closet.

## ÖZET

### FARKLI SINIFLARDA GEY KİMLİĞİNİN İNŞASI: ANKARA ÖRNEĞİ

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Bu tez temel olarak sınıfsal eşitsizlikler içerisinde gey kimliğinin nasıl inşa edildiğine odaklanmaktadır. Deniz Kandiyoti'nin kavramsallaştırması baz alınarak, eşcinsellik ve toplumsal cinsiyet kimliklerinin algısı göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, sınıfsal konumun gey deneyimini nasıl yeniden anlamlandırıldığı ve farklı sınıfların heteronormatif düzenle ne türden pazarlık stratejileri geliştirdiği araştırmanın temel sorunsalı olarak belirlenmiştir. Bu konunun tartışılmasında, gey erkeklerin kendilerini nasıl tanımladığı, bedenlerini kamusal alanda nasıl sundukları, diğer gey erkeklerle ne tür bir ilişki içerisine girdikleri ve onları nasıl algıladıkları ve erkeklik ve kadınlık kurgularını mevcut toplumsal cinsiyet kodları içerisinde nasıl algıladıkları gey deneyiminin çoğul karakterini anlamak için öne çıkmaktadır. Gey deneyiminin öne çıkan bu bileşenleri hem sınıfsal farklılıklar bağlamında gey kimliğinin nasıl oluştuğu, hem de bu çoğul gey kimliklerinin birbiriyle neden ve nasıl çatışmalı bir ilişkiye girdiklerini anlamak için önem kazanmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, inşa edilen gey kimliğinin diğer gey kimlikleriyle girdiği ilişki biçimi, gey deneyiminin çoğulluğunun kapsamlı bir analizi için tartışmaya dahil edilmiştir.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Heteronormativite, gey, sınıf, açılma, gizlilik.

To my mother,  
for her silent recognition

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Research Problem

The major aim of this study is to understand how identity construction of gay men differentiate from each other due to class differences in urban Turkey in the 2000s. Regarding the literature that argues heteronormative gender order does not constitute a unique and singular form of structure (Young, 2009, 49), the major focus of this study is developed as understanding how gay men construct their gay identities in the way of identification, body representations, family relations, spatial experiences, etc... within such plural structural formations. In other words, by virtue of taking into account intersectionality of gender and class dimensions, variation of gay subjectivities will be the major focus of this study to comprehend to what extent gay experience entails a collective gay identity; and moreover, in what way class differences and plural masculinities, in the context of class inequalities, engender plural gay identities.

Through this perspective, a further question would appear as an attempt to encapsulate bargaining strategies of gay men within such plurality of gay experiences. Self-identifications, body representations, family relations, life choices and lifestyle of gay men will be discussed around the question of how gay men negotiate with heteronormative gender order in the conceptual framework of Deniz Kandiyoti's (1988) study, *Bargaining with Patriarchy*. Moreover, such practices which emerge as bargaining strategies of gay men will also be understood as constitutive elements of gay identity. In this way, regarding that signification of body, family relations, life choices and lifestyle engenders multiple meanings, norms and values as masculinity construction constitutes a plurality due to class differences, such bargaining strategies of gay men will also be taken into account as constitutive elements of plural gay identities. By taking into account that gay identity is severely condemned and marginalized in urban Turkey, how gay men develop several strategies to regain legitimate selves in social life will be analyzed in this study.

## 1.2 Contemporary Literature in Queer Studies

Contemporary discussions in queer studies can be characterized around several terms which takes into account identity construction, cultural specificities, transnational dimension of sexuality and spatial experiences of queer individuals. The major tendency can be understood as a pluralist approach to understand different formations of queer subjectivities in fluidities and instabilities rather than unique, fixed and universal identities.

Literature on queer experience in Western societies have been constructed on denial of essentialist ideas that bounds sexual practices into rigid sexual categories (Weeks, 2000, 2). Great body of grounded works had contributed to queer studies as they stand at the point that reveals instability and fluidity of queer subjects (Plummer, 2007, 22). In this sense, contemporary discussions do not only reveal plurality of sexual practices but they can also be interpreted as dismantling taken-for-granted identity categories which hinders the fluidity and changeability of sexuality (Weeks, 2000, 2). Besides, although class dimension is being neglected in queer studies, there is several social research which emphasizes significance of class dimension for multiple queer subjectivities (Seidman, 2004, 218). Economic independence, family relations, vulnerability of queer people in working life and experience of closet/coming out indicate great differentiation among different class positions (ibid, 43).

Apart from this, great body of sexuality literature majorly focus on queer sexuality in Western societies and non-Western queer practices are being neglected and ignored. Moreover, there exists discussions on non-Western queerism which confines it into viciousness (Hekma, 2000). In such way, non-Western queerism is considered to be of gendered, age-structured and class-structured practices. On the contrary, Western queerism is celebrated as egalitarian forms of non-heteronormative sexuality. Such kind of argumentations are certainly restricted with oversimplification and overgeneralization of non-Western queer experience and moreover, it emerges as a Western centric conception. Besides, as Boellstorf (2006, 628) argues, it neglects non-Western specificities at cultural and national level. In this way, cultural dimension emerges as a significant element for queer subjectivities and rather than making universal

generalizations on queer experience, less prominent ethnographical works on queer experience in non-Western societies reveal the significance of grounded “perspectival approach” (ibid) towards queer experience. In this way, several ethnographic studies of non-Western queer subjectivities can be interpreted as multiplicity of queer experience within the context of cultural, national and historical specificities.

In that context, it can be mentioned that there are several featured concepts which indicates the particular experiences of non-Western queer sexuality. For instance, although coming out of the closet and public visibility of gay men are certainly celebrated as politically promising forms of resistance against heteronormative order in Western literature (Howe, 2002), a few research indicates that cultural specificities (e.g. Manalansan, 1995) and lesser legal and moral support (e.g. Howe, 2002) confine gay men into the closet and among those, construction of gay identities are being attained through such structural forces. Besides, the way of identification emerges as another dimension for non-Western specificities in the way of cultural relativity and national power structure (e.g. Puar, 2001). Lastly, perception of “Western gay lifestyle” as an image of emancipation through the terms of gay lifestyle and consumerism in Western society comes forward as another prominent topic being discussed in non-Western societies (e.g. Collins, 2005). Moreover, there are some further discussions which emphasizes the class dimension in transnational interactions between Western gay lifestyle and non-Western queerism (e.g. Altman, 1996).

Through this perspective, fewer studies reveal that queer subjectivation cannot be understood without taking local dimensions and its interrelationship with global dynamics of queer sexuality. The most salient outcomes which comes forward in the context of these studies challenges the idea of publicly visible, singular identifications of queer experience and notifies the significance of some other dimensions like cultural specificities, class inequalities and national power structures in the process of identity constitution.

### **1.3 Queer Studies in Turkey**

Although it is not easy to mention queer studies in Turkey as there are unfortunately very few researches on this issue, it would be significant to mention a couple of studies which have been conducted in Turkey. Hüseyin Tapınç’s study (1992) and Tarık Bereket

and Barry Adam's study (2002) share similar findings and research question as they are trying to claim a typology for "Western gay identity" which is adopted by middle class, urban and well educated gay men. For instance, Tapınç (1992) makes a categorization of gay experience which regards gender role mostly in anal intercourse. 'Masculine' and 'feminine' roles are being defined regarding the roles of inserter and insertee in order (ibid, 42-43). The one of whom inserter/insertee polarization disappears are being considered to be of Western gay identity. Similarly, Bereket's and Adam's study (2006) considers emergence of Western gay identity of which sexual practices are not gendered (ibid, 132).

Both of these two studies considered that class differences determines the social dynamics of Western gay identification and they argue that upper class position and education comes up with more egalitarian queer sexuality in the name of Western gay identity (Tapınç, 1992, 46; Bereket and Adam, 2006, 132). However, both Bereket and Adam's study and Tapınç's study insist on dualism of Western/non-Western queer practices and claim superiority of Western queerism in the way of more egalitarian practices. Moreover, their analysis seems to be too simplistic as they fail to regard perception of "being Western" in the context of local masculinity/femininity stereotypes.

Apart from these, Ayşe Gelgeç-Bakacak and Pınar Öktem (2009) focuses on media representation of gay/lesbian identity and managing strategies of gays and lesbians towards heterosexism in Turkey. Their study focuses on how gay and lesbian identities are being represented in daily papers which are being distributed in nationwide scale. The research is significant as it indicates the role of printed media on misconception of gay/lesbian sexual practices especially through medicalization, stereotyping gay and lesbian identities, strenghtening pejorative judgments towards LGBT people and making gay and lesbian voice invisible (ibid, 10-14).

On the other hand, the research focuses on how individuals who identify themselves gay or lesbian develop strategies to manage discriminatory social environment. In that regard, their findings reveal that closeting gay identity and leading a dual life, regulating the body in traditional masculinity norms, compartmentalization of life by constructing a closeted gay community and "being best" at one's other status comes forward as

empowering strategies (ibid, 17-20). However, their study explicitly neglects the intersectionality of gender and class with queer sexuality; as a result, it does not mention different empowering strategies among different class positions and gender identities.

Lastly, although both Bereket and Adam's study and Gelgeç-Bakacak and Öktem's study are recent works so that it would be influential to understand queer experience in contemporary Turkey, their fieldwork have been conducted with respondents who are in contact with political organizations that takes part in LGBT liberation movement in Turkey. In that sense, it can be considered that such kind of data might offer a narrow information about queer experience in daily life as the respondents who took part in these studies are expected to be self-affirmed and –at least partially- publicly visible gay and lesbian individuals. Misrepresentation of experience of closet and gay men who are not in contact with political organizations retains limited information about gay life in Turkey.

Besides, Ertan's (2008) study also focuses on gender dimension in daily experiences of gay men. It focuses on multiplicity of masculinities and complex processes of masculinity construction and its exclusionary aspects of gay masculinity. However, his study fails to encompass the plurality of gay experience as it conceptualizes gay identity as a monolithic category and argues subordination of gay masculinity within the binary oppositions of homosexuality/heterosexuality. As this study considers hegemonic masculinity as an absolute power position that subordinates both women and gay men (ibid, 9); complexity of masculinities among different classes and gay men as well is not being questioned.

#### **1.4 Contribution of This Study**

This study mainly fills the gap of understanding everyday experiences of gay men regarding the own narratives of my respondents. Therefore, this study aims at representing gay experiences of different social positionings which is not restricted to politically motivated gay network. Moreover, regarding the inclusivity of the data gathered through narratives of my respondents, this study is an attempt for mapping the gay subjectivities in the context of class differences. In this way, this study attempts to constitute a typology of gay experience by defining two types of gay experiences which are differentiated from each other in terms of class hierarchies. As variation of values

and norms, lifestyles, beliefs are variant through class differences, this study attempts to understand how gay experience reflects such variation and to what extent it reshapes the gay experience through such class differences. Especially when intersectionality of gender and class is taken into account, it attempts to encompass significance of class dimension for everyday life of gay men. And most significantly, this study is a modest attempt to contribute to a field of study which is being severely neglected by academic scholars in Turkey.

### 1.5 Methodology

The methods of data gathering used in this study are qualitative interviews and participant observation. 24 in-depth interviews have been conducted with men having sex with men; and majority of the respondents are self-identified gay men (One of the respondents were not aware of the categories of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender and after being informed he considered that he is a bisexual man as both men and women are sexually attractive to him. Besides, one of the respondents stated that he is a bisexual man but because he is not significantly attracted by women for a couple of years, he prefers to identify himself as gay). All the respondents live in Ankara. And different socio-economic statuses have been represented with age range from 22 to 48. Two of the respondents are married to a woman with children and one of the respondents is divorced but he does not have any children.

The length of a typical interview was between 45 minutes and 2.5 hours. The place for interview was determined regarding the respondents' choices as the place where the respondent would feel himself relaxed had been the major concern. The majority of the interviews have been conducted in cafes which are not only specific to LGBT people but there are several interviews which had been conducted in homes of the respondents, university campuses and workplace as well.

The interview had covered several issues which can be characterized in 5 themes of which some of them may be considered to be interrelated to each other: (1) The way of the one's self-identification to express his sexual practices and public visibility; (2) Body representations and perceptions on masculinity/femininity; (3) Spatial experiences for self-realization of sexual or emotional encounter; (4) Family life; and (5) Working life.



For participant observation, I have participated in gay cafe every Saturday evening and followingly gay club which located in upstairs of the cafe at night during a month. I have also joined 2 house parties hosted by a gay man. I have also joined numerous friends meetings in a home of a gay man or in a bar which is not specific to LGBT people. Participant observation was mainly organized to gain access to gay community and to participate entertaining activities in public space and in privacy as well. The major concern during the participation has been experiencing the negotiations for recognition especially in public space and an attempt to understand perceptions of gay men towards “other gays” concerning body representations and gender perceptions.

This study comprises a typology for gay subjectivities which reflects different forms of identification and body representations in two types. It should be noted that this does not come up with the claim that the typology covers up the all aspects of gay experience in Turkey; however, regarding the narratives of respondents it figures out a pattern that can be characterized in two categories: (1) “sophistication and exclusivity of gay experience” in the name of middle class, well-educated and gay men; and (2) “clandestinity under the image of ‘ordinary man’” in the name of lower class and traditional middle class gay men. In that regard, the study has been organized as follows:

In Chapter 2; much more detailed explanations on research methodology and experiences of fieldwork have been figured out. Definition of the site of field, the process of entering the field, organization and the content of the interview and other qualitative techniques like participant observation is going to be demonstrated to identify the methodology of this study. Besides, particular specificities of this study will be discussed regarding the vulnerable position of gay men in heteronormative gender order. In this way, a discussion that encompasses the positionality of the researcher and the interaction between the researcher and the respondents will also be included in such discussion regarding the gender and class dimension in self-reflexive way.

In chapter 3; a conceptual framework have been constituted to determine theoretical background of the research. The major dynamics of heteronormativity that shapes social order and social mechanisms for regulation of sexuality, in the name of legal, moral and medical discourse, will be specified as this process rely on the basis for heterosexism.

Furthermore, a discussion on sexual categories will be held and potentiality for decategorization of sexual practices that promise for a comprehensive understanding of queer sexuality will be discussed regarding social constructionist approaches and queer criticisms. And lastly, regarding conceptual discussions of queer authors, positionally strategies for resisting heteronormative gender order will be reviewed.

Chapter 4 figures out common way of gay life specific to urban Ankara. Regarding the narratives of gay men in gay social network, constitutive elements of urban experience to construct particular gay identity will be discussed. How gay men are inclined to lead “double lives” and bargain with heteronormative gender order will be analyzed regarding fragmentary aspects of their sociality. In this way, vulnerable positionings of gay men due to some sort of dependencies, spatial experiences and body representations will be conceptualized as featured elements of gay life. Moreover, partial visibility of gay community and gay men’s spatial and corporeal experiences will be discussed as a form of resistance against heteronormative codifications of dominant order.

Although this chapter encompasses the common aspects of gay life in the way that gay men bargain with dominant order, significance of class dimension which designates the plurality of gay experience in urban Ankara will be analyzed in the following chapter. Chapter 5 and chapter 6 are organized to discuss how two types of gay men differentiate from each other.

In this way, in chapter 5; gay identification of middle class, well-educated and urban gay men reveal how gay experience may appear as a source of pride and component of exclusivity. In this case, gay identification comes forward as a manner of distancing oneself from the “hetero world” and “other gays” as well by virtue of class privileges, age dimension. As a result, gay identity comes forward as a signifier of class position which symbolizes the exclusivity of gayly way of life that is directly adopted by Western gay image. In this chapter, significance of class privileges both in the way that comes forward as formation of gay embodiment as legitimate selves and construction of a lifestyle which is specific to a particular class position in the way of “gayization” will be emphasized.

In chapter 6; the distinctive aspects of gay closet which constitutes a particular experience specific to gay men of lower class positions will be demonstrated. In this

way, adoption of a strict family discourse and its gendering aspects will be figured out by avoiding confinement of such gay men into an absolute passive victimhood. There will be an emphasize for agency to resignify such family discourse and gay closet emerges as a particular gay identity which resignifies homoeroticism as a masculine form of queer sexuality.

Regarding such variations of gay experiences categorized in two types, there will be included a further discussion that questions the collectivity of the gay identity in chapter 7. Recognition of differences between gay experiences among different classes brings up with another dimension that reconsiders the situation of closet as an experience of “passive victimhood”. In this sense, by challenging the binarism of coming out/closet, there will be further inquisitions to find out some other forms of “gay agency” within the public invisibility.

## Chapter 2

### FIELD AND METHOD

Speaking of a field work which is conducted with gay men has several specificities as gay men possess a particular experience in their social life. Regarding the fact that majority of gay men are situated in a vulnerable position and they lack exact visibility in various ways and forms, organization of the field work and my ongoing interaction as a researcher with the respondents are not indissociable from such specificities and vulnerabilities. In this way, both during the way that I organize the data collecting process and my individual interaction with gay men emerges as a specific way of “researching” on this issue. In this way, I aim to demonstrate such specificities. In the first part of this chapter, I will figure out how I organized the fieldwork including the field site, gaining access to the gay life and qualitative techniques. In the second part of this chapter, I will try to discuss my positionality as a researcher and how I interact with my respondents regarding the gender and class dimension.

#### 2.1 Method

For this study, 24 interviews with men having sex with men have been conducted. To determine the site of the field, I have not asked for men to identify themselves as gay. Practicing sex with men have been sufficient for participating in this study. The reason that I did not take into account how they identify themselves relies on several reasons. As it is argued in some other researches (e.g. Puar, 2001), self-identification of individuals who practice sexuality different from heteronormative gender order is indissociable from power relationships. Exclusionary discourses and severe prejudices towards people who practice queer sexuality certainly affects how men identify themselves in the name to define their sexual and emotional activities. In this way, identification of individuals as gay, lesbian or bisexual emerges as an individual practice to affirm such sexual practices which destabilize hegemonic order. However, it should be noted that such practice of affirmation entails a feeling of competence to “claim” being different from heteronormativity. On the other hand, self-identification may come up with different forms due to individual preferences, sexual activities, etc...

During the fieldwork, I have met several men who does not explicitly define their identity as gay due to reasons that is mentioned above. For instance, a man defined himself as bisexual although he does not have any sexual or emotional attraction towards women but he just likes to maintain such possibility to have any sexual or emotional relationship with a woman. There were also one more man who was not aware of the sexual categories and after being informed what gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender mean he stated that he is bisexual as he likes having sex both with men and women. Besides, one of the respondents stated that he is a bisexual man but he does not feel himself attracted to women so much so he prefers to define himself as gay. Lastly, there was one more man who defines himself as bisexual however as he is in a long-term relationship with a man, he says that he is leading a gay life at that moment.

In this way, self-identification as gay does not constitute a temporally stable situation and is being reorganized due to several reasons. For some men, how they identify themselves is determined through feelings of guilt, fear and shame. For some other, they do not prefer to define in particular way due to their practices and desires. And even, there are some other cases that hinders the possibility to denominate the one due to lacking information for identifying sexual variation. The remaining 20 respondents define himself as gay . However, definiton of my respondents as gay was not sufficient and instead, I preferred to determine the site of field as “men having any sexual or emotional encounter with men”. Nevertheless, due to the reason that it would not be practical to mention such fluidities during the process of self-identification, I will prefer to use the notion of “gay” in the following chapters of this study.

The research have been conducted with men who lives in Ankara. Various socio-economic statuses have been represented with age range from 22 to 48. However, class differences in this study does not only rely on differences of economic resources and education levels. Rather than understanding class differences which is reduced to educational and occupational class positioning, complexity of cultural and social capital has also been taken into account. For this sake, initial outcomes of preliminary analysis of this study revealed that class differences indicate a slight distinction of gay men of different classes in urban Ankara. By following spatial differentiation of gay experience, much more plural understanding of class distinction have been taken into consideration. Therefore, in this study, class is being defined on the basis of occupation, education and

family. Through this perspective, social capital, taste, lifestyle choices, skills, resources choices, manners, language and geography indicated a challenge of class binarism which comes up with a duality of lower class and middle class. Regarding the respondents took part in this study, on the basis of major dynamics like spatial experiences, family life, lifestyle choices, taste and manners, 3 different categories of class emerges as follows: Professional, and well educated urban middle class, lower class and traditional middle class with stronger family ties.

Besides, different marital statuses have also been represented in this study. Two of the respondents are married with children. One of them defined himself as bisexual while the other as gay. Besides, there is also a man who is divorced a couple of years ago but he does not have any children. He also defined himself as gay.

Gay men are represented in this study mostly with their pseudonyms. As gay men commonly use a second name in their daily interactions with other gay men, they preferred to call themselves with their such "gay names" in this research. However, there are some other gay men who preferred to use their real names as well. The ones who preferred to use their real names are the ones who does not have any concern to closet their gay identity in any space. However, I prefer not to mention who use their real names as I have a concern that publicly representations of gay selves in this study would come up with a harm towards themselves. Of course, such attitude would confine them into an absolute position of marginalization of themselves and in this way, this study would result in strengthening the situation that gay men are inclined to closet their gay identity. However, I feel myself uncomfortable with the idea that any gay men would face any prejudice towards himself due to taking part in this study. As a result, I did not prefer to mention who use their real names.

Organization of the data collection has been majorly provided by conducting in-depth interviews with gay men in Ankara. However, I have applied some other techniques like participant observation as well. Moreover, conducting in-depth interviews and participant observation is not designed as separate phases of the fieldwork. By virtue of my individual contacts with gay men who lives in Ankara, I have conducted in-depth interviews with them and some other gay men whom my friends have referred. Besides, most of the time, I have joined several activities like coming together in house meetings,

going out to a cafe or pub, etc... In this sense, participant observation and in-depth interviews have been conducted simultaneously. I have joined two house parties of which gay men were invited to entertain. I have been to gay cafe and club every Saturday evening during a month. And also, I have joined numerous friends meetings in a home of a gay men or in a pub/cafe.

During the participant observation, I had a chance to participate and observe how gay men interact with each other, how they have fun, what sorts of activities they do, how they represent their bodies, how they perform their gender identities, what kinds of topics they talk about and how they interact with and perceive other groups of gay men during coming together. However, most importantly, participant observation provided me for gaining access to gay community. Especially by virtue of my individual contacts with a few gay men operates as a validation of my presence in such activities and I could easily earned trust and kindness of gay men during such activities. In this way, I can say that I got to know various gay men whom I could ask for making an interview with him following such gay activities.

However, organization of in-depth interviews has not been achieved only through participant observation. I also used snowball technique to have a chance for getting to know gay men who are not associated to gay community as well. Regarding the fact that snowball techniques provides for several advantages for studying groups of which are not visible (Bailey, 1994, 96), using such technique appeared to me indispensable. As gay men are not visible in social life, and majority of the gay population are strategically striving for being invisible in social life, snowball technique has been the significant element of my fieldwork as it supplied me for being introduced to gay men who leads his life in the gay closet with very few interactions with other gay men. In this sense, by using several techniques to get to know gay men I could had a chance to understand plurality of experiences and perceptions of gay men.

The length of a typical interview was between 45 minutes and 2.5 hours. To eliminate any possible feeling of being uncomfortable during the interview, I asked gay men for choosing the place where the interview will be held.

During the interview, I have tried to encompass various dimensions of gay experience in social life. Regarding the literature on gay men's experiences, several social dynamics and

concepts emerges as significant elements of gay experience. At first hand, marginalization of non-heterosexual sexual practices are subject to severe regulatory and discriminatory discourses due to existing violation of moral order (Weeks, 1986, 6); however, such dynamics are not distinct from violation of gender order as well. By defining hegemonic masculinity as a concept which is intrinsic to the heterosexuality (Connell, 1998, 249), it can be concluded that gay sexuality is violation of dominant gender order as well. In this way, regulatory and oppressive character of heteronormative gender order is both a product of hegemonic masculinity and gay experience cannot be taken into account without its intersectionality of gender dynamics.

Through this perspective, everyday life of gay men which is subject to such discrimination and violence is of various aspects at every moment of their social life. At first hand, it appears to be a question of recognition. In this way, non-Western aspects of cultural dimension engenders particular dynamics that reshapes non-Western queer sexuality. Regarding various studies on non-Western queerism, traditional forms of gay sexuality especially in the form of gendered gay identities appears to be distinctive element (Altman, 1996, 82). Such dimension is being juxtaposed to the family patterns which may have some traditional traces. In different family patterns, different forms of identity constitutions emerges and hence, gendering aspects of family life plays the decisive role in such gendered identity constitutions of gay men (ibid, 89). For those who can distance their selves from their families in physical, cultural or emotional sense, another form of gay identity constitution becomes the part of 'gay landscapes' in the name of "Western gay" (Boellstorff, 2006, 635). Besides, there exists some other aspects of gay selves which are constitutive for identity construction of gay men. For instance, community construction is a way of gay identification and it has several complexity in the way of resisting and reproducing hegemonic order (Yeung, Stombler and Wharton, 2006). Such dimension is certainly related to spatial experiences of gay men and there are various studies which designates the significance of spatial experiences of gay men. As Collins (2005) indicates, place-making is a part of gay identification and gay subculture in urban life. This is certainly intertwined with the dynamics of struggle for public visibility of gay men and cannot be considered indissociable from oppressive and regulatory aspects of heteronormativity (Connell, 1992, 744). Therefore, how and to



what extent gay men are visible in social life becomes influential aspect of identity constitution. In this way, body representations becomes the visible aspect of identification and it is certainly relevant to the dominant gender order. In the way of masculine and feminine codifications of body representations, gay visibility comes forward as decisive element in gay men's social life (Hennen, 2005). It should be certainly noted that it is not easy to comprehend all aspects of gay experience but it can be noticed that family life, spatiality, visibility, identification and body representations appears to be influential to understand everyday life of gay men.

In this sense, I had taken into consideration of such dynamics to understand the variety of gay experience. The interview has been organized in a semi-structured way. By virtue of this, rather than determining the content of the interview, I tried to attain the chance to understand how gay men experience, perceive and narrate their individual life.

However, there were several Standard topics which I would like to focus on. I had tried to understand how the gay men perceive his own identity, how he interact with other people like family members, friends, working environment and other gay men, etc... In this sense, the interview was designed to include such topics which would be characterized in 5 titles which would be considered to be interrelated with each other: (1) The way of the one's self-identification to express his sexual practices and public visibility; (2) Body representations and perceptions on masculinity/femininity; (3) Spatial experiences for self-realization of sexual and emotional encounter; (4) Family life; (5) Working life.

At the beginning of the fieldwork, I was trying to understand the experience of the gay men in urban life particularly depending on different neighbourhoods. In this way, I was asking how they perceive Ankara as an urban space, where they feel themselves more or less comfortable and where they prefer to live and not to live. However, regarding the preliminary analysis of my in-depth interviews, I concluded that such dimension of gay experience does not constitute a distinctive element which is specific to gay experience in social life. In this way, I abandoned such topic. On the other hand, although body representations was not a standardized topic in the interview, after that I realized how they perceive and represent their bodies are very significant in their social life, I decided to standardize talking about perceptions and representations of bodies. In this way, I can say that the fieldwork has been organized in a flexible way and during the process of

fieldwork, the structure of the interview have been reorganized through the narratives of gay men.

## 2.2 Field Experience

Regarding the fact that science is by no means different from an interpretation of which we might consider another forms of “seeing” (Haraway, 2009) and any scientific production is certainly a “situated knowledge” (ibid) which is shaped by the observations and interpretations of the researcher; and moreover, such process of “seeing” does not confine the object of the research into a passive position but, on the contrary, it is of a reciprocal interactions between the researcher and the source of the knowledge (Wacquant, 2007, 40); I believe that my own positionality as a researcher in the way of how I interact with my respondents and how such relationship reshapes the process of data gathering and analysis should necessarily be taken into account. To understand such process in a complexity of interactions between me, as a researcher, and my respondents; I believe that I should go beyond my singular identities within the process of entering the field. Instead, site of field should be taken into account by going beyond identifying the site simplistically as a group of people who are different from heteronormative order. In this sense, there exists a necessity to consider gender and class dimension (Bolak, 1996). Moreover, in such process body representations and spatial experiences are also significant elements as well (Datta, 2008).

Under the circumstances that a social group which is of invisibilities and considerable sufferings in a hegemonic heteronormative order, how the research has been achieved in the context of body and space emerges as a significant question to be figured out. As gay men are commonly invisible in social life, and moreover, they are inclined to develop various strategies and tactics to be invisible for eliminating such vulnerabilities in their social life, body representations and spatial performances of both my respondents emerge as constitutive elements that reproduce gender identities and class positions during the process of fieldwork. Moreover, I was also subject to such negotiations through my body representations as well.

However, as it is the major argument of this study, gay experience does not constitute a singular meaning in social life but it entails plural gay identities due to class differences. Therefore, spatial and corporeal dimension of interactions constitute a fragmented and

heterogeneous character. Both choosing the places where the interview will be held and body representations during the interview engenders in a plural way and complexity. Therefore, I cannot mention a stable and fixed process during the fieldwork.

### **2.2.1 Researcher's Positionality**

I can demonstrate my positionality as a researcher as follows. I have been in contact with LGBT people for a couple of years both in the way of political struggle against homophobia and transphobia and moreover, I can mention some sort of social interactions which is not only motivated due to political reasons. At an institutional level, I have been part of a group of students in feminist movement and LGBT movement which was striving for establishing a student association at METU between the years of 2008 and 2009. By virtue of this, I was in a relationship with various gay and lesbian people, as well as heterosexual activities, both at METU and in some other places in Ankara and İstanbul. Moreover, I was also introduced to some other political organizations like Kaos GL, Pembe Hayat and Lambdaİstanbul and a few of their members as well. In this way, I can mention that I have an insider position within LGBT community.

Lastly, I can mention that I am raised in a middle class family with parents of professional works. I was raised in metropolitan cities like İzmir and Ankara and I have earned my educational degrees from respectful state schools which are considered to be "promising" in public opinion. In this way, my insider position with gay men needs to be considered with an intersectionality of my class position as well.

### **2.2.2 Field of Gay Men as a Gendering Site**

At first hand, I should emphasize that my insider position provided for an easygoing access to gay community and I could easily developed rapport relationship with gay men and earned their trust and kindness. This was very significant dimension of my fieldwork as gay men suffer from severe vulnerabilities due to lacking institutional power and striving for invisibility in social life, so that maintenance of contact with gay men appeared to be vulnerable and difficult for such reasons. However, both in the way of my individual contacts and their kindly references for validation of my presence to whom I do not have a direct contact facilitated my access to gay men.

However, invisible situation of majority of the gay men reshaped the process of fieldwork as gay men were continually developing several strategies due to vulnerability in social life. Due to the fact that gay men were strategically striving for closeting their gay identity, public visibility of them at the moment that I was conducting an interview in any public space would deepen their vulnerabilities. Hence, the process of negotiations constitutes in the way of choosing the places where the interview will be held as well. However, this is also indissociable dimension of body representations and such discussion will be held in an intersectional way of space and body.

One of my own primary concerns was asking for my respondents to choose the place of the interview. As I was trying to organize the interview where my respondents would feel themselves most comfortably, I had never inclined my respondents to take a specific place for the interview. In this process, it can be mentioned that the interviews have been held in various places and times including workplaces, public cafes which are not specific to LGBT people, houses which is owned by my respondent and university campuses as well. Such variation can be interpreted depending on gay men's possessions of any concerns for being publicly visible or not.

Variation of places where the interview was going to held indicates plurality of gay experiences due to class hierarchies among gay men. Although such argument will be discussed in following chapters of this study, shortly, it can be mentioned that upper class position emerges as more public visibility of gay men while gay men of lower classes tend to closet partially or completely their gay identity in their social life.

In this way, conducting the interview in workplaces and university campuses of gay men indicates that such gay men does not have any concern to closet their gay identity. Therefore, conducting an interview was not subject to a considerable negotiations while interacting with such gay men. However, for those who are not publicly visible, at least except for their narrower social circle, did never preferred to have the interview in their workplace or university campuses. Instead, they preferred to conduct the interview in cafes, pubs or in their own houses. As a result, conducting interview in such places was subject to a complexity of negotiations.

Making the interview in the house was certainly convenient as there does not exist "heterosexual eyes" on us and gay men were not confined to develop any strategy to

avoid “homosexual suspicion” over their selves. However, house still emerges as a gendering site of the field as it is not exactly separated from public space. Gay men feel themselves under a partial surveillance even within the bounds of their private sphere and this comes forward in the way of how they will introduce me, as a researcher who is studying on experiences of gay men, to their neighbours. For instance, Sancar who is 42 years old and living alone in the neighbourhood where majority of his relatives lives in as well, invited me to his house for the interview and he had sent me a telephone message a couple of hours before we were going to meet. He was asking me what I was going to wear and he gave me several advices for what to wear: “I think you would better wear something sportive. Maybe a sportswear. I find narrow cuts and clothes that fits on body figure overwhelming 😊” (Sancar, 42, self-employed).

Particular strategies which are developed for avoiding any homosexual suspicion which would result in any corporeal activity unfitting to normative masculinity was being perpetuated even during the fieldwork as well. Moreover, significance of gender performativity in specific places also matters in the way of how I perform as well. As how I was going to behave was certainly related to any sort of homosexual suspicion which would also incline towards themselves, I was also expected to fit such heteronormative norms and values.

Besides, the interviews which were held in cafes were subject to much more complex negotiations. In this process, the feeling of being under surveillance of “heterosexual eyes” was constituted at the very moment of the interviews as there were numerous people around us. Therefore, gay men were developing numerous strategies. At first hand, they were trying to use particular words like gay, homosexual or heterosexual very rarely, only in the case that it was necessary. Moreover, even if they had to use such words, they were trying to be sure whether there was any waiter around us and in this case, they were speaking in a lower voice. Besides, choosing the table to sit on was also a matter of negotiations as well. Gay men were trying to find out a table which is relatively outside of the view of “other people” where there were not many people sitting around.

Furthermore, subjection of my body representations to such negotiations was constituted to a unstable process. During the interview, while I was trying to understand how they perceive masculinity and femininity in gay embodiment, gay men were

occasionally giving examples of my gender performativity to identify “what femininity is” and what is not”. However, such exemplifications did not constitute a stable signification of femininity and masculinity but it emerges as a dimension of plurality of gay experience due to class differences<sup>1</sup>.

For instance, a gay man of lower classes, Tark (28, autopark keeper), explicitly declared that I have a gender performance in the name of effeminacy:

“I do not know how to describe effeminacy. For example, you are feminine. Your way of speaking and walking shows that. You talk politely. You do not use your arms opening towards the sides while walking.” (Tark, 28, autopark keeper)

On the other hand, Eray (32, computer programmer) stated that my gender performativity is appropriate as it is not of exaggerated aspects of effeminacy:

“I think you have some sort of effeminate manner but this is your natural way. You do not exaggerate it. You behave in this way in your own accord. That is why, as you do not exaggerate it, it is appropriate.” (Eray, 32, computer programmer)

Signification of my gender performativity among different classes in plural ways indicates that negotiations during the interview process was not stable but it is being reshaped due to different gay experiences as a result of different class positions. In this way, perceptions on my gender performativity was not fixed process but it is being renegotiated at every time and place in accordance to class differences. Although I was trying not to violate gender order by virtue of adapting my performativity to hegemonic order for the sake of avoiding any harm over my respondents, I was always reconstructing my gender identity at every case of interacting with my respondents. This process certainly operates as a gendering field which reshaped my and my respondent’s gender identity in a continuous way.

Regarding the fact that the place where the interview was held was signified with heteronormative codifications system and it was certainly situated as a part of

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<sup>1</sup> Signification of gender performativity due to class differences will be discussed in following chapters. However, shortly, I can summarise that gay men of lower classes prioritize masculine embodiment due their lower class positions. However, middle class gay men have a tendency to trivialize masculine embodiment and they make a distinction of “exaggerated femininity” and “natural femininity”. In this way, some sort of effeminacy in gay embodiment emerges as an appropriate gender performativity as they perceive that such attitudes are naturally acquired and not reversible aspects of individuals.

“heterosexual’s world”, it should be noted that the site of field can be understood within the bounds of heteronormativity in which normative gender order was in process. On the other hand, the field that this research was being conducted have been eliminated from any form of prejudices which marginalize and condemn queer sexuality and in this way, I could claim that the site of my field was tried to resignify in an inclusive way that embraces different sexual or emotional practices. In this way, this process constitutes a fragmented terrain on which there exists an interaction between heteronormative gender order and some other discourses that embraces different sexual practices. However, as the field is fragmented by being determined by various forms of material, performative, discursive processes (Datta, 2008, 192), the site of field is being subject to various forms of negotiations due to such fragmented nature of the field process. Although I was always trying not to deepen the vulnerabilities of gay men who are striving for being invisible in social life, significations of the heteronormative system emerges in a plural way, and hence, I was confined to reconstruct my body representation, gender identity and the flow of the interview in every time continuously.

This process engendered as a site of field which reproduces particular gender stereotypes in several ways. Under the feeling that there exists a need to conform existing gender codifications, making an interview became a part of construction of normative gender identities. Both myself and my respondents were subject to continuous negotiations not to violate existing order.

### 2.2.3 Signification of the Researcher as □Messenger□

Although the fieldwork was subject to several specificities which is of particular difficulties due to vulnerable positionality of gay men, I can also mention some other aspects of my research process which facilitated ongoing process. During the process of fieldwork, gay men who participated in this study expressed their voluntariness to take part and they also showed out their kindly supports to introduce me some other gay men as well. Besides, wherever I joined any activity of which gay men came together to have some fun, common discussion have inclined to their particular experiences of their own accord. Regardless of my explicit attempt to ask for how they experience their gay identity in their daily life, they seemed to be enjoying while telling me their individual experiences of where they meet gay men, how they fall in love, what kind of men they

find attractive, how different men they have ever met before, etc... During such times, they were also notifying me "I think you should also write this in your thess" or some other statements.

And moreover, they were occasionally eager to talk about their individual sufferings. Although I had a general tendency not to represent gay experience as a "passive victimhood" and "subalternity" which reproduces the position of gay experience in absolute subordinate and oppressed situation, gay men had explicit inclinations to talk about difficulties which is specific to gay experience.

In this way, they were not only sharing their experiences but they were feeling in the position that they were representing "gay experience" to the public sphere of which most probably they perceive it as "heterosexual crowd". Gay men whom I have talked were eager to reshape my research analysis in the way that would make their sexual practices visible. The process of my fieldwork have been resignified by gay men as a site for gay agency to challenge their vulnerable position. In this case, I have, most of the time, felt that they had a desire to tell about "being gay" to the ones who are not familiar with it.

Therefore, signification of my position as a researcher is being perceived as a "Messenger" who transmits their own feelings, experiences and desires to the "heterosexual crowd". In this way, voluntary participation of the respondents becomes much more clear. By virtue of taking part in this study, gay men felt themselves visible in some way. As a result, I was codified as a person who makes such "agreement" between gay men and "heterosexual crowd". However, it should also be noted that such attitude can be interpreted as a reflexive interaction between the researcher and the respondents. Regarding my institutional position as a graduate student in a state university which is perceived as a respectful educational institution strengthened the perception of my position as "Messenger". As a result, acquiring the rapport relationship and kindly trust of gay men relies on my class position as well.



### Chapter 3

#### RETHINKING CONCEPTS ON QUEER SEXUALITY

Sexuality has always been a field of study until nineteenth century and sexuality studies owes too much to the political movements mostly in USA. In the late 60s and 70s, there have been great influences of anti-war movements, women's movements, gay-lesbian movements and Black Movements on emergence of sexualit studies in a critical approach (Beasley, 2005, 129). In this way, theoretical discussions and political struggles appears to have explicit influences on each other. However, the times of political struggles in USA, most importantly Stonewall riot, and scholarly works on sexual variations rely on the idea of homosexuality as a basic human condition, a fixed and universal identity which is being oppressed by capitalism (ibid, 130). In this way, homosexuality was commonly conceptualized as a stable category of people who are being oppressed due to non-procreativity. Therefore, oppression of homosexuality had been understood as a dimension which reflects capitalist mode of production. Besides, prominent works and political discourses which were striving for gaining the social and political recognition understood homosexuality which is rooted on the human biology (ibid, 131). In this way, conceptualization of homosexuality designates a dichotomy of homosexuality/heterosexuality, culture/nature, etc... Moreover, such dualism designates a power analysis in the way of oppression and strives for emancipation in the name of *Gay Liberation*.

However, contemporary discussions on gay sexuality designates a rupture from such discourse and it is being conceptualized in a different way from essential understanding of gay identity. As a result, gay identity comes forward as a socially constructed entity which is being understood within the power relationships especially in the context of modernity. In this way, some several questions emerges as significant elements for understanding the complexity of modern categories of sexual variation in the name of how it represents a universal, stable and fixed experiences and how it has a relationship with heteronormativity. Through this perspective, this chapter discusses such elements of non-heterosexual practices. In the first part of this chapter, conceptualization of gay identities regarding the social dynamics which constructs such categories will be drawn

on. In the second part of this chapter, universality and fixity of such sexual categories will be questioned in the framework of social constructionism and its queer criticisms. Third part of this chapter will focus on alternative approach of queer theory in the sense of how gay identities can be conceptualized as a denial of universal, fixed and stable gay experience. Intersectionality of gender will also be emphasized in a framework that assigns gay experience as a unstable and plural comprehension. In the last and forth part of this chapter, neglection of class dimension will be questioned in queer theory and several feminist approaches which designates significance of class inequalities will be included to the discussion on class dimension.

### 3.1 Homosexuality as a Socially Constructed Phenomenon

Contemporary discussions on gay/lesbian identity commonly shares the idea of social constructionism. In late 70s and 80s, Michel Foucault's prominent work of *History of Sexuality* has been turning point in sexuality studies (Plummer, 2000, 52). Therefore, rather than conceptualization of homosexuality as a condition, major approach turned out to consider it as a practice. *Jeffrey Weeks* and *Ken Plummer* are leading figures who conceptualized the gay/lesbian identities in social constructionist approach but we can also mention a couple of early works which conceptualized gay/lesbian identity in the way of social constructionism. *Mary McIntosh's* article is considered to be the most significant one which was written in late 60s. McIntosh (1996) explicitly questions the dichotomy of homosexual/heterosexual which assigns homosexuality as a condition. Instead she prefers conceptualization of homosexuality as a role rather than a condition because, in the first sight, homosexual behaviors do not always generate a universal and homogeneous category of people (ibid, 34). As she observes several homosexual acts in the way of latency and during the time of adolescence, she rejects homosexuality as a condition. On the other hand, she argues that assertion of homosexuality as a condition relies on the assumption of medicalization of which there does not exist adequate evidence (ibid, 34). She concludes that homosexuality is a role but conception of homosexuality as a condition operates as a social mechanism which comes up with the condemnation of homosexuality and social control.

According to her, a publicly known, clear-cut definition of homosexuality as a condition engenders the norms of permissible and impermissible acts and violation of these norms

come up with sanctions and punishments. Permissible acts of sexuality emerges as consistency to the heterosexuality and any form of violation, in which homosexuality is included, entails severe social exclusions and stigmatization as a sanctionary mechanism. That is why, conception of homosexuality appears to be a necessity for the social order and control (ibid, 34-35). Such kind of an approach should definitely be taken into account because significance of her work comes of its challenge to the existing paradigm as it conceptualizes homosexuality as a “complex social creation” rather than “a specific condition” (Weeks, 2000, 5). Weeks also celebrates McIntosh’s attempt to understand the conception of homosexuality but he argues that her functionalism leaves critical points unanswered and weak. According to Weeks (1996, 44), historical roots of the categorization carries on significant elements and he urges the necessity of it to understand the construction of homosexuality. In that sense, he focuses on discursive shifts of regulation from moral to the legal and medical discourse as a construction of homosexuality in Western history, following Foucauldian conceptions of bio-power and discursive regulations and control.

In this account, emergence of homosexuality as a trans-historical identity or condition is a new and modern phenomenon which is constructed culturally and historically at different times with different meanings (Weeks, 1999, 128). Before the emergence of the category of ‘homosexual’ – particularly in Christian West – traditional discourse on homosexuality was repressive to the discrete acts rather than the individuals. In that sense, he makes a distinction between traditional concepts of buggery or sodomy and modern concepts of homosexuality (ibid, 129). While particular non-procreative acts are being prohibited and sanctioned in the case of moral regulation and people who are associated to such acts have been punished to death penalty, shift towards the legal and medical regulation in the modern era constitutes homosexuality as a stable and fixed category (Weeks, 1996, 48). Although the homosexual behavior is being considered to be sinful crime in the moral discourse, it turns out to be a “disease” and a “deviance” and the individual who conduct such acts appears to be “the sick” and “the deviant” in the condition of homosexuality. The modern homosexual is being constructed due to

modern discourses and initial justification is being conducted through the biological 'evidences'<sup>2</sup> and criminalization.

Medical research becomes the primary way for construction of homosexuality as a pathological condition which should be cured and controlled. Early 1900s and late 1890s have been the years of considering homosexuality as a situation which is primitive, less developed, degenerated, abnormal, etc... (Sullivan, 2003). Here homosexuality as a condition, signifier of a category of people and a stable identity operates as a regulatory discourse and a modern organization of sexuality. As Weeks (1999, 142) argues, categorization of sexuality becomes the part of bio-power in Foucauldian account. Establishing the normative order in terms of heterosexual, monogamous family life designates a power analysis in the way constitutive, positive account. (Homo)sexuality is not considered to be within the domain to be repressed and prohibited but it actually constitutes the element of dominant discourse (ibid, 143). The *homosexuals* are themselves not only particular group of people who are being oppressed within the external power relations but such kind of categorical allegory subsumes discursive processes of manifesting marital, heterosexual, monogamous, procreative sexual acts.

Legal aspects of regulatory discourses appears as supplementary dimension which has a definition of "deviance" to construct homosexuality as a modern phenomenon. In this way, emergence of a notion of "demeanors" engenders as a threat towards normative order and institutions of modernity emerges as power structures which satisfies social order and control. However, regulations is being developed as a change towards a civilization and removal of death penalty is being reformed as disciplining and controlling queering subjects by virtue of imprisonment (Weeks, 1996, 48).

In this way, transformation of the discourses that characterizes non-heteronormative sexuality as a "sin" towards modern discourses that signifies it as "crime" and "medical

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<sup>2</sup> There are some commentators and sexologists like Heinrich Ulrichs (Sullivan, 2005, 4) and Edward Carpenter (Weeks, 1985, 247) who are for homosexual practices and their justifications of homosexuality are being constituted through biological evidences as well. However, assuming sexual desire as an instinctive force and natural phenomenon is not easily justified in latter studies. Jeffrey Weeks (1999, 133) argues that homosexuality is not a unique and universal sexual desire but there are a wide variety of sexual variation which cannot easily be understood as a biological motive.

illness" is being understood as a constitutive elements of modernity. In this sense, social constructionist approach defines emergence of modern categories of sexuality as stabilization of sexual commitments of individuals. Legal and medical discourses appears to be institutional apparatuses of such modern discourses that construct homosexuality to establish a social order of which non-heteronormativity is not being included.

### 3.2 Can "Homosexuality" be a Collective Identity?

Beyond the regulatory discourse of bio-power which categorizes sexualities and constructs heteronormative sexual order, refusal of 'homosexuality' as a stable and fixed condition comes up with the question of how we are going to understand sexual variations and non-heteronormative sexual practices. By virtue of various empirical works and political discussions, it turns out to be much more salient that sexual desires and practices goes beyond universal and generalized sexually defined categories. As Weeks (1985, 186) points out, regarding the idea of sexuality in the way of change and flux which is determined through unconscious forces and changing cultural and historical meanings, sexuality appears to be a set of personal commitments in a wide range of variety rather than political or social identifications. Gayle Rubin (1990, 70), as well, argues that sexual conducts goes beyond the binary oppositions of homosexuality/heterosexuality. That is why, homo/hetero binarism that establishes generalized sexual identities have explicitly problematic elements and involve some sort of exclusionary dynamics.

Through this perspective, the question of gay/lesbian identities as analytical categories constitutes a great question to be answered in anthropological and sociological research agenda. We may mention several approaches of social constructionism and poststructuralist critiques towards articulations on universal gay/lesbian identities. In the account of Jeffrey Weeks and Ken Plummer, there still exists an insistence on categories of identities in the way of self-creation challenging the heteronormative regulation and control. Although they explicitly express the dangers of sexual variations to be neglected under universal identity categories, they seem to have tendencies for perpetuating the discourse of identity politics for political strategy. On the other hand, poststructuralist

critiques of Diana Fuss, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Gayle Rubin designates an alternative way of understanding for sexual variation.

### 3.2.1 Collectivity of Gay and Lesbian Identities

Weeks and Plummer's insistence on the notion of collective identities seems to be relying on Plummer's theoretical contribution to social constructionist approach within the framework of symbolic interactionism. Idea of gay/lesbian identity is being understood as a social process within the framework of stigmatization towards gays and lesbians (Plummer, 1996, 65). His attempt does not disregard the 'homosexuality' as a socially constructed species but he actually designates the social interactions that involves condemnation and devaluation of homosexual acts in everyday social relations. In this way, discriminatory discourses towards gays and lesbians constitutes a part of the construction process.

Through this perspective, he figures out four stages which results in adoption of homosexuality as a universal and generalized category. Once he argues that the process commences with the individual experience of sensitization, it is followed by signification, coming out and stabilization (ibid, 69). He depicts the process not only as a typology for sociological analysis but he comes out with the argument of 'homosexuals' as a modern political and social subjects.

Firstly, *sensitization*, as an individual experience, refers to the complex relations of unconscious libidinal fluxes and conscious realizations. Plummer (ibid, 70) argues that this is the initial affection due to some sort of erotic encounter of the individual in the way of genital acts with another same sex individual. However, this does not necessarily occur among two persons but he designates an emotional or erotic attachment to someone in some way. Furthermore, although he explicitly utters that this is essential to the homosexual identification, he actually mentions such erotic commitments as a potentiality for homosexual identification. On the other hand, *sensitization* also constitutes the stage of bodily fascinations that symbolizes particularities of homoerotic acts (ibid, 70-71). Particular objects obtain homoerotic meanings and these are considered to be of an interaction with the social experiences as well (ibid, 71).

Secondly, *signification* is the following stage that Plummer (ibid, 72) conceptualizes as a leading stage for identification. Here, he mentions subjectivation due to acquisitions of differentness from the larger social world. And there exists an interaction with the society which would result in various ways. In the one way, it may come up with a positive relief in the sense of self-affirmation. However, in another, and most probable, sense; “structural forces of the larger society” (ibid, 72) operates as a reactionary condemnation towards homoeroticism. Moreover, self-devaluation may come up with secrecy and feelings of guiltiness and solitariness. In this sense, despite negative aspects of self-devaluation, homosexuality becomes a crystallized and signified identity (ibid, 73). Whether it is kept as a secret and invisible practices, homosexuality becomes a signifier of the identity and it goes beyond the experience of homoerotic encounter in Plummer’s account.

However, besides the such aspects of secrecy, solitariness and self-devaluation, Plummer (ibid, 75) designates the problem of access to the gay sociality and transformation towards deviance and vulnerabilities of gay and lesbian individuals. A process of isolation both in the way of lacking contact with other gays and lesbians and lacking support from heterosexual companions comes forward with devaluation of homosexual subjects (ibid, 76-77). To challenge self-devaluation and reaffirmation of his/her own is manifested as *coming out*. Public declaration of sexual orientation is both the constitution of identity in its own way and filled up with political meanings. Self-recognition as a homosexual by virtue of coming out appears to be parallel processes of establishing contacts with other gays and lesbians and community construction (ibid, 78). In this way, homosexuality becomes a way of life which shifts towards collectivization of identity (ibid, 78-79).

In Plummer and Weeks’ account, the idea of collectivity and universal gay/lesbian identity appears to be a political strategy in the way of self-affirmation and public visibility. Weeks (1985, 209) argues that identities of gay and lesbian are not destiny of which individuals have to adopt but it is a political choice. Although ‘the homosexuality’ as a modern phenomenon is a socially constructed entity to criminalize and pathologize sexual variations, he mentions a potentiality for self-creation of its own identity to change social structure that regulates and controls sexualities. However, both Plummer and Weeks does not deemphasize plural eroticisms regarding the queer criticisms. In his

later writings, Plummer (2007) mentions the significance of pluralization of sexual practices and risks of false binarisms of which lived experiences are not that much simplistic. However, he argues that emphasis on the pluralism has a risk of falling behind the devaluation of everyday life experiences (ibid, 20). He questions the arguments of fluidity and instabilities as structural change is not that much easy work (ibid, 24). Similarly, Weeks, as well, understands gayness as a personal commitment but he argues that this does not terminate the potential of political identification (1985, 186). In this way, social constructionism, in the account of Weeks, does not disregard sexual variation as a set of fluidity, unfixedity and destabilized individual encounters; his emphasis on individually lived experiences of individuals who are engaged with non-heteronormative sexuality designates a necessity to create analytically categorized sexual dissidences. Although differences and historical and cultural changes are not insignificant descriptive elements in his account, he argues that without disregarding identity politics as it is a risky game, he insists on sexual groupings and identification in fractious way (ibid, 193). As a result, owing much to queer criticisms as they are much more eager to expose differences, divisions and tensions, there is a need for common ground to make all the voices to be heard (Weeks, 2000, 2). Universally identified gay and lesbian identities are definitely intrinsic to the reduction of differences to such categories, but the need for the common ground appears to be main ground to be for identity politics in social constructionist approach.

Social constructionist approach, by virtue of Jeffrey Weeks and Ken Plummer, contributes too much to the sexuality studies. Exposure of sexual categories as a component of modern power opens up new possibilities which goes beyond the analytical categories of lesbian and gay studies or gay liberationism that are constituted as essential definitions. Among queer theorists, social constructionism is definitely celebrated as it makes possible to challenge essentialist conception of homosexuality. Beasley (2005, 144) emphasizes that Jeffrey Weeks' theoretical contribution explicitly interact with queer criticism. Gayle Rubin, as well, utters that Michel Foucault (Rubin, 1990, 72) and Jeffrey Weeks' (ibid, 82) texts have been turning points and influential references for her studies. Halperin (1994, 60) also recognizes LGBT identities not simply in the position of reaction against heterosexuality but in the way of creative process to challenge modern regulatory discourses. In that context, social



constructionist conception of homosexuality, not as an essence of identity but as a potentiality, precedes queer criticisms. However, among queer theorists, there is a general tendency to understand collectivity of identities as a reconstruction of homo/hetero binarism which eludes differences which cannot be reduced to the myth of universal gay/lesbian identities. In that sense, queer theory, namely by virtue of theoreticians like Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Gayle Rubin, Judith Butler, David Halperin, Diana Fuss – and although there might be theoretical discontinuities among them, puts forwards an alternative analysis of sexuality, and particularly sexual variation.

### 3.2.2 A Queer Challenge of Homo/Hetero Binarism

Exposure of the *homosexuality* as a socially constructed phenomenon brings up with the question of identities as a political and social situation. Although there are several articulations on collectivity of identities, as it is discussed above, poststructuralist criticisms towards the discourse of universally shared identities deconstructs homosexuality as a political strategy or a dimension for sexual freedom. Following the Foucauldian framework to understand sexuality that is constructed through the modern discourses, it is argued that “homosexuality” discursively precedes the establishment of heterosexuality as a normative order. As Namaste (1996, 196) indicates in a Derridean perspective, definitional existence of heterosexuality is intrinsic to the definition of homosexuality. In that sense, the idea of homosexuality and homophobia are not distinctive discourses but they are actually interrelated. In that sense, homosexuality and heterosexuality are not oppositional binaries but they are actually supplementaries of each other. In other words, heterosexuality as an unmarked term that designates an absence before the discursive construction of homosexuality. Marking the homosexuality makes heterosexuality as a present entity in the social world (Halperin, 1995, 45). Hence, it is argued that perception of homosexuality in a binary model that is opposed to heterosexuality becomes the part of the project that constitutes the exclusionary aspects of heteronormativity as it signified sexuality in such kind of dichotomous perspective. In that sense, such kind of a dual model is implicitly not efficient to expose regulatory discourses over human sexuality.

There are mainly two problematic points along with homo/hetero binarisms. On the one hand, conception of homosexuality, even in terms of political strategy, enforces the

idea of sexual differentiation from heterosexuality without questioning heterosexuality itself. In this way, heterosexuality is being socially reproduced by the critical analysis of gay and lesbian theorists as well (Namaste, 1996, 204). Besides, insistence on lesbian and gay identities reduces sexual variation to the 'homosexuality' by centralizing the identities of gay and lesbian (ibid, 205). Instead, poststructuralism conceptualizes sexual variation in a much more complexity and without recentralizing identities of gay and lesbian.

For instance, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1990, 22) points out the notion of *difference* which cannot be characterized in binary positions. In her account (ibid, 25), identical genitalities may absolutely offer different things to different people and even erotic attachments may go beyond genitally defined parts of bodies and differentiate for individuals one-by-one. Moreover, sexual desire is not an easily identifiable phenomenon as it is not stable for every people and for individual life history. Preference for sexual objects and the extent of the one's erotic attachment is non-fixed and likely to change one-by-one and even temporally. In that sense, "gay" and "lesbian" turn out to be a teleological definition (Fuss, 1989, 99).

In some way, gay and lesbian might represent a difference from the larger social world that is heterosexually-identified; however, this does not entail deemphasizing the inner differences. In that way, a "multiple differences" approach would be nonsatisfactory to go beyond the essentialist understanding of the "homosexuality" (ibid, 103). Regarding the decentralized understanding of the sexuality, various forms of sexuality does not engender a unity of people under several categories of gay, lesbian, transgender, bisexual or heterosexual. Such categories are actually inconsistent as sexuality is conceptualizes as continuously subversive and instable. Because a particular identity is always a non-finished work which is supposed to be constructed through repetitions and rituals (Butler, 2005b, 41); unity of a particular category appears to be nothing more than a myth. As a result, to mention the boundaries of an identity is not an easy and possible task, even for political strategies. Political strategies might appear to have an urgency to maintain a common ground –as it is argued by Jeffrey Weeks (2000, 2) – but Diana Fuss urges the necessity to ask such question: "Politically strategic for whom?" (Fuss, 1989, 107). In other words, such criticisms towards an urgency for a common ground is being perceived as association to exclusionary aspects as common ground is considered to be

prioritization of several sexual practices from some sort of trivialized aspects of queer sexuality.

If it is not possible to include all the voices within the socially constructed unities, e.g. in the name of gays, lesbians, transgenders, bisexuals, etc...; Fuss's question of how insistence on identity politics becomes desirable for particular groups of people appears to be urgent. Judith Butler (2005b, 19) argues that collectivity of identities is absolutely intrinsic to the exclusionary discourses of which some people's vulnerabilities are not prone to be represented. In that way, her endeavour exposes the limits of identity politics as they are not promising a universal inclusion. To challenge such kind of understanding of identities, she comments on "common vulnerabilities" (2005a, 56). In this account, social dynamics of vulnerabilities are not same but actually she designates the commonality of the pain which is definitely experienced differently one-by-one. In that sense, she absolutely emphasize that this is not a return towards collective identities but this is an attempt to reestablish a contingent definition of humanity beyond segregated collectivities (ibid, 58). So regulation and control of the sexualities cannot be understood under the umbrella of particular identity definitions. Here, the problem seems to be an issue of ethics to challenge the boundaries that separates individuals in the way of whether they will be represented or not.

Through this perspective, Gayle Rubin's prominent work *Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality* appears to be explanatory and figures out the complexity of sexual variation under the heteronormative sexual order. Although her study is an early work from the times of queer criticisms towards identity politics, it is still influential as she challenges sexual regulation and control systems by disregarding homo/hetero binarism. In the first hand, she understands sexual acts with a variety of differences which cannot be easily defined in an encompassing definition. Sexual variation does not only rely on a dichotomy of homosexual/heterosexual identities but it is of fetishisms, sadism/masochism, transsexuality, transvestites, exhibitionism, voyeurism, paedophilia, etc... Moreover, she also argues that dominant discourses of power constitutes a sexuality value system which constructs a hierarchy among different sexual acts through its own ideological and political interests.

The sexual value system, that is categorized by Rubin herself, is actually sex-negative discourse which criminalize or pathologize sexual variations (Rubin, 2007, 158). Such sex-negativity is not conceptualized as a power discourse which represses non-procreative sexual acts but actually she follows Foucault's and Weeks' theoretical framework that analyzes heteronormativity as a constitutive and regulatory power relationship. She argues that some sort of sexual acts are considered to be good, normal and natural while some others are bad, abnormal and unnatural (ibid, 159). In her account, normality comes of heterosexual, marital, monogamous, reproductive and non-commercial sexual acts and abnormality is bounded with homosexual, unmarried, promiscuous, non-procreative, commercial, public, cross-generational acts (ibid, 159-160). And such sexual hierarchy favors particular way of lifestyle which represents a family discourse. Reproductive, heterosexual family life or a long-term relationship is definitely at "the top of erotic pyramid" (ibid, 158). There is also one more dimension of such moral hierarchy that is not relevant to consensual character of sexuality but the sexual interaction is the one which is connoted as abnormal, immoral or criminal (ibid, 165). Normative order does not consider the coercion among the sexually interacted partners. Condemnation of sexual acts refers to the 'immorality' of the act rather than the relevance to the coercion. In this way, sexual value system does not consider the individual engagement to the non-normative sexual practices as a consensual desire but it signifies particular acts as inappropriate in the way that such practices violate existing social order.

Sexual value system that is celebrating heterosexual monogamous family life is the fundamental element of heteronormativity. However, outside the boundaries of the heteronormativity, sexual variation is not reduced to the binary oppositions. In that context, challenging the collectivity of identities comes up with an alternative agenda in the name of *queer theory*.

### 3.3. Queering Sexuality

As regulation of sexuality is not understood as a simplistic oppression of homosexuality but as "coercion to normality" (Rubin, 2007, 177), political resistance towards regulatory discourses rely on the idea of plural sex acts that escapes from normative order. In this way, politics is not being reduced to a motive of particular people who share a common

identity. Instead, queer politics appears to be performance-in-itself. Sex radicals also are not identified as desexualised categories. Here, the sexuality is explicitly included within the political domain in the name of queerism.

Queer politics actually adopts the feminist utterance that is 'private is political'. And the body is the initial instrument for political struggle (Halperin, 1995, 28). What the body does both constructs the structural order; however, this does not necessarily come up with the passive submission to the regulation of sexuality. Following Foucauldian perspective, power is being understood as constitutive and productive (ibid, 17); so that body appears to be the site of resistance as well. As Judith Butler (2004, 21) says, the body is not only a mortal and vulnerable entity against social regulations and control but it is also an instrument for the human agency. Moreover; mortality, vulnerability and agency are not separable domains but actually they are intrinsic to the each.

In that sense, what makes the corporeal practice 'queer' comes of the positionality in the relationship to the normative order. That is, particular body forms are not essentially subversive to the dominant order but it is so to the extent that it resists normative corporeality. Halperin (1995, 66) defines such potentiality as "the ability of queer to define (homo)sexual identity oppositionally and relationally but not necessarily substantively, not as a positivity but as a positionality, not as a thing but as a resistance to the norm". Therefore, gay (or lesbian) practices are not considered to be substantively queer but, here, he mentions that gay movement involves a creative process to challenge the normativity (ibid, 60). Moreover, it cannot be reduced to the gay/lesbian activity but it involves various sexual practices that destabilizes the boundaries of the normative sexuality. Halperin indicates the queer potentialities of "some married couples with children – with, perhaps, very naughty children" (ibid, 62). In that way, queer politics designates a potentiality to resignify existing normative order even in the case of so-called heterosexually marital relationships. Such potentiality is a process within the everyday practices of society, at the very moment of 'normal' life.

Queer strategies looks for a probability to resignify the heteronormative codifications, so that it focuses on everyday practices of individual people. In this way, queer acts are so intrinsic to the dominant discourses by virtue of capturing those discourses and give them new meanings. Halperin (1995) figures out queer strategies in three different way.

In the one way, he mentions *creative appropriation* of medicalized sexual orientation and *resignification* of it within the domain of non-pathologized context (ibid, 48). This is not considered to be of an explicit social change but here it indicates a potentiality to reconstruct the boundaries of normality in a much more inclusive and contingent way. Judith Butler (1997, 99) argues that the object of an injurious word is not a passive victim but s/he actually has a power to capture it and redirect its injury to the other way. Of course, this does not simply mean that such kind of words loses its power to injure someone, but reenactment of these words exposes the injury, makes it public and reproducible (ibid, 99-100). Secondly, Halperin (ibid, 51) mentions subversive potentialities of *theatricalization* that follows up *appropriation* of heteronormative glossary. Although it seems to be a public speech that is adopting heterosexually-defined way of life, such kind of a public use brings up with the overturn of the heterosexual definition and its 'normally' existence. And lastly, he points out the significance of *exposure* and *demystification* of the socially constructed truth<sup>3</sup> (ibid, 51).

Queer notion of subversion has always been a controversial concept as it is always questioned that to what extent a particular way of sexuality can change the social order. In this account, queer praxis appears to be a pro-sex approach that embraces sexuality in a contingent way. On the other hand, feminist criticisms towards queer theory and queer politics have always been criticized of being gender-blind<sup>4</sup> (e.g. Jackson, 2006, 46) and masculine bias (Jeffreys, 2003, 42). Celebration of sexual variation has been questioned as it is sought to be indifferent to the gender inequality and patriarchal aspects of sexuality. Especially around the terms of pornography, transgenderism and gendered aspects of homosexual practices became the object of the criticisms most commonly by feminist and some gay authors. It is thought that queer subversion is a matter of masculine legitimacy, centring male sexual pleasure and reproduction of patriarchy. In this way, intersectionality of gender and sexuality appears to be a hard and stressed question to be answered. Therefore, I will first try to discuss feminist criticisms

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<sup>3</sup> David Halperin owes too much to Judith Butler as his articulations on queer strategies is of implicit reference to Judith Butler's conceptions on queer subversion. However, there is a strict difference that Halperin focuses on the subversive potentials of queer practices in resistance towards heteronormativity. On the other hand, Butler's theoretical articulations mainly discusses the subversive potentials of queer practices in resistance towards the gender order as well.

<sup>4</sup> Judith Butler is actually an exception as she always talks about gender issues. However, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, David Halperin and Gayle Rubin are being considered to be disregarding gender dynamics while thinking of sexual variations. That is why, the criticism of neglecting the gender inequality takes aim at them.

and queer justifications of 'queering sexuality' within the framework of intersectionality of gender and sexuality. And then, following Judith Butler's contribution to the queer theory, I will try to figure out an alternative queer approach which recognizes intersectionality of gender and sexuality and which does not give up the sex-positive approach of queer theory/politics.

### 3.3.1 Intersectionality of Gender and Sexuality

A queer understanding of sexuality appears to be a pro-sex account of which the difference is being celebrated as a basic human condition. However, an alternative analysis of sexuality approaches to it within a perspective of gender that questions sexual practices around the terms of male domination and oppression of women. Catharine MacKinnon has been one of them whose work questions sexual practices including pornography, prostitution and consensual sexual practices in general. At first sight, MacKinnon (1982, 528) argues that sexuality is the critical keyword for the systematical analysis of feminism in the way of 'work' which offers the same for Marxism. In that way, she devalues the notion of consent regarding the sexual practices, namely rape, pornography, prostitution, etc... (ibid, 532). Coerciveness is not considered to be a significant character of sexuality to mention the legitimacy because the sexuality in practice is already a power relation that abuses women (ibid, 533). As it reflects a male point of view, male desire, male pleasure and male aesthetics; she definitely utters that sexuality is a form of oppression of women.

In that sense, she argues that sexuality is a practice of objectification of women. In the statement of "man fucks woman", "subject verbs the object" (ibid, 541) sexuality is being conceptualized as a way of alienation to the human sexuality. Adopting the Marxian perspective of exploitation, she argues that this is the problem of false consciousness of which male domination occur. Following the binarism of false/progressive consciousness, oppressing/oppressed and women/men, MacKinnon understands sexuality at the roots of the patriarchy and she seems to have a tendency to condemn all of the penetrative sexual acts as reproduction of masculine domination. Therefore, such kind of conception can be easily interpreted as signification of particular sexual practices as constitutive aspects of patriarchy even it is engaged to non-heteronormative queer sexuality. For instance, as the practice of "fucking" is considered

to be an act of “verb”, various practices that can be exemplified as anal intercourse between two men, several fetishes that are of violence in it, voyeurism, etc.. can be regarded as confinement to reproduction of gender hierarchies. In the one sense, such argumentation restricts gender hierarchy into biological reductionism so that penetrative acts are codified as biological script of patriarchy. “Verbing” that materializes in the act of “fucking”, S/M fetishes or “voyeuring” are being devalued in the name of sexual practices that are sought to be connotations of domination of men over women.

Besides, Sheila Jeffreys (2003) questions queer sexuality in a lesbian feminist account. Despite the contingent understanding of transgenderism, prostitution, gay masculinity and S/M in queer theory, she is explicitly critical towards such kind of sexual practices and she argues that queer theory and queer politics is of a “masculine bias” and reduce politics towards “night club activism” (ibid, 42). According to Jeffreys (ibid, 36-37) transgenderism and sexual domination (in the name of S/M) cannot be transgressive performances as it does not have a potentiality to challenge masculine domination. As a result, she is explicitly not for transgenderism and sexual domination for the universal sexual freedom. Moreover, her denial towards queer politics relies on the binarism of false/progressive consciousness. She argues that playfulness of the sexuality -in the way of conscious-in-itself- assumes the potentiality of the performance that does not present any social change at all (ibid, 40). Instead, her standpoint seems to be lesbian feminism in the way that she defines lesbianism as a politically and socially constructed phenomenon (ibid, 39). Although she does not recognize lesbian identity as a substantive identity, she argues that lesbianism promises a social change that goes beyond heterosexism. However, she does not regard any potentialities for other sexual practices including gay sexuality and we might again consider any sort of biological reductionism in her critical standpoint.

For the sake of the gay sexuality, the major question comes of the subversive potential of the gay men’s homoeroticism. Jeffrey Escoffier (1998, 183; in Green, 2002, 532), argues that ‘being queer’ easily seems to escape from the other socially constructed identities. However, such an idea of self-consciousness is not persuasive and does not promise any structural change in his account. In this case, he problematizes the the notion of subversion in terms of reproduction of masculinity norms. Regarding the gendered aspects of the homoeroticism, gay sexuality is considered not to be subversive



in itself. As Green (ibid, 535) emphasizes, reiteration perpetuates the gender system rather than destabilization of it. Particular sexual practices among gay men are explicitly condemned as they are considered to be in continuity with the phallogentric connotations and hegemonic masculinity in the way of gagging, choking, anal intercourse, violent sexual practices,... etc

Both feminists and gay theorists' criticisms towards queer theory mainly problematizes the contingent understanding of the sexual variation. Hypermasculinity, gendered homoeroticism and pro-sex arguments are not celebrated as a subversive practices but they are mainly considered within the framework of intersectionality of sexuality and gender. In other words, such argumentations constitute devaluation of particular sexual practices as they are considered to be reproduction of patriarchy. In this case, intersecting sexuality and gender comes up with the idea of continuity with the male domination and women's subordination in their account.

However, their analysis of masculine aspects within the sexually varied practices does not fall apart from the sexual hierarchy, that is conceptualized by Gayle Rubin. Such argumentation does not challenge any value system that designates a pyramid which is of valuable sexual practices and invaluable sexual practices. Their attempt is certainly not fall behind heteronormative gender order exactly as their criticisms constitutes a condemnation towards so-called patriarchal aspects even in the name of queer sexuality. Instead, feminist and gay theorists' argumentations on sexuality resignifies sexual value system in the name that revalues lesbianism at the top of such pyramid. As it is considered to lack any masculine script in lesbian sexuality, "two or more women" rather than sexuality of which a male is associated is regarded as motivations for structural social change. Besides, signification of gay sexuality and some other particular acts like S/M fetishes are confined to reproduction of patriarchy as it connotes male domination and subordination of women although women body is not explicitly scripted in such sexual practices, especially in the name of gay sexuality.

Such argumentation fails to encompass social processes that condemn and marginalize queer sexuality within the heteronormative gender order. In this case, their argumentations on reproduction of patriarchy does not promise an inclusive political and social discourse that embraces different sexual practices. It should be notified that

regulatory discourses and social control over queer sexuality reveals some other processes that cannot be explained as reproduction of patriarchy. Hence, it should be asked that even if queer sexuality is of a masculine bias that celebrates male domination in queer bodies, how and why dominant discourses constitutes severely exclusionary aspects towards queer subjects. In this way, as theoretical criticisms towards queer sexuality neglects such dimensions, feminist and gay theorists' argumentations has a risk of falling into association to the dominant moral order in the larger social world.

In that way, Gayle Rubin's criticisms towards feminist articulations points out the risks of such kind of a feminist discourse as it involves any sort of moral values. According to Rubin (2007, 174), feminist discourses on pornography and condemnation of particular sexual acts without regarding the consensual character rely on the discursive morality which supports the existing sexual value system around the discursive superiority of heterosexual family structure. Different from the conservative family discourse, she argues that such kind of feminist arguments prioritizes monogamous lesbianism. On the other hand, she argues that particular sexual practices cannot be reduced to the violence without taking into account the sexual choices (ibid, 177). As Sedgwick (1990, 29) argues, sexuality refers to "arrays of acts, expectations, narratives, pleasures, identity-formations, and knowledges, in both women and men, that tends to cluster most densely around certain genital sensations but is not adequately defined by them". Therefore, although genitality is definitely intrinsic to the sexual practices, this does not necessarily mean an experience of male domination and symbolic indicator of women's subordination. That is, penetrative sexual practices cannot be reduced to the patriarchy but its origin should be sought out somewhere else. In this way, rather than significations of biological human body as aspects of male domination, there does exist a need to look for patriarchal aspects of sexuality, say, in the social processes.

Moreover, sexually varied practices also cannot be reduced to heterosexual genitality and in that sense, they are considered to be "queer praxis" (Halperin, 1995, 86). So-called 'violent' and 'sexist' sexual practices can be understood in a positive manner that escapes from genitally localized sexuality. For instance, Halperin argues that domination in a sexual intercourse is a strategy to create sexual pleasure which frees bodily pleasure beyond the genital organs (ibid, 87). Referring to Foucault's notion of desexualization (or degenitalization) (ibid, 87-88), eroticization of the whole body rather than genitally

specific parts is a creative process which destabilizes the heteronormative sexual order. Moreover, so-called 'violent' sexual practices does not only decentralize eroticization of body parts in the way of eroticization of anus, nipples, skin or the whole surface of the body but it frees sexual pleasure beyond the body itself. Particular fetishes like S/M, machismo, hypermasculinity are celebrated as degenitalization of the sexuality in that way. Therefore, queer criticisms towards feminist and gay theorists argumentations on reproduction of patriarchy indicates that such sexual practices does not necessarily reproduce patriarchy but it resignifies human sexuality which goes beyond heteronormative family discourse. Hence, any sort of anal intercourse between gay men, S/M fetishes that materializes as violence for sexual satisfaction, eroticization of hypermasculine body, etc... may be interpreted as resignificaiton of human body and human sexuality which is not simplistically situated within the bounds of gender binarism.

Through this perspective, Halperin, Sedgwick and Rubin's standpoint seems to reject the elements of gender within the domain of sexuality. In this case, sexuality is not definitely considered to be a derivation of gender (Rubin, 2007, 178; Sedgwick, 1990, 29) but it is sought to be of distinct dynamics of oppression which goes beyond the gender inequality. Regarding sexuality as an aspect of gender polarization, there is always a risk of simplification as the sexuality goes beyond binary oppositions as it is discussed above. Gayle Rubin (1990, 96-97) argues that gay masculinities, particular fetishes like leather and S/M practices does not simply coincide with gender binarism. Although such practices may appear to be of binaries in the way of masculine/feminine or dominant/subordinate, such positions are definitely situational, fluid and not necessarily relevant to the gender identities. On the other hand, this does not simply mean that gender is disconnected to the sexual practices. As Sedgwick (1990, 31) indicates, we may observe elements of gender that is tied to the sexual practices but we may observe definitional relations to the class positions and racial differences as well. As a result, understanding sexuality as a derivation of gender is explicitly a reductionism and simplification. Instead, sexuality needs for an autonomous theoretical and political agende for its own sake and for a contingent sexual freedom discourse (Rubin, 2007, 179).

Aforementioned distinction of sexuality and gender appears to be influential and helpful to escape from the moral discourses and feminist reductionism that condemns sexual variations. However, in practice, analytical separation of sexuality and gender has some weak points as it devalues the fact that the social actors who conduct various sexual practices are not irrelevant to the gender relations within the everyday practices. In that way, distinction of sexuality and gender comes up with another way of simplification.

Through this perspective, Judith Butler stands at a very different point from the other queer authors. In her account, analytical separation of sexuality and gender hinders the possibility of queer politics to challenge the existing gender order. She actually develops her conceptual framework regarding the intersectionality of gender and sexuality but her point does not reduce sexual varieties to the reproduction of gender order.

### 3.3.2 A Queer Intersectionality of Gender and Sexuality: [Butler Subverts Gender]

Judith Butler is not only a feminist author who exposed the exclusionary aspects of feminist theory but also she conceptualized an alternative understanding of gender constitution and queer sexuality. As she argued that gender is by no means relevant to the biological roots but it is constructed by virtue of codifications, the body is not restricted to the external determinations which goes beyond the social domain (Butler, 2008, 217). In that way, gender identity refers to social construction which is acquired through repetitions and performances; that is, gender is performative (ibid, 224).

Through this perspective, gender appears to be a process rather than a taken-for-granted identity. Repetitive character of the gender reveals the indefiniteness of the gender construction.

Feminist –and queer as well- practice comes forward at that moment. If the gender is a continuous project which is an imitation of itself in a continuous way; then, subversion of the gender order can be attained by playing with the norms and values of the gender order. Butler (ibid, 226) argues that a particular bodily practice which disorients heteronormativity destabilizes normative order and exposes the discrepancy of the assumption of naturalness. A drag performer, in her account, is the one who both imitate an image of the woman and exposes the unnaturalness of gender identities at the same time. Similarly, eroticization of the non-genital body parts is a process of resignification of body by virtue of new cultural meanings (ibid, 219). Anal and oral

sexual practices, particularly among gay men, exposes the unnaturalness of the genitality and are considered to be subversive practices of procreative eroticism. Moreover, gay/lesbian eroticism does not only resignify sexually codified bodies but it comes up with the destabilization of the heteronormative order as well.

In her prominent work *Gender Trouble*, Butler has always been aware of the feminist criticisms that accused her of having a masculine bias and overtextualization but actually she had never meant that subversive practices eliminates the image of gender in its own corporeal existence. Even in *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler (ibid, 226) explicitly recognizes that drag performance, say, creates the image of the woman so that a drag queen's performative subversion does not come up with the disappearance of the gender identities. In that sense, in her latter study *Bodies That Matter*, she reconceptualizes the subversion of gender practices. The practice of subversion is by no means separable from the regulatory discourses of the power but she tries to find the potentialities of the resignification within such regulatory discourses.

According to Judith Butler (1993, 120), construction of the (gender) identity is being initiated by the *interpellations* in the way of Althusser's notion. The subject who is interpellated by the other is being constituted by him as well. In this way, no matter how the other interpellates the subject, there exists a practice of the recognition of the subject. Even the interpellation may occur in an affirmative way or in an exclusionary way, recognition is involved by the act of the interpellations. If the other interpellates, then the subject exists. That is, 'I' is constructed by the other who is the actor of the 'calling the name' (ibid, 122). However, this does not simply mean that the construction of the 'I' is absolutely external process in which the 'I' has no agency. The 'I' who answers the other is, then, being included to the process of the construction of the 'I'. Repetitions and rituals are the fundamental characteristics of this process in which the 'I' is being constructed performatively, that is "discursive life" (ibid, 123). Moreover, interpellations does not only function as an act of putting a name but in various way, interpellations may be experienced as a violation as well (ibid, 122). Here, if the 'I' is enclosed by the repetitive nature of the interpellations, there exists a question of how the 'I' can escape from the act of the power. Butler's attempt appears to find out resignifying potentialities of this process as queering sexuality might be a strategy for it.

She strives for finding out a way to escape from the violating aspects of the interpellations.

At first sight, she does not manifest denial of or prohibition the use of the 'I' but she argues that an escape from the interpellations is within the use of the 'I' (ibid, 123). The use of 'I' is not only an act of violation but she designates the enabling possibilities of these violations (ibid, 122). That is, referring to the Foucauldian idea of where there is power, there exists resistance as well, enabling violations designates the potentialities of the resignification. In that context, repetitions of the hegemonic forms of power initiates the possibilities to destabilize these repetitions. Butler argues that construction of the gender identity presupposes performative repetitions but it is always accompanied by particular failures of loyal repetitions (ibid, 124). That is, discursive legitimacy of these repetitions is of a sort of ambivalence. In that way, she argues that here we have potentiality to burn gender. The idea of 'gender is burning' comes from the disloyalties of the repetitive gender construction.

Particular queer acts, which is condemned in the way that it imitates gender order, implicitly designates aforementioned disloyalties which are seen as the initiation of burning gender. They are not passive imitations of the gender order but are being seen as active agents. Butler (ibid, 125) argues that gender imitation cannot be reduced to the heterosexual project and gender binarism. Gender imitation, particularly drag performance in her context, can never be a secondary imitation of an original gender as there does not exist any origin before the discourse. As a result, every corporeal practice is considered to be internal to the gender construction process. That is, "gender is drag". Moreover, queer practices exposes the repetitive character of the gender. Queer acts make the gender public and visible in the way that it is of imitation at all. Therefore, queer imitation of a gender goes beyond the heterosexualized gender production as it exposes the unnaturalness and instability of the gendered practices.

Here, resignification of the gender practices does not make gender invisible and private but instead it is much more visible and exaggerated than it was before. A drag performance exposes the femininity in a very salient way. A hypermasculine gay man shows out how a man performs in a 'manly' way. However, these practices are not condemned as corporeal practices but they are celebrated as transgressive acts to shift

towards the boundaries of heteronormativity. A hypermasculine gay man and a drag performer, for instance, reveals us that to be manly and womanly is nothing more than acting in that way.

Of course, resignifying queer practices does not simply mean a victory for “genderfuck”, or gender burning. Judith Butler (ibid, 128) argues that queer performativity is both an insurrection and a defeat against heteronormative gender order. Imitation of a gender does not directly come up with the humane representations of the gender practices but it may consist sexist, homophobic, racist, misogynist aspects as well. However, she argues that queer resistance is never oppositional to the dominant discourse (ibid, 133). There exists severe continuity of the prior hegemony over the queer practices. That is why, queering gender, or burning gender, is not displacements of the gender norms. Potentially denaturalization of the sex does not bring up with an emancipation from violating gender norms. But this is bargaining with the hegemonic norms of the power. Resistance occurs within the power itself, as Butler indicates as follows:

“men ‘mother’ one another, ‘house’ one another, ‘rear’ one another, and the resignification of the family through these terms is not a vain or useless imitation, but the social and discursive building of community, a community that binds, cares, and teaches, that shelters and enables. This is doubtless a cultural reelaboration of kinship that anyone outside of the privilege of heterosexual family (and those ‘within those “privileges” who suffer there) needs to see, to know, and to learn from, ...” (Butler, 1993, 137)

Judith Butler’s sayings are explicitly influential that should be celebrated as she exposes the intersectionality of the gender and sexuality. In that way, she is different from other queer authors who articulate queer sexuality as an analytically distinct domain from the gender issues. On the other hand, she should be celebrated as she does not reduce queer sexuality to the male domination and reproduction of oppressive male violence. She reveals the intrinsic gender dynamics within the queer sexuality, and even, she talks of the possibilities to resist the hegemonic gender order. In this account, before accusing her of being masculine bias, we should understand her endeavour for inclusive and contingent feminist discourse. That is why, in the preface (1999) of her most prominent and most controversial study *Gender Trouble*, she starts with saying that she is writing within feminism and for feminism (Butler, 2008, 11). Moreover, she urges the necessity

to make a distinction between a critique which is for democratic and inclusive politics and which is hindering the liberatory potentialities of the politics (ibid, 11). She posits herself at the former. In that context, an analysis of sexuality without condemnation of anal intercourse, so-called violent sexual acts, gendered practices and reproduction of gender stereotypes owes too much to Judith Butler's theoretical contribution. This does not mean a denial of intersectionality of gender and sexuality but this is actually an attempt to make queer voices be heard.

On the other hand, it should be noted that class issues reveals noticeable dimensions of gender and sexuality. In that way, the following, and last, part of this chapter will focus on queer sexuality in the framework of class dynamics.

### **3.4. Rethinking Queer Sexuality in the Framework of Class Inequalities**

Articulations on sexuality in intersectionality with gender dimension has always been much more efficient and applicable as it seems to be much more salient and obvious. On the other hand, class issue appears to be neglected while discussing queer sexuality. The reason that separates sexuality and class relies on the former paradigmatic consensus that separates the political and analytical distinction between redistribution and recognition. It is considered that oppression of sexual dissidences and class exploitation are absolutely distinct forms of oppression and both analysis and political struggle for emancipation should be autonomous (Weeks, 1985, 252). Of course, denial of the separation of class exploitation and oppression of sexual variation does not simply mean that one can be reduced to the other. However, contemporary discussions on sexuality and gender does not deny the class dimension as it reveals severe differentiations in formation of sexual identities and gender norms. Here, the significance of class differences does not only come up with the inner differences between queer subjectivities. Perceptions of masculinity and femininity, norms and values on sexual practices and individual survival strategies are relevant to the class differences in a larger social world.

Nancy Fraser (2009 [1999]) has been one of them who has reconsidered recognition and redistribution within an intersectionality rather than separating these two domains in a distinct political arena and conceptual discussion. The major idea that understands class within the domain of political economy and difference within the domain of cultural



politics and representation have always articulated these two 'distinct' domains in the way of cutting across each other (ibid, 73). Of course separation of representation from redistribution rely on the idea that does not tend to reduce one to the other. Fraser (ibid, 75) does not deny the fact that neither is effect of the other nor both are primary and co-original.

Actually, she does not totally reject the dual systems approach in the way that understands political economy on the one hand and cultural representation on the other. In her account, economy and culture are not dissociable concepts. However, she urges the necessity to challenge a classical binarism. In that way, she conceptualizes 'perspectival dualism' to explicate economy and culture in a cognitive way (ibid, 85). Her attempt is actually to understand economy and culture within the dynamics of intersectionality in the way that both have potentialities to reproduce and resignify each other reciprocally. That is why, she argues that "economy is not a culture-free zone but a culture-instrumentalizing and resignifying one" (ibid, 84). As a substantive dualist perspective fails to encompass cultural dimension of economic inequalities and economic dimension of cultural misrecognition, she points out an alternative approach to understand culture/economy binarism.

In that way, her idea come up with a concept of 'bivalence' that indicates the hybrid form of oppression that combines unequal distribution and the misrecognition simultaneously (ibid, 75-76). The notion of bivalence encompasses both the economic and cultural forms of oppression at different levels. Here, there does not exist any social form to mention only in economic sphere or cultural sphere. For instance, gender, race/ethnicity and sexuality appears to be the issues of (mis)recognition that occur within the cultural sphere. Similarly, class seems to be the issue of political economy at first sight. However, Nancy Fraser (ibid, 76-77) argues that such forms of oppression is of bivalent character in some way. Here, there might not exist an equal weight of injustices; as gender, race/ethnicity and sexuality incline more to the cultural sphere but class inclines more to the economic sphere. Particularly, Fraser (ibid, 76) argues that oppression of gay/lesbian people designates heterosexist injustice as such people violate heteronormative value pattern in the cultural sphere. However, she mentions a resulting harm that confine gay/lesbian people to the economic inequalities and vulnerabilities as

well. Bivalent character of sexual oppression comes up with the disadvantageous position of gay/lesbian people.

Particularity of sexual oppression originates from the cultural dynamics of heteronormativity in Fraser's account. For instance, Fraser (ibid, 76) conceptualizes bivalence of gender oppression in a more equally weighted way as gender issues are considered to be both within the sphere of political economy and culture. Gender dimension of injustice appears both in the way of unpaid labor, sexual division of labor and economic dependency –connoting political economy- and in the way of gender roles, practices and subordination –connoting cultural sphere. However, in Fraser's account, heteronormativity exists a priori within the domain of culture and economic inequalities and disadvantages are only harmful outcomes.

In that context, there exists two problematic issues that Nancy Fraser have been criticized of. On the one hand, her insistence on dual systems theory particularly assign oppression of sexual dissidences within the domain of cultural sphere. Suffering from maldistribution is considered to be a posterior effect due the fact that cultural misrecognition. Regarding Judith Butler's criticisms, as it will be discussed below, Fraser's articulations on economic inequalities consider maldistribution as a secondary outcome so that she fails to understand intersectionality of sexuality and political economy cognitively. On the other hand, regarding Iris Marion Young's criticisms, Fraser's attempt to understand recognition and redistribution simultaneously fails to encompass inner dynamics within the so-called distinctive forms of oppressions. Her point come up with the idea that sexually varied groups are being oppressed within the domain of culture and it brings up with economic sufferings in a collective way. In that way, her point does not go further the discourse of identity politics. Instead, a complex understanding of oppression would be illuminative to understand the complex relationality of culture and economy rather than a dual systems approach. In the remaining part, I will move towards Butler's and Young's criticisms of Nancy Fraser.

What Nancy Fraser means by conceptualizing perspectival dualism designates a dual systems approach in the name of binarism of culture and economy. Particularity of her approach appears at the level of relationality between these two systems in a dynamic interaction but she still stands at the point of analytical separation of two systems. Here,

Butler (1998) is the one who challenges Fraser's dualist approach by decentering the notion of labor within the political economy. Judith Butler (ibid, 40) denies the analysis of political economy around the term of labor power but she also emphasizes social reproduction of persons as well. In that sense, heteronormativity is definitely intrinsic to the capitalist mode of production as it values procreative sexual practices as a normative sexuality.

Because sexual practices which do not incline heteronormativity are pathologized and criminalized within the capitalist mode of production, sexuality and body seems to be relevant to the recognition and redistribution simultaneously. That is why, Butler (ibid, 42) argues that stability of gender, heterosexuality and naturalization of the family cannot only be understood within the domain of cultural sphere but such discourses are ideological apparatuses of political economy as well. Of course, gay/lesbian experience cannot absolutely be described through the terms of "unpaid labor" or "sexual division of labor". In that way, this is the point of Nancy Fraser that conceptualize heteronormativity within the cultural sphere unlike hybridity of gender order. However, by deconstructing the priority of production process in capitalist mode of production and rethinking the reproduction processes of capitalism, Judith Butler reveals failure of dual systems approach. As a result, economical sufferings is not a simple outcome of sexual oppression within the cultural domain, but she tries to encompass oppression of sexuality as a matter of political economy as well.

Challenging dualism of culture and economy is considerably significant to understand intersectionality of recognition and redistribution. However, Judith Butler's criticism still does not see through the class differences among sexually varied communities. Understanding the stability of gender order, pathologization of sexual dissidences and heteronormative family discourse in the name of political economy renders a much more cognitive analysis of sexuality and heterosexuality. However, does this mean that all sexually different groups –including gays and lesbians- are being oppressed by the heteronormative gender order? Here, we have a big question to categorize sexual variation in capitalist mode of production. Iris Marion Young (1997) argues that such kind of a theory that is still constructed through the dichotomies fails to encompass what is economic and what is cultural. The major problematic issue, here, is insistence on the group-based claims for cultural specificities, as it intrinsically assumes

homogeneity and collectivity in general (ibid, 156). Regardless of social positionings in the everyday life, materiality of the cultural misrecognition or cultural specificities of the material inequalities is being reduced to the simplified binarism of culture and economy within the group-based identification of power relationships. Instead, Young's arguments appear to be coextensive understanding of materiality and culture. She argues that social privileges and maintaining –or acquiring- such social positions cannot only be economic or cultural at all (ibid, 154). Here, she refers to the Works of Pierre Bourdieu to understand cultural factors of economic privileges. Economic privileges is definitely related to the cultural factors of taste, education and social connections (ibid, 154). In that sense, social injustices does not result in simplified mechanisms of misrecognition or maldistribution but there exists to be a much more dynamic complexity of everyday relationships.

Through this perspective, she emphasizes the risk of falling into reduction of complex mechanism of oppression and instead, she refers to her own article, *Five Faces of Oppression* (2009). In this article, she argues that oppression operates as a structural force in everyday life of the society that occurs in the very unconscious assumptions and reactions of well-meaning people, cultural stereotypes, bureaucratic hierarchies and market mechanisms (ibid, 56). Maintenance and reproduction of the oppressive practices of the modern societies seems to be at the very core of the structural forces. It operates in a complex way, at different times, different places and in particular cultural or historical environment. Hence, there is not only one “single form of oppression [that] can be assigned causal or moral primacy” (ibid, 57). Moreover, she argues that there is need to challenge dichotomy of ‘oppressing’ and the ‘oppressed’ and move towards the structural mechanism of oppressions (ibid, 56). In that sense, she conceptualize oppression as a way of social interaction rather than group-based definition.

Oppression of gay/lesbian sexuality might appear as a cultural misrecognition within the heteronormative gender order. However, when we take into account differences and variation of meanings of normative sexuality and appropriate gender practices in the framework of class differences and cultural or historical specificities, it would be inappropriate to understand oppression of gays and lesbians in a monolithic way. Heteronormativity is a particular way of oppression, as Iris Marion Young indicates, but forms of gender formation and meanings and myths of sexuality are not unique and

universal discourses and social dynamics of homophobia interact with these cultural and historical specificities.

However, such kind of conception goes beyond a conceptual framework of class relations on the basis of materiality. Rather than reducing the notion of class to the conceptually defined economic sources, there exists a need of comprehension class positionings in the framework of economic, social, political and cultural dimensions. As Arlı argues (2007, 149); class is not a simplistic economic notion of property relations and mode of production in Bourdieu's account. Instead, class is being conceptualized as a social and cultural concept which is autonomously reshapes the fields of social and cultural capital and which deepens the social inequalities at every moment of social life. Therefore, class emerges as a conceptual tool which marks wealth and income, but "skills, resources, choices, food, manner, language, intelligence, education and geography (Penelope, 1994, in Ward, 2003, 67)" as well. Especially regarding the fact that class does not offer a totalizing concept which defines a homogeneous groups of people, such kind of conception indicate a much more dynamic and varied class relations in everyday life. This does not surely deny the fact that class is interrelated to economic inequalities and relations, it would be understood as an attempt to understand class issue as a process of "reconstitution of class through taste and skill" (Ward, 2003, 67). In this way, class emerges as a individual positioning which is influenced by material forces but an aesthetic distinction and choices at an individual level as well.

Such kind of conception of class indicates an unstable and constructed positioning as it does not only define the individuals that are materially/externally determined. As Corcuff indicates (2007, 376), class is not only a coercive and external force in the name of *field* which shapes the individual agency in the name of Pierre Bourdieu. Instead, there exists an emphasis on *habitus* that opens up possibilities for new experiences, choices, preferences, etc... Therefore, class does not only involve a structural determination process but it includes some other forms of socialities as well. In this case, *habitus* is defined as a derivation and resignification of structural variants and as a result, class emerges as unfixed and dynamic social positionings. Moreover, such kind of dynamic conception of class challenges the dualism of classical conceptions on class and it opens up possibilities for plural class positionings in social life that are being signified through economic, social and cultural capital.

In that context, I will try to understand gay men's experiences and perceptions of their masculinity, how they identify their sexuality and their interaction with heteronormativity in this complexity. I will try to follow the conception of social constructionism that argue gay/lesbian identity as a socially constructed phenomenon but I will try to show up gay identity does not reveal a universal experience. Gay men's way of identification is implicitly related to the class positions, sexual preferences and cultural specificities that are symbolized in various ways and forms in daily life. As a result, perceptions of masculinity and the way of they identify themselves to signify their sexual orientation differ to the social positions of the gay men. Moreover, queer potentialities of the gay men reveal different forms of cultural resistance. Queer positionality and potentiality for resignification are not fixed and stable but gay men's daily experiences incline culturally specified possibilities to subvert or resignify existing gender order. Through this perspective, in the one hand, the universality of the gay experience will be questioned in this thesis. And, on the other hand, I will try to find out queer potentialities among gay men from different classes and cultures.

## Chapter 4

### PRECESSIONS BETWEEN □GAY LIFE□ AND □HETERO-LIFE□

Gay life in Turkey constitutes a particular form of social life that is not situated in the dichotomy of coming out/closet. Majority of gay men are certainly associated to gay community at different levels but such situation does not entail practice of coming out. Regarding several forms of dependencies in the way of family relations, working life or in some other particular forms; gay men are confined to severe vulnerable position which hinders the possibility to come out.

Although gay men considerably attain individual autonomy to associate to gay community, several forms of dependencies like economic and family dependencies, fear of condemnation and marginalization in working life incline gay men into closeting their gay identity in the larger social world. Therefore, everyday life of gay men are organized through strict social boundaries which restrict their individual practices through heteronormative gender order. This process can be comprehended in two intersectional way. In the one hand, severe prejudices and social exclusion of gay identity from ordinary way of life constitute a real boundary which marginalize gay life into outside of normativity. Conservative norms and values in urban life of Ankara confine gay men into a “double life” (Seidman, 2004) which hinders the possibility for an exact visibility of gay men in ordinary life. In this sense, gay life appears to be a socially isolated from, but embedded with as well, “normal” way of life. Social life appears to be of a fragmentary character which is separated into two distinct forms in the name of “gay life” and “hetero life”.

Besides, such exclusionary aspects of normative gender order operates as a process of which gay men internalize such norms and values. In this sense, a particular sort of perceived social boundaries emerges as “active compliance” (Grosz, 1994) of gay men into such regulatory discourses. Gay men are considerably aware of such existing norms and values and their active complicity to such disciplining discourses operates as reorganization of their social life which constitutes appropriation of hegemonic

discourse of normativity. In this way, public invisibility of gay men does not appear to be a single handed external determination which coerces gay men into a form of gay closet but it emerges as a survival strategy for making their life bearable. Avoiding any symbol on their bodies, practices, life choices or lifestyle entails several forms of strategies to escape from homosexual suspicion over their gay selves and in this way, gay men both reproduce and resist such exclusionary aspects of dominant discourse.

However, this does not certainly mean that gay men are confined to an exact experience of gay closet but majority of gay men whom I interviewed are partially visible and declared their gay identity to a small group of people but only after a long process of negotiations and daily interactions. Even, there are many gay men who are socially associated to gay community although they do not declare their gay identity to any people around them. In this way, fragmentation of social life into fragments of "gay life" and "hetero life" emerges as a strategy to construct a breathing space for queer sexuality. However, fragmentation of life into "gay life" and "hetero-life" generates two inextricable life spaces which are indissociable from each other. Under such circumstances of gay men's vulnerability in social life, community construction of gay men is not being generated as a separate fragment from "hetero-life" but it is being embedded within it. As "gay life" is inextricably situated in "hetero-life", breathing space of gay community is certainly restricted with fear of condemnation and punishment. Moreover, such situation confines gay men into continuously bargaining with "hetero-life".

Vulnerable positionality of gay men is certainly shared condition for every gay men and it should be notified that every gay men are confined to reconcile with hegemonic gender order. In this sense, bargaining with heteronormativity entails several strategies in the way of reformulation of gay selves through public existence in social life. In this way, how gay men represent their selves through body representations, corporeal practices and clothing in general and spatial aspects of gay life appears to be featured elements of bargaining process. What gay men wear, how they behave, where they go, how they interact with others in these places and to what extent these practices represent their association to gay sexuality in publicity designates the way of bargain to gain recognition in larger social world. Therefore, such attitudes of gay sociality can be understood as regulatory aspects of social boundaries which assigns appropriate and



inappropriate forms of social life. Moreover, these elements appears to be constitutive elements that constructs gay identity through body formations and spatial performances.

However, it should be emphasized that, although every gay men are confined to such bargaining process, this does not mean that spatial and corporeal character of gay experience in urban life constitute singular meanings. In this way, diversity of spatiality and corporeality in gay experience entails plurality of gay experience. Multiple forms of spatial and corporeal practices in gay sociality designates the different lifestyle patterns, life choices, cultural capital and material conditions. Hence, class dimension engender as significant element which constructs a class distinction in gay life.

Conservative norms and values which marginalize queer sexuality certainly confine gay men into precessions between “gay life” and “hetero-life”; however, there is a need to comprehend diversity of gay sociality to encompass plurality of gay experience. Through this perspective, this chapter will demonstrate how gay men are confined to such vulnerability and social boundaries. In this way, how gay men are confined to dependencies and social boundaries will be captured in the first part. Besides, significance of community construction and the social mechanism of gay community which operates as a particular form of solidarity among gay men will be figured out. In the second part of this chapter, diversity of gay sociality in the name of spatial performativity will be discussed. And in the last part of this chapter, signification of body formations will be demonstrated regarding the spatiality of gay sociality.

#### 4.1 Escaping from □Hetero-Life□

Gay sociality is absolutely far away from an institutionalized community due to the fact that sexual variation is severely marginalized and punished as a result of heteronormative moral order. Family relations, working life and social life emerges as a continual surveillance which hinders the possibility for coming out and public visibility. Therefore, misrecognition of queer sexuality confines gay men into a vulnerable social position which confines them into a partially closeted gay identity and entails continual negotiations for public visibility as legitimate and recognizable selves.

However, the major dynamics of negotiation does not disrupt gay identification. Gay men are inclined to bargain with “hetero world” in the name of how they represent

themselves. In other words, although they are content with their gay identity, public representations of their selves emerges as a bargain to be perceived as legitimate and recognizable. In this way, their self-representation turns out to be a practice of “story telling” of which real and fiction are intertwined with each other. “Telling fake stories about the woman with whom I have intercourse” (Onur, 35, teacher), “being followed by curious and loveful neighbours” (Eray, 32, computer programmer), “introducing nylon lovers to the parents” (Gökhan, 24, university student) and many other “gay lies” indicate gay men’s constant feeling of being pursued at every time of social life.

Of course, self-representations of gay men does not constitute an absolute condition of gay closet but coming out engenders as a rare preference after a long process of negotiations. Narratives of gay men reveal that fear of being harmed and establishing a trust relationship after a long period of time is absolutely necessary to ensure that they would not be offended due to a prejudice towards their gay identity. Moreover, coming out to family is explicitly exceptional. As a result, gay sociality is overshadowed by almost every aspects of social life.

In that sense, such restrictions incline gay men to establish fragmentary lives which is separated into two fragments: “Gay life” and “Hetero-life”. In practice, such process is attained through basically several strategies which are acquired simultaneously as supplementary of each other. Gay men establish a gay social network which constitutes a “gay milieu”. And therefore, gay community constitutes a gay subculture in urban life which is partially visible around night life.

Establishing a gay network in social life is certainly an organization of resistance for construction of gay identity which goes beyond the heteronormative gender order. Gay sociality within communal ties is by no means different from a form of solidarity and such relations can be understood as empowering strategies to provide for a living space outside of heteronormativity. In practice, such form of community operates as construction of a gay subculture which brings itself into being in particular way of life in specific times and places.

Formation of gay community as a practice of solidarity crystallizes in the way that almost every gay men are familiar with each other. Even if two gay men does not know each other, they would easily interact with each other verbally. For instance, in gay cafe

which is downstairs of the only gay club in Ankara, any person who enters into the cafe greets everybody and then sits a table. Moreover, although there are separate tables to sit, gay men do not prefer to sit on the same table during the whole day. Instead, by changing the place they sit, they continuously interact with other gay men so that the interaction among gay men is not limited to partial groupings.

Besides, such form of gay network can be understood as a maintenance of information flow in an informal way. By virtue of random interaction among them, they can easily find out partners for any sexual or emotional encounter, share their individual sexual experiences especially for specific people or places and even, transfer information informally for sexual health. For instance, while a group of gay men was sitting in gay cafe; Başak, who introduced himself to me as a prostitute, told that he prefers insertee role in the anal intercourse and he especially likes to have sexual relationship with men who has bigger penises but he was worried about losing the bowel control due to anal dilatation as a result of such sexual practices. At that time, another gay men began to speak and he shared his own experiences in accordance with Başak's concerns.

Socially tied gay men constitute a gay community in the direction of their social needs of which cannot be met in "hetero-life" due to public invisibility and lacking institutional supports specific to gay men. Therefore, it does not only operate as a social mechanism for entertainment but it is of a potentiality for resisting against heteronormative order in the name of "hetero-life". As gay men are publicly invisible and vulnerable due to several ways of dependencies as it is mentioned above, formation of gay community supplies for a network of solidarity to empower gay men. Public invisibility hinders the possibility to have any sort of interaction among gay men; and as a result, gay networks provides for social capital to render any emotional or sexual intercourse, information flows or simply "gayly" way of entertainment. Besides, it should be noted that such "gay milieu" provides for a safer social network in which gay men can express themselves without having any concern of being condemned and excluded due to association to gay sexuality. Such communal ties operates as a warranty of which gay sexuality is surely embraced. In that sense, community construction plays crucial role for empowering strategies of gay men who leads a double life.

## 4.2 Spatiality of Gay Life

Establishing a gay community can also be understood as a survival strategy that looks for some sort of queer potentialities in urban life. In this way, such communal ties appear to be reformulation of social life in Ankara in the way that some places are more welcome for queer possibilities and gender disconformity. In this way, community construction entails as a constitutive element of gay identification through diversity of gay places and bodily performativities. By virtue of community construction, gay men attain a queer space which renders gay sexuality possible and invisibly embedded in social life. Gay men's narratives indicate that gay community is of a particular gay life style which is partially visible but outside of "hetero-life" and moreover, partial visibility appears to be a strategy to challenge the vulnerabilities and dependencies of gay men. By distancing gay life temporally and spatially from "hetero-life", gay men establish breathing space for gay community.

Formation of gay life within the "hetero-life" can be characterized as keeping away from heteronormative family discourse and in that sense, gay sociality is constituted around the inexistence of family life. Therefore, night life emerges as a primary source for constitution of gay life as it is both temporally and spatially outside of the view of heteronormative family order. However, partial visibility of gay life in the larger social world hinders the possibility for an institutional gay community which is explicitly visible in urban life. And hence, gay networking engenders an informal information flow for construction of gay sociality which is partially visible in publicly used "hetero-spaces". For instance, Emirhan (34, self-employed) explains how he was introduced to gay life as follows:

"At the age of 20, I had a friend from my neighbourhood. He was my companion and he told me everything about gay life in Ankara. I learnt where the gay places were, where the gays were going from him. It was actually surprising for me because all these places were where I knew before and went before. For example, parks, bars, cinemas which exhibits erotic movies. I was aware of these places but I did not know that gays were using these places too."  
(Emirhan, 34, self-employed)

Emergence of gay life in specific times and places is not explicitly visible and moreover, gay experience is not isolated from the "heterosexual eyes". In this sense, gay life is constituted by virtue of transformation of social life which is formerly heterosexualised public life. In this way, there exists plural forms of queer sexuality in various places and times which emerges in various meanings and practices at different levels of emotional or sexual interaction. Therefore, as gay community does not constitute a homogeneity in terms of class, age, ethnicity, etc,...; construction of gay identity is variant in the way of such plural meanings and practices.

In the one sense, gay sociality entails plural forms of sexualisation which comes forward as casual sexuality. Parks, hammams, cinemas and taxis provide for matching most commonly on the purpose of sexual interaction. Although the existence of sexual interaction differs among gay men, it would be concluded that there exists lesser romance due to practicing instant sex.

"There are various ways of communicating with other gays in parks. If the one is interested with his environment while sitting in a park and even if he is touching his penis, it becomes clear for me. I clear take the message from him. Initial contact starts with asking for a cigarette or a light. Sometimes while gazing at the me if he sits across me and he smokes his cigarette rhythmically three times. Then a conversation starts out and two gays get introduced." (Enis, 32, professional in service sector)

In such places, gay interaction coexists with "ordinary" flow of the life which is a priori heterosexual social life and hence, non-verbal communication comes up with primary source for interaction and getting to know each other. Particular practices are considered to be indicators for signs of gay identification and hence, only after being sure with association to gay sexuality, gay men tend to communicate with other men in parks. Moreover, gay men's communication is mostly constituted for any sexual practice so that they attempt to establish a relationship on the purpose of sexuality. Such attitude is much more clear in hammams and cinemas as representations of bodies explicitly designate such sexual meanings and practices. Nudity in hammams and phallic swelling in cinemas which exhibits erotic movies makes these places much more convenient for sexual interaction. As a result, gay men signify these places much more sexualised and use of these places emerges as casual sexuality with lesser romance and even lesser verbal communication as well.

Besides, taxis engender an alternative possibility for queer sexuality as it does not only provide for queer potentiality but it becomes a social space for a sort of prostitution which occurs in a voluntary manner.

“In taxis, especially in the ones that runs at night, a sexual relationship can be probably experienced. If a guy takes a taxi alone or if he wears a earring and if the taxi driver touches his penis while driving, these are the signs. For taxi drivers who are gathering around the gaybar, probability increases. Sometimes drivers directly asks whether I like to suck or touch his penis. Many gay has a taxi driver, it is a routine for gay men. Then drivers takes the guys to their houses and don't ask for Money. And they never have any sexual relationship at home, commonly in the car.” (Onur, 35, teacher)

For the case of taxis, there exists particular signs which indicate a possibility for any sexual interaction between the driver and the passenger. Getting on the taxi alone comes forward as a primary indicator but even if the passenger carries particular symbols which unfits to hegemonic masculinity on their bodies in the way of dressing style or accessories, “phallic swelling” becomes a distinctive message which conveys that “I am available for sexuality”. However, such interaction entails a gay sexuality only at a later night. Furthermore, the district around the gay club increases the possibility and there might occur a direct verbal interaction rather than nonverbal and embodied communication as well. It is widely told by gay men whom I interviewed that after a satisfying sexual experience with the driver, gay men prefer to keep contact with the drivers and sexual relationship becomes continual. Moreover, drivers usually do not receive any payment for transportation after a sexual experience. As a result, queerism in taxis may come up with any sort of prostitution which does not occur in a coercive way but in a reciprocal consent and satisfaction.

Gay sexuality in hammams, parks, cinemas and taxis generates different levels of sexual interaction and develops an instant relationship which is commonly not maintained after the sexual experience. Such attitudes reveal that gay interaction in public space is certainly regulated by “heterosexual eyes”. It can be concluded that these places provide for escaping from panoptic power of heteronormative family life not only in the way of spatial but temporal dimension as well. It is certainly the fact that these places are not specific only to gay men and queer practices coexist with normative gender performativities in these places. Such regulations and controls does not only entail

minimization of interaction into a non-verbal symbolic communication but it reshapes the way of relationship into instant confrontations as well. Rather than a continual association to “other gays”, instant confrontations comes up with a survival strategy to make queer sexuality as invisible and inaudible.

However, gay sociality does not emerge as instant relationships but there are some other possibilities for continual interactions and developing emotional encounters but in the way of gay love and social groupings. There exists some other gay practices and gay networks which renders settled relationships in specific times and places. In this way, “hetero bars”, gay club or cafe, “gay houses” and most commonly cyberspace come forward as primary places for gay life. In this way, such aspects of gay life indicate that sexualisation of gay sociality is being trivialized by virtue of emotional and social commitments.

For instance, gay clubs does not only constitute a sexualised gay place for finding a partner to have specifically sexual or emotional relationship. Instead, gay men signify gay clubs as the only place for an absolute visibility without any fear of being condemned and punished.

“I feel myself free in gay bar while dancing. I can kiss a gay and have a sexy dance with him. I can freely dance with a person of same sex in this place. This makes me feel free. It is restricted to that place but still this is a feeling of freedom.” (Mehmet, 37, clerk)

“Once I was dancing with my partner in a gaybar. We were dancing with a slow music. A young gay came next to us and he told me that he felt that I am in love with the guy I was dancing. A third eye realized my love towards my partner and I really liked it.” (Enis, 32, professional in service sector)

The situation that there does not exist any “heterosexual eyes” which have any pejorative attitudes towards gay sexuality emerges as a feeling of freedom which is recovered from restrictions and controls. To make a judgment that every person in a gay club is gay or lesbian identified individuals is certainly not possible but it is surely applicable to argue that sexual norms and values which condemn and punish gay sexuality is excluded from such gay milieu. In this way, “gay dance” which would have several aspects unfitting to hegemonic masculinity or a gay romance in the name of “slow dance with gay lover” entails a feeling of emancipation from heteronormativity.

However, gay life is not limited to physical places but there are several other ways which permits gay sexuality within the "hetero-life". For instance, use of the internet is certainly primary source for gay life and there are many gay men who spends hours of time on internet. Existence of many web sites with English-interfaced international social networks and also for Turkish-interfaced local networks provides gay men to have an opportunity to interact with others. In this way, internet provides for a social basis to satisfy both the emotional, social and sexual expectations of gay men.

Besides, possession of a private place is certainly a desire which would provide for more individual autonomy.

"If I had a home of my own, I would feel myself free at most in this place. It does not matter whether I live in this place alone or any other gay friends. The important thing is that it is my own place. Because my house would be my privacy. I can spend some time in my house with my partner not only sexuality but some other things as well.

(Mehmet, 37, clerk)

Although gay men acquire some sort of breathing space in public life, their major desire appears to have a privacy in which they can enjoy with their lovers. In this way, privacy is being resignified as a place for freedom which is –at least partially- situated away from "heterosexual eyes". On the other hand, privacy emerges as a form of "gay publicity" as well in the way of house parties. There are many gay men who states that the time they enjoy most is when they come together with their gay friends in a house of one of them. In that way, gay privacy appears to be the most promising alternative for establishing a gay publicity.

It should be certainly stated that gay privacy is not an exact escape from "heterosexual eyes" as private sphere does not constitute an exact distinction from publicity. However, privacy emerges as a place under considerably lesser "heterosexual surveillance". It is not only a social space which is exactly isolated from public life. In this way, privacy constitutes a social space which would be potentially publicized. Therefore, "gay privacy" entails possibilities for "gay publicity" which embraces queer sexuality within it. That is why, gay men celebrates possession of a private space for acquiring a breathing space in their social life not only in the way that they can have several sexual or



emotional interactions individually. "Gay privacy" may have some sort of social meanings that is open to gay community as well.

Regarding such diversity of "gay places" in general, gay sociality in the form of a communal living indicates an experience of exclusion from the "ordinary" way of social life which is coded by heteronormative norms and values at every aspects of everyday life. Rejection of queer sexuality within the "ordinary" way of life operates as a constant process which aims to eliminate the differentiation in various ways and forms. As de Certeau (1988, 94) argues, such process functions in the way of classificatory operations and establishment of specific functions to the normative order. Fragmentation of social life into day and night, family and non-family, masculine and feminine etc.. reveal such classificatory operations which marginalize particular sexual practices and exclude them from "ordinariness" of the daily life. Inclination to the night life in particular places which reveals exclusion from the "hetero-life" constitutes such elimination of differentiation which is considered to be a threat to the procreative heteronormative order. Similarly, confinement to the nonverbal communication in public space designates the fear of condemnation and punishment so that gay men's communal living is inclined to an invisible social living in "ordinary" way of life. As publicity is codified by gendered and heterosexual aspects of sexuality, escaping from "hetero-life" is by no means different from marginalization and confinement into deviance.

However, such process does not confine gay men into an absolute victimhood of which they are unable to resist against such classificatory operations. There exists some other potentialities for contradictory movements which falls apart from the panoptic power of heterosexual family life (ibid, 95). And therefore, establishing a gay life becomes possible in the field that is no longer striced under the regulatory operations. In this way, "night life" emerges as a site for resistance as well. And gay sociality constitutes a practice of resistance by "escaping" from family life by virtue of an implicit desire to be recognized. Walking as a spatial activity reveals such potentialities to transform the signifier of the "heterospace" into somethings else by virtue of different ways of using (ibid, 98). In this way; night life, parks, hammams, taxis and gay privacy appear to be certainly "possible", "questionable", "optional" (ibid, 99) places of which can be transformed into another meaning by virtue of a short travel of *gaywalkers*. That is, nonverbal communications, getthoized night life and sexualised body representations in particular times and places

emerges as resisting practices and continual bargainings for gay identification specific to communal lifestyle. "Possible", "questionable" and "optional" character of social life are being resignified by virtue of spatial experiences of gay community.

Through this perspective, it can be concluded that living space of gay community is located where the social life is established in the way that there are other possibilities, questionable functions and optional ways of using. Specifically defined uses of particular places like hamam, park, taxi and cinema designates an explicit form of recreation, entertainment, cleaning or transportation. However, particular social codes which are functioned as a way of communication among gay men in the way of "inaudible looks", "smoking three times", "touching the penis of his own" or "gay dance" appear to be a practice of "walking", in the framework of de Certeau's (ibid) conception, for resignification of "heterospace". Such practices does not only invisibly resist against heteronormativity but it reshapes the social meanings and ways of uses of "hetero-publicity". That is, hammams, parks, taxis, clubs and cinemas does not only constitute local aspects of heteronormative order anymore. "Gay pedestrians" appears to be social agents who pluralize meanings of urban place. This does not certainly mean that "hetero-publicity" disappears in the way of "gayization" of urban space but there occurs a plurality of spatial experiences in urban life.

Moreover, such experiences does not only emerge as resignification of urban space as it is not a single-handed determination of gay sociality. Spatial experiences of gay men in the community engenders as a reconstitution of gay identity in the way of such spatial activities. The practice of *walking* constitutes performative acts that constructs a particular gay identity which is specific to such gay subculture. In this way, resignification of urban space is not distinctively isolated from identity constitution process. Gay life *walking* towards particular recreational and entertainment places becomes internal to and constitutes the major characteristics of gay sociality. Instant sex in parks, gay dance in a club, phallic swelling in taxi, publicized gay privacy becomes the distinctive element for reconstruction of gay identity in such communal living of gay men. As a result, gay subculture as a form of hamam culture, practices of dance, sexual signification of body and travelling in night taxis emerges as rituals of gay life which constructs gay identity in the form of communal living and designates the major characteristics of such gay lifestyle. In this way, such formation of gay sociality emerges

both as a process to bargain for gaining recognition and construction of gay identity simultaneously.

### 4.3 Appropriateness and Inappropriateness of Gay Embodiment

Indefinite process of negotiations to attain a living space is not only restricted to spatial experiences of gay men. Body representations are also significant element which entails as supplementary form of bargaining with heteronormative order. Despite the fact that gay men who are associated to gay community are content with their gay sexuality in spite of severe restrictions as a result of heteronormative gender order, such attitudes does not eliminate particular vulnerabilities of gay men as it is mentioned in the first part of this chapter. In this sense, affirmation of gay identification as a source of pride and association to gay community which appears to be an empowering strategy for their individual lives does not entail a complete public visibility in their social life. Hence, gay community itself is partially visible closeted living space which opens up several possibilities for gay men in their social life. Through this perspective, such strategies to closet gay community in urban life is not only restricted to spatiality of gay men but their body representations emerges as further negotiations to challenge their vulnerabilities.

How gay men represent their bodies in public space engenders as initial source to bargain with heteronormativity. In this case, *a priori* codified gender norms and values emerges as a reference point.

“I thing a man should have manners in the way of social expectations.” (Kerem, 28, dentist)

“Hetero people can wear earrings and have long hairs. They can wear shorts and some other clothes with different colours. These are not the things that connotes gayness.” (Görkem, 22, university student)

Body representations constitute one of the most significant dimension to gain recognition in social life. In this way, gender disconformity appears to be a burden which would come up with condemnation, marginalization and exclusion from the social life. As codifications of body in the direction of normative gender order regulates both men and women’s bodies (Grosz, 1994, 144); there exists particular form of

masculine embodiment as well. Therefore, strict definition of appropriate and inappropriate forms of bodies is being ascribed by gay men which entails masculine embodiment for heterosexual masculinity. Perception of normative corporeality is considered to be an imitation of heterosexual men's embodiment. And hence, if "hetero men" does particular acts, such practices transforms into ordinary way of life.

Through this perspective, it can be concluded that gay men's individual strategies engenders in the way that gay men tend to be invisible among the "heterosexual crowd". Definitions of how to be an "ideal man" designates a gay embodiment which is invisible among "other people" in the name of heterosexuality.

"I think I am an ordinary man. I do not withdraw other people's attention. I do not seduce them. Otherwise, I would feel myself uncomfortable. I would feel myself oppressed." (ilkay, 31, unemployed)

Continual fear of being realized by "heterosexual eyes" confines gay men into invisibility and their initial preference emerges as a desire to be unrecognizable. Due to the fact that gay men are certainly inclined to be in a marginal position as a result of gay identification in social life, they are actively complicit to the normative gender order.

However, signification of body is not committed as a stable and fixed process but gay embodiment engenders as a dynamic process within gay community. Gender imitation of gay men in the way that conforms to normative gender order is not restricted to strict and fixed repetitions of normative masculinity. In other words, gender imitation is not a practice of passive victimhood which hinders the possibility for resignification of gender order. Gay men resignify existing gender order in the way that includes some sort of gender disconformity. Such process occur in two different ways. Firstly, there exists particular places "to be able to feminine" and there are some other places where femininity is expected to be regulated and controlled. Secondly, gay men resignify gender order in the way that challenges binary oppositions of masculinity/femininity and transforms it into another form that includes femininity within the bounds of normative masculinity.

The distinction between appropriateness and inappropriateness "to be feminine" is constituted as a distinction between gay life and "hetero-life".

“Sometimes having several feminine manners might be amusing but behaving in a feminine way in the streets is totally excessive. It is appropriate in specific times and places. It is ok in a gay bar or at home, I don’t care what gays do.”(Emirhan, 34, self-employed)

“I don’t think that having some feminine attitudes are bad but if it goes beyond gay milieu, if a gay behave in a feminine way in the street, in a shop, in any public place, this is not noral. It should not be extended outside of gay life” (Alik, 26, university student)

Because there does not exist a strict distinction between gay life and “hetero-life” as they are intertwined living fields, social codes and meanings of gender normativity are being resignified within such gay community. Perception of femininity does not engender as a source of shame, fear and guilt but it is being revalued for particular conditions. This does not certainly mean that “feminization” of gay identity is being represented as a publicly visible gay pride. Gay identification is confined to a closeted gay community and “feminization” of gay identity is inclined to be restricted within the social borders of gay network. In this way, appropriate and inappropriate forms of bodies designates a spatial distinction of which particular practices are limited to particular places. In this way, socially constructed boundaries that define heteronormative gender order are being perpetuated in the minds of gay selves.

Moreover, femininity is being resignified in the publicly represented gay embodiments in some way as well. Here, strictly defined rigid gender codes are being subverted into a spectrum of femininity/masculinity; and therefore, some forms of femininity is being resignified as an “ordinary” way of life.

“There are two types of femininity. One is naturally acquired. The other one is exaggerated one. All of the gays are naturally male. That is why it should be exaggerated. Some of them are making up and plucking eyebrow. This is unnatural effeminacy. It is not natural.” (Eray, 32, computer programmer)

“I do not have any problem with having feminine manners. Some of them are naturally feminine. But some of them are effeminate coercively. The exaggerate it. It approaches to transvestism. They make up, wear female clothes. Exaggerated hairstyles.” (Onur, 35, teacher)

Transformation of gender binarism into a range of gender performativity in the name of “exaggerated femininity”, “natural femininity” and “masculinity” resignifies gender dualism in the way that includes some sort of feminine aspects into normative masculinity. In this way, dominant discourse that constructs existing gender order by virtue of “naturalization” in the way that defines biological origins for particular gender performativities is being adopted and resignified through the terms that “gay effeminacy is natural as well”. Gay men perceive that gay identity is a biological destiny of which they are confined into. As a result, “gay effeminacy” may come up with such biological origin as well. Although they do not think that “every gay men are effeminate”, “gay effeminacy” is perceived as an attitude of which some of them possess “naturally”. Hence, it is being defined within the boundaries of normative order.

On the other hand, gender performativity in the way that “plucking eyebrow”, “making up”, etc..., are not considered to be “natural” as such practices are perceived to be a “choice” rather than biologically legitimated practices. Therefore, “exaggerated effeminacy” is confined to be abnormality and gender discomformity which would be avoided from gay embodiment. In this sense, gay men resignify their gay identity by constructing an “other” identity to condemn and marginalize. Gay men’s perceptions on masculinity and femininity explicitly excludes particular gender performances like drag and cross-dressing. In this way, such attitudes can be interpreted as a desire to regain legitimacy by naturalization of gay experience that is juxtaposed by marginalization of “others”.

Especially when it is taken into account that gay identity is commonly perceived as “effeminacy” by heteronormative discourse, marginalisation of “exaggerated femininity” emerges as an attempt to resignify dominant discourse in the way to attain an inclusion of gay sexuality. However, such attempt does not engender a strategy to include sexual variation that includes every aspects of queer sexuality. Regulatory aspects of heteronormativity is still being adopted by gay men in community only in the way that resignifies such discourse by virtue of including gay sexuality that does not severely disrupts existing gender order. In other words, perceptions of gay men does not reveal a challenge that marginalize and stigmatize other gender representations in the name of transgenderism, cross-dressing and drag performance. It can be comprehended in the

way that gay men resignify gay experience by redefining the normativity by embracing gay sexuality and distancing themselves from “other” forms of queer sexuality.

Such process certainly designates that gay men are confined to live in a double life which is determined through socially constructed boundaries in the name of heteronormative gender order. Rigid gender order which assigns appropriate and inappropriate forms of living coerces them to reorganize their social life through such social boundaries. In this way, spatial and corporeal dimensions of gay life indicates that gay men are continuously renegotiating their existence in the social life. However, this does not mean that such bargaining process is of a singular form for every gay men in their everyday life. Material conditions and cultural capital reshapes the bargaining process and in this way, both gay spatiality and gay embodiments are being resignified through such class differences. This does not deny the fact that gay men are confined to double lives but it occurs in different levels and gay men develop different strategies. As gay experience is certainly marginalized and severely condemned practice as it violates heteronormativity, gay men’s everyday life is inclined to several forms of vulnerabilities and dependencies. However, class inequalities indicates that signification of gay sexuality is not unique, singular and fixed but it is of plural forms and practices through class differences. The following chapters will figure out how plurality of gay identities is being constructed through body representations and spatial experiences.

## Chapter 5

### EXCLUSIVITY AND SOPHISTICATION OF GAY EXPERIENCE

Although gay community is severely invisible in urban life as it is mentioned in previous chapter, there exists publicly visible gay men who see gay identification as a source of pride. As gay identification is purified from shame, fear and guilt; affirmation of gay experience entails coming out –at least partially. Tendency for gay identification as a publicly visible entity does not always rely on political motivations for queer sexuality but in each sense, coming out arises from self-esteem and pride with “gayly” way of life. Besides, gay men whose narratives will be analyzed in this chapter do not feel themselves severely enclosed by “heterosexual eyes” and this enables them to achieve an individual autonomy for public visibility as a gay men in social life. Of course, this does not mean that these men are visible in every space and time and gain complete recognition especially in family relations but they are able to negotiate public visibility by virtue of class privileges and family independence not only in the way of economic independence but being distant from kin ties as well.

Cultural capital emerges as distinctive element for identity constitution of middle class, urban and gay men. There exists a severe class distinction in the whole aspects of everyday life of middle class gay men. Therefore, such class privileges entails alternating form of gay experience of which reflects middle class lifestyle patterns. A sophisticated and exclusive way of middle class lifestyle has overtones an explicit gentrification of urban milieu of middle class gay men. As a result, gay experience of them indicates such sophisticated and exclusive norms and values. In this way, self-expressions of themselves, signification of gay experience and body representations in the way of gender disconformity becomes meaningful in such class positioning. How gay sexuality is being perceived and how they represent their gay identity in their social lives appears to be indissociable from middle class lifestyle. Therefore, construction of gay identity among middle class, urban, well-educated gay men does not appear to be a challenge of middle class masculinity.



In that context, regarding their individual autonomy achieved through family independence and class privileges; middle class, urban, well-educated gay men resignify their gay identity as a distinctive element for their gay subjectivity. In the first of part of this chapter, identity constitution of middle class gay men will be demonstrated regarding the identification process and body representations. In the second part of this chapter, how resignification of “difference” as a class distinction will be discussed. And the last part of this chapter will focus on how class distinction play role in construction of gay subjectivity as a way of exclusive life style.

### **5.1 Difference, Distinctiveness and Ritualization of Shame**

Identity constitution of middle class, urban and well-educated gay men relies on assertion of homoerotic sexual desire as an ordinary way of life. Gay men, who affirm homoerotic sexual desire as a basic human condition which represents the difference from heterosexuality, redefines normativity in the way that gay experience is included. Margins of normative sexuality represents a rupture from heterosexist discourse and there is an emphasis of “difference” in a positive account.

I want to do something that I know I seem fag/gay, and I want to show that to everybody at that moment.” (Tunus, 24, university student)

“I think, good part of being homosexual is being different, peculiar and rare.” (Murat, 27, Professional in a human rights organization)

“ After I shared this with my cousin I had to finish my relation with him/her. When I first talk about this, he/she said “I’ll be happy if you don’t mention this subject with me again, I love you but I don’t believe what you said.”. Then, I told her/him that if I listen to her/his personal relations, he/she has to listen to my relations, too. I said “If you can’t accept this, I can’t accept this inequality neither, then you are out of my life.”, and that was happened. Consequently we broke away.” (Mehmet, 28, academician)

Middle class, urban and well-educated gay men whom I interviewed are considerably content with their gay identity and they do not see it as an obstacle which makes them vulnerable, disadvantageous and source of sufferings in itself. Of course, elimination of shame, guilt and fear with the gay identification does not disregard homophobic violence and prejudices towards their sexual practices but, on the contrary, they think

that this is the point that inclines themselves into the vulnerabilities, disadvantages and source of sufferings. That is why they represent their gay identity “despitefully” visible towards “heterosexual eyes”. In that regard, visibility in the name of “gay” or “faggot” comes forward as a deliberate action to show up the selves in this way. As “difference” is revalued with connotations of rareness and distinctiveness, it is always source of pride. In other words, gay identity is not neutrally “different” from heterosexual people but it is being resignified with rareness and distinctiveness.

Because gay identification is source of pride as it shows out rareness and distinctiveness, closeting gay identity is perceived to be betrayal to gayly existence. As they attribute great values to their gay experience, public representations of homoeroticism comes true as a practice of conveying a message to the “heterosexual world”. Body appears to be the main tool for public representation of gay identity and it is being recoded with “gayish” symbols. These symbols convey the message of “pride” and actually they are being derived from heteronormative gender order that assigns rigid gender practices for particular gender identities. *Gay bodies* become visible in the way of effeminacy and it is basically way of expressing “pride, difference and rareness” in public space.

“ Sometimes I use red nail polish, sometimes I wear red long earrings. There are times that I pull my hair up. I don’t hesitate to show off myself with my clothes and jewellery.” (Tunus, 24, university student)

“ I like smoking slim cigarette because it is thought to be smoken by women. It is a feminine ornament and I like having it with me.” (Engin, 26, keeper in gay club)

Recodifications of bodies has always a reference point that imitates women’s bodies. What makes a body *gayish* designates a violation of normative body formations fitting to hegemonic masculinity. As gay men represent their bodies in the way that unfits to masculinity by imitating women corporeality, they absolutely think that they reform their bodies as a *gay body*. Particular practices that construct woman body comes forward as a symbolic attribute when it is repeated on a male body. Moreover, narratives of some of my respondents impose *gay body* an act of “playing with gender”. They do not simply think that this is feminization of male body but in their sense, this goes beyond gender rigidities.

“ The thing that I like is not only going out wearing women clothes, women shoes, women hair or women make up. On the one hand there is something very masculine but the shoes are very different. For instance, wearing high heels while everything else looks as a usual man. I really enjoy this duality.” (Tunus, 24, university student)

“ I don’t think I am feminine and I don’t have a problem as being feminine or masculine. I know that I have feminine and masculine sides and I don’t want to get stuck on either of them. I enjoy to present all the sides of me. I enjoy making a game out of it.” (Engin, 26, keeper in gay club)

Imitation of particular gendered practices are not simply considered to be belonging to a specific gender identity. In this sense, *gay bodies* are not perceived as feminine or masculine. Here, *gay bodies* indicate a symbol of “gayish” way of life in its own sense. As a result, identifying gay performativity in the name of effeminacy is definitely excluded in the narratives of middle class gay men. Rather than an imitation of a specific gender identity, “playing with gender” comes forward as an expression of gay pride which overcomes stability of gender order. Here, it can be interpreted as disobedience to the order unveils the gay pride that instabilize the appropriate way of life (Butler, 1993, 106). By adopting the existing codifications of gender order, *gay bodies* entails a new interpretation of femininity and masculinity in its own way. In this sense, signification of *gay body* goes beyond simplified notification of masculinity or femininity. It appears to be an entity that is “played with” and reformulated.

Gender performativity in the way that plays with normative gender identities is certainly overlapping with precessions between “gay life” and “hetero-life”, as it is mentioned in the previous chapter. However, for middle class and well-educated gay men, it is not easy to argue that such precessions appears to be a particular practice of resistance to closet gay identity for a bearable life. In this case, precessions between two fragments of social life signifies gay visibility as a way of “showing out the gay pride”. Gay men of middle class perform their gender identity in a playful manner to “make fun of it”. Repetitions of stereotyped symbols of femininity and masculinity in another way constructs gay identity in the account of difference and distinctiveness. Adoption of “pantnailing”, “slim cigars”, “tightly-fitting clothes” are explicitly defined as “feminine” preferences but these practices turns out to be constitutive elements of gay identification. In other words, so-called “feminine” is not considered to be feminine but

it is “gay”. Femininity offers a way of construction of “proudly gay” identification but it goes beyond the connotations of a particular gender identity.

In addition, although they directly refuse identification of gay corporeality in the name of effeminacy, it can be observed that perception of femininity play a significant role for construction of *gay body*. How effeminacy is being perceived plays the crucial part for construction of *gay bodies*. Femininity is being affirmed as a positive way of performing that should be appropriated by everybody. For instance, Yalın (21, university student) whom I met in gay club in Ankara, think that femininity is a smooth and flexible way of living that everybody should perpetuate. Similarly, Emre says that:

“I don’t know how to describe being feminine. First of all the way of speaking is wider than usual. Even the way you drink tea shows that. I don’t like a person being too much macho. I like femininity. I would like to see some femininity at everyone.” (Emre, 25, Professional in finance sector)

Femininity is widely perceived to be “a polite way of life” especially in an everyday interaction among two people. It is being celebrated as a peaceful gender performativity. On the other hand, masculinity is being perceived to be a pejorative performativity that is being recognized in the name of “machoism”, “harshness” and “toughness”.

Moreover, “femininity” may come up with a signifier of the difference in its own sake as well.

“I think femininity is separating myself from the group. There were cases that I behave in a feminine way consciously at an ordinary situation. Then, I thought that I do this to be separated. I like saying “I’m different from you”. I don’t like ordinary people. I don’t like standart things. Everything that fits ordinary situations disgust me.” (Murat, 27, Professional in a human rights organization).

Distinction is considerably significant dimension for construction of “proudly gay” identity and it has an implicit argument of social intelligibility that overcomes the connotations of shame. In queer studies, construction of gay subjectivity is commonly understood within the binary oppositions of pride/shame, coming out/closet, etc. While shame and closet inclines the selves into the feelings of solitariness (Plummer, 1996, 76) and captivity (Halperin, 1995, 29); coming out and pride has always been

celebrated as a self-conscious (Plummer, 1996,76) and resisting (Halperin 1995, 30) acts. On the other hand, construction of “proudly gay” identity is by no means dissociable component of shame, guilt and fear. Sarah Munt (2007, 4) argues that shame has a political potential for assertion of shameful desires in a new sense of pride and content. In her account, pride is being understood as a way of “ritualized shame” that appears in a new form in public sphere. What she means by “ritualized shame” is actually resignification of shame in the name of pride that comes forward as a way of ritual for queer sexuality. The thing that inclines the one into the shame shifts toward the way of political presence that is a source of pride. In this sense, any connotations of shame, fear and guilt transforms into the feelings of pride as a constitutive element of gay subjectivation.

In this sense, resignification of difference and distinctive, that is mentioned above, is implicitly ritualization of shame that comes out as an element of gay identity which is being publicly represented. Besides, “effeminacy”, that is formerly source of shame and guilt, emerges as a component of ritualization of shame and turns out to be the signifier of the difference. Gay men, of middle class, urban and well-educated, shows off their “shame” in a spiteful manner and moreover, they represent their gay identity in the way that it is marginalized in social life. The ritual crystallizes in the game that the one “plays with his gender” and the “play set” is his identity and his body. In that sense, they do not only assert gay identity but they assert their “shame” and “guilt” as well.

## **5.2 Distinction as a Matter of Class Privilege**

Assertion of difference is certainly politically promising position as it resignifies shame in the name of gay pride. As it is mentioned above, “immoral”, “abnormal” and “sinful” aspects of queer sexuality is not only being eliminated by virtue of “proudly gay” identification but sources of the shame becomes the part of the construction of “proudly gay” identity. However, it would be influential to ask the question of how shame turns out to be source of pride? For comprehensive understanding of “proudly gay” identity constitution, a further discussion would serve to understand the social dynamics which makes shame bearably visible and distinctive.

Gay visibility in the way of bodily codifications is not always embraceable as it has several vulnerabilities and disadvantages that incline gay men to the marginal social

positions. For instance, almost every gay men, who are being analyzed in this chapter, do not prefer to come out particular people in their working lives or families. In this case, they do not simply abandon their pride and not tend to closet their gay identity and their “distinctiveness” is still visible. For their lives, “being different” is still bearable, legitimate and in some way ordinary and the legitimacy of publicly visible “difference” comes of the class privileges which comes up with the reformulations of heteronormative gender order.

Emphasis on class differences does not mean that heteronormative gender order is being reconstituted in the way that includes non-heterosexual practices. However, class dimension engenders a legitimate self which embraces “being different” from other men without stigmatizing it.

“I can contact with a lot of people by using my academic identity. I don’t hesitate to be seen with transsexuals or gays, even by my family. I have a lot of friends at Facebook, from KAOS or people having rainbow flag photographs as a profile Picture. If my family would see that, my gentle way of speaking or my feminine behaviours, they don’t need to think about it, because I have been a university student at Ankara for years and I am an Academician.” (Mehmet, 28, academician)

Sustaining particular symbols that evokes any ‘strange’ meanings does not explicitly connote queer sexuality and in this sense, legitimacy of these symbols is not being undermined in the view of “heterosexual eyes” in cyber publicity or in the eyes of family members. “Polite way of speaking” and “effeminacy” explicitly designate “difference from other men”; however, a professional life which necessitates cultural capital renders such “strangeness” tolerable in the eyes of the “others”. It can be noticed that gay visibility is being interrupted as signification of *gay bodies* with ‘shameful’ symbols is not being perpetuated but assertion of “difference” is still being celebrated and entails “gayly” existence in public space in some way.

Besides, cultural capital does not only have a potential to tolerate “difference” in gay corporeality within the context of fitting to hegemonic masculinity. Social respectability of a gay man of middle class can also be satisfied with cultural accumulation rather than corporeality and in this sense, body does not appear as a considerable component for legitimate selves. For instance, Emre thinks that the major concern of him is not gender

conformity which fits to the normative gender performativity but he states that the main issue is the intellectual capital which makes a person invaluable:

“I have a friend. He has his own style but many people thinks he is too feminine. He’s quite different. He has higher quality. He’s loaded. There is no topic that he cannot talk about. We have brain stormings that last for hours. He starts with politics and ends up with science. This is something that makes him valuable. Having an idea about almost everything.” (Emre, 25, professional in finance sector)

Femininity comprises forming a style which is explicitly celebrated that entails the difference from the others. However, the primary source of attitudes that is affirmed appears to be the intellectual capacity of a gay man which makes him legitimate, respectable and qualified. Body representations are recognized as a way of making a difference, “forming a style”. And bodily practices unfitting to the hegemonic masculinity can easily be replaced with mental qualifications which indicates a power and status which is acquired through cultural accumulation.

Furthermore, respectability and legitimacy achieved through intellectual qualifications does not only render “feminine” body representations that unfit to hegemonic masculinity. Instability with the male homosociality comes forward as a tolerable violations of hegemonic masculinity for middle class gay men.

“All the guys in my family are male. All my cousins are male. They all watch football matches. They drunk together or went for chasing girls. They have such memories because they are all male. Since my childhood, I have always been out of this group. I think, eventhough they cannot see that I’m gay, they think that I’m a different person. A person interested in arts, studying acting and playing tennis.” (Tunus, 24, university student)

Male homosociality that is of “man-to-man” interaction in which normative masculinity is being constructed has a character of heterosexual masculinity in general and inconsistency of gay men to the male homosociality is expected to designate a degraded, subordinate position that should be condemned and marginalized. Because homosocial relations of men operate as a social mechanism to construct masculinity in the way of strength, success, domination and prowess; disobedience of gay men would indicate homosexual suspicion. In the way of “watching football matches”, “drinkin alcohol” or

“going out with girls”, male homosociality can all be understood as fulfilment of normative masculinity by taking part in the competitive interactions between men. These practices does not only indicate entertaining activities which is specific to culture of masculinity. They can also be interpreted as constructing a legitimate self in the name of strong, competitive and heterosexual manhood and a gay man’s inexistence in such kind of social network might be expected to be disobedience to the normativity. However, violating the competitive nature of masculinity does not come up with losing respectability and legitimacy of selves as individual life choices can easily be understood as a respectable position which is obtained through educational attributes and exclusive lifestyle. Respectability can easily be satisfied with some other practices particular to cultural accumulation and middle class lifestyle.

Signification of “studying art” and “playing tennis” emerges as elements for a sophisticated way of lifestyle of which is explicitly perceived as middle class life choices. In this case, “being different” from other guys does not simply entail violation of gender order. Masculinity construction of middle class men includes several gender performativities although it does not conform to strong, brave and competitive aspects of normative masculinity. Therefore, several homosocial rituals of masculinity construction emerges as substitutable elements with sophisticated elements of middle class norms and values.

In that context, gay visibility reveal a corruptible pride and distinction as it is intrinsic to the marginalization and subordination. Most of the time, in particular space and time, gay identification is being blurred. This is certainly dependent on the fact that gay identification is still a subordinate performativity. However, when class dimension is taken into account, “gayly” visibility in the way of “difference from other guys” is maintained as an embraceable attitude that is being legitimized by virtue of class privileges and in particular cultural accumulation. Transition of “gay visibility” to “gayly visibility” for maintenance of respectability can be understood within the scope of masculinity construction among middle class masculinities. Being distant to homosocial rituals of normative masculinity among middle class and well-educated gay men blurs the gay visibility by maintaining “gayly visibility” without violating existing gender order.



Although in early conceptions on hegemonic masculinity, it is understood within cartesian dualism of gender oppositions (e.g. Connell, 1998, 246) and as an absolute power position that subordinate gay masculinity (ibid, 247), further discussions challenge such kind of dualist aspects of hegemonic masculinity. Rather than universalization of masculinity in the name of hegemonic masculinity, pluralist perspective attains a comprehensive understanding of masculinity construction in the various fields of social life. Body is certainly inescapable element of cultural interpretation of gender identities which flows at the very moment of social life (Connell, 2005, 52). Physical feelings of strength, domination, prowess and superiority is indissociable aspects of bodily constructions of hegemonic masculinity in social life. Sexual experience that is of phallic significations, integrated performance of competitive interactions and some other various forms of masculine embodiments reveal that body is inescapable and vulnerable –as well- element for construction of gender (ibid, 53-54). As body is the inescapable element for achieving strength, domination and prowess, failing to have a satisfying performance comes up with the corruption of masculine domination.

In that regard, subordination of gay experience explicitly relies on dissatisfaction with the embodiments of hegemonic masculinity. Effeminate corporeality, inconsistencies with male homosociality, “feminization” of life choices and homoerotic sexual experience –most importantly- does not contribute so much to the masculine embodiments in the way of domination and superiority; and as a result, gay masculinity appears to be inclined to the subordinate position to be suppressed, degraded and marginalized. However, it should be emphasized that body has an element of labour process as well which renders different formations of masculinities possible among different classes. Connell (ibid, 55) argues that manual work indicates bodily capacities that define masculinity for working class men. In this sense, significance of body for masculinity construction becomes much more considerable for lower classes.

On the other hand, professionalization of work undermines the centrality of body and information technologies, keyboard work, professionalized labor and cultural accumulation comes forward as distinctive elements of middle class masculinities. As a result, middle class masculinity is being redefined around the terms of competition, power, technical but not physical superiority (ibid, 56). Hence, plural definition of

masculinity overcomes the binary oppositions of gay masculinity/hegemonic masculinity. As it is mentioned above, unfitting to hegemonic masculinity does not come up with a loss of respectability but, on the contrary, coexistence of gay pride and compliance with normative masculinity reveal the significance of class privileges in general. Gay men attain their respectability in the field of cultural capital.

As a result, it can be concluded that “proudly gay” identity constitution entails a form of “hybrid masculinity” (Demetriou, 2001) that eventuates in complex negotiations to regain respectability of normative order. In the one sense, gay pride involves vulnerabilities and marginalizations due to subordination of homoeroticism. Not only degraded aspects of homoeroticism but codifications of *gay body* appears to be a “insufficient” performativity in the account of hegemonic masculinity. On the other hand, “gayly visibility”, by blurring gay visibility, emerges as a strategy to bargain with hegemonic masculinity by virtue of reconstitution of selves in the way of respectability, difference, distinctiveness but ordinariness as well. Corruption of *gay body* appears to be reconstituted as a respectable representation of middle class masculinity as it designates a power position not in the way of physical feelings but in the way of superiority of mind, in general.

### 5.3 Gay Exclusivity

Apart from emergence of class privileges as an assertion of difference and gay visibility, class dimension is also decisive in the construction of gay subjectivity particular to the middle class value system. The emphasis on distinction is not only a neutral differentiation from the “others” but distinctive aspects of middle class, urban and well-educated gay subjectivity reveal an exclusive way of life that is defined around the terms of superiority, particular lifestyle patterns and severe sexual value system. In this case, gay identity is being reconstituted which is particular to a specific class position.

Construction of gay identity specific to a class position does not emerge as a sexual practice which designates gayness. In this process, identity constitution consists of desexualisation of gay experience and it is reconstituted as a particular “gay” lifestyle, “gay” culture and in general, “gayly” way of life. Signification of “gay” life does not explicitly include homoerotic sexual practices but the distinction comes of several particularities that is intrinsic to the gay men of middle class. The major distinction is

not constituted as “gay sex”, “gay love” or “gay romance”. The notion of “gay” designates a gentrified and exclusive lifestyle. As a result, sexual evocation of gay identity is disrupted and gay identity is reconstituted as a non-sexual identity.

For instance, gay groupings appear to be the major element for identity constitution and it is explicitly sexualised entity. However, gay exclusivity reshapes the pattern of groupings in an alternative manner.

“ I met my gay friends at gay clubs or through internet. Our mutual point was being gay, at the beginning. But later, it became our value judgement. Common view of life, taste of music, taste of movies, cultural activities. Every month we go to theatre or opera. These things connect us each other.” (Emre, 25, professional in finance sector)

As social network web sites and gay clubs are known as sexualised spaces in which gay men convey the message that “I am available” for any emotional or sexual encounter, gay groupings which is established through social relations in such spaces shares the sexual commonality. However, “proudly gay” men reshape their gay network within the bounds of middle class milieu. Without disappearance of gay commonality, there exists reformation of gay life with common lifestyle habits which is specific to middle class culture. Communal ties are being reformed in a de-sexualised way by adopting “a common way of life”. Moreover, commonality of lifestyle is not only desexualisation of gay groupings but it is of symbolic content of cultural capital. In that regard, community loses the character of heterogeneous class structure of which gay men of different socio-economic status and cultural backgrounds are included. “Proudly gay” community comes up with a homogeneity in the account of class differences.

Moreover, gentrified and desexualised gay network also reshapes gay identification in the name of superior way of living. Gay identity is being resignified with substantive attributes which signifies gayness as superiority

“ Gays are different then the majority. They are pickier. They look dressy. They are well groomed. They are more concerning the world. They read. (Ahmet, 36, engineer)

“Gays are different in a weird way. You see that, the most famous painters, musicians in history are homosexual. It is because of their personal intelligence. I think homosexuals are intelligent. They do ingenious works. (Emre, 25, professional in finance sector)

Gay experience engenders reaffirmation of homoeroticism in the name of genius and creativity. However, affirmation of homoerotic sexual desire as a signifier of "being superior" fails to include every aspects of queer sexuality. Superiority of homoeroticism does not only designate differentiation of queer subjectivation from "hetero people" but it implies a distinction from "slum gays" as well. Gay identification is being defined as a distinct honor of which "exclusive" gay men possess and the honor is being characterized by distancing the gay selves from "slum gays".

Perceptions of "slum gay" emerges from feelings of safety and its enclosing "threats" which jeopardize the respectability and comfort of gay selves. Narrations of "slum gay" does not constitute a respectable representation of gay experience and moreover, it demonstrates a "slum gay" image which has a tendency for disorder, troubling and criminality.

" My flatmate likes guys who are taxi driver, bus driver or greengrocer. But I get scared when they are at our flat. They are rude, they give orders. They intend to use drugs and crime. One of them is released from jail. I am afraid that something bad happens in my flat and I don't want to be remembered with these things as a gay."(Mehmet, 28, academician)

As gay identity is being constituted as a representation of exclusive life, any symbolic content which undermines such exclusivity is explicitly disapproved and distanced from individual life. Any criminal suspect is perceived to be a threat to purified lifeworld of gay exclusivity and gay men of lower status is inclined to have a tendency for such criminal suspects. Criminality is explicitly juxtaposed with lower class positions and hence, gay men of lower classes are perceived to be the source of freight and disturbance. On the other hand, "proudly gay" exclusivity is situated at the position that can never be associated to such attitudes. Identity constitution of "gay exclusivity" indicates a gentrified lifeworld which is purified from any connotation of lower symbolic value that evokes crudity.

Besides, "slum gays" are situated outside of gay exclusivity as they do not promise the feelings of reliance and profundity.

"Relations with gays from slum are generally superficial, wasting time or based on selfish interests. They use words like "aslanım", "kankam" or "müdür" while talking

with each other but everything may change suddenly. I think they are unreliable. Once, I hang on with someone like that and we even had a relation. He used to say “we are going to be all together after that, till we die”, but later I understood that it was because of his monetary needs and hunger. He used to talk about his painful experiences and his family life. But later I recognised that he benefit from my money. (Tunus, 24, university student)

Interactions between gay men of different classes is perceived to be overshadowing with economic inequalities which hinders the possibility of establishing trust relationship between them. In this sense, lower economic capital is inclined to unreliance and superficiality. Lower class position is perceived to be a condition that is deprived of any qualifications to perform any intellectual activities, developing any relationship between different classes is confined to superficiality. Moreover, as it would be bounded with economic inequalities, lower class positions is perceived to be a threat to the “exclusive” gay selves.

In that regard, identifying homoeroticism as a superior experience does not include all aspects of queer sexuality. So-called extravagant and superior homoeroticism signifies gay experience which is specific only to exclusive lifestyle. Therefore, “slum gays” are considered not to represent superiority of “gayly” way of life in their lifestyle choices and moreover, they are perceived to take part in an underground gay subculture which undermines safety of gentrified life space. As a result, perception of superiority is intrinsic to the class privileges and does not describe all aspects of queer experience.

Besides, such formation of gay identity constitutes a particular gay sexuality which is determined in the oppositions of appropriateness and inappropriates. In this context, a strict sexual value system is being established and appropriate way of gay experience is determined through such values and norms. These values explicitly represent the “superior”, “exclusive” and “respectable” way of gay sexuality and moreover, violations of these norms are certainly disapproved. The sexual value system also connotes identity constitution process in the way of exclusivity and class distinction. What is strictly disapproved is also juxtaposed with a lower class position and it can be certainly notified that devaluation of particular sexual practices is by no means dissociable from symbolic values of lower cultural capital. In other words, gay identity of middle class is attained through negating “chav” practices of “slum gays”.

Gay men of lower classes is inclined to non-valent sexual practices as they are perceived to be simplified, instinctual and random. Casual sexuality is definitely subject to disapproval as it does not promise any value for an exclusive gay life.

“I like very much making love with the person that I love. But sometimes, one night stands turn out to be “poor’s relation”. You just satisfy the fantasy that you have. A kind of treatment or excretion.” (Tunus, 24, university student)

There is a strict distinction between romance and instinctual sexuality. What makes a sexual practice instinctual is a motivation which is satisfied through particular acts without regarding how and with whom it is satisfied. As it excludes the possibility for developing a strong relationship between the ones who are encountered in this sexual intercourse, it does not go beyond an act of “treatment”. In this sense, such kind of sexual desire is being degraded as it is practiced randomly and casually without any romance and emotional encounter. Inexistence of emotional affection between the partners is perceived to be hindering the possibility for establishing any values which connotes any social experience. As a result, casualty is defined as a way of instinctual motivation. Moreover, casualty emerges as a class matter as well as the instinctuality is defined as “the poor’s relationship”. On the contrary, romance is of a way of exclusive sexual pleasure. Loveful ties is being celebrated as an enrichment of sexual encounter due to the fact that it develops emotional affections and values between the partners. In that sense, a “gay” sexual morality emerges within such context that characterizes the sexual aspects of gay exclusivity.

In that regard, gay publicity which facilitates random sexuality in some sort of specific spaces becomes subject to disapproval of gay sexual morality as it undermines the gay exclusivity.

“I really don’t like gay baths. I feel like in a place that you display your body directly. It feels like, everything is ready, you are naked and waiting for this. A hand directly touches your privacy. I don’t want to be in this situation. (Mehmet, 28, academician)

“I have a profile only in Manjam website. I think the others are terrible. For instance I have seen Gabile, it was terrible. Grammar mistakes or the qualifications that they require. They directly add the photographs of their but or penis. Everything is sex. That

simple. I couldn't find someone that fits with me on that website." (Emre, 25, professional in finance sector)

Explicit connotations of sexuality are also disapproved as it simplifies sexuality by public representation of eroticized body image. In this case, easy access to the sexuality is severely condemned and moreover, the situation which makes sexuality easily accessible is juxtaposed with lower cultural accumulation. Self-representation of body as an accessible sexual object is considered to be subversion of gay exclusivity which is not ascribed to the exclusive selves. On the other hand, casualty undermines the safety of *gay body* when it is represented nudely in public space. "Passing hands" towards the nude body entails an uncertainty which can be easily understood as a threat for gentrified life space of gay exclusivity. In that sense, privacy comes forward as an inescapable value specific to gay exclusivity. It is not only a symbolic value for enrichments of sexual behavior in an exclusive way but it comes forward as a middle class strategy to make lifeworld secure and distanced from lower class positions, namely "slum gays".

To sum up, construction of gay subjectivity is an indissociable process from class dimension as it comes forward both in the processes of body representations and gay subjectivation. Class dimension reveal an explicit particularity for middle class, urban and well-educated gay men and their representations of t<sub>g</sub>ay identity. However, it should be emphasized that the main issue is not only claiming the significance of class privileges for determination of gay subjectivity of middle class, urban and well-educated gay men. This chapter attempts to emphasize the significance of class dimension for construction of gay subjectivity within the bounds of its own class values and norms. As a result, identity constitution of gay men is being reshaped through class privileges and it comes forward as a gay subjectivity which indicates a particular form of exclusivity. Moreover, gay experience of middle class, urban and well educated men constitutes a gay subjectivity which comes up with "gayization" of a class position as well. Class distinction of gay men reveals a particular experience of homoeroticism which reconstitutes middle class lifestyle as a form of "gay exclusivity".

Besides, although assertion of gay experience as a source of pride seems to be politically promising, these promises does not generate a political motivation that includes gay

identity collectively. As emphasis on difference and ritualization of shame explicitly fails to represent gay identity within the scope of class heterogeneity, gay pride of urban, middle class and well-educated gay men can be characterized by a class privilege. When gay pride is considered with the class dimension, it can be concluded that pride is a way of public representations of selves in the sense of gentrified tastes and life choices. As a result, "proudly gay" identity constitution fails to construct a gay identity in an inclusive way and exclusivity comes forward both in the way of distinctive tastes and exclusion of the "others". Construction of gay identity emerges as an element of a sophisticated and exclusive lifestyle of which is acquired through cultural capital. Therefore, middle class, urban and well-educated gay men constitute their gay identities in accordance to such sophisticated values and norms.



## Chapter 6

### CLANDESTINITY UNDER THE IMAGE OF □ORDINARY MAN□

Gay men, who have sex with men and declare emotional attachments to men by having lesser social access to gay community, reveal an explicit difference from widespread gay identification as a source of pride. On the one hand, identification of the selves are irrelevant to the publicly visible and modern gay identity. Although it would be uneasy and impossible to propose a unique description of identification, it would be mentioned that there exists an implicit feeling of shame, guilt and fear in the way of perceptions of gay identity. On the other hand, these men perpetuate salient image of hypermasculine performativity. They do not only represent bodily symbols and performances within the normative boundaries of hegemonic masculinity but they explicitly appropriate gender conformity and they utter sexist and even homophobic speeches.

Moreover, social isolation from gay community inclines gay men to closet their gay identity. In that sense, gay closet appears to be a “life shaping pattern” and “social drama” (Seidman, 2004, 25) which falls apart from gay identification and moves towards the heterosexual identity. As gay closet is simply “living a lie, internal exile and imprisonment” (ibid, 29), closet is being defined within the boundaries of heteronormative gender order. Appropriation of gender order makes the gay closet confine with heterosexual nuclear family life, secrecy in working and social life and feelings of devaluation in general. Most of the time, it is accompanied by the one’s feeling that there is no escape.

Besides, it should be noted that the narratives of my respondents reveal that class dimension is certainly a significant element that confines gay men to closet. Particular cultural formations like family structure, in accordance with lower class positions, play the critical role for closeting gay identity within a heterosexual family life. In some way, gay men of lower classes are dressed in roles of fatherhood and husbandry; or at least, becoming a family member appears to be the major motives that encloses the gay selves. As a result, gay closet comes forward as a life pattern that is accompanied by a constant feeling of being enclosed by “heterosexual eyes”.

Such formation of social life with the feeling that there is no escape within the bounds of lower class position emerges as a construct of lower class masculinity. A strict gender segregation emerges as a significant element of family structure. Therefore, gay experience is being signified within such gender segregated structure. In this way, being a “strong man” comes forward as inescapable gender performativity and it appears to be the indispensable element for gaining respectability in social life. Besides, being a respectable man is being acquired through adoption of the image of “ordinary man” which is practiced as fathering or being a member of a family. Under the circumstances of such strict family life, gay men are inclined to lead their “gay lives” as a clandestine due to the fact that they are enclosed by a constant feeling of being followed by “heterosexual eyes”.

The feeling of being enclosed by “heterosexual eyes” engenders particular form of gay identity constitution in the sense of such class specificities and family structure. In that regard, in the first part, how public image of family life and adoption of dominant family discourse turns out to be public representation of heterosexual identity as a normative way of life will be discussed. Externalization of shame, fear and guilt which is thought to be intrinsic to gay experience by virtue of fathering and being a husband, or at least a modest family member will be demonstrated as a survival strategy for gay men.

In the second part of this chapter, how class dimension inclines gay men into the family discourse will be included in the discussion. Moreover, signification of field of family for reconstruction of masculinity will be figured out regarding the class specificities which come up with a plural definition of masculinity.

In the third part of this chapter, as homoerotic sexual practices are sources of shame, guilt and fear; gay men’s resignification of gay identity in the way that does not destabilize normative masculinity norms will be the major focus. In that regard, under the feeling of strict heterosexual surveillance, body representations and identification process will be analyzed as a way of bargain with heteronormative gender order.

## 6.1 Publicly Visible as an "Ordinary Man"

Closeting gay identity simply designates an attempt for invisibility as a gay man. In this sense, gay men's attempt for invisibility engenders a strict non-gay life with severe sufferings and restrictions that are limited with normative family life. As a practice, closet appears to be a process of self-sacrifice that hinders the possibility to be gay. Heterosexual visibility means much more than masking the gay identification and turns out to be a reorganization of social life within the boundaries of heterosexual family life. It goes beyond the particular responsibilities in specific time and space and encompasses the whole of everyday life. "Having a family" is signified as an ordinary life in which homoeroticism is a threat, disorder or source of shame.

"I think that I have no future because I am a homosexual. Everybody has a criteria. All the parents, even you, everybody. Everybody wants their son to grow up, go to military service, have a job, have a car, get married and have kids. Everybody thinks like that. They have the standards. I'm thinking like this. When I feel that it will never happen to me, I feel so upset." (Ahmet, 35, medical technician)

There exists a strict definition of an "ordinary life" that is sequentially organized in which homoeroticism is certainly not included. What makes a man ordinary is described in the way of "everybody does" and one of the most significant element of "ordinariness" comprises of starting a family. Besides, this is not only an external coercion of parental standards but this is the way that "everybody thinks". Therefore, gay identification is perceived as a source of sorrow and discomfort as it stands out of such family life.

Moreover, starting a family does not indicate an idealized life form but it is being adopted as a strategy as well.

"I also wanted to get married. I wanted to get rid of this life and set my life in order. Also it was how my family wanted. Normally people have an idea like getting married at a certain age. It was also the same with me. But I haven't any excuse left. I had a house, I had a work and then I got married. After I got married I had no other relation. I had no homosexual relation till we got divorced. By doing so I think I cope with it. On the other hand, being a homosexual has no effect on our divorce." (Ahmet, 35, medical technician)

“ Time comes and people get married in their life. It also happened to some way in my life.” (Alihan, 44, public worker)

Strictly defined sequence of life span assigns men to get married after “having a home and a job”. And moreover, it is sometimes being perceived as a way of “being safe from a deviant life style” as queer sexuality is confined to feelings of shame and fear. Marriage and family life comes forward as a “treatment” to stop all the sorrow of gay identity. “Starting a family” is perceived as an inescapable period.

However, adoption of family life is not only achieved through “fathering a family” but “being a decent family member” as uncles, son, nephew or brother in the view of “heterosexual man” comes forward as a socially praised position which provides a respectable and honorable way of life as well.

“We as a whole family are rightists. Generally we are members of various rightist parties. 25-35 year-old new generations are all members of my party. Hepsinde de benim emeğim vardır. I am the one who always takes them to meetings or actions. This is a tradition that is inherited from our uncles. My uncles were tried for capital punishment during 12 Eylül Era. They are also all fans of GS. I imposed them the party and GS. The ones who are police, soldier, teacher or academician they have their own ways. But up to a certain age have led them.” (Sancar, 42, self-employed)

Particular political attachments and belonging to a football culture constitute the heterosexual image as it is explicitly common among “the other men” in the way of ordinary life. Besides, such elements cannot be considered separate from family belongings as they are components of family identity. As a result, any practice that fits family identity becomes the source of pride and honor. Adoption of political values, football choices or some other family practices appears to be maintenance of family values and gay men perpetuate the role of family construction. Fulfillments for transference of family construct to the next generation comes forward as a mission to be completed and therefore, respectable situation of “an ordinary man” is achieved by virtue of family practices.

However, adoption of family discourse is not simply externally determined structural force that inclines gay men into the closet. As Bourdieu (2006, 128) argues, family is both intrinsic to the individuals and structural force that confronts as a form of

objectivity. The habitus of gay men within the boundaries of family life is transcendently determined by such principles of family structure. Signification of ordinary life as a form of heteronormative family discourse comes up with such transcendental family construct in which gay men suffer from. However, it would be an oversimplification if it is concluded that adoption of family discourse is a coercive process that confines gay men into passivity of imprisonment. It should be certainly emphasized that gay closet is certainly a way of life in sorrow and discomfort. Nevertheless, gay closet is not not only made up of external oppression that hinders the possibility to be gay. Gay men explicitly utter a desire for ordinary way of life as it satisfies the expectations of the larger social world. Family construct turns out to be a social phenomenon of which gay men are complicit as well. Ideological hegemony of family is being constructed as a stable, fixed and irreversible field. As a result, idealization of family comes forward as a *doxa* which appears to be *a priori* common opinion that is reconciliated and recognized by gay men as well.

Field of family as a *doxa* emerges as a life shaping pattern which restricts gay men into strictly defined family life. In this sense, potentialities for homoeroticism is being sought out within such family life.

“I am always afraid of being revealed. Even, I would never see the person that I once together for the second time. But I also want to have emotional relations. I have never had a relation. I would like to have too much. But this person who will be my partner is going to need to accept my marriage. For example, I can't see him whenever he wants.”  
(Alihan, 44, public worker)

Family life is an absolute restriction of which gay men feel themselves in a situation under “heterosexual eyes”. Feeling of constant surveillance over their everyday life inclines themselves into a “living a lie” that is accompanied by a risk of being uncovered at the very moment of social life. That is why, gay men's social life entails continual life strategies to establish “a room” for gay sexuality.

Moreover, the feeling of constant surveillance does not emerge only due to heterosexual marriages but economic dependency to the family may come up with “living a lie” with a high degree of risk to be uncovered as well.

“ I am working with my father and this situation is very annoying. If I had another job it

would be easier to lie to my wife. Once I had another job. I used to give half of my salary to my father and the remaining half was enough for me. I tell my wife that I have worked at night and nobody knows where I was. But now it is not like that. If I would lie to my wife she would call my father and learn the truth. This can't work." (Tank, 28, autopark keeper)

Besides, belonging to a family provides social and economic privileges and emotional support; and hence, family life does not appear as a negotiable fragment of social life.

"S:My family is about 200 households, we all live here altogether. We define the results of muhtar elections in our district. Others abstain from our family and my father. We don't have economic problems. My father also likes to help others. So do my uncles. They are engaged in politics. We are aware of events like weddings or sending people off military service. We are also aware of quarrels or fights. We are tightly connected. As a family we all stick together.

H:Would you like to move to another quarter?

S:No. When I got ill 10 people bring me some food. I feel quite secure when the windows are open. We live here about 51 years. How many families in Ankara live in the same district for 51 years. That's because of this I don't think of moving from here."(Sancar, 42, self-employed)

Although stronger family ties engender oppressive social milieu which encloses individual life within closer social relations, familial relations are indispensable as they provide for praise, emotional support and feelings of safety. Moreover, a lifelong solidarity of familial ties comes forward as a primary source of well-being which cannot be subordinated due to gay identification.

## 6.2 Family as a Gendering Field

Family oriented social life emerges as "being a father and a husband" or "a decent family member" which fits to the normative order. In this sense, social dynamics of gay closet can be understood as adaptation to heteronormative order to regain respectability and legitimacy. As homoeroticism is signified with shame, guilt and fear, self-representation as "family guy" comes forward as a survival strategy for social recognition. However, apart from the socially praised value of family life; fathering and being a husband attains gendering practices as well. Public visibility as heterosexual man

emerges as reconstruction of masculinity which is “disrupted” due to queer attachments in the name of gay experience. However, signification of family for reconstruction of masculinity cannot be dissociable from class dimension. As there does not exist a unique form of hegemonic masculinity, gay closet within the heterosexual family life becomes primary strategy for regaining respectability by fitting to hegemonic masculinity.

Coles (2008) defines the process of masculinity construction as a plural process which occur in the “field of masculinity”. In this field, there does not exist unique form of masculinity and unique hegemonic masculinity. Men who does not fit to the hegemonic masculinity does not experience subordination of hegemony but here complexity of negotiations and resignifications occur in the field of masculinity. Alternative subfields are substitutable with the form of the hegemonic masculinity and the loss of the power of the masculinity is being regained through the everyday negotiations (ibid, 237).

Masculinity is of fragments and fields which constitute the hegemony of men and unfitting practices of men is not simply loss of the power. The social dynamics of masculinity, in the name of “Mosaic Masculinity” (ibid, 238) as he defines, designates the plural forms of masculinities and various forms of masculinity construction.

For instance, bodily practices play absolutely significant role especially in sexual relations, sporting activities and performance in general (Connell, 1995, 54). Body comes forward as initial tool for gender construction and performance is a signifier of domination, power, superiority which are characterized as norms of masculinity.

Besides, working life appears as another process for construction of masculinity (ibid, 55). In this sense, class specificities come up with new forms of masculinity which is not only determined by embodiment. Distinction between heavy manual work and mental work figures out different systems of meanings and norms (ibid, 55-56). Physical force is definitely substitutable with manly machine systems. Hence, working class masculinities and middle class masculinities constitute different forms of the masculinity.

Moreover, class specificities does not only entail the significance of production process for masculinity construction. Serpil Sancar’s (2009, 64) empirical work on masculinity in Turkey reveal that, for those of lower economic, social and cultural capital, family discourse and fatherhood patterns becomes much more decisive in gaining respectability and praise for being appreciated as a man. In this sense, unfitting to the hegemonic

masculinity which is expected to be satisfied by economic power and competition is being negotiated with reformulation of family as a field of masculinity among lower classes. Under the conditions that does not provide economic power and accordingly authority; men of lower class construct their hegemonic masculinity by virtue of "fathering a family".

In that sense, family life comes forward as a field of masculinity to reconstruct hegemonic masculinity and regain respectability of normative masculinities. The loss of the economic power and feelings of shame, guilt and fear in the name of gay experience attendantly confines gay men to the field of family relations for resignification of hegemonic masculinity within the larger social world. Queer practices is always considered to be undermining normative masculinity and lower class gay men's individual choices, beliefs for "ideal life" and everyday practices appears as a compensation for the loss of masculinity. As a result, gay men of lower classes, whom I interviewed, resignifies family life as a field of masculinity as well. For instance, Tark describes his ordinary day at home with his family as follows:

"I ask my children what they are doing. Playing a game. What kind of a game? Atari. I play Atari. After having dinner I play Atari. I've got a cigarette or drink a beer. Then I show them kindness. Then I have a kind of psychopath or hard approach. "-What did you do at school? -My friend spit to me.-What did you do after then?-Nothing-Why didn't you hit him?" I mean a kind of more masculine way. I make him grow like that way. If you say " such things may happen", he cannot defend himself when he grow up. I give him love, I make him feel that I am with him, and I also teach him not to be afraid of anyone. My son is 5 years old, when he was 4 I made him shoot into the air, ofcourse I also hold it too. I also grow my daughter as a girl. If she plays with a remote controlled car I take it away from her. I tell her that it is his brothers toy and she needs to play with her dolls." (Tark, 28, autopark keeper)

Fathering a family entails particular practices which constructs and transmits strictly defined values and norms fitting to hegemonic masculinity. Identification through belonging to a family and being a father is perceived as a figure of manhood who is assigned to maintain the well-being and safety of a family. Fatherhood is signified with a loveful relationship with children and such loveful ties is not only considered to be



emotional support and smooth interaction. Fatherhood emerges as a gendered identity especially in accordance to interaction with children. It is perceived as a social responsibility to bring up children in a harsh, brave, prowess and protective way in the name of masculinity. Besides, fatherhood attains in the way of transference of rigid gender roles to the younger members of the family.

Juxtaposition of embodied masculinity with fatherhood emerges as a specific gender performativity to lower class position as body renders the primary source for construction of masculinity. On the one hand, gay experience entails a disruption of hegemonic masculinity and hence, gay embodiment cannot be a negotiable element for lower class gay men to gain respectability and recognition. On the other hand, the practice of “fathering” renders appropriateness to the normative masculinity so that gay men reconstruct their masculine gender identity which is disrupted due to gay experience within the field of family. Moreover, within the bounds of lower class position, gay men are inclined to juxtapose masculine embodiment with fatherhood, and hence, lower class gay fatherhood emerges as a gender performativity in the sense of harshness, prowess and protection. Therefore, gay identification is trivialized due to inaccordance with the such aspects of hegemonic masculinity.

In addition, adoption of family life as a field of masculinity for reconstruction of hegemonic masculinity does not only appear as a strategy for lower class gay men. As family formation as a production unit, especially among urban petit bourgeois results in permanence of classical patriarchy and strong kin ties among family members (Kandiyoti, 2007), family life does not appear as a fragment of social life but plays the decisive role in the formation of individual life choices. Because family belongings is not fragmentary but covers up the majority of lifeworld, family assets and ties becomes relevant to the individual life choices, political standpoint, economic activities, neighborhood and lifestyle in general. Men whom I interviewed, shows me out their social responsibilities like transmitting familial judgments to younger generation and perpetuation of supportive relations to other family members. Economic activities and maintenance of family bonds appear to be prior necessities for leading “a meaningful and appropriate life”. In this sense, family structure does not appear as a coercive oppression of gay identity but results in devaluation of gay men’s sexual practices within such kind of structure. Fulfilment of the family responsibilities and maintenance of the

family bonds remains the sole field to possess dignity and praise and it trivializes gay sexuality in their everyday life.

For instance, Sancar (42, self-employed) does not have clear distinction between his working life, family life and political life. He is living alone in the neighborhood where his all family members live in. Moreover, he is operating a small business which is owned by his uncle and he is an active member of a right-wing nationalist party which turned out to be a familial tradition; and he says:

“I am perceived as an authoritarian, powerful person among the family. I am responsible for the economic issues. My nephews follow my lead. If they knew that I am gay of course it changes the situation. They think in a different way. They would be disappointed.”(Sancar, 42, self-employed)

Belonging to a family as a male member provides gay men various privileges due to gender identity and hence, such elements necessitate maintenance of masculine performativity as well. Masculine performativity which entails a considerable prestige and authority in the family coexist with familial responsibilities and economic activities. As authoritative masculine image is achieved through economic power in the family, self-representation of heterosexuality becomes indissociable element for both masculinity construction and class positions. Therefore, fitting to hegemonic masculinity comes forward as indispensable dimension for dignity and praise. As a result, possession of authoritative image emerges as a constitutive element of hegemonic masculinity. Moreover, maintenance of masculine performativity operates as a process of family identity constitution. Transmission of masculine values to the younger male generation crystallizes as significant aspect of family identity; and hence, trivialization of gay identity becomes inescapable strategy.

### **6.3 Resignification of Gay Sexuality as a Supreme Way of Fraternity**

As gay closet operates as a life shaping pattern both in the way that adoption of family life as an ordinary life and its gendering aspects within the field of family, as it is discussed in previous part of this chapter, gay men are inclined to be enclosed by “heterosexual eyes” which comes up with severe sufferings and vulnerabilities. In this sense, it should not be concluded that “heterosexual eyes” confine gay men to passive

victimhood of which queer potentialities disappears. However, although we can mention some sort of queer potentialities in the social milieu of gay closet, such forms of queer sexuality is explicitly internal to heteronormative gender order. Gay identification and gay experience is possible only within the boundaries of heteronormativity; and therefore, gay subjectivities in the closet resignify gay experience in the way of such social restrictions. That is, gay practices are being re-affirmed in an affinity with “gay pride” but it is by no means relevant to public declaration and coming out.

Such process occurs in two aspects. In the one hand, gay identity is being redefined through the terms of gender binarism in the way that femininity is being degraded and masculinity is being praised. On the other hand, “masculine” gay identification that reveals an honorable way of homoeroticism comes up with an identity constitution in the name of fraternal ties.

### 6.3.1 Condemnation of Femininity

As closeting gay identity and adoption of family discourse emerges as a survival strategy to reconstruct normative masculinity and regain respectability, such inclinations reflect “heterosexualisation” in the way of body representations and corporeality as well. Regarding the aforementioned fact that masculine embodiment is being prioritised due to class specificities, body formations are definitely intrinsic to how gay identity is signified and body representations indicate the explicit endeavour to reconstruct the “disrupted” aspects of normative masculinity due to gay experiences. The expressions of the gay men whom I interviewed reveal an attempt for externalization of femininity from their way of body representations. Self-descriptions absolutely avoid any connotation of femininity and moreover, condemn femininity in male corporeality in any way.

A: This is an adoption process, after feeling this I did not do balderdash things saying I am a gay. I keep on my regular life.

H: What do you mean by doing balderdash things?

A: Like putting on make up, changing clothes. I have felt these inside of me. I know that I am gay but have kept on my ordinary life as a normal man, without disturbing other people.”(Ahmet, 35, medical technician)

Gay identity is considered to be a destiny which is confronted with blues and sorrow but gay men internalizes gay experience in the way that does not reshape “the normal way of life”. By adopting the homophobic attitudes towards gay men which confines homoeroticism to strangeness and marginalization, their utterances reflect a desire to distance themselves from such kind of perceptions over gay identity. Imitation of feminine corporeality is severely condemned and defined as “farcical practices” which should be strictly kept away from *gay bodies*. Moreover, such attitudes implicitly entails distancing the selves from “the other gays” who are considered to have gender disconformity. “Making up”, “changing the dressing styles” and “behaving in the way that disturb the others” implies particular group of people who are publicly visible gay men and condemnation of femininity includes marginalization of such people as well. As a result, signification of gay identity entails different representations of gay embodiment of which masculine performativity is praised. That is, gay identification is defined in the name of two oppositionary gender performativities.

“Homosexual means being hermafrodyte. Being gay and homosexual are quite different from each other. Being gay is different from male-female sex. On the other hand being homosexual is perceived by the society as having feminine clothes, or having female role which may lead to tranvestism. It is their perception. Being feminine may lead to tranvestism. One may find himself in a female role unconsciously.” (Alihan, 44, public worker)

For some gay men, gay identity is resignified due to gender connotations of the notion of ‘gay’. What makes a person gay is defined through the terms of naturalized reliance of biological sex. And hence, gay experience is being resignified in the name of “manly” gay manners. On the contrary, ungendered connotations of the notion of ‘homosexual’ is being signified as femininized gay embodiment which has a blurring range from femininity to cross-dressing and transgenderism. Perceptions of femininity reveals that femininity is the source of the condemnation which should be avoided as it is internal to the “position of women”.

Signifying feminine embodiments as incoherence and strangeness relies on the idea that such practices makes gay identity visible and brings up with vulnerabilities and source of shame. Therefore, such practices are considered to be perversion of the order as they attract the attention of “heterosexual eyes”.

“There are some feminine ones. They expose their body. They need to evince in a way that they are gay. They do this to show off. They want to be called as “gay” or “different” by the society. They do this to get attention and I do not find these appropriate.”(Ahmet, 35, medical technician)

Perceptions on “incoherence” with gay embodiment in a “feminine” manner is being described referring to socially mediated body formation that ensures gender norms and values. Masculine gay identification is acquired by virtue of avoiding dressing styles which reflects body lines and particular way of speaking as they are perceived to be “feminine” and inappropriate. On the other side, appropriate corporeality for gay masculinity is defined as indifference to the heterosexual image. It should also be notified that signification of femininity is strictly different from middle class and well-educated gay men. Here, “being different” is certainly degraded aspect of gay selves. Rather than expressing the selves as “proudly gay” by being visible in a different way from the others, the image of “ordinary man” among the “heterosexual crowd” is the indispensable strategy for gay men of lower classes. Therefore, adoption of masculinity as an “appropriate” gender performativity becomes much more meaningful in this sense. Indifferent visibility to “others” emerges as a life strategy for making the lives bearable as “difference” is being signified as a burden which would deepen the vulnerabilities of lower class gay men.

Condemnation of “femininity” reflects an implicit desire for invisibility in the social life which emerges as a survival strategy within the gay closet. In this sense, avoidance of femininity comes up with a different form of gay identification which is described around the terms of “manliness”, “masculinity”, etc... The hegemonic discourse that pathologize and marginalize homoeroticism is being re-appropriated but it is resignified in the way that include gay sexuality which is experienced in a “manly” manner. On the other side, particular practices which are considered to be “feminine” become the ones which are pathological and marginal. And gay experience in the way that resignified as “manly” way of sexuality is being repraised under the public image of “strong, strict and masculine man”.

“I think being gay means getting more mature mentally and realizing that it has no relation with being feminine. Feminine behaviours should not exist neither mentally nor physically. I think being gay is to do with masculine feelings.”(Alihan, 44, public

worker)

Although gay experience is considered to be a discrepancy with hegemonic masculinity, “manly” gay identification resignifies homoeroticism in the way that does not disrupt hegemonic masculinity and moreover, gay identification comes forward as a constitutive element of masculinity construction. As a result, “being gay” is being defined as a situation that is “matured” in the one’s mind and moreover, it comes up with feelings of a man. That is, gay identity is described as “masculine feelings” in the way of a man’s sexual desire towards another man.

Besides, for some gay men, gay experience does not always emerge as a “masculine feelings” of a man to another man. There might exist descriptions of particular practices which makes “manly” gay identification possible.

“If they ask me if I am homosexual, I would reply that it doesn’t matter for me girl or boy. I fuck whoever give me. I define something like that. This is my thought.” (Tank, 28, autopark keeper)

What makes gay experience praised and honorable is indissociable from particular sexual practices. Identification of gay experience as “masculine feelings” does not entail in any sense of gay sexuality or gay romance. “Fucking the one who gives” comes forward as significant dimension which makes homoeroticism “masculine feelings”. In this sense, it might be concluded that gay identification becomes possible within the boundaries of rigid gender distinction. “Fucking” comes up with constitutive aspects of “manly” gay identification.

### 6.3.2 Gay Identity as Fraternal Ties

Construction of gay subjectivity in the closet ensues within the social boundaries that restricts everyday life courses in particular relationships. Adoption of family life entails a social milieu of which there exists a distinction between *inside* and *outside* of the family. In this sense, gay sexuality that is expected to have an interaction with a “stranger” who is *outsider* of the family appears to be violation of such family discourse that renders the distinction of in/out. Familial identification of gay men hinders the possibility of “gay romance” or “gay sexuality” which would be situated outside of the heteronormative family life. Through this perspective, gay men resignify gay sexuality as a form of

relationship which would be socially recognizable in such heteronormative order. Emotional encounter to a “stranger” man who does not belong the one’s own family can occur only in the way of fellowship, particularly men’s fellowship. And moreover, the lover turns out to be a fellow and gay love becomes fraternal fidelity among two men.

“ I think gay relations should be the same as the relations of straight guys. The only difference is that two of them are having sex. Except this everything is same.”(Alihan, 44, public worker)

Signification of gay relationship as a particular form of straight men’s relationship among two men appears to be men’s sexualised homosociality that is not different from straight men’s friendship in practice. In this way, a “straight acting” gay relationship would come up with public invisibility that is certainly intrinsic to the gay closet. Moreover, such gay fraternity does not only reveal an endeavour to mask gay sexuality in the view of straight fellowship but it is being signified as a form of solidarity as well.

“Lets call “life partner” instead of “lover” to my relations with men. I percieve my relations with men as a kind of hanging together, companionship.”(Tarik, 28, autopark keeper)

Gay fraternities are not simply “straight-acting” gay relationship which is not publicly visible but it is being differentiated from sexualised content of gay sexuality. Making sense of solidarity and comradeship reveals a different form of interaction between gay men rather than emotionally or sexually attracted encounter. Moreover, gay fraternity entails a negation of heterosexual relationships as well.

What makes gay fraternity special and superior engenders as centralization of male pleasure in sexual practices, in that sense, gay sexuality is being celebrated to be much more enjoying as it is scripted only in “manly” pleasure.

“I used to have a friend from the neighbourhood. When we desire so much we used to meet at pantry. Sometimes we met 3 or 4 times in a day. But we were not calling as “lover” to each other. Orgasm, mutually. Orgasm for only night. There were no love, no affection.” (Sancar, 42, self-employed)

In that kind of sexualised homosociality, gay experience is being redefined in the way of

lessening emotional interaction and reducing homoeroticism to sexual satisfaction. Gayness is nothing more than “reciprocal orgasm”. In that way, it excludes emotions, loveful desires and romance which are coded as “feminine”. Instead, gayness becomes a men’s sexual desire which are satisfied by having sex with another man. Perceptions of gay men I interviewed centralizes male pleasures in the sexual practices, in that sense, gay sexuality is being celebrated to be joyful and satisfying.

Besides, gay fraternity emerges as a specific form of sexuality which is different from heterosexual relationships in the way that the two partners are men. As a result, such dimension appears to be the another source for celebration of gay fraternity as well.

T:A man knows satisfying a man more than satisfying a woman. Women are, you know. I mean the treatment. Or the position. But the man understands you. The man makes you more satisfied.

H:what he does, for instance?

T:I even fuck his mouth. I mean I am more satisfied.”(Tarik, 28, autopark keeper)

Signification of gay sexuality in the way that centralizes male pleasure entails a superiority in comparison to heterosexual relationship. Any sexual encounter of a man which is conducted with a woman is considered to be providing for lesser satisfaction as gay sexuality is perceived to promise conformity and joyfulness. The major dimension of gay fraternity that is defined as “solidarity” and “comradeship” renders gay intimacy flexible and comfortable so that asking for particular practices for satisfying fantasies becomes applicable.

Besides, heterosexual intimacy is being signified as a limited sexual activity due to gender segregation in lower class social life. Women are being perceived as a gender identity of which sexual practices is certainly limited to “vanilla sex”. Embarrassment and dissatisfaction with women entails a load of sexual practices which would not “asked for” from women. Therefore, “the world of men” emerges as a source for sexual satisfaction as there does not exist any considerable limitations which would be banned in gay sexuality.

Moreover, celebration of gay sexuality is not only due to “sexual joyfulness” but it is of symbolic value that sublime masculinity. Formation of gay subjectivity as male solidarity



and comradeship reconstructs gay masculinity as a particular form of hegemonic masculinity that engenders the “collectivity” of gay fellows.

T:Relation with a man is more superior. Because of that he is a life partner but not a lover.

H:What do you mean?

T:You share everything with him. You can not share everything with your lover.

H:But this is not a marriage either. Life partner is far more different than a lover. In what way it is different, can you explain?

T:You can not say everything to your lover.

H:What can you not say to your lover?

T:For instance, a very small thing. You are tight economically. You can not ask for money from your lover. But you can ask from your life partner. Support. You can say that you have a problem.” (Tark, 28, autopark keeper)

Masculine privileges is being oriented towards gay experience. Gay fraternity emerges as a sexual interaction among “two men”, a particular form of fellowship among them. The emphasis of “two men” is the source of gay supremacy and it endures the gender hierarchy which reflects hegemony of men. Reliance on gender hierarchy makes gay fraternity the solidarity of “two men”; that is “two strong”. In that sense, gay sexuality regains supremacy in comparison to heterosexual practices. As it is considered that heterosexuality is a practice of companionship among a man and a woman, a “dependent”; it does not promise a form of solidarity in practice. Solidarity is perceived to be a “gay privilege” because it provides for supportive homosociality of two men both in the way of sexual encounter and some other forms of solidarities.

In that regard, gay identification as a form of masculinization and fraternal ties does not emerge as an explicitly subordinate gay masculinity that results in severe sufferings but it entails as a part of reconstructed hegemonic masculinity. However, it would be an oversimplification to conclude that gay masculinity of lower classes in closet reproduce patriarchal aspects of hegemonic masculinity. Regarding the fact that experience of closet entails adoption of family life within the intersectionality of class positions, closet does not go beyond a life shaping pattern. In this sense, gay experience in closet attains family life as a field of masculinity and heteronormative gender order which coexists both in the way of imprisonment and socially praised ordinary position.

Continual surveillance emerges as a source of sufferings in the closet but such attitudes

comes up with social recognition and “patriarchal dividends” (Connell, 2005) as well. In this way, “closeted gay” masculinity can be understood as a “complicit masculinity” (ibid) as it reproduces several patriarchal aspects of hegemonic masculinity. The image of masculinity in the family life and masculine embodiments in the process of body representations comes forward survival strategies to be invisible in social life and to regain “disrupted” respectability due to gay experience. As a result, gay closet maintains a vulnerable position and masculine privileges at the same time.

Such sort of identity constitution as a closeted identity within the family bounds certainly differs from publicly visible identity construction which is perceived as a source of pride. Moreover, it would not be easy to understand “closeted gay” subjectivity around the terms of “difference” from other gay identifications in the way of destabilization of gender rigidities and embodiments. Gay subjectivity in the closet situates gay identity as oppositionary to other identity constructions of gay men as they are perceived to be threatening and inappropriate. Because public visibility and gender disconformity is considered to be a source of threat for well-being of the image of “ordinary man”, gay men construct a distance from other gays and gay social networking as well. Therefore, distancing the selves from gay network inclines men to the fields of life which are definitely heterosexually dominated and as a result, gay subjectivity is being associated with normative masculinity in the closet.

## Chapter 7

### CONCLUSION

Contemporary discussions on understanding gay experience share tendency not to generalize gay identity into a monolithic, universal and singular form of homoeroticism. There exists various studies that designate the emphasis of difference due to class, cultural, ethnic, gender, age hierarchies which would generate different forms of identity constitutions in everyday life (e.g. Manalansan, 1995; Puar, 2001; Hennen, 2005). Moreover, sexuality is not only restricted to gender-focused object choice which reduces queer sexuality into homosexual/heterosexual binarism. There exists various forms of sexual practices, fantasies, fetishes, roles, etc..., and therefore, overgeneralized category of "gay identity" fails to comprehend plurality of sexuality (Dowsett, 1993, 701). In this way, speaking of a gay experience both in the way of universal generalizations and monolithic comprehensions in nationwide would provide insufficient perspective to encapsulate various forms of gay identifications and sexual practices. Moreover, in queer studies, conception of difference emerges in an affirmative account as "difference" that indicate fluidities, hybridities and complexities is considered to be a resistance against regulatory and classificatory discourses (Seymen, 2009, 178). Plural forms of gay identities are explicitly celebrated as they are considered to be alternative forms of social life which destabilize dominant discourse.

When the findings of this study is taken into consideration, it would certainly noted that gay identity in Turkey constitutes plurality so that it is not possible to mention only one representation of gay identity. Furthermore, multiple forms of gay experience of Turkey emerges due to class inequalities. Hence, it would be concluded that pluralization of gay experience is not simply a result of differentiation but it is of unequal relationships.

In practice, this process comes up with two major categories which can be defined through different class positions. In the one hand, urban, middle class and well-educated gay men construct a gay identity that is characterized by gay pride and public visibility. On the other hand, formation of gay identity among lower class and traditional middle

class gay men constitutes a particular gay experience that can be defined through the term of gay closet. In that regard, several concepts comes forward as major dynamics associated to plurality of gay experience in Turkey. How gay men represent their gay identities and bodies in the name of coming out org ay closet, perceptions of masculinity and femininity, signification of gay experience as a way of life and its entanglement with perception of "other gays" are particular aspects for pluralization of gay experience.

For those who are middle class, well educated and urban gay men, the most distinctive element of gay experience appears to be a higher level of public visibility. Signification of gay experience is being shaped by gay pride and such gay men constitute a gay embodiment in the way of such corporeal practices that are specified to shame and condemnation. Here, a "proudly gay" embodiment comes forward that resignifies shame and condemnation as source of pride. In this way, body entails a distinctive element for "proudly gay" identity constitution. However, public visibility and ritualization of shame designates a class privilege as well.

Besides, such class privileges resignifies gay identity in the way that emerges as an element of an exclusive and sophisticated lifestyle. Therefore, gay identity is being redefined by eliminating its sexual meaning and it is being codified as a way of a particular lifestyle in the way that is percieved as superiority of gay men namely a creative mind, superior genius, and extravagant talents. However, such "superior gayness" does not codify all of the gay men but such superiority is percieved to be a distinction from "slum gays". As a result, such distinction symbolizes the exclusivity of middle class gay men. Moreover, gay identity comes forward as a process that performatively constructs a particular class position.

On the other hand, for gay men of lower classes and traditional middle classes, the experience of closet engenders another formation of gay identity. Idealization of heterosexual family life emerges as a primary tendency to attain respectable and ordinary masculinity and gay men within the closet percieve fathering a family or being a member of a family as inescapable way of life to be a respectable man. Therefore, gay men in the closet are enclosed by such family discourse and moreover, they are actively compliance of such discourse. Crystallization of family discourse in the experience of gay closet

emerges as a specific gay experience of lower class position. For lower cultural capital, significance of family life entails resignification of gay identity within such heterosexual family life. In this way, gay men in such kind of family life, resignifies gay experience in a masculine way. Masculinization of gay identity entails a strong representation of gay identity as a way of “fellowship” and “solidarity” of two men. Moreover, “effeminate” representations of gay identity is also severely condemned and gay men in the closet avoid such kind of representations in their social life and they construct an exact distance from “gender discomformity”.

Such kind of identity constitutions reveal that gay men are unstably situated between the positions of coming out and closet. Moreover, their narratives reveal that it is not easy to mention an absolute subordination of gay identity by hegemonic discourse. Gay men’s expressions destabilize the exact and singular position of subordination against hegemonic masculinity. Instead, their perceptions indicate a desire to regain respectability in various ways and forms depending on their class positions. As a result, such kind of situation hinders the possibility to mention polarized dichotomy of subordinate/hegemonic, oppressing/oppresed, marginal/central, etc...

For instance, gay men of lower or traditionally middle classes may be considered to be a subordinate position within the field of gay community as they lack a public visibility and even they prefer to be in the closet. Moreover, this situation relies on the fact that coming out of the closet deepen their vulnerabilities in their social life. Especially due to strict association to heterosexual family as a fathering role or being an ordinary “family guy”, they experience a severe restriction and adoption a family discourse appears to be an inescapable way in their social life. On the other side, adoption of such kind of family discourse emerges as a gendering field and their narratives overlaps with hegemonic masculinity. Self-identifications and perceptions of their lives directly indicate a gender segregation and rigid gender roles so that their gender performance does not fall behind hypermasculinity. Moreover, their narrations indicate explicit aspects that exclude gender violations.

Similarly, gay experience of middle class, urban and well-educated gay men constitute a particular gay identity which does not only designate a sexual practice but it is of a middle class lifestyle as well. In this case, gay life engenders a sophisticated and exclusive

lifestyle which has a positionality against lower class positions. Therefore, despite subordinate aspects of gay masculinity, gay life emerges as a privilege and prestigious position which excludes some other forms of gay experiences.

Regarding the elements of plural gay experiences, it is not possible to mention a unique form of positioning within power relationships. As Hetherington (1996, 23) argues, there does not exist a single marginal position which is regulated by a singular centrality. Moreover, coexistence of plural marginality and centrality attains an unfixed comprehension of centres and margins. As a result, to speak of an essentially determined identity emerges as a problematic argument in such kind of dynamic perspective (ibid, 25). Plural forms of identity constitution entails a distribution of different experiences under the general name of a shared identity.

Formation of plural identities distributed in various ways within multiple centres and margins comes up with distinction of "us" and "them". Perception of "us" which is surrounded by "them" appears to be the major dimension for constructing a particular identity due to specific way of living. Identity constitution that is formed by a perception of "us" under a "threat" of "them" engenders dynamic positions that comes forward as various forms and practices. In the one sense, it is defined as "slum gays" that does not represent the "exclusivity" of gay lifestyle. In the other sense, it may appear to be "gender discomformity" that makes gay identity visible and vulnerable for some. And even, within the shared living space, such differentiations coexist with each other and they share the same living space in urban life. As a result, a "shared" gay identity is constituted with the complexity of "plural, confused, contradictory and uncertain" (ibid, 27) gay identities. Although gay experience indicates a form of shared identity which may form a practice of solidarity, it fails to represent a collectivity that is formed by category of "gay" men. However, it should be noted that plurality cannot always be conceptualized as a form of resistance. As Jackson (2003, 80) argues, pluralization can also occur within the social hierarchies and also it may come up with deepening inequalities and power relationships as well. As this study reveals, plural forms of gay identities may have explicitly homophobic, sexist aspects and class distinctions.

Besides, such plural aspects of gay experience indicate a differentiation within the formerly existing hierarchies so that plurality of gay experiences deepens such

hierarchical relationships. As gay men of different classes develop different strategies due to their particular experiences in everyday life, formation of different gay identities emerges within gender and class hierarchies. Therefore, regarding the initial question which is mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, to what extent can we celebrate plurality of gay identities as a form of resistance against classificatory discourses? As multiplicity of gay identity constitution is by no means irrelevant to the unequal power relationships (Puar, 2001), such plurality does not always indicate potentialities for resistance against heteronormative gender order. As this study reveals, it may also come up with deepening gender and class hierarchies as well. Therefore, it is surely significant to consider such dimension in the context of possibilities for resisting against dominant order. For further research on possibilities for resistance of gay masculinity against hegemonic masculinity in Turkey, there exists a need to encompass the potentiality of reproduction of dominant order.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Turkish Originals of Quotations from In-Depth Interviews.

#### Chapter 2

“Sportif bir şeyler giysen iyi olur. Mesela bir eşofman falan. İçimden öyle geldi. Dar kesim, vücut hatlarını belli eden giysiler beni boğuyor ☺” (Sancar, 42, self-employed)

“Feminenlik nasıl anlatılır bilmiyorum. Mesela sen feminensin. Konuşmandan, yürüyüşünden ben öyle görüyorum. Kibar konuşuyorsun. Yürürken kollarını iki yana açıp sallaya sallaya yürümüüyorsun mesela” (Tarik, 28, autopark keeper)

“Bence senin biraz feminen davranışların var. Ama bence bu senin doğal davranış şeklin. Abartılı değilsin. Yani kendiliğinden bu özellikleri taşıyorsun. O yüzden abartılı olmadığı için kabul edilebilir” (Eray, 32, computer programmer)

#### Chapter 4

“20’li yaşlarımda mahalleden bir arkadaşım oldu. Onunla birlikte bir ilişkimiz oldu. O bana her şeyi anlattı. Gay mekanlarını, insanların nereye gittiğini ondan öğrendim. Şaşırtıcı oldu aslında benim için çünkü hep gittiğim ve bildiğim yerlerdi. Mesela parklar, bazı barlar, erotik film gösteren sinemalar. Bunlar hep bildiğim yerlerdi ama gaylerin de kullandığından haberim yoktu.” (Emirhan, 34, self-employed)

“Parkta iletişim kurmanın çeşitli yolları var. Parkta otururken sürekli olarak çevresiyle ilgileniyorsa, hatta şeyini okşuyorsa çok net beliriyor. Mesajı çok net alıyorum. İlk iletişim sigara çakmak isteyerek başlıyor. Ya da bazen adam bana baktıktan sonra hemen karşıdaki banka oturuyor ve mesela sigarasını 3 kez ritmik olarak çekiyor. Sonra sohbet başlıyor ve böylece tanışılıyor” (Enis, 32, professional in service sector)

“Taksiler de özellikle gece çalışanlarda yaygın olarak cinsellik yaşıyor. Taksiye yalnız binilmişse, ya da küpe falan takılmışsa, arabayı sürerken penisini ellemeye başlıyorlar.

Gay barın çıkışında bulunan taksilerde bu özellikle çok daha fazla. Bazen doğrudan ellemek ister misin, ağzına almak ister misin diye soruyor taksiciler. Çoğu insanın taksicisi var. Rutinleşmiş. Sonra eve bırakı para almıyorlar. Zaten ilişki asla evde yaşanmıyor. Gizli bir yere götürüyorlar, ve çoğunlukla arabada” (Onur, 35, teacher)

“Gay barda özgürce dansedebiliyorum. Öpüşebiliyorum, seksi dans yapabiliyorum. Kendi cinsimden birisiyle orda istediğim gibi dans edebilmek kendimi özgür hissettiriyor. Orda kalıyor ama yine de özgürlük duygusunu tadıyorum” (Mehmet, 37, clerk)

“Bir keresinde sevgilimle gabyarda dansediyordum. Slow dance yapıyorduk. Bir çocuk geldi ve bana dans ettiğim adama aşık olduğumu hissettiğini söyledi. Üçüncü bir gözün benim aşkıma fark etmesi çok hoşuma gitmişti” (Enis, 32, professional in service sector)

“Kendi evime olsa kendimi en çok orda özgür hissedirim. Tek yaşayayım ya da başka eşcinsel arkadaşlarımla paylaşayım isterdim. Önemli olan bana ait bir yer olması. O zaman her zaman rahat hissedirdim. Çünkü ev özelim olurdu. Sevgilinle cinsellik dışında da özgürce vakit geçirebileceğin bir yer çünkü ev” (Mehmet, 37, clerk)

“Bence bir erkek toplumun bakış tarzına göre olmalı” (Kerem, 28, dentist)

“Hetero erkekler de küpe takıyor. Saçını uzatıyor. Şort giyiyor. Değişik renklerde giyinebiliyor. Bunlar doğrudan eşcinselliği çağrıştıran şeyler değil” (Görkem, 22, university student)

“Ben kendimi sıradan bir erkek gibi görüyorum. Herhangi bir göz alıcılığım yok. Tahrik edici değil. Diğer türlü olsa, dikkat çekmek beni rahatsız ederdi. Baskı altında hissedirdim” (İlkay, 31, unemployed)

“Bazen geyiğine feminen olmak eğlenceli olabilir. Ama sokaklarda feminen olmanın, feminen hareketlerde bulunmanın ne lüzumu var. Her şeyin yeri ve zamanı olmalı. Gay barda olabilir, evinde olabilir. O zaman istediğini yapsın gayler.” (Emirhan, 34, self-employed)

“Benim açımdan feminen olmak kötü bir şey değil. Ama bu ortamdaki konuşmaları dışarı çıkardığında, sokakta, mağazada, toplum içerisinde olduğu zaman bu anormal

oluyor. Yani gay ortamının içinde feminen konuşursun, davranırsın. Dışarı taşımamak lazım” (Alik, 26, university student)

“İki tür feminenlik var. Biri doğal olarak sahip olunan. Diğeri de abartılı olarak yapılan. Sonuçta erkek olarak yaratılmışız. O yüzden çok fazla abartmamak lazım. Kimisi makyaj yapıyor, kaşlarını alıyor. Bu kendini sonradan feminenleştirmek. Doğallıktan çıkıyor artık” (Eray, 32, computer programmer)

“Benim feminen olmakla bir derdim yok. Kimisinin doğasında var feminenlik. Kimisi de bunu kendine zorla yüklüyor. Abartıyorlar. Travestiliğe varıyor artık. Makyaj yapıyorlar, kadın giysileri giyiyorlar. Saçlarıyla oynuyorlar.” (Onur, 35, teacher)

## Chapter 5

“İbne, gay görüneceğimi bildiğim bir şeyi yapmak, o anda bunu herkese göstermek istiyorum.” (Tunus, 24, university student)

“Eşcinsel olmanın güzel yanı bence şu, farklı olması. Kendine özgü olması. Ve az olması” (Murat, 27, Professional in a human rights organization)

“Kuzenime açıldıktan sonra onunla ilişkiyi kesmem gerekmişti. Çünkü ben ona ilk söylediğimde, ‘benimle bir daha bunu konuyu konuşmazsan sevinirim, seni seviyorum ama söylediklerinin gerçek olduğuna inanmıyorum’ demişti. Ben de ona ben senin ilişkilerini dinlemek zorundayım, sen de benimkileri dinlemek zorundasın, dedim. Bunu kabullenmezsen, ben de bu eşitsizliği kabullenmem ve hayatımdan çıkarırsın dedim, ve öyle de oldu. Nihayetinde uzaklaştık”. (Mehmet, 28, academician)

“Bazen kırmızı oje sürüyorum, bazen uzun kıpkırmızı bir küpe takıyorum. Saçlarımı topuz yaptığım oluyor. Kendimi giyimimle ve aksesuarlarımla göstermekten hiç çekinmiyorum.” (Tunus, 24, university student)

“Slim sigara içmeyi seviyorum çünkü o kadınların içtiği düşünülen, kadınsı bir aksesuar ve bedenimde bunu taşımak hoşuma gidiyor” (Engin, 26, keeper in gay club)

“Benim sevdiğim şey sadece kadın kıyafeti, kadın saçı, kadın ayakkabısı, kadın makyajıyla dışarı çıkmak değil. Bir tarafta çok erkeksi bir şey varken, alttaki ayakkabının farklı olması. Her şeyimle normal bir erkek gibiyken altımda topuklu ayakkabı olması mesela. O ikiliği görmek çok hoşuma gidiyor.” (Tunus, 24, university student)

“Kendimi kadınsı görmüyorum ve maskülen ya da feminen olmak gibi bir derdim yok. Kadınsı yanlarımın da erkeksi yanlarımın da olduğunu biliyorum ve herhangi bir tarafa takılıp kalmak istemiyorum. Her bir unsuru sunmak hoşuma gidiyor. Bunu oyunlaştırmaktan keyif alıyorum” (Engin, 26, keeper in gay club)

“Feminenlik nasıl anlatılır bilmiyorum. Bir kere konuşma daha yayvandır. Çay içişinden bile belli olur. Oturuşundan belli olur. Bir insanın çok da maço olmasından haz etmem. Seviyorum feminenliği. Her insanda feminenlik görmek isterim bir miktar” (Emre, 25, Professional in finance sector)

“Feminenlik kendini gruptan ayırmak bence. Bilinçli olarak normal koşullarda feminen davranışlar sergilediğim durumlar oldu. Sonra düşündüm, kendimi ayırmak için yapıyorum. Ben sizden farklıyım demeyi seviyorum. Ortalama tipleri, ortalama insanları sevmiyorum. Standart şeyleri sevmiyorum. Ortalama hallere uyan her şeyden tiksiniyorum.” (Murat, 27, Professional in a human rights organization).

“Akademik kimliğimi kullanarak bir çok insanla ilişki içerisine girebiliyorum. Eşcinsellerle travestilerle görülmek, aileme karşı dahi çekince duyacağım bir şey değil. Facebook arkadaşım olarak listemde Kaos’tan çok insan var, gökkuşağı bayraklı fotoğrafı olan insanlar var. Örneğin ailem, bunu görse, kibar konuşma tarzımı görse, efeminelik gibi görünen davranışlarıma tanık olsalar Ankara’da yıllarca okumuş, üniversitede hoca olmuş biri olduğumu düşünüp üzerinde durmazlar.” (Mehmet, 28, academician)

“Bir arkadaşım var. Kendi tarzını oluşturabilen ama insanların aşırı feminen diyeceği türden biri. Çok farklı bir insan. Daha kaliteli. Çok dolu bir insan. Tartışamayacağı hiçbir konu yok. Saatlerce süren beyin fırtınalarımız olur. Siyasetten girer, bilimden çıkar. Bu insanı değerli kılan bir şeydir. Bir insanın dolu olması. Hemen her konuda fikir sahibi olması.” (Emre, 25, professional in finance sector)



“Bizim sülalede herkes erkek, teyze çocukları erkek, dayı çocukları erkek. Hepsi otururlar maç izlerler. Beraber zamanında onların içki içmişlikleri, kız tavlamaşlıkları vardır. Böyle hikayeleri vardır hepsi erkek olduğu için. Ben hep çocukluğumdan beri bu grubun dışında kaldım. Benimle şilgili şöyle düşünöldüğünü düşünüyorum. Gay olduğumu göremiyorlarsa bile farklı biri diye düşünüyörlar. Sanata yatkın. Tiyatro okuyor. Tenisle ilğilenen farklı biri diye düşünüyörlar sadece” (Tunus, 24, university student)

“Gay arkadaş çevremle sitelerden gey külüplerinden tanıştık. Hepimiz için ilk başta ortak payda gay olmamızdı. Ama zamanla bunun ardından yükselen değer yargılarımız oldu. Ortak hayat görüşlerimiz, müzik anlayışlarımız, sinema zevklerimiz, kültür sanat. Her ay mutlaka tiyatroya, operaya gideriz. Bizi bağlayan şey bunlar oldu.” (Emre, 25, professional in finance sector)

“Gayler genelden farklıdırlar. Bir kere daha seçicidirler. Şık görünürler. Kendilerine bakarlar. Dünyayla daha alakalıdırlar. Okurlar” (Ahmet, 36, engineer)

“Gayler garip bir biçimde farklılar. Tarihteki en ünlü ressamlar, müzisyenler mesela; hepsinin eşcinsel olduğunu görüyörsün. Kişisel zekalarından kaynaklanıyor. Eşcinseller zeki insanlar bence. Dahice şeyler yapıyörlar.” (Emre, 25, professional in finance sector)

“Taksicilik yapan, manavlık yapan, dolmuşçuluk yapan bazı tipler var. Ev arkadaşım böyle tiplerden hoşlanıyo ve ben onlar eve gelip gittikçe çok korkuyorum. Kabalar, emir vererek konuşuyörlar. Uyuşturucuya eğilimleri oluyor. Suça eğilimliler, hapisten çıkmış olan dahi var. Bir gün evde büyük bir olay çıkması, karakolluk olmamız ve eşcinselliğimin bu şekilde gündeme gelmesini hiç istemem” (Mehmet, 28, academician)

“Varoş gayleriyle ilişkiler genellikle içi boş, yüzeysel ve çıkara dayalı kuruluyor. Kendi aralarında ‘aslanım’, ‘kankam’ ya da ‘müdür’ diye konuşurlar ama bir anda her şey değişebilir. Çok güvenilmez olduklarını düşünüyörlar. Bir süre bu tür biriyle takıldığım ve hatta ilişkiye girdiğim oldu. ‘Bundan sonra beraberiz’ derdi, ‘ölene kadar’ derdi ama zamanla bu lafların tamamen maddiyata, açlığa dayalı olduğunu anladım. Bana yaşadığı acıları anlatırdı aile yaşantısını anlatırdı. Ama sonra sonra fark ettim ki, benden maddi olarak yararlanıyor.” (Tunus, 24, university student)

“Aşık olduğum birisiyle sevişmek çok hoşuma gider. Ama tek gecelik bir ilişkide bazen öyle bir şey oluyor ki, tam bir fakir birlikteliği. Doyurmak istediğin fanteziyi doyuruyorsun. Bir tür sağaltım, boşaltım.” (Tunus, 24, university student)

“Gay hamamlarından hiç hazetmiyorum. Sanki doğrudan bedenini ortaya koyduğun bir yer gibime geliyor. Her şey çok hazırmış, soyunmuşsun ve bunun için bekliyormuşsun gibi. Doğrudan bir el uzanıyor mahremiyetine. Kendimi bu koşulda asla görmek istemem” (Mehmet, 28, academician)

“Yalnızca Manjam sitesinde profilim var. Diğer siteleri korkunç buluyorum. Mesela Gabile diye bir siteyi gördüm. Korkunç bir siteydi. Dil bilgisi hatalarından tut, aradıkları şeylere kadar. Doğrudan götlerinin, penislerinin resimlerini koyuyorlar. Her şey seks. O kadar basit. Ben kendime göre birini bulamadım asla o sitede. ” (Emre, 25, professional in finance sector)

## Chapter 6

“Eşcinsel olduğum için geleceğimin olmadığını düşünüyorum. Sonuçta herkesin bi kriteri var. Her anne babanın, senin bile aynı. Herkesin. Büyüyeyim, askere gideyim, işim olsun, arabam olsun. Evleneyim, çocuğum çocuğum olsun. Herkes böyle düşünür. Bi standardı var. Ben öyle düşünüyorum. Öyle şeyler olmayacağını hissedince de üzülüyorum.” (Ahmet, 35, medical technician)

“A: Ben de istedim evlenmeyi tabi. Bu hayattan kurtulmak, kendime çeki düzen vermek. Tabi ailemin isteği de oldu. Normalde herkesin bi kafasında ben şu yaşta evlenicem diye bi olay vardır. Benim de aynıydı. Ama artık bahane edicek bişiy kalmadı. Ev dedik, evim oldu. İşim vardı. Evlendik. Evlendikten sonra da hayatıma kimse girmedi. Boşanana kadar hiç eşcinsel ilişki yaşamadım. Böylelikle bunu yenebildiğimi düşünüyorum. Ve zaten boşanmamızda da eşcinsel oluşumun etkisi yoktur.” (Ahmet, 35, medical technician)

“İnsanlar hayatlarında zamanı gelir ve evlenirler. Bu benim hayatımda da böyle oldu.” (Alihan, 44, public worker)

“Ailecek sağ görüşlüyüz. Çeşitli sağ partilere üye bizim aile genelde. Yeni jenerasyon 25-35 yaş arası hepsi benim partide. Hepsinde de benim emeğim vardır. Mitinge, parti

etkinliklerine hep ben götürürüm. [Right wing nationalism] dayılardan miras kalan bir gelenektir bizde. Dayıların 12 Eylül döneminde idamla yargıldılar. Bi de hepsi gs'lidir. Gs ve partiyi hep ben aşıladım. Asker olan öğretmen olan, polis olan akadeimsyen olanlar bunlar kendi çizgilerini kendi çiziyö. Ama belli zamana kadar ben yönlendirdim onları." (Sancar, 42, self-employed)

"Sürekli deşifre olmaktan korkuyorum. Hatta bir zamanlar bir kere birlikte olduğum biriyle ikinci kez görüşmezdim asla. Ama duygusal paylaşımlarım da olsun istiyorum. Şimdiye kadar hiç sevgilim olmadı. Bunu çok isterdim. Tabi sevgilim olacak kişinin evliliğini kabullenmesi lazım. İsteddiği zaman görüşmem mesela." (Alihan, 44, public worker)

"Babamın yanında çalışıyorum o beni sıkıyo, maaşlı başka işim olsa eve yalan söylemek daha kolay olur. Bi ara çalışıyodum dışarıda, maaşımın yarısını babama veriyodum kalanı yetiyodu bana. Eve bu gece çalışıcam diyodum, kimsenin haberi olmuyodu. Ama şimdi öyle değil. Ben eve yalan söylesem açar telefonu babama sorar. Olmaz o iş." (Tarık, 28, autopark keeper)

"S: Bizim aile 200 hane, biz burada bi arada yaşıyoruz. Mahallenin muhtar seçimini falan biz belirleriz. Çekinirler bizim aileden. Babamdan da. Maddi sıkıntı da yok. Babam bi de yardım etmeyi sever. Dayıların da öyle. Bi de siyasetle uğraştıkları için. Asker uğurlaması düğün demek, mutlaka bizim haberimiz olur. Kavgadan dövüşten karakoldan hep haberimiz olur. Çok bağılyız. Ailecek dayanışma halindeyiz.

H: Başka bi mahalleye taşınmak ister misin?

S: Yok. Hasta olsam, 10 kişi yemek getirir bana. Camı açsam gayet güvenle oturuyorum. 51 senedir bu mahalledeyiz. Ankara'da kaç aile vardır 51 senedir aynı mahallede yaşayan. O yüzden buradan gitmeyi düşünmem de." (Sancar, 42, self-employed)

"Sorarım, oğlum napıyosun ya da kızım napıyosun? Oyun. Ne oyunu? Ateri. Ateri oynarım. O arada yemeği yedikten sonra ateri oynarım. Sigara açarım ya da bira içerim. Önce onları baba şevkatini gösteririm. Ondan sonra çocuğumu biraz psikopat tarzı diyeyim, sert diyeyim. Okulda naptın? Arkadaşım bana tükürdü dedi mesela. Sen naaptın Bişiy yapmadım. Niye vurmadin oğlum. Sana tükürmüş. Yani bira daha erkeğimsi, ağır. O tarzda yetiştiririm. Ağaç yaşken eğilir. Oğlum olur böyle şeyler dersen yarın öbür gün büyüdüğü zaman kendini koruyamaz. Kollayamaz. Ona hem baba

sevgisini gösteriyorum hem de babasının arkasında olduğunu gösteriyorum hem de kimseden korkmamayı öğretiyorum. Benim oğlum 5 yaşında, 4 yaşında elinde havya ateş ettirdim, tabi ben tutarım. Bunları yaptırıyorum. Kızımı da kız gibi yetiştiriyorum. Kızım uzaktan kumandalı arabayla oynarsa elinden alıyorum. Bu abinin erkek oyuncuğu. Sen bebeklerinle oyna diyorum ona da. Ondan sonra oyuncakları dağıtıyo.” (Tarık, 28, autopark keeper)

“Ben ailede astığı astık, otoriter, gücü elinde bulunduran, otoriter biri olarak görünüyorum. Para işlerine bakıyorum. Benim yeğenler beni örnek alır. Gay olmam elbette bu duruma zarar verir. Çok farklı şeyler düşünürler. Hayalleri yıkılır.” (Sancar, 42, self-employed)

“A: Kabullenme süreci zaten, onu hissettikten sonra zaten ben gayim söyleyim böyleyim deyip de abuk subuk şeyler yapmadım. Normal yaşantıma devam ettim.

H: Abuk subuk şeyler yapmak nedir?

A: Kaşlar gözler boyanmadı. Kıyafetler değişmedi. Onu içimde yine yaşadım. Gay olduğumu biliyodum ama normal bi şekilde, etrafı rahatsız etmeyecek şekilde yaşantıma devam ediyodum.” (Ahmet, 35, medical technician)

“Eşcinsel çift cinsiyetli demek. Gaylikle eşcinsellik birbirinden çok farklı şeyler. Gay olmak kadın-erkek seksinden tamamen farklı. Eşcinsellikse kadınsı giyimler, gayin kendisini kadın pozisyonuna sokup travesti olması toplum da böyle algılıyor. Onların algısı. Femeninliğin sonu travestiliğe kadar gidiyor. Bilmeden kendisini kadın pozisyonunda buluyor.” (Alihan, 44, public worker)

“Bazı feminen tipler var. Vücutlarını teşhir ediyorlar. Bir şekilde belli edeyim istiyorlar. Kendilerini göstermek için yapıyorlar bunu. Bu insan gay, bu insan farklı denmesini istiyorlar toplum içerisinde. Fark edilmek için yapıyorlar ve ben bunu hiç onaylamıyorum.” (Ahmet, 35, medical technician)

“Gay olmak bence beyinde olgunlaştırılması ve bunun kadınsı bir şey olmadığını fark etmesi demek. Femenin davranışlar hem bedensel olarak hem de ruhen asla olmamalı. Bence gaylik erkeksi duygular” (Alihan, 44, public worker)

“Bana deseler ki, sen eşcinsel misin, benim için kız-erkek fark etmiyor derim. Vereni

sikerim. Öyle bir şey olarak tarif ederim. Düdüklerim vereni. Benim düşüncem o”  
(Tarık, 28, autopark keeper)

“Bence gay ilişkiler straight erkeklerin ilişkileri nasılsa öyle olmalı. Tek fark ikisinin seks yapıyor olması. Onun dışında her şey aynı” (Alihan, 44, public worker)

“Erkeklerle kurduğum ilişkilere sevgili demeyelim de hayat arkadaşı diyelim. Ben erkeklerle kurduğum ilişkileri dayanışma gibi, yoldaşlık gibi görüyorum” (Tarık, 28, autopark keeper)

“Mahalleden bir arkadaşım vardı. Canımız çok isteyince onunla buluşurduk kilerde. Bazen günde 3-4 kez görüştüğümüz olurdu. Ama sevgili demezdik birbirimize. Karşılıklı orgazm. Gecelik bir orgazmdı. Sevgi, aşk bunlar olmazdı” (Sancar, 42, self-employed)

“T: Bir erkek bir bayandan daha çok bir erkeği tatmin etmeyi biliyor. Bayanın belli. Muamelesi diyeyim sana. Ya da pozisyonu. Ama erkek senin dilinden anlıyor. Seni daha çok rahatlatıyor.

H: Ne yapıyor mesela?

T: Ağzına kadar veriyorum. Tövbe estağfurullah. Yani daha çok rahat oluyorum” (Tarık, 28, autopark keeper)

“T: şimdi bak, erkekle kurulan bir ilişki daha üstün. O yüzden hayat arkadaşlığı ama sevgililik değil.

H: Ne anlamda?

T: Her şeyini paylaşıyorsun onunla. Sevgilinle her şeyini paylaşamazsın ki.

H: Mesela evlilik de değil öyle mi? sevgililikten daha farklı da bişiy hayat arkadaşı. Ne anlamda farklı bunu biraz açsan.

T: İnsan sevgilisiyle her şeyi konuşamaz ki.

H: Neyi konuşamaz?

T: Mesela, en basiti, en ufak bi olay. Bi yerde sıkışıklığın oldu maddi olarak. Onu sevgilinden isteyemezsin. Ama hayat arkadaşından istersin. Destek. Dersin, benim bi sıkıntım var.” (Tarık, 28, autopark keeper)