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Camouflaged liaisons: The social organization of Turkish male sexual minorities.

Tarik. Bereket
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CAMOUFLAGED LIAISONS:
The Social Organization of Turkish Male Sexual Minorities

by

Tarik Bereket

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
through the Department of Sociology and Anthropology
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Arts at the
University of Windsor

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Canada

*Girls can wear jeans
And cut their hair short
'Cause it's OK to be a boy
But for a boy to look like a girl is degrading
Cause you think that being a girl is degrading
But secretly, you'd love to know what it's like
Wouldn't you?
What it feels like for a girl?*

Lyrics from Madonna's
"What it Feels Like for a Girl"

ABSTRACT

This ethnographic study analyses the discourses of twenty Turkish men who have sex with other men, aiming to make sense of discernable patternings in their most intimate lives. The research documents the meanings ascribed to same-sex behavior by various participants, and sheds light on how homosexual desire is structured by the existing gender structure in Turkish society as a whole. The broader social and sexual culture within which discourses around anal intercourse are articulated show connections between homosexuality and heterosexuality, masculinity and femininity, and eventually, sexual penetrability and receptivity –in which all categories reveal certain ‘gendered’ power relations. My attempts to get a feel for the experiences and circumstances in which each man constructs his own conception or re-conception of himself within labels such as *aktif*, *pasif* or ‘*gey*’ as in the modern sense reveal Turkish men’s lack of interest in ‘queer theory’. My endeavour is to provide answers to the following crucial questions: ‘What are the social forces that go into taking either the *aktif*, *pasif*, or *gey* social location?’ and ‘Why do some people feel content with these categories, while others feel constrained or resistant?’ Ultimately, I argue that *Stephen Murray*’s model on types of homosexualities informs my topic better than queer theory since he offers analytic tools more amenable to the complexities of same-sex experiences in Turkey. The respondents’ own reflections on their engagements in anal coitus was decisive in drawing conclusions that indeed plural homosexualities exist, which entail plural meanings, all comprising intriguing gender dynamics with inherent implications regarding ‘stratification’.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my beautiful mother,
Ülviye Bereket –the best part of every day.

Anneciğim seni çok seviyorum!

Also, dedicated to everyone who has a dream and the people
who help nurture such dreams... just like my mother.

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I remain deeply indebted to the men at *Kaos GL* in Ankara whose struggles and experiences around their sexual orientation made this analysis possible.

I am also grateful to Christopher Lanspeary who offered me many needed breaks and was a great listener. I would also like to thank Stuart Hughes who accommodated me in Ankara and made me feel at home while carrying out the interviews. In addition, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Merve Kiran, Berna Bereket, Phyllis Kumi, Bahadır Akyüz, Kevin Manuel, Kelly Greenfield, Marc Tremblay and Karen Baracat (from Leddy Library). Their confidence in my ability to complete this thesis has been consistent and unconditional from the very start. I would also like to extend my sincere thanks to Andria Turner who always made herself available to me whenever I was in need for assistance.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Camouflaged liaisons... Are we not all a bit curious about the underlying realities beneath the surfaces of everyday lives, especially those of others? Are we not even more curious about those realities within which we are so enmeshed? These kinds of curiosities are fundamental to sociological research on sexual minorities. On the outside lies an observer, innocently unaware of what takes place within; on the inside, there are participants perhaps only somewhat conscious of their relations and their meanings. As sexual minorities in most Western nations develop social movements based on identity politics, Turkish sexual minorities remain almost in the dark. Research on sexual minorities in Turkey¹ is almost as equally undeveloped. This situation is partly the result of certain cultural practices, in particular those of Islam and especially those of traditional gender roles, both well established in Turkish society.

Although the Turkish nation has zealously defended its secularism since its founding as a republic in 1923², it is a country with a Muslim majority (99%) where Islam still continues to maintain a strong influence on values and norms for Turks. At the same time, Turkey's struggle for full participation in the European Union (EU) has contributed to such changes as those made to the Civil Code—all in the interest in a Western-tailored approach to legal protections. Nevertheless, even if Westernization policies are being

¹ Turkey is geographically located at a point where the three continents –Asia, Africa, and Europe are closest to each other, and is situated on both sides where Europe and Asia meet. It is a country surrounded by sea on three sides, by the Black Sea in the north, the Mediterranean in the south and the Aegean Sea in the West. Also, in the northwest, between the narrow channels of the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus, is an important internal sea, the Sea of Marmara, which connects the Black Sea with the rest of the world.

² It is the only Islamic country that has included secularism in its Constitution.

adopted politically, legally, and culturally (Tapınç, 1992: 39), so far, very little attention has been given to fe/male sexual minorities and their claims for social justice. “Issues of sexuality have not yet been raised between Turkey and the EU or the Council of Europe or any other international institutions in any significant way. Suffice [it] to say that in Europe problems vis-à-vis sexuality have increasingly become issues demanding political attention over the last two decades, while in Turkey they are still unimportant, minor sources of amusement” (Kahramanoğlu, 2001:79). Although members of Turkish society occasionally confront situations in relation to homosexuality both in the media and in their immediate environment, it is apparent that they either deem such matters as irrelevant or deny their significance to their own daily lives.

Considering that Turkey is eager to burnish its democratic credentials in the hope for full membership among other Western countries, this research sheds light on the experiences of **men** who have sex with other men and it gives voice to a difficult-to-reach population that longs for social justice. Within the Turkish context, little academic work has been done on the sexual behavior of people with same-sex preferences. This study builds on, and modifies the existing limited literature on homosexual practices and identities, and it analyzes the gender dynamics associated with the sex-roles preferred (*aktif/pasif/versatile*) during sex. Such research is critical as both feminist and gay social movements strive to affirm themselves in Turkish society.

There is little substantial knowledge concerning how homosexual desire/behavior is experienced or represented by those who are involved in them. For the purpose of this study, I narrow the concept *sexual minorities* to only the male gender as I focus exclusively on “contact between the penis of one male and the body of another person who was born

male and/or the desire by someone born male for contact with the penis, thighs, or orifices of someone else born male” (Murray, 2000:13). Without confining my analyses to only those men who identify themselves as being ‘gay’ (*gey*), I aim to make sense of patternings in representations of same-sex activities among Turkish men. Homosexual experiences are entangled in a web of norms and unspoken rules that regulate and give direction to the way men relate with one another. Despite the variety of detail, in the narratives studied, it appears that similar patternings become visible. This study documents the meanings ascribed to homosexual behavior by both masculine and ‘effeminate’ male participants, and it also examines how same-sex desire is structured by the existing gender structure in Turkish society as a whole.

Turkey and other Middle-Eastern cultures operate in a kind of Mediterranean model of homosexuality that is gender-inscribed. I am particularly interested in how gender-inscribed sexuality works among Turkish men who have sexual relations with other men, and to see how well this model explains the Turkish experience. Towards this aim, this research examines men’s discourses in order to get a feel for the experiences and circumstances in which each man constructs his own conception or re-conception of himself as being *aktif*, *pasif* or ‘*gey*’ as in the modern sense³. Through interviews with a range of men from different backgrounds who have different identities, we can find out how the ‘language’ of gender-inscribed sexuality circulates through their understanding of themselves, and also how it provides a language of desire. Furthermore, we can see to what degree ‘gay’ models of homosexuality circulate among Turkish men. In the social sciences

³ I am using the Turkish forms *aktif* and *pasif* as the generic term for (obvious) penetrator and (obvious) penetratee, respectively. These words are borrowings from the West that have been appropriated into the Turkish language, and I will be investigating *why* these words are being deployed by Turkish men who have sexual relations with other men.

literature, there has been an emphasis on men who are gender-*nonconforming*, while gender-*conforming* men with same-sex thoughts and feelings do not seem to be acknowledged, especially the ones who do not abide by the 'traditional' expectations in relation to sex-role preference in anal coitus. Having said this, among *aktif* and *pasif* men are men who do not easily fit the category they supposedly inhabit, e.g., top *pasifs*, being bottom *aktifs*. Thus, the crucial questions are 'What are the social forces that lead one to take on either the *aktif*, *pasif*, or *gey* social location?' and 'Why do some people feel content with these categories, while others feel constrained or resistant?'

I will show how gender-inscribed discourses are deeply embedded in the social organization of Turkish male sexual minorities. As Parker (1999) asserts, understandings about the nature of sexual interactions can scarcely be separated from the social construction of gender. "The body itself, particularly in its sexual performances, becomes the raw material for the construction and reconstruction of gender, just as the relations of power that traditionally circumscribe and organize the universe of gender become the basic structures organizing the sexual field" (Parker, 1999:29). Turkish homosexualities are linked to both sexuality and the prevalent gender structure insofar as they reproduce many of the social forms of gendered heterosexuality. Through the specific meanings attached to sexual behavior within this particular culture, the connections between society and sexuality may be detected. Thus, in Chapter 2, I argue that the cultural construction of homosexuality is interwoven with the polarized gender definitions within the Turkish society.

In Chapter 3, I talk about two perspectives, namely *queer theory* and *Stephen Murray's* model on types of homosexualities to see which standpoint helps to illuminate

how homosexuality is organized among men in Turkey. Queer theory tends to take any identification category, such as 'gay', and movements that may be associated with them, as discourses that need to be 'deconstructed', but perhaps more important to understanding Turkish men are the recurrent social patterns in relation to their sexual behavior and the ways they 'construct' sex-role labels and/or identities (e.g. *pasif/aktif*, *laço/lubunya*, and *gey*). In his three-fold typology, Stephen Murray distinguishes between age-stratified, gender-stratified, and egalitarian homosexualities. I suggest that Murray's model informs my topic better than queer theory since he offers analytic tools more amenable to the complexities of same-sex experiences in Turkey.

In the fourth chapter, I introduce details about the methodology used to conduct my ethnographic study. As I try to illuminate men's understandings of their own same-sex practices and/or identities which guide their decisions to act in particular ways, I employ an interpretive approach. Thus, I interviewed a total of twenty men, recruited from a gay organization (Kaos GL) in Ankara-Turkey, according to sex-role preferences (*aktif/pasif/aktif & pasif*), age, and educational level (high school and below/ university level and above). This section includes details about the research method, subjects, the data collection procedures used, information on data recording and analysis, and finally, the ethical issues to ensure that information obtained did not violate the dignity of any interviewee.

It is inconceivable to separate male homosexuality from the societal context in which it occurs. Since Islam is the dominant religion in Turkey, Chapter 5 gives an understanding of men's perception of their religion and it allows us to see the kinds of accommodations they make in terms of their devotion to Islam. Also, this chapter briefly

tackles how Islam, as a social institution, may aid in reproducing a certain model of social organization for men with same-sex preferences. Furthermore, I link religiosity to popular homophobia, and talk about non-homosexual people's attitudes towards men who engage in same-sex activities. As a social experience, I believe that same-sex relations cannot be comprehended without an examination of the societal reactions towards them. What is more, it can be argued that hostile responses shape the way homosexual experiences are lived, and how people are actively constructed as gendered subjects.

Chapter 6 deals with oppressive *police* practices, and their attempts to impose a particular definition of masculinity on *all* men. Police actions become part of a project of normalizing or rendering natural certain behaviours and sexual practices while marginalizing others. A common thread running through both the second half of Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 is that “[i]t is the knowledge of the cost of being publicly recognized as a homosexual that leads many people to conceal their sexual identity. A central fact of the experience thus becomes the necessity for the homosexual to manage a discreditable identity; to present a suitable non-homosexual front; to play down the homosexual self; to ‘pass’” (Plummer, 1975: 175).

Chapter 7 introduces the ‘traditional’ model in which same-sex relationships are organized, where a clear distinction between the *aktif* and *pasif* partner is evident. I argue that this rigid division is an emulation of the symbolic structure of male/female relations in Turkish society, where the *aktif* and *pasif* participants are ‘masculinized’ and ‘feminized’, respectively. Therefore, I show how homosexual practices reflect the overall gender norms for men and women. However, apart from this predominant model, I also acknowledge other same-sex behaviours that are inconsistent with the traditional stereotype. To be more

specific, I talk about 'top *pasifs*' and 'bottom *aktifs*' –occurrences that have very low visibility that either may pass unnoticed or be immune from public labelling. In this section I also discuss the specific indicators of 'labels' by which men categorize themselves, and how such labelling is enacted in certain locations such as the public parks, the Turkish bathhouses, night clubs, and cinemas. How these labels are perceived is yet another matter.

Furthermore, Chapter 8 deals with men who either *refuse* or *integrate* the hegemonic constructions of gendered activity and passivity into their sense of self but rather adopt Western models of 'gay' (*gey*) identification. *Geys* represent 'the minority within the minority' of homosexuals in Turkey. In order to understand 'gay identities' in Turkish society, one first needs to examine occurrences at the global level and then look at the impact of Western articulations of gayness at the local level. Only then can we gain some insight into the extent to which Turkish *gey* men organize themselves. Thus, I talk about 'modern' homosexualities, with much emphasis on those Turkish men who do not simply surrender to cultural "imperialism" from the West. In this chapter I do not proclaim the emergence of a 'universal gay identity' caught up in the processes of the globalization of gay lifestyles, social organization, and identity politics, similar to the Western world. Rather, I show that the meaning of the term *gey* varies, bringing about diverse ways of imagining, portraying, and seeing oneself.

A common theme repeated throughout each chapter is the gendered nature of homosexual relations and how an immense and multifaceted institutional and cultural order plays its part in shaping such relations. Accordingly, I make use of R.W. Connell's term, 'hegemonic masculinity', in order to show how the way men relate among themselves has an underlying association with the gendered power relations among men, in general. After

all, for men who have sex with other men, being 'effeminate' or 'masculine' is a matter of personal experience. It involves many experiences as part of the socialization processes while growing up, the way one relates with others in sexual relationships, the way one sees oneself, and consequently presents oneself to others in daily life. Sexual practices, fantasies, and identities for *everyone* are greatly influenced by cultural representations of femininity and masculinity, and reinforced by the social institutions in one's environment (Lorber, 1994). Therefore, as I talk about the interconnections between the existing gender structure in Turkish society and homosexuality, masculinity and femininity, and accordingly, sexual penetrability and receptivity, this study attempts to cast light on the kinds of negotiations men make in their most intimate affairs, and helps not only 'insiders' but also 'outsiders' comprehend what is actually experienced.

As I uncover these diverse subjectivities, I aspire to enable male sexual minorities to describe the circumstances of their lives and to give them the opportunity to present themselves and their experiences as they would want them to be presented. Also, it is my objective to provide the community under investigation with a tool to reflect upon its own culture. After all, as Spradley (1979:38) explains, an ethnography often describes some part of the respondents' culture in a way that gives them new insights and understanding. Hopefully, by means of 'self-reflection', these men will become more aware of the things they normally would not discuss openly in public, and they will gain confidence and pride in being able to have their (normally suppressed) voices heard, their story spoken. As Carrier (1995: xix) points out, very little has been written about the intimate lives of homosexual men in most societies around the world. Hence, for the achievement of public awareness and for the sake of having 'gay' men listen to their own voices, this research

could aid in the production of a sense of community experience that makes for collective endeavour.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter reviews the research literature on gender in Turkey and focuses on discourses that emphasize connections with how men who have sex with other men socially organize among themselves. The social organization of Turkish male sexual minorities is deeply embedded in gender-inscribed discourses. Indeed it is impossible to understand Turkish homosexualities without seeing how particular members of the Turkish culture reproduce many of the social forms of gendered heterosexuality. In short, I argue that the cultural construction of homosexuality is interwoven with the polarized gender definitions within this particular culture.

Existing Gender Relations in Turkish Society

Since the establishment of the secular Turkish Republic in 1923 by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Turkey has engaged in a project of modernization (Müftüler-Bac, 1999: 303; Ilcan, 1996:118-9; Culpan & Marzotto, 1982:338-9; Kandiyoti, 1987:320). This modernization was an outcome of the Westernism and secularism of reformist elites for whom women's emancipation from the traditional Islamic way of life would open up the way to Westernization and secularization for the larger society. Thus, Turkish women have been given social, political, and legal rights not granted in other Islamic countries. However, as Ilcan (1996: 119) states, the political regime of modernization "attempted not only to mobilize and discipline populations but also to morally regulate and create subjects

that would comply to certain ways of modern thinking, acting, and behaving.” Consequently, there are major underlying obstacles for the progress of women in Turkish society. These obstacles may not be so much legal restrictions as structural inequalities, social limitations, and cultural biases. Therefore, the granting of certain legal rights has not altered the observable inequalities that still exist (Culpan & Marzotto, 1982: 339; see also Kandiyoti, 1987, Müftüler-Bac, 1999). The patriarchal system is kept intact by various social institutions that promote the continuity of male dominance over the female population.

Islam, the dominant religion in Turkey, is one of the major factors contributing to patriarchy. As Müftüler-Bac (1999:306) points out, Islam divides the world into two: the public sphere that belongs to men, and the private sphere, the domain of domesticity for women. In the same vein, Kandiyoti (1987) argues that Islam provides some unifying concepts that influence women’s experiences of domination by men. “The changes in Turkey have left the most crucial areas of gender relations, such as the double standard of sexuality and a primarily domestic definition of the female role, virtually untouched” (Kandiyoti, 1987: 324). This reveals the cultural controls that are closely related to the construction of oneself as a gendered subject. Müftüler-Bac further asserts that Islam provides the base for keeping women from the public sphere, as the *Koran*, which is considered as Allah’s words, fosters this. This further legitimizes women’s position as subordinate and inferior, as it would be a sin (*günah*) to challenge divine judgment¹. Nevertheless, an over-emphasis on religious codes cannot always provide an adequate

¹Göle (1996) discusses the significance of Islamic movements, and more particularly that of Islamic veiling, in terms of the intrigue and resistance it offers to the modernization project. The veil reconstructs the ‘otherness’ of Islam to the West. Thus, “women’s bodies and sexuality reappear as a political site of difference and resistance to the homogenizing and egalitarian forces of Western modernity” (Göle, 1996:1).

explanation of patterns of social behavior and relations between the sexes. In practice, gender is actively constructed and negotiated at several levels and gender ideologies in Turkey do not simply emulate the constructions of Islam. As Cole (1991) states, individuals organize their gender identity through interpretation of varied, and often contradictory, gender ideologies according to their own experiences and socioeconomic conditions.

Kemalist reforms attempted to reorganize life by the replacement of the Islamic patriarchy with that of a secular Western one. In other words, Kemalism sought to improve women's lives only to the level prevailing in the West, where the female was still perceived as the 'second sex' (Arat, 1994:58). These reforms strove to equip Turkish women with the education and skills that would improve their contribution to the republican patriarchy by making them better wives and mothers. Due to the fact that gender inequality was already prevalent in all Western legal and social systems, the legal reforms in Turkey also failed to establish full legal equality between the sexes. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk emphasized motherhood as the primary function and virtue of women. He also designated education as the most effective way of changing the traditional mentality into a modern one. Thus, Atatürk encouraged women's education not as a means to liberate them from the confinement of the 'private' sphere, but as a way of improving the quality of child care/mothering that would serve the best interest of the nation, in terms of nurturing better citizens. Educated women were expected to put their knowledge into practice first within the home environment (Arat, 1994: 60). As in so many nation states, until very recently (24 November 2001), although the Turkish Civil law's general principles and articles treated the husband and wife as legal equals, the division of labour in the family and the rights and responsibilities of each spouse presented a highly inegalitarian picture. Consequently, the

Civil law reproduced patriarchal biases through the sexual division of labour and institutionalization of women's dependence on men.

While Kemalism articulated the vision of a Westernized Turkey, the reforms had endorsed patriarchy even when they seemingly improved women's position in society. As Tekeli (1990:270) puts forth, "the reforms brought a paradoxical liberation –the prospect of freedom without making it necessary for women themselves to do anything to remove the obstacles which would continue to exist." Even after legal changes have been made, the familial ideology still depicted women as wives and mothers. Until very recently, the changes in the Civil Code had been discriminatory: the male was considered the head of the family; women were expected to do the housework; and since men were the 'official' breadwinners, women could only work with their husband's consent. Although women are increasingly participating in the labour market, they not only have a secondary status in the labour force but they are also made to feel guilty for not staying at home, fulfilling their domestic duties (see Tabak, 1997). In short, working women in Turkey are *made* to face a double-day workload.

After the legal reforms, Tekeli (1990:271) further adds that a small number of urban, educated, professional women thought that Kemalism had solved the problem of women in Turkey. However, these same women were not aware of the fact that in rural Turkey, women working in unpaid family occupations were still being exploited. Hence, the Kemalist ideology prevented these educated women from perceiving the situation beyond their immediate environment. In a rural setting, Morvaridi (1995) demonstrates that although macroeconomic plans and policies are 'gender neutral', they actually incorporate stereotypes and assumptions regarding gender definitions that affect women at the

intra-household level. In farm households, the ideology of patriarchy sustains the sexual division of labour both in the home and at work, giving women the most labour-intensive jobs (Morvaridi, 1995:145). "When the state encourages small farms to adopt a more intensive cropping system, cultural norms of patriarchal control led to a generalized attempt to increase the exploitation of unpaid female labor" (Morvaridi, 1995:139). Consequently, a gendered authority structure is reinforced. In short, the reforms made since the establishment of the Turkish Republic may have brought legal equality for all women *on paper*, but not necessarily in actual life.

In contrast to the Islamic tradition, Kemalist ideology aims at bringing women into Turkish public life, as the emancipation of women is considered crucial in the struggle to create a modern state (Müftüler-Bac, 1999:307). However, although Kemalism has improved women's lot in society, "the integration of women into [the] public sphere was possible only if women concealed their femininity and displayed modesty in their attire and behavior. The ideal woman is portrayed as pure, honorable, and unreachable, serving the higher cause of modernization in Turkey" (Müftüler-Bac, 1999:307; see also Arat, 1994). This brings our attention to the suppression of female sexuality through the development of asexual stereotypes that typify the 'modern Turkish woman'. With respect to the relationship between Turkish women's gender roles and their professional roles, Kandiyoti (1987:328) further contends that the very rigidity of cultural definitions of femininity helps redefine women in the public sphere as 'nonfemale', or at least 'asexual'. Moreover, she highlights the cultural mechanisms that are specially mobilized to construct some cross-sexual encounters as sexually 'neutral', as in the case of labelling unrelated women as sister (*abla*), aunt (*teyze*), and mother (*ana/anne*) according to their ages, with explicit overtones

of asexuality. As a result, although Kemalist reforms have improved some women's situations in Turkey, it seems that patriarchal order still persists under a different cover.

Being one of the most important experiences shared by all Turkish men, the polarized gender definitions are further maintained through *military service*. The military forms a major site where definitions of male identity and of masculinity are constructed and reinforced, and it is this site that "provides men with a crucial life experience that definitely makes them different and superior to women" (Sirman, 1990:31). While men are in military service, they learn discipline, endurance, and the meaning of patriotism. Individual experiences by these men are usually portrayed in an attempt to impress others with stories of their courage and strength, which highlight their ability to have an easy time although the individual suffers hardship. Thus, the valuable knowledge gained in the army equips men with the tools that make him a 'real man' (cf. Sinclair-Webb, 2000). As Sirman (1990:33) states, just as military service is understood by everyone as 'a debt to the nation' (*vatan borcu*), soldiers are conceptualized as those people who offer protection for women and children from the enemy. Accordingly, the military has direct connections with very 'private' spheres of life, since marriage is seen as the next stage to complement 'true manhood'. For a 'real man', this honour is established through his ability to secure a livelihood for his family, and a good name for all of his household members. With respect to rural Turkey, Sirman (1990) uses the concept of "representation" in order to show one of the means through which gender identities are defined. Representativeness is an integral part of male identity. Hence, a man is by definition the head of a household, an economically independent individual who obeys no one but who is obeyed by those who are supposed to share his fund of material and symbolic capital, namely members of his

household. Representation becomes a gender-specific association: household heads by virtue of their position become representatives and women, the represented. Representatives are judged not only in terms of their own conduct, but also with respect to the behaviours of those people who are in subordinate relations to them, those whom they represent. "Representation is not part of [women's] gender definition and if they behave in this fashion too openly, they will have to face criticism and loss of status" (Sirman, 1990:48). More importantly, the husband would suffer loss of face as a man unable to control his wife. In short, through the subordination of the other members of the household, men fulfill their gender requirements by becoming representatives.

Another agent of patriarchy is the 'honour and shame' codes [*namus-şeref anlayışı*] (Müftüler-Bac, 1999:305; Tezcan, 2000:237-9) associated with the machista tradition that can be observed in varying degrees in all eastern Mediterranean societies. Women are 'victims of their sexuality' since honour and shame are components of a system of male prestige that serve as a mechanism of social control that defines social boundaries and loyalties (Cole, 1991: 77). Women's sexuality and fertility forms the one universal recourse that provides a focus for honour, and is constructed as requiring control. "Control [is] achieved through the domestication of women's sexuality and fertility – through the social construction of women as wives and mothers –and through the conflation of women with shame (and men with honor)" (Cole, 1991: 77). And, through their reverence to the moral code of shame, women show their respect for male honour. "The culturally defined modes of control in the Mediterranean region are deeply vested in traditions and social norms constraining female behavior" (Müftüler-Bac, 1999:305). Therefore, women's inferiority is justified by society's rules of appropriate behavior. In

short, it can be said that male supremacy in Mediterranean culture, promoted by the unequal power relations between the sexes is another factor that endorses patriarchy in Turkey. However, through her study of Vila Chã women, Cole (1991) challenges the stereotype of women in the code of honour and shame, since viewing women in terms of their relations with men and their reproductive roles as wives and mothers ignores their roles in economic production. Hence, her argument makes one question the validity of honour and shame as a model of gender relations in Turkey.

Ilcan (1996) emphasizes the role of moral discourse as a technique of power in shaping social and economic relations, and in influencing the action of people by 'circumscribing arenas of obedience and duty'. Although Ilcan's research is conducted in a rural setting in Turkey, the experiences of women within the more modern, urban setting are surely not entirely divorced from those experiences of the women in more rural settings. On the contrary, even in the most modernized sectors of Turkish society, the sexual classifications and values of traditional culture are well known and indirectly understood by all Turkish men and women (see Tabak, 1997). In Ilcan's (1996: 124) words:

The moral judgment that women are not suited to a particular kind of work only attempts to circumscribe areas of duty and obligation for women, not fully disclosing the underlying power contests between men and women or the fact that the primary target of masculinist power has been the subjugation of women.

For instance, in the rural setting, labour-intensive farm tasks are viewed by men as work inherently suited to women; men do not consider women's work as requiring much skill or expertise (Ilcan, 1996:123). Interestingly, older women gain more social status and respect, after withdrawal from agricultural work and become more restricted to performing tasks

inside the home. "This newly acquired status is, however, an effect of power since it derives from the devaluation of women's farm work by wage-earning male kin" (Ilcan, 1996:124).

Tabak (1997) illuminates the role of moral discourse in Istanbul, an urban setting, by trying to find an explanation of what influences the upward mobility of women in industrial corporations. This research draws attention to social factors such as socially appropriate behaviours and values that prevent women's advancement to positions of authority over male subordinates (Tabak, 1997:95). She emphasizes the strong cultural influence and limitations put on both men and women by the Turkish society. Gender distinctions made during the socialization process determine to a great extent what is considered to be proper behavior for both men and women. This makes it clear why "women have difficulty in identifying with the masculine traits that are traditionally associated with good management and leadership skills" (Tabak, 1997:95). In the same vein, a study conducted by Culpan and Marzotto (1982) among university students, shows that the female respondents, on the whole, held distinctly more egalitarian attitudes towards work roles than the male respondents did, since men are less willing to accept women's employment outside the home, provided that there is no financial necessity. "Sex-role² attitudes in Turkey may be so compartmentalized that traditional attitudes about home and family comfortably coexist with the changing attitudes concerning work-force participation"(Culpan and Marzotto, 1982:351). Thus, moral discourses concerning what is socially appropriate or not serve as clever disguises and subtle expressions of the forces of domination that regulate women's activities (Ilcan, 1996:127).

² Here, 'sex-role' refers to gender attributes in general, *not* role taking in sexual activities.

It is easier said than done to completely break from the prevalent gender structure one has grown up with. This predicament is presented in Doris Lessing's novel *Martha Quest* (1994), the first of the 'Children of Violence' series. Lessing portrays her heroine, Martha, as a sensitive girl who rejects the social concept of 'determinism', who is especially concerned with liberating herself from the conformist institutions around her. It seems that Martha is disgusted by the thought of being fated into marriage and motherhood. She keeps on saying to herself that she would never be like the women in her environment by submitting to a husband. Although she thinks "the marriages of the district were ridiculous and even sordid, and most of all old-fashioned" (Lessing, 1994: 80), she is disloyal to her conception of herself, and surrenders to the conventional female role – the role of being a wife. Owing to her awareness of the effects of nurture, Lessing describes the dangers that a sensitive adolescent confronts when biological and social pressures are too powerful. Martha is both dependent upon, and reacts against the collective pressures in her environment, constantly redefining herself through her relations with them. Everybody in her surroundings seems to want to mould her, and she keeps falling under influences, discovering too late her loss of autonomy. What she goes through is a "feeling of being dragged, being weighted. She did not understand why she was acting against her will, her intellect, everything she believed. It was as if her body and brain were numbed" (Lessing, 1994: 37). It seems that freedom is conceived as a limited space between fixed alternatives. Thus, I would argue that similar to Martha's experiences, within the Turkish context, the ability of the collectives to mould individuals is still present.

Through their ability to challenge what is taken for granted, women *are* able to think differently and recognize other ways in which they can organize their lives. Thus,

during the 1980s, some women began to challenge the adequacy of Kemalist reforms by arguing that these reforms had endorsed the patriarchy even when they enhanced women's status. As Yeşim Arat (1994:102) argues, young, well educated, professional working women, who have been exposed to the feminist activism in the West, have developed feminist perspectives on Turkish issues. In an attempt to promote liberalism and democracy within Turkish society, these leading feminists have created public awareness on women's situation by protesting the legal inequalities –demonstrating that the Kemalist reforms had brought neither equality nor liberation. These women have been formulating new strategies and ways of knowing that allowed them to assess and negotiate the forms of control imposed on them. In order to protest the restricted civil rights and liberties of women, these women organized major activities against state policies, laws, and the regime itself (Arat, 1994:107; see also Tekeli, 1990). The prevalent familial ideology controlled every aspect of women's lives, and could not be reconciled with feminism, which aimed to undermine patriarchal structures, reshape social relations and legitimize women's right to self-determination (Arat, 1994:109). Consequently, these feminists argued that patriarchal social relations in the private and public sphere had to be radically transformed. The dominant familial ideology depicted women as wives and mothers, and it is *still* inconceivable that a woman who chooses to break out of this cultural restraint to enter work in a profession could be permitted to neglect her domestic responsibilities. Tezcan (2000:198) echoes this point by stating that even if a woman's education is higher than her spouse's, as long as she does not abandon her daily household chores, and performs her duties *layıkıyla* [as she should be], as defined by Turkish society, there is nothing to be concerned about.

These women have a vision: a vision that resists the socially coded modes of thought and behavior. In order to bring about change, they articulate a critical response to being placed in subordinate positions. In short, women have been expected to play the sexual stereotypes, and it is this expectation that creates the material basis for a feminist ideology. As in the West, feminists have given Turkish society a language in which to voice the suppressed and latent sense of rebellion experienced by women. Here is a list of articles covering important amendments³ to the family law that may be attributed to feminists' endeavours to bring about equality:

- Article 21 of the current law under the sub-title "Legal Residence," stipulating a legal residence, was changed to the "Legal Domicile" and the provision "the residence of the husband" was not included in the law in order to ensure equality between man and woman.

- The marriage ceremony can hereby be held not only in the province where the man resides, but also in the one where the woman resides. (Article 134)

- A third legal grounds for divorce, "humiliating behaviour," is hereby established, in addition to "plots against life" and "grave assaults and insults." (Article 162)

- A divorced woman is allowed to retain her former spouse's name if he so agrees. Women are now allowed by law to retain their maiden name after marriage, though must still adopt their husband's name as well. (Article 173)

- Under these changes, the husband is no longer automatically the head of the family. (Article 186)

- The new code allows couples to jointly decide where they will live. (Article 186)

³ The new Turkish Civil Code was approved by the Turkish Grand National Assembly on November 27, 2001 and was promulgated by President Ahmet Necdet Sezer and published in the Official Gazette on December 8, 2001 (see Amendments to the Turkish Civil Code, as of 04/07/2002)

- The principle that the husband is responsible for looking after his wife and children has been deleted, with the new code specifying that a shared financial responsibility be adopted. (Article 186)

- Both men and women are given equal status within the marriage and are both able to represent the family in legal matters. (Article 188)

- The obligation for spouses to obtain permission from the other spouse before choosing a profession or a job is hereby abolished. However, in the choice and pursuit of professions, the welfare and benefit of the unity of marriage shall be taken into consideration. (Article 192)

- The clause which required a widow to obtain a judge's permission before she could incur debts in favour of her husband is hereby abolished under the principle of equality of women and men.

Of course, the purpose of the recent amendments to the Turkish Civil Code is more than just a secular push for women's rights as Turkey has an interest in a Western-tailored approach to legal protections. Turkey has been struggling for full participation in the European Union, and it is this endeavour that necessitates changes to the Civil Code. Even so, I would argue that the recent changes to the Turkish Civil Code owe much to feminist activism, since it is feminists who highlight the civil rights that are *not* granted to women; thus, bringing attention to additional issues that Turkey still has to deal with in order to join the European Union. Women have begun to deny their former passivity and have begun to define an ideology which has as its objective a society where women can decide their own fate according to their own desires (Tekeli, 1990: 284). Currently, as Turkish women begin to embrace a new way of life, it has yet to be seen whether

relationships among men and women will become truly egalitarian or develop in new directions.

Links to the Structuring of Turkish Homosexualities

So far, I have tried to portray the existing relations of power based gender. But, this analysis can further be extended to the existing relations of power in the world of men, and its implications for male homosexuality in particular. The segregation of the private and public spheres by sex, serves to reproduce the prevalent gender ideology as well as the gender-dominant ideology in Turkish society among the various institutions –such as the family, the streets, the school system, the state and religion– in which patriarchal relations are reproduced and enacted (see Connell, 1987:119-41). These institutions are crucially responsible for the production of culturally valued masculine identities. This claim can further be pushed by arguing that these institutions help to reproduce the ‘traditional’ organization of homosexuality in which the clear distinction between *aktif* and *pasif* role-taking in sexual relations are highly pronounced. For this reason, it is worth pointing out that however important experiences with a particular institution may be –for example, the family– they are but one instance of a whole range of institutional arrangements which go into the definition of what it means to be a man or a woman, as gender definitions are reconstructed in new institutional settings.

R. W. Connell (2002; 1995; 1987:183-6; 1983:41) presents masculinity as a social construction that is achieved within a gender order that defines masculinity in opposition to femininity. This reinforces and maintains the power relation between men and women as a group, recognizing variation not just between masculinity and femininity, but also *within*

gender. This argument lays the foundation for the analysis of gendered power relations among men, and the separation of hegemonic from subordinated masculinities. There is no single 'masculinity'; power relations among men construct *multiple* masculinities. Connell suggests that gender politics among men involve a struggle to assert socially dominant masculinity, and that the kind of masculinity that is hegemonic involves a particular institutionalization of patriarchy and a particular strategy for the subordination of women. As acknowledged by Kandiyoti (1994:199) Connell's approach opens up the possibility of examining subordinate masculinities and the ways in which certain categories of men may experience stigmatization –among them young and effeminate, as well as homosexual men. These subordinated men are oppressed within patriarchal sexual relations, and their circumstances are linked in different ways to the general logic of the subordination of women to men (Carrigan, Connell and Lee, 1985:587).

At the point of entry into the male world, young boys might feel 'feminized' by virtue of their still immature physical appearance and lack of resources (Dundes, Leach & Özkök, 1972; Kandiyoti, 1994). Within the household environment, Kandiyoti's (1994) study illustrates that it is not unusual for adult women to celebrate a young boy's physical masculinity and to be amused by the boy's arrogance and display of machismo. What is really interesting is that young boys can "play at being the uncontested master of the house", so long as he is alone in the women's world (Kandiyoti, 1994:206). However, in the case that an older male figure is around, the boy would be pushed around and given unskilled tasks to do. Thus, he would still be seen as part of *the female domain*, with low status. The young boy has a very small space in which he could act out "an assertive version of masculinity". In Kandiyoti's (1994:207) words:

While the world of women reaffirms certain attributes of maleness and, at times at least, the young boy can bask in the comfort of being the male child, this comfort and certainty are shattered when he is with adult men. Vis-à-vis older males, the little boy is charming, placatory and obedient; in many ways, his behavior replicates that expected of women in the face of adult male authority.

Here we can see connections to the themes of subordination/inferiorization in interactions among young boys, in an attempt to *gain* status. In their study of the verbal duelling rhymes practiced among Turkish boys⁴, Dundes, Leach & Özkök (1972) put forth that the actual communicative intent through topics such as manliness and sexuality is to assert one's *masculinity*, not the information these insults carry themselves (Dundes et al., 1972:131). Due to the clear gender definitions in Turkish culture, upon leaving the world of women at a young age, little boys seem to realize that their own relationships to older men must entail the assumption of passive, deferential roles quite similar to the inferior status experiences by women. In other words, they are constructed as subordinate males in the world of adult men. Hence, in order to gain status among one's peer group, one has to prove one's manliness in the form of placing one's competitors in the passive, feminine position, through symbolic words. Through the affirmation of the culturally valued male world with its active sexual role, this duel allows the adolescent to renounce the female world with its passive sexual role (Dundes et al., 1972:157-8). In Dundes et al.'s (1972:135) words:

One of the most important goals is to force one's opponents into a female role. This may be done by defining the opponent ... as a wanton sexual receptacle..., by means of casting him as a submissive anus, an anus which must accept the brunt of the verbal duelist's attacking phallus.... Of course, the victim normally does not simply remain passive. Rather he tries in turn to place his attacker in a passive, female role.

⁴ Turkish adolescents practice a traditional form of ritual insult exchanges that depends upon an individual's skill in remembering and selecting appropriate retorts to provocative insults.

Much of the skill in the dueling process consists of parrying phallic thrusts such that the would-be attacking penis is frustrated and the would-be attacker is accused of *receiving* a penis instead. According to this code, a young boy defends and asserts his virile standing in his peers group by seeing to it that his phallus threatens the anus of any rival who may challenge him. *It is important to play the active role in a homosexual relationship; it is shameful and demeaning to be forced to take the passive role* (original emphasis).

This preoccupation with proving one's masculinity can be traced to males who recreate their own early passivity/inferiority, by forcing others to take the inferior position. By imposing it on others, this replay of earlier weakness may help males both to relieve and exorcise those experiences, therefore, allowing males to assert their masculinity (Kandiyoti, 1994: 207).

Along the same lines, same-sex relationships in Turkey can be fully understood only within the wider structures of Turkish sexual ideology and its definitions of masculinity and femininity. Through the specific meanings attached to sexual behavior within this particular culture, the links between society and sexuality may be detected. This is not to suggest that individuals are mere 'carriers' of a modeled culture. After all, the dominant discourse of the predominant sexual ideology may obstruct but does not necessarily prevent different kinds of relationships. Nonetheless, it is crucial to bear in mind that acts are not random. As Barry Adam (1985; 1993) points out, cross-cultural evidence demonstrates that homosexuality is an inextricable component of the structural codes of the society in which it appears. Hence, "the social geography of homosexuality should reveal clues to the problem of why sexual desire arises at certain structural points and how it is ordered and made meaningful" (Adam, 1985:19). As Adam (1993:172) explains:

Homosexual attraction and affection is not random, but tends to endorse standards of desirability and appropriateness already widespread in the culture. While modern gay and lesbian worlds have emerged primarily in advanced capitalist nations and in major cities of the former Soviet bloc and the third world, more traditional social arrangements of male homosexuality have typically relied upon age and gender differentiation as their organizing principles.

From this vantage point, Tapınç (1992: 39-40) sees homosexuality in Turkey as a *social contract* where rules are initially based upon the agreement of various participants, which are ultimately defined by society. By asking questions about the 'social contract' which operates between the two social actors, and seeing the ways this is regulated by society, as Tapınç suggested, it becomes possible to see how Turkish homosexualities are linked to both sexuality and the prevalent gender structure. In short, the gender role employed by Turkish men in interpreting and organizing their homosexual experiences relies upon a gender-inscribed discourse common to the Mediterranean region and most of Latin America (see Carrier 1995; Lumsden 1996; Adam 1993).

As Tapınç (1992:41) points out, in the Turkish language, the two words: *vermek* (to give) and *koymak* (to put) are frequently used to define the position of those involved in a sexual encounter, whether heterosexual or homosexual. Thus, it is the woman or 'real' homosexual who 'gives' and the 'real' man who 'puts'. This, of course, refers to the male's active role of penetration as opposed to those who offer themselves up to be penetrated in either vaginal or anal intercourse. "If one's subjectivity is masculine and masculine practice is to penetrate (and not be penetrated), being 'active' in a anal intercourse reinforces that subjectivity. But if the same person is also 'passive', [his] masculinity is potentially threatened" (Kippax & Smith, 2001:420). For the Turkish case, as Parker (1999:29) suggests in relation to sexual life in Brazil, it can also be said that the distinction between

masculine activity and feminine passivity is central to the organization of sexual reality. This distinction implies a kind of symbolic domination that is typical of Turkey's traditional culture of gender, as discussed earlier. Just as 'koymak' is used to describe various forms of domination through reference to the relations of gender, 'vermek' can be used for implying submission, and passivity in many settings (adapted from Parker, 1999: 30). Thus, by means of these categories, "the sexual universe is continually structured and restructured, in even the simplest and most common verbal exchanges, along the lines of a rigid hierarchy: a distinction between sexual [activity] and [passivity] that is translated into relations of power and domination" between the *aktif* and *pasif* male engaging in homosexual relationships (Parker, 1999:30). As Parker further suggested, the structure of this hierarchy is used to organize and conceptualize sexual relations both between members of the opposite sex, and between members of the same sex. The symbolic structure of male/female interactions seems to function as a kind of model for the organization of Turkish homosexualities. As part of this model, what is primarily important are perhaps the social roles played out by the participants rather than the shared biological gender in organizing and structuring same-sex interactions; in other words, their being *aktif* or *pasif* as sexual partners and social persons (Parker, 1999:30). As a result, within the framework of this model, then, there exists a fairly explicit cultural construction of same-sex desires and practices. Thus, we can see how the gender role employed by Turkish men in understanding and categorizing their homosexual experiences relies upon a gender-inscribed discourse.

From this vantage point, in Mediterranean-based cultures, the label of the homosexual is attached only to the person who takes the passive role in relations with

another male, and no stigma is attached to 'active' same-sex relations (Ross, 1983: 4). As Dundes, Leach & Özkök (1972:147) put forth, especially in relation to the Turkish context, there is nothing insulting about being the active homosexual: "[T]he active phallic aggressor gains status; the passive victim of such aggression loses status." Thus, in Turkish culture, the conception of homosexuality⁵ originates around the schema of penetration, and it is the individual who is penetrated or thought to be penetrated that is conceptualized under the label 'homosexual', and subject to stigmatization (Tapınç, 1992:42). In Tapınç's words:

As a consequence of this stigmatization, *ibne* [the colloquial word for 'homosexual'] appears to be the person who is expected to fulfill the effeminate and 'passive' role as the homosexual, condemned and despised in society. Interestingly enough, many homosexuals and gays themselves in Turkey adopt this mainstream/malestream distinction, and they have adapted two slang words, *laço* and *lubunya*... which refer to masculine, 'active' and not necessarily homosexual individuals and to feminine, 'passive' homosexual people, respectively.

Consequently, it becomes clear that societal factors play a role in the relationship between homosexuality and the gender one associates himself with, since on identifying oneself as 'homosexual', a person may accept the cultural expectations that he will be feminine. Hence, gender definitions persist not only as important elements in the determination of one's sexual practices, but also one's gender/sex identity. Carrier (1977) makes a cross-cultural analysis (countries involved: Mexico, Brazil, Greece, and Turkey) and also comes to the conclusion that sharply dichotomized gender definitions and the cultural formulation linking effeminacy and homosexuality appear to have an important effect on the structure of male homosexual behavior. "It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy

⁵ Homosexuality is also used to emphasize the practice and ideologies that are not held by dominant heterosexual relationships and values.

of some cultures that effeminate males under their influence are pressured to play the passive insertee sex role when involved in homosexual behavior and masculine males are pressured to play the active insertor role” (Carrier, 1977:64).

The linking of gender and homosexuality, to some degree, as a function of societal expectations is further supported by Ross, Rogers, and McCullough (1978). They suggest that in an anti-homosexual society, where there are sharp gender differentiations, people who wish to relate sexually with a member of the same sex may feel that they must contain some attributes of, or may consider themselves to be partly, members of the opposite sex. Ross et al. have shown that in societies where both homophobia and strong sex differentiation are less intense, the degree of opposite-sex identification in homosexual men is reduced correspondingly.

Earlier, the implications of the sharply dichotomized gender system of Turkey were discussed, and how the division of the private and public spheres organizes the social network of Turkish society by the category of sex/gender. Owing to the widespread gender ideology, according to Tapınç (1992:45) homosexuals are left with nothing but dichotomous gender definitions, since the prevalent system occludes the emergence of alternative models of identity for people. Furthermore, although his research methodology is not stated, Tapınç adds that “this is one of the reasons why the majority of homosexuals in Turkey, once they recognize their homosexuality, accept the effeminacy through identifying themselves with women and the images of womanhood”. Hence, the *pasif* homosexual is “exiled from the male public sphere by the other men in the name of ‘honour of manhood’”. Therefore, once you abandon your culturally defined ‘manhood’, the sphere of women seems to be the only safe harbour in which to seek refuge (Tapınç,

1992:45). On the other hand, although penetrating a man is also potentially stigmatizing, the *aktif* homosexual is still able to keep his place in the men's world as long as he announces that he 'gives it like a man', signifying his *aktifness*. In conclusion, the effects of penetrative sex manifest themselves in relation to the gender definition each person holds for himself. Thus, "the strict division of sexual roles among participant individuals, in fact, perpetuates the myth of heterosexuality as well as that of masculinity" (Tapınç, 1992:47).

Apart from what has been discussed above, it is of paramount importance to highlight the emergence of a recent phenomenon in Turkish society, in which the conventional distinction between the *aktif* penetrator and the *pasif* penetratee fades away (Tapınç, 1992:46). Thus, despite the hegemonic constructions of gendered sexual activity and passivity, there are many other men who still recognize the construct, but resist it (see also Kippax & Smith, 2001). I would say that these men express a dynamic kind of questioning and of re-thinking of the way in which they build their own conception or re-conception of themselves as being either *aktif* or *pasif*. In other words, they question how the 'language' of gender-inscribed sexuality circulates through their understanding of themselves, and also how it provides a language of desire.

In 1986, Arslan Yüzgün published *Homosexuality in Turkey: Yesterday and Today* (Türkiye'de Eşcinsellik: Dün, Bugün), and it is notably the first serious publication on male homosexuality in Turkey. As Sofer (1992: 79) emphasized, Yüzgün's aim was to promote consciousness-raising within the Turkish society in order to put the issue of gay rights on the agenda. Yüzgün (1986:67-8, see also 1993:163) conducted a survey of 223 male homosexuals in Beyoğlu, Istanbul, and although his findings are only representative for a

limited area, not a sample of the Turkish society as a whole, he was ready to say that 56.1% of Turkish homosexuals are both *aktif* and *pasif*; 30.9% of them are exclusively *pasif*, and 13% are exclusively *aktif* (see also Murray and Roscoe 1997:37 and Şimşek 1988:153-161). However, according to Sofer (1992:79), when Yüzgün was asked about his sampling criteria⁶ his only claim was: "I knew they were homosexuals." Nevertheless, considering the figures he reported, Yüzgün was able to promote an alternative mode of thinking and awareness vis-à-vis viewing one's sexuality.

Similar to the characteristics of the Turkish feminists of the 1980s, this new model in which same-sex desire is organized, as highlighted by Tapınç, is found widely among urban, young, educated, and middle-class homosexuals. "They represent a new sexually conscious stratum of the homosexual population in society, and have introduced the word 'gay' [*gey*] with which to identify themselves" (Tapınç, 1992:46). This can be related to Western ideas of 'gay identity' that have become entangled in globalization processes that have come to promote the emergence of alternative constructions of same-sex bonding around the world (Tapınç, 1992:46; Adam 2001). Whether relationships among homosexual men in Turkey have started to *evolve* towards the 'gay model' widespread in Europe and North America or is developing in new directions will be discussed in the following sections.

⁶ During a workshop of the 'Homosexuality, Which Homosexuality' conference in Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam in December, 1987.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

Introduction

In order to find out about how sexuality is organized among gay men in Turkey, I will discuss two perspectives, namely *queer theory* and *Stephen Murray's* model on types of homosexualities. I will argue that Murray's model informs my topic better than queer theory since he offers perspectives more amenable to the complexities of homosexual experiences within the Turkish context.

Queer Theory

Queer theory is a set of ideas based around the idea that identities are not fixed and do not determine who we are. It suggests that it is meaningless to talk in general about 'men' or any other group, since identities consist of so many elements that to assume that people can be seen collectively on the basis of one shared characteristic is misleading. For instance, Seidman (1996) points out that asserting a unitary 'gay' identity entails the exclusion and devaluation of a range of experiences and values. Thus, as there are infinite possible combinations of social variables such as class, race, gender etc., any assertion of identity will be partial and privileging. Indeed, queer theory proposes that we deliberately challenge all notions of fixed identity, in varied and non-predictable ways. In the same vein, Annamarie Jagose (1996) argues that queer theory's challenge is to create new ways of thinking about not just heterosexuality and homosexuality, but also such seemingly given fixed notions as 'gender', 'sexuality', and even 'man' and 'woman'.

Queer theorists' aim is to destabilize cultural ideas of normality and sexuality and terms like *heterosexual* and *homosexual* which have been used to oppress people who do not conform to the western ideal of monogamous heterosexual marriage. These theorists hope that this strategy will weaken the status quo and promote the freedom people need to create their own sexualities. Queer theory's debunking of stable sexes, genders, and sexualities fosters its theorists' demonstrations of the impossibility of any 'natural' sexuality (Jagose, 1996:3), thus, focusing on mismatches between sex, gender and desire.

It should be kept in mind that, 'queer' is a consequence of the constructionist problematizing of any term. "The delegitimation of liberal, liberationist, ethnic, and even separatist notions of identity generated the cultural space necessary for the emergence of the term 'queer'; its non-specificity guarantees it against recent criticism made of the exclusionist tendencies of 'lesbian' and 'gay' as identity categories"(Jagose, 1996:76).

As Jagose (1996:77-78) states, access to the post-structuralist theorization of identity as provisional and contingent, linked with a growing awareness of the limitations of identity categories in terms of political representation, enabled *queer* to emerge as a new form of personal identification and political organization. Thus, identity has been reconceptualized as a sustaining and persistent cultural myth. Louis Althusser (in Jagose, 1996:78) points out that we do not pre-exist as free subjects; but that we are constituted as such by ideology. In the same vein, Spargo (1999:51-52) writes: "I may believe that I am somehow essentially and uniquely myself... [But w]hat allows me to think of myself as having an identity of any kind are the very discourses and their knowledges that produce and police sexuality as well as gender." In other words, Spargo asserts that subjectivity is not an essential property of the self, but something that originates outside it. Sexual identity

is perceived within the set of 'options' determined by a cultural network of discourses. Therefore, identity is an effect of identification with and against others; being ongoing, and always incomplete. As a result, for queer theorists, the foundational category of any identity politics inevitably excludes potential subjects in the name of representation.

In stressing the partial, flexible and responsive nature of *queer*, Butler (1990) offers a corrective to those naturalized and seemingly self-evident categories of identification that make up traditional formations of identity politics. She specifies the ways in which the logic of identity politics, which is to gather together similar subjects in order to achieve shared aims by mobilizing a minority-rights discourse, is far from natural or self-evident.

Diana Fuss (1991) argues that 'gay' identity reproduces the opposition between homosexual and heterosexual, thereby reinforcing a social logic of exclusion and the production of deviant others. The identity of a person is implicated in its opposite. "The hetero/homosexual symbolic coupling forms a mutually interdependent, hierarchical relation of meaning" (Seidman, 1998:290), with a logic of boundary defining similar to the masculine/feminine gender code. It structures identities, the basic categories of knowledge and culture, and the normative organization of society. Hence, the issue of homosexuality is no longer simply an issue for a social minority, but one that has an effect on the whole of the society by affecting the cultural order. As Seidman (1996:12-13) puts forth, queer theory is a general critical cultural analysis of the social productivity of the hetero/homosexual definition in the service of a heterosexual norm. It is clear that queer theory tries to show the pervasive, structuring presence and power of homosexuality, but it also attempts to portray the instability of this binary opposition with the intention of reducing its force and releasing new possibilities for desire, identity and social

organization. No matter how personally liberating it may be to declare oneself to be *out* of the closet of concealed sexuality, it implies admitting the centrality of heterosexuality as well as reinforcing the marginality of those who are still in the closet (Spargo, 1999:47). As Adam (2000: 325-326) points out, “the deconstructionist impulse of queer theory has sought to expose the underpinnings of a sexual system that sorts people into a hierarchy based on sexual orientation.”

Queer theory maintains its critique of identity-focused movements by understanding that even the formation of its own coalitional and negotiated constituencies may well result in exclusionary and reifying effects far in excess of those intended (Jagose, 1996:131). It represents itself as unfixed, and “describes a horizon of possibilities whose precise extent and heterogeneous scope cannot in principle be delimited in advance” (Jagose, 1996:131). It draws our attention to the assumptions that lie in the mobilization of any identity category. Edelman (1995: 346) contends that it would be better to construct queer theory less as the site of what we communally want, than as the want of any communal site. “Queer theory curves endlessly towards a realization that its realization remains impossible, that only as a force of derealization, of dissolution into the fluxions of a subjectless desire, can it ever be itself”(Edelman, 1995: 346).

Queer theory is interested in breaking up any identity category, and its weakness is in its incapacity of envisioning alternatives. On the other hand, I will expose a real *existing alternative*. This is not to propose a normative model that determines perception of others and conception of self (although it may channel such perception and conception). In all societies, individuals adapt and manipulate ‘cultural scripts’ for generating interactional and intra-psychic sexual meaning. Having said this, queer theory has little to offer in

making sense of patternings in representations of homosexual behavior within the Turkish context.

Stephen Murray's Typology

Stephen Murray (2000; 1992) points out that there is no single *homosexual* type with a unique set of characteristics, but despite the variety, he argues that there are only a few recurring patterns. As for other cultural arenas, only a few categorizations exist across space and time. Murray (2000:3) cautions us that there is always intracultural diversity, and that a person may understand the same behavior in a dissimilar manner at different times with different partners, or even with the same partner. As stated by Adam (1985: 20):

[A]ny single set of cultural institutions never completely contains the full range of human experiences and innovation. Social coding practices may be uneven, incomplete, or in transition. Even where sexuality has a culturally specific complex of meanings, there remains a larger universe of experience, maladjustments, and emigrations from prescribed interpretive frameworks. The dominant sexual codes of one place take on subterranean aspects elsewhere as a "little tradition" or folk culture.

In order to focus on similarities, Murray (2000:8) admits that categories necessarily ignore differences; however, for him, "in the current intellectual climate of postmodernist nihilism, stressing diversity within categories is less important than stressing that there are patternings, many of them recognized by those living within a society, and that emulation of what are thought to be requirements of roles occurs. Individuals are more than 'carriers' of a modeled culture, but their acts are not random". In his book, *Homosexualities*, Murray proposes a three-fold typology of social organizations of homosexuality: age-structured, gender-stratified, and egalitarian homosexualities. This typology seems to encompass the

observed empirical variance in social patterns of male-male sexual relations, and “the three main types are noticeable in societies differing in scale and in elaboration of technology” (2000:6).

Murray (2000:23-203) sub-divides the first category, **age-structured homosexualities**, into three. The first subtype is one in which the ‘boy’ is sexually receptive to an older man who takes responsibility for helping him to become a masculine adult warrior. The second subtype is one in which the ‘boy’ is neither masculinized nor permanently feminized. And, the third one includes ‘boys’ who take the insertor role in sex with an older man for rewards beyond any sexual pleasure they experience.

In societies with **gender-stratified organization of homosexuality**, the second category, there are cultural expectations for the insertor partner to be hyper-masculine (the ‘*activo*’ role widespread in the Mediterranean and Latin American cultures). The receptive partner (the *pasivo* role) is expected to act out some other aspects of the feminine gender role with respect to behavior, sound, and dress. However, as Murray (2000:219) points out, there is an “absence of attention to the gender-conforming partners... male butches have been all but ignored, while the gender nonconforming have received almost all the attention. This is as true of current queer discourse about gender performativity and transgressiveness as it is of earlier ethnographic work.” In Stephen Murray’s (2000: 267-8) words:

The typological system is very simple: there are pasivos and activos, that is, males who want to be penetrated by males and males who want to penetrate – preferable to penetrate females but willing to use substitutes.

Behavior, desire, and identity are more complex in messy reality. Certainly there are individuals who impersonate the ideal type of undifferentiated phallic supremacy of the penetrating *hombre / homem*. However the sexually omnivorous

hombre who doesn't have any preferences in "object choice" -...- is more a *maricon* fantasy than a plausible empirical observation.

Despite the hegemonic gender ideology that there has to be harmony in one's gender, and the role taken in sexual activities, in Mediterranean and Latin American cultures, there are masculine-appearing males who are penetrated and effeminate-appearing males who are mostly or exclusively penetrators. Within this second category, Murray (2000:295-381) also includes 'sacralized' homosexual roles such as those of temple prostitutes, and the *Dagara* of southern Burkina Faso. Generally, the indigenous view of causation for males taking on transvestite religious and/or healer roles is involuntary; it is gods and spirits that choose the occupants of these roles.

Murray's third category, **egalitarian homosexualities**, "breaks from assigning one partner to the inferior role of 'boy' or 'wife', and – with regard to their sexual behavior – insists that both are men who should have equivalent privileges, not the least of which is autonomy" (Murray, 1992:29). But, this is an ideal type. It does not necessarily involve invariant and perfectly balanced sexual reciprocity. Nevertheless, sexual behavior is less restricted by the cultural dichotomization of masculine and feminine roles. With respect to the Turkish case, although Tapınc (1992:45) states that polarized gender definitions hinder the emergence of alternative models of identity for individuals, and that the majority of homosexuals is left with clear gender definitions based on the sex-role one takes during sex, he nonetheless emphasizes the recent emergence of an overtly masculine, urban, young, educated subgroup, a "new sexually conscious stratum of the homosexual population [that] have introduced the word 'gay' with which to identify themselves" (Tapınc, 1992:46). Greenberg (1988:395-396) argues that gender stereotyping of homosexuality may keep some men who do not fit the stereotype from thinking of

themselves as homosexual despite their attraction to others of their sex. Some prospective entrants into homosexual subcultures may be repelled by behavior they consider deviant. For others, the stereotypes may provide social roles, furthermore telling novices what it means to be homosexual. Consequently, Murray (2000:386) makes reference to the tendency of novices to American gay male scenes to go through a short-lived stage of enacting effeminacy in the process of coming out, before they begin to distinguish societal expectations of effeminacy from actual gay cultural expectations. Therefore, within egalitarian homosexualities, Murray (2000:386) emphasizes that “desire for same-sex partners need not involve abandoning the gender of the sex in which one is born”.

Murray’s conclusion is not that egalitarianism characterizes modern American society but that ‘diversification’ rather than ‘homogenization’ characterizes it: “more than one type of homosexuality may occur in one time and place” (2000:357). He emphasizes indications of male same-sex relations lacking significant status differences in classic Greek, Roman, Islamic, and Chinese literature, where at least approximately equal sexual reciprocity, social status between partners, particularly, similarity in age, prestige, gender presentation, and access to resources is prevalent; thus, the existence of egalitarian homosexualities even in ‘premodern’ societies is made clear (2000:373-381). The existence of ‘premodern’ instances of male homosexuality not involving status differences shows that egalitarian homosexuality was not impossible before industrial capitalism. However, “mobility- both in space and in occupations differing from one’s parents’- is a precondition for the urban concentration and multiplication of potentially exclusive and non-role-bound relationships of ‘modern homosexuality’” (Murray, 2000:421). In other words, the availability of some living space which families do not control, and having some financial

security other than family support make possible the formation of a critical mass of those desiring and/or having same-sex relationships. In conclusion, if I were committed to a queer agenda, it would be out of the question to talk about the 'gay society' in Turkey. On the other hand, Stephen Murray replaces the dogmatism of queer theory by perspectives more responsive to the complexities of human experience. He shows the range of homosexualities, and demonstrates that the predominant sexual ideology may obstruct but does not necessarily prevent different kinds of relationships. There is always intercultural and intrapsychic variance, but there are also recurrent social patterns, many of which include role labels, e.g. *pasif/aktif*, *laço/lubunya*. As a result, Stephen Murray's model informs my research topic better than the queer model, since he actually talks about possible alternative social organizations of homosexualities adaptable to the Turkish experience.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This section gives a detailed account of the research method used. After an explanation of what an *ethnographic study* is, and an overview of the four dimensions that it is composed of, the characteristics of the research participants and the research design are dealt with. Furthermore, following a clarification of the data collection procedures used, the means by which the data was collected and analyzed are explained. Finally, in order to ensure that the information obtained did not violate the dignity of any participant, the ethical issues taken under consideration are elucidated.

Research Method

The purpose of this study is to attend to Turkish gay men's discourses in order to get a feel for the experiences and circumstances in which each male builds his own conception or re-conception of himself as being *aktif*, *pasif* or gay. Through an ethnographic study, the aim is to find how the 'language' of gender-inscribed sexuality circulates through these men's understanding of themselves, and also how it provides a language of desire.

Ethnography refers to writing about the culture of groups of people. There is a focus on the patternings in human conduct that constitute important dimensions of people's culture. The essential core of this activity aims to understand another way of life from 'the native point of view'. Hence, rather than studying people, ethnography means learning

from people (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999: 27; Spradley, 1979:3; Creswell, 1998: 35). As stated by LeCompte & Schensul (1999: 21-4), culture consists of group patterns of behavior and beliefs that persist over time. Also, culture can be seen as a mental phenomenon consisting of what people know, believe, think, understand, feel or mean about what they do. Furthermore, culture can be treated behaviourally in terms of what people actually do as opposed to what they say they do. In addition, culture also includes the social arrangements and institutions within which people interact, or that are designed to meet their emotional needs. However, it is important to acknowledge that in an ethnographic study, in order to avoid cultural stereotypes and ensure that all of the many voices contending in a setting are heard, not everyone within a cultural or social group believes in the same things or behaves in the same way. As this study shows, there are always variations that can give better insight into the reality of things.

Burawoy (2000:26-28) talks about four dimensions of ethnography that are relevant to this research. The first dimension is 'the extension of the observer into the world of the participant'. In entering the lives of those s/he studies, an ethnographer adjusts him/herself to the horizons and rhythms of his/her subjects' existence, and becomes the living embodiment of the processes s/he studies. The second aspect refers to 'extensions of observations over time and space'. In other words, the ethnographer spends extended periods of time following his/her subjects around, in order to understand their way of life from their own point of view. "Believing that situations are important in determining both actions and beliefs, the ethnographer's problem becomes one of understanding the succession of situations as a social process" (Burawoy, 2000:27). The third aspect relates to 'extending out from micro processes to macro forces', from the space-time rhythms of the

location to the geographical and historical context of the field. As Burawoy states, one way to think of the macro-micro link, without being influenced by a person's own take on it, is to view the micro as a manifestation of the macro; hence, "some putative principle that governs society is found in its every part"(2000: 27). He clarifies this dimension by adding that the macro-micro link does not signify an 'expressive' totality, but a 'structured' one in which the part is influenced by its relation to the whole that is represented by 'external forces'. However, prior theory is necessary in order to identify those external forces. Therefore, the fourth dimension is 'the extension of theory'. Instead of being 'induced' from the data collected on the onset, existing theory is extended to accommodate observed missing parts or variances. What makes a research site interesting is its violation of some theory that needs some elaboration for its improvement. "[W]e are conventionally taught to rid ourselves of our biases, suspend our judgments so that we can see the field for what it is. We cannot see the field, however, without a lens, and we can only improve the lens by experimenting with it in the world" (Burawoy, 2000:28). There are guidelines but few rules in conducting an ethnography, and I learnt it through practice.

Subjects and Research Design

The group of participants for this study was obtained from Kaos GL, an independent gay organization in Ankara, Turkey. This voluntary organization is neither financially nor politically engaged with a political party or organization. As indicated on its web-site (KAOS GL), even though the group mostly consists of a younger generation of gay men, no matter what a person's age, gender or sexual orientation is, its doors are open to anyone who supports the spirit of pride in being open about oneself without any

prejudices against others. Kaos GL is located in downtown Kızılay, and its open address is disseminated through the Internet, the *Parmak Gazette*, and the bi-monthly *KAOS GL Magazine* published through the joint efforts of its members. Therefore, the presence of this gay organization is not a secret at all.

Owing to the hidden nature of the homosexual population, as there is a fear of disclosure, representative sampling of gay men is virtually unachievable (Bell & Weinberg, 1978: 29). However, efforts were made to recruit a heterogeneous group of men with same-sex thoughts, feelings, and behavior. Instead of drawing random samples from the complete gay Turkish population (which is impossible), the researcher was obliged to take them from the most accessible source, Kaos GL, knowing that the group drawn will be probably skewed relative to the broader homosexual population for at least some dimensions related to gay identification and practice. For instance, there is a tendency for a younger, more educated, and more 'gey' identified segment of the homosexual population to frequent Kaos GL. Nevertheless, there were attempts to modify this skewedness as indicated below. It also should be kept in mind that by the sampling procedure used, the group is biased towards those who have social support within a gay community and those who are 'out of the closet' at least to other people where Kaos GL is located.

For the purpose of this study, it was essential to include the most important characteristics that have a relationship with any of the categories proposed by Stephen Murray (2000) in his three-fold typology of the social organization of homosexualities; namely, age-stratified, gender-stratified, and egalitarian homosexualities. To achieve a diverse group, the interviewees of the study were selected based on sex-role¹ preference (aktif/pasif/gay), age, and educational level (high school level and below/ university level

¹ Here, 'sex-role' refers to role taking in sexual activities, *not* gender per se.

and above). *Sex-role preference* as one aspect will give clues to whether any of the participants conforms to gender-stratified or egalitarian homosexualities. The *age* dimension will reveal generational differences in relation to understanding oneself as being *aktif, pasif*, or *gay*. Thus, Tapınç's (1992:46) claim that sexual identities are age related is examined. Finally, *educational level* is important since people with higher educational background tend to be more exposed to western media representations of homosexuality or homosexual behaviours, and travel to western countries more, possibly increasing the possibility of forming gay identities. For convenience purposes, *income* as a variable is not included since it is highly correlated with educational level. As a result, after consideration of all possible combinations of the three facets stated above, I was able to interview a total of 20 men.

As stated by Guba and Lincoln (1985:201), in naturalistic investigations, the purpose of sampling will most often be to include as much information as possible. Therefore, *maximum variation sampling* is usually the sampling mode of choice in order "to document unique variations that have emerged in adapting to different conditions" (Guba & Lincoln, 1985:200). The aim is not to focus on the similarities that can be developed into generalizations, but to detail the many specifics that give the context its unique flavour (Guba & Lincoln, 1985: 201). Hence, the term 'purposive sampling' is used to describe the process (Guba & Lincoln, 1989:178; 1985:201). As part of this process, there can be no specification of the sample in advance since each study participant had to be selected only after the previous unit has been taped and analyzed. From a practical point of view, the first person that I interviewed was one of the two informants that I have known in person, and who is also well known and respected by other members of the Kaos GL

community. And, successive people were selected based on who the first person referred to in order to be included in the sample. Each consecutive interviewee was chosen to extend information already obtained, to obtain other information that contrasted with it, or to fill in gaps in the information obtained so far. By means of the '*each one reach one*' technique (Guba & Lincoln, 1985:202), starting from the first participant, each interviewee was asked to name others (that would be willing to participate) that are different from them with respect to the characteristics under consideration, in order to be interviewed in the same manner with the same instrument. (It was important to ensure that each succeeding element was chosen to be as different as possible from the proceeding elements. After all, it was necessary to have respondents who provided constructions different from those that were already heard of. This further ensured that I maximized the scope and range of information obtained.) As with any non-random selection procedure, this sampling technique is to ensure that the sample for this study is saturated with the characteristics that I wanted to study.

Data Collection Procedures

With respect to data collection, as a researcher I was regularly in touch with two informants who frequently went to Kaos GL. Both served as, what Schensul et al. (1999:150) define as, 'key informants'. After interviewing them, from time to time, these individuals stepped back from the target group, in which they were a part, in order to offer accounts of group behavior, beliefs, experiences, and related matters. The Kaos GL community meets regularly on Sunday evenings² and they discuss various issues and

² The researcher attended many of these meetings before the actual research started; the frequency of the meetings tends to be less during the summer holiday.

problems (personal or social), and the informants assisted me in gaining a better understanding of whatever needed further clarification. Furthermore, these informants helped in determining the existence of unidentified layers of target population members that had to be represented in the study, such as the *Avrupa travestisi* (European transvestite) that I never even heard of before.

As a native speaker of the Turkish language, I am in a unique position to pursue research in Turkey, and conduct the ethnographic study in the language of the men that are under investigation. The study participants were interviewed on average 90 minutes, using a set of open-ended questions (see Appendix A for English version, and Appendix B for Turkish translation) designed to elicit narratives about the social forces that go into the *aktif/ pasif/ gey* position. In other words, each of the twenty respondents were asked explicitly about their own sexual behavior and their responses offered insight into how and why they place themselves inside or outside certain categories, and what that identification means in terms of their interactions with other men. In many ways, this ethnography could not have been possible if the researcher was not an 'insider' in the field setting. The members of the gay community would have hardly provided any meaningful information to an 'outsider' who would be unaccounted for in the classificatory codes developed by the scene. This fortunately reduced the time that would have normally taken in order to build rapport and trust between the respondents and myself. It was crucial that the respondents felt comfortable, and this often calls for a different kind of friendship (LeCompte et al., 1999:10). Trust is not built over-night –it takes time and considerable effort. As the major objective of this study is to present intimate views of Turkish gay men, to ensure that people were to be as honest as possible, I indicated to them that they could ask *me* personal

questions as well, and that I did not want them to see the interviewing experience as a 'formal' one (which would only require me asking questions). Although this approach was not planned before the actual interviews, I thought this aspect would further promote a more comfortable environment, and make the conversations more 'real'. Having people ask me questions also proved to the respondents that I was genuinely interested in each respondent as an individual, and that I myself trusted them in revealing private information. Not surprisingly, after the interviews were conducted, I usually had people who would want to talk more not only about issues pertaining the interview schedule, but also other matters. Thus, the honesty established proved to yield more fruitful insights.

Data Recording and Analysis

After the respondents were notified verbally that the interviews were going to be tape-recorded, they were given information sheets that explicitly stated that "[a]nything you say in the interview is strictly confidential. Any identifying information about you or other individuals on the transcripts will be omitted. The tapes will be destroyed after transcription" (see Appendix C). Only one interviewee, who was one of the oldest participants, had reservations about the tape-recording. I already hypothesized that there would be generational differences in relation to understanding the kinds of meanings and emotions one ascribes to his sexual acts, therefore, I had to include this participant and take notes of the conversation both during and after the interview, as it was difficult to find mature men to be included in the study. All other interviews were tape recorded, and I transcribed the tapes on my own.

With respect to the analysis of the ethnographic data, in order to preserve the rich textual detail of the narrative accounts of the interviewees, I first read the transcriptions to refresh my memories of the key issues discussed. This initial reading of the notes reinforced the themes developed during the data-collection phase, and also generated new themes previously unrealized. Thus, *open coding* (Berg, 2000:164) allowed the researcher to identify themes, topics, or issues in a systematic manner. Next, records of clear patterns in the conversations of the respondents were created, by manually cutting and pasting quotes from the general transcriptions³, and appropriate narrative textual accounts concerning specific themes were put together within separate documents.

Excerpts from audiotapes have been used to illustrate the ordinariness and diversity of men who engage in same-sex relationships. I have made all the translations of interviewee quotations on my own, and the original Turkish texts are included as footnotes, under each quote from interviewee responses translated into English, for comparison purposes. In each chapter, quotes from respondents are introduced by the letter 'R' with a case number (which link to pseudonyms) signifying the label assigned for a particular interviewee in the study (e.g. R08 stands for respondent number eight). This labelling allows one to compare responses from a certain participant across chapters, depending on the theme being discussed. Under each quote from the respondents, there are square brackets which include demographic information; namely, the pseudonym for a particular participant, the person's sex-role preference, the age of the respondent and educational level, respectively, e.g. [Deniz: *pasif*, 25, high school graduate].

³ Considering that there are only twenty respondents, I made the decision to identify the patternings manually.

Throughout the study, Turkish terms and expressions have been maintained in referring to key cultural categories, as they emphasize complex cultural constructs. For these constructs whose full range of meanings can hardly be translated, I included English versions in parentheses, as accurately as possible. In the interview quotations, the tag line identifies the respondent's sex-role preference, age, and educational level. No attempt was made to extrapolate to the larger Turkish society. The descriptions of, and the motivations behind the activities and behaviours are used to illustrate the kinds of accommodations made by these men in response to societal disapproval, and how they may thus behave and be affected differently by their family life, and social and cultural imperatives (adapted from Carrier, 1995:xix-xx).

Ethical Issues

The researcher has consulted the *Tri-Council Policy Statement for Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (SSHRC, as of 12/12/2001), in order to ensure that information obtained during the interviews did not violate the dignity of any participant. This research focuses on very private behaviours (sexual activity); therefore, such a study on Turkish gay men produced very confidential information. As of Article 2.1(b), under normal circumstances, it is required that there is evidence of free and informed consent by the subjects in written form. However, due to the hidden nature of the targeted population, this was not appropriate since a written record of the subjects' names means that a formal record of participants exists. This requirement was replaced by what Berg (2000:57) calls 'implied consent', i.e. the subject taking the time to give the information required by the researcher indicated this kind of consent. In this case, with

respect to Article 2.4, explanations of the study's purposes and potential risks and benefits were given (see Appendix C for the form that was provided for the participants in English, and Appendix D for the Turkish version). After the interviewees were informed that a tape-recorder would be used, they were asked whether they understood the information and whether they still would be willing to participate in the study. Affirmative responses and completed interviews served the purpose of providing consent, not requiring any record of the subjects' names or other identifiable information. Moreover, the subjects were assured that they were free not to participate, had the right to withdraw at any time, and would be given opportunities for deciding if they wanted to continue to participate (Article 2.4(d)). With respect to Article 2.2, special efforts were made to ensure that free and implied consent was given *voluntarily*, without any kind of manipulation. In appreciation for the interviewees' participation in this study, and to compensate for the time spent with the researcher, 10.000.000 Turkish Liras (approx. \$10.00 CND) was given to each participant. It is noteworthy that some of the participants were reluctant to take the money offered as they thought their participation would be beneficial for the study itself. Some interviewees mentioned that they had never been included in such an experience and felt that it was not necessary to take the money. However, I felt it necessary to reassure the respondents that this monetary incentive was not a personal expense but one that was sponsored by the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Windsor. Having said this, most of the subjects donated the money to Kaos GL.

Since very few people are 'out of the closet' in terms of being willing to be publicly identified as 'gay' in Turkey, the researcher systematically changed each subject's real name (if it were indicated –at the beginning of each interview I told the participants

that I did not need to know their real name) to a pseudonym when reporting the data to promote the protection of confidential personal information and records. Any identifying record and list was not kept longer than was absolutely necessary.

CHAPTER 5

RELIGIOSITY, HOMOSEXUALITY AND HOMOPHOBIA

Introduction

The major objective of this chapter is to get a feel for the experiences through which the research participants go in accommodating devotion to Islam, the dominant religion in Turkey. This section analyzes responses to one particular question, “What joys and difficulties have you experiences regarding your sexual orientation?” by using ‘in relation to Islam’ as a probe to elicit responses that would give insights to how Islam and homosexuality could possibly coexist, if at all. It is not within the scope of this section to discuss Islamic law and its relation to same-sex behavior in detail, rather, I will reflect upon how Islam, as a social institution, aids in reproducing a certain way of organizing men who engage in same-sex sex. Finally, as I hypothesize that the attitude of especially religious non-homosexual people –who tend to be bound by traditional sex/gender roles– concerning homosexuality is a negative one, I talk about the possible links to popular homophobia in ‘the streets’, ‘the school system’, and in ‘the family environment’.

Homosexuality and its Effects on Perceptions of Islam

The Islamic law is based on the Koran (*Kuran*), which is regarded as *Allah*’s (God’s) words. “It is revered and regarded as being authoritative in terms of how Muslims should conduct themselves”(Jamal, 2001:3). Also, the *Hadis* or *Sünnet* (Hadith) is used which is a collection of Islamic traditions, teachings and stories of the prophet Muhammad, accepted as a source of Islamic doctrine and law second only to the Koran (see also Schild,

1992; Dunne, 1990). As Schild (1992:179-180) states, Islam deems sexuality as “an absolutely normal and natural urge of every human being. Symbolic of this positive attitude is the important place sex is accorded in paradise, which will be the fulfillment of the spiritual and bodily self”. However, there are major restrictions imposed on the enjoyment of sex, as it may only take place within the structure of *nikah* (marriage). It is suggested that “[s]ocial order and God-given harmony of life are threatened by the suppression of sexuality in celibacy and by sexual acts outside of marriage, heterosexual as well as homosexual”(Schild, 1992:180; see also Dunne, 1990:66). Thus, engaging in homosexual acts (*livata*) is likened to adultery (*zina*), which disrupts the social fabric and causes disorder. Various researchers such as Tapınç (1992:45), Schild (1992), Dunne (1990) and Yılmaz (1998:129-130) suggest that same-sex relations in Islam are regarded as ‘the most sinful of sins’, as the participants in such acts are being offensive to God’s will; thus, Islam directs the offenders to be punished by death¹ (compare AbuKhalil, 1997). It is through reference to the Biblical story of Lot that appears in the Koran, and the interpretation of it in the *Hadis*, that the harsh prohibitions against homosexuality are pronounced.

Contrary to the dominant reading of the Koran, Jamal (2001) questions the so easily taken-for-granted assumptions vis-à-vis homosexuality², and suggests that in the Koran, same-sex practices are viewed no differently from certain opposite-sex and non-sexual activities, such as desiring women/men outside the bounds of marriage and not

¹ Hekma (2002) talks about a ‘growing group-consciousness’ in Dutch society that is recently guiding young men and women of Turkish (and Moroccan) ancestry to rediscover Islam and the Koran, and to follow religious obligations, which makes them prone to queer bashing. He further mentions imam El Moumni who made statements against homosexuality and “stated in a book of his that Europeans were less than dogs or pigs because these animals at least do not know same-sex marriages”(Hekma, 2002:241).

² Jamal (2001:9) points out that as there is no concept of the ‘homosexual’ in Muslim societies, as it is understood in the West. The term does not fully represent the practice of same-sex activity; therefore, she uses the phrase ‘same-sex sexuality’ instead. For the purposes of this chapter, ‘homosexuality’ and ‘same-sex activity’ is used interchangeably. It is also noteworthy that in Turkey, the term ‘homosexuality’ (*homoseksüellik* or *escinsellik*) has been incorporated into the Turkish language.

controlling one's temper, respectively. Through her analysis of the key terms used in the Koran, she looks at the Lot story³ to understand the Koran's perception of the morality of same-sex sexuality. Jamal (2001:64) concludes that "same-sex sexual abominations are just another form of alienation from God", and that homosexuality is not the ultimate reason, or 'the worst of crimes' for the punishment that Lot's people experience. Jamal (2001:66) adds that there are certain words in the Koran that have a light emphasis on same-sex activities which are suggestive of a tension that things prohibited are also sacred. Moreover, though the Koran does not specifically condemn homosexuality by means of an explicit term, analysis of the *Hadis* reveal that through a specific term (*lūṭīyat* in Arabic, which is not mentioned in the Koran), there is larger moral emphasis to the detestation of homosexuality than is justified (Jamal, 2001:67-8). Not surprisingly, the discussion on the Koran and its perceptions of the morality of homosexuality by Jamal concludes by a confirmation of its being a negative one; hence making it a sin, if not the most sinful. In Jamal's (2001:68) words:

Rather than the Qur`ān [Koran] having influenced the *hadīth* [(*hadis*)], the *hadīth* literature has managed to connect Lot and same-sex sexuality exclusively, thus influencing various interpretations of the Qur`ān, perhaps also accounting for the later Islamic attitudes towards same-sex sexuality.... [T]his would perhaps provide further evidence as to how traditional Muslims have inherited their interpretations of same-sex sexuality that are somewhat different from the reading of the text of the Qur`ān itself.

Owing to what the Koran communicates, it seems that men who make a moral decision about same-sex activities and who also have been brought up in a Muslim country (or a setting where the teachings of Islam are promoted by Muslim parents) are left with limited

³ Refer to Jamal (2001) for the Koran's interpretation of the story of Lot, which is a typical punishment story.

alternatives. During the interviews, of all the men included in the research sample, who confirmed that they (used to) abide by the Islamic tradition, eleven of them demonstrated that they either gradually lost their faith in religion or simply ignore it, as it would make their lives more complicated. In addition, three participants indicated that religion has never been an issue of concern, as they were not nurtured in an environment where much emphasis was placed on religion in the first place. Here are some views on religion and what the interviewees make out of the Islamic teachings:

R08: When it comes to Islam or religion, I don't really have any religious beliefs. But there is certain religious stuff, of course, that was taught as I was growing up, and upon reading the Koran, I realized that in a verse, it is stated that homosexuals go to hell. Consequently, I come to a decision that I won't believe in a god that curses me⁴ [Deniz: *pasif*, 25, high school graduate].

R09: I do have religious faith, but to tell you the truth, I don't put too much emphasis on it...⁵ [Ziya: *aktif*, 20, some high school education]

R12: I live in a religious environment...My family is highly religious. Until I was 20 years old, I was also connected to religion, practicing all the required rituals of Islam, except the prayers five times a day. I accepted my homosexual identity when I was very young...and I was able to lead a life by bringing my sexuality and religiosity together... In other words, I never felt restrained by my religion...I was both able to show my respects to religion and 'hook up' with men. Now, I have no religious convictions whatsoever...I also no longer believe in *Allah*...I lost my faith⁶ [Ahmet: *pasif*, 30, high school graduate].

⁴ R08:İslam veya dine, gelince hiçbir dine inanmıyorum. Ama işte mesela çocukluğumdan beri bana öğretilen işte dini şeyler vardır ya, hani böyle düşündüm, yani nedir işte, Kuran-ı Kerim'in tercümesini okuyorsun, bakıyorsun orda bir ayette diyor ki, eşcinseller cehennemliktir diyor. Ben de düşünüyorum, beni lanetleyen bir tanrıya ben de inanmam.

⁵ R09:Dine inanırım da doğrusunu söylemek gerekirse fazla üzerine düşmüyorum...

⁶ R12:Dini bir çevrede yaşıyorum...ailem oldukça dindardır.. ben de 20 yaşına kadar dinle bağlantısı olan, beş vakit namaz hariç, bütün dini vacizelerini yerine getiren biriydim. Eşcinsel kimliğimi çok küçük yaşta kabul ettim... [eşcinsellik ve dini] normal beraber yürüttüm...yani kendi dinimle alakalı herhangi bir baskı yaşamadım...hem dini şeyimi yerine getirdim hem de erkeklerle beraber oldum. Şu anda dinle alakalı herhangi bir inancım yok....Allah' a da inanmıyorum artık...inancımı yitirdim.

R18: I'm really not a religious person anyways. When I was a little boy I used to say my prayers before going to bed, but I no longer do such things... I believe in *Allah* and that's enough for me. I don't practice anything specifically in relation to Islam, and I don't feel the need to. Anyways, according to my religion, I am committing a sin... Well if I still do this kind of thing [engage in same-sex activities], then I guess I don't really care about it⁷ [Emre: *gey*, 25, university graduate].

R17: As I was brought up within the Islamic tradition, I define myself as a Muslim, however, I meet almost none of the requirements prescribed for being one. I don't practice them, so, I am not religious⁸ [Yücel: *aktif*, 33, university graduate].

R07: In my high school years, since my family is very religious, I felt terrible. I felt as if I was doing something that should be avoided. I thought about Turkish society... Sinfulness, in relation to being Muslim. I no longer have such beliefs, so it becomes a solved problem for me⁹ [Harun: *gey*, 27, university graduate].

It seems that these men either question the authority of the Koran, or simply reject Islamic culture. Since the Koran is considered *Allah's* words, some of these men not only lose faith in the dominant religion, but also discontinue their belief in *Allah*. On the other hand, although some men indicated that they did not practice the rituals of Islam (e.g. Islam requires prayer five times a day), and did not consider themselves religious, they still believe in *Allah* – but through re-appropriations of the dominant beliefs. In other words, these men have 'personalized' views of God, and it is this conviction that keeps them in peace with themselves. Here is one respondent who has his own interpretation of religion:

⁷ R18: Zaten çok dine bağlı bir insan değilim, eskiden küçükken geceleri yatmadan dua ederdim ama artık hiç öyle şeyler yapmıyorum...Allah'a inanıyorum ve bu bana yetiyor, ama İslam dini adına özellikle bir şeyler yapmıyorum ve ihtiyaç da duymuyorum. Zaten dinime göre ben günah işliyorum... eee bunu bile bile hala yapıyorsam demek ki çok da inanmıyorum demek ki...

⁸ R17:İslam dini içerisinde yetiştirildiğim için kendimi Müslüman olarak tanımlıyorum ama Müslümanlığın gerektirdiği şartların nerdeyse hiçbirini yerine getirmiyorum, uygulamıyorum, yani dindar değilim.

⁹ R07: Şöyle lise yıllarımda, ailemin dini inançları çok olduğundan dolayı, kendimi çok kötü hissettim. Yapılmaması gereken bir şey yapıyorum gibi hissettim. Türk toplumunu düşündüm. Günahkarlık.. Müslümanlık yönüyle alakalı.... şu anda öyle bir inancım yok. Yani ..sonunda çözümlenmiş bir problem oluyor benim için.

R15: I do have religious faith but it's all according to my own belief system that has nothing to do with a particular religion or movement. There are certain things I established based on my own rationality and mind. In the family, religion has always been left at the background ¹⁰[Enver: *gey*, 24, university graduate].

Another respondent in his fifties reports:

R16: It's obvious that Turkey is a country where taboos and religion are highly pronounced. Living such experiences [(homosexual relations)] aren't contradictory, of course, though I'm also a very religious person. Nevertheless, if you are a well-known *X* [(his occupation)] like I am, you have to be very cautious with whatever you do ¹¹ [Erol: sex-role preference not indicated, 50+, university graduate].

This particular interviewee shows that the concealment of homosexual relations acts as a relief from the prohibitions imposed by religion. Having said this, provided that same-sex acts take place in a discreet manner, it is not considered as a wrongdoing by the participants themselves; hence, such men are able to reconcile Islam with their homosexual behaviour. As long as a person is able to keep his respectability in public, his private preferences and idiosyncrasies do not seem to intervene with religious convictions. Erol (R16) offers a more liberal Islamic view of homosexuality since for him Islam and homosexuality are not in opposition, but may be combined, as long as things are done clandestinely. In conclusion, not losing face and maintaining the prescribed gender roles in public alleviate the weight of religion.

In another case, a religious interviewee indicated that he was an *aciz kul* (a man lacking the ability to do something) although he tried to 'convert' to heterosexuality, and he

¹⁰ R15: Din inancım var ama bu tamamıyla kendi içimdeki inançlarla alakalı, belli bir din yada akımdan yola çıkarak değil. Kendi mantığımla ve beynimle oluşturduğum bazı şeyler var...aile içinde de din her zaman çok arka planda kaldı.

¹¹ R16: Türkiye'de tabuların ve dinin baskın bir yer olduğu ortada, aynı zamanda ben son derece dindar bir insanımdır, ama tabii böyle şeyler [eşcinsel ilişki] yaşamak bana ters gelmez, ama benim gibi bilinen bir *X* iseyseniz, her şeyinize çok dikkat etmeniz gerekiyor...

based this inability on *Allah's* not granting such power and endurance. Birol (*pasif*, 41, post-secondary education) stated that he read the Koran, always avoided consuming alcohol at Ramadan and fasted, and that he used to go to the mosque regularly for the communal Friday prayers. Nevertheless, he also adds:

R19: I'm aware that homosexuality is sinful in our religion. However, it is also stated in a verse in the Koran that every Muslim person can go to heaven. In the religious sense, I know that I won't be put to death, but I will go through punishment. I don't really think I am a sinner, as long as I don't do any harm to anyone. I see myself as an *aciz kul* created by *Allah*, and since I wasn't able to overcome this [my homosexuality] within my own powers, I wish that *Allah* would give me such power...But I am also in peace with myself...¹²

Finally, one respondent expressed his awareness of his *günah* (sin), and mentioned how tough, and distressing it is for him to be part of the 'gay scene' (*gey camiasi*). Noting that Islamic prescriptions and guidelines were often discussed in his household, Tarkan (aktif, 31, high school graduate) claims that if a person is deeply attached to the Islamic faith engaging in same-sex activities can open up serious wounds (metaphorically). In his own words:

R13: I know that it is a life that's not in accordance with religion for sure... That's my belief as well...I have become a sinner, and if you maintain that something is a not a sin, when in actuality it is, you become a *kafir* (unbeliever, non-Muslim). I'm not saying that it's not a sin.... Compared to the past, I would even say that I've become more religious. You start to claim more ownership of your values, as they all

¹² R19: ...dinimizde eşcinselliğin günah olduğunu biliyorum ama Kuran'da bütün Müslüman olan insanların sonuçta cennete gidebileceğine dair bir ayetin olduğunu da biliyorum, ben idam olmayacağımı biliyorum dinen, ama ceza yatacağım, [kimseye] zarar vermediğim sürece ben çok da günahkar olduğuma inanmıyorum.... Kendimi de Allah'ın yarattığı aciz bir kul olarak görüyorum, ve bunu [eşcinselliğimi] kendi gücümle de yenemediğim için de, Allah bana bu gücü verseydi diyorum...ama kendimle barışığım da yani...

gradually slip away from you in this life [gay life]. I'm not able to reconcile religion with my sexual orientation. In Islam there is no such thing as 'homosexuality'¹³.

Hence, Tarkan is not able to harmonize Islam with his same-sex activities, which in turn leads him to feel guilty. He presumes that he will receive the punishment as communicated through the Islamic teachings, and the Koran itself. It appears that for Tarkan, he is limited to fixed alternatives: either he abstains from engaging in such activities or surrenders to his deepest passions and accepts the sin that comes along with it. He chooses the latter. It is apparent that his experiences with religion show Islam's ability to affect individuals, and that it exists mainly as a negative psychological force.

What appears to be a common thread in all interviews is that whether the respondents reject religion and/or the literal definitions of *Allah*, or believe in all the Islamic ideals, they engage in homosexual practices, regardless of sex role. For most of these men, the contradiction between their sexuality and religious prescriptions was insoluble; therefore, they tended to lose religious convictions as they participated in the 'gay scene'. While some of the study participants explicitly stated that they did not believe in Islam (or any other religion), others acknowledged that they were nominally *Müslüman* (Muslim), but perceived it as more of a cultural connection. On the other hand, two of the interviewees, Birol and Tarkan, who hold on to the Islamic view of the world, await their punishment.

Although it seems that Islam is clear about the position of homosexuality, Devrim Yılmaz (2002) provocatively documents his own homosexual experiences with three

¹³ R13: ...dinle kesinlikle aykırı bir hayat olduğunu da biliyorum...inancım da bu...günahkar oldum, günah olan bir şeyin günah olmadığını iddia edersen kafir olursun, günah olmadığını iddia etmiyorum....[B]ence dini taraflarımda çoğalma bile oldu eskisine oranla, sahip olduğun değerlere daha çok sahip çıkıyorsun...çünkü ayağının altından akıp gidiyor bir zamandan sonra... din ile cinsel eğilimimi birlikte bağdaştırıyorm...İslamiyet'te 'eşcinsellik' diye bir şey yoktur.

'religious men' in Turkey. Yılmaz (2002:34-7) describes how he was raped by his *hoca* (religious teacher) at the religious school he attended. Also, he mentions his relationship with a prominent *hafiz* (one who has learned the Koran by heart and says public prayers), and how this man (who was also married) told Yılmaz that his own homosexual behavior did not inconvenience him, as being a *hafiz* was only a profession, and did not impose any boundaries on whom he would have sex with (Yılmaz, 2002:67-8). Finally, Yılmaz (2002:80-83) claims that in return for a place to stay, he had to do sexual favours for a *tarikât lideri* (leader of a sect). I find these experiences very intriguing, as such religious men are still able to engage in same-sex relations, and also provide the community with their sacred services. For further research, it would be interesting to see how such religious men conceive themselves, and gain a better understanding of their inner-worlds, in relation to their sexuality.

According to Wafer (1997:90), there are many *hadis* where the prophet Muhammad "warns his followers against gazing at youths precisely because they are so attractive". As Islamic policies towards same-sex activity are developed through such texts, it can be inferred that emphasis placed on 'youth' may imply a certain way in which homosexuality is socially organized. This connotation appears in one *hadis*: "Do not gaze at beardless youths, for they have eyes more tempting than the *hūrīs*" (Cardin cited in Wafer, 1997:90). As Wafer adds, Muhammad seems to be vulnerable to the charms of beautiful youths, and cautions his adherents from yielding to such temptation. In the same vein, in relation to religion in Turkish society, Tapınç (1992:45) also highlights the importance of not only age but the gender it may entail as a characteristic that contributes to the way same-sex bonding is 'traditionally' organized, as "[young] men with the beauty

of women, *kız güzeli erkek*, are put in the same category with women”. Having said this, Tapınç adds:

In conjunction with the identification with women, homosexuals, particularly feminine and ‘passive’ ones, are assumed to possess the omnipotent sexuality, and, in turn, they are regarded as agents of the sexual threat to the male world.

Consequently, we understand that it is the older male who is conceived as the *aktif*, and the younger male with feminine qualities, as the receptive partner, i.e. that the traditional age-stratified system is operative. However, my research does not provide any evidence to support the age dimension. For instance, as a religious person, Birol ([*pasif*, 41, post-secondary education]) indicated that he was exclusively *pasif*, but he also added that he had a preference for men in their twenties. Provided that Birol viewed himself as a ‘woman trapped in a man’s body’, one would expect that he would be interested in older men, if we were to abide by the age-defined construction of homosexuality. On the other hand, Tarkan [*aktif*, 31, high school graduate] pointed out that he would ‘never’ be the receiver in same-sex activities, as his masculinity would be seriously compromised. Moreover, conforming to what Tapınç (1992) asserted, Tarkan claimed that he was only interested in young and effeminate men (*genç ve kırıkkan*). Nevertheless, although the sample size in this study is not big enough to draw definite conclusions, by looking at these two men’s sex-role preferences, and realizing the exclusivity in defining themselves as either *pasif* or *aktif*, together with their high religiosity, it is tempting to conclude that as a major factor that also comprises patriarchy, Islam *does* contribute in the construction of oneself as a gendered subject; thus, promoting gender-stratified homosexuality. In other words, it can be said that religion *is* associated with the ‘traditional’ construction of male homosexual relations. This

account is no more than provisional; therefore, the conclusion is offered with caution. In addition, this study does not support age-stratification as a defining feature of men who engage in same-sex activities. Since the rest of the interviewees did not give importance to religion when it comes to homosexuality, their sex-role preferences become irrelevant for further investigation.

Links to Popular Homophobia

Turkish society is highly patriarchal due to the polarized and rigid gender system endorsed through various relationships, institutions, and practices. As presented above, Islam is deeply patriarchal, prescribing the public sphere for men and the private sphere for women. Furthermore, Islam also regulates sexual behaviour, condemning any kind of sexuality outside marriage. Consequently, the conventional sex/gender roles it promotes reinforces attitudes of non-homosexual people towards men who engage in same-sex activities as oppositional. I hypothesize that people who are especially religious have a greater tendency to be bound by traditional sex/gender roles (and what such roles entail), and have a negative mind-set vis-à-vis homosexuality.

It was about three decades ago that a study by MacDonald and Games (1974) revealed that greater adherence to traditional sex role prescriptions, and less approval for equality between the sexes, was positively correlated with more negative attitudes towards homosexuals. This study suggests that stigmatizing homosexuality is a means of reducing sex role confusion –delimiting what is acceptable behavior for men and women. As the authors state, “difficulties experienced by minority groups can better be attributed to characteristics within the majority that discriminates against them than to minorities

themselves” (MacDonald & Games, 1974: 10). In the same vein, these findings were replicated by Nuray Sakallı (2002), within the Turkish context. Sakallı (2002:55) claims that homosexuals are “viewed as a threat to Turkish society’s traditional sex role structure”. She further claims that the male participants in her study displayed greater ‘hostile sexism’ than the female ones, indicative of prevalent paternalism, beliefs concerning women’s inferiority, the ‘unquestionable’ approval of heterosexuality for everyone, while, on the other hand higher levels of anti-homosexual attitudes¹⁴.

This argument can be extended by saying that hegemonic masculinity not only promotes gender dichotomy but also at the same time marginalizes and subordinates other men, in this case male sexual minorities. Such definitions of masculinity are not only embedded in the dynamics of institutions, but also in the personality of individuals (Carrigan, Connell & Lee, 1985:591). Men who abide by hegemonic forms of masculinity constantly try to impose such definitions through their hostile attitudes and behaviour against homosexuals, further legitimating and reproducing the social relationships that reinforce their dominance. As Connell (1983:41) indicates, “[t]he celebration and enforcement of this hegemonic form creates a complex penumbra of repression and subordination. It defines by exclusion groups of men who are systematically oppressed: gays and effeminates, notably”. This oppression locates gay men at the bottom of a gender hierarchy among men themselves, and excludes homosexuals from the authority and respect granted to men who embody hegemonic forms of masculinity. Consequently, being gay is likened to femininity. Connell (1995:83) adds that those men who are at higher

¹⁴ In another study, Sakallı and Ugurlu (2001) demonstrate the relationship between social contact and prejudice against homosexuals/homosexuality in a Turkish sample. They assert that friendship and social interaction with homosexuals caused more favorable attitudes towards people who engage in same-sex practices.

levels of the hierarchy, use violence to keep their dominance. In a nutshell, by drawing boundaries and making exclusions, violence is used as a means to reinforce the ideology of male supremacy.

The Streets

At this point, I want to briefly discuss one site where homophobic normalizing punishments are carried out: the streets. As in many other countries of the world, most people in Turkey view homosexuality with considerable disapproval. Although 'queer bashing' is not a widespread practice in this country, some respondents indicated that they have been intimidated or threatened in the streets, ranging from verbal harassment to more terrifying physical abuse. A common theme running through each of these subjects' stories were that they tend to be gender-nonconforming gay men. In other words, these men tend to be more 'effeminate' in their mannerism and/or attire. No interviewee who expressed that he was 'both straight-acting and looking' claimed that he has endured such maltreatment. Deniz reports the following incidence:

R08: Years ago, when I went to my friend's house, we were kidnapped by eight or nine people; taken to the outskirts of the city in cars, stripped naked, and beaten up until all parts of our bodies were swollen. It has been about seven years now.... What's interesting is that these people didn't even rape us or anything, but just beat us up for our homosexuality¹⁵ [Deniz: *pasif*, 25, university drop out].

Similarly, another respondent claims:

R02: In the streets, there are times when people would make insolent remarks, shout, or as you're rambling with a friend that doesn't even know about your

¹⁵ R08: Bir arkadaşımın evine yıllar önce gittiğimde biz sekiz dokuz kişi tarafından kaçırılıp şehir dışına arabalarla, çırılçıplak soyulup, her tarafımız şişene kadar dövülmüştük. Yani nereden bakarsan 7 sene olmuştur.... Ama şey çok ilginçtir yani bu kişiler şey, bize tecavüz falan etmediler sadece dövüler eşcinsel olduğumuz için.

homosexuality, you would hear someone shouting out loud words like *top*, *boncuk*, *tekerlek*, *lastik*, *simit*¹⁶. Sometimes you're even exposed to violence: one day when I was strolling around with a friend, a group of four people grabbed my friend's hair and hit him with their elbows, leaving him with a bleeding nose. We didn't even make advances to them; we were just walking in the street. Later, one of the guys asked, "Am I the *top*, or you?"; whatever way you respond it's obvious that he would strike again...¹⁷[Arda: *pasif*, 24, high school graduate]

He later adds,

R02: I live in the most luxurious neighbourhood of Ankara, as it is the only region that accepts homosexuals like myself. The rent is high, however, I couldn't have lived in a place like *Demetevler*¹⁸: it isn't hard to guess what would happen to me. After all, I wear feminine clothes when I go out at night...¹⁹

This statement is insightful in the sense that the respondent highlights the importance of social-economic status of Turks, when it comes to judging the morality of homosexuality and homosexuals. It appears that when Arda used to live in a low-status district, he would constantly be intimidated, which accordingly led him to move to another neighbourhood. I would hypothesize that the reason for why more wealthy vicinities are more accepting of male sexual minorities can be attributed to the residents' educational background, income level, and consequently, having greater opportunities to travel to other western countries,

¹⁶ These words are used to degrade gay men, which literally mean 'ball, bead, tire, rubber tire, ring-shaped bread roll/donut', respectively, to imply homosexuality. What is significant about these words is that they are all round objects used to signify the roundedness of the anus. Hence, people who are referred to by these words are assumed to be penetrated by a *real man's* active phallus, and labeled homosexual.

¹⁷ R02: Sokaklarda yeri geliyor laf atmalar, bağırılmalar, eşcinselliğini bilmesini istemediğin bir arkadaşınla geziyorsun, arkandan "Top, boncuk, tekerlek, lastik, simit" gibi kelimeler söyleyip bağırıyorlar, yani rahatsız oluyorsun, bazen şiddete de maruz kalıyorsun: bir gün arkadaşımınla gezerken, dört kişilik bir grup arkadaşımın saçından tutup dirseğiyle vurdu ve burnu kan içerisinde kaldı, ve hiç yavşama bile olmamıştı [bizim tarafımızdan], normal yolda yürüyoruz, sonra çocuk soruyor "Sen mi topsun ben mi topum?" diye... tabii cevabı ne şekilde versen, sonuçta yine vuracağı ortada...

¹⁸ *Demetevler* is a neighbourhood where people with lower incomes mostly reside.

¹⁹ R02: Ankara'nın en lüks semtinde yaşıyorum, çünkü benim tarzımdaki eşcinselleri kabul eden tek kesim o, kirası vs çok fazla ama Demetevler gibi bir yerde eşcinselliğimden dolayı yaşayamazdım, yoksa başıma neler gelir... sonuçta geceleri efemine giyinip çıkan biriyim ben...

which increases chances of less adherence to traditional notions of sexuality and gender identity.

Finally, one respondent mentioned his becoming a ‘screaming queen’ (*çığırtkan*) as a tactic of resistance, when homophobic men would harass him in the streets.

R06...at night, for instance, there are people who try to pull me into their car, people who attempt to beat me up, but as I’m a screaming queen, one way or another, I am able to get someone to help, or I try to run away immediately. But as I have an awareness of what can happen, I try to be careful in the streets. I at least try not to act too much in a feminine manner²⁰ [Özgür: *pasif-gey*, 20, high school graduate].

The School Setting

Negative attitudes towards gender-nonconforming men are also displayed within the school environment. None of my respondents who indicated that they were more ‘girl-like’ in their childhood (whether they are *still* feminine or not) stated that they were exempted from negative sanctioning for their effeminate behaviour. As a consequence, these stigmatized boys are always mocked, harassed, and the cause for jokes. Inevitably, Turkish boys who are trying to reinforce the hegemonic pattern of being a ‘real man’, therefore keep effeminate males in low esteem at later stages of life. Referring to his years in primary school, Harun suggests:

R7: During my primary school years, I would never play in a boys’ game, for instance, I never played football in my life...I would always ‘play house’ with the girls. My male peers would always call me: ‘*karı kılıklı* (womanly), *karı-gibi* (like a woman), or *kılıbık* (hen-pecked husband, i.e. less manly)’. At the same time, once my teacher asked me: ‘My boy, why are you playing with girls? Are you a girl?’, and I said, ‘My boy friends constantly swear a lot, and I don’t like doing that, as my

²⁰ R06: ...akşamları mesela arabanın içine çekmeye çalışanlar, dövme kalkanlar oluyor, ben de çok çığırtkan olduğumdan, bir şekilde birilerini başıma toplarım, yada hemen kaçmaya çalışırım, ama yolda olabilecek şeyleri bildiğim için dikkatli olmaya çalışıyorum. Hiç değilse çok aşırı feminen tavırlara girmiyorum.

girl friends don't swear, I prefer to play with them'...This was a great lie²¹ [Harun: gey, 27, University graduate].

I find it noteworthy that playing football is a significant feature of Turkish boyhood, which offers, in part, a kind of extended rite of passage to manhood. Those boys who do not partake in such sport activities are considered 'unmanly' and subject to ridicule. Moreover, it appears that not only peers but also teachers at schools contribute to the defense of hegemonic masculinity. No doubt, such experiences are common all around the world, however, what I find interesting in relation to Harun's observations is that after his declaration that 'the other boys' utter obscenities, his teacher is indifferent, as if boys' bad language is taken for granted and is to be expected. Hence, we see how masculinities are actively produced, and reproduced within the school setting. These experiences can have such an effect that they may be sources for future anxieties. Upon entering the workforce, and worried that his colleagues would realize his sexual orientation, Harun adds:

R07:...I built a wall around myself with everybody at work... At my previous workplace, I had my own private office, with my door closed all the time. The office was so beautiful; it was my own little world in there, and I didn't want anyone else to enter it. I was only involved with my work, had my coffee or tea in my room, and instead of smoking in the kitchen with the others, I'd smoke in the washroom²².

²¹ R7:İlkokul yıllarında erkeklerin hiçbir oyununa katılmazdım, hayatımda hiç futbol maçı yapmadım mesela....Ben hep kızlarla evcilik oynardım.Erkek arkadaşlarım devamlı bana 'Karı kılıklı, karı-gibi, veya kılıbık' derlerdi. Aynı zamanda ilkokul öğretmenim bana şey demişti 'Oğlum sen niye kızlarla oynuyorsun? Kız mısın sen?' Ben de demişim: 'Öğretmenim erkek arkadaşlarım çok fazla küfür ediyorlar ve ben küfür etmekten hoşlanmıyorum; kız arkadaşlarım küfretmiyor o yüzden onlarla beraber oynuyorum.'...bu çok güzel bir yalandı.

²² R07:...bir duvar ördüm işyerindeki herkesle etrafıma...özel bir odam vardı bundan önceki işimde...odamın kapısı her zaman kapalıydı ve oda felaket derecede güzel duruyordu, kendi dünyamı kurmuştum. Çünkü kimsenin girmesini istemiyordum. İşte devamlı işimle uğraşıyordum... çayımı kahvemide odamda içiyordum, sigara içmeye bile mutfığa gitmiyordum, tuvalete gidip sigara içiyordum.

Another respondent offers a perspective on how important the ‘breaking’ of a boy’s voice (*sesin kalınlaşması*) is when it comes to learning where a male stands in the gender hierarchy within his own gender;

R18:...I don’t think I was effeminate when I was young, but I had a high-pitched voice, and I even remember I would ask my elders whether there was a medicine to have a deeper voice. My voice still hasn’t changed that much. The reason was, of course, to bridge the gap between the other guys and just be like them...After all, it really made me unhappy when they made fun of me, and I still recall the times I cried a lot²³ [Emre: *gey*, 25, university graduate].

Emre summed up by mentioning how much he enjoyed playing with Barbie dolls with his girl friends when he was young, and that a few years ago, he was embarrassed in front of his date, by a remark of one of his boyfriends (who was also interested in Emre’s girlfriend). Apparently this friend told everyone that Emre enjoyed playing with dolls, an experience that encouraged many people to make fun of him.

A common theme running through the interviews was the obvious difference portrayed in the negative sanctioning of effeminate behaviour within state and private schools, which can be attributed to many factors such as the students’ social-economic status, adherence to traditional teaching approaches with underlying sexism, teaching resources provided from the West, teachers’ educational background et cetera. As one respondent puts it:

R15: I didn’t get much negative response from anybody in my primary-school years, which was in a private institution. But in middle school I transferred to a state school, and I was intimidated at once when I first stepped in there. This was also done a lot in lycée, owing to my [effeminate] behaviour. My best friends were

²³ R18:...küçük yaşlarda efemine olduğumu sanmıyorum ama sesim çok inceydi, hatta sesimi kalınlaştırabileceğim bir ilacın olup olmadığını etrafımdaki büyüklere hep sorardım, sessim hala çok değişmedi. Amaç aslında farklılığımı kapatıp her erkek çocuğu gibi olmaktı...sonuçta alay edilmek beni çok mutsuz ediyordu ve çok ağladığım günleri hala hatırlıyorum.

always girls, and I recall many incidences when the macho boys at school would rebuke me²⁴ [Enver: *gey*, 24, university graduate].

In the same vein, even after entering university life, hegemonic masculinity continues to be reinforced and promoted among peers. However, Enver further reveals that the socially dominant form of masculinity is not only imposed by male peers but also female:

R15: When I first 'came out' to my friends, the responses were very positive. Everything was quite normal, but as time passed by their reactions gradually started to change. In their eyes, I started to become a problematic person. They despised everything that I experienced: love, hurt, happy moments, the love makings, datings...They would react by saying things such as, "Don't be silly Enver, is this how it's going to be? Don't go to such places [the bars] like that, these are bad things, don't...", these were all my girl friends²⁵

On the other hand, one participant, who did not approve of gay men's effeminacy, claimed that his current roommate at university was threatened at gun point, for his feminine mannerism and flaunting of his sexual orientation in public. In Alp's words:

R01: ...I am not like him [my roommate]... There is no need for people in the street to know about my homosexuality! And up to this point, trust me, I never had any negative reactions from anyone. My school is a fascist institution. I was confronted by a group of young guys who said: 'Look Alp, these guys are homosexual, *ibne* [colloquial word for homosexual], *top*, and if you move in with them to the same house, or hang around with them, we will make it known that you are also *ibne*'. So, I was also 'outed' in a way...but whenever I had problems with these friends of

²⁴ R15: İlkokulda çok fazla tepkiyle karşılaşmadım, ki ilkokulu ben kolejde okudum, ama ortaokulda devlete geçtim, ve adım attığımdan itibaren hemen rahatsız edilmeye başladım; lisede de çok hareketlerimden dolayı köşelerde filan kıştırıldım; hep en yakın arkadaşlarım kız arkadaşlarım oldu, okulun maço erkeklerinden çok fazla laf yediğimi bilirim.

²⁵ R15: Ben ilk başta arkadaşlarıma açıldığımda çok olumlu pozitif tepkiler aldım, her şey çok normaldi ama gün geçtikçe, beni içten içe yeyip bitirmeye başladılar, yani arkadaşlarımda ben sorunlu bir insan oldum. Yaşadığım her şeye hor bakıyorlardı, aşk, sevgi, acı çekmeler, yada mutlu olmalar, sevişmeler, çıkmalar... işte "Saçmalama Enver. Böyle mi olacak? Gitme oralara, bunlar çok kötü şeyler, sakın yapma" gibi tepkiler, bunların hepsi de bayan arkadaşlarımdı...

mine [the gay ones], it was always these guys [the ones intimidating him] who stood by me...I've even been able to have these fascists on my side²⁶ [Alp: gey, 21, university student].

It is apparent that societal pressures move in the direction of repressing outward manifestations of homosexuality, since most people in Turkey view same-sex relationships with substantial disapproval. Effeminacy in men is automatically equated with *pasif* homosexuality and inevitably, the cause for oppression, however, *less* stigma is attached to those men who are gender-conforming (not necessarily *aktif*) and engage in homosexual activities. From Alp's story, it is clear that it is his association with other effeminate gay men, *not* his own sexuality, which causes the masculine males at school to intimidate him, in order to re-affirm and impose the hegemonic forms of masculinity. Alp mentions that he was already presumed to be homosexual for being close with his effeminate friends by the homophobic men at his university. By having the 'fascist guys' on his side, we see how Alp is exempted from further stigma, and how advocates of Turkish society's gender-role prescription reproduce such biases. It is noteworthy that he does refer to these men as 'fascists', suggesting that he does not identify with them and distrusts them.

²⁶ R01: ...ben onun gibi değilim...sokaktaki adamın benim eşcinsel olduğumu bilmesine gerek yok! Ve şimdiye kadar inan ki hiç bir olumsuz tepki almadım. Okul, işte faşist bir yer, okuldan bir grup genç, 'Bak Alp, bu çocuklar eşcinsel, ibne, top, eğer onlarla eve çıkarsan, yada gezersen, senin de adını eşcinsel, ibne diye çıkartırız" dediler... ben de 'out oldum' bir nevi... ama benim bu arkadaşlarımla ilgili ne zaman bir sorun olsa, yine benim yanımda onlar vardı...bu faşistleri bile yanıma aldım.

Familial Reactions

With respect to the Turkish context, verbalizing one's (homo)sexual orientation to one's parents creates a dilemma especially in the social diacritics of face and status. All respondents in this study felt a responsibility for maintaining face, as public discussion and disapproval of 'marking' (*damgalayan*) information would jeopardize family honour. What can be discerned from interviewee responses is that in the event that men do not openly challenge the rules in public, there seems to be a degree of acceptance for people's transgressions from societal norms of masculinity (not to mention, public deviation of Islamic morals). Thus, in order to prevent any kind of compromise that would ruin one's family's reputation, men who engage in same-sex activities refrain from telling their parents that they are gay. As Schild (1992:183) states, "[s]hame is engendered by what an individual thinks that others might think of him, and arises when public behavior is not according to the prescribed role, and therefore improper and disgraceful, bringing obloquy on the individual and tarnishing the reputation and standing of his family". This is a concern widespread in all Mediterranean cultures, which is also acknowledged in most of Latin America (see Murray, 1992).

What I find intriguing about the Turkish case is that although a high percentage of the research participants believed that there was *not* a necessity for their families to know about their sexual orientation, most indicated that the family 'probably' knew what was happening in actuality, but that it is left as 'the unspoken'. In relation to the Mexican experience, Carrier (1995:13-14) points out that homosexuals avoid disclosing their sexual preferences to the family for fear of being forced to leave or being cast out of the home that they share with them. Moreover, he adds that even if such preferences are made known to

other family members, there is a conscious effort to minimize any indication of effeminacy by gay men themselves, such that, even the most effeminate men would present the most masculine image possible during family gatherings. However, judging from my respondents' assertions, in Turkey I came to realize that what is important is not so much what family members know about a person, than what is revealed to other people outside the bounds of one's familial environment. This was a point made by men who actually 'came out of the closet' to their family. As one respondent revealed:

R03: At first, they disapproved, of course. They didn't know what to do; then they were indifferent, and followed the 'don't ask, don't tell' philosophy. As long as you hide, and don't label things, families no longer make a big scene out of it. For them, what's important is not to discuss it. Some relatives still ask questions like 'Well this boy is identified on the magazine (Kaos GL), he goes to the [gay] cultural center, goes to public demonstrations, is on television, what is going to happen to our family name? Are we going to lose face?'²⁷ [Ferhat: *gey*, 30, university graduate].

Similarly, Cihan, whose parents live more in a rural area, says:

R05: My family knows but pretends as if they don't.... But for the last eleven years, I have been sharing the same house and bed with my partner; and as Ankara is a central locale, whenever they need hospital services or sit for examinations, my brother, his wife etc stay at our house, and see everything, but nobody ever asked why we sleep in the same bed. They can sense what's going on but they never discuss it with me²⁸ [Cihan: *pasif gey*, 32, university graduate].

²⁷ R03:...yadırgadılar tabii ilk başta, ne yapacaklarını bilemediler.... tepkisiz kaldılar, yani görmedim, duymadım politikasını güdüyorlar, bir şeylerin üstü örtüldükçe, adı konmadıkça aileler artık bunu bir sorun olarak görmüyorlar. Onlar için önemli olan bunun söylenmemesi. Hala işte 'Yaa bu çocuk dergide, işte bu çocuk kültür merkezinde, işte alanlara çıkıyor, televizyonlara çıkıyorlar, ne olacak bizim ailemizin adı, kötüye mi çıkacak' falan diyen akrabam var...

²⁸ R05: Beni ailem biliyor ama bilmemezlikten geliyor.... Ama ben 11 yıl boyunca sevgilimle birlikte aynı evi ve aynı yatağı paylaşıyorum; ailem, Ankara merkezi olduğundan hasta hane veya sınav gibi bir şey olduğunda, abim, eşi filan bizim evimizde kalırlar ve görüyorlar, ama hiç kimse, niye aynı yatakta yatıyorsunuz diye bir şey sormadılar, hissediyorlar ama bunu benimle tartışmıyorlar.

Here, it is noteworthy to talk about the living arrangements of 'gay' men in Turkey. There are many men who come to Ankara from other cities or villages for a university education, and mostly prefer to share an apartment with other students, or find gay or lesbian roommates through various networks like the Internet. Also, it is quite common to hear two same-sex partners sharing their own place without any societal reactions as it is not unheard of for two bachelors to live together and live their lives freely within the confines of their household –assuming that they are saving money for a future marriage. Even if one's family lives in the same house, as long as a man earns his own living, generally there is no expectation from him to abide by the rules of one's parents. However, as in Latin America, the problem is that many gay men cannot afford to move away from their family, thus their family can continue to regulate their behavior. In addition, if a gay man has his own place and his family is staying with him, then the family has to observe the house rules.

By means of managing gender which accordingly entails managing sexual identity, being in the closet is “a strategy of accommodating to heterosexual domination” (Seidman, 2002:55). Men who try to be exempted from any kind of stigmatization, discrimination, or ill-treatment must effectively manage to exhibit the conventional signs of masculinity, as this consequently allows them to share completely in men's gender privilege. “Closeted gay men are given the same support straight men receive to conform to masculine gender roles and can claim its considerable social benefits” (Seidman, 2002: 50). Hence, it is crucial to keep in mind that the fact that family members may be accommodating to a kin's homosexuality does not necessarily imply acceptance. As Seidman (2002:120-1) verifies:

Tolerance is a prominent pattern. Roughly speaking, a period of strain and estrangement is often followed by some type of reconciliation. There are

innumerable variations to this pattern. Reconciliation often amounts to a grudging acknowledgement of a gay family member, whose reintegration into the family is contingent on the condition that his or her gay life remains outside or marginal to family life.... [T]here is no explicit coming out; it's as if there's a tacit agreement that while the fact that a member of the family is gay is generally known to kin it will not be explicitly acknowledged. Still, gay kin are often treated respectfully and as kin. These are rough adjustments, on both sides. And while they don't signal acceptance or equality, neither are they rejection. Some sort of tolerance seems to best describe the dominant pattern of families accommodating gay kin.

Alp, who is masculine and describes himself as being 'like any other guy in the street' (*sokaktaki adamdan farkı yok*), mentioned an event when his father saw an effeminate friend, socializing with him. He stated the following:

R01: ... I told my father that I was going out for a walk with my friend, and he said: "Look son, at your age, I am not going to tell you whom to be friends with, but you're aware that I know a lot of people around, so try not to be seen too much in public. Whatever happens between four walls is your business"²⁹ [Alp: *gey*, 21, university student]

Here it can also be inferred that since Alp conforms to the prescribed gender roles, the father shows tolerance for his possible homosexual alliances, provided that such acts are done discreetly. In addition, Alp's father could be presuming that his son is the *aktif* partner in same-sex activities, retaining the male privileges ascribed for men in Turkish society, as it is commonly understood that it is the 'real man' that only penetrates. In the same vein, Tarkan, who is also very masculine in appearance and demeanour, adds:

R13: My family doesn't know anything explicitly in relation to my [sexual] orientation, but they aren't stupid as well...No matter how conservative they are, they still understand certain things, but maybe they just don't want to believe in it.

²⁹ R01: ...[babama] arkadaşım ile gezmeye gideceğim dedim, babam: "Bak oğlum, bu yaştan sonra senin arkadaşlarına karışamayız, ama biliyorsun benim burada çevrem çok geniş, pek fazla ortalarında gözükmeyin, dört duvar arasında ne oluyorsa sizin aranızda olan şeydir" dedi.

As the guy that I used to be lovers with was younger, feminine and gay (*gey*), they knew that we couldn't have been just friends. This is impossible in Turkey... If you have no kinship ties with someone that is seven-eight years younger than yourself, it's just impossible!³⁰ [Tarkan: *aktif (laço)*, 31, high school graduate]

Some respondents mentioned that although there is an expectation for males to sit separately and socialize with other men, and women with other women during family gatherings, those men who are considered as being 'gender-nonconforming' are exempted from following such requirements. As Emre says:

R18: Although I never made any pronouncements of my sexuality, everyone in my family knows that I'm not like the other boys. For example, whenever we have our traditional kebab get-togethers, I always help the women in the kitchen and gossip about other people, while the men sit in front of the *mangal* (charcoal brazier), and drink their *raki*. When I was younger, they would say that I had to go and interact with the men, but owing to my refusals, they learnt to give in, and have it my way³¹ [Emre: *gey*, 25, university graduate].

But not all experiences with the family seem to be favourable, whether a person is 'gender conforming' or not. For instance, one interviewee maintained that he was shot by a family member for the public rumours that he was homosexual, and that he was warned that the next time they heard such things, they would literally kill him in the name of 'family honour' (*aile şerefi*). As can be deduced from the following case, 'family honour'

³⁰ R13: Ailem benim eğilimimden açık bir şekilde haberdar değil, ama aptal da değiller... birtakım şeyleri anlıyorlardır, ne kadar da tutucu bir yanları olsa da, ama belki inanmak istemediler. Çünkü bir zamanlar benim sevgili olarak birlikte olduğum insan, benden yaşça çok küçüktü, kadınsı ve gey'di... normal bir arkadaşlık yaşamadığımızı biliyorlardı. Olamazdı zaten, burası Türkiye... Bu kişi çok efemineydi... arada 7-8 yaş küçük birisiyle akrabalık ilişkin yoksa, olamaz!

³¹ R18: Cinselliğim hakkında hiçbir söz söylemediğim halde, ailedekiler benim diğer oğlanlar gibi olmadığını biliyorlar. Örneğin, ne zaman bizim geleneksel kebab buluşmaları olduğunda, erkekler mangal başında rakılarını yudumlarken, ben daima mutfakta kadınlara yardımcı oluyor, millet hakkında dedikodulara katılırım. Küçükken erkeklerle kaynaşmam gerektiğini söylüyorlardı hep, ama isteksizliğimden artık bu tür şeylerden vazgeçmesini öğrendiler, ve benim istediğim oluyor.

could be taken so seriously that a family member could even consider putting his/her own life at risk:

R09: My family doesn't know [my homosexual activities] at all, it's impossible! If they did, a lot would happen...There was an incident when I was sentenced to jail after wounding someone, consequently, my father jumped off the balcony as to how his own son could be sent to prison. He broke his legs³² [Ziya: *laço /aktif*, 20, middle school graduate].

Murat claims a less unfortunate case when he was 'outed' to his parents by a total stranger:

R04: Someone called my parents on the phone and said, 'Did you know that your son is *ibne*?' and then made me go through a difficult time by sending letters to my father's workplace. When my parents asked me, 'Is it true?' I said, 'no', to my father, then after a while, my father confronted me and asked once more by using the proverbial '*Ateş olmayan yerde duman çıkmaz*' (If there's smoke there's fire), and I said 'okay'. Afterwards, my dad told me to take all my belongings and leave the house. After three months, my mom called me... Now my relationship with my family is better³³ [Murat: gey (bisexual), 31, university graduate].

On the surface, most Turks generally view homosexuality and homosexual behaviour with substantial disapproval. In order to preserve one's social status, the main strategy employed is to keep effeminate behaviour out of sight and/or not to mention one's 'deviant' sexuality as much as possible. There seems to be a general tolerance, as long as same-sex activities are carried out behind the 'veil of secrecy'. What matters is that men who engage in homosexual activities uphold the prescribed gender role in public (if not

³² R09: Ailem beni hiçbir şekilde bilmiyor, mümkün değil! öğrenseler bayağı bir şeyler olur...benim bir cezaevi olayım olmuştu, yaralama olayından, babam nasıl oğlum cezaevine girer diyerekten balkondan atladı, ayakları kırıldı.

³³ R04: [Birisi] aileme telefonlar açıp, "Oğlunuz ibnedir biliyor musunuz?" deyip, arkasından babamın iş yerine birtakım mektuplar gönderip bana zorluklar yaşattı, beni çağırıp ailem: "Böyle bir şey var mı?" diye sorduklarında "hayır yok" demiştim babama, sonra aradan biraz zaman geçtikten sonra babam yine çağırdı, 'Ateş olmayan yerden duman çıkmaz' deyimini kullanıp yine sorguladı, ben de 'okey' dedim, ve babam: "pılını pırtını topla defol git!" dedi...daha sonra annem beni aramıştı 3 ay sonra....Şu andaki ilişkilerimiz daha iyi...

within the family surroundings); thus, one's private preferences and idiosyncrasies becomes one's own business. As a result, it is generally advised that established norms and values are not challenged openly –all contributing to how people are actively constructed as gendered subjects.

CHAPTER 6

THE 'POLICING' OF TURKISH MALE SEXUAL MINORITIES

Introduction

In chapter 5, I have discussed that the social definitions of masculinity are embedded in the dynamics of various institutions, namely, the streets, school setting, and family institution. This section deals with the workings of the Turkish state, in particular *police practices*, in its attempts to impose a particular definition of masculinity. Police officers occupy positions of power as agents of the state that further legitimate and reproduce the social relationships of supremacy. Male sexual minorities who depart from dominant definitions of masculinity are often subject to discrimination and sometimes the targets of violence. Since I argue that the defense of 'hegemonic masculinity' –the system of gendered power– involves the state, this chapter analyzes the interviewees' responses to one particular question, "What joys and difficulties have you experienced regarding your sexual orientation?" with primary emphasis placed on what the respondents had to say in regards to their experiences with and treatment by police forces. I discuss how *morality* is used by police officers to identify (suspicious) people who (are thought to have a tendency to) act 'indecently' and violate the public morality. Through an examination of the ways in which 'undesirable citizens' are treated, I show that the Turkish government's assertion with respect to 'equality of *all*' is wishful thinking at best.

Guilty without Guilt

Since the secular Turkish Republic was established in 1923, Turkey has engaged in a project of 'modernization' to petition for membership among western societies. Towards this aim, various changes have been made in the legal system to promote equal rights legislation for all Turkish citizens. However, there is no effective legislation providing specific protection against sexual orientation discrimination. Although there are no specific legal statutes that criminalize homosexuality, there are several provisions of the Penal Code— Articles 419, 547 and 576¹ —which are used against sexual minorities (Kahramanoğlu, 2001; ILGA, 2002). As is the case in many other countries around the world², these articles cover 'indecenty' and 'offences against the public morality', which the courts and the police use against effeminate gay men, transvestites, and transsexuals. Interesting enough, masculine 'gay' men are generally exempted from prosecution (see Sofer, 1992). As Şimşek (1988:218) states, the attitude of the Turkish population in the main, and the police in particular are hostile towards *open* homosexuals who are especially gender-nonconforming.

Even though it is not uncommon to find people who acknowledge that they have endured police violence, the Turkish government denies widespread charges of inhumane treatment or torture of sexual minorities, but suspected abuse of human rights of Kurds

¹Article 419: "Whoever acts indecently in public shall be imprisoned for 15 days to 2 months, and whoever so engages in sexual intercourse shall be imprisoned for 6 months to 1 year and in this case a heavy fine shall be imposed."

Article 547: "Whoever intemperately or in a shameful manner openly hurts or disturbs another shall be punished by light imprisonment for not more than 15 days or by a light fine."

Article 576: "Whoever in a lewd manner exposes himself or a private part of his/her body to the public, or through lewd words or songs, or in another manner, violates public decency shall suffer light imprisonment for not more than 1 month or a light fine."

² For instance, see Rofel (1999:459)'s brief discussion in relation to China; and Lumsden (1996:81-95)'s on Cuba.

threatens the country's endeavour to join the European Union. While statements such as those made by the Turkish Embassy in The Hague (on January 18, 1991) that "In Turkey there exists no rule forbidding homosexuality [and that] the Turkish constitution does not permit separation based on a sexual reason" may sound convincing, further stating that "to act in public in a lewd or indecent manner is a crime" therefore, "People acting in this manner are punished...regardless of their sexual preference", that makes one question the soundness of such declarations (Tielman & Hammelburg,1993:334). Thus, it is crucial to be cautious as Lumsden (1996:87) indicates:

Laws regulating public morality and standards of decency in every country are affected by material changes as well as by shifts in the way those in power interpret the standards. The way these statutes are interpreted and enforced also varies since 'moral' offenses are more susceptible to subjective evaluation than many other kinds of infractions.

As revealed below, there are numerous instances in which men who engage in homosexual activities are treated differently, and gender attributes seem to be important indicators guiding police practices. Through adherence to the 'rule of the law', the Turkish government gives the 'appearance' of equality in the legal sphere, which would have offered a legal barrier against the arbitrary exercise of state power and the unconditional assurance of the rights and liberties of individual citizens. However, it is crucial to emphasize that there is *no* effective legislation providing specific protection against sexual orientation discrimination, and the one and only anti-discrimination law³ does not explicitly refer to 'sexual orientation'. Thereby, it is the *practice* that gives the lie to equal rights talk –indicative that the rule of the law is not totally respected, and that not *all* Turkish citizens

³ Section 10(1): "Everyone, regardless of his/her language, race, color, sex, political thought, philosophical beliefs, religious belief or denomination, and any other similar grounds, is equal before the law."

are treated equally. As indicated by Başaran (2002:37), in state laws, 'homosexuality' is not cited in terms of either aiming to protect non-heterosexual citizens against discrimination, or penalizing homosexual acts. It seems that this crack or opening in the legal system comprises one of the motivational forces that give Turkish police forces opportunity to regulate not only sexual desire but also the gender order, which consequently hinders sexual minorities' access to justice.

Hegemonic Masculinity and the Turkish State

It is important to acknowledge the association between the macro-politics of power in which women are subordinated to men in society as a whole, with the local or micro-situation in which such relationships are reproduced within the male gender itself through similar hierarchies of authority. The fact that there are actual 'transgressions' against the global pattern within the local-situation (e.g. effeminate gay men who are at the bottom of the gender hierarchy) is the cause which calls forth supplementary attempts to re-establish the global model locally as a norm. This is the point where 'policing' is required for the further defense of the hegemonic form of masculinity, which is heterosexual –embodying the prescribed sex/gender roles for men. Hence, it becomes clear that hegemonic masculinity is always actively constructed in relation to other subordinated masculinities, not to mention women in society.

Nükhet Sirman (1990) emphasizes that gender roles involve the construction of a representation of, and a relation with the state (*devlet*), in which women represent the ruled, while men (the father) represents the ruler (a major constituent of the definition of manhood). Although her study focuses on rural Turkey, people's experiences within the

urban setting certainly follow similar patterns. Thus, Sirman asserts that the state can be understood as having meanings and representations that “are bounded by one dominant image, that of the state as provider, an image which is reproduced by its local representative and emulator, the household head. This image...reinforces the nature of everyday social relations and gender identity within the village” (Sirman, 1990:22). By that means, the state is influential in regulating how a person fulfills gender definitions. By conceptualizing the state as a “paternalistic provider” (Sirman, 1990:24) police force’s actions can be likened to a father taking responsibility for his children’s behaviour within the confines of prevailing morality. To further extend Sirman’s argument, as the state can be perceived as being in the same structural position to its male citizens as a father is to his son, police forces (as agents of the state) similarly ensure that the people they are in charge of do not ‘transgress’ standards set in Turkish society. As ‘representatives’ of the state (as in the household environment), they try to impose the dominant masculinity on male sexual minorities’ ways of conducting their lives. In the process of fulfilling their gender role and reinforcing the masculinity they come to represent, the police are responsible not only for the people within a specific territory that they are assigned for, but also the state as a whole.

In the same vein, Selek (2001:120-8) talks about how both print and visual media have been deployed to reinforce and further legitimate the dominant ideology pertaining to sexuality. Selek highlights the extensive footage, especially in 1996, of police beatings with a plastic hose of detainees, among them numerous transvestites. Interestingly, during that year, the local police chief in the Beyoğlu-Istanbul district even acquired the nickname ‘Süleyman the hose’ (Hortum Süleyman), as he apparently hit people with a plastic hose. During an interview, Pınar Selek (Yeşim, 2002:36) emphasizes that ‘Süleyman the hose’ is

a *typical* man raised in Turkish patriarchy, who thinks that as a 'patriarch' he has total right and exclusive power to determine whether something is an offense or not. In Turkish society, 'fathers can both chide and praise' (*babalar hem sever hem döver*) as the Turkish proverbial expression puts it. Chastisement is not viewed as a sign of lack of paternal love, but rather a means of assigning paternal care. As this particular police officer perceived homosexuality and similar 'transgressions' from heterosexuality as indecent and offensive against public morality, it is not surprising that Süleyman did not hesitate in punishing non-heterosexual men in the name of the 'honour of manhood'.

Similarly, it is also mentioned in *Yeni Gündem* (Gürbilek, 1986) that the police had been practicing 'hair-cropping' in front of journalists, a public spectacle that can be interpreted as both a reassertion of the police power, and a reaffirmation of the hegemony of heterosexuality. Nonetheless, caution should be taken in coming to conclusions vis-à-vis whether the media spectacle is *rationaly* determined to express absolute rule over sexuality (as defined by the prevalent gender ideology), or as an act of deterrence. Nevertheless, it is clear that the masculinity of the state is chiefly a relationship between police forces and the socially dominant masculinity in this particular society. As Connell (2002:105) puts it, "[t]his relationship is a two way street. State power is a resource for the struggle for hegemony in gender, and hegemonic masculinity is a resource in the struggle for state power".

Apparently, every social institution has a standard set of arrangements concerning gender. An investigation of the pattern in gender arrangements within police forces, its "gender regime" as Bob Connell (1987; 2002) puts it, reveals consistencies with the general gender order in society. As the Turkish state is a patriarchal institution, for police

forces that come to represent it, gender is an important attribute in the active construction of masculinities. Having said this, the state not only institutionalizes hegemonic masculinity but also engages in practices that 'police' it. By conceptualizing the state as a masculine institution, it can be seen how violence against sexual minorities facilitates the police in drawing boundaries and making exclusions, all leading to the re-assertion of masculinity and the maintenance of male dominance. In Connell's (1995:84) words:

Violence is part of a system of domination, but is at the same time a measure of its imperfection. A thoroughly legitimate hierarchy would have less need to intimidate. The scale of contemporary violence points to crisis tendencies (to borrow a term from Jürgen Habermas) in the modern gender order.

Accordingly, as any 'immoral' behavior (in this case men **not** being gender-conforming) can be interpreted as threatening the state's interests vis-à-vis patriarchy, undoubtedly, the provisions concerning public morality reveal how the Turkish state plays a major role in shaping and re-shaping social patterns. Thus, through repression and regulation of (homo)sexuality, the state is constitutive not only of 'the homosexual' as a social category but also of hegemonic masculinity. This in turn becomes the basis of labelling and stigmatizing a 'subordinated' masculinity by the state. I would argue that police practices aim at forcibly 'converting' men who do not abide by the approved gender roles, if not sexual orientation, and negating alternative masculinities that transgress what is considered to be socially dominant. Consequently, in response to state/police practices, gay organizations such as Kaos GL are relentless in their attempts to promote equal rights legislation and public awareness to the circumstances in which Turkish sexual minorities have to endure. Hence, "[t]he patriarchal state can be seen, then, not as the manifestation of a patriarchal essence, but as the centre of a reverberating set of power relations and

political processes in which patriarchy is both constructed and contested”(Connell, 1987:130).

Brief Review of Reports on Regulating Male Same-Sex Desire

An analysis of police practices in differentiating ‘undesirable’ citizens from ‘desirable’ reveals the state’s attempts to perpetuate hegemonic masculinity in Turkish society. The means by which police officers ‘police sexuality’ within a set territory are a reality with which many sexual minorities have to deal in their daily lives. It is noteworthy that ‘territory’ may be understood in the literal sense for the very district that the officers are responsible for, and/or in the way these agents of the state territorialize sexuality at large.

There are many cases of police brutality directed against sexual minorities that have never been re-addressed by the authorities. “This police violence cannot, however, be divorced from the general problem of the Turkish police seemingly being unaccountable and above the law” (Kahramanoğlu, 2001:77). This gives them the opportunity to arbitrarily raid gay bars/clubs, detain men, shave their heads, humiliate and exile them to a provincial town, and in some cases beat them up in police vans and stations (see also Yüzgün, 1993:164-5). “Like other police violations of citizens’ human rights, there is no possible redress” (Kahramanoğlu, 2001:77). Complaints from victims are overlooked, and police officers that are accused of thrashing and torture are merely transferred to another station by the authorities⁴.

⁴ As indicated in the Turkish daily *Radikal* by Çelikkan (May, 29,2002), the court case started against Süleyman Ulusoy has still not been resolved. Mr. Ulusoy, the local police chief in the Beyoğlu-Istanbul district in the mid 1990s, is on trial for torture and abuse of power, and the prosecution is asking for a 27-

In newspapers it is common to see articles that mention the “police force [in Turkey] whose affection for torture has earned it international notoriety” (Bowcott, 1996). For instance, in 1996, *The Guardian* reported a claim by a Turkish transvestite that she has been beaten with cables. In her own words: “One of the policemen has a handful of different coloured cables and asks you to pick one...If you choose a colour he whips you with that one, if you don't you are hit with all of them”. Furthermore, *Amnesty International* (1996:39) reveals that in November 1995, twelve transvestites were arrested and taken to the police station where they were “forced to undress, hosed with ice-cold water and severely beaten” and that “their hair was pulled out ... [and] beaten on their genitals”. In addition, Çekirge (1999:205-6) and Yılmaz (1998: 172) also mention how sexual minorities are detained arbitrarily, without an arrest warrant, while they are in the streets, out shopping, in their cars, at the time of leaving night clubs, or even while they are in their own homes.

Yüzgün (1993:167) mentions the infamous ‘hair-cropping’ of sexual minorities, and adds that in 1993, batons were substituted by bulky wooden sticks and plastic hoses to beat them up. He further states that as ‘unwanted citizens’ they were exiled to a provincial town, some stripped naked, and that following a cruel beating, batons were inserted in their anuses. Çekirge (1999:207) also talks about how non-heterosexual citizens have been thrown out of the city to have them understand that they are not welcome in the territory they reside in. He adds that because ‘hair’ is one of the most important possessions a person can have, police officers intentionally cut it ‘unevenly’ to identify their territory in order to humiliate them. In an interview with police authorities, it was reported in *Yeni*

year term of imprisonment in Beyoğlu. This police chief, who allegedly used to hit people with a plastic hose, has been simply moved to another post by the authorities, and is currently on duty in Fatih-Istanbul.

Gündem (Gürbilek, 1986) that these actions were found justifiable by the fact that once a 'homosexual' is detained and set free, he ends up being found at the same street corner the following day; hence, cutting hair is seen as an effective strategy to exclude them from a given territory. The reason for these acts is to force sexual minorities to migrate to other locations, stigmatize them, and leave marks that remind other people of their 'transgression', all contributing to not only discouraging the so-called 'transgressor' but also other men who might consider such 'immorality'. In addition *Nokta* (1991) also shows a very graphic picture of a transvestite with bruises and scars all over her body that exemplifies the police brutality that many non-heterosexuals experience.

Within the Turkish context, in order to determine the '*truth*' of indecent offenses for 'gender nonconforming' men, and justify any expression of sovereignty by police forces, sending sexual minorities to hospitals for physical examinations as a means of providing 'visual evidence' for their transgression (in which the person's *anus* is tested) bears a strong resemblance to the importance of a *confession* to sovereign penalty as described by Foucault (1977:37-9). As mentioned earlier, it is apparent that the conception of homosexuality originates around the schema of penetration, and it is the individual who is penetrated or thought to be penetrated that is conceptualized under the label 'homosexual', and subject to stigmatization (Tapınç, 1992:42). On the other hand, no stigma is attached to the penetrator in sexual relations; he is still able to keep his culturally valued status as a 'real' man as long as his sexuality is not discussed openly. In other words, the cultural presumption is that it is the 'real' homosexual who is penetrated, and that it is the 'real' man who penetrates. "If one's subjectivity is masculine and masculine practice is to penetrate (and not be penetrated), being 'active' in anal intercourse reinforces

that subjectivity. But if the same person is also 'passive', [his] masculinity is potentially threatened" (Kippax & Smith, 2001:420). Thus, it can be understood that there exists a fairly explicit cultural construction of same-sex desires and practices, and what is primarily important is the role taken in sexual relations rather than the shared biological gender. As Tapinç (1992:47) remarks, "the strict division of sexual roles among participant individuals, in fact, perpetuates the myth of heterosexuality as well as that of masculinity".

Coşkun (1998:10-11) mentions an incidence in October 4th 1997, when an elderly Persian man (with no Turkish language skills) appealed to the police after being robbed in his residence. Soon after it was 'assumed' that he might be homosexual, owing to his effeminate mannerism and way of expressing himself, he was taken to the hospital. Without an explanation, the man was forced to bend down with his back protruding, and a doctor inserted his finger into his anus, and wrote a report concerning his homosexuality for the police. Following this degrading experience and having his sexual orientation inscribed on official documents, the man's complaint was ignored, and considered as a trivial matter. Yüzgün (1993:165) asserts, "[a]fter being attacked and beaten or robbed, homosexuals appealing to the police encounter a further assault. Instead of obtaining their rights, they leave the police station as criminals". And, it is an *open* homosexual's so-called 'indecent' that exempts police forces from respecting the rule of law⁵. Furthermore, it is *not* unheard of for sexual minorities who consider filing a complaint further to be beaten by police forces.

⁵ There are instances in which some corrupt officers, who have an awareness of the bad consequences of these physical examinations, threaten to register sexual minorities to obtain personal favors. Devrim Yılmaz (2002) documents his own life history in a diary format, and mentions that in October 5, 1999, the police *for no reason* pulled over while he was hitch-hiking, and upon realizing that his mannerism was effeminate, they threatened to take him to the police station for a physical check-up, and that he would be released if he were to give sexual favors in return. At the end, he had no other choice but to cooperate rather than having his sexual orientation registered.

Similarly, Yılmaz (1998:222) points out a different way of obtaining the confession for indecent acts through literally asking the victim or 'suspicious' offender who is arbitrarily detained whether he is ashamed of coming to the police station, or not. Voluntary affirmative verbal responses, or bodily gestures are enough for the police to consider such replies as constituting the confession and a strong proof for the person to accept responsibility for his disapproved acts, and good evidence for his recognizing the 'truth' of his offense. As a result, both physical tests and positive responses to police questions legitimize and affirm the 'rightness' of coercive power and exclusionary practices by the police.

The Turkish state's tolerance for the enforcement of articles pertaining to 'public decency' against 'gender conforming' men who engage in homosexual relations is due to how masculinity is conceptualized in this particular culture. Turkish masculinity is not in contradiction with all homosexual experience, so long as the participant is the *aktif* insertor during anal intercourse. As evident from the interviews, there are married men who experience same-sex sex prior to marriage. Having said this, masculine men could have sex with other men and still be 'heterosexuals', as one's gender/sex identity depends on taking the masculine, *aktif* role in such relations, no matter the sex of his partner. Yılmaz (1998:222) reports an instance when an eighteen-year-old man was caught by the police while making love to another man in a car. Reportedly, while the 18-year-old was detained for three days and beaten up repeatedly, his partner who was more 'masculine' was released with no charge, since it is inconceivable for the police to identify masculine appearing men who engage in same-sex relations as being 'homosexual'.

Study Participants' Experiences

In this study, the police had physically abused only a couple of the men interviewed; they do not conform to dominant masculinity. Nonetheless, there are other individuals who have been openly intimidated, which exemplifies how these men live in a homophobic environment, not so different from other countries around the world.

Ahmet, who lived most of his life at a rural suburb of Ankara, describes himself as being feminine and flamboyant in his behaviour. He mentioned confronting the police during an instance when he was waiting for a friend at a sidewalk to go to the movies. Apparently, his friend was already being followed by the police, was stopped without reason, and asked to give the names and telephone numbers of anyone he knew that engaged in same-sex acts. Ahmet's friend had no other options but to tell the police that he was meeting one such friend. Thereby, upon meeting the police, in Ahmet's own words:

R12: They asked for my identity card, and then took me into their police car, and inquired whether I knew my friend or not [who was in the car].... I told them I just moved from *X* ...but one of the officers was also from *X*, and angrily said "How could an *ibne* [the colloquial word for homosexual] be from *X*?" and spat on my face...Then I was taken out of the car to a corner of Güven park, and asked whether I had any *lubunya* [(passive homosexual)] friends, and how much money I receive from other men for sex...but I told them I knew no other person...I had a feeling that they were going to take bribes from me, and that's what happened. One of the officers took the money I had for my movie ticket, and punched me in the face a couple of times, and they let me go...⁶ [Ahmet: *pasif*, 30, high school graduate].

⁶ R12:...benim kimliğimi sordular beklerken, sonra da arabanın içine aldılar, arkadaşımı tanıyıp tanımadığımı sordular...*X*'den yeni geldiğimi söyledim...polislerden bir tanesi de *X*'li çıktı... "Memleketten *ibne* mi çıkar?" dedi, yüzüme tükürdü...sonra arabadan indirdiler, Güven parkın bir köşesine çekti...*lubunya* arkadaşlarımın olup olmadığı, ve kaç parayla sikiş yaptığımı sordular... kimseyi tanımadığımı söyledim... para toplayacağımı hissettim...rüşvet...ve öyle oldu...Üzerimdeki sinema parasını aldılar, yumruklamışlardı da birkaç kez yüzümü ve bıraktılar.

In this instance, it was already assumed that Ahmet was a ‘sex-worker’, although he is *not*. He was humiliated, and physically threatened. This instance also shows how some corrupt officers can assert their power and have material gains through mobilizing their ‘unquestionable’ authority. It is particularly noteworthy how the officer also from *X* takes Ahmet’s transgression as a personal cause, consequently, he takes revenge by spitting on Ahmet’s face.

24-year-old Arda, who is actually in the sex-work industry, talks about how dangerous his job could be, and that he had to deal with the police a lot, owing to the many abusive customers he had in the past. In one occasion, a client literally tried to throw him out of the window of the apartment they met in. Upon being unsuccessful in this attempt, the man locked the doors, and called the police:

R02: I told the police that we were friends and that I had no idea what was happening. At this time I was trying to act ‘straight’ so that they wouldn’t have a hint that I’m homosexual. But the man said, “He is lying, he is into prostitution”, and I said “both him and I are homosexual, and he gives money to people who sleep with him”. We were taken to the station, but at the end I was not prosecuted, as I told them that I knew my rights, and that there is no law forbidding homosexuality...I am the kind of guy that can get very loud at certain times, and trust me, I am good at intimidating people who have no idea with whom they are dealing. Of course I was trying to avoid them taking me to the *Ahlak* [Vice Squad] as that is the place where they try to find proof that you are homosexual, which means having a record with the police of what I am... Fingerprints and pictures are taken...⁷ [Arda: *pasif*, 24, high school graduate].

⁷ R02: Ben arkadaş olduğumuzu, ve ne olduğumu bilmediğimi anlattım. Bu arada ben çok normal davrandım, öyle çok efemine değildim ki eşcinsel olduğumu anlamasınlar. O da “yalan söylüyor, fuhuş yapıyor” dedi, ben de “Kendisi de eşcinsel, ben de eşcinselim” dedim, “Ve böyle ilişkilerden para veriyor” dedim. Emniyetlik olduk, emniyet adamı haksız buldu, çünkü haklarımın ne olduğunu bildiğimi ve eşcinselliği yasaklayan bir kanunun olmadığını söyledim. Ben gerektiği yerde çığırkan olmasını bilen bir insanım, emin olabilirsiniz ki kimle uğraştıklarımı iyi gösteririm ben insana. Tabii ki Ahlak'a gitmek istemiyordum... Ahlakta eğer ispatlanırsa eşcinsel olduğun, fişleniyorum...Parmak izlerin alınıyor, fotoğraflar çekiliyor...

During this experience, Arda might be considered fortunate, due to his personality as someone who presents himself strategically. He was able to make the police let him go, as they simply were not willing to deal with someone who was so outspoken. It is clear that Arda makes use of his knowledge of the law to resist the intrusive aspects of police actions. As Little (1998:165) indicates, “[p]ower is not static, nor is it an attribute or possession; instead, it is relational, an ongoing process of human interaction”. As demonstrated in a number of ways in many other interviews, Arda strategically argues and renegotiates the regulatory process he confronts. It is his knowledge of the usual police practices through others’ experiences that determined his actions at the police station. He mentioned many cases when his friends were locked up in cells with no windows, and food, in the dark for days. It is not surprising that sexual minorities live in fear and censor their own activities and mannerisms in an attempt to protect themselves in public. Later in the conversation, Arda continues:

R02: The other day, as my boyfriend and I were leaving the club, we saw the ‘Balyoz Team’⁸ (*Balyoz Ekibi*), so I was terrified, and tried to go back into the club, but they blocked my way. They took us to a deserted place at night, and they beat my partner saying: “What do you mean, who the hell are we to take you with us? We can take anyone we want from anyplace. Are you trying to be an actor? What are you, a man or something?” ...⁹

⁸ According to Arda and Ferhat, the Ankara Safety Office ‘unofficially’ established the Balyoz Team in the late 1990s, to deal with disorder in the streets in general. Great coverage has also been given concerning this team in media. However, it turns out that the team mainly dealt with sexual minorities. It is very interesting that ‘balyoz’ means sledge-hammer in Turkish, as if this team has set itself the mission to hammer down sexual minorities.

⁹ R02: Geçen gün bardan çıkarken, yanımda da sevgilim vardı, bir baktım, Balyoz Ekibi, korkmaya başladım, hemen bara doğru kaçmaya çalıştım, hemen önümü kestiler, sonra bizi boş bir araziye götürdüler karanlıkta, sevgilimi indirip bir güzel dövdüler, “Sen ne demek istiyorsun biz kimiz de sizi alıyoruz, biz istediğimiz yerden adam alırız, artistlik mi yapıyorsun? Erkek misin nesin?” deyip bayağı bir dövdüler...

The respondent who mentioned that he was kidnapped and beaten up by homophobic men stated that he always saw himself as a 'girl', even when he was a young boy, and that the womanliness (*kadınsılık*) in his appearance and behaviour always came natural to him. Deniz claimed that rape or any kind of material gain was not even intended by the attackers. When he was asked if he filed a complaint, he remarks:

R8: Why would I even consider going to the cops? Who cares about people like me? I'm sure they would even hit me twice as hard. There isn't anything you could do about it, just endure. I went through it before. I know what I'm talking about...and nothing will ever change. In time, you learn to take things into your own hands; no one else can help me other than myself¹⁰ [Deniz: *pasif*, 25, university drop out].

Deniz brought up an instance, last winter, when he actually hit a guy with a metal ash-tray in his hand for two or three times: "He slapped me on the face for refusing to have sex with him... I wasn't going to 'do it' without any money ...his face was covered with blood, and I ran away". Deniz's comments reveal his sense of hopelessness borne of limited alternatives. Since the legal system is reluctant to enforce equal protective treatment for such citizens, many men like Deniz simply avoid the law, thus, their access to justice is hampered. Later in the conversation:

R08: I have no problems with officers at the local police station. They don't treat me badly. It's very interesting but a lot of transvestites used to live in my neighbourhood, and gradually we all became well acquainted with the cops...but a lot depends on how homophobic the chief officer is, and in my neighbourhood, I'm safe. Otherwise I could've been registered every instance he saw me. But, I have been arrested many times for no reason while I am simply on Sakarya Street, or

¹⁰ R08: Polise başvurmayı niye düşünüyem ki? Benim gibi insanlar kimin umrunda ki? Eminim ki iki mislisini bir de onlardan yerdim. Pek fazla yapabileceğin bir şey yok, dışını sıkacaksın işte. Merak etme ne dediğimin farkındayım ben. Daha önce böyle şeyler yaşadığım için biliyordum. Hiçbir şey değişmeyecek. Her şey aynı hamam aynı tas. Zamanla her şeyi kendi başına halletmeyi öğreniyorsun, bana benden başka hiç kimse yardımı olamaz.

while sitting at Güven Park on a bench on grounds of being a ‘suspicious person’.
Once they actually asked for money so that they could let me go...¹¹

Here, it is clear that social networking helps a lot in relation to whether or not a person will get registered. Deniz feels secure only within the limits of his neighbourhood as he is known by all officers, and has become kind of ‘friends’ with them over the past years. Nonetheless, he is still vulnerable to police control, and constantly reminded of being an undesirable citizen outside his familiar environment.

41-year-old Birol admits that he is feminine to a greater extent when he is with his homosexual friends, but extremely careful once his ‘feet step out of the house’. He claims that a lot of his male friends who engage in same-sex acts frequently visit his house and that now it is at a point where the entire neighbourhood is aware he is *eşcinsel* (homosexual). Consequently, young ‘straight’ men began to knock on his door, taking it for granted he would give them sexual favours, as if being homosexual implies being a willing receptacle to anyone’s phallus. Thus, he recalls an occasion when the ‘usual’ arguments and noise at his doorway led the police to deal with the problem:

R19: ...under normal circumstances, when there is noise, it is the *Asayiş Police* [Public Order Division] that is called, but later on the *Ahlak* [Vice Squad] got involved, and as I didn’t want them to have me go through ‘the usual exams’, I just told them that I was *eşcinsel*...no one tried to hurt me physically, but I have many friends that aren’t as lucky as I am, but don’t forget that I’m not ‘that obvious’ outside.... Nevertheless, in all that noise, I remember some officer mockingly

¹¹ R08: Yani oturduğum semtteki karakolda çok rahatım. Bana kötü davranmıyorlar. Yani çok ilginçtir, benim oturduğum semtte eskiden çok travesti falan otururdu. Ve zamanla artık ahbap olmuştuk. Amiri tanıyorum. Bu işte amirin homofobikliğine bağlı bir şey ama. Ama benim oturduğum semtte ben rahatım. Yoksa beni her gördüğünde bana işlem yapabilirdi. Birçok kez Sakarya Caddesindeyken veya sadece Güven Parkta bir bankda otururken tutuklandığımı biliyorum, hemde hiçbir neden olmadan, şüpheli şahıs olarak. Hatta bir kez serbest bırakmak için benden para bile istediler.

saying, “You dirty *ibne*, aren’t you ashamed of yourself? And you’re a grown up eh, look at you!”¹² [Biol: pasif, 41, post secondary education].

This instance illustrates how the police can indirectly seek the confession, through degradation. Although, the disturbance at his apartment could have been dealt with in the common way, as it applies to heterosexual citizens, Biol’s sexual orientation seems to be the cause for other ‘authorities’ to investigate the indecency of the issue at hand. One wonders what a person’s homosexuality has to do with the noise level in the apartment, but surely, homosexuality is seen to be a greater problem for the police to tolerate than the noise level. The fact that Biol is an older man and that an officer acknowledges his age also makes the humiliation worse.

Tarkan defines himself as being a ‘typical Turkish man’ who conforms to the usual way society expects men to behave and look physically. He dated women until his mid-twenties, but upon discovering the ‘gay scene’ (*Eşcinsel alemi*) he has been exploring different options to heterosexuality. Nonetheless, he still identifies himself as *hetero* (as in heterosexual) and suggests that same-sex relations do not make him any less of a ‘man’. Tarkan said that the police interrogated him many times, especially when he first decided to date a man:

R13: The person that I was seeing at that time always wore showy clothes, and his flamboyance was surely obvious enough to draw the officers during the routine checks at the clubs...of course, that meant I was also in trouble for being acquainted with him. But compared to other machos, it usually took longer for me to be released...If it weren’t for his ‘outrageousness’ I wouldn’t have had to deal with this

¹² R 19: ... normal gürültü olduğunda Asayiş polisi çağırıldı, ama yerine, sonrasında Ahlak işin içerisine girdi, ama genel yapılan testlerden geçmek istemediğim için direkt “ben eşcinselim” dedim, ve ne bir baskı ne de bir kaba kuvvet olmadı, başka arkadaşlarımın benim kadar şanslı olmadıklarını görüyorum ve duyuyor ama bana olmadı hiç. Ama unutma ki ben dışarıda çok fazla aşikar değilim yani...karakolda ama o gürültüde patırtıda, bir polisin alaycı bir şekilde “Pis ibne, utanmıyor musun, bir de kocaman adam olacaksın, bak şu haline!”.

at all...But I've never been mistreated, that's for sure¹³ [Tarkan: *Aktif (Laço)*, 31, High school graduate].

Similarly, Ziya, who can be considered as an extreme case in dealing with anger issues, by no means allows people to define him as 'homosexual'. He even has a criminal record for wounding a guy during a fight, and was behind bars for six and a half months. He has been dating and living happily with Semih (an effeminate guy) for the last eight months, but his jealousy and possessiveness have always been a reason for confronting the police. Ziya recalls a particular night when he overheard a man in his 30s harassing Semih in the street, in which he ran with a bottle in his hand and smashed it on the man's face. He adds that two or three other guys tried to help the man and that he chased them with a pocket-knife. In his own words:

R09: I have no tolerance for these kinds of things...After the police arrived, they took me to the station, and asked me "What happened Ziya?" and I was immediately out of there. I never got into trouble because of my sexual preferences, and never will!¹⁴ [Ziya: *Aktif (Laço)*, 20, high school dropout].

During the interview, Ziya kept on making reference to being 'a real man', and that he never felt he was in danger; as a matter of fact he showed confidence in the case that his sexual orientation was to be discovered. For him, it was already clear to other people that he is 'the man' in his relationship with Semih, and that he would do *anything* in the name of 'manly honour'. Hence, he seems to be exempted from police maltreatment.

¹³ R13: O sırada birlikte olduğum insan kıyafetlerini devamlı çok abarttığından, hatta efemine davranışları polisin ilgisini çekmeye yettiğinden birkaç kez polisle sorun yaşadım rutin çevirmelerde, ama diğer insanlara göre beni daha fazla tutuyorlardı, o yanımda olduğundan, benden kaynaklanmıyordu. Onun bu abartılığı olmasaydı böyle şeylerle uğraşmak zorunda kalmayacaktım. Bana kötü davranmadılar ama, orası kesin...

¹⁴ R09: Ben böyle şeylere hiç tahammül edemem yani... Sonra polis geldi, beni karakola götürdüler, ve polis bana, "Ne oldu Ziya?" dedi, sonra hemen bıraktılar beni...Cinsel tercihimden dolayı zaten hiç olayım da olmadı polisle ve kesinlikle de olamaz!

It is important to note that *not* all men who transgress the prevalent gender ideology and engage in same-sex relationships seem to have bad experiences with police. For example, 20-year-old Özgür's experiences are especially noteworthy in comparison to the men above. He mentioned many occurrences when his mannerism caused various dangerous confrontations with people in different public spaces. He was even shot by one of his relatives in the name of 'family honour' in order to threaten him, for his effeminacy, therefore, he tries to be 'careful' once he is in public. Özgür remarks on an instance when he was robbed at the *hamam* (Turkish bathhouse). Reportedly, while bathing with his friends, a man approached Özgür and said, "Won't you come and satisfy this?" pointing at his penis. After Özgür refused the man's demand, he noticed that the same man went in his cabinet, and that he stole his cell phone and money. Consequently,

R06: Someone informed the police and they took us all to the police station. The man said, "These guys behave badly, they get themselves fucked", as if stealing is something less to be ashamed of in this country than being homosexual. The officer in charge degraded him in front of us, and he was detained, while we [(Özgür and his friends)] sat on leather chairs, and were offered tea and coke... We weren't expecting this at all; they simply cared more about our blue identity card of the Turkish Republic than our sexuality, and we were released.... We were even given advice by the police that we should file a complaint so that the theft would get punished. I think that's great! Not all officers are like this, but the newly educated young ones are so nice. Of course I'm not including the Balyoz team...¹⁵ [Özgür: pasif-gey, 20, high school graduate].

¹⁵ R06: Birisi polise haber veriyor, ve hepimizi içeri alıyor. Adam, "Bunlar yanlış davranıyor, bunlar kendilerini yaptırıyorlar" diyor, yani eşcinsellik çok yüz kızartıcı ama hırsızlık bile yüz kızartıcı değil bu ülkede... polis adamı son derece aşağıladı, ve içeri tıkıldı, biz ise deri koltuklara oturtulduk, çaylar ve kolalar ikram edildi. Hiç beklemiyorduk bunu; ve kesinlikle bizim cinsel kimliğimizle ilgilenmediler, direkt Türkiye Cumhuriyetine ait mavi kimliğimizle daha çok ilgilendiler... ve bizi bıraktılar; üstelik akıl da verdiler, şikayetçi olmamızı istediler ki adam cezasını çöksün. Bu muhteşem bir şey bence...herkes böyle değil, ama bu yeni mezun olmuş genç polisler o kadar çok iyiler ki... bu Balyoz timlerini içine katmıyorum tabii...

Coda

No matter what legal changes have been made in the name of modernization, as a developing country, it is clear that moral codes are still influential in Turkey vis-à-vis having the rule of law respected. Not surprisingly, 'non-trans' homosexuals are unwilling to be *openly* attributed with any 'gender-bending' association owing to the consequences that 'might' follow in breaking the code of sexuality in the face of police practices. It is important to recognize that the treatment of these people reflects societal values on manliness and heterosexuality for *all* men. Accordingly, police practices become a project of normalizing or rendering natural certain behaviours and sexual practices while marginalizing others. As agents of the state, the police's involvement in this moral regulation is ongoing, continuously regulating the formation of identities and subjectivities of citizens.

It has been shown that the role of police forces as moral guardians of citizens, intruding into their lives in a direct manner, reflects the states' attempts to restore the dominant masculinity. There is no doubt that as a constitutionally and structurally secular society, legislative reforms have been aiding in the promotion of social justice in Turkey. However, sexual minorities are not provided with the 'natural' provisions and privileges that are granted to heterosexual or 'desirable' citizens. Hence, this chapter has identified the motivations behind why some men feel bound to live a 'veiled' life within the prevailing social and moral standards set in Turkish society.

The provisions of the Penal Code dealing with 'public morality' are used to persecute 'gay' men who deviate from the prevailing gender order in Turkish society, as they are perceived as being a threat to the state. Historically, the association between

hegemonic masculinity and homosexual masculinity has involved the stigmatization of same-sex activities, as well as intimidation and violence outside the bounds of law. The Turkish state and public sphere are constructed as masculine, and supporting the state means further reinforcing the masculinity that is ascribed to it, and homosexual masculinity is certainly viewed as a source of danger for each definition. Thereby, every effort is made by the authorities to keep any behaviour that might be understood as homosexual as invisible as possible to the general public.

Undeniably the purpose of the recent amendments to the Turkish Civil Code¹⁶ is more than just a secular push for human rights as Turkey has an interest in a Western-tailored approach to legal protections. This nation has been struggling for full participation in the European Union, and it is this endeavour that necessitates changes to the Penal Code. Having said this, until recently, few Turkish gay men have been willing to challenge arbitrary behaviour by state officials. This can be attributed to there not being the right political conditions in the previous years. Even so, such police practices motivated the emergence of a new culture that addresses the problem of hegemonic masculinity. Kaos GL, the independent gay organization where the group of participants for this study was obtained, is only one of the establishments in Turkey that is endeavouring to bring the problem of LGBT rights as a human rights issue on the Turkish political agenda (see Appendix E for press statement for the ninth meeting of Gays and Lesbians in Istanbul in English, and Appendix F for the Turkish version.). Hence, sexual minorities have also begun to deny their former passivity and are struggling to define an ideology that successfully *resists* the network of dominant social sites regulating sexuality.

¹⁶ The new Turkish Civil Code was approved by the Turkish Grand National Assembly on November 27, 2001 and was promulgated by President Ahmet Necdet Sezer and published in the Official Gazette on December 8, 2001.

In the same vein, this chapter aimed at bringing public attention to the inconsistency that the law is premised on all citizens being equal, especially when sexual minorities are placed in a position of social inequality. Thus, the Turkish state is left in a position of either acknowledging that all citizens are *not* equal or making adjustment to provide greater equality; and it is this public focus on the contradictions that necessitates the state to take some form of ameliorative action. As Turkey enters the new millennium with its desire to join the European Union, it continues to 'modernize' its laws. Yet, it still has to address issues related to the stigmatization of sexual minorities. And in 2003, after a party with Islamic roots (Justice and Development Party) won the recent elections, there is concern in relation to how well democracy and a 'greater' emphasis on Islam can co-exist. As a nation that has passionately defended its secularism since its founding as a republic, whether it will adapt itself to the challenges brought by sexual minorities and become truly egalitarian or develop in new directions has yet to be seen.

CHAPTER 7

GENDER STRATIFICATION IN SAME-SEX BONDING

Introduction

So far, it has been shown that gender is closely connected to a vast and complicated institutional and cultural order, which comes into relation with bodies, giving them gendered meanings. This chapter talks about a discernable pattern in male homosexual relations that is based on the clear distinction between the *aktif* and *pasif* partner. It can be argued that this rigid division, which reproduces Turkey's traditional culture of gender, is an emulation of the symbolic structure of male/female relations in Turkish society. This model in which same-sex relations are socially organized is inherently connected to the network of social institutions that reproduce hegemonic masculinity. As mentioned in Chapter 2, during anal intercourse, the person who penetrates preserves his culturally valued masculinity and is not labelled as 'homosexual'; while, the receptive partner is stripped of all male privileges, and –as a 'real' homosexual– is constructed as a man performing the 'woman's role' (equating homosexuality with effeminacy). Thus, it is clear that the anatomy of the sexual partner is less important than the sex-role played in such activities. Together with this dominant model which reflects the overall gender norms of heterosexual men and women, in this section, I also talk about men who *deviate* from the stereotypes: although masculine, both behaviourally and physically, not acknowledging one's penetrability in public, or being feminine, but taking the *aktif* sex-role. Finally, I discuss specific indicators of 'labels' by which men categorize themselves,

and how such labelling is enacted in certain locations such as the public parks, bars, and cinemas.

The Traditional Model

As mentioned earlier, in Turkish society, the dominant image of male homosexuality “originates around the schema of penetration” (Tapınç, 1992: 42), and it is only the person who is penetrated that is considered homosexual. The way in which same-sex relations are defined by rigid sex roles during anal penetration and the gendered identity that comes along with it –with one partner being the masculine *aktif* and the other being the effeminate *pasif*– can be understood as an extension of the dominant sex typing and gender schema in society at large. Consequently, since all relations between men are viewed hierarchically, as Carrigan, Connell and Lee (1985:585) state, “we should observe how the gender dichotomy acts to define homosexual men not only as ‘outside’ of patriarchal sexual relations, but ‘within’ them as well”, as men who engage in homosexual relations are divided into *aktif* and *pasif* types, with the former type retaining or even reinforcing his masculinity, while the latter is subject to discrimination and stigmatization, either for assumed or actual effeminacy. Within this traditional conception of homosexuality, it is inconceivable to depart publicly from the prescriptions of hegemonic masculinity; therefore, conceptualizing the penetratee as lacking masculinity is normalized. In other words, homosexual relations are much more defined by the norms of the prevalent gender structure and ‘compulsory heterosexuality’, to borrow Adrienne Rich’s term. The *aktif/pasif* distinction gives a heterosexual meaning to same-sex relationships, which inevitably supports the hegemonic masculinity framework.

In this study, the importance of gender-based notions of activity and passivity in structuring sexual interactions between men is clearly evident from interviewee responses. “The reason for this manifest distinction could be detected in the polarized and inflexible gender system of Turkey” (Tapınç, 1992: 45), which has the potential of hindering one from seeing alternative models of social organization for men who engage in homosexual relations. According to Ziya [*Aktif (Laço)*, 20, high school drop-out], for a man who defines masculinity as taking an *aktif* and directing role in sexual relations, there is no way that anybody could label him as ‘*aktif gey*’ (gay man who is exclusively active), as he believes such an identification would imply that he lacks masculinity. He prefers the label ‘*laço*’ (‘real’ man), as it signifies being a friend, lover or husband to a man who likes to be anally penetrated (and likely to be feminine). Thus, gender dichotomies are re-appropriated in his relations and “[i]n no sense is [his] homosexuality built on a lack, a gender vacuum” (Connell, 1995:147). The same respondent adds that he is no different from his heterosexual friends, and that his current long-term relationship with a ‘*lubunya*’ (effeminate man) does not make him less manly. Ziya also adds that he likes women as well, and that he had many heterosexual relationships in the past. Consequently, irrespective of his homosexual engagements, through his appropriation of a hyper-masculine persona, his defence of hegemonic masculinity becomes apparent.

Similarly, despite his homosexual preferences, Tarkan also continues to define masculinity as sexual agency, and says that he might marry a woman one day if he were to find ‘the one’ for himself. Owing to his age, he states that he has been pressured by his family to get married and have children, and that he also believes that it is about time to make a change in his life. However, he confesses that heterosexuality has not been realized

in practice (as often), since he was 24 years old. This respondent may be understood as 'bisexual', but he openly refuses such an identity:

R13: Although the lifestyle that I'm leading right now fits the 'bisexual' label, I don't believe in bisexuality. I'm aware that I live my life in certain phases –I was *hetero* till I was 24 years old, and then I discovered this scene [gay life]. Later on, I still dated a girl, however, I've never been able to live both lives concurrently. I am able to be with a woman just as much as I can with a man, and the satisfaction I get depends on the person I'm with. Nowadays, I'm in my homosexual period¹. [Tarkan: *Aktif (Laço)*, 31, High school graduate].

'Bisexuality' is not a preferred label as it potentially carries the stigma normally attached to same-sex relationships. It is noteworthy that Tarkan emphasizes he would never 'turn his back' for anybody to allow himself to be penetrated, as he has been leading his life as an insertor until he was 24 in heterosexual relationships, and that there is no need to change 'his ways' for his homosexual encounters. He adds that he is masculine in appearance, mannerism, and attire, and that men admire him for the image he portrays both in public and in private. When asked about what he looks for in a potential partner, whether long term or short, Tarkan claims that he likes younger men who tend to be feminine in every way, and who are only *pasif* in bed. This preference conforms to the traditional constitution of same-sex relationships within the prevalent sexual ideology in Turkey. What I find interesting is that when I inquired about his reaction in the case where a sex partner who demanded that he be *pasif*, he responded by saying:

¹ R13: Şu anda yaşadığım hayat biseksüel tanımına uyuyor, ama ben biseksüelliğe inanmıyorum. Ben hayatımı dönem dönem yaşadığımı bilirim, 24'üme kadar heteroydum, ondan sonra da bu hayatı keşvettim, sonra yine bir kızla bir birlikteliğim oldu, ama bu iki hayatı ben birlikte hiç beraber götüremedim. Kadınlarla da erkeklerle beraber olduğum gibi beraber olabiliyorum. Yaşadığım tatmin de kişisine göre değişiyor...yine şu anda eşcinsel dönemimdeyim.

R13: People aren't sincere. It would be a victory for another *gey*² man to be *aktif* to a man like me. When he breaks up with you, or after a one-night-stand, he wants to be able to say, "Look, you see this man, well I fucked him." In other words, there's sharing [of personal matters]. It's not as if you become *pasif* to him, and he'll also do the same for you in return; I won't be deceived by such a thing! Unfortunately, sooner or later, relationships end, and most of the time, they end in a bad way. So, such a thing [being *pasif*] is absolutely out of the question³.

Tarkan states that no other *laço* would get close to him, e.g. in a bar environment, as 'two similar poles repel each other', meaning that it is inconceivable for two 'real men' to relate to each other. And, as can be understood from above, it seems that he might try being *pasif*, but because of gossip, he completely rejects the possibility to secure his sense of 'manliness'. For him, being anally penetrated is a 'defeat', or 'victory' for another person; he would rather remain the 'victor', as being exclusively *aktif* exempts him from stigma that might otherwise occur. In other words, he re-establishes his socially masculinized persona in the private sphere, and through adherence to the conventional definitions of gender, he reaffirms hegemonic masculinity.

One of the respondents reflects on his most recent sexual encounter with a 32-year old lawyer who identified himself as being solely *aktif*, as follows:

R18: As I was having sex with him, I suddenly ejaculated on his chest, unintentionally, and all of a sudden he got very angry and started to shout that I should wipe it off, as he wouldn't touch it. He said no one has ever done anything like that to him, and that what I did was not only disrespectful but also gross. However, he ended up coming on my face although I told him prior to our meeting

² Here, it may be presumed that Tarkan admits the 'gey' label for himself; however, he uses this label for all men who engage in same-sex activities.

³ R13: İnsanlar samimi değil, şimdi bir geyin benim gibi bir adama aktif olması, onun için bir zaferdir, bir süre sonra senden ayrıldığında, yada bir gecelik bir birliktelik olur, "Bakın bu adamı görüyor musun? Ben bunu düzdüm" diyebilmek istiyor. Yani paylaşım oluyor, sen bana pasif ol ben de sana pasif olayım diye birşey değil. Ben bu oyuna gelmiyorum! Eninde sonunda ilişkiler bitiyor maalesef...ve çoğunlukla ilişkiler kötü bitiyor...o yüzden kesinlikle böyle birşey olamaz.

that I didn't want anything to touch my face, even if it's his biggest fantasy... In the end, he still had his way⁴ [Emre: *gey*, 25, University graduate].

What is clear from Emre's experience is that seminal fluid is considered as the 'essence of masculinity', and the fact that he would ejaculate semen on his *aktif* partner seems to be taken as a violation of another's sense of maleness, and something to be considered dishonourable. After his sexual encounter, Emre was told by his partner that he was not both *aktif* and *pasif* like him, and that he finds it intolerable for anyone to do what Emre did, as he was 'the man'. Meanwhile, the penetrator, taking 'the directing part', is excused from such limitations, and has his favourite fantasies fulfilled that he, ironically, perceives to be humiliating if done to himself. Consequently, the *aktif* partner regains his sense of self by ejaculating on Emre –a 'masculinizing practice' that allows one to reassert his support for hegemonic masculinity.

On the other side of the 'sex coin' are *pasif* receptive men who are automatically associated with the female gender in their engagements in 'feminine' sexual practices. Within the traditional model of same-sex bonding, these effeminate men constitute the 'visible majority', and upon recognizing their homosexual preferences, they accept the prescribed effeminacy through identification with the female gender and the images of womanhood it entails (Tapınç, 1992: 45). According to Selek (2001:77), many 'gay men' try to find space in patriarchy by aligning themselves with the opposite gender, becoming flamboyant (as an indication of one's subordinate position), or choosing transvestitisms

⁴ R18: Onunla cinsel ilişki sırasında, birden, istemeden göğüsüne boşaldım; aniden bana çok kızıp, kendisi asla dokunamayacağı için, hemen benim silmem gerektiğine dair bağırmaya başladı. Daha önceden böyle birşeyi kimsenin asla yapmadığını, benim bu yaptığının çok büyük saygısızlık olduğunu, hatta iğrenç birşey olduğunu söyledi. Daha sonra, cinsel ilişkimizin başında ona, en büyük fantezisi olsa bile, yüzüme hiçbir şeyin dokunmasını asla istemediğimi söylediğim halde... yine sonunda onun istediği oldu ve yüzüme boşaldı.

otherwise the more difficult option of a sex-change operation (i.e. transsexualism) is not considered.

One of the interviewees defined himself as being *lubunya*, which is recognized as ‘a woman trapped in a man’s body’. While we were speaking of the likelihood of meeting potential partners at Kaos GL, he claimed that all men there were ‘women’ (*kadın*), and that there is no way that he would become intimate with a person who has similar characteristics like himself. It became apparent to me that, for this respondent, once a person acknowledged preference for other men, and attached an identifying label to it, e.g. *gey* (whether *aktif*, *pasif*, or versatile), that person was regarded as a woman. Ahmet [30, high school graduate] insisted that as a *lubunya*, he would only be the receiving partner to a ‘real man’ (i.e. heterosexual or *laço*) and that it is impossible for another feminine man to establish same-sex bonds with him, as two ‘women’ would have nothing to offer to each other (to define such an experience, he uses the phrase, *kapak kapağa vuruşturma*, literally meaning two lids/caps hitting each other⁵). He openly states that he finds himself effeminate, and that as a person with solely *pasif* tendencies, he never tried being *aktif*, and would never consider it, no matter what the circumstances were.

In the same vein, Deniz claims that he has always seen himself as a ‘girl’ even when he was a young boy, and that as a *lubunya* or *pasif eşcinsel* (passive homosexual), he only prefers to engage in sexual relations with young hyper-masculine men (*delikanlı*), who are possessive and might even ‘beat’ him in the case of wrong doing or jealousy! He justifies his contentment with the label by saying that he was able to have a 5-year long term relationships with a *laço*, while men who are gay, in the modern sense (see Chapter

⁵ Notice the circular shape of these objects with their obvious resemblance to an anus that is ready for penetration. In North America, ‘bumping pussy’ is the phrase used with similar meaning. In Latin America, it is called making ‘tortillas’ together!

8), end up having short term bonds since there is too much sex-role confusion in their relationships. Here is an extract from the interview that reveals that he believes he is not 'essentially' *pasif*; rather he is socialized as such:

R08: After all, if you want someone to stand as your protector, if you want a man, then you play your part. What I mean by this is that everyone knows his own role: he knows his manliness and you recognize your femininity.

INTERVIEWER: *Doesn't it bother you to play such a role?*

R08: Oh no, not anymore. Not only do you internalize it, but it also doesn't make the other person uncomfortable. First of all, I love being *pasif* a lot. It's not only that I love it, I want to be *pasif*⁶ [Deniz: *lubunya/Pasif eşcinsel*, 25, University drop-out].

Another respondent, who also supports traditional notions of gender roles in Turkish society, claims that in his youth, he always imagined becoming a woman that would be waiting at home for her husband. It is noteworthy that Arda emphasizes a clear distinction in terms of his sex-role preference, depending on whether it is a long-term companionate relationship or a 'one-night stand.'⁷ He says that he has an exclusive preference for being *pasif*, and that his partner must be a very masculine man who is dominating and decisive in daily matters. Arda also pinpointed that he likens his long-term relationships to conventional marriages –with him being in the role of 'the wife', and his partner, the husband. He adds:

R02: My lover has to be completely *aktif* in bed. In a long-term relationship, if I am *aktif*, I don't know, for some reason, something dies away; in that case, I'd start to look at him [his lover] as if he is a homosexual friend of mine, and that love

⁶ R08: Sonuçta şey, sana birisinin sahip çıkmasını, bir erkeğin olmasını istiyorsan o zaman da rol yapıyorsun. İşte rol yapıyorsun derken herkes kendi rolünü biliyor, işte o erkekliğini biliyor, sen dişiliğini biliyorsun...

ARAŞTIRMACI: *Bu rolü oynamak seni rahatsız ediyor mu peki?*

R08: Yoo, artık şey, etmiyor. Hem benimsiyorsun, hem de karşı tarafı da rahatsız etmiyor. Bir kere pasif olmayı da seviyorum çok. Seviyorum değil pasif olmak istiyorum.

⁷ See following section where he talks about how he 'has to be' *aktif* due to his occupation as a sex-worker. Hence, this fact should not be confused with Arda's *actual* sex-role preference, which allows him to define himself accordingly.

disappears gradually. I know this from past experience... I don't want to be *aktif* in a long-term relationship, it shouldn't happen!⁸ [Arda: *pasif/Avrupa travestisi*, 24, high school graduate].

When asked how he identifies himself, Arda responds:

R02: ...I see myself as an *Avrupa travestisi* (European transvestite). When we look at such transvestites, we see that the hair and beard is kept at a normal length, you have no breasts, like an ordinary guy, but you wear women's clothes... a nose job is 2 billion Turkish Liras, a breast implant is 2 billion, getting your genitals removed is 5500 dollars...well why should I pay all this money? During the night, I wear extremely feminine clothes; I sometimes even wear women's clothes, but never a skirt, and I also don't have breasts...and it's not required anyways...⁹

From the responses of both *aktif* and *pasif* men above, it is evident that these men's same-sex desire is structured by the existing gender order in Turkish society (as discussed in Chapter 2). Within this traditional model of homosexual bonding, the participants conceive themselves with apparent reservations, no matter how limited, with hegemonic masculinity. These men are products of a culture that promote conventional definitions of gender, and each member simply emulates the power relations inherent in heterosexual bonding. Put differently, the rigid division of sex-roles in such relationships reinforces the myth of not only heterosexuality but also masculinity.

⁸ R02: Sevgilim yatakta sadece aktif olmalı. Uzun süreli beraberliğimde ben aktif olursam bilmiyorum nedense bende birşeyler bitiyor, onu öyle sanki eşcinsel bir arkadaşım mış gibi görüyorum o zaman, ve o sevgi yavaş yavaş bitiyor, çünkü daha önceden öyle bir ilişkiyi yaşadım ve öyle biliyorum...aktif olmak istemiyorum uzun bir beraberliğimde...olmasın!

⁹ R02: ...ben kendimi Avrupa travestisi olarak görüyorum...şimdi Avrupa travestilerine baktığımızda, saç-sakal normal uzun, göğüs yok, normal bir erkek tarzında, ama üzerinde kadın kıyafeti olan bir tip...bir burun ameliyatı 2 milyar Türk Lirası, bir göğüs ameliyatı 2 milyar, cinsel organını kestirme 5500 dolar, yani ben bu kadar para yani niye vereyim ki? Ben yani geceleri aşırı efemine giyiniyorum, bazen kadın kıyafetleri giyerim ben, etek asla giymem ama, ama göğüsüm yok...ve zaten gerekmiyor da...

Inconsistencies: Top Pasifs and Bottom Aktifs

Receptivity in anal intercourse is traditionally associated with being feminine, and the *pasif* person is automatically 'tainted' by homosexuality. However, the predominance of one particular paradigm of male same-sex sexuality in Turkey does *not* mean that any variations, deviations or inconsistencies of forms are unimportant or not related to the Turkish experience. There are men who feel the need to align themselves with the hegemonic form of masculinity, and use it as a reference, while simultaneously engaging in *discreet* sexual practices that would otherwise be considered as impairing one's sense of masculinity (see Irwin, 2000). This section attempts to move towards looking beyond the cultural stereotypes, ensuring that 'other voices', which deviate from the gender-stratified model, are also heard and given validation. As in many other cultures around the world, although there is a general assumption made vis-à-vis sexuality that opposites attract – attraction to the masculine entails seeing oneself as being feminine and performing accordingly – homosexual practices may be more complex, and not so predictable in messy reality. There are men who try to secure their privileged position in the power hierarchy by adopting the heterosexual masculine role (which further reinforces hegemonic masculinity), but whose "behavioural repertoire may diverge from the clear-cut [gender] dichotomy" (Murray, 1992:30). In Murray's (1992:30) own words:

Those who are privately involved in receptive homosexuality, but who maintain a masculine public appearance, are obviously unwilling to forgo male privileges, and have a vested interest in maintaining stigma on effeminacy rather than on homosexuality.

In response to societal disapproval, these men who do not openly reveal their *pasif* tendencies assert that they are rather *aktifs*, or simply consider themselves as being

'heterosexual', irrespective of their actual sexual performances. It becomes clear that these 'top *pasifs*' try to avoid any stigmatizing information and maintain their status in Turkish society at the same time. As Irwin (2000:368-9) and Murray (1992:30) recognize, men usually do not confess their real sexual practices, particularly if they are perceived to be dishonourable by others in society. Within the Mexican context (with obvious similarities to the Turkish experience), in relation to what can be understood as the 'masculine lie', Pineda (1961:49-50) points out that:

A man who lies is reaffirming himself with respect to everyone else, in a supposed truth that only he knows, or believes he knows: he is, then, establishing for himself a different truth and is, therefore, trying to create, for the benefit of everyone else, a fantastic being, different from reality.... The Ego of the person who lies is reaffirmed upon considering that he has dominated and defeated the person who has been deceived (cited in Irwin, 2000:369).

Having said this, one of my interviewees¹⁰ (Selami: identified as 'heterosexual', 41, Middle school education), at first was insistent about his preference for effeminate men who would be willing to be *pasif*. Selami kept on saying that his ideal sex partner is a person who wears women's clothes, lacy underwear, make-up, and a wig. Such depictions of an ideal led me to ask why he would prefer a 'pseudo -woman' when there are so many 'real women' already available in society. His response was that heterosexual women do not "take it up the ass", and as anal penetration is his favourite sex fantasy, he has no other choice but to anally penetrate effeminate men who "only want to be the passive giver (*pasif verici*)". However, later in our conversation he contradicted himself by admitting that even if a 'real woman' were to fulfill such desires, he still would want to 'do it' with a man. He

¹⁰ Selami was recruited through a referral from one of my informants from Kaos GL. He is not part of this gay organization, and only finds his sex partners in public parks, or cinemas. This interview itself was conducted within a park environment.

later brought up an instance in the park when another man unzipped his trousers, revealing his “extraordinary big tool” to him from a distance. According to Selami, he was taken by surprise and went by the man’s side, indicating his agreement to have sex with him, taking his pants off in return. But, he claims that he was further shocked as soon as the man knelt down to be the *pasif* partner. From this experience it may be inferred that Selami had prepared himself to be penetrated by the man who had a big penis, as he not only showed his interest in the man by getting closer, but also he was astonished by seeing this man give his back to him. For Selami, it seems that a man with such a phallus would have been nothing but the *aktif* person. As a result, it may be understood that no matter what Selami says with regards to his having an exclusive preference to anally penetrate effeminate men, and that he would never allow another man to penetrate him, his portrayal of this very instance in the park implicitly reveals his endeavour to fulfill his unspeakable passions below the surface. Otherwise stated, his ‘masculine lie’ is used as an effort to maintain his public sense of masculine integrity, despite a hidden desire to be the receptive partner in anal intercourse. Selami’s story suggests that sex-role changing is not random or reciprocal, and that some ‘*aktif*’ men are willing to be penetrated by ‘more masculine’ men, in comparison to their sense of or way of perceiving their *own* masculinity. The other man’s having a bigger penis can be a quality (together with other possible ones such as body size, looks, conduct etc.) that could make Selami assume he (the man) is ‘more masculine’ than himself. At one point in the interview Selami adds: “I have an average cock, it’s not too big or too small, big enough to be satisfied”. He seems to be placing himself in a gender order, and is capable of ‘flipping’ his sex-role preference –an act that he might not normally do, but for ‘some’ guys. On the other hand, the men that are understood to be ‘less’ masculine

are automatically identified with *pasif* inclinations, and serve the 'seemingly' exclusive *aktif* partners' desires.

Yılmaz (1998:153-6) shows that there are masculine appearing men who do not necessarily have homosexual preferences, but for a livelihood or just to lead a more luxurious life-style, choose to sell sex to closeted or open homosexuals. In Turkey, these men are labelled as '*jigolo*' (a borrowing from the word 'gigolo' in English, but with a shift in meaning; the male identified is not supported by a woman, but a man), and although they are usually known to be *aktif* for tangible rewards, they also may possibly be the receiving partner, depending on how far one wants to make such concessions. In a recent study, Hocaoglu (2002: 103) gives voice to an interviewee who claims that he made a *jigolo* confess his homosexual preference, but that such men cannot reconcile their same-sex preference with the hegemonic masculinity to which they subscribe. Thus, as a means of detaching themselves from the stigma normally attributed, these men find their homosexual engagements justifiable so long as they receive material benefits in return. Unfortunately, in this study, I have not been able to recruit a *jigolo* to get a feel for the experiences and circumstances in which he constructs an understanding of himself and the meaning(s) that such engagements would imply to him. Nevertheless, it is clear that there are masculine appearing men who seek validations for what they normally regard as an incompatibility between being masculine and receptive, and consequently allow themselves to be penetrated during anal intercourse.

In connection to 'top *pasifs*', similar inconsistencies to the 'traditional model of homosexual coupling' can be seen in relation to those men who are feminine in appearance, but *aktif* during anal intercourse. In this study, during the recruitment process, both my

informants and the subjects stated that it was ludicrous or even inconceivable to find men within this category. Towards the final stages of the research, I unexpectedly came across Yeşim's (2002) thought-provoking interview with Pınar Selek where she talks about transvestites in Istanbul whose struggles and experiences around their sexual orientation and profession as sex-workers sheds light on the possibility of 'bottom *aktif*s'. Consequently, as I was not able to find men who identified themselves as not only effeminate but also *aktif*, I felt obliged to include two men who are sex-workers, one of which also referred me to another respondent, who does not fit in the category, but is acquainted with such experiences as he provides the space (*fuhuş evi*) for such sexual engagements in return of small monetary benefits. It is noteworthy that although both sex-workers are effeminate, in daily life they do not wear feminine clothes or make-up. However, in order to increase the likelihood of attracting clients, they both make modifications at night; they use this as an opportunity to reveal their 'basic' instincts, as they indicate.

According to Deniz, it is problematic to assume that men who are labelled as *laço*, or whoever is very masculine, are *aktif* in bed, notwithstanding the image they try to present in public. He claims that there are many masculine men who choose to be with effeminate men like himself, in order to imply to others that as 'real men' they are *aktif*. But, for Deniz, this is a strategy employed to hide the masculine partner's *pasif* tendencies, as other people would discriminate against such men if they heard their 'buddy' spent the night with another masculine man. In Deniz's words, "it is important not to leave a question mark in one's friends' mind as they will start questioning who is *aktif*, who is *pasif*..." It is clear that as long as certain scripts are in use to give others the impression

that every participant is following their respective sex-roles as prescribed by society, the masculine partner can discreetly engage in homosexual relationships, that can be understood as a 'transgression' against the traditional model.

R08: For instance, a *lubunya*'s or *pasif* homosexual's lover, in other words his *laço*, is constantly *aktif*; and, is aware that if he were to be *pasif* to his *lubunya*, then his reputation will be ruined... But, he goes to discreet places and finds people that he doesn't know and becomes *pasif*. It's because he knows that his lover will leave him and will spread it [the stigmatizing information] all around, therefore, his name will be *damgalanma* [tarnished]. There are several examples of this. Many of my friends' *laço* would come and be *pasif* to me for money in return¹¹ [Deniz: *pasif*, 25, university drop out].

Arda echoes this point by claiming that the reason why he has so many clients, compared to transsexuals, is that he has not surgically removed his penis. He says that these men prefer transvestites or effeminate men as they still have their penises available. Consequently, no matter how effeminate Arda is, most of his clients tend to be the receiving partner during anal sex, and people like Arda serve as perfect camouflage for such hidden activities. This case is also reported within the Brazilian context by Kulick (1998). Arda revealed that at first, he only wore baggy clothes to hide his phallus (or simply 'squeezing' his phallus between two legs during sex), and would never allow anybody to touch his front part, as he thought that he was only supposed to be the *pasif* receiver with 'a hole' ready for penetration. However, he came to realize that the men he slept with not only laid their hands on his penis, but also would engage in oral and anal sex. In his own words:

¹¹ R08: Mesela bir *lubunya*'nın yada *pasif* eşcinselin sevgilisi, yani *laço*'su, yani sürekli aktif oluyor. Ve biliyor ki buna *lubunya*sına *pasif* olursa doğrudan adı çıkacak...Ama o gidiyor, gizli kapaklı bir yerlerde tanımadığı insanlarla *pasif* oluyor. Çünkü biliyor ki sevgilisi terk edecek onu bir de duyuracaktır etrafa böylelikle *damgalanacaktır*. Bir çok örnekleri oldu. Benim birçok arkadaşımın *laço*'su geldi benle parayla *pasif* oldu.

R02: For about 75% of my clients, I'm the one who 'screws'... There are men who come for me, and say that it's their very first time, but then they are the *pasif* one. Well how is that possible? In addition, how is it that they can so easily have sexual intercourse? And these people never identify themselves as being 'homosexual'; they'd never accept that. They are 'men'! Look, this is very interesting but, in bed, they say "kocacığım" (my husband/man), but after I get out of bed, if I were to say "karıcığım" (my wife/woman), he'd get into an argument with me... After getting out of bed, he becomes 'my husband'...¹² [Arda: *pasif/Avrupa travestisi*, 24, high school graduate].

Biol also maintains that there are many masculine-appearing men (introducing themselves as *aktif*) who come to his house to 'hook up' with effeminate male sex-workers, but end up being *pasif* after saying, "I never tried this [being *pasif*] before, and since you are so trustworthy, I am very curious..." Biol states that this is the usual excuse made by such men, and pinpoints how easily they end up being penetrated with no physical discomfort whatsoever. He elaborated on this point by saying that if there is a group of masculine men visiting his house to choose among the sex-workers already at his home, there is a high likelihood that the most effeminate ones will be preferred during the 'browsing and selection process' (*seç-beyen-al*), as nobody would want his friends to assume that he will get penetrated by another masculine man. Yet, contrary to what is presumed, Biol states that no one knows what actually happens within four walls, as both participants have benefits through their 'secret deal': for one person being financial, and the other sexual. Once a 'top *pasif*' has confidence in a particular sex-worker, he ends up frequenting the same 'bottom *aktif*', as he would not want anyone else to know his

¹² R02: Bana gelen müşterinin ortalama olarak %75'ini ben kendim beceririm... Bana gelen oluyor mesela, ilk defam diyor sonra bana pasif oluyor, yani bu nasıl mümkün ki? Hem bu kadar rahat nasıl cinsel ilişkiye girebiliyorlar ki? Ve kişiler kendilerini asla eşcinsel olarak tanımlamazlar, bunu hayatta kabul etmiyor, onlar 'erkek'! Yatakda bana şey diyorlar, bak bu çok ilginçtir, "kocacığım" sonra ben yataktan çıktıktan sonra ben ona "karıcığım" desem benle kavgaya eder... yataktan çıktıktan sonra o benim kocam oluyor...

stigmatizing sexual encounters. In order to prevent other people from disclosing such confidential information about oneself, these 'real men' feel compelled to visit the same sex-worker repeatedly. Hence, according to this respondent, this is why transvestites and effeminate male sex-workers make more money than transsexuals. Birol adds:

R19: The transvestites in the sex-work industry wouldn't attempt to reveal secret reality, as it would negatively affect their earnings; thus, the client will either stop using their services or simply deny [what actually happens in the room]... Nevertheless, one way or another, the transvestite will still disclose to his friends what really happens, but this is never reflected outside... I know a lot of cases that a [transvestite] friend will come out from the room saying, "Birol I was the one who 'did him'", but to the friend of the guy [who is also identified as heterosexual], he would say, "Your friend is so strong, he's got a huuuuuge thing [penis]", but inside the room the guy wouldn't even have an erection...but this is said for business purposes...¹³ [Birol: *pasif*, 41, post-secondary education].

What becomes clear is that "[s]ince nobody other than a direct witness can really know what happens in bed, there will always be a doubt connected to homosexual encounters and, thereby, the risk that a man's masculinity may be perceived as impaired" (Prieur, 1998: 188-9). It is noticeable that 'bottom *aktifs*' and 'top *pasifs*' are still making use of the traditional notions in relation to gender during mate-selection, but do not necessarily conform to the sex-roles that one's gender demands. Hence, although rigid gender roles and the sex-role they may entail are not inevitably determinant, through 'the masculine lie', the conventional notions around role-performance and hegemonic

¹³ R19: Fuhuş ortamındaki travestiler zaten ekmeklerini kaybetmemek için saklı olan gerçeği ortaya koymaya çalışmazlar, çünkü onu yaparlarsa o insan oraya bir daha gelmez, yada inkar eder...ama travesti arkadaşlarına mutlaka söylüyor bir şekilde ama dışarıya yansıtılmaz bu...ben böyle çok biliyorum çıkıyor böyle "Birol ben yaptım" diyor ama heteroseksüel deneni kişinin arkadaşına "senin arkadaşın ne kadar güçlüymüş yahu, bööyülle şeyi var işte" diyordur ama içeride şeyi kalkmamıştır...ama bunu ticaret amaçlı yapıyordur...

masculinity are further reaffirmed (and the stigma attached to *pasif*-role taking is additionally reinforced).

Indicators of Particular 'Labels' and how they are enacted in certain Locales

There are certain scripts employed by men who engage in same-sex relations in order to communicate their sex-role preference in possible sexual encounters. As evident from the interviews, it was found that depending on the location where partners are sought for, the 'signals' used vary considerably, although certain similarities can also be discerned. During the interviews, in response to the question, "How do you understand that some guys are within certain labels?" it was indicated that in places such as public parks, bars/clubs, *hamams*, cinemas, and in the streets, it is possible to understand a person's sex-role preference, that would reduce the chances of causing any misunderstanding among interested parties.

The Park

Public parks are one of the most widely frequented 'cruising spots' (*çark alanı*) by men who are reluctant about having their 'sexual escapades' revealed to others. As in many other countries, in almost all cities of Turkey, Ankara, Istanbul, and İzmir to name a few of them, these are places where hetero/homo/bisexual men discreetly find sex partners. Upon entering a park, one wanders around until he comes across someone in whom he has an interest. Usually, right after finding someone, he sits on a park bench that is closest to the potential partner to draw his attention. Eye contact is crucial as there is a chance that the other person can go away. Once both parties look at each other enough to 'signal' an

agreement, either person walks around and ends up sitting on the same bench as the other, and usually indirectly tells each other what one expects from the other, and go somewhere that no one can see. However, verbalizing expectations is not always the easiest thing, therefore, body language is one of the most commonly employed strategies. In this case, as one walks through the park, observing people carrying a bag (*çanta*) on their shoulder like a purse, wearing some make-up, crossing legs while sitting on a bench, and holding one's cigarette by the tip of his fingers are only some of the means by which *pasif* orientation is communicated, while, the *aktif* man would spread his legs apart while seated, and act 'manly'. However, such obvious gender attributes are not always incorporated into conduct in the park. As mentioned by three of the respondents, especially for those men who are gender conforming, whether *aktif* or *pasif*, scratching or fondling one's crotch while walking around, is indicative that a person is willing to be the *aktif* penetrator in anal intercourse, while touching one's buttocks lightly, with brushing motions tells that he is willing to be the *pasif* receiving partner. It is apparent that if a particular man is 'versatile', the signals he would make to other men in that location, depending on his preference on a certain day or according to each potential partner encountered, will be the guiding principle that informs other men his desires at that particular moment.

The Cinema

Cinemas that show pornographic movies for an exclusively male clientele are alternative locations where men discreetly find same-sex partners. Usually in Ankara, such places have the sign "*Üç Film Birden*" (Three Movies at Once) at their entrance, in which each movie last about 30-40 minutes. What is interesting about such places is that showing

'gay pornography' is out of the question. Despite the fact that many 'heterosexual' men frequent these places to see 'straight porn', it is common knowledge that the same people also engage in homosexual relationships provided that they only offer their penis for others for oral or anal sex, perpetuating their culturally valued status in society as 'real men' who only *give*.

As claimed by the interviewees, while the lights are on, people look around to designate 'the one' they find suitable for themselves, and as soon as the lights go off, they sit next to that person. One of the respondents said that he is so used to going to the cinema that he is able to see who he likes even in the dark, and moves around while the movies are shown. A crucial aspect in such places is that those who are not interested in other men sit at the front (as any action can be seen from the back) and only view the movies, while others strategically try to quickly reserve a back seat, before others do. As Ahmet asserts, all employees (including the manager) are already aware of what happens clandestinely. He adds:

R12: As soon as I enter the cinema, you can tell that I am *pasif*... I'm flamboyant in the way I walk, well it's because I'm used to it this way, and in these kinds of places I am generally more 'flamie' than usual¹⁴ [Ahmet: *pasif*, 30, high school graduate].

According to Hüseyin, a married man who usually finds his male partners at the cinema, since he is friends with the ushers (*ışıkçılar*) at the cinema, he is given permission to have other men sit on his lap. He points out that usually the ushers allow men to have oral sex ("*sipet-alıkmak*" or *saksafon çekme*), and that in the event he wishes to have sexual intercourse, he is given the keys to a separate toilet only used by staff members, or the

¹⁴ R12: Benim pasif olduğum zaten sinemaya girer girmez belli oluyor...kırıkkanımdır, yani genelde böyle alıştığım için, ve genelde bu tür ortamlarda daha çok kırıkkanımdır.

room where the film equipment are stored. He also claims that the staff know whatever happens in there as:

R11: ...a lot of people that we define as *lubunya* come in with no make-up on, then after putting their make-up in the toilets, they wander in the cinema like women...and they (the staff) ignore such things as the cinema wouldn't do business otherwise...¹⁵ [Hüseyin: (*aktif*)gey, 30, high school graduate].

The Hamam

Also known as the Turkish bathhouse, the *hamam* is a third alternative where men privately meet and participate in homosexual relations. In the *hamams* that are mostly frequented by men who engage in homosexual relations (there are two well-known ones in Ankara), the *tellak* (*hamam* attendant or masseur) usually directs men first into a steam room, and when he is not 'occupied' with any other client, he indicates to the next person to lay on a marble slab (*hamam taşı*) and starts to massage with a somewhat rough washcloth scrubber (*kese*). Consequently, as Emre mentions, the person is asked whether he wants to have his body washed with a special green soap. This is the instance when one's experience at the *hamam* can become a little adventurous, if preferred. In Emre's own words:

R18: After saying that I want to get washed by soap (*sabunlanmak*) the *tellak* leads one to a small stall, hangs your *peş tamal* (waist cloth or large bath towel) at the entrance of the stall to let other people know that privacy is expected, and gets every part of your body foamy.... As soon as he gets all of your face covered with foam, he tilts your head towards his penis. Of course, as you feel his erection on your face (unable to open the eyes because of the soap) you understand that it's time to give him a blowjob. This happened to me whenever I went there... and at the end you

¹⁵ R11: ...birsürü *lubunya* dediğimiz kişiler içeriye makyajsız giriyorlar sonra tuvaletlerde makyajlar yapıyorlar ve içeride kadın gibi dolaşıyorlar...onlarda buna göz yumuyorlar yoksa sinema dolmaz...

have to give the *tellak* an extra tip for his service¹⁶ [Emre: *gey*, 25, university graduate].

However, not everybody wishes to get intimate with the *tellak*. There are men who simply sweat in the steam room and either stare at each other, and 'signal' whether one is *aktif* by either showing his erection through his *peştamal*, or just fondling it. Usually the way one sits or lays down in the steam room indicates one's sex-role preference. Men who cross their legs or simply act in a feminine manner reveal that they prefer to be *pasif*. Such preferences are also communicated in the pools (*havuz*) where men go for cooling in the *hamam*.

The Bars/Clubs

The gay bars or clubs in Ankara are one of the most popular places where men who engage in same-sex relations find each other. At such places, there are many indicators that men use to let others know the sex-role preference they assign themselves. When a person wears colourful, tight, sparkly or even chiffon cloths, and acts womanly, it is indicative of one's *pasifness*. Also, having 'alternative' hairstyles, wearing light makeup, such as eyeliner, and powdering one's face to give a smoother look also serve the same purposes. Other than physical appearance, the way men dance at such places also gives clues. It was indicated that if a person dances coquettishly or flighty (*kırılarak*) with techno music, and suddenly starts belly-dancing as soon as there is a switch to oriental music, then the likelihood that he is *pasif* is high. Whereas, men sipping their drinks at a corner, staring

¹⁶ R18: Sabunlanmak istediğimi tellağa söyledikten sonra tellak seni küçük bir kabineye yönlendiriyor, sonra peştemalını kabinenin girişine asıyor, ki başkalarına bir şekilde rahatsız edilmek istenmediğini belirtmek için, sonra bütün vücudunu sabunla köpürtüyor... Bütün yüzünü köpükle kapladıktan sonra seni yavaşca penisine doğru eğiyor. Tabii ki adamın ereksiyonunu yüzünde hissettiğinden dolayı, zaten gözlerini açamayacağından dolayı, saksafon çekmen gerektiğini anlıyorsun. Ben oraya ne zaman gitsem, bu bana hep oluyor... Ve en sonunda tellağa ek bir bahşış bırakman gerekiyor.

at other people on the dance floor, or simply dancing without any excessive body movement is generally a sign of *aktifness*. Five of the respondents indicated that wearing a dark suit (*takım elbise*), especially a black one, is a way of asserting one's masculinity. Furthermore, according to Alp,

R1: For instance, if someone buys you a drink, you understand that he wants to be *aktif*, because that is the case when the whole 'taking one person under another's wings' thing starts; or, when an argument or fight starts, if he says "You stand here" and pushes you behind him, then again you understand that that person has *aktif* tendencies¹⁷ [Alp: *gey*, 21, University student].

Commonality in all Locations: Language Use and 'The Look'

Almost all of the respondents claimed that whether it is in the park, cinema, hamam, or in the bars, the frequent use of words "derived from gypsy slang" (Tapınç, 1992: 42) among sexual minorities, which the heterosexual population cannot interpret or is simply not familiar with, is a major sign of one's *pasif* inclinations. This can be attributed to the notion that since *aktif* men do not view themselves as being 'homosexual', exempting oneself from using such jargon further aids in distinguishing a person from his *pasif* partners, who are automatically labelled as 'homosexual' and assumed to be equipped with the 'private language' that helps them to communicate among themselves and find prospective sex partners. Here are some common slang words used by this sub-culture:

Balamoz = Older male

Manti = Younger male

Laço = 'Real' man/ heterosexual

Lubunya/ Lubun = (Effeminate) homosexual

Koli alıklama = trying to pick somebody up/ making a pass at someone

Koli = sex partner

¹⁷ R1: Mesela sana birisi içki alıyorsa o zaman da o kişinin sana 'aktif' olmak istediğini anlıyorsun, çünkü o kanat açma olayı, sahiplenme olayı başlıyor, veya bir tartışma veya bir kavga çıktığında, "sen böyle geç" derse ve senin önüne geçerse seni arkaya itip, o zaman da kişinin aktif eğilimli olduğunu anlıyorsundur.

Kolileşmek = to fuck

Gacı = Woman

Güllümleşmek = to have fun

Sipet alıklama = to give a blowjob

Naşlama = to run away especially when there is a chance of getting caught

Madi = thing/person that is bad

Other than the use of gypsy slang, the way in which men talk with each other (*konuşma şekli*) also gives clues in relation to who is (or wants to be) *aktif* or *pasif*. Some respondents stated that if a person begins to include sexual jokes or any other reference to sex during a conversation, then the chances that he is homosexual, hence willing to be penetrated, are high. Also, including expressions such as ‘*ay*’ and ‘*ayol*’ in a conversation, which are feminine characteristics, and laughing out loud in a womanly manner (“hahahhaayyy” as one respondent puts it) also display *pasif* tendencies.

Furthermore, many of the interviewees indicated that the way people stare at each other also gives clues to not only one’s sex preference but also one’s sex-role preference. This stare, or what Badruddin Khan (1997:55) calls ‘The Look’ is the universal *coup d’oeil* that men give other men once they sexually desire them. In Khan’s (1997:55) own words:

This Look spans continents and cultures, and time stands still when there lurks the possibility of wandering within its radiance. Antennae that can pick up the Look are grafted within us and, as children of the Look, we find its magic revealed to us in stages, with experience. Investigating the Look requires empirical practice. The Look is part visual contact, part stance, and part the projection of presence. But dissecting it into its components brings no satisfaction, just as the inventory of the electronics in an audio receiver provides little clue to the melodious strains it can evoke. Just as beautiful electronics can make bad music, and a properly tuned, aging receiver can convey flawless audio radiance, so it is that the Look silently transforms the ordinary man into a prospective sex organ from top to toe.

Hence, in the event that a man looks at another man in a 'seductive way' (*edali bakış*), while trying to emulate womanly mannerism, he makes it clear that he desires to be the penetratee, whereas staring in a 'cool manner' (*soğuk bakış*) with no emotions revealed signals *aktif* tendencies in anal intercourse. According to Harun (*gey*, 27, university graduate), it is easy to differentiate heterosexual men who are not interested in same-sex relationships, whether *aktif* or *pasif*, since they do not make long eye contact with other men.

What about the Internet?

I find it noteworthy that although the number of men finding sex partners on the Internet is growing every day, the indicators used above are not seen to be as efficient as bluntly asking whether someone is *aktif*, *pasif*, or both. In fact, many respondents point out that they do not have to waste time in order to make it clear to whom they want, and what they can offer; thus, directly typing (asking) whether a person is a bottom or a top in anal sex becomes a very convenient way for men to arrange short term sexual engagements. In cyberspace, it is easy to find other men through well-known websites such as www.gay.com, and www.mynet.com, discreetly, without having to expose one's true identity. The chat-floors on these websites usually make it easy for men to communicate each other's sex-role preference by providing a 'profile' section for each nickname that men sign up for, which basically includes information depending on what characterizes a particular person, and what he is looking for in a casual or possible long-term relationship. Here are some real existing profiles that were found on the Internet:

-212, 29, A, Good looking, athletic (meaning that he is in Istanbul [as 212 is the area phone code], 29 years old, and *aktif* [A])

-*Yakışıklı Pasif, Büyük aletli aktif arıyor* (meaning that he is a good-looking *pasif* man, looking for someone who is *aktif* and has a big 'tool')

-*Escort: 29, 187, 77, kumral, atletik, aktif* (meaning that he is an athletic, *aktif*, 29 year old, with darkish complexion, who is 1.87meters high and weighs 77 kilos)

-*Gey, gizli, benim evim, a+p, şimdi, 36; sende gey, a+p, daha genç* (meaning that he is a 36 year old gay man, versatile, looking for now; and looking for younger gay men that are also both *aktif* and *pasif*).

The internet is a great resource for men who engage in same-sex relations as it does not require men to go to public places and take the risk of seeing someone that might be familiar in one's social life who might spread unwanted rumours about such hidden escapades. Although it might be assumed that only people from higher socio-economic statuses may have access to the Internet, it is worth indicating that there are many available cyber-café's (on nearly every street in Ankara) that provide Internet services for a low price. Hence, without requiring one to be computer literate, it is made easy for many men from various backgrounds to make use of such services, and find possible sex-partners.

The possibility of finding sex partners through the Internet raises the intriguing question whether the Internet facilitates versatility (being both *aktif* and *pasif*) as anyone can have 'multiple' profiles and indicate divergent preferences in these profiles. However, as there was no such focus during this study, unfortunately, I do not have enough reference for further claims and elaborations.

CHAPTER 8

THE EMERGENCE OF WESTERN 'GAY IDENTITY'?

Introduction

There has been little recognition among people of the northern and western hemispheres of the endeavours of gay men in Turkey. Even though Chapter 7 chiefly illustrates the hegemonic constructions of gendered sexual activity and passivity, there are many men who recognize the construct, but nevertheless resist it or integrate it into their sense of self, adopting Western models of gay identification (apart from homosexual 'practices'). Especially since the early 1990s, more and more Turkish men (including *pasif* identified men, if not *aktif* ones) have started to incorporate their homosexual behaviour into their sense of self and comfortably identify themselves under the label 'gey', as a social identity – a recent emergence linked to trans-national networks of gay men. Although *geys* represent a minority among men who have sex with men, their number is rapidly increasing, and through organizations such as Kaos GL¹, they are engaging in activities which seek to raise consciousness concerning their struggles around their sexual orientation. To comprehend 'gey identities' in Turkish society, first of all, necessitates examining occurrences at the global level and seeing what Western articulations imply at the local level; to gain a feel for the extent to which Turkish *gey* men organize themselves. The term *gey* is variable, entailing diverse ways of imagining, portraying, and seeing oneself.

¹ The 'GL' in Kaos GL is an acronym for 'Gay and Lesbian'.

'Modern' Homosexualities

Socioeconomic changes in contemporary Turkey have no doubt enhanced the conditions for gay cultural formation. As Parker (1999:223) suggests in a different context, the shifts in the way men socially organize themselves “must be understood as a complex interplay between individual biographies, local social structures, and broader global processes.” Recent developments in ‘Turkish gay life’ cannot be understood without reference to the rise of a modern capitalist world system which has restructured both the private and public spheres and influenced the emergence of ‘gay’ identities, communities, and even movements. Modernity has changed traditional gender/sex orders, and aided men engaging in same-sex acts to enjoy their sexual preferences openly, or at least, with less guilt. As John D’Emilio (1983) clarifies, the adopting of a gay identity, in the western sense, is a product of history, and is associated with capitalism’s free labour system, since capitalism detached men and women from dependence on the parental household, giving both sexes autonomy, apart from the confines of the previously existing social space, creating the environment that permits men to organize a personal life around one’s own sexuality. “Materially, capitalism weakens the bonds that once kept families together so that their members experience a growing instability in the place they have come to expect happiness and emotional security” (D’Emilio, 1983: 109; cf. Adam, 1996: 112-4). As wage labourers, men began to be separated from traditional communities (outside the household), moving to more urban settings where the market sent them. Consequently, as the bonds keeping household production became looser, through industrialization there has been a breakdown in traditional ideas of the self. Put differently, there was a shift in ideology, i.e. the rise of individualism. As Plummer (1995:92) points out, “the notion of an autonomous

individual is a crucial idea. It is the rise of the modern self: a self that has to be much more flexible, mutable, protean than the self in a pre-capitalist order where identities were fixed, stable and largely God-given". The new public spaces where men could find each other outside kin ties facilitated the development of social networks for same-sex bonding. "For homosexually interested people, the issue is not one of family decline but of the development of often hidden and unintended possibilities that loosened the monopoly of traditional arrangements and made opting out of the system more viable" (Adam, 1996: 113). Thereby, the changes associated with capitalism have created the ideological conditions that give men the option to make sense of their lives and to possess a gay identity. Altman (1996:87-8) adds that:

The significant aspect of the contemporary globalization of capitalism is the growth of affluence in many countries and the corresponding greater freedom for individual choice it makes possible. Affluence, education, and awareness of other possibilities are all prerequisites for the adoption of new forms of identity, and the spread of these conditions will increase the extent to which gay identities develop beyond their base in liberal Western societies.

These developments, which have been promoted through processes and events taking place on a global level, have had an effect on Turkey as a country, not to mention Turkish 'gay life' in particular. The changes in local regimes of sexuality and gender become more obvious with the emergence of new kinds of visibly 'gay identities'. Nonetheless, caution must be taken in coming to the conclusion that *all* Turkish gay men will behave or conceive themselves in the same way as men do in the West². Through the incorporation and indigenization of external social and cultural influences, Turkish men begun "to

² There are scholars who acknowledge the predominance of Western modes of gay identity, but also highlight that the form brought by Westerners is definitely not homogeneous or uniform (see Rofel, 1999; and Boellstorff, 1999:490).

imagine themselves as part of an alternative gay or homoerotic culture that extends beyond national frontiers, and that offers possibilities for realigning the contours of sexual experience both locally as well as globally” (Parker, 1999:225).

The number of men becoming members of Kaos GL, the first gay organization in Turkey, is increasing every year, which also entails having more men identifying themselves with the *gey* label. Publishing a GLBT³ magazine is just one of this organization’s activities. Kaos GL frequently participates in panel discussions and symposiums held at various universities such as Middle East Technical University, Istanbul Bilgi University and Hacettepe University, aiming to make homosexuality accepted and defined as a social identity. In September, 2000, the organization established a ‘Cultural Centre’ (*Kültür Merkezi*) which has its own GLBT library, meeting room, and office for not only producing material for publication in the bi-monthly *KAOS GL Magazine*, but also for contacting other Turkish sexual minorities outside the city limits of Ankara, and around the world such as The International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) and International Gay & Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC). At this Cultural Centre, Kaos GL also organize activities such as weekly salon discussions, video shows (especially from overseas), and exhibitions related to GLBT issues related to not only Turkey but also other countries around the world. Even for a foreigner who does not know the Turkish language, once a person skims through a Kaos GL publication, it becomes apparent that the visual aids, the translated articles, and the advertised GLBT books and movies undoubtedly connect Turkish sexual minorities to a larger global gay world. By means of western media representations, as sexuality turns out to be a significant domain for the production of modernity, “[m]odern’ ways of being homosexual threaten not only the custodians of

³ Designations such as ‘GLBT’ are adopted by Kaos GL.

'traditional' morality, they also threaten the position of 'traditional' forms of homosexuality, those which are centred around gender nonconformity and transvestism" (Altman, 2001:88). To be sure, Kaos GL is very much influenced by the gay (and lesbian) movements in other countries.

It is also crucial to highlight that part of the appearance of modernity (regarding ideas about being gay) is the impact of travel to and from foreign cities such as New York, Toronto, and Amsterdam. It is not unusual to see young Turkish 'gay men' who have travelled outside Turkey, either as students for a university degree or as tourists, and who would share their cultural experiences with others at their homeland by either writing them down in the form of an article for the magazine, or simply verbalizing their stories during the weekly meetings. More directly connected to how men socially organize themselves, Turkish travelers to the West also bring bits and pieces of modern gay culture –gay pornography being the most prominent. "US gay video pornography, with its emphasis on the gay hypermasculine clone, has almost single-handedly contributed to the discursive severing of the associative links between 'being a real, muscular, macho man' and 'not getting fucked'" (Lambevski, 1999:407). Similarly, foreign men who come to Turkey –for business, teaching English at various institutions or simply to travel the exotic places the country offers– also bring different aspects of their gay culture, not so similar to the Turkish experience. "As mobility increases, more and more people are traveling abroad and meeting foreigners at home. It is as impossible to prevent new identities and categories traveling as it is to prevent pornography traveling across the Internet" (Altman, 2001:94).

Likewise, the importance of knowing a foreign language, English in particular, also comes to the surface. For the last two decades, there has been an enormous

proliferation in the number of educational institutions where English is the medium of instruction, both at the secondary school level and, especially, at the university level. It is worth highlighting that these establishments are mostly private schools catering to people at higher social class positions; the more privileged segment of the Turkish homosexual population has greater access to a foreign language and the outside world. The English language gives sexual minorities the opportunities for networking with other people who also have same-sex preferences, making it impossible to prevent the perpetual dissemination of ways of being homosexual from the West. And, as part of the emergence of modernity, the Internet has created a new avenue for the circulation of information and (cyber)space for communicating with other sexual minorities abroad in which English is predominantly used.

At this point, it is essential to understand what constitutes the 'gay' category. It is noteworthy that it is the coalescence of many factors, rather than one, which has motivated people to start to define themselves as 'gay', hence, enhancing the emergence of gay communities. In Turkey, contrary to what was experienced even a decade ago, more and more teenagers have started to speak openly of their same-sex preferences, in pursuit of a public identity based on homosexuality –clearly a western influence. As Barry Adam (2001: 170-1; see also Adam, 1995:7, and Altman, 1996) mentions, *modern* gay (and lesbian) worlds are distinguished from other systems of homosexual bonding in various ways:

1. In societies where kinship has declined as a primary organizing principle determining the survival and well-being of their members, homosexual relations have developed autonomous forms apart from dominant heterosexual family strictures.

2. Exclusive homosexuality has become increasingly possible for both partners and a ground for household formation.
3. Same-sex bonds have developed relatively egalitarian forms, characterized by age and gender 'endogamy', rather than involving people in differentiated age and gender classes.
4. People have come to discover each other and form large-scale social networks because of their homosexual interests and not only in the context of pre-existing social relationships (such as households, neighbourhoods, schools, militaries, churches, and so on).
5. Homosexuality has come to be a social formation unto itself characterized by self-awareness and group identity.

What follows is that, unlike the 'traditional' model of same-sex bonding (discussed in Chapter 7), homosexual men influenced by western models begin to identify themselves as 'gay' without necessarily denying conventional assumptions about masculinity, and form relationships that are egalitarian, in terms of unspecified role playing and regarding sexual reciprocity, as well as emotional reciprocity. "The increasing fluidity of power dynamics and the resistance to normative understandings of the exercise of power in sex is an effect of the democratization of power within sexual relations" (Kippax & Smith, 2001:430). Murray (2000:382-90) elaborates on this type of homosexuality by stating that it is an 'ideal type' (like gender stratified and age structured homosexualities) that does not necessarily demand invariant and perfectly balanced sexual reciprocity. He states that, in relation to egalitarianism, valuing both partners in a relationship and having a shared identity as gay are decisive factors, "not exactly calibrated sameness in gender self-presentation or perfectly balanced reciprocity in sex" (Murray, 2000:385). There are always

individual preferences regarding sex-role preference such as *aktif*, *pasif*, or *aktif-pasif* (i.e. *versatile* with a possible leaning towards either exclusive sex-role in varying degrees)⁴.

The gay transvaluation of “it is more blessed to give than to receive” a penis is not “we must do both and balance the frequency of giving and receiving” but “get what you want; wanting one or the other does not make you better or worse than someone wanting the other”.... It is respecting what others want to do with their bodies as we hope they will respect what we want to do with ours –a golden rule that is the positive basis for solidarity among sexual minorities (Murray, 2000:387-8).

As acknowledged by Tapınç (1992:46), this modern conception of viewing one’s homosexuality is a recent development especially among the younger⁵ and more educated segment of the homosexual population that reside in the more urbanized centres of Turkish society. These men have borrowed the word ‘gay’ from the English language, and included it into the Turkish language, spelling it ‘*gey*’ without distorting the original pronunciation. However, contrary to what this word means for gay North Americans (that is a social identity and consciousness actively chosen in relation to homosexuality), there are inconsistencies in what it signifies to Turkish sexual minorities in general. During my study, I have noticed men using the category *gey* – a largely Western term– to describe themselves from both rural and urban origins, various occupations, educational backgrounds, and social class positions. However, there is tendency for men from lower educational backgrounds, who have less exposure to western media representations of ‘gay identity’ forms, not to use ‘gay’ in the western sense. These men seem to use *gey* as a

⁴ Versatility is a common word among gay men in North America used to identify a person who is both the inserter (*aktif*) and the receiver (*pasif*) in anal intercourse.

⁵ It may be that the difficulty in finding older men who were openly *gey*, has to do with the lack of social conditions for new forms of sexual expression prior to the 1980s.

trendy word, in place of *ibne*, *eşcinsel*, *homoseksüel*, or *lubunya* (not *laço*)⁶, assimilating it to the traditional conception of homosexuality⁷. On the other hand, there are other *gey* men who simply perceive themselves, and present themselves to others, as having a consciousness and politics based on their same-sex orientation –and use the *gey* label as a way of being openly, solely homosexual (seemingly) devoid of the effeminacy traditionally attributed to same-sex preference. The content and meaning of the term ‘*gey*’ is contestable, and whatever it implies for both camps, it is quite common for men to further identify themselves (or others they know of) as *aktif gey* or *pasif gey*, to also make clear to other people their sex-role preference. Consequently, it becomes obvious how the continued usage of the word *gey* and combinations of it with other adjectives discloses the Turkish *gey* world’s lack of interest in ‘queer theory’. As one respondent acknowledges:

R18: I identify myself as being *gey*, and I am comfortable within such identification. If there weren’t such a word [as ‘*gey*’], then I don’t think the word ‘homosexual’ or ‘*ibne*’ would’ve made me view my sexuality in the same way; those words really put me down as if I should be ashamed of myself....Being *gey* has become a central part of my life; I mostly enjoy *gey* bars, *gey* literature, the company of *gey* friends, and so on. I want people to accept me for the way I ‘really’ am, I no longer tell people lies or pretend to be someone I’m not; I’m so tired of that...not everyone has to love me, and that’s fine with me⁸ [Emre: *gey*, 25, university graduate].

⁶ In this study, there were instances when a person who identified himself as *lubunya*, would also use ‘*pasif gey*’ interchangeably; and such people would call their *laço* partner ‘*aktif gey*’. However, none of the *laços* interviewed would accept ‘*aktif gey*’ as an identification category.

⁷ Stephen Murray (2000:396-7) also had the same findings in relation to Lima, Guatemala City and Mexico City, and avers that the term “*gay* was a relexification of the preexisting conceptual order”.

⁸ R18: Ben kendimi *gey* olarak tanımlıyorum ve bu tanımlamadan çok rahatım...Böyle bir kelime olmasaydı o zaman ‘homoseksüel’ veya ‘*ibne*’ terimlerinin kendi cinselliğim hakkındaki iyi düşüncelerimi aynen sağlayacağımı sanmıyorum; o kelimeler çok aşağılayıcı, sanki kendimden utanmam lazımmış gibi...Bu benim hayatımın odak noktası halinde; *gey* barlar, *gey* kitaplar *gey* arkadaşlarım vesaire...insanların da beni olduğum gibi kabul etmelerini istiyorum, artık eskisi gibi yalanlar söylemiyorum, yada olduğumdan farklıymışım gibi yaşayamıyorum, çok yoruldum...herkes beni sevmek zorunda değil, ve bu beni rahatsız etmiyor.

During my interviews, a number of men indicated that before discovering Kaos GL and/or the *Kaos GL Magazine*, they felt that they were ‘the only ones’ in a country that basically equates homosexuality with effeminacy. For example, in the Turkish media, these men have been exposed to people like Zeki Müren and Bülent Ersoy (now a male to female transsexual), two prominent singers that *gey* men refuse to take as role models owing to their effeminacy or cross-dressing inclinations. However, the newly developing culture in Kaos GL has started to define a reality that makes *gey* personhood more bonded and even more achievable. As Alp puts it, “the only question mark remaining in my head was whether there were other masculine *gey* men who didn’t grow their hair⁹” (Alp: *gey*, 21, university student).

Cihan, a *gey* activist who does not hesitate in telling people his same-sex preference, has participated in many public demonstrations, such as symposiums on Turkish gay and lesbians’ struggles around sexuality and homophobia. He mentions how perceptions of homosexuality have been changing for the last two decades. He elaborates that in the early 1980s it was easier to tell who was *aktif* or *pasif* through people’s behavior, but especially in the 1990s such traditional notions have become more and more blurry, so much so that it is more difficult to discern a person’s homosexual preferences. He holds:

R05: After speaking to the person for I while, somehow I can still tell whether he is *aktif* or *pasif*, but people have started to realize that with your partner, along the course of a relationship, you can easily be both *aktif* and *pasif* in bed. This situation no longer shocks people, in other words, finding out that a person is actually *pasif* when expected to be *aktif*¹⁰ [Cihan: *gey*, 32, university graduate].

⁹ R01: Sadece akılımda soru işareti olan, acaba benim gibi, saçını uzatmayan erkeksi *gey* var mıydı diye...

¹⁰ R05: Hala, bir süre konuştuktan sonra kimin aktif kimin pasif olduğunu bir şekilde söyleyebiliyorum, ama insanlar şeyi fark ettiler, yatakta partnerinle kurduğun ilişkinin akışı içinde çok rahat aktif de pasif de olunabilir, artık bu durum insanları şoke etmiyor, yani aktif olarak beklenen birinin aslında pasif çıkması.

Cihan mentioned about his long-term partner – also a university graduate from a similar socio-cultural background– claims that if anything were to happen to his relationship, he would probably find someone with similar characteristics. At the onset of his 11-year relationship with another man, Cihan claims that his mostly *pasif* sex-role preference was understood (by his friends) as his being a *lubunya*, and that since his partner is not as ‘butch-looking’ as himself, people had a lot of difficulty in accepting the genuineness of their relationship. Nevertheless, it seems that occurrences in which one does not conform to traditional expectations concerning male-to-male bonding are so losing their validity that it is no longer considered an ‘anomaly’ to see two masculine men (*both* with a degree of femininity in their conduct and appearance) to connect with one another. Due to his masculinity, he adds that although he may still be expected to be the *aktif* partner with others, his encounters with further gender-conforming men do not imply that he will have anal coitus with those who label themselves as ‘fuckers’ (*sikici erkek*).

R05: For instance, even if I were to remain without any dick for 40 years, I still wouldn’t sleep with a person who’d say “I’m only an *aktif* man” or “I’m *hetero*[sexual],” but, if the person doesn’t identify himself as *aktif*, and has an awareness of his homosexuality, yet still only prefers to be *aktif* in bed, then I have no problems with that at all¹¹.

At this point I would like to mention two respondents who are still married to women, and have similar experiences concerning their ‘geyness’. Both respondents indicated that they no longer have sexual intercourse with their wives (or any other women) and that they ‘came out of the closet’ in order to terminate their ‘imposed’ marriage. In

¹¹ R05: Ben mesela “ben sadece aktif erkeğim veya *heteroyum*” diyen insanla 40 yıl penissiz de kalsam yatmam; ama ben aktifim diye tanımlamayıp, eşcinselliğinin bilincinde olan, ve yatakta sadece aktif olması bile bir insanın, benim için hiç bir sorun değildir.

Turkish society, after completing schooling and military service, it is expected that a man marries and starts a new family. Hence, Hüseyin had to get married as soon as his parents matched him with a *temiz aile kızı* (a girl from a respectable family). Although, arranged marriages are not so common in more urbanized areas of Turkey, there are *gey* men who feel compelled to fulfill their parents' desire to continue the family name. Although Hüseyin's wife still thinks that their marriage will get back to 'normal' as they used to have sex, Hüseyin claims that his current visits to the psychiatrist are simply to ensure her that "things will never be the same again." He emphasizes that it is not crucial to 'come out' to everyone in his environment –such as his own parents who do not have any kind of formal education– as "they wouldn't understand such things". Nevertheless, to stop the pretence, Hüseyin is keen on talking about his sexuality with those who play an important part in his life for "inner peace" (*iç huzuru*). Furthermore, he regularly engages in same-sex acts and is currently seeing a man with whom he hopes to have a future. In relation to how he relates with men, he adds:

R11: I'm an *aktif gey* man...up till now I've been *pasif* only twice in my whole life, and I wasn't satisfied in both experiences. If I were to gain pleasure that way as well, then I would've done that but I didn't like it...¹² [Hüseyin: (*Aktif*) *gey*, 30, High school graduate].

Although he frequently found male partners for sex during his travels overseas either for job or recreational purposes, Yücel also 'came out' to his wife after realizing his love for another man with whom he discreetly had a relationship. He says that he would have had a completely different life if he were living in a foreign county, and that he would not have had to marry to please others. Similar to Hüseyin's experiences, Yücel asserts:

¹² R11: Ben aktif bir geyim... ben su zamana kadar hayatımda sadece iki kere pasif oldum, ikisinden de memnun kalmadım, eğer o şekilde de bir haz duyabilseydim o şekilde de olurdu ama hoşuma gitmedi...

R17: A person who is *aktif* can also try being *pasif*—there’s no such thing that it will never happen. I actually tried being *pasif* as I loved the other person involved, but it was painful, yet I also don’t have a taboo that I’ll never try it again¹³ [Yücel: *gey*, 33, university graduate].

There are other *gey* men who basically insist on the importance of not only versatility (both *aktif* and *pasif* sex-role taking) but also a significantly high degree of masculinity, if not hyper-masculinity, in the way one presents himself (and actually feels)¹⁴. During my study, I realized that many *gey* identified men, especially from more privileged socio-economic backgrounds, indicated that the ‘*gey*’ category implied simply having ‘no limits’ (*sınırsızlık*) in bed regarding role taking, and that this category requires *gey-gibi davranış* (acting like gay people do). When I inquired about what this meant specifically, Harun clarified:

R07: Well I find myself very much in between: I’m neither too feminine nor too masculine. I’m actually the way I’m supposed to be. I don’t like feminine *gey* men, ‘they’ don’t attract me, but I also don’t like *gey* men who are too masculine. The person should be somewhere between the two opposite poles [of masculinity and femininity], and must be content with his body, without being too self-conscious...For me, the word *gey* should be used for men who are both *aktif* and *pasif*. I don’t want to adapt the male-female relationships in society to same-sex couplings¹⁵ [Harun: *gey*, 27, university graduate].

¹³ R17: Aktif olan bir insan pasif olmayı da deneyebilir –yani illa da olmayacak diye birşeyler yok. Ben aslında pasif olmayı denedim, karşımdakini çok sevdiğim için bunu denemeye çalıştım ama acı verdi, ama asla bir daha yapamayacağıma dair bir tabum yok

¹⁴ I witnessed many instances when men (whether they engaged in homosexual acts or not) would label a gender-conforming homosexual man ‘*gey*’, while calling effeminate ones ‘*ibne*’ or ‘*park lubunyası*’ (effeminate man who finds his partners from cruising parks). This distinction shows the respectability attached to being masculine, and the low status or mortification accorded to effeminacy.

¹⁵ R07: Yani ben kendimi çok ortada görüyorum, yani ne çok fazla feminen ne de çok fazla erkeksi. Yani ben tam aslında olması gereken şekildeyim. Feminen geylerden hoşlanmıyorum, ‘onlar’ beni çekmiyor, ama çok erkeksi geylerden de hoşlanmıyorum. Orta karar olmalı, arada derede...bedeniyle barışık bir şekilde kendini kasmayan...Gey bana göre hem aktif hem pasif olanlara denmesi gerekiyor. Toplumdaki kadın-erkek ilişkisini eşcinsel ilişkilere uyarlamak istemiyorum.

Accordingly, another respondent articulates that he is generally able to differentiate heterosexual men from *gey* men by their rudeness, firmness in demeanour, and hyper-masculinity (or machismo), and that even if such men were to look stylish, or slightly feminine by following what is in fashion (in clothing and hair-style), he asserts that their 'straightness' is still discernable –“you can simply feel it.” Conversely, in relation to himself and other *gey* men, he claims that 'a little femininity' looks more “natural” (*doğal*).

In Enver's own words:

R15: I find myself quite masculine, but having a kind of masculinity that is in a different form: more polite, more gentlemanly. I also find myself feminine at times, but this is just an instantaneous thing like a momentary behaviour, a smile, or a thing that happens when you're walking. I might've been more feminine when I was in middle-school, however, through experience, I began to conform to the status quo, and consequently changed myself...All *gey* men have a femininity in them. One way or another you're able to notice it. I can feel it, I can see it...¹⁶ [Enver: *gey*, 24, university graduate].

In relation to what he looks for in a potential partner, he asserts:

R15: A guy shouldn't be that different from myself, that is, he shouldn't be an effeminate type as we define being *lubunya*. I have no limits in bed, and I'd expect to have the other person feel the same way as well...*Laços* and *lubunyas* don't interest me. Put differently, people who define themselves as being exclusively *aktif* or *pasif* don't attract me at all. The guy should be simply *gey*...¹⁷

Likewise, Emre points out:

¹⁶ R15: Ben kendimi erkeksi görüyorum ama biraz daha formatı değişik bir erkek, daha kibar, daha ağır başlı olarak görüyorum. Kendimi bazen efemine de bulurum, ama bu bir anda, bir hareketinde, bir gülüşünde, bir adım atışında olan bir şey. Orta okulda belki biraz daha efemineydim ama çevrede gördükçe, yaşadıkça birtakım şeyleri ona göre öğreniyorsun mizacını şeylerin ve değişiyorsun... bütün geylerde vardır bir kadınsılık, mutlaka yakalyorsun onu bir yerinden yani, hissedebiliyorum, görebiliyorum ben onu...

¹⁷ R15: Bir erkek benden çok da farklı olmamalı, yani *lubunya* olarak tarif ettiğimiz efemine bir tip olmamalı. Yatakta sınırlarım yok, karşıdaki insanın de aynı şekilde olmasını beklerim...*Laço* ve *lubunyal*ar beni çekmiyor, yani sadece kendini aktif ve pasif olarak tanımlayan insanlar beni hiç çekmez; *gey* olmalı işte...

R18: I don't find myself effeminate...but I was always different when I was a kid, and used to get a lot of reactions. But of course, as I grew up, the differences became lesser...I'd be lying if I were to say that I am totally masculine now...I am but not the way it's usually recognized...however I also don't make my sexual orientation public... I usually don't like effeminacy at all...and I'd want a likely sex partner to be versatile. For example, I know that whenever there is a more effeminate friend of mine beside me, a *laço* would prefer my friend, not me as I don't like acting womanly in order to charm a guy...I'd never perform the woman's role!¹⁸ [Emre: gey, 25, university graduate].

The voices depicted above show the extent to which hegemonic masculinity still has social authority and that it is further reaffirmed within the *gey* world itself. These men are judgemental of those who display any kind of effeminacy, and they even abstain from any kind of overt 'womanly' behaviour for themselves. While they articulate dislike for *lubunyas*, they also reject the hyper-masculinity of *laços* (and the way both perceive homosexuality in the traditional sense). On the other hand, though they predominantly have a strong sense of their masculinity, as Connell (1995:156-7) identifies as 'gay masculinity', they also admit having feminine qualities (but not in 'excess' to the extent it would give opportunity for others to deduce one's same-sex preference). "The choice of a man as sexual object is not the choice of a-body-with-penis, it is the choice of embodied-masculinity. The cultural meanings of masculinity are, generally, part of the package" (Connell, 1995:156).

¹⁸ R18: Efemine olduğumu sanmıyorum...ama çocukluğumda hep farklıydım ve tepki alıyordum. Daha sonra büyüdükçe tabii ki bu farklılaşma azaldı...Hala tam anlamıyla erkeksi olduğumu söylesem yalan olur... Ben yani erkeksiyim ama bilinen şekilde değil...ama cinsel tercihlerimi de çok belli etmiyorum etrafta...ve genel olarak efeminelikten hiç hoşlanmam...potansiyel bir partnerin benim gibi yatakta hem aktif hem pasif olmasını isterim. Mesela laço dediğimiz bir insan daha efemine bir arkadaşım eğer yanımdaysa onu tercih ettiğini biliyorum, çünkü ben öyle çok kadınsı tavırlar yapıp da erkek tavlayamam...Bir kadın rolüne asla giremem!

It is paradoxical to see how *lubunyas* or other effeminate *gey* men are ostracized by gender-conforming *gey* men who are most likely to have experienced such stigmatization themselves. As Taywaditep (2001) points out (and supported by my interviews), through a process called 'defeminization' –F. L. Whitam's term– a majority of gender-nonconforming boys gradually become less effeminate as they grow up. Due to the collective pressures confronted in the immediate environment, this process:

...appears to involve an extensive restructuring of one's self-concept, a conviction, and redefinition of one's identity as a man, and a rejection of the childhood 'sissy' image. Defeminizing boys and men must learn what masculinity and femininity entail in order to modify their behavior and appearance towards masculinity and, therefore, can be expected to become highly schematic in regards to gender-role norms. Also, they should be publicly self-conscious with respect to their gender-typed appearance, knowing all too well from experience that one can easily become a significant social object (Taywaditep, 2001: 20-1).

Hence, anti-effeminacy attitudes may be stirred by a need to be valued and accepted by others, without having one's 'differences' acknowledged, which would also weaken the effeminate stereotype for homosexuals. Also, such prejudice may be "an extension of the hegemonic masculinity ideology they have adopted from society at large" (Taywaditep, 2001:18). Consequently, within the *gey* community, the challenge to *defeminize* and conform to gender-role expectations entails the marginalization and subordination of feminine men who have sex with other men.

There are instances when *gey*, as a social category, is so readily available that it can be forced on men whether they like it or not. As a man who yearns to be recognized as bisexual (*biseksiuel*), Murat constantly experiences such impositions while he is still genuinely interested in women. He indicated that he accepts *gey* identification not to

prolong further discussion of his sexuality, which keeps his *gey* peers (who find it ludicrous to associate gayness with heterosexuality) satisfied. Hence, it can be seen that sexual preference is so dichotomized that “there is no positive social category of the bisexual, no well-defined intermediate identity that the men can take up” (Connell, 1995:154). Murat mentioned that he dated many girls until he was twenty-four and that he later on had a three-year relationship with a man who was ‘like himself’. In relation to sex-role preference, he finds the strict division between the *aktif* and *pasif* role-taking meaningless, as no one could predict what will happen at highly intimate times during sex. For him, “at such moments, if I really care for the other person, I don’t really have any problems or worries about whether I’m a bottom or top, and I’d like to know that my partner feels the same way as well”. Due to his profession, Murat travels a lot to foreign countries where he is able to meet other bisexuals, who take his sexuality ‘more seriously’ than the other people do at his homeland. In his own words:

R04: I’m actually bisexual. When I go abroad, people don’t make fun of me. Sometimes I feel that I don’t belong here. In the past I used to confront individuals, and react strongly, but now I feel that it is useless to respond. I don’t try to explain things anymore. I am not against the word ‘*gey*’, I might even identify myself as such, but if I were to tell people how I feel, I don’t think they would label me as *gey*¹⁹ [Murat: *gey* (bisexual), 31, university graduate].

¹⁹ R04: Ben aslında biseksüelim, yurt dışına gittiğimde oradaki insanlar ha-ha-ha-hi-hi-hi deyip dalga geçmiyorlar, bazen buraya ait olmadığımı düşünüyorum, eskiden insanlara tepkim çok büyük oluyordu, ama artık onlara tepki göstermemin gereksiz olduğunu düşünüyorum, artık açıklama yapmıyorum...*gey* kelimesine karşı değilim, hatta kendimi de öyle tanıtabilirim, ama nasıl hissettiğimi insanlara anlatsam bana *gey* diyeceklerini sanmıyorum.

Syncretism rather than Cultural Imperialism

Overall, interviewee responses reveal that once a person becomes conscious of his gayness, and ‘comes out’ (*dışa açılma*) to others in his immediate environment, he experiences the open identification of his (homo)sexuality as liberating, outside the harsh constraints in the ‘real world’ regarding homophobia (see Chapter 5). In spite of the dominant discourse around same-sex relations, *gey* is a modern form of homosexuality shaped by “the internationalization of gay identity” (Altman, 1996) from the West. And, in the name of having their share of ‘social justice’, this openly *gey* community is increasingly developing, and struggling to get its voice heard. However, I am **not** suggesting the emergence of a ‘universal gay identity’ caught up in the processes of the globalization of gay lifestyles, social organization, and identity politics that is similar to the western world. There are other accounts by *gey* men not so consistent with the examples shown so far that are built on the prevalent sex/gender regimes and ideologies in Turkish society. Human action is creative, and we are constantly entering historical spaces that no one has lived before; nonetheless, we also do not create in a vacuum. In particular instances, we construct our subjectivities based on our own, and other people’s, past actions.

Most people negotiate numerous models of identity in everyday life, and what might seem paradoxical or contradictory to the observer is no more than evidence of the human ability to constantly reshape him- or herself. Sexuality, like other areas of life, is constantly being remade by the collision of existing practices and mythologies with new technologies and ideologies (Altman, 1996:91).

What I find intriguing is that these men who abide by the political implications of asserting a *gey* identity, and who ‘seemingly’ do **not** abandon in public the gender of the sex into which they are born, incorporate the already existing socio-cultural traditions into their sense of self **only** while relating among themselves for mate-selection. They portray a

different story, which seems not to be the case in comparison to other western representations of being 'gay'.

“Ideas, examples, and fashions from the First World do not inevitably acquire adherents elsewhere –nor, when they are adopted, do they necessarily assume the same form; rather, they often become adapted and synthesized into local frameworks” (Adam, 2001: 169; see also Adam, Duyvendak & Krouwel, 1999:348-9). It can be argued that these Turkish men give imported discourses concerning 'gay identity' their own culturally-specific interpretations, a reality overlooked not only by scholars such as Hüseyin Tapınç (1992) but also Turkish *gey* men themselves. These men who are conscious of and fairly influenced by western models, appear to “balance the impact of universalizing rhetoric and styles with the continuing existence of cultural and social traditions” (Altman, 1997:420), and though they refuse to be recognized by the traditional notions imputed to homosexuality, they 'inherently' characterize themselves as contesting sexual rather than gender norms. Conversations with a segment of the *gey* identified men illustrate that they articulate subjectivities which have “reconfigured local, national, and transnational discourses in a way that challenges the modernist single trajectory for...gay identity” (Boellstorff, 1999:499). As Dennis Altman (1997:429) stresses, “[i]t is constantly important to find a balance between the view of globalization as a new stage of imperialism and the triumphalist discourse of globalization as the creation of a new world society”. Thus, these men seem to be attracted by some elements of the western gay model. There is **no** attempt to suggest that such appropriations show evolutionary tendencies towards the 'modern' form of understanding same-sex relations. Syncretic *gey* identities in Turkey are by no means less evolved or a less modern version of Western gay identities. Having said

this, “gay and lesbian [identities and] movements are both *a part of* and *apart from* the societies around them, both resisting and participating in –even reproducing– dominant public discourses” (Adam et al., 1999:9).

It is of great importance to pinpoint that *gey* men do **not** necessarily consider western gay culture to be something that needs to be replicated with *all* of its implications, by simply surrendering to *cultural imperialism* from the West. Cultural imperialism is the practice of embracing a foreign culture (promoted by a large powerful nation) by individuals in less affluent nations, threatening their unique sets of beliefs, values, and behavioural norms together with their distinctive ways of life. It does not pay enough attention to the varieties of cultural life in the Western world, as if everything in the West is uniform and homogeneous. While cultural imperialism recognizes the trends towards Westernization, it does not give adequate recognition to various modes of resistance. It seems to assume that people passively become ‘victims’ of Westernization processes. Hence, *gey* identification might entail ‘gender-conformity’ in the public and private spheres (as promoted through Western media imagery and texts), however, it does not guarantee that the individual will also abide by such gender constructions during the process of finding a partner (as distinct from the moments when sexual desire is *not* experienced). In my study, interviewee responses revealed that a significant number of men make some ‘adjustments’ to their appearance and/or conduct once a potential sex partner is found –a performance that could be overlooked if one were only attending to these men’s discourses regarding *gey* identity rather than what actually happens during their most intimate affairs. As mentioned above, through processes of globalization, economic and cultural forces are altering sexual regimes and the associations between the sex/gender order and other

economic and cultural structures, nevertheless, what appears to be worldwide can be potentially transformed, incorporated, modified, or simply mediated by a particular culture (Altman, 1996:87). This perspective unravels the dynamism in *gey* identity formation, with its capacity for adaptation to the modern and the Western, yet also being true to certain constituents of Turkey's traditional culture. In this inter-cultural context, the relations between sexual customs and gender regimes are so complex that the result is a range of sexual practices and categories.

For those men who might see contemporary gay identities (as portrayed in the West) as a mode of self-expression that seems to be divorced from one's 'roots', such "syncretic engagements" (Manalansan, 1995) promise the potential for forming 'gey identities' that are associated with Turkey's own cultural traditions. For instance, Fatih, a man who identifies himself as being an openly *pasif-aktif gey* (he emphasizes that he tends to be mostly *pasif* during sex, but that his predominant sex-role preference does not entail passivity or subordination in his relationships with men), asserts that although he does not see himself as being effeminate, the times that he wants to find an *aktif* partner, he 'gives hints' to potential sex partners in order to make a point that each party knows what is expected, "so that we don't end up giving our backs to each other in bed or having our dicks in a kind of 'swordfight.'"²⁰ Fatih acknowledges that he used to be exclusively *pasif*, but owing to his profession, his travelling experiences have given him opportunity to meet men who are not only masculine but also versatile (*aktif-pasif*) during sex, and that he has had experiences in which he was aroused by trying the *aktif* role. However, he emphasizes that he has never approached another person who is openly *pasif*, and that he is willing to

²⁰ Ona göre yatak da birbirimize götümüzü dönmeyelim, yada birbirimize siklerimizle kılıç savaşı yapmayalım.

be *aktif* to those who are only younger or around his own age (he has no age preference when being *pasif*). For him, whatever tendencies *gey* men have concerning sex-role preference, it is mostly about negotiating things with partners and about enjoyment. Even being solely *pasif* does not close off identification as *gey*. In relation to his experiences in other European countries, Fatih revealed his astonishment when he saw how men at gay bars do not feel the need to expose their sex-role preferences through the clothes they wear, or even their conduct. He was especially bewildered when he met effeminate friends who were exclusively inserters in anal sex, a case not heard of in the Turkish context. Nevertheless, regarding his practices in Turkey, Fatih claims that, in a gay bar, in the case he wears a dress suit with a tie, people assume that he is ‘the man’, hence, those who want to be *pasif* are likely to make advances to him. On the other hand, if he wants to ‘get fucked’, he makes sure that he wears more feminine, or fashionable clothes that indicate his ‘womanly’ side. He adds:

R14: If I were to get close to someone who is *hetero*[sexual], let’s say not in a *gey* bar, but in the streets , for instance to a taxi driver, then I tend to be extremely feminine, as I have to pinpoint our differences so that he’ll express his masculinity. If I want to ‘hook up’ with a taxi driver and I say “ohhh you must be so tired, you should come to my place for coffee” [in a flirtatious manner], then inviting him to my place automatically means an invitation for sex. And, when you look at him amorously through half closed eyes, it implies, “don’t worry, we will go to my place and you will fuck me”, but if I were to say, “Let’s go to my place and we’ll have coffee” [in a manly way], then it may imply that ‘I am’ the man, and I’ll be the one to fuck him...²¹ [Fatih: (*pasif-aktif*) *gey*, 26, university graduate].

²¹ R14: Ben eğer hetero olduğumu sandığım birine yaklaşırsam, hani atıyorum bir *gey* barda değil, sokakta bir ortamda, mesela bir taksi şoförü, o zaman fazlasıyla efemineleşiyorum, çünkü adamı bir şekilde uca çekmem lazım ki erkekliğini göstereyim. Taksi şoförüyle gitmek istiyorsam, “ayyy sizde yorgunsunuzdur, gelin bize bir kahve için” (flört edercesine) desem, zaten eve davet etmek eşittir sekse davet etmek demek, işte bir de göz süzmem eşittir “merak etme, eve gideceğiz sen beni sikeceksin yani” anlamında, ama “bir kahveye gelin içelim” desem (erkeksi bir şekilde), belki ben erkeğim ve onu ben sikeceğim

In the same vein, Özgür also maintains that he changes his mannerisms depending on the characteristics of the person he wants to have sex with and the sex-role he wants to engage in. Although he says he is usually effeminate, and tends to prefer *pasifness*, he seems to be altering it based on circumstance. As he asserts below, Özgür clearly incorporates traditional understandings of gender roles into his way of conceiving is gayness:

R06: I like men who are well-built, legs and shoulders must be stocky, and if I want to be *pasif*, I'd like the kind of guy that we define as being completely macho... In the case I want to be *aktif*, I look for a person who has small and firm buttocks. Of course I'd like him to be masculine, but not any more masculine than how I am. Being with an extremely feminine man is no different than being with a woman. In that event I would have been with a [real] woman...²² [Özgür: *gey*, 20, high school graduate].

As a man who is highly involved in Kaos GL's activities, such as attending public demonstrations, and helping with the publication process of the *Kaos GL Magazine*, Özgür further states:

R06: I'm a full-fledged *gey* man! There are times that I am very womanly, but there also times that I am also very manly. I don't put restrictions on my homosexuality in any way. I am *gey* because I also have 'no limits' in bed, I can be both *aktif* and *pasif*, both man and woman, it depends on the moment...²³

Also, as an openly *gey* activist and dynamic member of Kaos GL since 1996, Ferhat similarly holds that whether he likes it or not, *gey* men are influenced by the

²² R06: Ben iri erkeklerden hoşlanırım, bacaklar, omuzlar iri olmalı, ve pasif olmak istiyorsam, tam maço kılıklı dediğimiz erkek ilgimi çeker...aktif olmak istediğimde küçük ve dar kalçalı olmasına bakarım kişinin, tabii erkeksi olmasını isterim ama benden daha erkeksi değil, ama aşırı kadınsı bir erkekle de beraber olmak zaten bir kadınla beraber olmak demek, o zaman bir kadınla beraber olurum...

²³ R06: Ben safkan bir geyim! yeri geldiğinde çok da kadımsı da oluyorum, ama yeri gelince de çok da erkeksi oluyorum. Ben eşcinselliğimi hiçbir şekilde sınırlandırmam. Gey'im çünkü yatak da sinirsizim ben, aktif de pasif de oluyorum, erkek de kadın da oluyorum, anına göre değişiyor...

prescribed gender roles in society, and that consequently “most” men try to imitate Turkish women when it comes to revealing *pasifness*. During our conversations, he mentioned how Kaos GL has been struggling to create a new gay movement, a newfangled sub-culture, and that people who have formed an identity around their sexual orientation, and willing to meet others with similar feelings “quickly buy into the prescriptions and concepts concerning how to look, behave, form relationships, so on, from our fellow brothers in Europe and North America”. This suggests a pre-existing appetite among Turkish men for new forms of sexuality. I would argue that what makes western modes of being ‘gay’ attractive is the promise of leading a life ‘beyond the closet’, therefore, potentially bringing about the possibilities in establishing a more equal, democratic and just society where every citizen’s rights are respected . On the other hand, Ferhat argues that, in this newly developing culture, the danger lies in the fact that gender-conforming *gey* men are discriminating against other gender-nonconforming men with same-sex thoughts and feelings: refusing to walk with them in the streets, socialize, have sex, or engage in any kind of exchange that would involve interaction.

Based on my observations and interviewee responses, I can say that social class is a great indicator of such practices, and that men especially located in highly urbanized settings, from higher socio-cultural and economic backgrounds tend to ostracize their ‘not so gay’ comrades. For instance, *gey* men from universities where English is the medium of instruction, such as Bilkent University and METU, internalize Western representations of how it is to be gay. Ironically, the ‘same’ men can easily change the way they perform their gender role in order to communicate sex-role preference. Thus, the person talking about how much he ‘loathes’ effeminacy in men instantly becomes ‘womanly’ himself. It is

noteworthy that there is a prevalent notion that those men (who have sex with other men) from lower social classes are automatically associated with effeminacy, while men from more middle and higher social classes are divorced from any kind of linkage with 'sissiness' even though they may 'briefly' perform in such ways. This situation could be attributed to the fact that people from more middle and higher classes are more used to exercising power, and availing themselves of male privilege and therefore inhabit masculinity as a 'natural right.'²⁴

Ferhat argues that there are cases in which gey men have sex with not only other geys but also with heterosexual men, a situation that differs from Western examples. Although Ferhat says that 'he' tries to refrain from having sex with a man who is not only exclusively *pasif* or *aktif* but also uses such categories to identify oneself and perform the traditional gender roles (i.e. the *lubunya/laço* dichotomy), his actual practices are very revealing. In his own words:

R03: We especially treat our partners, who identify themselves as heterosexual, the way Turkish women do. Not only inside but also outside the bed, we act as if we are 'the woman' and he [the straight one] is 'the man'... Although I speak against and refuse such role models and claim that I don't associate myself with them –and it's my belief that everyone does this– I also end up performing 'the female' role prescribed by our culture [when it comes to communicating with a partner]. Or, if I decided to go to a bar and find someone that I can be a penetrator with, then for instance, I wouldn't shave that day²⁵...[Ferhat: gey, 30, university graduate].

²⁴ Although in the United States it seems to be reversed with the working man seen as butch, and middle class men as sissies.

²⁵ R03: ...özellikle heteroseksüel olarak gündelik hayatta dolaşan partnerlerimize Türk kadınların davrandığı gibi davranıyoruz, yatakta kendimizi kadın, onu erkekmiş gibi davranıyoruz, hatta yatak dışında da.... bu rol modelleri, bu yargıları tartışıp reddetmeme rağmen şey yapıyorum, ve bence bunu herkes yapıyor, ben böyle değilim dediğim kadınsı toplumsal rol modelini giyiniyorum. Yada, ben bara gidiyim de hani etken olayım diyorsam, ne bileyim sakallarımı kesmiyorum falan...

It is of paramount importance to acknowledge that these syncretic engagements do not overtly reinforce negative stereotypes regarding homosexuality – “to conflate sexual identity and gender identity, to reinvigorate possible oppressive traditions and subject positions” (Hagland, 1997:377) – as these openly²⁶ *gey* men *still* follow conventional gender norms in public (whether in the presence of heterosexual or other homosexual people). The *momentary* ‘playing around’ with gender norms, in the case of finding a possible sex-partner, happens in ways that usually no one other than the ‘interested party’ can recognize (or other ‘witnesses’ who are familiar with the ‘signals’ for communicating sex-role preference). Although such discreet happenings may be seen as further reproducing hegemonic heterosexist and patriarchal discourses around gender and sexuality, it should be kept in mind that “[t]he value of individual autonomy might then be understood as the freedom of the individual to construct her [/his] own identity or identities and pursue relationships, but not divorced from the specific context(s) in which that individual finds herself [/himself]” (Hagland, 1997; 377).

In the face of the observed variance in understanding one’s sexuality and acting accordingly, it is crucial to talk of various forms of being *gey* (analogous to Murray’s (2000) proposal to analyse the different forms of male-male sexual relations through his three-fold typology of the social organizations of homosexuality, namely age-structured, gender-stratified, and egalitarian homosexualities). The word ‘gay’ should be conceptualized as a plural entity which reflects a wide spectrum in desires, acts, attributes and identities associated with same-sex preference. Based on interviewee responses, it is clear that there is much confusion, and disagreement concerning the degree to which they

²⁶ In the case that such people confront the police, it is just a matter of saying that they are ‘straight’, hence, being exempted from any prosecution as it is inconceivable for a gender-conforming male to be ‘homosexual’ in the eyes of the police (see Chapter 6 for detailed discussion).

see themselves as part of a 'global gay identity', but I also must stress that I do not see these men as being radically different from the gay men in North America or Europe. Instead of suggesting that the 'traditional' model in which men socially organize among themselves has been replaced or lost its validity by the emergence of the modern gay model, such indigenous modes of seeing oneself actually *continue* to co-exist with Western gay identities be adapted into syncretic *gey* identities. Such co-existence provides a broader spectrum of alternatives for men vis-à-vis sexual and "genderal" expression (Hagland, 1997:374). One form of identity is no less authentic than the other, therefore, it is vital to be cautious of totalizing discourses around same-sex bonding in Turkish society. Turkey has never been cut off from other western societies; there has always been cross-cultural dialogue, let alone migration, tourism and appropriations, which subsequently enhanced the cross-cultural exchange among sexual minorities. Conversations regarding globalizing tendencies of gay identity, politics and culture are disrupted by local dialogues and interpretations, and there is a need to look beyond universalizing rhetoric around being 'gay'. At this point a theory of globalization that embraces notions of 'sameness' and cultural imperialism becomes irrelevant. Rather, through "an attempt to hybridize local traditions, attitudes, and practices and 'outside' influences" (Manalansan, 1995: 432), a syncretic move to understanding *gey* identity gives more insight amenable to men's same-sex experiences. It will be fascinating to see how Turkish *gey* men (whether or not participating in organizations such as Kaos GL) will continue to adapt or assimilate imported ideas of modern gay discourse and western identity politics into their way of conceiving or re-conceiving themselves. Consequently, by means of the rapid rise of *gey* identities (and movements) in Turkey:

We may even recognize the need to question whether Anglo-American queer theorists are saying much of relevance to the majority of people in the world who are developing a politics out of their shared sexuality in far more difficult conditions than those within which western lesbian and gay movements arose (Altman, 1997:433).

CHAPTER 9

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

There is little substantial or reliable knowledge on the sexual behavior of Turkish male sexual minorities. This research proved to be one of the few that cast light on the most intimate lives of 'gay' men from a Middle Eastern background. As Tapınç (1992:39) avers, the experiences of Turkish 'gay' men are ignored by Turkish scholars; however, these experiences will increasingly become important as both feminist and gay politics are pronounced more in Turkey. In this study, a recurrent experience I had was that as my research was academic, and I was actively seeking to recruit a heterogeneous group of people with different subjectivities, I realized that many of the subjects took the project as a means to express their troubles concerning their sexuality and society at large – all in the hope that I can bring some kind of alleviation to the things that bring so much dissatisfaction in their daily lives. Due to my choice of research, I realized that most men saw me as a kind of 'rescuer' and/or 'messenger' that could possibly change social attitudes towards same-sex relations in Turkish culture. There were many instances when I would hear one say, "*oradakilerine bunları hep anlat, duysunlar*" ("tell everyone there [in Canada] about these things, let them hear about it"). Hence, "not only did they see me as a professional person but also as somebody who was there to spill the beans to the rest of the world about the drawbacks of our culture" (Phellas, 2000:58).

A common theme running along each chapter is that although Turkish homosexualities are multiple and not fixed for life, they *are* socially patterned by the prevalent gender structure – thus, it becomes clear that same-sex desires, practices, and

identities are not only gendered but also reveal discourses that are 'soaked with' power relations within the male gender itself. In Turkish culture, since gender is constructed dichotomously, especially with reference to the 'traditional' constitution of male-to-male bonding, it is apparent that *pasif* identified men enact some aspects of the female gender as taking the 'women's role' in anal coitus entails giving up the culturally valued 'manliness' reinforced by various social institutions in one's environment, and consequently such men are placed in subordinate positions in comparison to their *aktif* partners (which is a reflection of the 'hegemonic masculinity ideology' where subordinated forms are symbolically assimilated to femininity). Also, in cases that involve inconsistencies to the 'obviously' gender-stratified model, it is still evident that 'Top *Pasifs*' and 'Bottom *Aktifs*' are furthermore influenced by the social constructions of gender; thereby, we see that 'temporarily' effeminate men become 'the husband', while the publicly masculine partner acts out some features (especially through speech or behavior) of what is conventionally ascribed to the 'wife's' role. Likewise, within the 'realm of men', an identical gender order can also be discerned among *gey* identified men who 'seemingly' do *not* abandon the gender of the sex into which they are born, but through various 'syncretic engagements' incorporate the already existing socio-cultural traditions into their sense of self *only* while relating among themselves for mate-selection. Considering such hierarchal manifestations that *all* Turkish men are familiar with (even if they are not necessarily used by *all* men), which reveal the patriarchal essence in Turkish society, in Judith Lorber's (1994:79) words:

It is doubtful, though, that any and all sexual practices would be treated neutrally or not become marked by economic and power interests. Even if some future utopia were not gendered, sexuality is likely to be organized with norms of appropriateness, if not with moral strictures, in the service of community interests. Democratic states may restrict the undue burdens they place on what citizens do with their bodies, but

in the end, bodies belong as much to the community as they do the individual....

Whoever has power in the community will be influential in determining what sexualities will have moral hegemony.

Hence, I show that some issues go beyond the local, in this case how same-sex practices are organized, where an intricate set of *aktif/pasif* characteristics accentuate their connections with the already existing gender structure in Turkish society. As a result, it becomes clear that what happens in localities is influenced by articulations at the global level. In other words, the broader social and sexual culture within which discourses around anal intercourse are articulated show connections between homosexuality and heterosexuality, masculinity and femininity, and eventually, sexual penetrability and receptivity –in which all categories reveal certain ‘gendered’ power relations. As Kippax and Smith (2001:414) assert, “anal intercourse is not only constructed through bodies engaging in the act, but also through the multiple social contexts within which it is represented”. The respondents’ own reflections on their engagements in anal coitus, and consequently their claims to what such practices imply was decisive in coming into conclusions that plural homosexualities exist, which entail plural meanings, all comprising intriguing gender dynamics with inherent implications regarding ‘stratification’. On the surface, although many of the meanings attached to same-sex practices may show apparent commonalities among countries, a closer scrutiny hints that we should be more cautious in coming into fast conclusions, and appreciate the ‘camouflaged’ differences in same-sex liaisons for what they are. Ultimately, this research shows that ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’ *can* both co-exist independent of one another and be in a form where they potentially ‘intersect’ or even ‘meld’ with each other. In the light of such awareness, then we can

understand how indigenous traditions of same-sex bonding have the potential to shift with the changing social conditions around them. As Dennis Altman (1996:82) puts it:

Modern forms of homosexuality often exist side-by-side with older traditional ones, and the boundaries can appear either blurred or distinct, depending on one's vantage point or ideology. Thus some homosexuals in non-Western countries seek to establish historical continuities while others are more interested in distancing themselves, psychologically and analytically, from what they consider old-fashioned forms of homosexuality, especially those that seem based on crossgender lines.

Tout ensemble, the recent changes that have taken place vis-à-vis the gender attributes of Turkish male sexual minorities (i.e. the inapplicability of conventional gender stereotypes of homosexuals), their identities, and the way they are engaging in public demonstrations to resist the oppression experienced at the hands of state officials, needs to be understood without losing sight of the 'official' changes and/or other means in which alterations in the general power relationships between women and men are promoted—much owing to the Turkish feminist movements (cf. Connell, 1985: 588). Hence, "[t]he 'social space' that homosexuals presently occupy, and that the gay movement has struggled to expand, reflects a contestation of the subordination of women to men" (Connell, 1985: 588). As a consequence, male sexual minorities who are put in subordinated positions in comparison to heterosexual men (in more hegemonic statuses) are committed to acts of resistance to 'gendered power' demonstrations (or hegemonic definitions of gender), which are oppressive in nature, for the betterment of their lives and for benefiting from the privileges that they have been denied previously. Thus, alliances among gay men, feminists, and liberal heterosexual men could potentially prove to bring about the social environment where gender relations shift in a democratic direction.

This research has shown that it is irrelevant to put forth that *aktif* (and/or *laço*), *pasif* (and/or *lubunya*), or *gey* identities are dispensable or things that need to be 'debunked' when in reality men are using such labels to define their subjectivities, and ultimately give clues regarding the way they socially organize among themselves. With queer theorists' non-defined vision of alternatives, it seems that challenging any notion of fixed identity "tends to deconstruct an idea rather than its material conditions. The absence of gay-lesbian categories more often signifies the repression or denial of same-sex bonding than sexual or affective freedom, and people in Asia, Africa, and Latin America who seek to defend same-sex desire continue to find inspiration and pragmatic strategies in gay and lesbian models" (Adam, 2001: 168). Unquestionably, the claims made throughout this study will disappoint adherents of queer theory. In relation to 'gay' identification, I find it crucial that one does *not* overlook the strengths in Lisa Rofel's (1999:470) assertion that "[t]he insistence on identities that do not break down and on categories that are self-contained ignores the discursive processes of exclusion and differentiation". Based on my suggestion of certain syncretic engagements (which I find predominant in the 'Turkish *gey* world'), I have come to reveal that *gey* men in Turkey do not necessarily duplicate what their 'brothers' in the West may be recognized by. Nonetheless as I have argued repeatedly, I do identify discernable patterns in *gey* identification that highlight gender-stratified meanings whose roles are of paramount importance in the structuring of male-to-male bonding that may be defined as 'uniquely Turkish' (or even 'Mediterranean') if not 'globally unitary'. "What gay identity ends up looking like in any one place in the world today is not a forgone conclusion; certainly it is not a straightforward matter of joining the global gay human race. It involves unexpected outcomes as people who bring different

imaginations to a place contend with the way in which they will connect to one another” (Rofel, 1999: 470). As Adam et al. (1999: 348) pinpoint, “[c]ountry-specific elements remain important, much more than is acknowledged by the postmodern rhetoric that celebrates globalization instead of emphasizing the local meanings of global tendencies”. By no means have I tried to make any assumption that being ‘gay’ is all the same all around the world. But I *am* also adamant about the actual sexual experiences of Turkish men that represent intriguing patternings that reflect Turkey’s own socio-cultural traditions –the roots where these men belong to.

At a time when queer theory tries to ‘deconstruct’ any identification category, let alone ‘gay’ identity, it is unfortunate that queer theory fails to notice the socio-political conditions that allow for the unification of *gey* communities. In Barry Adam’s (2002: 131) words:

It [queer theory] also implies a most peculiar politic: while its deconstructionist thrust promises a deflation of heterosexism as a discourse, it seems incapable of addressing heterosexism as a practice. It is apparently insensitive to gay and lesbian identities as sites of mobilization, and has no account of why masses of people willingly embrace these identities both in the North/West and South/East. It has a rather too premature confidence that a state of cultural pluralism has been so well realized in advanced, capitalist countries, that modernist alliances have become historically obsolete and can now be broken up in favor of a celebration of postmodern heterogeneity, diversity, and multiculturalism (in the U.S. sense).

It is remarkable to see the rapid rise of a Turkish community that embraces the relevance and significance of the word ‘*gey*’ to label their subjectivities and make assertions in relation to their visibility and social rights. This research has not only cast light on men who enthusiastically adopt *gey* identification, but also the gender dynamics in how they relate among themselves. In relation to Stephen Murray’s typology of homosexualities, the

data presented in Chapter 7 supports claims regarding the gender-stratified organization of homosexualities, which can be seen as an emulation of the traditional sex/gender systems in Turkish society, as is common to the Mediterranean region and most of Latin America. However, in relation to egalitarian homosexualities, although there are cases that conform to what Murray maintains –i.e. Turkish men who are very much influenced by Western representations of same-sex relations– I propose a modification or an extension to Murray’s typology that accommodates the real life experiences of ‘most’ Turkish *gey* men (with their egalitarian alliances) that have both similarities and differences to how ‘gayness’ is practiced in other Western countries. An analyses of the observed predominance of syncretic involvements as to how *gey* men socially organize themselves show that the gender-stratified and egalitarian types of homosexualities have the potential to merge with each other ‘shortly’ until each participant in same-sex activities communicate the sex-role preferred at a certain time, or depending on the characteristics of each party involved. Hence, with this kind of flexibility in adapting Stephen Murray’s typology, I have come to see how one can make sense of the patternings in male-to-male coupling that retain the essence of Turkey’s traditional culture that many men, unsurprisingly, seem to be under the influence of, and see these relationships for what they actually are. While I argue that queer theory is quite problematic, I have come to see Murray’s typology to be very fruitful as it offered insights that have been built up upon, therefore, the real foundation that played an important role in generating the interrelated ideas proposed so far.

Academic spaces today in many parts of the Western world have liberal environments that permit research into alternative sexualities, a possibility often not viable

in developing countries. Although Turkey has undergone many social and political transformations in recent years, traditional cultural biases have covertly restricted research in Turkish universities on gay and lesbian issues. Therefore, having the opportunity to conduct my research from a Canadian university has provided me with a heightened capacity to examine the contemporary milieu of male Turkish sexualities. Since my research has been conducted from a Western institution, I have been able to reveal silenced and hidden male sexualities that would for the most part go unrecognized in Turkey. From this reflexive lens of looking back at my own culture, I believe it can play a significant contribution to the existing literature concerning non-Western gay male sexualities. Further, as an ethnographic study, I have been able to examine the subject in more depth by exploring the sexual behaviour of the respondents from their own perspectives. From conducting this informative ethnographic research, I would hope that it shall provide the potential for social praxis in Turkey for gay identified individuals. Additionally, I also aspire that this study promotes more research in this significantly marginalised and overlooked phenomena concerning same-sex relations and how it is conceptualized in Turkish society.

A Word on the Older Generation

In relation to gaining a better understanding of older men's subjectivities, every attempt was made during the recruitment process for greater participation; however, this research has provided evidence for how the older generation is having difficulty in adjusting to the social conditions changing around them, and how they seek refuge in the solacing rhetoric of tradition and conservatism not only in the way they find their partners

and relate with them but also in the way they remain deeply fixed on their state of *invisibility* for not wanting to disclose as much information as the younger men did. This was the case in Hüsni's situation, a man in his late 50s (was married twice due to familial pressure but divorced in both instances) who avoided any claims of his engagement in any kind of homosexual activity, and was persistent of his being merely a *röntgenci* (voyeur) of such behavior in public parks. In the same vein, even though Erol¹ maintains that the only important thing is 'romance' with another man, he nonetheless points out that he would not want to know that his partner has *pasif* tendencies (or that he has a feminine side), and that even if that is the case, then he would rather not be informed about it –a possible elucidation of his recurrent fantasies of falling in love with heterosexual men, and a reflection of his connectedness to the 'traditional' constitution of homosexual bonding. Furthermore, the importance of concealment (a feature that differentiates men like Erol from the younger generation of *gey* men) is revealed as follows:

R16: I don't want people's lives to be directed by their sexuality...and I'm saying this as someone who lives in this country, but no one should make it [one's homosexuality] known to others in any way. This is so important. You have to deny it, you have to have a certain sense of dignity, it should be your own personal life... For instance, Murathan Mungan is a great author, and he is admired very much; however he could've concealed certain stuff [his sexuality]. It is just not pleasant... I don't want anyone to know [about my own sexuality]...² [Erol: sex-role preference not indicated, 50+, university graduate].

¹ Erol is a well-educated professional who has traveled to many Western countries; although he claims that he finds himself gender-conforming, through his mannerism, way of talking, posture, and facial expressions, I would identify him as being fairly effeminate.

² R16: İnsanların hayatlarını cinsellikleri yöneltmemesini istiyorum...Ve bu ülkede yaşayan bir insan olarak söylüyorum bunu, insanların hiçbir şekilde deşifre olmaması gerekiyor, bu çok önemli, inkar edeceksin, belirli bir saygınlığının olması gerekiyor, o senin kendi dünyan olmalı... Mesela Murathan Mungan çok iyi bir yazar, çok seviliyor ama bazı şeyleri gizleyebilirdi. Hiç hoş değil bu...kimsenin bilmesini istemiyorum ben ...

Final Remarks

In this study, my primary intentions are to make (non-)homosexual people to re-think their (or others') experiences and have a hidden population speak for itself, instead of having myself doing the saying. My task was one of being more of an 'interpreter', giving perspectives as to the reasoning behind certain acts, and how they are enacted. The research was conducted in cooperation with the Turkish 'gay' community, and I tried to be as true as possible to the various accounts made by different people with diverse backgrounds and life experiences. It would not be wrong to say that the whole project was like a journey for me where I not only learnt a lot about the lives of various people that I would not have been able to meet under normal circumstances but also it was an experience that compelled me to re-consider my own understandings of same-sex relationships in Turkey.

When I was conducting the interviews in Kaos GL, a repeated narrative was that it is *not* a priority of Turkish *gey* men to change state policy that is inherently homophobic, which ultimately excludes sexual minorities from the social rights granted to their non-homosexual brothers and sisters –at least on paper. What seems to be on this community's agenda is to change the values of Turkish citizens or Turkish society as a whole, which encourages the implementation of homophobic policies. Therefore, towards this end, members of Kaos GL have been involved in various public demonstrations in downtown Kızılay, Ankara – May 1st 2003 being the latest one on Workers Day, with other democratic unions, syndicates, and citizens supporting equality in various spheres of life – in order to raise consciousness at the societal level and make the experiences of sexual minorities a social issue that calls forth urgent attention and action. Consequently, such

demonstrations could bring about more amendments to the Turkish Civil Code by state actors themselves.

I aim to communicate the findings back to the Turkish 'gay' community by conducting a presentation on a Sunday evening, when the KAOS GL community usually meets and/or writing an article in *KAOS GL Magazine*. This research could also be taken as another attempt in 'breaking the silence' and promoting an intellectual leadership with readily understood goals for the attainment of a social space that successfully resists the network of dominant social sites regulating sexuality. Undeniably, having homosexual alliances in Turkey is an experience that makes many men's lives tough to live (and a possible motivation for migrating to other countries); nevertheless, it is refreshing to see a growing number of younger men who are able to avoid compulsory marriage, and assertively 'come out of the closet' to their loved ones and make more informed decisions as to address the unfortunate situations they confront in their immediate environment. As Turkey enters the new millennium with its strong links to North America and desire to join the European Union, it is endeavouring to modernize its laws to recognize gender equality. Yet, it still has to address issues related to the stigmatization of sexual minorities. Eventually, the challenge for Turkey is to remain true to its essential cultural and social values and end stigmatization of sexual minorities, and prepare itself for genuine membership among western societies. To conclude, seeing that homosexuality *is* a historically specific phenomenon, I am personally optimistic, and strongly agree with Emre's statement:

R18: We read and hear about how things were 10 or even 20 years ago... I can't even imagine the developments that will take place in the next 10-20 years to come³
[Emre: *gey*, 25, university graduate].

³ R18: 10 yıl önceki hali hatta 20 yıl önceki hali okuyoruz, duyuyoruz... Başka bir 10-20 yıl sonra olacak gelişmeleri hayal bile edemiyorum.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Interview Questions:

1. How did you find out about this location? (*Kaos GL*)
 - First time came?
 - Current involvement?
 - What does *Kaos GL* offer you?
 - Where else do you meet guys?
2. Where are you from? (Migration?)
 - Urban/rural setting?
 - Educational background?
 - Age?
3. What joys and difficulties have you experienced regarding your sexual orientation with:
 - Your family?
 - At work or school?
 - In the streets?
 - Police or other authorities?
 - Islam (or other religion if relevant)?
4. How do you define '*masculinity*' and '*femininity*'?
 - How do you see yourself in relation to these descriptions?
 - As a child/adolescent? //When you first came out?
 - In comparison to heterosexual men, do you see any differences in male homosexuals?
5. What do the labels: *aktif*, *pasif* (or *laço/lubunya*) and *gay* imply to you?
 - How do you label *yourself*? Are you comfortable within this label?
 - Have always been within this category?
 - Why do you prefer this label for yourself?
6. What do you look for in a guy?
 - Does it affect your sexual fulfillment if a guy is similar or different from you? (Or are you always firm in your preferences?)
 - Age//educational background//sexual preference//occupation//ethnicity?
 - Do you think there are variations in your preferences when you seek a sex-partner, than compared to a (possible) companion?
7. What kinds of men make advances to you?
 - Your reaction depending on the characteristics of the guy?
 - How do you understand that some guys are within certain labels?
8. Is there somebody that you are seeing at the moment? Or, anybody that you had sexual contact with lately?
 - His characteristics? Who initiated the relationship?
 - What did you do in your *most recent* sexual encounter?
9. Is there anything else that you would like to share?

APPENDIX B

Görüşme Soruları:

1. Bu mekan hakkında nasıl haber aldınız? (Kaos GL)
 - İlk geliş zamanınız?
 - Şu an ki mevcut katılımınız?
 - Kaos GL size ne sunuyor (katkısı)?
 - Erkeklerle başka nerelerde görüşüyorsunuz?
2. Nerelisiniz? (Göçmen misiniz?)
 - Şehir/kırsal kesimde mi?
 - Eğitim durumunuz?
 - Yaşınız?
3. Cinsel eğiliminizle ilgili olarak ne gibi rahatlıklar ve güçlülükler yaşadınız?
 - Ailenizle ilgili?
 - İş ya da okulda?
 - Sokaklarda?
 - Polis ya da diğer yetkililerle?
 - İslam dini (ya da bağlı olduğunuz başka bir din varsa) ile ilgili?
4. “Erkeklik” ve “dişiliği/kadınsılığı” nasıl tanımlarsınız?
 - Kendinizi bu tanımlarla bağlı olarak nasıl görüyorsunuz?
 - çocukken/gençlik çağlarında? İlk kez cinsel kimliğinizi açıkladığınız zaman?
 - Heteroseksüel erkeklerle karşılaştırıldığında, eşcinsel erkeklerde bir farklılık görebiliyor musunuz?
5. *Aktif, pasif* (veya laço/lubunya) ve *gay* terimleri size ne ifade ediyor?
 - *Kendinizi* nasıl tanımlarsınız? Bu tanım içerisinde rahat mısınız?
 - Hep bu kategori içerisinde miydiniz?
 - Neden bu tanıma kendinize uygun buluyorsunuz?
6. Bir erkekte ne ararsınız?
 - Eğer bir erkek size benziyorsa ya da sizden farklıysa bu sizin cinsel tatmininizi etkiler mi?
 - Yaş // eğitim durumu // cinsel tercih // meslek // etnik köken {din}?
 - (Olası) uzun süreli bir eş ile karşılaştırıldığında, cinsel-partner aradığınızda tercihlerinizde farklılık olduğunu düşünüyor musunuz?
7. Ne tür erkekler size yakınlaşır?
 - Erkeğin özelliklerine bağlı tepkiniz?
 - Bazı erkeklerin belirli tanımlar içinde yer aldıklarını nasıl anlıyorsunuz?
8. Şu anda görüştüğünüz biri var mı? Ya da, son dönemde herhangi bir erkekle cinsel ilişkide bulundunuz mu?
 - O kişinin özellikleri nelerdir? İlişkiyi kim başlattı?
 - *En son* cinsel birlikteliğinizde ne yaptınız?
9. Paylaşmak istediğiniz başka bir şey var mı?

APPENDIX C

Information about the Study

You have been asked to participate in a M.A. thesis study on the social organization of Turkish sexual minorities being conducted by Tarik Bereket, under the supervision of Dr. Barry Adam, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, University of Windsor.

The purpose of this study is to examine Turkish men's (who have sex with men) discourses in order to get a feel for the experiences and circumstances in which each male builds up his own understanding of himself as being *aktif*, *pasif* or gay.

The following interview will contain questions related to our own sexual behavior. Although some of the questions may be difficult for you to answer, you are encouraged to answer as openly and honestly as possible. The interview should take about one hour.

The interview will be tape-recorded. Anything you say in the interview is strictly confidential. Any identifying information about you or other individuals on the transcripts (typed versions) will be omitted. The tapes will be destroyed after transcription. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may refuse to answer any questions that you feel uncomfortable with, without any need on your part for explanation. You are free to end the interview at any time. You can take a copy of this form with you if you prefer. You will be given 10.000.000 Turkish Liras (approx \$10.00 US) in appreciation for your participation in this study.

I will make myself available to you anytime after the interview should you require any feedback. Upon completion of the study, if you are interested in the results, I will provide you with a summary of the results. If you have any further questions or hesitations about this interview or research, please contact me at (519) 253-3000, ext.8614 or e-mail me at: bereket@uwindsor.ca. Or, feel free to contact my thesis advisor, Dr. Barry Adam at (519) 253-3000, ext.3497 or by e-mail at: adam@uwindsor.ca address: Dept. of Sociology & Anthropology, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario, N9B 3P4, Canada.

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the University of Windsor Ethics Review Board. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject please contact:

Ethics Co-ordinator
Chrysler Hall Tower, Room 309
University of Windsor
Windsor, Ontario, N9B 3P4

519-253-3000 ext 3916, email: ethics@uwindsor.ca

Thank you for your time, cooperation, and participation.

APPENDIX D

Araştırma Hakkında Bilgi

Windsor Üniversitesi, Sosyoloji ve Antropoloji Bölümünden Dr. Barry Adam danışmanlığında Tarık Bereket tarafından yürütülen Türkiye'deki cinsel azınlıkların sosyal organizasyonu hakkındaki Yüksek Lisans Tezi çalışmasına katılmak üzere davetlisiniz.

Bu çalışmanın amacı, başka erkeklerle cinsel ilişkilerde bulunan Türk erkeklerinin yaşadıkları deneyimler ve içinde buldukları koşullar sonucu kendilerini *aktif, pasif* veya *gey/eşcinsel* olarak algılamaları ve bu hissettiklerini daha iyi anlamak üzere düzenlenmiştir.

Müteakip görüşme, bizim kendi cinsel davranışlarımızla ilgili soruları içerecektir. Sorulardan bazılarına cevap vermeniz güç olsa da , mümkün olduğu kadar açık ve dürüst cevap vermeye çalışın. Görüşme yaklaşık bir saat sürecektir.

Görüşme kasede kaydedilecektir. Görüşme esnasında söyleyeceğiniz her şey tam anlamıyla gizli kalacaktır. Yazdığım yazılardaki şahsınıza veya diğer kişilere ait kişisel bilgiler çıkarılacaktır. Kasetler yazıya geçtikten sonra imha edilecektir. Bu çalışmaya katılımınız tamamen gönüllüdür. Kendinizi rahatsız hissettiğiniz sorulara açıklama yapmaksızın cevaplamama hakkına sahipsiniz. Herhangi bir zamanda görüşmeyi sona erdirmekte serbestsiniz. Eğer isterseniz bu formun bir kopyasını alabilirsiniz. Bu çalışmaya katıldığınız için size 10.000.000 Türk Lirası (\approx 10 Kanada Doları)verilecektir.

Bu çalışma tamamlandıktan sonra yapılan görüşmelerle ilgili bilgi alabilmeniz için istediğiniz zaman bana ulaşabilirsiniz. Bu görüşme veya araştırma ile ilgili sormak istediğiniz veya çekindiğiniz bir şey olursa lütfen benimle bağlantıya geçin: (519) 253-3000 dahili 8614 ya da bana e-mail atın: bereket@uwindsor.ca. Veya tez danışmanım Dr. Barry Adam ile temasa geçebilirsiniz: (519) 253-3000 dahili 3497 veya e-mail atabilirsiniz: adam@uwindsor.ca. Adresi: Department of Sociology & Anthropology, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario, N9B 3P4, Canada.

Bu araştırma, Windsor Üniversitesi Etik Komitesi tarafından onaylanmıştır. Araştırmadaki katılım haklarınız hakkında sorularınız varsa, lütfen aşağıdaki adresle bağlantı kurunuz:

Ethics Co-ordinator
Chrysler Hall Tower, Room 309
University of Windsor
Windsor, Ontario, N9B 3P4

519-253-3000 dahili 3916, email: ethics@uwindsor.ca

Katılımınız ve zaman ayırdığınız için teşekkür ederim.

APPENDIX E

PRESS STATEMENT FOR NINTH MEETING OF GAYS AND LESBIANS

October 31, 2002/Istanbul

We, as gays and lesbians of Turkey, made our ninth meeting in Istanbul on Oct. 26-29. Turkey's lesbians and gays hold biannual meetings for producing solutions to the problems they have with the society. Under the head title "What Do Gays and Lesbians Want", the participators discussed our needs and demands, methods of struggle and endeavors of organizing by Turkey's gays and lesbians. Also our families were ready in this meeting for the first time.

We want to publicize our demands, on which we reached a consensus after discussion, on the eve of general elections. Hence we believe that the horizon of the political parties preparing for elections and the new parliament on our ignored demands will broaden.

Obscure statements in laws such as "general morals" and "shameful crimes" are used against us. We are dismissed from our works, thrown away from our houses or student dormitories for being homosexual. We are subject to humiliation, exclusion, threats and violence in the houses, streets, schools, work places, hospitals, public and private institutions. For that reason, we are requesting addition of "sexual orientation" to the constitution's Article 10, which emphasizes equality of citizens under the law, and also implementation of this addition by making necessary changes in other laws.

Guardianship of a female minor is given to the father if the mother is lesbian in divorce cases. We are requesting abolition of the previous Court of Cassation decision against lesbian mothers.

The crimes and murders suffered by transvestites and transsexuals are ignored, not prosecuted and the criminals are not found. We request that no partial attitude be displayed in investigation and judicial process.

We are rejected, humiliated, mocked, and bashed in the schools by our classmates, teachers and administrators. Also our textbooks and what we are taught at school try to make us believe that we deserve such attacks. We request that attacks in schools are stopped and content of textbooks concerning homosexuality is changed for our growing as happy and self-confident individuals not ashamed of their homosexuality. Hospital workers insult us for our homosexuality and refuse to serve us. We are forced to hide that we are homosexuals from gynecologists, urologists, dermatologists, and psychiatrists although our sexual identity can affect diagnosis and treatment process. We request psychiatrists and psychologists to stop trying to cure homosexuals with the reasons and methods, based on prejudices but not science. We call professional health organizations to put sanctions on discriminatory acts against gays and lesbians and organize educative works in cooperation with lesbian and gay organizations.

Living as sex workers is imposed on transvestites and transsexuals. We request security, health and social rights for those who have to work as sex workers and increase other professional opportunities to transvestites and transsexuals other than sex industry.

Homosexuality is accepted as an illness in military examinations contrary to general psychiatry practice. The army sees homosexual men as invalid. Moreover, male homosexual individuals' own statements for their sexual orientation are not trusted and arbitrary acts such as requesting photographs of sexual penetration or examination of anus are continued. We request them to be stopped.

We request stopping media coverage which shows transvestites and transsexuals as freaks or sex objects, which uses homosexuality only as a show material, which shows gays and lesbians as targets and spread hatred, caricaturing or stereotyping them.

We are working on a detailed text which includes these demands told in brief. When this text is completed, it will be shared with the public opinion. We believe that a democratic understanding without lesbian and gay rights is not possible, and we call all individuals and institutions to be in solidarity with the gay and lesbian liberation movement.

Individuals
Anatolian Bears
Izmir Pink Triangle
Kaos GL
Lambda Istanbul
LEGATO
Turkey Bears

APPENDIX F

9. EŞCİNSELLER BULUŞMASI BASIN AÇIKLAMASI-31 Ekim 2002, İstanbul

Türkiyeli eşcinseller olarak 9. buluşmamızı, 26-29 Ekim tarihleri arasında İstanbul'da gerçekleştirdik. Bu buluşmaları, toplumda yaşadığımız sorunlara çözüm üretmek için yılda iki kere düzenliyoruz. "Eşcinseller ne istiyor" ana başlığı altında, ihtiyaç ve taleplerimiz, mücadele yöntemleri ve örgütlenme çalışmalarımız üzerine tartıştık. Bunun yanında, ailelerimiz de buluşmalarımıza ilk kez katıldı.

Üzerinde tartışarak görüş birliğine vardığımız taleplerimizi seçim arifesinde kamuoyuna sunmak istedik. Böylece görmezden gelinen taleplerimiz konusunda, seçime hazırlanan partilerin ve yeni oluşacak meclisin ufkunun genişleyeceğini düşünüyoruz.

Yasalardaki "genel ahlak", "yüz kızartıcı suç" gibi muğlak ifadeler aleyhimize kullanılıyor. Eşcinsel olduğumuz için öğrenci yurtlarından, işyerlerinden, evden atılıyor. Evde, sokakta, okulda, işyerinde, hastanede, kamu kurumlarında ve özel kuruluşlarda aşağılanma, dışlanma, tehdit ve şiddete maruz kalıyoruz. Bu yüzden anayasanın vatandaşların yasalar önünde eşitliğini vurgulayan 10. maddesine "cinsel yönelim" ibaresinin eklenmesini ve diğer yasalarda gerekli düzenlemeler yapılarak bu değişikliğin hayata geçirilmesini istiyoruz.

Boşanma davalarında anne lezbiyense kız çocuğunun velayeti babaya veriliyor. Bu konudaki yargıtay kararının kaldırılmasını istiyoruz.

Travesti ve transeksüellerin mağdur olduğu suç ve cinayetler görmezden geliniyor, takip edilmiyor, failleri bulunmuyor. Soruşturma ve yargıda yanlı tutum gösterilmemesini istiyoruz.

Okullarda sınıf arkadaşlarımız, öğretmenlerimiz ve idarecilerimiz tarafından yok sayılıyor, aşağılanıyor, bizimle alay ediliyor, dayak yiyoruz. Kitaplar ve müfredat da tüm bu saldırıları hakettiğimize bizi inandırmaya çalışıyor. Eşcinselliğinden utanmayan, mutlu, özgüvenli insanlar olarak yetişmemiz için okullarda bu uygulamalara son verilmesi ve müfredatın değiştirilmesini istiyoruz.

Hastanelerde çalışanlar, eşcinselliğimiz yüzünden bize hakaret ediyor, hizmet vermeyi reddediyor. Özellikle jinekoloğa, üroloğa, dermatoloğa, psikiyatriste gittiğimizde, tanı ve tedaviyi etkileyebileceğinden eşcinsel olduğumuzu söylememiz gerektiği halde, gizlemek zorunda bırakılıyor. Psikiyatrist ve psikologların bilimsel temeli olmayan, önyargılarına dayanan neden ve yöntemlerle eşcinselliği tedavi etmeye çalışmaktan vazgeçmelerini istiyoruz. Sağlıkla ilgili meslek kuruluşlarını ayrımcı uygulamalara karşı yaptırımında bulunmaya ve eşcinsel örgütleriyle işbirliği içinde eğitim çalışmalarını yapmaya çağırıyoruz.

Aramızdaki travesti ve transeksüellere tek meslek seçeneği olarak seks işçiliği dayatılıyor. Seks işçiliğine sürüklenenlere can güvenliği, sağlık hakları ve sosyal haklar sağlanmasını, travesti ve transeksüeller için seks işçiliği dışındaki meslek olanaklarının artırılmasını istiyoruz.

Eşcinsellik, askerlik muayenesinde genel psikiyatri uygulamalarının aksine hastalık olarak kabul ediliyor. Ordu eşcinsel erkekleri çürük sayıyor. Üstelik kişisel beyan kabul edilmeyip, fotoğraf ve makattan muayene gibi keyfi uygulamalar yapılıyor, buna son verilmesini istiyoruz.

Medyada travesti ve transeksüelleri topluma canavarlar ya da seks objesi olarak sunan, eşcinselliği salt magazin malzemesi olarak kullanan, eşcinselleri hedef gösteren ve nefret yayan, eşcinselleri karikatürize eden ya da belli bir kalıba oturtan yayınlara son verilmesini istiyoruz.

Yukarıda kısaca bahsettiğimiz taleplerimizi içeren ayrıntılı bir metin oluşturmaktayız. Tamamlandığında kamuoyu ile paylaşacağız. Eşcinsel haklarını içermeyen bir demokrasi anlayışı olamayacağını düşünüyor, tüm kişi ve kuruluşları eşcinsel hareketle dayanışmaya çağırıyoruz.

Bağımsız Eşcinseller

Anadolu Ayıları

Kaos GL

Lambda İstanbul

LEGATO

Pembe Üçgen İzmir Eşcinsel Kültür Oluşumu

Türkiye Ayıları

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VITA AUCTORIS

Tarik Bereket was born in 1977 in Ottawa, Ontario. He graduated from Türk Maarif Koleji (High School) in 1994 in Northern Cyprus. From there he went on to Middle East Technical University where he obtained a B.A. in Teaching English as a Foreign Language in 1998. He is currently a candidate for the Master's degree in Sociology at the University of Windsor and hopes to graduate in Fall 2003. His next academic endeavour involves conducting research at the HIV Social, Behavioural and Epidemiological Studies Unit, University of Toronto.