IDENTITY POLITICS AND SOLIDARITY PRACTICES OF LESBIAN AND BISEXUAL WOMEN IN İSTANBUL

by
Lara Güney Özlen

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Approved by:

Doç. Dr. Ayşe Gül Altınay
(Thesis Supervisor) .....

Doç. Dr. Cenk Özbay .....

Yrd. Doç. Dr. Evren Savcı .....

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ABSTRACT

IDENTITY POLITICS AND SOLIDARITY PRACTICES OF LESBIAN AND BISEXUAL WOMEN IN İSTANBUL

LARA GÜNEY ÖZLEN

MA Thesis, August 2017

Thesis Supervisor: Associate Professor Ayşe Gül Altınay

Keywords: gender, sexuality, lesbian, bisexual, socialization, solidarity, community, identity, politics

Focusing on people who identify themselves as lesbian or bisexual women in İstanbul, this research aims to explore woman-to-woman socialization processes and their possible relations with identity and community making, solidarity building, and identity politics.

This research analyses lesbian-bisexual women's socialization in two sites: physical spaces that women frequent, and virtual/digital spaces. It explores commonalities and differences between lesbian-bisexual socialization mediums in order to have a wider perspective on relationships established among these spaces, and their possible effects on identity politics.

Socialization in LGBTI+ friendly spaces is a significant part of LGBTI+ culture, because they create relatively "safe spaces" within larger predominantly hetero-normative social structures. Based on field research with lesbian and bisexual identified individuals, this thesis explores the ways in which these spaces contribute to community making and solidarity building processes.

ÖZET

ISTANBUL'DAKI LEZBIYEN VE BISEKSÜEL KADINLARIN KIMLIK POLITIKALARI VE DAYANIŞMA PRATIKLERI

LARA GÜNEY ÖZLEN

Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Ağustos 2017

Tez Danışmanı: Doç. Dr. Ayşe Gül Altınay

Anahtar Kelimeler: toplumsal cinsiyet, cinsellik, lezbiyen, biseksüel, sosyalleşme, dayanışma, komünite, kimlik, politika

İstanbul'da kendilerini lezbiyen ya da biseksüel olarak tanımlayan kişilere odaklanan bu araştırmanın amacı, kadın-kadına sosyalleşme süreçlerini, bunların kimlik ve komünite oluşturma, dayanışma geliştirme ve kimlik politikasıyla olası ilişkilerini ortaya çıkarmaktır.

Bu araştırma, lezbiyen-biseksüel kadınların sosyalleşme pratiklerini iki alanda incelemektedir: kadınların sık gittikleri mekanlar ve sanal alanlar. Lezbiyen-biseksüel sosyalleşme ortamları arasındaki benzerlik ve farklılıklar araştırılmış, bu ortamlar arasında kurulmuş olan ilişkiler ve bunların politikaya olası etkileri incelenmiştir.

"LGBTİ+ dostu" yerlerde sosyalleşme, LGBTİ+ kültürün önemli bir parçasıdır, çünkü bu alanlar, daha yaygın olan heteronormatif yapı içinde görece "güvenli" alanlar yaratır. Bu tez, bu sosyalleşme alanlarının komünite oluşturma ve dayanışma geliştirme süreçlerinde nasıl bir işlev üstlendiklerini kendilerini lezbiyen-biseksüel olarak tanımlayan bireylerle alan çalışmasına dayanarak incelemektedir.

Dedicated to all of my beloved, gorgeous "lubun" friends who kept me going in ruff times…

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

"Being in the LGBTI+ scene," "hanging out" means drinking, flirting, dancing that can be a part of long or short terms dating. LGBTI+ community related places of socialization (cinemas, bars, cafes, bathhouses) have never been perceived only as recreational or entertainment spaces. Rather, they have been central sites for creating and (re)organizing a community that might support each other in different aspects (sexual, social, economical, political), as well as for creating alternative ways of socialization.

Socialization in bars or cafes have always been part of LGBTI+ culture because they create relatively "safe spaces" within predominantly heterosexual structures. Although this idea of creating comfort zones, through multiple inclusion or exclusion strategies that might lead to ghettoization has also received criticism (Duggan 2006; Hanhardt 2013), for many of my interviewees it was a significant concern. Spaces which LGBTI+ communities inhabit can be perceived, throughout history, as more than just places of entertainment and recreation. Examples like Compton's Cafe Riot in 1966, Stonewall Riot in 1969 and more recently Pulse Shooting in 2015 have triggered significant public demonstrations, increased political visibility and rights movements related to the LGBTI+ community. Chronologically, after both Compton's Cafe and Stonewall Riots, the LGBTI+ groups formed networks of transgender and gay activists and published informative newsletters about processes related to transition surgeries and civil rights (Stryker 2008, 67-76).

The main research questions can be lined up as follows: How can we analyse virtual and physical mediums in relation to lesbian-bisexual (les-bi) socializations? How do different forms of socialization affect people's feelings of solidarity and belonging to a community? In what ways do les-bi socializations open up new or alternative modes of solidarity? In which aspects people perceive the dynamics of getting together with "people like themselves" as political? How are "commonalities" defined? And how do les-bi individuals perceive or problematize these commonalities? How are personal intimacies in general related to lesbian-bisexual politics? Is "the personal political," as it was argued by second wave feminists? How are people's identifications and perceptions of community shaped through different mediums of socialization? How do they affect the social and political dynamics of coming together? Asking these questions, among others, this research also investigates the similarities and differences between physical and virtual sites of les-bi socializations, and the ways in which the recent introduction of virtual sites

have changed the ways les-bi individuals socialize. That is why it was important for this research to focus on the younger generation of women, who are more familiar with new virtual sites.

1.1 Terminology and Naming

The term "socialization"[1] and which aspects of it I focus on in this thesis need more clarification. I have deliberately chosen to avoid the term homo-socialization (Tapinc 1992) and cruising (Bersani 2002) since they are closely related to socialization between gay men in the literature. Even though the term "cruising" is occasionally used in the context of lesbian-bisexual intimacies (Bullock 2004), it generally refers to gay men's sexual sociability. In Turkish, cruising has been translated as "çark," which is been used particularly for gay men's or trans women's sexual sociability. Hence, I have decided to use "les-bi socialization" instead of homo-socialization or cruising, since I would like to cover friendly or romantic intimate relationships les-bi individuals establish through dating applications and physical sites, such as bars. In the context of this research, "les-bi socialization" refers to social encounters with both friends and sexual partners, as my interviewees tended to highlight the significance of both kinds of encounters in their narratives.

Throughout this thesis, I address my interviewees as "lesbian-bisexual individuals," or "les-bi individuals." From the very start my focus was on "desire between women," be it life-long or temporary. My use of the term "les-bi" reflects the common usage of this term in recent Turkish LGBTI+ language and practice. Yet, I also acknowledge the differences and tensions between these two identifications, as some of my interviewees also reiterated. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this research, I focus mostly on commonalities and similarities between lesbian and bisexual experiences of socialization: being a subject of patriarchy and LGBTI+ related phobias, and desiring women.

In the research process, I did not want to assume orientations and directly asked how my interviewees self identify or define themselves. Before the interviews, I told my interviewees that I am conducting research on "les-bi socializations." However, it was striking that some of my interviewees mentioned that they would prefer to use the term

[1] While I was conducting the research I used "sosyalleşme" in Turkish.

“queer” or “not being certain” about their self-identification due to the fluidity of the expressions of their desires and identities.

Judith Butler (1999) and Monique Wittig (1993) in their canonical works on categories of sex being social constructions as well as gender, discuss the limitations and naturalized characteristics of “sex.” Wittig in “One is not Born a Woman” (1993) argues against naturalized “biological” distinctions between men and women, highlighting the exclusionary and limiting categories and spaces that create “natural groups” that would limit women's groups with naturalized categories of sex (1993,105). Rather she offers to regard these distinctions originated from “biology,” as “political and economical categories not eternal ones” (Wittig 1993,106). This would pave the way to a political struggle which would not be restricted by naturalized categories in her opinion. Wittig perceives “lesbian” as the “only concept [...] which is beyond the categories of sex (woman and man), because the designated subject (lesbian) is not a woman, either economically, or politically, or ideologically” (1993,108). Because “lesbian” is outside the predominantly heterosexual constructions, it can be perceived as breaking the binary categorizations. Thus she aims to push the limits of binary identity categories which are limiting for some individuals and political actions.

In Butler’s terms, “Wittig understands ‘sex’ to be discursively produced and circulated by a system of significations oppressive to women, gays, and lesbians. She refuses to take part in this signifying system or to believe in the viability of taking up a reformist or subversive position within the system; to invoke a part of it is to invoke and confirm the entirety of it” (Butler 1999,154). They both aim to highlight the restrictiveness of binary categories that have been created and utilized for political and social change. While I accept and support their arguments, I also have to acknowledge the limitations of discourse and language. For analytical and political purposes, we need to work with certain concepts, while identifying their problems and limitations. While I utilize the concept of “les-bi” in this dissertation, building on its widespread use in Turkish LGBTI+ language, I also acknowledge that it does not cover the range of self identifications which were mentioned during my fieldwork. Thus I use these concepts in a way that they connote more than their binary meanings, as some of my interviewees utilized them during the interviews. Even those interviewees who prefer to use other terms to define the changing nature of their desires, continued to use lesbian or bisexual (or both) to refer to themselves, their relationships or their political affiliations. One might wonder why I did not use “plus” (+) in this dissertation. Since I did not use the terms with

their binary meanings (which might have excluded certain orientation, performances and desires) in the first place, I did not feel comfortable adding "plus" to les-bi. Although the term LGBTI+ has recently become widely used in political discourse, none of my interviewees uttered "plus" in relation to themselves or their relationships.

Lezbifem,[2] a lesbian-bisexual feminist collective in İstanbul that I explain in greater detail below, uses this specific term as well, to highlight political and practical commonalities, encouraging les-bi women in their coming out processes, talking positively about their sexualities, and aiming to find ways to create some kind of a community and safe space for women.

Thus, throughout the thesis, I try to abstain from generalizations and acknowledge the ways in which my interviewees' self-identifications have more layers than lesbian or bisexual with their binary connotations. I use the term "LGBTI+ friendly" to define certain social circles or sites, because most of the les-bi individuals I talked to defined themselves as a part of larger LGBTI+ community.

1.2 Being a Subject of Your Own Field

I decided to conduct my research on les-bi socializations after I developed my sense of belonging with the LGBTI+ community. The main point I wanted to highlight, although I was not able to put my finger on it at first, was solidarity building and community-making processes through les-bi socialisations..

Although I was already frequenting some LGBTI+ friendly places, after I decided to focus my fieldwork in those places, their meanings started changing for me. After each of my visits, I started coming back home and taking notes. I also asked my friends to accompany me to these sites. Thus the concept of "tgif" had completely opposite meaning for me during my fieldwork: it became the time I spent for my research.

1.2.1 Positionality

Since I had an "insider" position regarding les-bi frequented places, because of my "outness," it was relatively easy for me to get contacts. On the other hand, dating applications had completely unfamiliar dynamics for me; because I was hardly familiar with them. I soon realized that the process of convincing people to make the interview for this research would take longer than I had assumed. Establishing rapport and trust

[2] Lezbifem is a lesbian and bisexual feminist women's collective which was established in 2015.

becomes more tricky when people are contacted through an online site. Although my interviewees were aware of my positionality as an out bisexual woman, who has been frequenting activist circles as well, our assumed similarities and commonalities would be challenged along the way. Fieldwork enabled me to question my own ideas of community and solidarity, as well. On the other hand, being perceived as an "insider" had many advantages. We often had common things to talk about with lesser degrees of tension and anxiety.

After I logged in to online sites, I wrote a brief informative text about my research and why I was there. This was important for research ethics and to create a sense of trust in my prospective interviewees. Atuk (2016) and Gürel (2012) were also radically honest about their positionality in applications, as they conducted their fieldwork in gay dating application sites. They also stated their reasons for being in these applications (i.e. research) which I found honest and ethical. I adopted a similar approach: I wrote an informative text on why I am logging in. At first people did not believe I was actually conducting research, they thought I used this as a "hook up strategy." When I proposed to meet up to have coffee, they would be surprised: "oh really... that fast?" Generally, while I was scrolling up and down in applications, people were curious about the subject I was researching. They would ask if I am lesbian as well, or what I meant by socialization. It was important for me to realize how slippery this surface of "research dates" might be. Thus I aimed to be as clear as possible regarding my research and the purpose of our meeting. During my fieldwork, I also wanted to connect with trans-women, both in the applications and in the bars. However, it was harder than I thought because they were not that willing to meet up or not even visible in some cases. Even though I aimed to be more trans-inclusive during the fieldwork, it became practically impossible. However, the case was different with trans-men. They were more eager to share their own experiences in dating applications.

Most of my interviews took place in cafes or bars. Thus five hours of interviews could happen where we would talk about our relationships, politics and coming outs spontaneously. Since I would start with ways and mediums of socializations, people would talk about their first times, their significant relationships and fights or tensions they have been involved during these socializations. Relationships and intimacies even if they were not my direct focus in the research, would cover a relevant ground in our interviews. In the earlier phase of my fieldwork, I was explicitly asking about how the concept of queer was related to my interviewee's positionality. I was literally digging for "queer" in

some cases, but after a while I decided to stop asking about it directly and let my interviewees bring it up, if they found it relevant. I was cautious about using the term "queer" before my interviewees talked about it: I did not want to assume, categorize things as inherently queer. The same thing can be applied to the question of politics and solidarity where my interviewees would define what these concepts meant for them personally.

1.3 Than and Now: Beyoğlu As Center of Socialization

As Zengin (2014), İlaslaner (2015) and Partog (2012) have also shown, Beyoğlu-Taksim district has been the centre of LGBTI+ socialization especially between 2003 - when LambdaİstanbuI first rented a place in the neighbourhood - and 2010. Başdaş in her unpublished PhD thesis (2007), portrays Beyoğlu-Taksim district as more liberatory for anonymous les-bi intimacies, focusing on activist women's community making processes, and delves into the discussion of cosmopolitanism. Although Başdaş adopts different research techniques like focus group interviews or survey/interview methods the way they provide background information is still relevant.

By the time I started doing my research, there had been significant changes in the Taksim area, also affecting les-bi individuals' socialization routines around LGBTI+ friendly bars. Taksim has been the focal point of urban transformation since 2012 when the "pedestrianisation" project started. Unlike European and North American examples of urbanization and commodification of LGBTI+ frequented places, in İstanbul I would claim that urban transformation and LGBTI+ community have not had friendly encounters. In the Taksim case, urban transformation has meant leaving the center for many LGBTI+ individuals and LGBTI+ frequented places. Political organizations like LambdaİstanbuI have recently relocated to Kadıköy since they could not afford to continue renting in Taksim (in 2014).

Additionally, as many of my interviewees also highlighted, the current political situation has affected the way people socialize in the last couple of years. After bombs exploding (2016), brutal police attacks to mass demonstrations (starting from 2014), and finally the 15 July coup attempt (2016), many of my interviewees preferred not to socialize in the Taksim area. Some highlighted the comfort of home or logging into an app, while others said that they preferred socializing in the peripheries of Taksim, which they perceive to be less chaotic and tense.

Still, I should highlight that, for many of my interviewees, Taksim and its sphere (Osmanbey, Kurtuluş) made them feel relatively comfortable while going out for dates, or hanging out with their friends, especially because of the anonymity that the Taksim area provided, as well as its multicultural structure (Başdaş 2007).

1.3.1 Brief History of Les-Bi Frequented Bars and Applications

Since my research focused on physical spaces and dating applications that especially les-bi women frequented, some brief information on the history of these sites would be useful. Throughout my interviews, people came up with similar names for applications and bars they frequent(ed). For applications Chloe (2012), Love Angel (2004), or other applications where everyone can customize their wishes and expectations, would be explained. For les-bi frequented bars, Gaia (2013), Barbara (2006, on and off until 2017), and Derin Teras (2015) would be mentioned. Although there were also cafes that was frequented by les-bi individuals at this point, people I interviewed did not necessarily prioritise those places to socialize.

Barbara was a women-only space while it was first launched in 2006. In September 2016, they have announced their opening as a "LGBTI+ friendly cafe and bar except for the 'exclusive' women only parties on Saturdays." Apart from "queer and lesbian parties" Barbara aimed to function as a LGBTI+ friendly space that also contains screenings, plays and cultural events. However they closed the place down "for upcoming surprizes" in April 2017. Still, it continues to cover a remarkable amount of narrative in people's stories of socialization and coming out since it has been around for a long time.

Constant change in habitation and semi-opennes of these les-bi frequented bars unlike their gay counterparts which can be perceived as more visible and "out" about their purposes, should be considered as one of their characteristics. Because these bars constantly change their places and they are less visible about their LGBTI+ friendly attitude, people may have hard times trying to find them. Deniz (27) mentioned how she could not find Barbara the first time she wanted to go there:

> "… at that time, I found the address of Barbara on internet but couldn't find the actual street. Especially to find [another women-friendly place] was impossible… it says 'on Şölen Str.' But I walk up and down on Şölen Str. Couldn't ask anyone… then one day I was strolling down Sim Str. A man came closer and said, 'Are you looking for Barbara?' I was that obvious!I

> became hesitated and said, 'No!' Another day on the same street I saw the sign of the place, it was there… With some friends, we started to go there…"[3]

Similar to people who do not fully want to disclose themselves in certain conditions or spaces, les-bi frequented bars seem to have abstained from commercializing themselves to wider mainstream publics. One of the reasons that made me reach this conclusion is that they have been frequented by LGBTI+ individuals who would have heard or known about them from one another. Another striking characteristic of these bars is their preferences on being less visible in their neighbourhoods: most of them do not have signs that would differentiate them from their "straight" counterparts. One would not be able to tell the difference between these LGBTI+ frequented places and straight ones before entering them. LGBTI+ spaces and applications of any kind, seem to be accessible mostly to people who are part of "the community." Thus this can be perceived as a vicious cycle: in order to be in the "community" you need "means/connections to socialize" and you need to "be in the community" in order to have an access to mediums to socialize.

Gaia has been open in the weekends both as a Karaoke Bar and LGBTI+ friendly place since 2013. Like Barbara, Gaia has started as a women-only space and became more open about its "LGBTI+ friendly attitude." While their Facebook group contain unicorns and rainbows, the signboard on the door does not give out much about how this place may have been functioning. However people in the LGBTI+ community, still mention this bar as a woman only/queer friendly one. Recently they have opened the place up as cafe and bistro as well.

Chloe, is a smartphone dating application, that was generated in 2012 for les-bi women's use and help women create a virtual cruising space. It has recently become available to people who identify themselves as lesbians or bisexuals or are interested in les-bi relationships. Even though some lesbian-bisexual women I got to know also use other dating applications, I did not include them into my research. There are practical reasons for that: first I wanted to focus specifically on lesbian applications like Chloe, and secondly I realized after logging into multiple applications that the same people have different accounts in different mediums. In the literature gay dating applications are

[3] "Tabii o zaman internetten filan ben Barbara'yı buldum ama sokağını bulamıyorum...Hele [o zaman açık olan başka bir lezbiyen bar]'yi bulman imkansız...Şölen Sokak yazıyo internette, tavaf ediyorum sokağı aşağı yukarı aşağı yukarı...Bi de soramıyosun da,...Sonra bi gün...Sim Sokak'tan aşağı yürüyorum bakına bakına. Bi adam gelip dedi ki 'Barbara'yı mı arıyosun?' O kadar belliyim yani. O zaman çekindim 'yok ya' dedim. Sonra anladım ki o sokakta, ordan geçerken başka bi gün tabelasını gördüm. Sonra birkaç arkadaşla oraya gitmeye başladık..."

discussed as being more sex oriented, rather than dating or relationship oriented. My fieldwork and participant observation experience in applications suggests that women often distinguish themselves and their "aims" from their gay counterparts. Additionally I used gay slang to describe "casual hook ups[4]" in the description I put in the application. While some people would get it and continue to talk, for some the meaning of "kolicilik" was not that clear. Some les-bi women I encountered could not define themselves as a part of that habit since it has been perceived as a "gay habit." Les-bi women's desired intimacies cover a grand spectrum of friendship, long or short term datings, and casual hook ups.

After logging into Chloe, one can perceive profiles of other women as little boxes on top of another which are aligned by distance to one's location, from the closest to faraway ones. Touching one of these boxes would bring the description parts of profiles (including height, weight and age). In the "about" section, les-bi women often write their expectations, who they are, their interests and so on. In terms of labels, Chloe does not have a "compulsory label selection" that may ensure a level of restriction about self-definition to individuals using this application. Another application, Love Angel, has different kinds of labelling opportunities: from lesbian to bisexual, pansexual to gender-queer...Thus dating apps may be opening up new possibilities for (self) identifications by not squeezing people into binary categories.

Before dating applications like Chloe, there were chat-rooms, forums where lesbian and bisexual women could log in and meet other individuals. Kizkiza.com (2008) was and still is one of the oldest ones frequented by les-bi women. It was established as an online platform where les-bi individuals in Turkey can discuss various topics in forums or have dates.

1.3.2 Brief History of Lezbifem and İstanbul LGBTI+ Pride Week

In İstanbul, LGBTI+ and the women's movements can be close allies from time to time, which is at times necessitated by outside conditions. For instance, when hate crime legislations and anti-violence laws for the "benefit" of LGBTI+ individuals or women encountering violence end up working against them, these communities come together and develop common strategies. During my fieldwork, two collective formations were mentioned by most of my interviewees, in some cases to express support, in other

[4] "Kolicilik" in Turkish gay slang means "looking for casual sex"

cases to talk about personal experiences of active participation in them: İstanbul LGBTI+ Pride Week Organization (since 2003) and Lezbifem (since 2015).

Serkan İlaslaner's MA thesis is helpful in providing a brief history of LGBTI+ politics and organizations: "Although the Pride Week's had continued throughout 1990's and early 2000's, the 2003 Pride Parade was significantly more dynamic, as a result of the increased political activism and established affinities with feminist, anarchist and socialist movements.[...] In 2005, LGBTI activists (lesbians) started to join March 8th demonstrations, claiming their space within feminist movement in Turkey" (İlaslaner 2015,5). In 2003 Pride Parade could march with people with different affiliations from anti-militarism to feminism. The number of people who attended Pride Marches increased over the years and reached 50.000's after Gezi Park events in 2013 (Pearce 2014). Although the numbers vary in different sources, 2013 March was the most crowded one in Turkey. While LambdaİstanbuI still holds a relevant ground as a legalized association for LGBTI+ individuals, it is not as politically active since they had to move out from their central location in Taksim due to harsh economic conditions caused by urbanization in 2014. Most of my interviewees mentioned the Pride Week organization and the March itself with great importance and longing (because of the ban) in terms of feeling solidarity with other people they do not even know, creating space for LGBTI+ individuals and feeling stronger. "Providing an opportunity for certain emotions to erupt such as excitement, solidarity, nervousness and joy and for others to alleviate such as fear and anxiety; Pride Parades create a space for LGBTI's to imagine and perform a queer futurity" (İlaslaner 2015,61). I realized similar narratives in my interviewees' accounts regarding Pride Week events, especially for the March which is banned for the past three years.

Lezbifem was established after Socialist Feminist Collective (SFK) became inactive in 2015 due to economic difficulties and political disagreements. They started to gather with "the need and the suffocation they have felt, regarding their lack of visibility," by highlighting the fact that they are part of both feminist and LGBTI+ organizations (Lezbifem 2015). Currently, the les-bi women I talked to are part of both feminist and LGBTI+ organizations, thus, "intersectionality" between the two should be highlighted here. While Nehir (28) and Nalan (26) are actively attending Lezbifem meetings, especially Nehir and other members from Lezbifem, keep their personal and political contacts with the Pride Week organization. Additionally, for the last 2 years, Feminist Mekan (that was used to be the habitation of Socialist Feminist Collective SFK, which

published a quarterly magazine) holds LGBTI+ Pride Week organization meetings. Thus one can actually perceive strategic companionships between these collective, informal political groups.

After I started my research, it was especially hard to find women who would frequent Gaia and it was hard to meet new people on the spot because of the crowd and noise. I asked in the Lezbifem mail group if anyone who frequent(ed) Gaia would like to talk to me about this research. Three people responded positively, among whom I interviewed Nalan. Thus throughout this research I also used Lezbifem's mail group to reach more people with varying experiences on les-bi socializations.

1.4 Methodology

I have conducted ten, in person, semi-structured, in-depth interviews. Four of them were in my interviewees' apartments, two were in my apartment, and the remaining four were in public places of their choice, since I wanted them to feel comfortable. With Çınar (27), our first meeting was in a cafe: because we had met through the online application, we figured that for both of us a public site would be more comfortable. This meeting was like a pre-interview since she was trying to understand what my research was about. Afterwards we met in my place and made a recorded interview even though she was more nervous than the first time. My first meetings with other women were also in public places of their choice. Six of my interviewees were from different parts of Turkey; including Ordu, Kırıkkale, Afyon, Diyarbakır; one of them was originally from Germany; and four were originally from İstanbul. I reached some of my interviewees through personal acquaintances: they could have been distant friends who would have knowledge on les-bi socializations, or we would meet through a common friend by recommendation. Generational difference was not that wide since I talked to young people between the ages of 18-33. Some of my interviewees were still studying at the university, while some of them were white collar employees. Generational differences between my interviewees would define how individuals socialized, thus it was relevant during this research, as some of my interviewees also highlighted. Özlem (33) mentioned how her generation is different from other women she encountered. She first started to socialize in the virtual world through kizkiza.com when "things were more discreet" before Chloe. While comparing these two, she thinks that the new generation might be

normalizing virtual ways to socialize unlike herself. “It can be a way to build relationships for them, like writing letters.[5]”

I have to admit that it was hard to hang out in some les-bi frequented bars, such as Gaia. Intense non-stop Turkish pop would block any kind of conversation and in the beginning I had no interlocutor who frequented that place. Afterwards I got to know some people and we started to go there together. Once again, my interviewees’ solidarity with me helped me to be more relaxed in certain places. I was relatively more comfortable in Barbara since I got to know the managers of the place better. I met some of my interviewees in different set ups after our interviews: I met Özlem (33) to go to Barbara's closing party, or met Özgü (26) to go to Gaia, which helped me observe their (and others’) interactions in these physical sites and ask additional questions.

I started to conduct my interviews in November 2016 and did the last one in March 2017. The interviews I conducted had variable durations: the minimum was one and a half hour; the maximum was five hours, depending on how much free time people had and the places where we conducted the interviews. Additionally in order to perceive the possible change in profiles in various parts of the city, I tried to log into Chloe in different parts of the city (Bakırköy, Yusufpaşa, Sultanahmet, Tuzla, Yeşilköy)**.** People's profiles change significantly depending on the socio-economical conditions they are in. Sultanahmet, which is considered as a more conservative and religious area, would have more women with headscarves, and “peace” [huzur] nicknames. Yeşilköy area, where I generally logged in at Atatürk airport, would contain security women with nicknames such as “surveillance.”

1.5 Theoretical Framework

There is a body of literature on women frequented places, namely bars, cafes, websites or bath houses which covers gender performances of les-bi individuals in these specific spaces or highlights relevance of women-only environments for identity politics (Eves 2004; Hightower 2015; Hammers 2009). I also encountered physical space focused researches (Bech 1998; Hammers 2008; Bell&Valentine 1995; Browne, Lim, Brown 2007; Duncan 2005; Keith&Pile 1993).

Since coming out narratives and the ways les-bi individuals negotiate their strategies on “outness” or “closetedness” held a significant ground in my research, I

[5] “[...]onlar için bi ilişki kurma aracı olabilir, mektup gibi.”

aimed to cover parts of the literature on this aspect (Plummer 1990; Sedgwick 1990; Halperin 1995; Blasius 1992; Orne 2011; Rust 1993). In terms of les-bi socializations, different levels of integration, segregation, and/or negotiation may be involved as narratives of my interviewees showed. Cautious negotiation with the "outside world" can also be perceived in people's behaviours during lesbian/gay socializations both in physical and virtual spaces. In this respect, I mentioned how coming out has been debated in activist contexts and how my interviewees negotiated being out in their own terms of being safe and free. In this part, İlaslaner's unpublished thesis on Pride Week organization's emotional habitus provided relevant background information regarding self-organized LGBTI+ groups that les-bi women have been a part of in İstanbul. İlaslaner mentions how "coming out and attending to the events and organizations, has changed [LGBTI+ individuals] ways of emoting" during Pride Weeks (İlaslaner 2015,63). This might be one of the key concepts I would like to mention, regarding relationality between social encounters' affect on coming out and community making processes.

There is a remarkable body of literature on LGBTI+ community's socialization and cruising practices in both virtual and physical mediums, focusing on İstanbul and Ankara. (Özbay 2010; Savcı 2016; Başdaş 2007; Durgun 2010; Bereket&Adam 2006; Gürel 2012; Özyeğin 2015; Atuk 2016). Gül Özyeğin, in her recent work on sexualities in Turkey, *New Desires New Selves* (2015), discusses how "passive resistance" and "harmony" [denge] that might allow a lesbian woman "to stay connected with her mother via the creation of facades and pretensions that enabled her to be seen as heterosexual, while simultaneously keeping her lesbianism in the forefront of her mother's consciousness" (Özyeğin 2015,93). Similar to her arguments, I also encountered variations of the "don't ask don't tell" policy between some les-bi women and their parents on their sexuality. Savcı's arguments on how women-only spaces might contain multiple levels of inclusions and exclusion, and her discussion of the class based aspects of socialization processes have been particularly insightful.

There is another body of literature, exploring LGBTI+ socializations in virtual settings and the workings of online communities (Kozinets 2010; Atuk 2016; Dasgupta 2014; Mcglotten 2005; Gürel 2012; Görkemli 2014). While most of them focus on gay cruising in general, they provide significant insights regarding the virtual forms of socialization and community building. Through these virtualities, I argue, more dynamic and flexible communities might be shaped. Görkemli's *Grassroots Literacies* (2014) shows how online ways of getting together in university circles, such as LEGATO, would

help individuals to form communities. Through these kinds of gatherings and sharings, even in virtual set ups, Görkemli claims, LGBTI+ communities can create their own "community literacies" (2014, 123) that would ensure information transfer to newcomers. Transformation of literacy holds a relevant ground within the flow of my research, since it is one of the factors how I interpret apps as communities. However this idea of having communities through commonalities, might cause newcomers to abstain from taking initiatives and limit their own ways to share formations as some of my interviewees also mentioned (see Chapter 3).

In order to highlight possible connections between community making and solidarity building practices of les-bi individuals, I have reviewed the literature related to community makings of les-bi women (Phelan 1994; Jeffreys 2003; Stein 1997; Weston 1991). Phelan (1994) and Stein (1997, 2006) mention queer theory and politics as a fresh way to take a look at what "communities" have been excluding (especially in terms of class and ethnicity). In relation to queer theory, the way my interviewees mentioned queer or chosen families, as new forms of solidarity will be discussed in this context as well.

Although I do not discuss "class" and class based differences as much as I initially aimed to, my research findings do point to class as being an important determinant in les-bi socializations (Young 1990;Fraser 2013; Taylor 2007;Skeggs 2002). While urbanization and constant change in Beyoğlu district where these places have been inhabited, have their effects on les-bi women frequented spaces, I think commercialization and mainstreaming of LGBTI+ frequented places will be less of an issue in the context of İstanbul. Unlike what US based scholars have offered (Bell&Binnie 2004; Knopp 1987) related to issue of pink economy and commercialization of LGBTI+ culture, in İstanbul, especially in Beyoğlu district, LGBTI+ frequented areas are still considered as affordable ghettos to a large extent.

In this research, I would like to highlight the locality, hybridity, as well as the fluidity of terms that have been adopted to define LGBTI+ people in different contexts in different parts of the world. All of the researches I mentioned in the context of Turkey's LGBTI+ scenes, highlight local articulations of LGBTI+ culture in the context of Turkey, rather than its global aspects and connections (Bereket&Adam 2006; Savcı 2016; Özbay 2010; Başdaş 2007). Turkey and especially its biggest cosmopolitan city İstanbul, has a multicultural, constantly changing structure, with people coming from different places,

and backgrounds, it cannot be easily put into binary categories of "East" and "West. [6]" Thus I would like to highlight the hybridity and context change in İstanbul .

The question of "politics" I posed during the interviews, ["do you think these mediums of socialization can be perceived as political?"] aimed to delve into multiple aspects of how my interviewees personally perceived their positionality towards them and open up the discussion of dissident, sexual, intimate citizenships (Weeks 1998; Bell&Binnie 2000; Plummer 2003). For me, it became obvious in the course of this research that there are multiple layers to "politics:" what I meant by "politics," what people perceived, how they practice politics and finally, how I reflect on their personal ways of negotiating "politics." Although I aimed to abstain from assigning "politics" on my interviewees, their identities as "les-bi individuals" might be perceived as being inherently political, as some of my interviews revealed. Finally, the literature that covers identity politics and how my interviewees positioned themselves accordingly with this concept will be discussed in Chapter 4. (Binnie&Bell, 2000; Duggan, 2006). Most of my interviewees defined themselves as part of the LGBTI+ community which is perceived as an "oppressed minority."

1.6 Significance:

Same sex desire mostly been studied from the gay male perspective, thus during this research I also aimed to highlight woman-to-woman desire and intimacies. The literature on Turkey's gay scene, for at least 20 years, has focused specially on gay male intimacies, how they cruise in various mediums, how coming out affects their self-expression, and how they develop solidarity networks especially in an activist sense. Woman-to-woman socialization and a focus on lesbian bisexual individuals promises to bring more insight and widen the literature on les-bi socializations. Since it is generally hard to find information about LGBTI+ friendly places and apps, I believe my research can potentially contribute to the historicization and contextualization of same sex socialization in Istanbul. One of the aims of this research is to address the gap on les-bi virtual socializations in the context of Turkey, by highlighting les-bi visibility in LGBTI+ community.

[6] While I think the discussion of "East vs West" holds a relevant ground, in this research there was no necessity of getting into this. While using Western in quotation marks, I aimed to highlight my critical perspective on the binary East vs West.

1.7 Outline:

Chapter 1 provides historical information regarding lesbian-bisexual woman's socializations in Turkey, covering the literature in this field. The Chapter analysis how les-bi women's socialization has changed over time and how it is experienced today. This chapter also discusses my research questions, methodology and the literature in this field. The literature which particularly highlights Turkey's LGBTI+ scene and its position "between Eastern and Western LGBTI+ cultures" is also discussed in this chapter. After introducing the concept of socialization, I explain my preference to use the concept "les-bi socialization" in this research.

In Chapter 2, I discuss coming out processes of les-bi women and how they negotiate it in their daily lives, focusing specifically the relationship between this practice and different mediums of socializations. The process of coming out and the way it has been closely related to activist discourse and activism is given closer attention in this chapter. Here I would like to argue that there are less clear cut distinctions between LGBTI+ activism and the process of coming out in daily life unlike some scholars such as Ken Plummer argued. Eve K. Sedgwick's *Epistemology of Closet* (1990) and Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality* (1978) might be relevant here to discuss personal ways of negotiating being out and how it has been perceived as a precondition of activism or "the truth" about one's identity. I discuss my interviewees' coming out processes in different terms, to different circles as a question of negotiation with the predominantly heterosexual structure.

Chapter 3 covers les-bi women's socializations and the different mediums that have been frequented in İstanbul. I mention both bars and dating applications, providing a brief history of these mediums as well. Generational and class differences are mentioned here, since they determine how les-bi individuals socialize. In this part I also discuss concepts like community making and forming solidarities with "people like yourself" through my interviewees' multiple accounts. The concept of solidarity is closely connected to discussions around "queer family," since "being in solidarity" often refers to being together with people like oneself. Activism as professional work and activism through personal encounters are also discussed in this chapter, alongside people's perceptions of being part of a minority, oppressed group, much like other minority groups. Here, I ask a series of questions, including: How do people build their sense of community and belonging in LGBTI+ places or applications? How are these concepts related to different negotiations of coming out?

In Chapter 4, I discuss "identity politics" in terms of self-identification, solidarity and community building practices since these concepts are central to my research and analysis. For my interviewees, "politics" typically connoted high politics or politics in grand scale. In this chapter, I first explain the background of my question on politics, namely that I wanted to discuss the ways in which les-bi socializations might be perceived as "political." As I analyse the political connotations of les-bi socializations, I use the concept of "dissident citizenship" and discuss how some of my interviewees defined themselves as dissident subjects. In some cases this dissident position was the point where "politics" or politically active subjects originated. I also discuss the implications of visibility and "clocking"[7] oneself in relation to identity politics.

Finally in Chapter 5, I conclude by summarizing my arguments, highlighting further questions to explore, and discussing the possible future prospects of similar research in the field of LGBTI+ studies in Turkey.

[7]"Clocking" means being recognized about your sexual orientation or gender identity or "not being able to pass" in especially US based gay slang. Some of my interviewees used this term as "alıktırmak" in Turkish. Although it is not contained in written sources, some of the younger generation of LGBTI+ indidividuals use the term as I can observe.

CHAPTER II: "COMING OUT" IN THE CONTEXT OF SELF-IDENTIFICATION AND SOCIALIZATION

"Coming out" as a practice seems to play a key role in terms of my interviewees self-identification processes. I aim to discuss this practice from different critical aspects with based on my interviewees accounts, analysing preferences of "coming out" and "closeting" oneself in various mediums and circles. Although "coming out" both as a personal and political practice has been discussed vibrantly in 1970s, with the emergence of the Gay Liberation Front in US, its close relation with LGBTI+ activism has changed over the years.

In this chapter, I aim to highlight the relationship between socialization, community building and the issue of "coming out." Being "out" and being "visible" constitute a central issue (and tension) in the lives of lesbian-bisexual individuals. "Being out" had different connotations for every woman I talked to: the central concerns being exclusion from family, lesbo-phobia in circle of friends or the work environment. In relation to the gay community in İstanbul, Bereket and Adam argue that "[…]embracing a gay identity is not just an aspiration for personal freedom or civil liberties; it speaks as well to a changing 'erotic subjectivity' about other men, and the possibility of inter-male connection beyond the gender-inscribed form" (Bereket & Adam 2006, 147). Thus if one is "out" in the public, it will be relatively easier to "cruise" and hang out in public, thanks to one's visibility. Since my main focus covers les-bi socializations in applications and bars, coming out to others about one's sexual orientation become crucial while women meet, talk or flirt with other women. One has to "clock" herself (i.e. "disclose" oneself) in order to catch other women's attention.

Additionally, coming out, as I perceived both in the literature and the interviews, connects two seemingly distinct aspects of the "personal" and the "political." In what follows, I first discuss the debates around coming out processes and how they have changed over the years, and how my interviewees have perceived it in their processes of identity making. Almost all of my interviewees separate the mediums, circles in which they have come out or stayed closeted, usually with the motivation to face the least possible problems in daily life. Before delving into my interviews with lesbian-bisexual women, I would like to discuss the literature on the practice of "coming out" and how it is perceived as part of the identity making process.

2.1 Coming Out: Political Through Personal

Ken Plummer's *Telling Sexual Stories* (1995) can be perceived as one of the canonical works on coming out. "Stories need communities to be heard, but communities themselves are also built through story telling. Stories gather people around them: they have to attract audiences, and these audiences may then start to build a common perception, a common language and a commonality" (Plummer 1995, 174). He highlights the effect of having "common stories" on community building and its reciprocal nature: just as minority (especially ethnic) groups, political organizations, or on a bigger scale nations do, commonalities regarding sexual experience and expression also help people get together in different mediums.

Stories would help people to share their repressed feelings, traumas thus being able to talk about what one has been through as well as sharing one's desires. At this point, I should mention Foucault and how he critically positions himself accordingly related to the concept of confession, which he perceives closely related to coming out. While giving examples from Christianity which canonizes confessions of individuals, he criticises confession's roots in Western culture that actually forces individuals to participate in the process of "producing truth" (Foucault 1978, 59). These processes of confessions as he highlights, are not free from power relations. "The obligation to confess is now relayed through so many different points, is so deeply ingrained in us, that we no longer perceive it as the effect of a power that constrains us; on the contrary, it seems to us that truth, lodged in our most secret nature, "demands" only to surface; that if it fails to do so, this is because a constraint holds it in place, the violence of a power weighs it down, and it can finally be articulated only at the price of a kind of liberation"(Foucault 1978,60). Thus, confession and outing oneself by uttering one's orientation might be perceived as closely related as Foucault offers. Indeed, in order to achieve any kind of visibility for political action, individuals who aims to be part of identity politics (be it LGBTI+ movements or minority rights movements) individuals have to out themselves and this process is not free from power relations. Being out is closely related to being visible for surveillance and being exposed to dangerous encounters.

Such stories collectively shape framework of identity politics and enable people to form a sense of belonging. The way my subjects mention "coming out" often brings aspects of "personal" and "political" together contribute to the imagining of a collective past and a different future. Deniz**,** is a self-identified gender-queer woman who mentioned her struggle with her family on multiple contexts: what to study, what job to have and

finally her sexuality. While she talks about her own ways to negotiate being out, mentions her family's conventional attitude towards LGBTI+ issues. She highlights her comfort in her own skin but equally concerned about her family's "being old and unsympathetic towards LGBTI+ individuals:" "You should wait a bit more, our generation's children would already grow up with awareness on these issues, would be more relaxed. You can be visible from certain aspects, but you should also keep the balance." [8]Here, she aspires for a "better" and "freer" future while taking younger generations into consideration: through other generation's steps regarding self-expressions, in the future les-bi individuals might be less marginalized in her opinion. My interviewees mostly highlighted their aspirations for "better," (i.e. more visible, less lesbophobic) future since they observe the visibility of LGBTI+ individuals grew throughout the years.

"Stories mark out identities; identities mark out differences; differences define 'the other'; and 'the other' helps structure the moral life of culture, group and individual. Stories are often, if not usually, conservative and preservative—tapping into the dominant worldview"(Plummer 1995,178). According to Plummer, the widespread sharing of coming out stories can present an alternative to the "dominant worldview," in other words, hetero-normative narratives. Plummer highlights multiple characteristics of coming out because people may aim for various expectations from the act itself, such as political visibility in order to claim equal rights or just to feel more comfortable around their family. According to him, there are personal (self-conversation), private (telling specific others), public (knowledge may dissolve and become told by many others) and political (story as means of social change) ways of coming out (Plummer 1995, 57-58). Coming out seems to be the site where the personal gets clicks with the political, since it has an impact in both fields. Plummer distinguishes personal and political coming out processes, but also highlights the ways in which they feed each other.

"The telling of sexual stories that can reach public communities of discourse has been a central theme. Without lesbian and gay stories the lesbian and gay movement may not have flourished [...] And these stories work their way into changing lives, communities and cultures. Through and through, sexual story telling is a political process." (Plummer 1995, 145). Here, Plummer highlights the importance of having common stories and social relations in order to form a community. Kübra (33), who was

[8] "Bırakın bekleyin bizim neslimizin çocukları zaten bununla büyüyecekler yani daha rahat olacaklar. Sen görünürlüğünü sağla bi yerden, ama dengeyi oturttur."

involved in various feminist and LGBTI+ organizations throughout years, came out to her mother in 2015 after our dear friends Zeliş and Boysan died in a car accident.

> "My mom, even though she wasn't an oppressive person, I was afraid to come out to her, couldn't find the words, but I was relaxed after I said it… It was funny though, I told a friend about it, she sent a tweet from Lezbifem's account, saying "today another woman came out as a lesbian to her mother!" People liked and everything, it was funny."[9]

Here, personal and political aspects of one's life can be seen as mingling together: deeply personal event may cause a personal coming out that may have a political reflection through social media account of a feminist group. Kübra's story may inspire, trigger other stories to emerge as Plummer argues.

Demanding rights is closely related to being visible in the case of LGBTI+ subjects, but it is in the process of coming out that the political subject is formed as it has been argued by Plummer. Coming out process enables "personal stories" become "political stories" in relation to politics of visibility and identity politics. "There is a coming out, a shift in consciousness, a recovery through which a negative experience is turned into a positive identity and a private pain becomes part of a political or a therapeutic language" (Plummer 1995,50). In Plummer's framework, coming out relates closely to coming to terms (with conditions you are in, or yourself) and personal becoming political. However these preconditions related to how coming out's being political, might not be generalized for every les-bi individuals since they may not perceive their coming outs as political and public.

Lack of "better stories" regarding relationships was an issue we discussed with Özgü and Nehir in particular. They mentioned the lack of good, empowering stories regarding les-bi intimate relationships. They highlighted how emotionally damaging relationships can be, for example, the expectation of feminized beauty standards in dating applications, people being extremely mean to each other, (including physical fights in bars) or relationships ending bitterly. Both Nehir and Özgü, in different interviews, mentioned their feeling of being caught in a trap of binaries here: there are certain ways to build relationships in these les-bi communities, and "you either take it or leave it."

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9 "[Annem baskıcı biri olmamasına] rağmen bir şekilde korktum yani açılırken ne diyeceğimi bilemedim, gerçekten korktum, söyledikten sonra baya rahatladım ama. Hatta şey çok komikti, [arkadaşıma] söyledim. O hemen Lezbifem'in Twitter'ından "bugün bir kadın daha annesine lezbiyen olarak açıldı" falan diye twit attı, böyle like'lar falan çok komikti."

These relationships tend to be more on short term basis and may change dynamically. Although my interviewees realize how brutal things may get while they socialize with other women, they continue to log into those dating applications, and/or frequent those bars. Because they think they will not be able to find any les-bi women to talk to in libraries, bookstores, park, or break between classes[10]. To flirt in more normative settings like these, seem impossible for them. They highlight hearing other les-bi women's stories may help emergence of alternative ways of building relationships as well.

Process of "coming out" and the way LGBTI+ political agenda positions this, have been criticized from different aspects over the years by different researchers (Orne 2011; Rust 1993, Blasius 2012; Sedgwick 1990). Orne and Rust with other scholars, criticize linearity, goal and essence orientedness of available coming out models. Orne's "coming out," practice has been conceptualized as "strategic outness" which "involves an active management of identity" (2011, 692). Thus more active, changing ways of coming out has been proposed over the years. "Coming out" when it was constantly debated in 1970's, perceived as the way to discover the true identity of oneself that would happen in a step by step moving forward method. Whereas my fieldwork revealed as well, steps to "identity formation is not orderly and predictable; individuals often skip steps in the process, temporarily return to earlier stages of the process, and sometimes abort the process altogether by returning to a heterosexual identity" (Rust 1993,51). Similarly Blasius argues that "coming out is instead a process of "becoming lesbian or gay "(1992,655). "This process is described by Blasius as a "lifelong learning of how to become and of inventing the meaning of being a lesbian or a gay man in this historical moment" (Blasius 1992,655). Thus, performative and dynamic nature of self-identification has been highlighted by both of these researchers, since contexts, styles which define lesbian-gay identities are in constant change. Indeed, I aimed to highlight the aspect of formation in identity construction of lesbian-bisexual individuals: the way one finds out ways to socialize, ways to perform one's identity; the way my interviewees mention their constant coming outs to their social circles with various self-expressions as lesbian or bisexual to queer.

Additionally, coming out's being perceived as precondition to be part of LGBTI+ activism, has been discussed from the aspect of class as well (Bell&Binnie 2000;Taylor

[10] Soydan and Özbay's Eşcinsel Kadınlar might be also relevant to have alternative lesbian and bisexual women's stories.

2007). Bell and Binnie in *The Sexual Citizen* (2000), highlight how classed this coming out discourse might be, while overlooking the economic costs of it that are still relevant and present. Especially coming out to family, in Turkey, requires being economically less dependent on your family since one may come across with stigmatization and exclusion after coming out to their family members.

The notion of coming out has been criticized for being "Western" as a concept because of its roots in activist discourse that emerged in 1970s after Stonewall that preconditioned coming out for LGBTI+ activism. "Armstrong (2002), for instance, clearly demonstrates that Gay Liberation's successful use of coming out as a political strategy relied on the narrative of self-love, acceptance and authenticity" (Armstrong, 2002 cited in Orne 2011,695). Visibility through gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans identities, aimed a political ground in the legal system in order to claim equal rights, treatment, employment and education. Because of Gay Liberation Front's emphasis on coming out as a way of political activism, "self-acceptance" and "freedom" les-bi individuals may find themselves stuck between "liberation of coming out" and "darkness of being closeted." Sedgwick (1990) similarly talks about the epistemology of closet and how practice and discourse of coming out have been used as a precondition to form a gay (LGBTI+) identity. "Closetedness" itself is a performance initiated as such by the speech act of a silence - not a particular silence, but a silence that accrues particularity by fits and starts, in relation to the discourse that surrounds and differentially constitutes it. The speech acts that coming out, in turn, can comprise are as strangely specific. And they may have nothing to do with the acquisition of new information" (Sedgwick 1990, 3). Here Sedgwick highlights that people may choose to stay in the closet and how people prefer to negotiate being out or closeted would be a personal call. She criticizes this obligation to out oneself with functions of power relations which might be related to Foucault's arguments on confession's nature.

David Halperin in *Saint Foucault* (1995), similarly highlights problematic aspects regarding the "coming out vs. staying in closet" binary. He argues that coming out simply may not be an act of freedom by its nature, rather it may be ground for struggle since one might encounter: bullying, contempt and/or physical violence. "If to come out is to release oneself from a state of non-freedom, that is not because coming out constitutes an escape from the reach of power to a place outside of power: rather, coming out puts into play a different set of power relations and alters the dynamics of personal and political struggle. *Coming out is an act of freedom, then, not in the sense of liberation but in the sense of*

resistance" (Halperin 1995,30). As Halperin and many other researchers argue, coming out opens up new aspects of resistance that may be hard to avoid from. The inevitability of the "resistance," as it was highlighted in our interviews with Nalan and Nehir, emerges from coming out process' potential pressure on LGBTI+ individuals when they are visible, in other words "out" and "public." In two of the interviews this aspect of "being out," making oneself exposed to certain dangers and tensions were discussed.

As Nehir puts it,

> "Whether you want it or not, wherever/whenever you are public and became open to public, actually you are public. You start to belong there, you become a part of it and you would be someone for people to speak of; some kind of a material...Even if you like it or not, thing you would call "personal space" has its limits "outside the personal" and its wide open to public." [11]

After this point, she moves on to political aspects of being out and cruising. These two and seemingly distinct concepts can be connected together through the concept of being part of public sphere. Özgü, when she talks about personal relationships, seems like more comfortable and out:

> "I think I'm relatively distant to this aspect of closeting myself. I can be out about myself. When I go to the classes, in friend circles, I can be out and hang out people who can do the same. However that public thing affects me..."[12]

Even if there may be no visible, practical tension, one may feel like being cautious out of necessity. Many women I interviewed mentioned the restrictive nature of this tension. In both of these cases regarding "being out" my interviewees' tension rises from visibility and through which mediums one makes themselves "out."

2.2 Coming Out As a "Western" Concept

Since issues related to process of coming out were debated mostly in the US context, both activists and academic work overlooked different specific conditions of coming out regarding non-US countries. Thus the literature on coming out generally assumes "unified identity making process" in a specific "Western" social structure (Sedgwick 1990; Orne 2011; Rust 1993). Here, locality of the process of coming out

[11] "[...] ister istemez sen kurumsallaştığın...kamusallaştığın her yerde, kamu sensin aslında. Ve oraya hem ait oluyorsun hem oranın bir şeyi, oluyorsun, üstüne konuşulabilir oluyorsun. kullanılabilir oluyorsun meta bi yerden de. İster istemez bütün o özel alan dediğin şey ya bence sınırı dışarıda toplumsal anlamda, kamusal alanda çok açık."

[12] "Nispeten bu gizlenme durumundan uzak olduğumu düşünüyorum. açıkça yaşayabiliyorum. girdiğim derste, sınıfta arkadaş ortamında söyleyebiliyorum ve söyleyen insanlarla olabiliyorum. ama yine de toplumsal şey beni etkiliyo."

should be highlighted since terminology may be the same but it may not be covering the same concept in the same way. "People construct and reconstruct gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered categories within cultural parameters consistent with their own experiences both in the North and the South. This is not to argue that structural conditions will lead to a convergence toward a single model all around the world, or that other societies will adopt gay 'identities' with the same content as North/West societies, or that gay 'identities' are coherent or static entities even in North/West societies. (Bereket and Adam 2006,132-133). Thus, coming out may contain different risks, problems and liberations for lesbian-bisexual individuals in İstanbul different from les-bi individuals in US or Europe. Gopinath in *Impossible Desires* (2005), focuses on how dominant "Western" way of conceptualization of LGBTI+ politics may change in the context of South Asia: dichotomies regarding being "out" or "closeted" or being recognized as a subject. She aims to discuss particular differences between these two different conceptualizations while highlighting "Western" discourse "organized exclusively around a logic of recognition and visibility" (Gopinath 2005, 16). It might be the case for les-bi individuals in İstanbul. I would like to argue, preconditioning "being out" may overlook individuals' agencies by from various conditions (class, space, culture), who might adopted various ways to negotiate "being out" in multiple contexts.

2.3 Changing Nature of Coming Out: Identifying Oneself As "Queer"

Although I preferred to be cautious while using the concept of queer during my fieldwork, I realized it became necessary while some of interviewees mentioned it as more "flexible" ways for their self-identifications. Half of my interviewees used "queer" or "changing" ["değişiyor"] or both, after I asked them how they define themselves. The way some of my interviewees define themselves as queer (with or without the acknowledgement of academic formation that comes along) aims to draw distinctions between themselves and other les-bi individuals as well as their way of lives of their straight friends. Especially Lusin (18) and Nehir made clear cut distinctions between their "LGBTI+ friendly subculture" and "straight world" that contains a certain level of tension. Nehir and some other interviewees acknowledge the norms (within LGBTI+ community) that may re-appropriate certain gender binaries and performances. However they could not deny the feeling of comfort they experienced in LGBTI+ frequented places or applications, because of their "solidarity" feeling.

Halberstam in *Queer Time and Space* (2003) suggests that queer life-styles and spatio-temporalities may offer and open up to de-naturalize "straight" ones as counter to "queer" ones. "Queers participate in subcultures for far longer than their heterosexual counterparts. At a time when heterosexual men and women are spending their weekends, their extra cash and all their free time shuttling back and forth between the weddings of friends and family, urban queers tend to spend their leisure time and money on subcultural involvement. This may take the form of intense weekend clubbing, playing in small music bands, going to drag balls, participating in slam poetry events or seeing performances of one kind or another in cramped and poorly ventilated spaces" (Halberstam 2003,328). Some of my interviewees might not perceive or frame LGBTI+ friendly bars (or apps) as part of a certain "subculture," but the way these socialization mediums create relatively safe zones for LGBTI+ individuals, covers a respectable ground in narratives of my interviewees. As they mention, les-bi temporality regarding weekend activities and ways to socialize might be different from their "straight" counterparts.

Most of my interviewees highlighted how they felt with their straight acquaintances or friends after coming out to them. Lusin, like many others mentioned her discomfort around straight friends, because of her fear of being ignored, not being understood completely:

> "I have a few straight friends whom I feel comfortable with. I am not comfortable with everyone though, only with the ones I came out. But with them I also have a problem: to understand a person, it is not enough to think like him or her. I don't think a person who is not queer[13] could understand a queer. I may be prejudiced but I talk out of my experiences until now. When I talk to my straight friends, sometimes there is something that either one of us don't feel comfortable."[14]

Lusin thinks she suffers from "heterophobia" since she generalizes "them" and "their world" with certain prejudices. She adds "never feels like herself" when she is with her straight friends. Similarly, Nehir feels more alert and emotional when she is with her straight friends:

[13] "Queer" used as an umbrella term here to cover "lubunya" in Turkish gay slang.

[14] "Birkaç hetero arkadaşım da var rahat olabildiğim. Ama hepsi değil, açık olduklarıma rahatım. Ama açık olduklarımla da şöyle bir derdim var. şey, bir insanın karşı tarafı anlaması için karşı taraf gibi düşünebilmesi yeterli olmuyor. Mesela lubunya olmayan birinin lubunya birini anlayabileceğini düşünmüyorum. Önyargılı olabilirim ama şimdiye kadarki deneyimlerimden bunu çıkardım. Hetero arkadaşlarımla konuşurken bir noktada bir şeyler alttan alta vuruluyor yani. onlar da ben de rahat olamıyorum."

> "...seems unbelievable but I guess you become more sensitive...while socializing with straight people. More cautious or sensitive...certain things seem to get on my nerves...or in a more emotinal state, you think they wouldn't understand you and you don't want to be with people who wouldn't undersand you."[15]

Nehir also constantly compares how lesbian-bisexuals and heterosexuals find their partners and highlights her wish to have "daily flirt stories" like "straight people."

> "I don't know where else I could socialize really. You either go to a LGBT place, or use that application. Where else you could find someone really? While walking in the park or on the street a man comes up to you flirting, it happens often. But how would a woman be sure about you[r orientation] to come up to you and flirt so on. I have no idea about this subject."[16]

Similarly, Kübra highlights her discomfort around heterosexual counterparts, that originates from her past. "I wasn't comfortable among straight people. I was much more relaxed with people like me. And I think applications are more… I think parties and places make you feel more comfortable."[17] Çınar also distinguishes whom she prefers to be out in terms of her identity and sexual orientation:

> "There are lots of straight people who support you. That's enough I think, otherwise they can get lost. If they don't accept or support, they can get lost. You were not there bro, it wouldn't make much difference. I would be sadder if people who are actually in my life didn't accept me."[18]

As it was highlighted in the last two accounts, most of my interviewees seem to prioritise to be understood by "people like themselves" or get more comfortable les-bi or LGBTI+ socialization mediums.

While, "coming out" practice and the narratives related to it, might assume an essence deep within the subject that waits to emerge and burst some of my interviewees

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[15] "...inanılmaz ama hassas da oluyosun galiba mesela ben hetero biriyle sosyalleşirken daha şey oluyorum. Daha dikkatli mi oluyosun daha hassas mı oluyosun. Bi tık bişeyler böyle sinirimi bozuyo yani...ya da daha duygusal bi yerden anlamıycak yani seni anlamıyo, ve seni anlamayan biriyle olmak istemiyosun."

[16] "Başka ne yaparken bulurum da sosyalleşirim bilmiyorum gerçekten. Ya işte LGBT bir mekana gideceksin, ya o uygulamayı kullanacaksın. Gerçekten başka nerede bulacaksın ki [başka insanları]? Parkta yürürken bi kadınla, ya da yolda yürürken...Bir kafede otururken bir adamın senin yanına gelip flört etmesi bir şey bir şey, hani çok rastlanır da, ama bir kadın nereden gelecek de o kadar emin olacak da yapacak falan. Hiçbir fikrim yok mesela bu konuyla ilgili."

[17] "Hiç rahatlığım yoktu heterolar arasında. Daha böyle benim gibi insanlar arasında daha rahat davranabiliyordum. Ve aplikasyonda daha böyle şey oluyor...sanırım gene de partiler, ortamlar daha iyi hissettiriyor."

[18] "Hetero olup da destekleyen bi sürü insan var. O da yeter zaten öbür türlü de olmayıversinler. Destelemiyolarsa kabul etmiyolarsa da olmasınlar. Yoktun zaten abi şimdi olsan nolur olmasan nolur. hayatımda olanlar kabul etmese daha çok üzülürüm."

do not necessarily prioritize the stable essence. In fact half of my interviewees, after I asked them about their sexual orientation (i.e. how do they define themselves) they paused and gave themselves some time to think. While some of them used the term "queer" with a certain level of enthusiasm and comfort, some of them only referred the changing nature of their desire. Thus, the process of coming out from some of my interviewees' point of view, can be a dynamic, ongoing process that one do not have to finalize.

As Muñoz discusses in *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (2009), "[q]ueerness is also a performative because it is not simply a being but a doing for and toward the future. Queerness is essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world" (Munoz 2009,1). Defining oneself as queer means constantly being on the way, not arriving and craving for "utopias." Here, as some of my interviewees highlight their identities are not fixed as they used to be. They talk about "queer" as a more flexible zone that may enable them to "shape" themselves in more diverse and flexible ways.

Özlem who is a white collared employee, highlights it is impossible to know who is having what kind of performance in bed. Thus, she comfortably utters that she is "atypical person" who defines herself as "AP gender-fluid lesbian woman." Despite her self-identification, sometimes when we were out in the bars together, she told me to that I should "be careful with other people around, because they may 'snatch me'" [kapmak]. After I stared at her for a second, she was aware and surprised by her "normative" behaviour, since she defined herself as "outside" of those norms.

Deniz who currently defines herself as "genderqueer" says,

> "A few years ago I was saying that there was no label. Then I realized, when you first meet a person, you need those labels to describe yourself. When I came out to myself, I was 25 years old. I have none of them in my soul, I have both of them. Actually they come to the same thing."[19]

Before this talk about obligatory self-definitions, she mentioned how she wants to have a mastectomy surgery since she does not want to be perceived feminine. Thus she prefers an androgynous body over her current body, while still identifying herself as woman in

[19] "Etiket diye bir şey yok diyordum bikaç yıl önce. Sonra ilk yeni tanışırken bi insanla, kendini tanımlarken o etiketlere kavramlara ihtiyaç duyuyorsun. Ben mesela kendime karar verdiğimde 25 yaşındaydım...Ruhumda hiçbiri yok, bende ikisi de var. Aslında ikisi de aynı kapıyo çıkıyo."

her narratives. Most of these narratives, as I can perceive, connote a unique way of performance regarding self-identification.

As Nehir narrated in our interview, the surface of identity politics can be slippery. The moment she started to self identify herself as "lesbian" she was challenged, because she was sexually involved with a trans-guy:

> "I actually describe myself as pansexual; I have found this one, as the clearest and easiest description. But outside, politically, I say I am a lesbian for politics of lesbian visibility."[20]

Here while Nehir does not want to give up on her desires fluid nature, she prioritizes lesbian visibility as a political choice. Similarly Esra (25) mentioned her confusion regarding her self-identification, since "it constantly changes." Like Nehir if she has to come out, she prefers define herself as lesbian. However actually it is more complex than that.

> R: How do you self identify yourself?
> E: It is difficult, I don't know anymore. I say I am a lesbian, but I first thought I was bisexual. Then I decided to say I am a lesbian, now I don't know. If the setting is not right or I don't want to explain, I say I am a lesbian. I want to escape a little, I don't know…"[21]

Here, Esra similar to other interviewees, mentioned how she finds it difficult to self-identify herself within existing categories. Coming out requires certain boundaries and orientations that one has to adopt, some of my interviewees like Esra, might find them insufficient. Desire, as it can be perceived here, is in constant change, so self-identification simply and directly as "lesbian" or "bisexual" might get trickier for some of my interviewees.

Lusin, is a high-schooler, aims to study veterinary medicine who came out to herself a year ago. After I asked her about how she defines herself, talked about the processes she has been through:

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[20] "[...] Ben kendimi aslında panseksüel diye tanımlıyorum, en açık ve rahat tanımı bu gibi geliyor. Ama işte politik anlamda lezbiyenim diyorum dışarıda. Kimlik politikası güdüyorum."

[21] A: Kendini nasıl tanımlıyorsun?
E: Artık bilmiyorum çok zor...Daha böyle lezbiyenim diyorum, ama hani böyle ilk biseksüel olduğumu düşünüyordum. Sonra lezbiyen demeye karar verdim, şimdi bilmiyorum. Eğer çok anlatılacak bir yer değilse ya da anlatmak istemiyorsam lezbiyenim diyorum. Biraz kaçmak istiyorum ama bilmiyorum yani.

> "I accept none of the assigned identities. So, while I cannot define myself as a woman, as none of those sexes, it is not enough to describe myself as lesbian, because I am attracted to women. I don't know, I can say I am attracted to people whose gender is woman. It was like that mostly so far. I felt that way, there was no different situation, if different things happen, I think about it then."[22]

Lusin highlights that binaries regarding sexes are not enough to define the complexity of one's desires and thoughts. On the other hand, Nalan criticized "queer" in our interview by highlighting its complexity: "Everybody's really 'queer,' [kuir][23] I only feel like I'm a 'fag,' 'you don't even know English?' [mimicking shocked remarks] and I'm like 'ok, you're 'queer' I'm a 'fag.'" [24] Being able to define oneself as queer perceived as having the English and "Western" formation for Nalan.

Gill Valentine in "Negotiating and Managing Multiple Sexual Identities" (1993) similarly claims that lesbian-bisexual women prefer to take things under their control by ignoring the dichotomous construction of coming out (1993, 241). Both Valentine and Orne highlight changing nature of being out in multiple contexts as my interviewees also mentioned. Some of them prefer to come to their close friends, some carefully come out to their families and their work environments. Since the last two may have economic and/or violent consequences, all of my interviewees tend to be cautious on those factors.

Kübra, who has been politically active in Lezbifem and SFK throughout the years, mentioned how she had to come out twice to her sister. Because she thought Kübra was bisexual, she asked her if she wants to get married:

> "I came out to my elder sister and a few years later she asked me again: 'There is a doctor, don't you want to marry him?' I became angry and said: 'If you ever ask me such questions again, I would not answer your phone calls for

[22] "Bana atfedilen hiçbir kimliği kabul etmiyorum. Dolayısıyla ben kendimi kadın olarak tanımlamıyorken, hiçbir şey olarak tanımlamıyorken, kadınlardan hoşlanıyor olmam benim lezbiyen olarak tanımlanmama yetmiyor falan. Bilmiyorum toplumsal cinsiyeti kadın olan insanlardan hoşlanabiliyorum diyebilirim...Şimdiye kadar ağırlıklı olarak böyle oldu, böyle hissettim. Farklı bi durum olmadı, olursa da o zaman düşünürüz yani."

[23] Similar to Nalan many of my interviewees somehow mentioned the concept of "queer." Since the concept has been translated into Turkish as "kuir" in some cases to denote queer theory, wording or way of thinking, I preffered to keep it that way in certain quotations.

[24] "Herkes çok kuir, ben kendimi çok ibneyim gibi hissediyorum. İngilizce de mi bilmiyosun? aa?..Okey ben ibneyim sen kuirsin."

> two years!' The other day I said to her: 'Actually you should have to apologize me!' She asked me, 'Why?' and I explained to her, she just nodded."[25]

After they talked about it, her sister invited Kübra and her partner over a dinner to meet as Kübra narrated. In some cases, my interviewees had to come out over and over again: sometimes because of their fluid sexual orientations, sometimes as in Kübra's case, because of family members' ignorance of their come-outs'. Processes of coming out, as my fieldwork revealed, have unique and subjective dynamics for every individual therefore, les-bi individuals I interviewed had different strategies to come out to their close circle of acquaintances.

2.4 Friends as Gatekeepers to Les-Bi Networks and Communities

Based on my fieldwork and interviews, I would like to highlight that most of my interviewees start to find out how to act, how to flirt, and how to perform their les-bi identities after coming out to themselves, at least on a personal level, by socializing with other women. They need a level of outness in order to communicate with other women around them. Thus the lesbian-bisexual women I talked to, start to re-shape their new social circles with both the shyness and the comfort of being out. Self-expression as les-bi or queer in social circles may take certain forms: frequenting specific LGBTI+ friendly bars or logging into certain dating applications may be counted as such actions. Lusin remembers the period she first came out in Kamp Armen:

> "I met him and thanks to him I gained a circle of friends. When I talk to him I learned the apps etc. they used. First I used Chloe, but my aim was not to find someone. I wanted to find the places people like me would get together. After having conversations, I became friends with people and I learned the names of the places."[26]

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[25] "Bir ablama açıldım ona açıldıktan sonra, bir iki sene sonra, gene bana, 'bi doktor varmış, evlenmek ister misin?' diye sorduğunda çok sinirlenmiştim. "Bir daha bana böyle bir şey sorarsanız iki yıl telefonlarınızı açmam" falan demiştim hatta. Sonra geçenlerde hatta, konuyu tekrar açtım. "Aslında senin benden özür dilemen lazım" dedim, "niye?" dedi, "böyle böyle" dedim, 'hı' dedi."

[26] "[M]esela onunla tanıştım böyle bir çevrem oldu onun sayesinde. daha sonra onunla konuştukça hani onların da kullandığı uygulamalar vs vardı. İlk olarak Chloe'yı kullandım. Chloe'da ama işte böyle tam, hani amacım şeydi, birini hemen bulmak değil de hani, benim gibi insanlar var ve neredeler falan diye. Onlarla muhabbet ettikten sonra böyle yavaş yavaş, insanlarla görüştüm konuştum filan. Çevrem genişledikçe de mekan isimleri öğrenmeye başladım."

Being able to find/communicate people like you covers a significant amount of narrative in my interviews. Because, this may lead les-bi individuals to feel comfortable with their own identities, in their own terms and definitions.

Friends may function both as gatekeepers to LGBTI+ circles and facilitators of normalization process regarding lesbian-bisexual identities. Merih (27) is "a former activist and a bar manager" (quoted from her narrative). She mentions how she first encountered LambdaİstanbuI and Barbara through her gay friends who wanted to get her more involved in the community. Özgü also likes to highlight her luck while she first came out that there were friends around who would join her in one of the lesbian bars when she wanted to go and explore. Through virtual and physical ways socializations, les-bi individuals learn how to perform their identities, and communicate with each other. Esra mentions her first "flirt" with a woman through a lesbian website.

> "I remember, in the beginning, after saying 'hello' they would ask you to use skype, in order to see if you are a woman or a man. One night I logged into Skype, we said hi to each other, she asked me to take my top off. I said "my mom is sleeping inside." I thought this is how things work here. I had no friends who would experience the same stuff, and I said 'no'…"[27]

Esra, like many other interviewees, highlighted social spheres and moreover socializations affect on self-identification as lesbian-biseual woman. You have to know how things work, what might and might not be proper while you communicate with other women. Finding out how to perform can be closely related to sharing things with other les-bi people who do the same.

Discourse of normativity covers a respectable ground while women talk about coming out. My interviewees tend to talk about how they first "defined themselves" in early childhood or puberty as "different," "weird" and "wrong," even if they do not think as the same currently, the same discourse seems to takeover from time to time. But as I encountered in the interviews, friends whom lesbian-bisexual women first came out about their sexual orientation, helped both social circle and the subject herself to approach things "normally." All of my interviewees have come out to their close circle of friends, before coming out to their families. When Lusin talked about how she came out to herself in Kamp Armen, highlights her friends' being there and normalizing the whole process. Lusin highlighted that:

[27] "İlk hatırlıyorum, merhabadan devamı gelen kadınla skype istiyolardı. Kadın mı erkek mi görmek istiyolar, akşam saatiydi. Skype açtım falan sonra merabalaştık, "üstünü çıkarmayacak mısın?" dedi. "İçerde annem uyuyor" dedim. "Bu işler böyle yürüyor heralde" dedim. Arkadaşım da yoktu yaşayan aktif olarak...yok dedim falan…"

> "I used to try to be with people constanly and tried to be close to them. I had to feel something; others felt things, so I have to feel as well. At that time I despised myself, it was the most self-hated period of my life. Still, from time to time I feel that way, I don't understand why I am not like them, "why? there is a problem?"[28]

Being like "other people" holds an important ground for some les-bi individuals at certain period when they might feel alone, as "weirdo" or "different" as Lusin highlights. Similarly to Lusin's narrative, Deniz mentioned:

> "In 2010 I logged into Twitter, and then new things started to develop quickly. Searching on internet, you hear lesbian, bisexual, but you don't know anything about them. Apparently there must be something wrong with you."[29]

Deniz similarly realizes her condition as "different" from other people or "wrong." Thus being able to part of "norm" which is perceived as "heterosexuality," covers a relevant ground while les-bi individuals come to define themselves. Lusin mentions the first time she utters her self-identification to someone else:

> "I got a lot of support from Aret…. Actually I call him "mama." I came out to him for the first time. It happened like this: I knew but I couldn't say it directly; there was a rainbow wallpaper on my phone and we were at Kamp Armen. He asked me whether he could play music, and I said yes. Then he asked me whether I was a supporter. I said no. He pulled me aside and we started to talk. I was trembling, my hands went cold even it was hot on a summer day, I have difficulty to speak. He helped me enormously and I don't know how I could have come out without a person like him. Then I met all my friends during my coming out process at Kamp Armen. It was perfect. First time I came out loudly there. Even without saying it, some people could understand there. Apart from having been supported, it was good to be accepted as a normal person."[30]

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[28] "Birileriyle sürekli beraber olmaya çalışıyordum. Ve onlara yaklaşmaya çalışıyordum. Bir şey hissetmek zorundayım ya ben...Birileri hissediyor, benim de hissetmem lazım. kendimden çok soğudum o dönem, kendimden en nefret ettiğim dönemdir. Yine zaman zaman olur, "niye ben onlar gibi olamıyorum niye?" bi sıkıntı mı var?"

[29] "[...]2010'da Twitter'ı açtım sonra çok hızlı gelişti bi şeyler bende. Yalnız olmadığımı internette araştırıyorsun merak ediyorsun ya, hani lezbiyen duyuyosun biseksüel duyuyosun. Ama bunlar nası şeyler? Sende bi sıkıntı var belli."

[30] "Aret'ten çok destek gördüm. Zaten mama diyorum ben ona. İlk kez ona açıldım o da şöyle oldu ben söyleyemedim. Biliyordum ama söylemedim. Ekran koruyucum gökkuşağı renkleriydi. Kamp Armen'deydik. Telefonum şarjdaydı "müzik açabilir miyim?" dedi, "tabii" dedim. "Destekçi misin?" dedi, "hayır" dedim. Beni kenara çekti falan. Sohbet ettik. titriyorum böyle ellerim buz gibi falan, yaz sıcağında. Konuşamıyorum falan böyle.İnanılmaz yardımcı oldu bana. Hayatımda [onun] gibi biri olmasaydı nasıl açılırdım bilmiyorum. Sonra tüm arkadaşlarıma ilk açılma döneminde Kamp Armen'de rastladım çok mükemmeldi. İlk orda yüksek sesle birilerine açılabildim. Ben söylemeden birileri anlıyordu orda. Destek görmenin dışında normal karşılanmak çok güzel bir şeydi."

Lusin highlights how important her friend's attitude was, in relation to her coming out in comfort. The way she describes her friend as her "mama" would be a relevant point when I discuss queer family in Chapter 3. In terms of normalization of coming out Çınar mentioned a similar narrative:

> "If I was with the same group of people, probably I wouldn't come out then. During Erasmus period many things happened. My head became clearer there actually. A year after I returned from Erasmus; I was more like, "supporting gay rights, doesn't mean you are gay; they also have needs, etc." I got over this idea afterwards. A friend from Erasmus imposed me these ideas, made this change happened for me let's say. Erasmus is like a turning point, because I mean, I was homophobic too."[31]

This shift on her social circle, enables her to talk about her own sexual identity in a more relaxed way. After coming out to themselves Nehir and Çınar separately mentioned coming across to old friends who may not be aware of their outness. Çınar highlights her coming across to a friend in a LGBTI+ party, and coming out to her made their relationship much better than it was. Commonality of sexual orientations may bring lesbi individuals together years after they came out.

Nehir for example, knew that her friend was phobic towards LGBTI+ individuals, however she did not say anything negative on her outness.

> "I have a friend, I know she is homophobic. We see each other may be once a year or so. I went there with my lover for holidays; by chance that friend came there also; we haven't seen each other two-three years. I wasn't out yet then. I introduced my girlfriend as my, lover. She didn't react a bit; she acted as if it was always like that. But I know she was homophobic. Maybe it is important that, this homophobic person who knows you as a social acquaintance, accepts you as you are, I mean you are not an x person for her or him…"[32]

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[31] "Aynı insan grubuyla takılıyo olsaydım açılmazdım muhtemelen. Kafamın açılmasının tek sebebi, Erasmus'ta da bi sürü şey oldu. gittikten sonra, ilk orda başladı zaten. Erasmus'tan geldikten sonraki seneydi…"bunu savunuyo olman senin gey olduğun anlamına gelmez" tribindeydim. En azından o kafayı aşmıştım. "Onların da ihtiyaçları var" falan. Bunları da Erasmus'ta tanıştığım bi arkadaşım empoze etti, benimsetti diyim. Belki o olmasaydı şu anda aynı Çınar aynı kafa giderdim. Belki o zaman olmazdı sonra olurdu. Erasmus kırılma anı gibi. Çünkü ben de homofobiktim yani."

[32] "Benim mesela çok homofobik olduğunu bildiğim bi arkadaşım ...Yılda bi kere belki görüşüyoruz... Yani açılmamışım, hatta işte iki üç yıl boyunca görüşmemişiz hiç. Ben tatile sevgilimle oraya gittim, o da geldi tesadüf. Ve direkt kız arkadaşımı sevgilim diye tanıştırdım. Ve kadın zerre tepki vermedi. Hayatımızda hep böyleymişçesine yaşadık mesela. Ama homofobik olduğunu çok net biliyorum. Şey de olabilir o sosyal ilişki senin kim olduğun çok önemli oluyor. Ama o bizim Nehir, şey değil yani x bi kişi değil diye de gelişiyor."

Once again in this narrative, a deeply personal event gets clicked with politics of visibility. Through personal contacts with her straight friend, Nehir gets shocked by the change in her attitude. Similarly Deniz talks about the meaning of "being the first out and proud lesbian" for many friends' lives by saying: "Including my friends, like from high school, straight, most of them know me [my orientation]. They got acquainted with this stuff with me.[33]" Eventhough she never claimed herself to be an activist, I was moved to hear Deniz's courage and patience regarding being out. In Chapter 4, I will mention personal ways of doing activism in more detail. Towards the end of our interview Özgü realized how politically charged her statements were:

> "I wasn't obliged to use such a political narrative. But we are talking about so fundamental and very humane things and I felt I have to be included these aspects. When I attributed an identity to myself, I became a member of this community. We can't talk only about our inner world, friendships and daily burdens. It is going to be a very political thing. For such a long time there was no need to mention my personal relation for example; because there is something much bigger than this. If something affects me socially without leaving a space for personal things, it has to be very important."[34]

Eventhough she is not involved in politics actively, her accounts were closely related to les-bi identity politics after she defined herself as a part of that common lesbian identity and/or community. Her self-identification as a lesbian woman affects the ways she mentions her personal narratives.

Considering all the statements above one can perceive reciprocal bond between coming outs personal and political aspects. As I discussed earlier, personal and political can be easily mingled together, since identity politics emerges from self-identification and expressions of subjects. In that way one can claim an equal ground for identity politics that may provide LGBTI+ individuals education, employment and anti-discriminations laws. This visibility can be provided through various coming out stories on multiple mediums or circles: some would be out on the street, while some would be out in virtual set ups, some may perceive workspace as "safe," for some it may be family. In order to

[33] "Benim arkadaşlarım dahil, liseden hetero, çoğu beni bilir, beni tanıdıktan sonra bu işe ısınan çok insan var."

[34] "Ben bu kadar politik ifadede bulunmak zorunda değildim. Çok insancıl temel bir şeyden söz ediyoruz ama ben bunlarının hepsinin içine girmem gerektiğini düşünerek… En azından bunlara bir şekilde dahilim artık, kendime kimlik atadığımda, bir şekilde bu oluşumun üyesi olduğum için. Salt şeyden konuşamıyoruz yani benim iç dünyamda noluyo ve başkasıyla nası arkadaşlık...çok günlük sıkıntılara yer kalmıyor. Çok daha politik bir şeye dönüşme olasılığı daha fazla. Şu kadar saat oldu bi tane ilişkimden bahsedecek alan, ihtiyaç yoktu. Çünkü çok daha büyük bi şey dönüyor ortada. Benim hayatımdan benim kişisel deneyimimden bağımsız olanlar. Toplumsal seviyede beni bu denli etkiliyorsa, kişisel olana alan bırakmıyorsa bu başlı başına bir şey."

highlight this multiplicity, I will mention different ways to negotiate being out through accounts of my interviewees in the following part.

2.5 Negotiations of Being Out in Work Environment

Çınar and Özlem, as lesbian women who have white collar jobs, do not "disclose" their sexual identities both because they prefer to normalize the situation and they do not want to deal with risks that may emerge. Özlem says, "The people I eat with in work talk about their problems, why shouldn't I? I prefer to normalize the situation. Why would I give details? Should I say 'hi I'm this and that and I'm gay?'"[35] Özlem prefers to normalize the situation, thus she does not stick things into people's noses. At the same time, she comes out to her coworkers who are on the same level with her, to keep the balance between superior-subordinate coordination. Çınar who has just changed her job while we were having the interview, mentioned her comfort at the former workplace eventhough she was not out publicly.

> "When I went out, or in my previous work place, I used to pin LGBT flag on my bag. I didn't do it at the new work place yet. I don't want to attract people's attention that way. I am new there yet, there is no reason to have eyes on me for that. At the previous firm I didn't care that much. A girl there once said to me: 'You are such a big supporter of LGBT!' Well, yes, I am; I mean I defend for LGBT."[36]

She acted more cautious in her new work environment, when she first started. But in our second meeting which involved some of her close friends and colleague, it was obvious that she could find the "eligible" people to come out about her identity: she was comfortable around them while she was talking about her dates and love life. Kübra, who is a teacher in a course, remembered the tension she felt after logging in to her lesbian-bisexual dating application, Chloe:

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[35] "Yemek yediğim insanlar derdini anlatıyor mesela ben niye anlatmiyim ki? Durumu normalize etmeyi tercih ediyorum, niye detay vereyim ki? 'Meraba ben bilmemkim geyim' mi diyeceğim?"

[36] "Mesela dışarı çıkarken işyerimde yapmaya başlamıştım, LGBT bayrağı var ya rozetini çantama takıyordum. [..] onunla geziyordum. Yeni şirkette yapmadım daha. Henüz yapmadım gözleri üzerimde olsun da istemiyorum, yeni geldim ya...Gerek yok öyle bir şeyle yükselmeye. İnsanların kafasına sokmaya gerek yok. Eski şirkette en son umursamıyordum belki de. Zaten bi kız şey demişti, "ay ne LGBT taraftarısın" demişti. Öyleyim...savunuyorum yani."

> "When I started to teach, then I understood people better…I started to get worry about my students' opinion about me; if they see me and say, 'Wow, the teacher is a lesbian!', what would happen? Or, what happens if a student text me and without knowing I text her back? For a while I had such fears as well."[37]

But this tension did not stop her from using the app. There are different cases where les-bi individuals are being exposed and forced to come out about their sexual orientations.

Nalan's case who has been exposed two different times highlights virtual socialization mediums enormous affect in les-bi individuals lives. She realized that social media's being open to "invasion" and exposure and she changed her name eventhough she was out about her sexual orientation. First time was both an exposure and disclosure to herself: woman she has been involved that time exposed her by writing a comment ["I learned how to love women as well, I'm glad"] in a leftist group that they were both part of. At that time she started to define her identity as a bisexual woman although it was not the case before the exposure. Another one was related to her leftist identity. After she shared a post saying "I'm glad HDP[38] exists," her boss fired her on an accusation of "terror propaganda." As it can be perceived here, she has been exposed about her sexual and political orientations both by her political organization and by her work environment. There are many forms of exposure as it can be perceived from these examples where social media covers a respective ground.

2.6 Coming Out to Families

Coming out to family covers an important narrative element in my interviews. Eventhough they have find their ways to negotiate being out, my interviewees constantly highlight their wishes to come out to their parents. Deniz says that:

> "But I am more comfortable. I know how to protect myself. But my family couldn't accept my homosexual identity. It is about perception. Telling this

[37] "[...]Dershanede öğretmenlik yapmaya başladıktan sonra böyle bi öğrencim görürse falan diye, ilk defa o zaman biraz daha anladım insanları. Çünkü koyuyordum falan nolucak falan diye. Ama bi öğrencim görse, 'vaov hoca lezbiyenmiş gördünüz mü?' falan, ya da bana mesaj atsa onla yazışmaya başlasam filan. Öyle korkular benim de oldu bi ara."

[38] Halkların Demokratik Partisi (People's Democratic Party) is a political party which came to the forefront of Turkish politics with its embracing policy on all ethnic minorities, LGBTI+ movements and feminist movements.

> and trying to be accepted by them is merely being spoiled. They are both over 60 years old. This will make them unhappy, nothing else…"[39]

She has never came out to her family because she thinks its not that necessary, since she can do whatever she wants by not telling them everything. Deniz uses double profile technique, which I similarly encountered from my interview with Kübra. Women who do not prefer to come out to their families, use two different profiles: one to add relatives, other to keep in touch with friends, flirts. Kübra remembers using a similar technique "back in the day."

> "I had two Facebook profiles back then. One of them was like my Kizkiza.com profile's continuity. I had one normal profile, and another one was where I experience lesbianism, like a ghost… Like most of the LGBTI people. I had a period like that, but later when I came out, I closed the other profile.[40]

This may create some level of confusion as Kübra highlights in lesbian-bisexual women's lives: a "ghost-like and dissident self" detached from the "actual and normal self." Özgü and Çınar similarly claimed that "they do not have a sharing and caring relationship with their families" thus there's no need to come out to them particularly.

Esra, when she first discovered virtual communities where lesbian-bisexual women meet, she remembered being extremely cautious as if someone was going to "bust" her there: "I logged in but I'm afraid because I wasn't out to my family. As if any of my relatives might see me there...or I was afraid if I used my real name they might knock the door in the next moment. I filled all the information false[41]." The process of coming out as it has been mentioned here, is usually challenging and deeply personal. Especially in virtual spaces, the meaning of "coming out" has significantly changed since people tend to use nicknames and profiles. And yet, even this anonymity may not be enough to ease the anxieties of some LGBTIs.

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[39] "Ama ben daha rahatım. Kendimi de korumasını biliyorum tabii. Ama benim ailem eşcinsel olmamı kaldıramaz. Bi algılamak var bi de başka bir şey. Benim bunu onlara söylemem ve kabul ettirmeye çalışmam şımarıklık olur. 60 küsur yaşında ikisi de. Bu onları mutsuz etmekten başka bir şey olmaz."

[40] "2 tane Facebook profilim vardı. Bi tanesi Kizkiza profilimin devamı gibi ordakilerle ordan takılıyordum. Hayalet gibi. Bi lezbiyenliği yaşadığım bi profil, bi normal bi profil. Bütün LGBT'lerin olduğu gibi, çoğunun yani. Öyle bi dönemim oldu, sonra daha şey oldukça, açıldıkça, diğerini kapattım falan."

[41] "Girdim ama korkuyorum aileme açık değilim. Orda bi akrabam beni görecekmiş gibi. Ya da birine ismimi söylersem, direk kapıyı çalacak gibi korkuyordum...Her şeyimi yalan yanlış doldurdum."

For some of my interviewees, their family and close circle already had some clues regarding their interest in women. Nalan's younger brother who wanted to come out as bisexual, first asked her help to open up the subject, so she called her mom:

> "[...] I said mom I need to talk to you and it's 1 am. She asked 'Nalan are you a lesbian?' I was going to say that my brother is gay. I said 'I don't want to talk about this, this is not the issue, eventhough I may be. I need to hang up'[42]

Here, as in many other cases, one can see that the family's positionality is preconditioned by the "don't ask don't tell" policy to get away from obligation to talk and face LGBTI+ children or other family members, similar to the case where lesbian individuals had to "balance" things up by not being "out and loud" as Özyeğin discusses in New Desires New Selves. Similarly, while Özlem attempts to come out to her mother for the first time, by saying her girlfriend is actually more than a friend, her mother responds "I knew it, do you think I'm stupid?"

Nehir talks about how, since high school, she has been perceived as a "lesbian". When she first got into her job, she heard people talking about her "being a lesbian" despite the fact that she has never come out to them.

> "With my last boyfriend, our relationship lasted 4 years, with last 6 six months with uncertainty. But he didn't realize that the relationship was going to end. Whenever I said, 'I wanted to talk to you about something', I mean may be something about my family, he always said, 'You are lesbian, right? You want to say that.' He kept saying this."[43]

Customs, norms that enable people to track down "lesbian identity" sex positive attitude, fancying other women, or a dyke haircut, may be projected on "closeted" individuals before they even come out to themselves. Thus identities have their own framings and norms that would lead to individuals defining themselves or other people accordingly.

Layers and layers of negotiation may be involved in the process of coming out to family members. After coming out to her mother (and implicitly to the virtual world of

[42] "[...]anne senle bi şey konuşmam lazım dedim saat 1. 'Nalan lezbiyen misin?' dedi. Ben ona [kardeşim] gey diyeceğim. 'Bunu konuşmayacağım' dedim, 'konu bu değil, olabilirim ama, kapatmam lazım' dedim."

[43] "[...]en son erkek arkadaşımla 4 yıl sürmüştü ilişkimiz, son 6 ayı hep böyle sallantıda. Ama o farketmiyo yani, o ilişki bitiyo. Ne zaman seninle bir şey konuşmam gerekiyor desem, çok alakasız, belki ailemle ilgili kötü bi şey anlatıcam yani…"lezbiyensin dimi onu söyliyceksin?" hep ordaydık..."

Twitter) Kübra mentions how her mother tends to ignore her sexual orientation while at the same time acknowledging it.

> "My mom still ignores everything; now I have been living together with my girlfriend for two months, though I didn't call her 'my lover' yet in front of my mom, but she sees that we sleep together in the same bed. She says 'you are good friends'. I think she is afraid of conceptualizing the situation. On the other hand, she asks 'When you go away for your PhD, what will she do?' I mean what is it to a 'good friend' if I go away? It is strange for her to ask this question. This is a kind of question you ask about normal couples, but she still thinks we are close friends. Isn't it interesting?"[44]

In another occasion, Nehir talks about how people in her neighbourhood, asked her about her girlfriend's absence:

> "We were living together with my girlfriend; we used to go to work by car. But after we had broke up, my neighbour asked me about her. Even the man at the green grocer, where I had never been with her, asked where she was. They only saw us together in the street; or in a car. How could they understand the type of relationship between us?"[45]

My interviewees realize that people around them have a certain "radar[46]" regarding their les-bi identification, style and image. They either choose to overlook it or face it with confusion. Çınar seems to act more cautious about her sexual identity. While her parents know that she has other gay friends, she prefers not to "stick things out:"

> "If I come out about my sexual identity, my family would think that my close friends are also gay. When they know about them, their families would know too. Everything is connected to each other, so I feel like I have to consider their situation as well."[47]

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[44] "[...]hala dediğim gibi yok sayıyor ama yani mesela şu an sevgilimle yaşıyorum. Birlikte yaşıyoruz işte annem, ben, sevgilim iki aydır. Sevgilim demedim, ama işte görüyor aynı yatakta yatıyoruz, görüyor. "aa çok iyi arkadaşsınız siz" falan diyor. Ama yani kafasında herhalde kavramsallaştırmaktan korkuyor. […]"sen eğer doktoraya gidersen [o] ne yapacak?" diyor. Ben de "belki o da benimle gelir" dedim. Bu soruyu sorması bile tuhaf. Yani ben bir yere gidecek olsam, ne yapacak olsun ki iki arkadaş için aslında….Yani böyle normal çiftler için sorulabilecek soruları soruyor ama sadece yakın arkadaş olduğumuz için falan...Böyle ilginç yani."

[45] "Aynı evde yaşadığım kız arkadaşım..işte arabayla işe gidip geliyoruz. Ama mesela ayrıldıktan sonra, komşumuz kadın şey dedi, "arkadaşın noldu" falan...Sonra manav mesela sordu, o manava hiç gitmedim onunla, sadece motorla arabayla geçerken öyle görmüştür ama yani yine dediğim gibi, arabayla önünden geçerken nası anlayacaksın onu?"

[46] "Radar" is used by some of my interviewees, as a version of version of "gay-dar" in gay slang. Some of my interviewees directly used "radar" as well to define the process of "clocking oneself" i.e.LGBTI+ individuals recognizing each others' gender orientation.

[47] "Benim bunu [açılmak] söylüyo olmam en yakın arkadaşlarımın da gey olduğu anlamına geliyo. Onları biliyo olmaları onların da ailelerinin biliyo olması filan her şey gidicek..her şey bağlantılı olduğu için. Onları da düşünmem gerektiğini düşünüyorum."

She highlights the consequential nature of coming out: if she comes out, her close circle is also implicated as les-bi. She does not want to "expose" her friends and put them into danger by her personal come out. Thus coming out may not be a purely personal call; statements of Çınar connects personal and "individualistic" to a certain idea of a community or being part of a bigger group.

As Sedgwick (1990), Orne (2011) and Rust (1993) have highlighted in relation to other contexts, the language of self-description (i.e. terminology) and socio-political landscapes are all dynamic mediums which affect how, where and when les-bi individuals can talk about their sexual orientations. While the issue of coming out was first debated, it was closely related to Gay Liberation Front's activist discourse that preconditions coming out as a tool for "whole coherent self." My interviewees' narratives show that, there may be multiple ways to negotiate "outness" through various mediums and circles. Choosing to "stay in the closet" may enable some les-bi individuals' agency in certain aspects in their lives, becoming strategy that would cause them less problems. While "coming out" or visibility may be important for activism, one can claim that, les-bi individuals do not have to be a part of an activist discourse or aim for a public change in order to be able to talk about their own stories as it was preconditioned in Gay Liberation Movement.

My interviewees negotiate the practice of coming out through their own subjective positions: some prefer to come out to their parents or working environment, some prefer to keep the scale smaller and remain "out" only in their close circles. Moreover my interviewees mention the feeling of safety, and solidarity that comes after coming out and "clocking" themselves to other women. In almost all of the cases I have listened, enable women to create new networks of socializations and common grounds for self-expression. Bits and pieces of coming out to oneself, either with a rainbow badge, or Lezbifem bag, would help les-bi individuals to spot each other and create a radar to track other les-bi individuals. These can provide ways for les-bi individuals to come out to themselves relatively more easily. Material clues such as these may enable the feeling of community which I aim to discuss in the next chapter. Sharing stories of coming out, often enable les-

bi individuals to embrace their seemingly “different” identity within predominantly heterosexual mediums. Many of my interviewees highlight the relevance of being out in terms of being able to share and not feel alone: especially when it comes to share their daily struggles often related to lesbophobia,more more deeply rooted family issues. The following chapter delves more into the aspects of solidarity building and community making.

CHAPTER III: LES-BI WOMEN'S SOCIALIZATIONS IN RELATION TO COMMUNITY MAKING AND SOLIDARITY BUILDING

After discussing coming out as a relevant indicative for socialization, as coming out to oneself determines one's intimate socialization with other women and one's self-identification process as a lesbian or bisexual woman, in this chapter, my focus is on the ways in which virtual or physical mediums contribute to community making and solidarity building practices.

When I was initially prepared my interview questions on socialization, I did not have a concrete expectation, especially since my interviewees were coming from various socio-economic backgrounds and generations. While for some, socialization meant feminist organizations they have been a part of; for others, it meant solely cruising. Similarly, the age gap was indicative: some of my interviewees, (ages between 18-25), used dating applications, or other virtual mediums such as kizkiza.com, to come out and identify themselves as lesbian or bisexual; while others (ages between 25-33) have been frequenting bars and physical spaces although they have recently started using dating applications as well. Yet, all of the conversations ended up with a discussion of how various relationships were formed through different mediums of socialization. When my interviewees mentioned certain mediums and ways to socialize, to meet other women to flirt or to have a chat, they discussed different norms in relation to different mediums. Thus, this chapter analyses the norms and expectations related to virtual and physical mediums and how my interviewees positioned themselves in relation to them.

In my interviews I used the concepts of "solidarity" and "community" without mentioning their activist connotations as I was more curious about how people ascribe meanings to those concepts. The term "community" [komünite] was only uttered by Merih and Özgü in different contexts, with its the activist connotations. Apart from them, terms like "komünite, cemaat, cemiyet" were not uttered during this research. I ocsasionally used it myself while I was asking questions during the interviews, aiming to highlight community-like structures, feelings or networks.

Feeling of solidarity, as Nehir and Lusin mentioned, would emerge from "being relaxed with people like yourself" within certain social settings. Although some of my interviewees mentioned this concept as "being part of something bigger," and "unified," this was not always the case. Most of my interviewees mentioned multiple communities and networks they are a part of: some were temporary and virtual like e-mail groups or

dating apps, some were physical and relatively more permanent like bars and cafes. Some of the les-bi individuals that I interviewed had been active in lesbian-bisexual, feminist, or LGBTI+ networks or all at once like Nehir and Kübra. In the following parts, I will be discussing intersectionalities and commonalities between all of these communities. Some of my interviewees would also count their political organizations and their work environment as habitations of socialization as well. It might have been their professional work or feminist LGBTI+ activist organizations. People talk about causes and effects of their socializations while they try to come out and build up a network with "people like themselves." During my interviews, with the question "what does solidarity mean to you?[48]", I aimed to investigate the ways in which people have built their ideas of forming networks and solidarity making practices. Concept of solidarity is closely linked to the idea of "queer family" for some les-bi individuals, since "being in solidarity" connoted being together with "people like yourself" for many of my interviewees and this phrase has been used repeatedly in my interviews. For many of my interviewees, solidarity emerged from commonalities while in certain activist circles, it might mean being in solidarity with people who are less like yourself.

For some of my interviewees, solidarity meant "solidarity parties" that have been held for various purposes from reassignment surgery to piled up rents of LGBTI+ organizations and expenses of Pride Week events. For others it meant networks of friendships and acquaintances and "feeling less lonely with people like yourself."

In this chapter, I firstly mention virtual and physical mediums of socializations, and how norms related to these mediums affected the les-bi women I interviewed. Later on, I delve into what I meant by concepts such as community-making and solidarity-building, and how my interviewees have positioned themselves in and around these concepts. Eventhough these heavily and "activistly" loaded concepts such as community and solidarity have been utilized confidently during the interviews, I aimed to problematize them in this chapter as well. Then, I delve into the possible connections between community-making, solidarity building and LGBTI+ frequented bars and applications.

[48] "Dayanışma senin için ne ifade ediyor?"

3.1 Women's Socializations Through LGBTI+ Frequented Bars

As I mentioned in Chapter 1, one can perceive les-bi frequented places as relatively "safe spaces" for women to socialize. In fact, there is a body of literature related to the creation of bars as safe spaces and visible communities for les-bi women. Because they were women-only places for a long time, it might have been easier some women to feel as a part of those bars or cafes and to feel like being with other people like themselves and feel safe from certain acts of exposition or physical violence. Lapovsky Kennedy and Davis in *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community* (1993), through oral history research they conducted with les-bi women, highlighted the significance of lesbian bars that emerged between 1940s and 1950s in USA, for expression of identity, for formation of collectivity and networks outside their private/domestic habitations, and for "public recognition and acceptance" (1993,29-63). These spaces may be perceived as creating women-only environments for women to meet other women, share their feelings, thoughts without intervention of the outside world, and organize themselves politically for social change: coming out as I mentioned might be relevant here as well as forming romantic relationships and/or having a social circle. Yet it is important to note that les-bi women's relationship to these bars are often more complex, as these sites are not immune from norms and expectations. Lusin and Çınar both highlighted, in different interviews, the tension they often felt when they went to such bars alone, being perceived as if they were going to "jump on someone's girlfriend" as if they are "hunters."

Hanhardt in *Safe Space: Gay Neighborhood History and the Politics of Violence* (2013), argues how discourse of safety might be closely related to urban change and gentrification in certain districts where "people of colour — many of whom identify as LGBT — long have socialized[...]" or inhabited in San Francisco especially in the late 1990s (2013,2). Discourse of safety has been utilized intensely in feminist and LGBTI+ activism because both of these movements demand a level of safety from possible violent attacks towards themselves in predominantly heteronormative social spheres (Hanhardt 2013, 30). Hanhardt exemplifies Greenwich Village and Castro districts becoming more and more commercialized while excluding its less wealthy LGBTI+ residents "after rents being risen and establishing of anti-sex zones" (Hanhardt 2013,6). She illustrates how the "discourse of safety" has being utilized by certain lesbians and gay men by excluding themselves from the "criminal LGBTI+" category through "criminalization and privatization" of certain lower classed people of colour who also identifies as LGBTI+

(Hanhardt,2013,18). Here, in the context of İstanbul, eventhough it has become the heart of urban change since 2013 now, as I mentioned in Chapter 1, it is not possible to perceive such a similarity.

3.1.1 Women-Only Socializations VS Les-Bi Socializations

When it comes to woman-only socializations, parties and events, my interviewees tended to abstain from making general statements. Even though they acknowledged the liberating, empowering effect of woman-to-woman socializations in some cases, they also highlighted the contradictions they felt. Most of my research participants seem to perceive themselves somewhere in between woman-only practices, gatherings and LGBTI+ ones. As Özgü mentions how she feels about woman-only gatherings:

> "I will comment on women to women activities. I think it is strengthening, but it could develop to a control sphere. We do this and that with women. Sometimes it is like housewives' day gatherings… I think there is difference between doing something together and being isolated from others. There are groups tend to isolate themselves, this is disturbing. Of course there could be a need to be isolated, but this is something… A difficult subject…I'm having hard time conceptualizing it. I think without a need to be isolated, to be a group of women with real identities is the ideal thing…"[49]

Özgü thinks this restriction might lead to women's organizations or gatherings to getting stuck in their "comfort zones." She also mentions isolation and exclusions that may be involved in these women-only gatherings. Eventhough she adds that she understands this necessity for some women; she has other ideals which does not involve "isolation" as in the case of women-only gatherings.

Merih in our conversation similarly highlights how she felt when she is attending a "weird school trip" in women only socializations, especially in the 8th of March after parties, which bring together a diverse group of women:

> "If I declare my opinion publicly, on March 8th's I would be stoned. I wasn't joining the activity last two years, this year I went with a friend. Marching was fun and then we went to the party. I said to my friend, 'I felt like we went to a picnic with school'. Music, people, feminists are all happy women to

[49] "[...] kadın kadına yapılan etkinlikler konusunda yorum yapıcam ya, bence güçlendirici bir şey ama bu tamamen kontrol alanına dönüşebilecek bir şey. "Biz kadına kadına şunu bunu yapıyoruz." Gün yapmaya dönüyo o zaman...Birlikte bişey yapmakla kendilerini izole etmek için beraber olmak arasında fark var bence. Ve ona kayma yolunda giden gruplar olabiliyor bu rahatsız edici. Böyle bi ihtiyaç da olabilir tabii...Bunun bi... Zor bi konu bak zorlanıyorum. Böyle bi izolasyona ihtiyaç duymaksızın kendi kadın kimliğiyle birlikte olabilen kadınlar olmak ideal olanı diye düşünüyorum."

> women… Music was terrible, I wanted to party, that's me… I said I felt, soon there will be poems reciting and then under the Turkish flag, closure speech and closing… Actually poems were recited with music, but people wanted to touch each other while dancing and make out; the energy was like that…"[50]

Merih was involved in LGBTI+ groups more than feminist ones. She highlights her discomfort eventhough they have a lot in common with those women groups. For many, being part of the category "women", might not be enough to feel relaxed in women-only gatherings. Both of these accounts highlight how some of the les-bi identified women tended to exclude themselves voluntarily from feminist, women-only events or organizations since they perceived them to be more conventional, exclusionary and relatively less sex positive than LGBTI+ events.

Nalan, as a member of Lezbifem, highlighted the difference between "themselves" and "hetero feminists" while trying to explain their more trans inclusive politics to her partner who is a trans man: "But, we're here as well, queer feminists, [here connotes non-straight] for the last couple of years...those were the straight feminists who treated you that way..."[51] The way Nalan highlights Lezbifem's difference from their "hetero feminist" counterparts is related to Lezbifem's claiming to be more trans inclusive. Feminist and/or women organizations, initiatives after second wave feminism, aimed to be more trans and queer inclusive in their political acts and discourses. Although les-bi individuals I talked to seem to highlight their comfort with their gender identity and sexual orientation, they adopt a certain distance to feminism since it had an exclusionist past towards trans individuals especially around 1980's (Raymond 1979;Jeffreys 2003). Duggan in *Sex Wars: Sexual Dissent and Political Culture (2006)* also mentions the aspect of class in the process of self-identification and forming communities. "Every production of "identity" creates exclusions that reappear at the margins like ghosts to haunt identity-based politics. In the case of lesbian/gay politics, such exclusions have included bisexuals and transgender persons, among others" (Duggan 2006,175). Thus it would be relevant to ask about trans individuals' communities in relation to cis, les-bi womens and gay-bi

[50] "8 Mart'la ilgili düşüncelerim bi yerde olsa taşlanırım. Arkadaşımla gittik, 2 yıldır gidemiyordum. Yürüyüş falan çok keyifliydi. Partiye gittik, arkadaşıma "okulla birlikte pikniğe gelmişiz gibi hissediyorum" dedim. Müzikler insanlar, feministler, kadın kadın diye mutlu olmuşlar. Müzikler korkunç. Ben partilemek istiyorum, öyle biriyim. "Birazdan şiir okunacak ve kapanış konuşması yapılacak ve Türk bayrağı asılıp kapanış yapılacak gibi hissediyorum" dedim... ve şiirler okundu bi takım şiirler sazlı sözlü. ama herkes orada sevişmek birbirine değe değe dans etmek filan istiyor. öyle bi enerji var."

[51] "Ama biz de varız bakın ibne feministler falan, son bi kaç yıldır bunları diyebiliyoruz... 'Bak onları yapanlar hetero feministlerdi, bizimkiler farklı…'"

man's communities: How do they become a part of these communities? Are they part of these communities or do they form separate ones? Thus visibility of cis-sexed individuals may require critical thinking here.

As my fieldwork revealed general commonalities such as "being women" might not be enough to make some les-bi individuals feel as part of a community. There are multiple cracks, various self-identifications one can be part of. Even if the ideas and romanticization related community making processes require critical thinking here, since it can be achieved through levels of inclusions and exclusions.

3.1.2 Norms Related to Les-Bi Frequented Bars

In Turkey, les-bi socializations, I would argue in this chapter, affected women in similar ways with European and North American countries in terms of community making, coming out, and finding solidarity. In İstanbul particularly, Evren Savcı's article "Who Speaks The Language of Queer Politics" (2016) on a woman only bar would be relevant to mention, in terms of the norms adopted in those places and the way some bars position themselves in relation to "solidarity."

Savcı highlights the tension between activist women from LambdaİstanbuI and women who frequent "Kadınca" (a women-only bar in Beyoğlu district back in the days). Savcı mentions the aspect of class that is being ignored while talking about activism vs. non-activism. She uses the term "politico-cultural capital" (the knowledge and the language that enabled one to be 'political.') (Savcı 2016, 379). Here, 'political' is closely related to 'activism.' However as Savcı puts it, 'activism' and 'non-activism' cannot be dichotomously categorized since, people in the bar management may not define the bar only as a commercial undertake, but rather as a place for les-bi community and solidarity, thus expecting a level of solidarity from its customers (like being more cautious about starting fights and damaging the place). LGBTI+ frequented bars that my interviewees mentioned have solidarity parties for various reasons as well, thus it can be another factor to perceive these places as being in solidarity with LGBTI+ community (at least some parts of it).

In our interview a former bar manager, Merih, mentioned how some women used to get involved in bar fights and how actually performative they were. "The most shocking thing, a fight starts, everybody would be involved, customers would runaway. But still the next week all of those people would be happily together. Maybe because they have

nowhere else to go."[52] I remembered a fight I came across in Barbara this fall. All of a sudden a tension exploded from jealousy and in ten minutes, fighters were arm-in-arm, making redemption talks. Merih perceives them as "a community in itself" who have no other place to go and express themselves with ease.

> "I never acted in such a way, only because I had a different background maybe, I got to know plenty of activist people while I was younger, where these kind of behaviors would be criticized and so on. They are not like that, they are going out only once with their girlfriends somehow. and they want to perform that masculinity: "you checked my girlfriend out..." Just because they feel like they need to show and perform their masculinity in that specific way. I tried to empathize with the situation."[53]

She suggested that she understood this "macho male performance which highlights class based differences which masculine performance's this aspect has been approved." She continues,

> "Then I left there [Barbara], next day at Lambda, they say, let's not use 'like a man' phrase as a metaphor! I felt like laughing. Anyway, soon I stopped going to Lambda. That much activism added to the realities of life was too much for me. I became tired of activism and people pulling apart everything all the time."[54]

As Savcı also mentions, this gap between "activism" and "real life" seems to create certain tensions between activist and non-activist les-bi groups. In Merih's case and narrative, real life experiences took over while she was working in one of the les-bi frequented bars.

Özlem, similar to Savcı's arguments, highlighted classed differences related to les-bi frequented bars. Eventhough she defines herself as a white collar person who occasionally goes to these bars, she thinks these places are more for middle and lower-class people, while upper class prefers to frequent and create their own places.

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[52] "Bi de en şaşırtıcı olan şey belki de gidecek yerleri olmadığı için, kavga çıkıyo herkes birbirine giriyo, müşteriler gidiyo falan. Haftaya herkes kolkola mutlu mesut…"

[53] "Mekanda asla öyle tavırlarım olmadı ama benim geldiğim background farklı olduğu için belki, genç yaşta epey aktivist insan tanıdım falan. [Bu tarz tavırların] eleştirildiği kafa açıldığı yerler falan. bunlar öyle değil haftada bir dışarı çıkıyo sevgilisiyle bi şekilde. Ve onunla orda o performansı sergiliyo: "Sen benim sevgilime baktın." Erkeklik hissini yaşmak için, maskülenliğini böyle göstermesi gerektiğini düşündüğü için. Kendi kendime böyle varsayımlarda bulunup empati kurmaya çalıştım."

[54] "Sonra ordan [Barbara] çıkıyorum ertesi gün Lambda'da "arkadaşlar 'adam gibi'yi kullanmayalım" falan.….Gülesim geliyodu. zaten bi süre sonra bıraktım Lambda'yı. Fazla geldi hayatın gerçeklerinin yanında o kadar aktivizm...Yorulmuştum aktivizmden, insanların her şeyi didik didik etmesinden."

Nalan in our interview similarly highlighted the gap between "activism and real life" as Savcı highlighted. She thinks being an activist requires different discourses and ways to behave from "other people with less activist attitudes." I asked if she felt tense in Gaia because of bar fights:

> "No, I didn't. But in Derin Teras I did. For example someone comes and punches me, swears or shouts at me; those are bad, those are violence. But they are real; what no one does to me is, acting like everything is perfectly normal and exposing me the day after. This never happens in Gaia. I feel the difference better between virtual and artificial there. Nobody acts as if nothing happened and the next day sulks at me. If I do something I get a punch in the face but I won't be shocked the next day."[55]

She thinks that despite the violent fights that may burst, Gaia holds a more realistic and consistent ground since "it is what it is." Evethough Nalan is an activist advocate, and she does not approve bar fights that occur in LGBTI+ frequented places, she still prefers to go Gaia because she thinks its more "straightforward" than bars frequented by activist people.

Nalan also makes clear cut distinctions between some LGBTI+ frequented bars in relation to class. Since Gaia seems to be frequented by "lower class women," some activist women may abstain from going there because of the violence and harassment that may occur. She highlights:

> "There is a class dimension on this subject. There is a distinction between activists and other LGBTI people. This makes me feel tense. I feel cornered somehow. I don't know, if I feel like to go, I go. I am a LGBTI activist as well. Activists don't ask anything to me, they can reach what they want to reach. But let say a woman I met Gia, asks something to me next day, and then she might involve with activism too. You may touch her and your activism may take her in. In Derin Teras, or other places people can reach everything, that's why I think activists should be those places as well."[56]

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[55] "Hiç olmadı. Derin Teras'ta oldu mesela. çünkü mesela biri gelip bana yumruk atar, küfreder ya da bağırır. Bunlar kötü, bunlar şiddet. Ama bunlar gerçek. Ama biri bana şunu yapmaz, hiçbir şey olmamış gibi davranıp ertesi gün ifşa etmez mesela. Böyle bir şeyle karşılaşmam Gaia'da, daha birebir. Sanal olanla zahiri olan arasındaki farkı çok hissediyorum. Kimse bana hiçbir şey yokmuş gibi davranıp, ertesi gün surat asmaz. Bişey varsa suratıma yumruğu yerim. Ve derim ki bişey yaptım evet, ama ertesi gün şok olmam yani."

[56] Sınıfsal bi boyutu var işin. İşte aktivistler ve diğer LGBT'ler olarak bi ayrım var. Bunlar beni çok geriyo. Sıkışmış hissediyorum o anlamda. Bilmiyorum ben gitmek istediğimde gidiyorum. "Aman gitmiyim" falan demiyorum. Ben de LGBT aktivistiyim... Zaten aktivistler gelip bana bir şey sormuyor, bir şeye ulaşmak istediklerinde ulaşıyorlar. Ama benim Gaia'da tanıştığım kadın ertesi gün bana bir şey soruyor. Bu şekilde aktivizme de dahil olmuş oluyo. Ve değebiliyorsun yani senin aktivizmin ona değiyor. Derin Teras'ta ya da diğer yerlerde o insanlar her şeye ulaşabiliyorlar. o anlamda aktivistlerin de içinde yer alması gereken mekanlar olduğunu düşünüyorum..."

As Nalan mentions, it can be hard to make clear cut distinctions between activism and cruising in bars that les-bi individuals frequent. Nalan's point on activism and its practicality in terms of getting in touch with les-bi individuals who may require solidarity, underlines a tension between the "political" and the "personal." One may not be able to be politically correct activist 7/24.

For most of my informants, although they highlight the safety feeling regarding these spaces, there is a continuation of the tension behind this "safety." Since some women tend to build monogamous (for some, more possessive) relationships in these spaces, this tension may turn into literal bar fights for various reasons: via glimpse to a flirty move.

Despite the feeling of safety related to les-bi frequented bars that emerges from "being people like yourself", it is hard to claim that women have similar expectations and norms while socializing with others. Although most of them do not approve the fights and tensions that might be emerging from intimate relationships, this does not stop them from going to those places. Since these places also enable a feeling of "being people like oneself," which emerges from having common sexual orientation or self-identifications, most of my interviewees also mention their feeling of safety. Based on the fieldwork I conducted, I would like to claim that many les-bi identified women have a love-hate relationship with these bars which makes the situation more complex and harder to highlight the negativities.

3.1.1.1 Who can be "in"?

Especially physical spaces les-bi women frequented have been changed dynamically throughout the years. Thus the way people perceived women only bars as safe grounds for socializations may have challenged after Savcı's research.

Shift from "women-only" to "LGBTI+ friendly," can be related to economic concerns of bar managements, as well as to the way people prefer to socialize. Les-bi women who may have direct and personal relationships with their gay-bi and trans friends or partners preferred to socialize with them: as in the case of Nalan and Lusin who had romantic relationships with trans men. Gaia claimed to be "LGBT inclusive" from the starting point, but one can perceive the invisible quota for "G" and "T" individuals once stepping into the place: so they may not be that welcoming towards gay and trans individuals after a certain hour. During our interview with Lusin, she firstly highlighted the comfort she felt and secondly exclusions her gay friends experienced in Gaia:

> I felt like I was camouflaged when it got more crowded and felt more relaxed. Because I could meet anyone I liked in a more comfortable attitude. When I was kissing a woman noone would stare at me weirdly. Afterwards I continued to go Gaia for a while.[57]

Although Gaia may create relatively comfortable habitation for flirting, Lusin continues to criticize their exclusionist attitude towards "individuals whose assigned sex was male." Lusin mentioned how she felt tense in Gaia couple of times while claiming "I think there's homophobia and transphobia…every kind of phobia can be found there."[58] Afterwards Lusin mentioned one night when she wanted to get in with a gay friend and rejected by the security guard: "Because you may create a scene inside, how would I know you are gay?" Lusin in her account mentioned she had other expectations while cruising in les-bi friendly bars:

> "I think the first place was Barbara. In the beginning it wasn't so impressive for me. I was expecting something else. I don't know, I thought I would feel free, not alone. But it wasn't like that. We are living in a male dominant world, and I saw there something similar; I can say there wasn't so much difference."[59]

She thought she would feel "more relaxed and free" while expressing her identity, but it was not the case. She bumped into other kinds of normativities in LGBTI+ friendly Gaia, as I quoted from her narrative.

On the other hand Çınar mentioned she has never experienced such an invisible quota for gay men although she has heard of it because she could get in with her gay friends without any problem. "They sometimes don't let some people in...if they are somehow familiar to the guard, you can say he is my friend ad with me. so he can get in. They wouldn't let a single man in, and I don't approve it.[60]" Unlike Lusin, Çınar says she wouldn't approve

[57] Kalabalık olmaya başlayınca arada kaynadığımı hissetmiştim ve rahat hissetmiştim. Çünkü istediğim biriyle, rahat ilişki kurabiliyordum. Bi kadınla öpüşürken kimse bana garip bakmıyordu falan. Ondan sonra Gaia'ya gitmeye devam etim bi süre.

[58] "Homofobi, transfobi, ne ararsan var bence orda."

[59] "İlk gittiğim yer sanırım böyle Barbara'ydı. ortama ilk girdiğim zaman, aman aman bir şey bulamadım çok da. Beklediğim şey çok daha başka. Ne bileyim orda yalnız değilim orda ben özgürüm diye düşünmüştüm. Çok da öyle bir şey yok yoktu, zaten klasik yaşadığımız yerde erkek egemen bir toplum var. Orda da bunun benzerini gördüm diyebilirim çok da ayrılmıyorlardı birbirinden."

[60] "[İçeri] sokmadıkları da oluyo...Yüzü bilinen insanlar oldukları zaman, hani bak bu benim arkadaşım benle birlikte diyorsun, öyle girebiliyor. Tek başına bi erkek gitse almazlar, ben de tasvip etmiyorum yani."

if they had many gay man inside. In other narratives I encountered during my fieldwork, my interviewees did not use specific and radical remarks regarding bars as Lusin did even if they did not refuse the norms these places might contain. Thus, it seems like umbrella terms might not be enough to share the same bar with each other: commonalities might not be enough.

3.2 Relevance of Virtual Mediums as Ways of Forming Networks and Communities

Robert V. Kozinets in, *Netnography: Doing Ethnographic Research Online* (2010) highlights virtual communities as "a regular, ongoing part of [people's] social experience" (Kozinets 2010, 2). Although "virtual" spaces that are provided by Internet have different mediums, discourses to connect people that people perceive as "artificial or less real," during my research I realized people mentioned them in a similar manner thus I would like to claim that dating applications may still create a constantly changing networks with certain dynamics. As Kozinets also argues, "Online communities are not virtual. The people that we meet are not virtual. They are real communities populated with real people, which is why so many end up meeting in the flesh" (Kozinets 2010, 15). Although logging into an app may involve a level of performance and "fakeness," as some of my interviews mentioned, I would like to argue it is not that different from physical sites.

Grasssroots Literacies: Lesbian and Gay Activism and the Internet in Turkey (2014) by Serkan Görkemli may be useful to track the LGBTI+ activism and community making practices down on digital mediums focusing on LEGATOs in İstanbul and Ankara in 2003 (Özakın Kaos GL,2010). LEGATO was used to describe LGBT student initiatives at universities which were originally established in ODTÜ in 1994. "In this manner, they [Turkish LGBT students] discovered other online and offline gateways, such as Legato mailing lists, the cafes and university campuses where Legato groups met, and the offices of Kaos GL in Ankara and Lambda in İstanbul, through which they networked, joined communities, and participated in reading groups, film screenings, conferences and discussions, which raised their consciousness about topics such as sexuality, hetero-sexism and homophobia" (Görkemli 2014, 104). Görkemli highlights how these online communities, even if they were underrated by some activists because of their virtuality, how online platforms like LEGATO may be helpful to form LGBTI+ communities through internet and may enable people to create "community literacy" (2014,123-124).

His points on digital communities may be relevant in terms of my research and how I perceive dating apps as a form of digital, dynamic community.

Görkemli after his fieldwork with various LEGATO members from two cities, concludes possible practical effects of digital mediums and community making: "(1)receptive mode: learning about lesbian and gay identities and culture; (2)participatory or performative mode: learning how to participate in a community organization and perform its discourse and how to create a similar offshoot organization in its image; (3)problem solving mode: developing ways of using technology and digital literacy to advance organizational goals, in this case offline activism." (Görkemli 2014,164)

In my case of online communities and networks (kizkiza.com and Chloe) as they were mentioned in my interviews, I interpreted dating applications as "community-like" mediums for several reasons. First, because of the affinity that is being established over time. Many of my interviewees mentioned how familiar and boring these applications may get. Thus they may stop logging in from time to time just to "fresh it up." Another reason is related to learning how to perform les-bi identities. While Lusin and many of my informants were in the process of coming out to themselves, these applications made them feel less lonely, since they enabled les-bi individuals to find people like themselves. Again generational differences are relevant in this discussion: for earlier generations, this medium could have been kizkiza.com or woman-only bars. As Lusin mentioned in her interview, she first came out to herself through google searches on lesbianism or applications: "Then if one would write 'women who love women' in search bars or certain blogs, kizlararasinda.com and so on, I read the comments there. Women who love women...After that point I started to hear this phrase everywhere."[61] For Lusin, her self-identification process as a woman who is attracted to other women was formed through virtual encounters and searches she conducted.

Finally, another reason would be forming social relationships and its effects on accumulation of knowledge through these applications, which often enables people to share their experiences, their stories and encourage others to find their own ways. Esra mentioned how she started to log into Chloe, and how talking to other les-bi's made her felt better even if they did not meet. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, friends, acquaintances Lusin, Nehir and Çınar had through apps and other mediums, normalized the coming out

[61] "Sonra kadınlardan hoşlanmak diye yazınca ufaktan, kızlar soruyor var ya, ordaki bi sürü yorumu okudum sonra kızlar bölümüne gelince bikaç yorumda bu geçiyodu "kadınlardan hoşlanan kadınlar" o zaman hani bi kelime öğrenince her yerde duymaya başlarsın ya izlediğim filmlerde dizilerde çok çıkmaya başladı

process; apps functioned like safe spaces where les-bi individuals can be who they "actually" are.

Deniz, after logging into her Twitter account that has an "upside down triangle," realizes her "radar ringing" on the street from people she got to knew through social media. Kübra, whom was a part of the "kizkiza" community "back in the day" while she was coming out, highlighted the importance of forums and chatrooms on this website to share knowledge and transmit experience. Thus distinctions between "virtual" and "physical" may not be that clear, as Kozinets (2010) has pointed out. After one starts frequenting these sites, the connections and commonalities between virtual dating applications and physical spaces become quite clear. Networks and community-like groups in applications and bars might be perceived as more dynamic, free, fragmentary and spontaneous: being online in the app, or having a beer in the same bar every once in a while, would be enough to refresh your status in those networks.

3.2.1 Norms in Applications

While Barbara and Gaia turned themselves into LGBTI+ friendly places, in applications where people prefer to be more discrete about their identities, this inclusiveness would be harder to achieve. Because people's self-descriptions would be more limited than physical mediums to socialize and this may create certain level of tension during communication as Çınar and Esra will be mentioning in their narratives. In virtual mediums, one would be restricted with avatar photos and written descriptions. Additionally as some of my interviewees mentioned, some of les-bi individuals tend to prefer digital pseudonymity and anonymity in virtual worlds since they might not be "out" to their social circles (Philips 2002).

As some of my interviewees highlighted, les-bi individuals may enjoy applications' "anonymity" because of the violence they may encounter during cruising. In these mediums, uploading pictures would increase the trust between people and more interaction would be guaranteed (Gürel 2012; Atuk 2016). Because, this would prove one's "genuineness." But this may create other tensions for subjects such as "outing oneself." Not every subject who frequents these applications is "out" to their social circles and they may prefer to keep it that way. Thus they either use parts of their body in their profile picture, or have distant, silhouette shots of themselves, or have comics, drawings, political graffiti as their representatives in dating applications. Since their pictures have been perceived as "fake," profiles and even individuals are approached with a level of

caution. Esra mentioned how she was excluded from certain ways of virtual socialization because she did not have a smartphone: people thought of her as fake and they were hard to convince the other way around.

Similarly Çınar mentioned how she has been treated when she logged in without photos: "[...]for example I don't prefer to put profile pictures, because people tend to act accordingly. I think this is bad... Dude, we're here for some chat, why do you act like this? That means people are looking for a hook up or lover. It's a really strange place[62]." Other persons' acting with certain prejudices or expectations of photos seems to offend her. Additionally, Çınar indicated how beauty standards would affect her communication with other people: they either got sick of this and deleted their pictures or blocked their accounts. "Everybody uses applications, but noone is socializing or not really into other people. Not everyone has to like everyone. But there are so many people who are there to boost their ego.[63]" She perceives everyone there as "posing." After these negative remarks she remembers being more optimistic towards the applications:

> "When I first logged into Chloe 4 years ago, I was more excited about it, because I didn't know anyone there. I'll meet new people, learning new things. Logging in there and making silly jokes to meet other people...maybe I was a kid. Probably everyone goes through this stage. Maybe you are not yourself."[64]

Her optimism emerged from getting to know something new and learning new things from it as she mentioned. After a while, she faced other people's norms in Chloe. Similar to Çınar's accounts, Esra mentioned how she experienced people's norms on beauty standards.

> "I sent my pics if people ask me. In some cases chat ends, in some of them people thank me, it means they didn't like me. I was very resentful it in the first encounters. I expected people to say something. Now I don't care. You would talk and talk, and it ends radically after the pic. I don't just stop talking

[62] "Mesela ben foto[ğraf] koymayı tercih etmiyorum çünkü insanlar fotoya göre hareket ediyor. Bu bence çirkin….Abi muhabbete gelmişiz niye böyle yapıyosun yani? Demek ki insanlar sevgili ya da koli arıyor. çok tuhaf bi yer bilmiyorum."

[63] "Herkes aplikasyona giriyo ama kimse sosyalleşmiyo ya da beğenmiyo da olabilir. Herkes herkesi beğenmek zorunda değil. Ama egosunu tatmin etmek isteyen çok fazla insan var."

[64] "4 sene önce girdiğimde ilk, daha heyecanlıydım aplikasyonlarda. Çünkü kimseyi tanımıyodum. İnsanlarla tanışıcam, yeni bişey öğreniyorum. Girmiş oraya saçmasapan espriler yapıyo insanlarla tanışmak için...Çocuktuk belki de. Herkes bu evreyi yaşamış olabilir. Kendin olmuyosun belki."

even if I don't like that person. It becomes obvious when I don't like someone anyway, and they don't continue."[65]

She highlights how this affected her communication with other women in the applications because she doesn't like her pictures to be taken in the first place. These standards people have, blocks the conversation in her opinion.

After I was done with my fieldwork in Chloe, one of my friends who passed as a trans guy a couple of years ago, mentioned having been banned from the application, because of "indecent posts and photos" he shared. After I talked to him, I realized the radical decrease of trans men from the application. After I asked Chloe about this, they stated that "it is a "girls only" platform, thus if you see a guy logged in, you should report him." As Lusin similarly mentioned, her intersex friend was banned because of their "facial hair."

Although none of my interviewees encountered anything physically violent or brutal from application dates, they constantly highlighted the norms and tensions that affected them negatively: sometimes this led them to delete their accounts, sometimes they had to have a break from that flow. Although it may open up new possibilities for people to meet who are far from each other, both in terms of distance and mentality, dating applications like Chloe continues to reappropriate gender norms and binarisms on practical levels.

After discussing inclusions and exclusions in LGBTI+ frequented places from the perspective of les-bi individuals, I would like to discuss the concept of "community" and networks buildings in relation to solidarity practices.

3.3 Critical Aspects on Community Making Processes

As number of researchers have highlighted (Phelan 1994; Görkemli 2014; Stein 2006) notions of homogeneous community and unity are "imagined" (Anderson 1983). As les-bi women are as diverse as any other group or community, Phelan suggests that assumption of homogeneity, harmony and unity can only be a phantasy. Yet, as imagined as it might be, the concept of "community" retains its political appeal: "[r]ather than abandon 'community', I would like to think of it as a process. In the process of community, personalities are created. Persons do not simply 'join' communities; they

[65] "İsteyene yolluyorum kimisinde bitiyo sohbet...Kimisinde teşekkürler ediliyo, hani beğenmemiş. Başta çok alınıyodum. İnsan bişey der falan diyodum. Şimdi takmıyorum. Baya uzun konuşmuşun tak! fotoğrafta kesiliyo. Ben beğenmediğim biriyle direkt kesmiyorum beğenmediğim belli oluyo o da devam etmeyince..."

become microcosms of their communities, and their communities change with their entrance"(Phelan 1994, 87). Phelan highlights the dynamism within communities and the process of constant learning about oneself. Thus I perceive les-bi women frequenting virtual and physical socialization mediums in a similar way.

Başak Durgun in her MA thesis (2011) mentions how the idea of community does not have to emerge from plurality while adopting Jean Luc Nancy's singular-plural discusses this concept as a way to move away from community views that precondition plurality and commonality. Singularity of a being, and this is where it is severely distinguished from individuality, indicates its plurality. The principle of communication between *singular-plural beings* does not create a bond but a sharing of alterity, with the circulation of meaning of the self" (Durgun 2011,179). Communities or commonalities does not have to gloss differences, singularities over, rather one should aim for alterities that may bring individuals together, as Durgun and many other scholars highlight. Heterosexual hegemony demands for its own regulatory dominance and claim of originality a state of togetherness (community, society, cult, group, movement) under the boundaries of identity and the illusion of individual autonomy. (Durgun 2011, 15)

Community making process can be perceived as "performative" and fluid, in a similar way with individual identities, as Phelan suggests (1994 81-82). My interviewees were a part of different communities and networks that do not necessarily originate from having the same sexual orientation: some of them are involved in feminist, and/or LGBTI+ organizations which functioned like communities, others prefer to socialize with the LGBTI+ community at work, some prefer to create their own safe networks through their close circle of friends. Additionally, mediums of socialization do not remain constant. Les-bi women may frequent certain mediums of socialization or abandon them from time to time. Thus settings and characteristics of these les-bi networks may be more flexible and changing than the term "community" would suggest.

Arlene Stein, among others (Jeffreys 2003; Weston 1991), conceptualizes lesbian communities as "sexual minority communities"(Stein 1997,5) that might function similarly with ethnic minority communities. Some common characteristics between LGBTI+ communities and ethnic ones would be: claiming of a certain identity, forming of a subculture and negotiations with mainstream or predominantly heterosexual cultures. Many of my interviewees compared and contrasted LGBTI+ groups or community with ethnic minority groups. Thus I should delve into this narrative as well. Özgü utters

"azınlık" [minority] while she talks about LGBTI+ friendly bars that have been frequented.

> [...] I don't know how it would work in these circumstances, but places for us are obligatory. I mean I don't know how to position LGBT minority groups while I talk about them, but every minority group would have their own spaces of socialization. Some organizations aim to achieve this but I think they weren't that successful."[66]

Nalan in our interview constantly mentioned being part of a minority group and LGBTI+ groups together. She was born in Diyarbakır and her father is Kurdish. She mentioned how these factors affected her in school when she was growing up. For example she mentioned an incident when one of her teachers asked if her family is part of PKK ["siz PKK'li misiniz?"]. Nalan remembers responding that she does not know what PKK is but her father was really upset when Ahmet Kaya died. She highlighted how she connected a singer who supported the Kurdish freedom movement and PKK unconsciously. Through this narrative she connected being part of minority groups and being inherently political ["azınlık olmak böyle bişey doğuştan politiksin"]. Similar to Nalan Lusin highlights the "inseparable bond" between her ethnicity as an Armenian woman who is attracted to other women while she defines herself as "other."

On a similar track with Stein, most of my interviewees defined LGBTI+ community as some kind of an "oppressed, minority or othered" group. While, I also agree these umbrella terms and people who prefer to identify themselves with them may create communities or networks through certain common features, one would need to problematize the essentialist underpinnings of these identifications. I would like to highlight uncertainty parameter regarding the perception of "LGBTI+ community as minority group:" one cannot exactly know who is a part of this large umbrella category.

On this path, Nehir mentioned seeing another woman close to her location in the application, and finding out that she is the receptionist in the hostel she generally has her lunch with her colleagues. She goes to her and says hi, and "clocks" herself. This can be an example of an invisible community of les-bi women. Nehir highlights:

> "I think about our spaces of togetherness, I know the feeling; I know the meaning of being organized. When we are together, even if it is in a different way, our main focus is our existence, right? To be exist, you know, to show

[66] "[...] şu anki ortamda nasıl olur bilmiyorum ama mekan olmazsa olmaz bişey. Yani, LGBT azınlık topluluğunu çok nasıl konumlandıracağımı bazen hızlı konuşmada bilemiyorum. Ama yani, her azınlık grubunun kendi kendine sosyalleşebildiği alanlar var. Dernekler bunu nispeten sağlamaya çalıştı ve benim görüşümce başarılı olamadı."

> oneself, make yourself openly exist and to gain that space and feel comfortable; this is very empowering for me. When I say being organized, it doesn't have to be under an organization. But when I leave that place and go to a non-queer horrible place, I feel stronger with a support behind me. Or something walks beside me to give me strength."[67]

She highlights the comfort of being side by side with people like herself apart from being part of a political group. The main commonality Nehir highlights is "to exist" "to make yourself visible." Politics of visibility and feeling of solidarity that rose from similarities cover relevant ground in her narrative. Through Chloe, as Nehir and others constantly highlighted, people can have the option to communicate other people from various, changing social backgrounds by touching their phones screen. It's easier and more dynamic than trying to find organizations and/or physical spaces related to one's sexual orientation. These virtual networks, enable les-bi women find people like themselves, to find out where to go and whom to socialize.

Unlike "natural born communities" that depend on ethnicity, LGBTI+ individuals get connected through their own wills and desires as I discuss below through the concept of "queer family." One can claim that this is a "supposedly minority community" whose boundaries and numbers is impossible to establish. These networks, groupings, as some of my interviewees mentioned, are shaped through the choices people make and they have dynamic, constantly changing natures.

While Stein (1997) highlights the importance of the definition of boundaries in the process of forming the community, she also reminds us that the idea of "unity" might be imaginative since there are all kinds of personalities, aims and desires. Stein critically and rightfully highlights queer theorizing and activism may be lacking certain practicalities regarding identity politics. Although she admits that categories related to gender and sexuality are fictional, she also argues that "so long as people are categorized and stigmatized according to sexuality, sexual identities are necessary fictions" (Stein 1997,22). For Stein, these choices that one has to make, seem inevitable, while she still acknowledges their social constructedness. Similar to Stein,Foucault (1978) and Butler (1999) have also highlighted this dilemma related to self-identifications of lesbian and

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67 "O birliktelik alanlarımızı düşünüyorum. O şeyi biliyorum mesela, örgütlü olmanın benim için anlamını biliyorum...Yanyana geldiğimiz o anda başka şekillerde de olsa başka başka da ilerliyor da olsa en temelinde derdimiz ne? Varolmak hani. kendini göstermek, kendini açıkça var etmek ve rahat etmek o alanı kazanmak...Mesela bu benim için inanılmaz güçlendirici geliyor..Ve sokakta yani bir araya geldiğim o insanlar, o işte, örgütlülük derken illa bi örgüt çatısı altında olmak zorunda değil ama ordan sonra çıkıp da gerçekten hiç lubun olmayan ve inanılmaz korkunç bi yere de gitsem kendimi daha güçlü hissediyorum arkamda bir şey var yani...ya da yanımda benimle yürüyen bir şey varmış gibi geliyor kuvvetlendiriyor."

gay individuals. Foucault writes about the dilemma of homosexual subjects who began to speak on their behalf "to demand that its legitimacy or 'naturality' be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified." (Foucault 1978,101). That was the main reason for activists to start using gay or queer rather than "homosexual" which is a medical category. This dilemma continues to challenge LGBTI+ activism.

Butler also argues against the binary categories related to sexual orientation that one has to accept while aiming to overcome or subvert them. While lesbianism or homosexuality are perceived to be "dissident" or "subversions" from "the norm," which is "heterosexuality," they still anchor their identities to the same heterosexuality. "Lesbianism that defines itself in radical exclusion from heterosexuality deprives itself of the capacity of resignify the very heterosexual constructs by which it is partially and inevitably constituted" (Butler 1999,174). Such identification may limit the possibilities of political change and dissent. The process of defining one's identity with certain boundaries, life-styles or image, can be restrictive, as many of my interviewees have also mentioned. But this is a double edged sword in terms of forming networks for solidarity or when one decides to claim a political space for equal rights and visibility

Miranda Joseph (2002) discusses how the idea of community have been romanticized and fell into false generalizations especially because "Identity-based social movements invoke community to mobilize constituents and validate their cause to a broader public" (2002, vii). She highlights how gay visibility might be turning into domination over other individuals in a group (xvii) and queer and non-binary people might be overlooked (xviii).

As Stein (1997) mentions identity politics may put individuals in contradictory positions where even if one does not define oneself with an identity or as part of a group, it is required in order to claim a social or political ground. Similar to Phelan (2000) and Stein, Joseph (2002) argues against the natural, spontaneous nature of communities. Rather than communities that focuses on commonalities and ignores certain exclusions such as race, class and ethnicity, Joseph offers "affiliation" that focuses on differences. Because the community discourse and the phantasy of being part of a community may not be easy to escape, but may lead to generalize people falsely. In this research, the commonality would have been the commonality of sexual orientation while bulking differences like ethnicity and class into the same containers. However during my fieldwork I realized I should be aware of false generalizations since some of my

interviewees adopt more queer and fluid ways of self-identification. Despite the fact that such utterances as “the feeling of safety” or “being with people like oneself” were constantly repeated during my fieldwork, I realized that one should not generalize lesbian or bisexual women's ideas or daily practices related to the networks and solidarities they have built through various mediums.

This research has shown that, for lesbian and bisexual identified women, idea of community or forming of community like networks is constantly shifting depending on the medium of socialization. Boundaries are not strict between women and the various communities they are part of, and the term community, contains more than it’s activist connotations. The places les-bi individuals frequent often function like stable communities. However they would not guarantee the commonality between individuals. Socializations in bars and applications has enabled many of my interviewees to learn how to perform their identities, how to define themselves and find “people like themselves.” One has to admit that “community” has various positive and negative aspects that give strength to individuals, while at the same time downplaying their personal expectations and characteristics. Rather than being a place of “refuge, of sameness” communities may bring diversities and differences together so that people encounter and learn how to establish different kinds of relationships (Phelan 1994, 84).

3.3.1 Helixes of Community: Queer Family

Through a discussion of “queer family” here, I aim to connect narratives related to community and solidarity building, since some of my interviewees discussed “family” in relation to “solidarity.”

Although I personally became cautious about using the concept of “family,” since, whether it is queer or not, it may connote an obligation, some of my interviewees mentioned the concept of queer family while talking about their intimate relationships with their friends and partners. People who mentioned queer family typically had an activist formation or practice, thus while bringing this concept up, one encounters the aspect of class and the ability to talk queer discourse as Savcı highlights (2016).
“Queer family” refers to “families” that LGBTI+ identified people “choose” for themselves, as communities where they feel “comfortable in their own skin,” and establish a level of belonging. However one should be careful while depicting LGBTI+ communities as “safe environments” and “happy families.” Kath Weston in *Families We Choose: Lesbians, Gays, Kinship* (1991) highlights differences, exclusions between

LGBTI+ communities and how this concept of queer/chosen family may be related to the discourse of coming out and may have different meanings for people from various backgrounds. “Informed by contrasting notions of free will and the fixedness often attributed to biology in this culture, the opposition between straight and gay families echoes old dichotomies such as nature versus nurture and real versus ideal” (Weston 1991, 38). Thus the idea of highlighting the possibility of forming non- biological affinities helps the deconstruction of “naturally given” and obligatory characteristics of family. Especially during the 1980’s many of the LGBTI+ communities shifted the focus from friendship to kinship by highlighting love and agency in relation to essence and obligations. Weston also highlights that chosen families “made it possible to claim a sexual identity that is not linked to procreation, face the possibility of rejection by blood or adoptive relations, yet still conceive of establishing a family of one's own” (Weston, 1991, 40). As I was talking to a friend he highlighted his worries regarding getting old and how he hopes to form a communal life at some point. Without families formed through marriage (putting legal obstacles aside) or kids, the question of care in old age becomes an issue and highlights the need to take care of one another [“birbirine kalmak”].

Lusin mentioned how she came out to a friend for the first time and he made everything easier for her and now she calls him “mama” as I mentioned in Chapter 2. She perceives him as her “mama,” because of his solidarity and help while she first came out to herself, a term that highlights the performativity related to these identifications. Similarly Nehir mentions how she feels about queer family despite her suspicions:

> “I thought that chosen family is utopic and meaningless; but whatever was the reason and outcome, I had a terrible three months period, and then I realized that there are people caring about me, checking all the time if I’m ok. I thought, well, there is something here. When I’m in trouble they are not serving me a solution or something, but they are there for me; somehow, not another person but a specific one who understands me more, wants to be beside me I think. I guess the solidarity is something like this; not to feel alone always.”[68]

[68] “Seçilmiş aile de çok ütopik ve anlamsız geliyodu. Ama işte sebebi sonucu ne olursa olsun, korkunç bi 3 ay geçirdim. Ve 3 ay boyunca şeyi farkettim, gözümün içine iyi miyim diye bakan insanlar var. Ama her gün her saniye onu kontrol ediyolar falan. “Bi saniye” dedim “böyle bi şey var.” Mesela çok böyle canımın sıkıldığı bi zaman oluyo, çıkmazda olduğum bişey oluyo falan...ve şeyi biliyorum belki doğrudan derdimin dermanı olmayacak ama yine de yanımda olup, nedense sanki başka biri yerine o, daha içimdeymiş ve beni anlıyomuş, yanımda olmayı daha çok istiyomuş gibi geliyo. Sürekli yine o işte yalnız hissetmemeyi, heralde biraz benim için böyle bir şey dayanışma.”

Nehir experienced the positive parts of being part of a family. She highlights chosen family's relation with solidarity and how she started to trust in it, before being sceptical about it.

Merih, after I asked her how she feels about the concept of solidarity, she highlighted the importance of queer family. Afterwards she criticized "solidarity partys[69]" that was held by LGBTI+ organizations or individuals since she thought they can be exploitative. Similar to Nehir's case she feels somehow connected to idea of chosen or alternative family. She remembers the first time she formed her chosen family after she left her biological family's house:

> "I made up my chosen family for myself then. They have a wider place in my life than my biological family and I am in solidarity with them. It's like big family and nuclear family; LGBT community is my big family, and I have also a nuclear family. You are automatically in the big family of LGBT community; it is like ethnic root. Like, they say all of us are Turkish, but we are not...It's similar to that..."[70]

Once again, LGBTI+ groups from different sizes, as Merih stated, has been mentioned paralelly with ethnic backgrounds. In fact, one can perceive this idea of community as parallel circles that may intersect at some point. Merih highlights possible tensions within "LGBTI+ family:"

> "[...]"When something bad happened to someone, even if you don't like this person, you feel like to be in solidarity with them because of your common sexual identity, I mean it could happen to you or it touches you somewhat. You are part of a big thing, impossible to stay out!"[71]

After considering how accounts of my interviewees were diversified on the idea of community and different networks, I would like to discuss the community tensions that may explode from time to time. Indeed "community" is not as harmonious and unified as

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[69] "Solidarity parties'" would in context mean non-profit, party organizations for LGBTI+ individuals who might be looking for support for financial reasons, for surgeries etc.

[70] "[...] o zamanlar kendime seçilmiş bi aile kurdum ben. Şu an kan bağı olan ailemden daha fazla hayatımda yer ediyolar. ve dayanışıyorum onlarla. Bi de çekirdek aile- büyük aile hikayesi gibi ya. Bence LGBT komünitede de öyle. Bi çekirdek ailem var bi de büyük ailem var, ister istemez. LGBT başlığının altına dahil olduğun sorulmadan, şey gibi bu, etnik köken, hepimize Türk diyolar ama değiliz. aslında çok benzer yani."

[71] "Birinin başına bişey geldiğinde ne kadar sevmediğin biri de olsa, mesela kişisel olarak, seninle aynı cinsel kimliğinden dolayı yaşadığı şeyler senin hayatında başka noktalara değiyo ve onunla dayanışma isteği duyuyosun yani. O yüzden çok ayrılmaz bi parçası oluyo. Dışında kalmak çok mümkün değil yani."

it is often assumed. To the contrary, it is sometimes used to cover up certain tensions or forms of exclusions. As Merih suggests, having a common sexual orientation may not be enough to stay together since there are more layers underneath it.

In most of my interviews, les-bi women I talked to highlighted the comfort and tension of frequenting in a small les-bi community. Deniz and many other interviewees mentioned bar fights, tensions that may arise from jealousy directed to ex-girlfriends or hook-ups:

> "Now that there are limited queer people in a certain place, everyone is someone's ex, and of course it is not bearable. People fight to each other a lot. "You checked someone, s/he is her/his ex, my ex is here…" Everybody hangs out at the same place; there aren't many choices for them to go. Evidentially exes would be at the same place, and that brings there a tension."[72]

Incidents like this may be an example of being part of or frequenting around a relatively small community. Özlem highlights a similar case for herself:

> "You take your social life to the place you go to meet someone. And this narrows your circle; everybody is related to each other already. You know the people next table; one of them goes to the loo, the rest starts to flirt each other; there could be a fight out of jealousy or they leave the place together."[73]

It seems inescapable not to bump into an ex-girlfriend while hanging out in bars or applications with other people. These incidents may create for most of my interviewees. On a similar track, Merih talked about the open relationship she had couple of years ago when she first logged into Chloe.

> "I was also curious about it, so I logged in. I received messages saying "so that's where you cheat on your girlfriend" because she is our friend. Why do you care? I was furious. Or there were people who would be super tense when I talked about my girlfriend. I was open about it. I could never meet anyone."[74]

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[72] "Şimdi bi avuç ibne olunca öteki ötekinin eskisi, eskisi öbürünün mide kaldırmıyo. Millet birbirine giriyo çok kavga çıkıyodu…"Sen ona baktın, o onun eski sevgilisi, eski sevgilim burda," başka yer yok ki! Eski sevgilisiyle aynı yerde takılıyo tabii bu gerginlik sebebi."

[73] "Tanışmak için, (kolicilik) gittiğin yerlere sosyal hayatını da götürüyorsun. Böyle durumlarda çevre daralıyor. Herkes birbirinin bir şeysi oluyor zaten. yan masada oturan insanları tanıyorsun, biri tuvalete gidiyor. Masada kalanlar flört ediyor, kavga edebiliyor kıskançlık üzerinden ya da birlikte kalkıp gidebiliyor."

[74] "Ben de bi bakayım neymiş dedim. "Demek sevgilini burda aldatıyosun?" mesajları aldım. Arkadaşımız yani. "Sana ne be?" Acayip sinir oldum. Ya da sevgilim olduğunu söyleyince tribe giren insanlar. Söylüyodum zaten. Bi türlü birileriyle görüşemedim."

Merih highlighted how she had hard times while trying to explain the concept of open relationship. Lesbian or bisexual women she has spoken had certain norms regarding relationships and this had a pressuring effect on Merih.

The way Weston conceptualizes "chosen family" is critical in a way that it contains different aspects of class, ethnicity and sexual identity (Weston, 1991,131-133). She highlights the differences related to class and visibility between gay communities and lesbian communities, while also highlighting people of color may be also experiencing "family" in more conflictive ways than white people. Thus one should think about exclusions within communities.

Finally, I acknowledge the agency, flexibility and the feeling of solidarity that queer might give, but one should not take it for granted and generalize it to all components of a group. As other communities, the LGBTI+ community is also formed around certain inclusions, exclusions and contradictions. Since one comes to "choose" things, it means exclusion of some other things.

3.4 Solidarity Narratives: "Like Leaning On a Tree"

For many les-bi individuals "solidarity" meant being with people like yourself or having mutual support from each other. Lusin highlights her comfort around "lubunya[75]" groups and "likeness" between her and them:

> "Anyway, there are a lot of people like me; we can defend our rights wherever possible. If we face beatings, we run away together. It is nice to see solidarity, even if you are only two people. Now I'm thinking about the time my first realisation and acceptance of my identity; you are lonely, you feel lonely."[76]

Being with people who suffer from similar things in life, may get one together as it can be perceived from this example. Lusin in fact perceives this as "unity." Similar to Lusin, Çınar highlights solidarity's connection with not being lonely: "I have a group of people with me, I know they would support me. They know I would support them. It makes me

[75] "Lubunya" means "gay" in Turkish gay slang. However it has been used by some individuals to highlight and define the LGBTI+ umbrella term in the recent years. People also referred this as "lubun" throughout our interviews. While I translate my interviews, I used "queer" as "lubunya"s equivalent since they have similar histocities. Both of these terms have been used to discredit and degrade LGBTI+ communities in the history, but their meanings have been deconstructed and started to own by LGBTI+community.

[76] "Zaten benim gibi bi sürü insan var, hakkımızı koruyabildiğimiz yerde koruruz yani. Zaten dayak yiyeceksek de her beraber kaçarız yani. Bi birlik olduğunu görmek güzel. 2 kişi bile olsa. Şeyi düşünüyorum, ilk bu kabullenme çağımda keşfettiğim zamanlarda, yalnızsın yani. Yalnız hissediyorsun."

feel strong, I feel like I'm not alone."[77] As both of these narratives highlighted, some of my interviewees mentioned solidarity as being people like themselves. This is how I connected concepts of community makings and solidarity.

For Özlem solidarity connotes "To make people feel less alone, people who are in need."[78] She mentioned a lesbian colleague's exposure in her office by her boss, through Chloe. She was not sure about what to do about this issue: "I want to say I'm with you to that friend of mine, but I have hesitations."[79] She does not want to disclose her identity but she realizes that "one wouldn't be able to highlight his/her stance when he/she is alone." Politics, people's self-identifications and social media constantly merge since people check and stalk each other through different mediums. It can be a boss checking your profile to discover your ideology or someone you flirt or your family members.

I asked Esra, who is part of a LGBTI+ football team, how she feels when she socializes with people like herself, she says:

> "It happens only in the football field; I feel very comfortable. It happened a few times at school, after Özgecan's death at a meeting for example… At the parties I feel extremely safe. At the beginning even though I knew no one, I felt same. Now I start to know people, it is quite comfortable. I feel tense among heterosexual men; I want to leave the place…"[80]

She explains how she felt more comfortable while she was with feminist groups and LGBTI+ or women only parties even if she did not know anyone in the place. She explained one night, how she "stood out" for her friend who was kissing another girl, and chased a guy because he was staring at them. Solidarity similarly connotes "not being alone" for her, even if she was not that much involved in political side of those networks as she states. Deniz also highlights her comfort in LGBTI+ friendly spaces, since she can flirt freely and this would increase her self-confidence. While talking about solidarity and what it meant for her Deniz mentioned:

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[77] "Yanımda bi insan grubu var, bana destek olduklarını biliyorum, onlar da benim onlara destek olduğumu biliyolar. Güçlü hissettiriyo, yalnız olmadığımı hissediyorum."

[78] "Yalnız olmadığını hissettirmek insanlara, ihtiyacı olanlara."

[79] "İşyerindeki arkadaşa arkandayım demek istiyorum ama çekiniyorum."

[80] "Bu sadece mesela futbol alanında oluyo, çok rahat hissediyorum kendimi. Birkaç kere okulda Özgecan öldürüldükten sonra bi toplantı olmuştu. Aşırı güvende hissediyorum, partilerde de olsun...Başta kimseyi tanımıyodum doğru düzgün, yine aynı hissediyodum. Şimdi biraz tanışmaya başladım. Baya rahat. ... Hetero adamların olduğu yerde çok geriliyorum. Ordan çıkmak istiyorum..."

> "Sharing things and being together, this is solidarity; standing behind each other to support. We share and support each other. Giving strength or receiving strength is like supporting for example, like you lean on a tree and gain power from it. I think people do this even unintentionally…We were talking in Şapka [another LGBTI+ frequented cafe] once, a queer told us (s)he escaped from his/her family. But (s)he was happy while talking to us, didn't feel alone. I was feeling alone when I was in the university. When I came here [İstanbul] I stopped feeling lonely, I feel strong. You find solutions with the others. I felt strong; by thinking and sharing with the others I draw my way slowly. When you share you can see the difficulties, you can choose the convenient way for yourself. There is a way to choose; you see someone who shared her situation with her family and things went bad. Then you give up to share. You learn from other people's experiences. I envy people who are open with their family. There was only one person like that in our group. You envy to be in such a comfortable situation, but not everyone has the same conditions in life. It's like being born rich or poor; having courage [to come out] is differentiating from one person to other."[81]

For Deniz and many other interviewees, solidarity covers a relevant ground to strength, to find out ways to come out or closet oneself. Deniz highlights the importance of LGBTI+ frequented places for her since they enable people to share their own experiences. Those sharings might be good pathfinders for some individuals in some cases. She also highlights how being in İstanbul made her feel less lonely in terms of being people like herself. Deniz highlights the commonalities they all shared like being excluded from one's family after coming out. However she also mentioned the differences in between, because coming out process was experienced differently by every individual which might be defined through certain social conditions such as class. While feeling less solitary and isolated, most of my interviewees, like Deniz highlighted, might have learnt how to behave, how to stay strong in predominantly hetero mediums.

[81] "Bi şeyleri paylaşabilmek ve bir arada olmak dayanışma. Birbirinin arkasında durmak. Bir şeyleri paylaşır birbirimizin arkasında dururduk. Onlara güç vermek ya da güç almak. Dayanmak da öyle bir şey mesela, ağaca dayanıp güç alırsın. İnsanlar bence bunu yapıyolar. istemeden de olsa yapıyolar. Şapka'da [another LGBT frequented cafe] konuşuyoduk mesela, lubunyaymış ailesinden kaçmış. Mutlu oluyo ama konuşurken orda yalnız hissetmiyo. Mesela üniversitede yalnız hissediyodum. Ne zaman buraya [İstanbul] geldim öyle hissetmedim, güçlü hissettim. Bir aradayken bi şeylere çözüm buluyosun. Ben kendime yavaş yavaş yol çizdim. Güçlü hissederek, konuşarak, kafa çalıştırarak, paylaşarak. Paylaştıkça bi şeyleri görüyosun, zorunu kolayını görüyosun, kendine uygun olanı seçiyosun. Seçebilmek... Diyosun ki bu insan ailesiyle paylaşmış, kötü olmuş. Benim de böyle olabilir diyosun vazgeçiyosun. Aslında bir musibet bin nasihat...O musibet gibi geliyo bana gördüğüm şeyler. Çok özeniyorum ailesine açılan, rahat olan insanlara. Aramızdan sadece biri öyleydi...özeniyosun o rahat olmaya, ama herkesin koşulları aynı değil. Zengin ya da yoksul doğmak gibi bişey yani. İnsandan insana değişiyo cesaret."

Eventhough Çınar highlights norms she suffered from in Chloe, such as beauty standards and being have to have a proper profile picture, she does justice from other aspects:

> "I don't want to discredit it, one of my best friend is from Chloe for example. We still see each other, we met on November last year. I'm really happy they became a part of my life. So it has positive sides. I wouldn't believe if anyone told me I could meet one of my friends there. It happens, I'd never imagine it." [82]

As it can be perceived here, people do not use applications for only casual hook ups or dates, one can easily find friends.

As my interviewees narratives revealed, coming out and first couple of encounters with LGBTI+ community may make people feel solitary. Being with people like yourself, who assumingly have similar troubles, joys and thoughts within predominantly hetero mediums, may increase feeling of "togetherness." Most of my interviewees mentioned they attended Pride Week events and/or Marches in İstanbul. In fact I saw many of them during events and marches this year's Pride Week. They highlighted how they felt as "together," as "majority." Being visible during those marches, might enable people to feel stronger and less lonely. I would like to highlight the importance of Pride Weeks in terms of les-bi individuals' socializations, coming out processes, forming solidarity and networks in the following chapter in more detail.

Lusin mentioned how she was looking forward to this year's Pride Week since she came out to herself and her close circle of friends.

> "At the Pride Week meeting we were negotiating about the day of the Kadıköy party; they said Wednesday is no good, because last year it was too crowded. Parties are normally on this side of the city [European side], there is a need to be organized in Kadıköy too. There are students and working people who cannot go to the other side [European side]. I think about some working people who get up very early next day, but still go out in the streets or bars. This is enough to explain how we desperately in need of such gatherings. Who goes to a party on a Wednesday night? But you have to go. This is special time for you. Time flies then. You wait and say you would go, wherever it would take place, it doesn't matter…"[83]

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[82] "[...]Çok da yermek istemiyorum benim en yakın arkadaşım Chloe'dan mesela. Şu anda, geçen sene Kasım'da tanıştık hala da görüşüyoruz. 40 yıldır tanışıyomuşuz gibiyiz. Hayatıma girdikleri için çok mutluyum. bi yararı da var yani. Kimse demez ki ordan yakın arkadaş edinebileceksin. Oluyomuş, hiç aklıma gelmezdi."

[83] "Onur Haftası toplantısında Kadıköy partisi konuşuluyodu mesela, Çarşamba mı Cuma mı diye. Çarşamba olursa olmaz dendi. Geçen sene çok dolmuş mesela Çarşamba partisi. sonra, Kadıköy'e gitmeye çok ihtiyaç var, bütün

Lusin expresses her excitement regarding Pride Week's events, especially after she came out to herself. Her narrative reveals an important aspect of LGBTI+ frequented or themed parties. Since LGBTI+ themed parties happen lesser than "straight" ones, it may become vital to attend these events no matter what. Because one would not be sure about when and where the next one might happen. For many of my interviewees the idea of solidarity is connected to creating your own safe, social sphere with friendship and/or being politically active with certain collective groups through different mediums. Nehir, while mentioning how she frequents Chloe, she highlights the comfort to see people like her around herself.

> "Now I have a monogamous relationship, but I don't shut my Chloe off; I like to see people near me when I go somewhere, let say to Bağcılar, Bakırköy, even to Beyoğlu. When I go out of the city as well, I like to log in to see if there is someone to talk to…"[84]

She announces her comfort within that virtual network. But I should highlight that she assumes an "unified les-bi group" and people like herself while she talks about these networks. She realizes she's "optimistically generalizing." Since she first came out about her identity, she happened to socialize with activists from LambdaİstanbuI, and/or various feminist organizations. She highlights her comfort around her friends from Lezbifem, Pride Week Comitee but she likes to socialize through applications as well. She defines this weirdly familiar feeling she has with applications:

> "There are a few aspects of things that help you not to feel lonely; feeling someone there and talking to her or seeing her helps. But you don't know, maybe there are many queer around you, but they are not out. You want queer circle more than this one and socialize there more. You don't feel happy and comfortable in a place where you are not out, or with people that don't talk to you with the idea of not being homophobic. But that applications and places where our social circle is, different. My primary motivation to go to Gaia, for

partiler bu tarafta oluyo ve gidemiyolar. İnsanlar çalışanı var okuyanı var, düşünüyorum. Bi sonraki gün, sabahın köründe kalkacak ama yine de gidip sokaklara taşabiliyosun falan. Bu bence yeterli her şeyi anlatmaya ne kadar ihtyacımız olduğunu anlatmaya. Bi Çarşamba kim partiye gider? Ama gitmek zorundasın yani. Yok yani. O senin özel zamanın. Zaman hemen hıphızlı geçer böyle. Hep beklersin ve o gün gelmiştir hangi gün olduğu önemli değil….Ben o partiye gidicem yani nerde olduğu önemli değil."

[84] "...Şu an tekeşli bi ilişkim var ama Chloe'mı kapatmıyorum, şeyi görmek hoşuma gidiyo mesela... Gittim bi yere diyelim, atıyorum Bağcılar'a gittim, Bakırköy'e gittim, ya da neyse Beyoğlu'ndayım hiç farketmez...Açıp onu etrafta birilerini olduğunu bilmek görmek falan mesela çok iyi geliyor. Hakeza öyle, atıyorum şehir dışına gitiğimde şey oluyor, hadi açiyim bakiyim kimler var, işte ne biliyim... Biriyle görüşürüm belki sohbet ederim bilmemne…"

> example is this… everybody there is queer. And also you know that there, no one is going to behave strangely or homophobic. No one should come over to you asking whether you are a lesbian, that is also harassment and homophobia."[85]

She highlights the comfort and why she prefers to frequent these applications and bars: the feeling of safety is the focus point for her, however she does ignore tensions and normativities that are contained in these mediums. After I logged in, I tried to use Chloe in various cities, or different parts of the city. Thus I have an idea of this feeling of "not being alone" which Nehir mentioned. There is in fact a virtual crowd that comes along with you wherever you go (as long as you are online).

3.4.1 Problematizing Solidarity Parties

For some of my interviewees, "solidarity" immediately reminded "solidarity parties" which have been held for different purposes. Lusin, immediately thought about solidarity parties held by Pride Week or feminist organizations when I asked her how she feels about solidarity. "I saw it in Barbara, I liked it at first. But afterwards I realized they throw soli parties every week. It's not soli, it's exploitation. Then I put some distance…"[86] She thinks these parties may exploit peoples feeling of solidarity since they are so often.

> "It is very stupid to keep that money there for a year. I think it is better to put a certain amount for solidarity; I mean this is solidarity for me. It is meaningless to keep money there. Maybe I had only 20 Liras and I gave 10 Liras to you, why do you keep 200 Liras in your safe?"[87]

[85] "Böyle birkaç ayağı var yalnız hissetmeme halini en çok gideren şey o, orda olması hissi ve onunla konuşuyor görüşüyor olmak falan. Çünkü şeyi bilmiyosun ya, bu arada tabii inkar etmiyorum, belki de etrafımda bi sürü var lubun, ama çok gizli atıyorum. Hani şey istiyosun...daha fazla o lubun çevresini istiyosun, onunla sosyalleşmeyi çünkü başka bi dünya var diğer tarafta gibi. Açık değilsin çoğuna diyelim ki ve açık olmadığın veya anlaşılmadığını bildiğin bir yerden veya öylesine homofobik olmamak için susan birilerinin olduğu bi yerden falan mutlu ve rahat hissettirmiyor. Ama onun yerine işte o sosyal çevre yani uygulamalar olsun mekanlar olsun, mesela Gaia'ya gitmemin en şey motivasyonu buydu yani… "burdaki herkes lubun…" ya bi kere şey motivasyonu da daha fazla, orda, biriyle yakınlaştığın zaman, şey rahatlığı da var, kimsenin gelip homofobik ya da saçmasapan bişey yapmayacağını biliyorsun yani. Gerçi o da homofobik de, gelip taciz etmeyecek...Adam sana gelip diyor ki lezbiyen misiniz siz?"

[86] "Barbara'da yapıyolardı. başta böyle hoşuma gitmişti. Sonra baktım ki her hafta düzenli olarak dayanışma partisi yapıyolar. Dayanışma diye artık sömürü partisi...Biraz ondan da soğudum filan böyle."

[87] "O bi sene boyunca paranın orda kalması bana çok saçma geliyo. Bence şey olmalı, belli bi miktar konulmalı ve onun üzerine dayanışma yapılmalı. Bence dayanışma budur yani. O paranın orda kalması anlamlı değil. Belki benim cebimde 20 lira vardı, 10 lirasını sana verdim. Senin kasanda neden 200 lira olsun?"

In a way, she highlights her distrust to certain organizations or groups, since anyone can organize solidarity parties for anything. Similar to Lusin, Merih also mentions how she does not approve the way people ask for solidarity:

> "As I said, that subject is different for everyone. "We are in need of a flat" party is not the same with trans people's transition process needs. But people making this kind of need equal to the needs of others, like, let's say a trans person needs hormone therapy but hasn't got enough money or someone has to have an operation… these are not same… people who need rent money can work. This equation is not just; because state doesn't help them to get that therapy or operation. There is an obligation there you know? It is more valuable to be in solidarity with those people than the ones who need a flat…"[88]

She makes clear distinctions between trans people's surgeries that may become obligatory because of state policies and people who are in need because they could not find jobs.

Similar to Lusin and Merih, Özgü highlights how the idea of solidarity has lesser political connotation in our times. On the one hand, she likes the feeling of togetherness and visibility that may enable the LGBTI+ community to grow; on the other hand she thinks the constant solidarity events may cause to caricature LGBTI+ community. Özgü criticizes the frequency of solidarity parties and ineffective characteristics of some LGBTI+ organizations:

> "In every three months we have such activities, but what happens after that? You have to wait another three months. This is not solidarity. I am being mild in criticizing, but this gives the opportunity to one group or person to realize themselves, not the others…It doesn't affect other people. If the Pride Week wasn't a great success perhaps I wouldn't have much of this social circle now. Activities [they organize] etc. may be included to the solidarity."[89]

She thinks these attempts may have small effects and the concept of "solidarity" can be expanded to Pride Week events since many people from different background gets

[88] "[..] dediğim gibi herkese göre değişiyo o konu… "biz de evsiz kaldık bize ev şeyapın" partisiyle, ameliyat olmak zorunda olan ya da hormon almak için parası olmayan bi transla dayanışmayı daha değerli görüyorum. Elleri kolları tutuyo çalışsınlar. Keza o trans da çalışıyo ona yetmiyo olabilir ama ordaki denklem ayrı bişey. Bi eve kira bulmakla o hormonlara ulaşıp o ameliyatı sağlamak... Devlet sana bunları vermiyo, orda bi zorunluluk var anladın mı? O yüzden o daha değerli."

[89] "3 ayda bir şöyle bi etkinliğimiz oluyo...o 3 aydan sonra noluyo? Bi 3 ay daha bekliyosun yani...Dayanışma o değil. Eleştirme konusunda ılımlı davranıyorum ama kendi kendini oluşturup başka birilerinin kendini oluşturmasına alan vermiyo yani... İnsanları etkilemiyo. Onur Haftası çok büyük bi başarı, olmasaydı şu anki sahip olduğum sosyal çevrenin büyük bi kısmını edinemezdim belki. Etkinlikler vs, dayanışmanın içine girebilir."

together in those events. She criticizes organizations to solidified themselves and not opening new space for anyone else. Çınar, while she struggled to explain what might be political regarding these socializations, partially highlighted her similar views while saying "it looks like we only know how to party."

> "From outside it looks as if we only have fun. We don't solely have fun. We don't mean ok always when we say 'I am ok'; we show people that we are ok, but we have fire inside, we are upset; and people say, she doesn't have any problem. We have a lot of problems actually and we have also problem while we utter them. There could be fights and people say silly things."[90]

As it can perceived here most of my interviewees tend to criticize multiple aspects of solidarity while acknowledging the need for it. Although it may have economic connotations, which may lead to exploitation of the term by certain LGBTI+ groups or organizations, they do not overlook the need to have solidarity through various mediums for purposes like transition surgeries, processes of coming out and finding one's position towards different LGBTI+ networks or groups.

3.4.2 Solidarity Through Proffesional Work

For some of my interviewees "solidarity was closely related to professional work." Nalan, as a lawyer who is involved in LGBTI+ cases such as custodies during marches and transition processes of trans individuals. She perceives solidarity as "some kind of a job." Since she defines herself as a part of LGBTI+ community, she highlights her tricky positionality regarding advocacy and secondary trauma she suffers from because it may become hard for her to detach herself from legal cases of trans and les-bi individuals. Once again, legal processes and court cases related to LGBTI+ individuals merges personal and political.

> "Solidarity is in our professional field, as much as the power we put into the movement; sometimes it is visible, sometimes nonvisible… it's like giving strength. No one has to know this; it doesn't have to be visible either. I go to police stations for example, to help people who were taken under custody during Pride Week Marches, to give their statements; or I take the cases of especially trans-men, who don't have enough money to have a lawyer. I submit a petition for them or talk to the judge if there is a problem. I take

[90] "Çünkü şey gibi görünüyo karşıdan, biz eğleniyoruz... bi tek eğlenmiyoruz. 'Naber abi?' 'iyi işte' falan diyosun ama içinde alevler yanıyo hüzünlüsün mutsuzsun. Ama kendini iyi gösteriyosun. İnsanlar da Çınar'ın problemi yok diyor. Aslında bi sürü problemimiz var ve bunları dile getirirken bile problemler yaşıyoruz. Kavga çıkıyo insanlar saçma şeyler söylüyo."

> business or divorce cases of lesbian and bisexual women. I am in solidarity with LGBT people more about business that reminds me my activities of solidarity."[91]

Her lawyer identity which is closely related to her bisexual identity and the ways she stays in solidarity with other people from LGBTI+ community. She explains she never gets paid out of these cases and it's a voluntary job and perceives this as an opportunity for activism:

> "Apart from this I am always in solidarity with women. I have some feminist women friends for 10 years or so, who are heterosexual or bisexual, and not in the movement. Even if they are not in the movement, those women are activists in another fields of life: they do readings on feminism, poetry and so on. And when I need to have such solidarity, I turn to them."[92]

Practices of solidarity, being with people like yourself is can be mutually related to friendships people establish. Here public ways of being in solidarity and private ways seem to be meshed in each other. Nalan is also a member of Lezbifem, and mentions it with thankfulness regarding their sex positive attitude. She highlights her discomfort in cis-feminist organizations related to their sometimes possessive and jealous attitudes.

> "In this aspect, Lezbifem is very powerful for me. I mean, I am more honest there, I can overcome my taboos, I can talk. I can talk anonymously; we write to pieces of papers for example. In this meaning Lezbifem is very important for me, because there is another kind of women's socialization there."[93]

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91 "Dayanışma, profesyonelleştiğimiz alanda harekete güç verebildiğimiz kadar, bazen görünmez bazen görünür... Bi yerde güç vermek gibi. Kimsenin bunu bilmesine gerek yok, görünür olmak zorunda değil...Onur yürüyüşlerinde gözaltına alınanların karakola gidip ifadelerine katılmak, işte bi de böyle avukat tutacak gücü olmayan, özellikle transların, trans erkeklerin davalarına bakıyorum ben mesela. İşte vekalet çıkarmadan dilekçelerini yazıyorum ya da sıkıntı olursa müdahale ediyorum hakimle görüşüyorum falan. Lezbiyen biseksüel kadınların iş ya da boşanma davalarına bakıyorum. LGBT'lerle daha iş konusunda dayanışıyorum, hep bana onu çağrıştırıyo."

92 "Onun dışında kadınlarla dayanı...zaten dayanışıyorum kadınlarla. Benim zaten heteroseksüel ya da biseksüel hareketin içinde olmayan bi takım kadın arkadaşlarım var. 10 yıllık falan arkadaşlarım, feminist kadınlar bunlar, hareketin içinde olmasalar da. Feminist okumalar yapan, şair, bilmemne. Hayatlarının başka alanlarında o aktivizmi canlandıran kadınlar var hayatımda. Ben zaten böyle bi dayanışmaya ihtiyaç duyduğumda, oraya başvuruyorum."

93 "Lezbifem bu anlamda çok güçlü benim için. Yani çok daha dürüstüm. Çok daha tırnak içinde, cinsel tabularımı aşıyorum, söyleyebiliyorum. Anonim olarak söyleyebiliyorum. Mesela kağıtlara yazılıyo falan...Lezbifem bu anlamda değerli benim için çünkü başka türlü bi kadın sosyalleşmesi oluyo."

I realized even if she comes to be a part of various women collectives, for Nalan, Lezbifem's position and the feeling of solidarity and community she has, even if she criticizes them from time to time, seems to be more distinctive.

Similar to Nalan's case, Özgü in our conversation, highlighted her wish to be in solidarity with LGBTI+ individuals through her profession as a psychologist:

> "I hope one day I have stronger tools (means) to be in solidarity with people, and literally I would be more helpful to support them. I want this, because I have chosen psychology in the first place to help those people. I was always interested in the subject... I felt lucky. There are bigger and unspoken things in the rest of Turkey; they cannot be spoken anyway now. When there are physical threats over people's heads, they can't be spoken. But while we go through those events, some still fall in love to his/her desk mate and suffer. Some gets beaten by his father for being 'fag'."[94]

Similar to my other interviewees accounts related to solidarity, Özgü perceives herself as a part of bigger invisible LGBTI+ group that she aims to stay in solidarity.

In conclusion, virtual and physical socialization mediums have different characteristics and have a diversity of effects on les-bi lives: negotiation of outness, expectations, and norms change depending on the context. Both virtual and physical mediums of socializations have their own norms which may lead to certain exclusions and inclusions. LGBTI+ frequented bars are also shaped around certain norms and regulations as well, such as exclusionary door policies towards gay or trans individuals, or bar fights that emerge from monogamous possessive relationships. While dating applications may open up presumably "safer" possibilities by creating more flexibility in terms of space and time, similar to bars, they contain certain level of norms such as beauty standards, constant suspicion of genuineness of one's profile, and exclusions of trans and intersex individuals. I should highlight that these norms and regulations that some people suffer from cannot be generalized to all les-bi individuals, since it is possible to observe a substantial diversity in the narratives of my interviewees. All of these norms are shaped by les-bi individuals who use these sites as well as their management. In the narratives of my interviewees, there were not major differences expressed in relation to physical and

[94] "Umarım bi gün böyle şeylere sebep olmak için daha büyük araçlarım olur ve bi şekilde daha insani olan, kelimenin tam anlamıyla destek, dayanışmanın olabilmesi için faydam olur. Bunu isterim çünkü en baştaki amacım da oydu. Psikolojiyi de böyle seçtim. En başından beri bunla ilgiliydim. Hep kendimi şanslı hissettim. Türkiye'nin geri kalanında, çok daha büyük ve dillendirilmemiş şeyler var. Şu anda zaten dillendirilemez. Herkesin üzerinde fiziki tehditler varken bu dillendirilemez. Ama olaylar olup biterken bi yerlerde birileri gene sıra arkadaşına aşık oluyo ve bunun acısını yaşıyo. Birileri babası tarafından 'ibne mi olucan' diye dayak yiyo…"

virtual mediums of socialization. Most of my interviewees do not tend to choose between these mediums, either they frequent them both at the same time or they drop one and continue with the other for a while. Virtual and physical mediums of socialization seem to get mingled in each other in the narratives of my interviewees. Thus, I would argue that they are better analysed in a continuum, and not as exclusive spaces.

As my fieldwork revealed, all of my interviewees had ideas or feelings related to concepts of community and solidarity, which were not generalizable: some of them had political connotations, some of them not. These concepts mentioned parallelly in some of the narratives, that is why I aimed to mention them together. Different ways of socializations helped les-bi individuals to form new networks and communities while moving to a new city, coming out or claiming their place in new social circles. However lesbian-bisexual women's communities should be evaluated without assumptions of homogeneity and romantic generalizations. Commonalities in sexual orientation or gender are not enough to create lesbian or bisexual communities. In some cases, LGBTI+ groups or networks were perceived by my interviewees as being similar to ethnic minority groups. Similar to minority communities, les-bi women's networks and communities might be considered in constant change, since there is nothing fixed about the ways they socialize or their political affiliations.

Being visible or being part of groups or communities are determined by various factors from "race" to class, from ethnicity to sexual orientation and gender performance. If people did not have the means to meet me during this research I would not be able to conduct this fieldwork. On a similar track, the reason I could not reach trans individuals during this fieldwork might be related to their wishes to be less "out" and less "visible." My fieldwork revealed how the idea of a unified, harmonious "community" would merely be applicable in theory, whereas in practice the concept of community would be challenged through differences related to class, ethnicity, gender identification and sexual orientation between lesbian and bisexual individuals.

CHAPTER IV: "BUTTERFLY EFFECT": IDENTITY POLITICS AND PERSONAL WAYS OF NEGOTIATING POLITICS

In Chapter 3, I discussed how lesbian and bisexual women established their self-identifications in their social networks, in the spectrum between coming out and closeting themselves in their daily encounters. This chapter focuses on the politics of self-identification and on what "politics" connotes for my research participants. In the course of my research, questions related to politics were generally tricky for people, since they all defined the framework of politics in their own way.

Indeed, while asking whether they considered the mediums they socialized as political, I had identity politics in mind (in this case les-bi politics or grand scale of LGBTI+ politics). Most of my interviewees actually talked about it before I directed the question to them. For others, the term politics seemed to connote a large (often national) scale of organized politics and they tended to exclude themselves firmly by highlighting its vastness and multilayeredness while still acknowledging their positionality and self-identification as "women who are attracted to women." Thus acknowledgement of predominantly heterosexual mediums may create a sense of "difference", being "minority," "oppressed," "weird," or "other."

For many of my interviewees, a major drawback regarding "politics" was related to the post 1980's mainstream discourse on politics in Turkey. As Özgü mentioned, in the 1970s and 80s, "being political(ly active)" [politik olmak] would already put the subject in a dissident position, most likely as a leftist "against state oppression." In the period following the July 2016 coup attempt, which is when I conducted this research, it was possible to observe similar processes of de-legitimization and criminalization of "being political," which might have shaped the hesitation of my interviewees.

With Çınar, whom I interviewed first, the question of politics led us to a nervous pause while she was trying to frame what politics might be in her own terms. Thus she uttered she is not "politically active as activist people would be." Similarly, after I talked to owners of Gaia, I realized that they were being cautious about positioning themselves as "political" although they stated that they actively participated in the Gezi movement and LGBTI+ Pride Marches, for instance. Yet in the club, while dancing and drinking, if you take a look at the huge projection screening on the wall, it is possible to see showreels from Pride Marches' through the years. Thus it is possible to argue that not only is there

a diversity of perspectives on what it means to "be political," but also that its meaning is not fixed and unchanging for any single person.

In some of the interviews, there were obvious discrepancies between the narratives on "politics" and the narratives on political practice. For instance, although Deniz, Çınar and Özlem highlighted their distance to "politics" and discussed its complexities, most of them prefer to highlight differences between themselves and their "straight" counterparts in order to advocate for identity politics and form their own communities with similarly self-identified women, and attend LGBTI+ marches. Some of my interviewees perceive activism and being political as a "profession" that they cannot be part of since they do not feel like having the "formation.

All of my interviewees either through personal encounters in daily life or through political organizations they are part of, expect a level of social change regarding lesbian-bisexual identity (for LGBTI+ individuals on a grand scale) and visibility as my interviews revealed. These social changes might be achieved through politics of visibility that may lead to "normalization" of same sex desire. "Politics" as I would like to highlight, may have two aspects here since I asked two questions as follows: first one would be if they are politic(ally) active; and the other one would be if they consider ways, mediums they socialize as political. I do not aim to assign any kind of "politics" on my interviewees, since some of them uttered they do not seem to have any connection with it. However some affiliations with political organizations, some actions they took, may be perceived as in the intersectionality of personal and political.

Throughout this chapter, I aimed to highlight diverse and contradictory perspectives on the concept of "politics,"' it's possible connections with my interviewees self-identification processes as "dissident" subjects and dissident's potential for political change or action. In what follows, I would like to interpret how my interviewees defined becoming political(lly active) through the concept of dissident citizenship because they tend to define their identity as "outside the norm," "minority," "other."

4.1 "Politics" Relationality with Dissident Subjects

In this part I aimed to highlight commonalities between the dissident subject positions and how these can be conceptualized through dissident or sexual citizenship" as most of my interviewees mentioned. Sexual citizenship has been conceptualized by Weeks (1991) while many scholars such as Binne and Bell (2000), Evans (1993) mentioned the same concept through dissident citizenship. While dissident citizenship

may be functional in relation to self-expressions of some of my interviewees, I aim to highlight the limitations of this concept as well with multiple sources. For some scholars it was perceived as a part of capitalist economies, aiming to equal consumption with heterosexual counterparts (Evans 1993), for some it was the alternative way to struggle the state power that ignores women and people of colour (Sparks 1997), minority sexual communities, for some there were many aspects of sexual citizenship that may challenge the heteronormalized inequality (Richardson 2000), and some of them argued against it while highlighting its connections with unified nation states (Yuval-Davis 1991).

Bell & Binnie (2000) and Imre (2009) claim that citizenship is a sexualized concept that needs elaboration while talking about LGBTI+ individuals positionality within current political conditions. “All nations have evolved gendered and sexualized, depend on specific constructions of normative gender and sexuality, and make use of gendered and sexualized allegories to perpetuate those constructions” (Imre 2009,158). It seems like an inescapable trap for every nation since they all create their own norms related to sexuality, or sexual orientation. Even if conditions and the ways that affected norms can be diversive in various parts of the world, heterosexuality seems to be normalized with different laws and regulations such as files against public sex and Operation Spanner in England in 1990’s, and new zoning laws in New York in 1995 by illuminating the differences between “dissident” and/or “same sex” subjects, their habitations and “heterosexual” ones (Bell 1995; Warner and Berlant 1998). In Turkey, around the same time, one would not encounter such radical regulations against same sex “dissident” desires. However state’s oppression was more visible on trans women “when going out public and participating in everyday, mundane activities” such as taking a cab, walking on the street and so forth, since they have been perceived as “involved in an illicit sexual transaction” (Zengin 2011,118).

At this point “what norm is” covers a relevant ground for this discussion in order to proceed how my interviewees positioned themselves as “for” or “against” it. Diane Richardson in “Constructing Sexual Citizenship: Theorizing Sexual Rights” (2000) discusses heterosexuality’s becoming the norm throughout the years and how it affected perceptions on same sex desire. “Fundamentally important are institutionalized (hetero)sexual norms and practices, whereby heterosexuality is established as ‘natural’ and ‘normal’; an ideal form of sexual relations and behaviour by which all forms of sexuality are judged. Exclusions from the boundaries of sexual citizenship as practice, therefore, may be on the grounds of ‘natural’ disqualification” (Richardson 2000, 111).

Because same sex desire has been perceived as unnatural and abnormal, it becomes easier to stigmatize or exclude people accordingly, with arguments like "nature" and "norm." That is why, as many scholars' highlighted (Bell&Binnie 2000; Duggan 2006) it becomes more and more relevant to talk about one's sexuality and orientation while predominantly heterosexual structures seem to be continuing systematically ignore the same sex desire in terms of legislating rights to get equal education, employment, or marriage equality. Since "same sex desire" has been medicalised, throughout centuries as a "curable disease," the political struggle of LGBTI+ individuals in many contexts have been closely related to "legitimizing their dissident identities" as part of the "norm." In order to claim for equal political or social ground against their counterparts, "homosexualized" ones should admit they are "different, dissident." Thus this process may function as a vicious cycle where les-bi or LGBTI+ individuals seem to accept certain binary categories and dissident positionality regarding their self-expressions.

"Citizenship" in Bell & Binnie's work may be described as claiming equality, and request of utilization of citizenship rights such as education, housing, employment, etc. "Every entitlement is freighted with a duty. In our reading of sexual politics, rights claims articulated through appeals to citizenship carry the burden of compromise in particular ways; this demands the circumscription of 'acceptable' modes of being a sexual citizen. This is, of course, an age-old compromise that sexual dissidents have long had to negotiate; the current problem is its cementing into rights-based political strategies, which forecloses or denies aspects of sexuality written off as 'unacceptable'" (Bell&Binnie 2000, 3). They argue that every individual, citizen is sexualized through certain processes, in conjunction with the "norm." "Unacceptable" as they offer, is closely related to "queer" and its focus on questioning, "unnaturalizing" norms. "As the growing literature on the relationship between sexuality and the nation shows, despite the imperatives of globalization and transnationalism, citizenship continues to be anchored in the nation, and the nation remains heterosexualized" (Bell&Binnie 2000, 25). Here they highlight even if nation state's homogeneity may have changed, acceptable form of it would be nevertheless heterosexual. "Crucially, there is a naturalized, heteronormative modality of sexual citizenship implicit in mainstream political and legal formulations; and set against this, there are myriad forms of what we might label dissident sexual citizenship" (Bell & Binnie 2000,33). The way my interviewees also perceive or define themselves as "different, minority and oppressed" might be related to this perception of dissident.

Through this processes, fertile ground for alternative versions of citizenships may be opened up. Bell and Binnie claim, the norm itself should be questioned and its naturalness should be discussed, through this concept of "dissident." Because most of my lesbian or bisexual interviewees highlighted their positionality related to norm as "dissident" or "different" I also claim, the concept of dissident citizenship and claiming this dissident position may open up alternative paths while individuals seek for equality, or "a level of normality" or freer future as some of my interviewees mentioned. "Queer politics also threw critical light on the lesbian and gay community and its mode of political activism, arguing that it had settled into an assimilationist agenda, with entryism into mainstream (mainly local) politics and an acceptance of the 'good gay citizen' model" (Bell&Binnie,2000,37). Similar to US based political agendas as they mention, in Turkey, LGBTI+ movement might have similar agendas in terms of legislating hate crime laws or marriage equality. Many of my interviewees who identified themselves as "queer" answered the question of politics from that path. Thus, bending, stretching and acknowledging the norms and positioning oneself accordingly, was relevant in our talks related to politics.

Seemingly remote distinctions between public and private may be also relevant for the discussion of dissident citizenship, since issues related to sexuality might be perceived as "private." As I also highlighted in the previous chapters when it comes to identity politics and the way it situates subjects, distinction between personal and political might be not that clear. Claiming a political ground for one's equality may be closely related to highlight one's dissident sexuality (which also means "private"). Lisa Duggan in "Queering the State" (2006) mentions how anti-LGBTI+ campaigns were perceived as giving special rights to LGBTI+ community instead of equal citizenship (No Promo Homo and No Special Rights campaigns in 1990s). "The argument being made is "you can do what you want" (the concession to privacy) and "you can be who you are" (the concession to identity), but "you can't spread it around on my dime" (Duggan 2006,179). The distinction between private and public becomes blurry when it comes to identity politics related to LGBTI+ politics since claiming one's political ground is closely related to being more visible and out.

The seemingly natural and clear cut distinctions between public and private may end up ignorance on LGBTI+ individuals since their rights have been perceived as "private individual rights" rather than human rights (Richardson, 2000,120). "Thus, for example, the right to recognition of lesbian and gay lifestyles and identities as a legitimate

and equal part of social and cultural life is commonly understood as seeking 'a better deal' for particular sexual minority groups, rather than an extension of the right of freedom to choose one's sexual partner to all human beings" (Richardson,2000,120). Similar to Richardson and Duggan here, Bell & Binnie also mentioned LGBTI+ rights are perceived to be "purely symbolic" and the struggle itself perceived to be "merely cultural" (2000,70-71).

Private-public tension determines and sometimes restricts LGBTI+ movements. On this track, Richardson highlights how the exclusion and ignorance on gay and lesbian practices extends to public identities and lifestyles and it does not restrict itself with only private. "Indeed if claims to rights are negotiated through public fora, then the negotiation of citizenship rights will be seriously restricted if one is disallowed from those fora, either formally or informally, through fear of stigmatization or recrimination if one identifies publicly as a lesbian or gay man. The ability to be 'out' and publicly visible is therefore crucial to the ability to claim rights" (Richardson 2000, 120). While their heterosexual counterparts do not necessarily have to become visible and "out" in order to claim their social or political space, LGBTI+ individuals are expected to come out and become visible about their "dissident" sexualities. Still, claims for equality may be perceived as a part of private realm. One might ask in that case: if it is private, why anyone except the individuals themselves, have the right to talk about it? Why one has to make oneself public in order to claim for equal rights and treatment? This neither/nor situation seem to put LGBTI+ individuals in contradictory positions where "being out" and "visible" becomes one of the precondition to claim one's social or political space. Not everyone has similar means or aims to come out and to become publicly visible as many of my interviewees mentioned in the Chapter 2. Jeffrey Weeks argues, (1998,36) "The sexual citizen, therefore, is a hybrid being, breaching the public private divide which Western culture has long held to be essential." This seemingly solid and conventional divide between public and private might be challenged through sexual or dissident subjects such as LGBTI+individuals when sexuality that perceived to be "private" becomes publicly debated with its importance related to identity politics. Those boundaries seem to be blurred from time to time depending on the context.

On a similar track with Bell & Binnie, Sparks (1997), perceives dissident practices and citizenships as new and alternative ways of struggle especially in relation to women of color movements that contain both gender and racial aspects of struggle. She claims "Instead of voting, lobbying, or petitioning, dissident citizens constitute alternative public

spaces through practices such as marches, protests, and picket lines; sit-ins, slow-downs, and clean-ups; speeches, strikes, and street theatre. Dissident citizenship, in other words, encompasses the often creative oppositional practices of citizens who, either by choice or (much more commonly) by forced exclusion from the institutionalized means of opposition, contest current arrangements of power from the margins of the polity" (Sparks,1997,75). She conceptualizes dissident practices and citizenship as having the potential to create new ways of resistance for women of color since they seem to lack institutional ways of claiming their space for equality.

On the other hand, Yuval Davis in "The Citizenship Debate: Women, Ethnic Processes and the State" (1991) criticizes the notion of citizenship by highlighting its close relationship with Western, liberal ideologies that may gloss over gender, and class differences and people of colour aspects of citizenship. She aims to draw attention to the reality of inequality in the concept of citizenship, in Westerns contexts. Yuval Davis argues that discussions on various aspects of citizenships highlighting "the category of women, as well as that of ethnic and racial minorities," may challenge "common notions about citizenship which have been constructed around the individual rights of men within a class-differentiated society" (Yuval-Davis 1991,64).While discussions on citizenship may indeed contribute to make predominantly white and male perceptions on citizenship while adding on visibility of different ethnicities, or minority groups and how they have been treated in dominant discourses. LGBTI+ groups in my case, might be distinctive. As I aimed to highlight in Chapter 3, collective groups cannot be assumed as unified, and put into the same general category of sexual dissidents or minorities. There are differences between and within each category, within each section of L, G, B, T, I, and plus. Thus, being able to talk about these particularities may draw attention to groups or individuals who have been overlooked, and assumed to have equal treatment. Yuval Davis' theory of dissident citizenship also suggests not to take "state as a unitary given," but should retain the notion of the state as the focus of the intentionality of control;" not to "assume 'society' or 'the community' as a given, but should see struggles over the construction of their boundaries as one of the major foci of struggles on the nature of citizenship within a specific society;" and "not to assume a Eurocentric perspective for developing the framework of its assertions" (Yuval-Davis 1991,66).

Claims of equal citizenship that emerges from the so called dissident position of LGBTI+ individuals become both the impetus and the blockage of the movement: one has to accept the discourse of "dissidency" in order to claim equality and visible ground

for identity politics. As I also stated in Chapter 3 in relation to Stein's work (1997), even if one adopts more flexible perceptions regarding self-identification, in order to claim equality on various mediums, or aiming to open up a political ground, one has to claim an identity which has boundaries and descriptions. After discussing dissident and sexual citizenships from multiple aspects, I should delve into potential of change that dissidency might not have.

In this regard AnaLouise Keating's *Transformation Now!* (2013) offers a critical point of view, in relation to readymade generalization on dissident, ethnic, minority identities or politics. Since these two binaries of dissident and non-dissident obligates people to choose between these categories, both of them cannot fully represent stances of complex individuals as she argues. Here by acknowledging and by not aiming to transform these binaries one would not able to escape from the existing system and potential of transformation might fade away. She claims one would not be able to even imagine anything outside these dichotomies. Most importantly, she highlights "[...]we internalize our oppositional approach to thoroughly that we use it against each other" (Keating 2013,7). At the end every group needs clear distinctions between themselves and the "others" in order to keep their positionality and legitimacy. "In short these oppositional energies limit our vision for change restrict our options and inhibit our ability to create transformational alliances" (Keating 2013,7). In order to find more inclusive ways of doing politics Keating proposes "threshold theories" (2013,11) which originates from differences and particularities like Iris Marion Young and Nancy Fraser argued through concepts of subaltern counterpublics and politics of difference.

Iris Marion Young in *Politics of Difference* (1990) delves into ways of doing politics in heterogeneous groups and publics. She highlights that in order this inclusion to be achieved, differences rather than similarities and commonalities should be take into consideration. "To promote a politics of inclusion, then, participatory democrats must promote the ideal of a heterogeneous public, in which persons stand forth with their differences acknowledged and respected, though perhaps not completely understood by others" (Young 1990,119). I think it is important to acknowledge the differences which are already there rather than sweeping them under the rug with general presumptions.

On a similar track Nancy Fraser proposes "subaltern counterpublics" where "subordinated social groups-women, workers, peoples of colour, and gays and lesbians-" may create alternative spaces and mediums for themselves" (Fraser 1990,67). The point is that, in stratified societies, subaltern counterpublics have a dual character. On the one

hand, they function as spaces of withdrawal and regrouping; on the other hand, they also function as bases and training grounds for agitating activities directed toward wider publics"(Fraser 1990,68). As Fraser suggests places and mediums where LGBTI+ individuals socialize seem to be perceived as subaltern counterpublics where minorty or subaltern groups can inhabit safely. These sub groups, categories might be restrictive from some aspects and may be blocking the possibilities of two counterparts to face and have a possible communication with each other. Thus this condition would lead to isolation of counterparts. This process may not lead to a possible social change but rather helps enlargement of safe and isolated spaces for every group.

Eventhough claiming a space both in political terms, may contain contradictory aspects, such as being monitored (Foucault 1977), being open to dangers, since this would require a level of visibility, it may open up new possibilities for identity politics. Most of my interviewees whether they were active politically or not, described their identity through the framework of "dissidency" by mentioning their community and themselves as "other," "minority," and "oppressed."

4.2 Positionalities According to "Politics": "Our Day Will Come"

"Politics" is a loaded term with various connotations. While conducting my fieldwork I asked couple of questions regarding "politics:" one was if my interviewees perceived themselves as political(ly active), the other one was if they perceive les-bi socializations as "political." Here I would like to highlight how my interviewees personally position themselves according to "politics" (whether grand or smaller scales). The answers I received were various and contradictory in themselves. I aimed to classify them with their themes.

4.2.1 Politics As Dissident Subject Positions

As many of my interviewees mentioned their positionality towards politics with their self-expression of sexual dissidents, it seemed relevant to mention this aspect of politics.

Lusin perceives herself as a politically person, and she attends Pride Week's organization from time to time. Because of her identity as an "Armenian women who is attracted to other women," she defines "being political" is inherently part of her "dissident identity" both in terms of ethnicity and sexual orientation.

L: I wouldn't be very keen, but I think I am political.

R: Why?
L: There would be certain lines, I mean you have an opinion and there are lots of opposite opinions. And you react to those opposite opinions and you get organized, you became an activist… I don't know whether I would be more comfortable if I wasn't like that. I was born that way; some identities are assigned to me, like being a woman, an Armenian, a lesbian and others… I feel I should fight for all those assigned identities of mine. For example I feel responsible to fight for street animals and for refugees as well. I think that is why I am a political person."[95]

The way Lusin defines her own positionality towards politics is closely related to her assigned identities as "Armenian women who is attracted to other women." She highlights the natural born qualities that she cannot deny and mentions why she wants to become a veterinary, related to this feeling of responsibility to other "living creatures." Different from my other interviewees, she defines this feeling of responsibility with the feeling of solidarity with creatures unlike herself as well through generalizing all of these categories as "being the other." Like some other interviewees, she has this feeling of responsibility for a mass of people whom she have never met, but feels like part of their community. She highlights it became trickier than before to define herself with already existing categories:

"Concepts got mixed; I thought 'who am I?' Problem was....with people like us, aren't the problems always with concepts? Why we have to label ourselves then? Perhaps a need… For heterosexuals, we see ourselves as 'the others', right? And of course we are. Well then don't we see the category of "plus," as others? Aren't we marginalize (otherize) them too? I always say this: today's other is also today's marginalizing one. We are others, we know what it means, but still we do it."[96]

[95] L: Politik olduğumu düşünüyorum ama olmak istemezdim.
R:Niye?
L: Sonra böyle oluyo, net çizgiler oluyo filan. Yani şey, karşı düşünce vardır, bi de senin düşüncen vardır ya...Bir sürü karşı düşünce ve sen varsındır ya, hani o karşı düşünceye karşı bazı etkinlikler yaparsın örgütlenirsin aktivizm yaparsın ya….Olmasaydım daha mı rahat olurdum bilmiyorum. Ben bu şekilde doğdum. Bana bazı kimlikler atfedildi mesela, kadın olmam, Ermeni olmam, kadınlardan hoşlanan bi kadın olduğumu düşünürsek lezbiyen olmam gibi...Bana bazı kimlikler atfedildi. Ve ben bunlar için ve bana atfedilmeyen bi sürüleri için mücadele etmek zorunda hissediyorum kendimi. Mesela hayvanlar için mülteciler için, hepsi için kendimi sorumlu hissediyorum. Bunu yapmaya çalışıyorum o yüzden politik biriyim heralde."

[96] "[...]kavramlar karıştı karıştı ben neyim oldum. Bende sıkıntı, bizim gibi insanların sıkıntılı olduğu şey kavramlar değil mi? Niye kendimizi bi şey olarak adlandırmak zorundayız ki o zaman? İhtiyaç belki? Heterolara göre kendimizi öteki olarak görüyoruz ya...öyleyiz de nitekim. O zaman biz o artı dediğimiz insanları ötekileştirmiyo muyuz? Ben her zaman şunu söyledim: bugünün ötekisi bugünün ötekileştirenidir de. Ötekiyiz ne olduğunu biliyoruz, ama yapıyoruz da."

She highlights the limits of outness and how she feels these categories as "inadequate." Through the concept "being the other" she illuminates layers of inclusions and exclusions, i.e. a relevant point related to practices of community making and how it means to exclude other people while trying to define your own boundaries to protect. The othering process which LGBTI+ communities suffer from might be utilized by the same minority community on other groups such as "plus" community. Here, she problematized her dissatisfaction with categories' boundaries regarding gender performance and sexual orientations. "Plus" which was added 2 years ago to LGBTI+ political agenda, in order to be more inclusive towards every kind of romantic, constantly changing orientation and desire. However LGBTI+ movement have been and should be criticized for being ignorant about it for years, and not doing anything particular or opening up new debates about "plus." At some point, because things got related to contemporary political issues, I also asked if the current political tensions affected her or the way she socialized:

> "It doesn't affect me. I think, when I go out I may be killed anytime; a bomb might go off near me or someone may rake us in the street. But this thought never inhibits me from going out. Because I know there is no place to be safe. There is no place to hide with this uneasiness. I carry on my life, wherever I am. This doesn't affect my daily life, but some people get affected I think. But we always live through things like that. Before those bombings, police came to the places where we frequent, just to threaten us. It wasn't different for me. Things to be done to harass others… One is aiming this group, other is aiming other ones. I think I became insensitive. It is related to political agenda; most disturbing thing for me is being used to certain things. I am more disturbed when I get used to it, than a bomb explosion. Why should I get used to it? Doesn't matter how many is dead; one or ten… That day it was in Reina, today somewhere else. We are talking about actual things. It is not important commemorating anymore. I don't feel anything. It is only a date. For example we commemorate Madımak. There are lots of them. Lots of them are happening now, or happened yesterday…"[97]

[97] "Benimkini etkilemiyo. Çıkarsam her an ölebilirim diyorum, kabul ediyorum. Yanımda bomba patlayabilir, biri silahla bizi tarayabilir. Ama bu benim çıkmamama sebep olmuyo. Çünkü güvenli olabileceğim hiçbir yer yok biliyorum. Bunun verdiği tedirginlikle kaçabileceğim bi yer yok. Olduğum yerde devam ediyorum. Günlük hayatımı çok etkilemiyo, ama insanları etkilediğini düşünüyorum. Ama biz bunu her zaman yaşıyoruz. bombalardan önce de gittiğimiz mekanlarda sürekli bi sırf gözdağı vermek için polislerin gelmesi falan...Bunlar aslında bana çok da farklı gelmiyo. Hepsi rahatsızlık vermek için yapılmış şeyler. Biri şu öteki bu kişilere...Vurdumduymaz oldum galiba biraz. Politik gündemle ilgili beni en rahatsız eden şey buna alıştığımı düşünmek. Bi bombanın patlamasından çok buna alışmak ben rahatsız ediyo. Niye alışıyorum ki? Bi insan ya da 10 insan. Niye? O gün Reina bugün başka bi şey. Güncel şeyleri konuşuyoruz bi şey anmak diye bi şey kalmadı. Benim üzerimde böyle bi etkisi var. Önemli olmuyo. Bu bi tarih aslında. Madımak mesela anıyoruz. Hangi birini? Niceleri oluyo, şu an oluyo, demin oldu, ondan önceki gün oldu…"

She claims all of these tensions were already there for LGBTI+ community while remembering the police attack in one of the closing events of İstanbul LGBTI+ Pride Week. Additionally she perceives and evaluates certain human rights issues, violent attacks on minorities, hate crimes, from a similar perception of being part of "other" "minority" communities while highlighting people's ignorance on these issues. Lusin and Nehir, after I asked if the ways they socialize can be perceived as political, answered "yes" without hesitation by giving examples of dissident positionality of les-bi individuals. Lusin perceives les-bi socializations as political because of othering one might encounter during coming out processes:

> "There is something here we call 'the other'. The other is lonely in a way. I don't feel marginal only when I am with people like me. That's why the place you socialize is political, if it maintains a union for you and the others; there, you are not alone. In general you are marginal in the world but if that place gives you a chance not to feel marginal, for me that place is political."[98]

Being people like yourself holds an important ground in order not to feel solitary or "other" from Lusin's point of view. Unlike her previous accounts related to be in solidarity with ever creature possible, this time she perceived places and applications as places of unity and commonality because of being other. Similar to Lusin, Nehir also defines les-bi socializations as political:

> N: "… now for example, this might be a very simple and silly thing, but a woman who has a very short hair, is for me very political. For instance even if she wouldn't identify herself as a feminist or a lesbian she is valuable for me. I say this from a point where I acknowledge that stereotype. You create some things even if you don't want to. That point, where you break some barriers is important; the point I position myself, going to a certain bar late at night, using that app, talking people somehow, all the socializing areas, walking with my girlfriend, my dressing, me using gay slang, are very important. Today many heterosexuals learned gay slang... I mean our existence is political; it doesn't important whether you are out or not. Well, naturally it is important but it is not a big parameter.
>
> R: Identifying out of the box? You mean anything?

[98] "Sonuçta, ortada öteki diyebileceğimiz bişey varken, öteki dediğin şey bi yerde yalnızdır. Öteki hissetmediğim noktalar, benim gibi olduğum insanların yanında hissetmiyorum. Bu yüzden o sosyallşme, mekan olsun ne olursa olsun, senin gibi olan insanlarla birlik olmanı sağlıyosa, politiktir bence. Yalnız değilsindir. Ötekisin aslında, genel dünyada. Orda öteki değilsen, bunu sağlıyosa, politiktir bence."

> N: Exactly. Actually if we look through identity politics, like being alternative- other where we talk about queer wording and queer philosophy, these are ok; it's enough to be out of that standard box. You used to break that norm by doing something like smoking on the street as a woman. I know it is not enough now, but it was a very political act for me back in the days; this is my view, may be right, may be wrong, I don't know."[99]

She thinks people are more aware on LGBTI+ issues than ever, by giving examples of gay slang's becoming more widespread. However this could be interpreted as mainstreaming of LGBTI+ politics giving the current circumstances, where it becomes more and more troubling to make one visible politically. She defines "our existence" and visibility as people outside or on the boundaries of certain norms, as political in itself. These progresses in her opinion might be related to visibility of les-bi or on a grand scale LGBTI+ individuals who aims to bend the "norm." However, these small acts of resistance or disobedience may not be enough for political change on a more practical level as Keating also discussed. Although it is important to acknowledge the potential here, one should be careful while defining dissident acts as political altogether.

Nalan was a part of leftist organization before she was exposed and kicked out because of her sexual orientation and her intimate/sexual relationships with women. She defines herself as a human rights advocate and member of Lezbifem, eventhough criticizes them from time to time. As her narrative reveals, she thinks the way les-bi individuals exist as a part of dissident communities, can be perceived as political in a parallel way with Kurdish community or women's movement as part of their nature. I

[99] N:"[...]şimdi mesela benim için, şey çok net.atıyorum, çok basic saçmasapan bişey de olabilir. Kafasında gerçekten, kısa saç kullanan kadın benim için çok politik. Mesela atıyorum, feministim demeyebilir feminizmle alakası olmayabilir, lezbiyenim demeyebilir. O stereotipi de tanıyan bi yerden söylüyorum bunu tabii, ama benim için yine de kıymetli. İstesen de istemesen de sen var etmiş oluyorsun bi şeyleri. Bişeyleri kırdığın o nokta önemli ve işte ister istemez bütün duruşum, gecenin bi yarısı o bara gitmem de, o uygulamayı kullanmam, bi şekilde o insanlara anlatmış olmam, bütün sosyalleşme alanları da, kız arkadaşımla yürümem de, nasıl giyindiğim de lubunca konuşuyo olmam da...Bugün artık heteroların bi çoğu da lubun kelimeleri biliyosa öğrendiyse falan...Bence öyle yani varoluşumuz politik zaten bence. Ne kadar açık gösterip göstermediğin de şey değil, tabii ki o da önemli ama büyük bi parametre değil yani.

A: Normun dışında bi yerden tanımlamak? Yani herhangi bir şey?

N: kesinlikle, aslında biraz da bunlar şey kimlik siyaseti üzerinden bakacak olursak, hani o alternatif -öteki olmak falan, tam da kuir dünyadan, kuir felsefeden bahsettiğimiz yerde yeter ki o standardın dışında ol, okey yani zaten. O normu yıktığın tek bi şey yapıyo olmak, sokakta sigara içen kadın olmak bişeydi. Bugün artık değil belki ama o bi şeydi. Onu yaptığın sürece benim için okey, dünyanın en politik şeyi orda oluyor yani. O bi eylem yani falan. Her zaman böyle baktım, bilmiyorum ne kadar doğru yanlış da."

should highlight that both Nehir and Nalan are members of Lezbifem. Even if they realize they may not act politically correct all the time in terms of frequenting these bars or apps I mentioned, (in relation to norms, violence one may encounter) they both think these mediums of socializations may provide individuals communities or networks of solidarity, by keeping them connected in certain spheres. We also talked about the current political situation and this affected the way she socializes:

> "Even if you hear fireworks, you act like it was a bomb these days. Public scene is less crowded, generally everyone knows each other. I feel like...everybody's really tense because the state of emergency. For example you would need either a doctor or a lawyer in those emergency cases…"[100]

She highlights the tension everyone feels and the increased need for advocacy because of the state of emergency. Similar to Esra, Nalan finds frequenting LGBTI+ friendly bars as a bisexual woman as political eventhough she cannot put her finger on it. She mentions some cases where flirting intertwined with her advocacy profession. At that point, in her narrative, I remember thinking how complex the relationship between personal and political might get, even one tries to draw a line. After a while Nalan mentions LGBTI+ friendly bars as "our ghettos" in this context, claiming them as political spaces. She states that: "We [LGBTI+ individuals] are all politically active subjects, like being Kurdish, being queer is also political. If you hang out in that ghetto, you are political."[101] Here, "ethnicity" or being part of "dissident minority group," is equated as being part of a lesbian-bisexual group. In this conversation I asked her if we should ignore people's agency, regarding their self-identifications. She responded:

> "I think political arena has its definition for them independent from their own self-identification or agency. Even if they do not define themselves as political, they have a place in the political arena. Let say two women kissing each other in Gaia, even if they are prepared to say "yes" for the referendum, there is a political base for their existence. And they are very politically active while they're kissing, their existence is political…"[102]

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100 "Çatapat patlasa bomba patlamış gibi hissetme durumları oluyo. Daha az kalabalık, biz 40 kişiyiz birbirimizi biliriz durumu oluyo. Mesela ben orda şeyi hissediyorum... OHAL'le ilgili çok tedirgin herkes. Mesela bi şey oldu mu direkt doktora ve avukata ihtiyaç duyuluyo ya…"

101 "Politiğiz ya zaten, Kürtlük gibi ibne olmak da genel olarak politik. O gettoda takılıyosan politiksin."

102 "Bence onların tanımayıp tanımlamamasından bağımsız, siyasi arenanın bi tanımı var. Onlar kendilerini öyle tanımlamasalar da siyasi arenada bi yer ediniyolar. Atıyorum Gaia'da iki kadın öpüşürken, ikisi de evet verecek bile olsa, referandumda, onların varlıklarının politik bi zemini var. Ve mesela öpüşürken çok politikler, varoluşları zaten politik…"

She thinks the way les-bi individuals exist in heteronormative structure should be perceived as political in a parallel way with Kurdish community and/or "other dissident groups." I think this intersectionality covers a relevant ground for establishing political alliances in practice between for example Kurdish, women's movements and LGBTI+ movement.

Merih, towards the end of our conversation, after mentioning how she thinks negatively on grand scale of politics, highlighted "Two gays would become "political" even if they have beers out in public."[103] The way she described being "political" might be considered with dissident positionality and visibility of LGBTI+ individuals.

4.2.2 Politics As "Being Organized Around Love"

Similar to Lusin, Nehir perceives herself to be political(ly active) since she is an active member of Lezbifem and gives me a flirtatious smile after I asked this question, asking: "I guess so, what do you think?" She talks about the way she does activism at work: how she opens up debates on misogyny and scepticism, or how her colleagues are more careful about swearing when she is around. Nehir concludes our conversation by highlighting, "life and human beings are not plain and sharp, we are complex things and it is hard. If you ask me getting together, organizing people around love is the best and the easiest thing in the world. But it doesn't happen that way in life,[104]" while considering layers and layers of contradictions we mentioned and the inevitable gap between "personal and political." The ways individuals create their networks, their communities are various and more complex than the optimistic utopia of "uniting people around love." After this, I asked her how the current political situation affects her and she answered:

> "I find myself as open to attacks because of this rage piling up. It doesn't pile up on m y identity directly but you can be the target of it because you're out. And they wouldn't abstain from showing that anger; it may be posed at any kind of other. You may become the stress ball in those conditions and it makes me tense. I never abstained from walking alone on the street, whenever and wherever, even if I was drunk, I wouldn't be tense about it. But especially in the last year...I sometimes feel tension while I'm going back home from work

[103] "İki gey dışarda bira içerken bile politik."

[104] "Hayat ve insan net bi şey değil, çok zoruz, komplikeyiz. Bana kalsa sevgiyi örgütlemek dünyanın en güzel en kolay şeyi ama öyle olmuyor."

around 7pm. “Is someone around me, what’s happening?” The environment makes me feel tense.”[105]

She realized she could not ignore the tension she felt for the last year especially. The anger and tension the society have might turn to les-bi individuals like herself since they are part of minority groups. These tensions related to current political situation, might passivate les-bi individuals by not encouraging them into taking political actions.

4.2.3 Politics As Daily Encounters

Esra, who is a part of LGBTI+ football initiative, does not perceive herself as political(ly active). She explains she has difficulties while entering new circles, thus she does not attend political organizations. “I don’t feel like I belong anywhere. Maybe HDP but I don’t… I tend to go to marches without telling my parents. I would go out and march for LGBT organizations in any case…”[106] As her narrative reveals, LGBTI+ groups are in a different position for her, she would stand up for them in any case. Esra also mentioned how she stood up for her friend when she was harassed by some guy in the bar. Eventhough she thinks les-bi socializations as political, she did not know how to describe it. However, she does not stop from tackling issues like normative ways of building relationship and gender binary discourse that discriminates bisexual identities in dating apps:

> “I saw a profile for example; she wrote that she doesn’t want to be with a girl who had many women in her life before. I said ‘Why did you write that? There are heterosexuals thinking like you, behaving women like you, I mean they want virgin woman, right? They say you are sick, why did you say that?’ She said, she didn’t want her to meet so many people. And she changed her profile. I said, there are biphobic people, afraid of their partners would leave them for a man. There are a lot of biphobics as I said earlier...‘Are you bisex?’ she said, and I said ‘does it make any difference?’ As a lesbian I may go for another woman. It is difficult to name these things, why are you asking?”[107]

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[105] “Kendimi saldırıya daha açık buluyorum çünkü biriken bi öfke var. Bu öfke direkt benim kimliğime birikiyor değil, ama o biriken öfkenin hedeflerinden birisin ve açıksın yani. Ve şey yani sakınmaz, atıyorum öteki, hangi öteki olursan ol, onun anlaşıldığı yerde o öfkenin şeyisin sen, stres topu sensin. Bu beni geriyor mesela. Hiçbir zaman sokakta geceymiş şuymuş buymuş sarhoşmuşum demeden yürürdüm asla gerilmezdim ama son özellikle 1 yılda..Akşam 7’de işten dönerken filan gerildiğimi biliyorum yani. “Aman biri mi var, bi şey mi olur?” falan diye çok yükseldiğim zamanlar oldu. Çok geriyo beni ortam.”

[106] “[Ait] hissedebileceğim anlamda bi yer göremiyorum belki HDP olabilir ama şey yapmıyorum. Eylemlere aileme söylemeden gitmeye çalışıyorum. Eylem olsa giderim yine LGBT örgütler için de...”

[107] “Mesela bi profil görmüştüm. ‘Daha önce hayatına bi sürü kadın girmiş bi kızla birlikte olmak istemem’ tarzı bişey yazmış. ‘Neden bunu yazdın?’ dedim. ‘İnsanlar, senin gibi düşünen heterolar da vardır kadınlara böyle davranıyolardır bakire falan [olsun diyerek]. Onlar senin için hasta diyolar neden böyle bişey dedin?’ dedim. O da,

Esra, like some of my other interviewees, triggers little changes in daily life, which can be perceived as wish for more relaxed ways of self-identification by questioning binary categories. We also talked about the current political situation and how the way she socializes got affected by it. While answering if she still comes to Taksim area to socialize, she said:

> "I'm not generally afraid, when I go to Taksim but I go out by myself very rarely. My friends are afraid. We use side streets instead of the main one… and places don't really matter to me. I had many dates, but I didn't come to Taksim that much."[108]

She highlights the effect of her social life on where and how she socializes. Esra, does not perceive herself as politically active, rather she likes to "save the world" while drinking[109]. She thinks socializations through different mediums might be political but it is hard to put her finger on it: "Of course it is political. They think of something and they go to those places. They have come to terms with certain things...they share things, talk about their lives or meet up. I find it political...when two women meet for a date…[110]" In Esra's account, personal disclosures, sharing one's stories might be closely related to being politic(ally active). She mentioned a flow of messages in our conversation, right before referendum happened in Turkey (on 16th of April). A profile decorated oneself with "evet," "accused" her for being an "Alevi, Kurdish, traitor" just because she asked "why would she vote for yes." As Esra's narrative revealed, grand scale of politics of any kind, can be a hot topic to start or end a chat in virtual mediums.

Though Özlem is not part of any political organization, she highlights Pride Week's and Marches' importance for her, with feeling of "being part of majority" as I mentioned in Chapter 3. Eventhough she attended some of the marches over couple of years (Hande Kader March in 2016, Pride Marches before the ban on 2015) she does not

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'çok insanla görüşmesini istemem' dedi.. Sonra değiştirdi. Bifobik tipler var dedim ya, 'bi adama gidicek' falan...sen biseks misin dedi ne farkeder dedim. Lezbiyen olup başka kadına da giderim. Zaten isim koymak zor ne soruyosun."

[108] "Ben çok korkuyla gelmiyorum ama tek başıma nadir dışarı çıkarım, arkadaşlarım korkuyo. Gelince bile arkalardan dolaşılıyo...Mekan da benim için önemli değil açıkçası. Date'lerim de çok oldu ama Taksim'e çok gelmedim mesela."

[109] "rakı masasında ülkeyi kurtarmak"

[110] "Tabii ki de var, bi kere bişeyi düşündükleri için oraya giriyolar. Ne biliyim bişeyi kabullenmiş...Paylaşım yapıyolar, hayatlarını anlatıyolar buluşuyolar. Bana çok iki kadının bi date için buluşuyo, politik bi şey…"

perceive herself politically active. This year's Pride Week we came across to each other many times during events and talked about current ban on Pride March. Özlem may prefer to be more closeted at work as I mentioned in Chapter 3, talked about how she struggled to convince her girlfriend to hold hands in public in Taksim.

> "I fight a lot to convince my lover. She was a feminist and politically she didn't want to be open about her relationship with me, so she didn't want to be hand in hand outside. We went to Hande Kader march[111], I said to her, 'You join these kind open activities and do so many other things, but you can't hold my hand?' Then she got used to it too…"[112]

Eventhough Özlem was not that "out" about her own sexuality, she aspired to be more visible with her girlfriend which may be closely connected to politics of visibility. After this she mentioned one of her future utopias: "I'd like to kiss my girlfriend on the Taksim Square for example. It happened only once, I was drunk and got courageous"[113]. As I stated earlier, even if some of my interviewees are not politically active "in a sense that activists would be" as some of them revealed in their narratives, they still aim for a "better", "freer" futurity in similar narrations.

Çınar expresses "she is against politics[114]" while continues to attend some of the LGBTI+ and lesbian-feminist organizations' events.

> "I'm thinking, it's a tough question...I have never thought about it. I perceive irritating situations. While I do advocacy for myself, I got carried away, or get angry. I may stick to it...of course straight people also do it, and you have the right to do the same. But I don't want anyone to have sex publicly. I don't know."[115]

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[111] Hande Kader was a trans woman, who was doing sex work on the street. She was kidnapped and murdered brutally in August 2016. After this murder, many platforms from feminist and LGBTI+ groups got together and organized a march together. This was one of the most visible trans woman murders in Turkey.

[112] "Çok mücadele verdim sevgilimi ikna etmek için. Feminist biriydi ve politik olarak çok da istemedi ilişki içinde olduğunu belli etmek, el ele gezmek. Sonra Hande Kader yürüyüşüne gitmiştik, 'sen bunca seyi yapıyorsun açık açık yürüyüşlere katılıyorsun, benim elimi tutamıyor musun?' demiştim. Sonradan o da alışmıştı."

[113] "Meydanda sevgilimle öpüşmeyi isterdim mesela. Bi kere oldu ama sarhoşluk vardı, cesaret geldi."

[114] "Politikaya karşıyım"

[115] "Düşünüyorum...zor bi soru. Hiç düşünmedim. Öyle bi durum oluyo ki irite oluyo. Savunurken kendimi kaybedebiliyorum, sinirlenebiliyorum. Çok böyle insanların gözüne sokup sokup...tabii ki heterolar yapmıyo mu? Yapıyo. Senin de hakkın var mı? Var. Ama kimse sevişmesin ortada. Bilmiyorum.

While she tried to define "politics" in her terms, she mentioned how she can lose her temper. She thinks no one ["straight or gay"] should put things under each other's noses.

During our interview, Çınar mentioned she explained what it means to be "gay" to a musician who was harassing people for money during one of the pre-pride parties by highlighting importance of "communicating straight counterparts:"

> "He was fed up with the crowds. People don't give him money. I said, 'Here everyone is student bro; not all of them have money, most people don't work. They come over to have fun. They are students, they try to get rid of their stress, this is important. On the other hand your children could be like us; you don't know their behaviour, you don't understand their psychological situation, but they are your children. Are you going to throw them away?' It was quite dramatic, but he listened to me and felt that I was sorry, I saw that. I told him about that period. 'You are right my friend,' he said."[116]

Even if she highlighted she is not a "professional" who is involved in "politics," like other people, this story made me think about importance of being communicative while explaining one's sexual orientation, since those communications "may serve for a better cause" as she claims. "I'd like to do things, but it doesn't mean I'm a professional. I want to share small and intimate things with other people.[117]" Again personal aspects of doing activism should be highlighted here and how people perceive "activism" as a professional work with specific kind of formation. "Politics" might be intimidating for some of my interviewees because they feel like lacking certain type of formation. In daily life, while talking to her cousins or in her work place, she constantly defends LGBTI+ community: explains that it is not "hormonal disorder" to be "gay" or anyone can be "gay." She is perceived as "LGBTI+ advocate" by her counterparts.

Özlem's position regarding politics has changing aspects. Eventhough she highlighted solidarity's importance in relation to "not feeling alone" she does not perceive the ways les-bi individuals socialize as political. She cares only about "whom to get laid or have relationships next."

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[116] "Bıkmış kalabalıktan, insanlar para vermiyo... 'abi' dedim 'burda herkes öğrenci herkesin parası yok çalışmıyor insanlar...bi şekilde tutunup eğlenmeye geliyolar, öğrenciler...onların yaşadıkları önemli ve stres atıyolar. Bu arada senin de çocukların böyle olabilir onların tavırlarını bilemezsin psikolojilerini ne durumda olduklarını. Onlar senin çocukların dedim. Böyle bi durum olsa alıp çöpe mi atacaksın ne yapacaksın?' deyip baya acıklı dramatik...Ama adam beni dinledi ve bunu hissettim. Ve üzüldüğümü farketti. O evreyi anlattım falan. O da bi noktada 'haklısın kardeşim' dedi."

[117] "Bişeyler yapasım var ama profesyonel olduğum anlamına gelmiyo. küçük şeyler paylaşmak istiyorum insanlarla samimi bişeyler."

> "Why feminist organizations do not have accounts in apps? They are not aware of the power of apps for solidarity and help. Everybody is there individually. Power of social media should be used. Since Gezi, if the issue is to become conscious and get organized, social media made a great leap. If the revolution doesn't cover majority, minority can do little. Women's movement and the feminists cannot cover majority; it's ok in central city but how are you going to convince people in Fatih[118], or Alibeyköy?"[119]

While she talks about these issues, she sounds hopeless, and she thinks about going back to Germany for good in couple of years. She thinks these issues related to inequality of LGBTI+ individuals should be perceived as a consequence of larger scale of male patriarchy. While she highlights the classed boundaries between different communities of les-bi women, she thinks applications may be utilized for solidarity purposes as well. After our talk with Özlem, in one of the Pride Week meetings I asked if they ever had accounts in dating apps for women. The answer was: they tried it out once in gay dating applications (Hornet, Grindr etc). I think this explains how les-bi "cruising" can be perceived as unthinkable or tend to be overlooked in LGBTI+ community.

Özgü who is not politic(ally active) currently, mentioned another daily life example from a children workshop she conducted: "[...] In one of our workshops we made some children say 'right to change one's sex' for example...they were shocked at first, then we said 'well it is possible.' Those 100 children realized something there. They might become parents of 400 other children.[120]" Similar to Deniz's narrative in Chapter 2, on "better" future, Özgü aspires for a similar cause through personal encounters she has. While she highlighted how pessimistic she was before regarding political changes or equality the LGBTI+ movement aimed, little changes like this one, helped her to keep her hope alive.

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[118] Fatih and Alibeyköy are perceived as the old and relatively more conservative neigbourhoods of İstanbul.

[119] "Applerde dernek ıvır zıvır, onların hesapları niye yok? Feminist örgütlerin falan, yardım, dayanışma madem. App'in gücünün farkında değiller. Herkes bireysel olarak orda. Sosyal medyanın gücünü kullanmak gerekiyor, atak yaptı Gezi'den beri, bilinçlenmek örgütlenmekse mesele... Çoğunluk devrimi olmazsa azınlık çok az şey yapabilir, kadın hareketi ve feministler çoğunluğa hitap edemiyor. Merkezi yerler tamam ama Fatih'i Alibeyköy'ü nasıl ikna edeceksin?"

[120] "Çocuklara ÇOÇA'nın bi atölyesinde cinsiyet değiştirme hakkı dedirtmiştik mesela...önce şok oldular 'nee' falan, sonra olabilir dedik. O 100 kişiye onu göstermiştik. Onlar gelecekte 400 çocuğun annesi ya da babası olacak…"

> "About 3-4 years ago, I used to think that these kind of [political] interventions do not have the effect they hoped to make. I thought in theory, we do things in order to become visible, but they stay among us or just evaporate. You try a lot, but the result is small. I calculated that effect for that moment. But the impact of your effort grows like butterfly effect, now I understand this. People can talk now. From now on if none of these LGBT organizations, even LGBT people do nothing, those effects would be in our environment. We plan to add new things and we do things now."[121]

She highlights the hope she has now in the current condition while observing that people can talk about these issues more freely. After a certain point she highlights her acknowledgement on slow social changes which will eventually happen. Özgü even if she does not define herself as political, admits there might be possible political aspects related to les-bi socializations: "These things [different ways of social encounters] function as a little part of politics; they must be a part of some kind of a politics most probably. But they don't pave the way to a new way of politics."

> "What is non-political really? Emotions are non-political. All the rest, on the level of thoughts are going through a political filter. You feel something and you interpret your feeling according to your views, then you reach a thought. This process determines your personal politics. Everything I see I assume political, because I don't see the feeling. It's like you feel anger when you heard someone calling you 'girl' instead of 'woman'. This is something you learn yourself; negotiating whether it is political or not. It is only a feeling for me. Everything we talk about should be political. Politics is a word; it means world-view; I mean its connotation is as if it is far away from personal but very social."[122]

Here Özgü perceives political more as public with having social reflections. However still she mentions them parallelly with the utterance of "life style".[123] Utterance of "life style"

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[121] "Bundan 3-4 yıl önce şöyle düşünüyodum, bu tarz müdahaleler yaptıkları düşündükleri etkiyi yapmıyo. Teoride görünürlük kazandırmak için bi şey yapıyoruz ama o kendi içimizde kalıyo ya da uçup gidiyo gibi bi düşüncem vardı. Çaba buysa sonuç şuydu; ama şimdi, sadece bunun için de değil. O etkiyi anlık olarak hesaplamışım. O anda evet şu kadar çabanın şu kadar etkisini görüyorum ama o kelebek etkisiyle büyüyo, bunu şimdi farkediyorum. İnsanlar konuşabilir hale geldi...Şu noktadan sonra belki hiçbir LGBT örgütü, derneği, hatta LGBT'lerin hiçbiri hiçbir şey yapmasa bile o etki uçuşuyor yani...Biz ona eklemeler yapıyoruz ve yapmayı planlıyoruz da...."

[122] "Ne politik değil belki? Ne değil hakikaten? Alt seviyede hissedilen şeyer his düzeyindeki şeyler politk değildir. Onun dışında düşünceye çıkan her şey politik bi filtreden geçer. Hissettiğin şeyi hani kendi görüşüne göre yorumlayıp düşüneceye varıyosun. O düşünceye vardığın nokta görüşün olan her şey, görüşünden etkileniyo bu senin kişisel politikanı belirliyo. Ben karşımda gördüğüm her şeyi politik addederim çünkü onun hissini göremem...Biri kadın yerine kız dediğinde orda öfkeye yöneldiğini hissedersin ya, o senin kendine öğrettiğin bişeyle ilgili. Bu politik midir onun tartışması. O salt bi his bende. Erişip konuşabildiğimiz her şey politik olmalı. Politika şey bi kelime, benim kastettiğim hayat görüşü...Konotasyonu da sanki kişisel olandan uzak fazla toplumsal gibi."

[123] "hayat görüşü"

reminds me of personal being political. After highlighting this, she made a joke saying, "I heard (s)he is political(ly active[124]" related to 1980's after coup discourse that equated "dissident" position and "being politically active." Thus uttering "politics" might be still containing a certain level of tension for some individuals.

Small acts like these in daily life may enable les-bi women to "raise other people's consciousness" about "dissident" sexual orientations while not exposing themselves necessarily. These small ways of doing personal activism, may help les-bi women to gain more agency in terms of their own sexual orientation and keep their hopes alive for a "freer, better" future.

4.2.4 Politics As a Professional Work

In our interview, while Deniz proudly showed herself in one of the showreels of the Pride March, she also mentioned how marching was fun and important for LGBTI+ community's visibility and how political situation changed over the last couple of years.

> "I don't agree with... not giving permission to LGBTI+ Marches because of Ramadan. In 2015, it was Ramadan we could celebrate the Pride. We couldn't celebrate in 2016 because the scene was a mess [with threats from different groups and bombing]. Anyone would like to bombe that much of faggots getting together. We would have so much fun. We like to go there together and celebrate. I think our visibility increased, gay people used to be less out on the street. It's not like that anymore. But of course it depends on the district or area they are out."[125]

She does not see a correlation between Ramadan and Pride Marches but she does not overlook the possible dangers against the LGBTI+ community. She perceives the visibility of LGBTI+ individuals increased for the last couple of years because they can walk freer on the street by showing affection to each other while acknowledging the space based differences on this liberty. Deniz does not define herself as political(ly) active, since she "cannot cover the formation" in order to be political:

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[124] "o da politikmiş

[125] Ben şeye de katılmıyorum LGBT yürüyüşlerine Ramazan'dan dolayı izin vermiyolar falan. 2015'te Ramazan'dı biz kutladık...2016'da kutlayamadık çünkü zaten ortalık karışık, o kadar ibneyi herkes patlatmak ister. İşte çok eğleniyoduk mesela çok eğlenceli geçiyodu. Ya bi şey, hep birlikte gidelim eğlenelim falan. Görünürlüğümüz arttı ya, eskiden mesela geyler daha zor yürürdü dışarda. Şimdi öyle değil, Ama tabii bunun mekan mekan farklılığı var.

D: … I am a non-political person; my wit doesn't enough for that sort of things. I am a very humanist person; I believe that everything has a balance. There are of course a lot of things that I don't defend…

R: Politically?

D: I am not one of those advocates. For example, everybody cannot be a doctor, or a politician. But there are people defend their opinions. I have a place and a role in this life, but I cannot be there. I can't put myself to a certain place. I should say that I think in a Kemalist way…"[126]

Thus describing oneself as political seems to connote certain kind of formation which one has to have in order to be advocate for les-bi rights: she thinks she does not fit into those categories. After mentioning this, she highlights her hope related to social change in Turkey:

"There will be some developments here too; time heals everything. Development will be realized slowly. No one can suppress these voices. I mean, this is reality. Appropriate or not to the religion… I used to say 'My God, why am I like this?' Perhaps I am one of the faults of life; I am a sinner. But I am a sinner like anyone else. I choose a way to be a good person. After being a good person, even if I go to hell, what can I do? I do my best…"[127]

Even if she is not part of the "political struggle as profession" as she claims, she still aims for society to change. Deniz, uses "development" as a comparative concept with the "Western" way of living and thinking. Because she was talking about this, in relation to marriage equality and right to adopt in other "Western" countries. Similar to Deniz, some of my interviewees talked about "development" "change" with "being more Western-like" which might highlight the affect of Western way of thinking in this context. She highlights the change that might happen through increased visibility of LGBTI+

[126] D:"[...]apolitik bi insanım ben ya, benim kafam yetmiyo öyle şeylere. Çok hümanist bi insan olduğum için her şeyin bi dengesi olduğuna inanıyorum. Tabii savunmadığım bi sürü şey var.

A: Politik olarak mı?

D: Ben o savunuculardan biri değilim. Mesela herkes doktor olamaz, herkes siyasetçi olamaz. Ama görüşlerini savunan insanlar da var. Benim hayatta bi yerim var, bi rolüm var. Ama ben o tarafta bulunamıyorum yani. Bi yere koyamıyorum kendimi. Kemalist düşünüyorum aslında, öyle söyleyeyim."

[127] **"**Buralar da yavaş yavaş gelişecek, zaman her şeyin ilacı. Hani böyle yavaş yavaş gelişecek. Kimse bu sesleri bastıramaz. Gerçek bu artık yani. Dine uygun ya da değil. 'Allahım ben niye böyleyim' diyodum. Belki hayattaki yanlışlardan biriyim, günahkarım. Ama herkes kadar günahkarım. Benim yolum iyi insan olmak. Ben iyi insan olduktan sonra, cehenneme gideceksem de napayım. elimden geleni yapıyorum."

community. She gave another example related to social change which was triggered by the idea of queer becoming more widespread.

> "Few years ago, there's a gay thing going on, but people have straight state of mind. When butches fool around they become bad boys, but when feminine girls do it they become whores...I think these things have changed, and queer set of mind become more widespread. As far as I can observe, in the last 5 years, since I come here, these setups have changed radically and we became more visible."[128]

She perceives the idea of queer as a way to have more open minded people around related to issues like gender performances or self-identifications. She highlights her discomfort with these distinctive and discriminatory remarks. Similar to Özlem's case, in her personal life, she tends to raise some of her friends' consciousness, about lesbianism through her self-expression, making jokes about it. She constantly highlights she is one of the first "out and loud" lesbians in her social circle while she explains this as "something for a bigger cause." After I asked if constant explanation to her straight friends on her self-identification was tiring for her, and she responded; "You should be patient, from a certain point, they will know you and continue their lives with that consciousness.[129]" Deniz does not perceive the way les-bi women socialize as "political" since those can be slippery surfaces. Some of my interviewees seem to cover a middle ground related to question of "politics." They thought les-bi socializations through multiple mediums as inherently political, but they found it difficult to explain.

4.3 Relationality Between Les-bi Socializations and "Being Political"

As I stated in the beginning of this chapter, the question of "politics" had various connotations for my interviewees. For some of my interviewees "everything related to les-bi identities were inherently political," on the other hand, some of them would not perceive themselves as "political(ly active)." I assume first opinion is in close relation with the concept of "dissidence" I discussed earlier. Referring les-bi communities as

[128] "Ama bikaç yıl öncesine kadar şu vardı...eşcinsel bi şey var ama insanlar heteo kafasında yaşıyolar. Baçlar piç çapkınlık yapınca, feminenler orospu oluyo...o yavaş yavaş gitti şimdi bu kuir kafası yaygınlaşmaya başladı yani. Bunu görebiliyorum en azından. Bu 5 yıl içerisinde, 2012'de geldim, bu olay ne kadar değişti ne kadar görünmeye başladık ben farkındayım."

[129] "Sabrediyosun bi yerden sonra, bi de seni tanıyacaklar ki bunun farkındalığıyla yaşayacaklar."

"minority, oppressed, other" groups and defining themselves as "outside the norm" might be part of the same "dissidency."

During my interviews I asked if my interviewees perceive the ways they socialize as political. On this track Sheila Jeffrey's arguments' on "queer politics" may be discussed since she equates queer transgression with "night club activism" (2003, 42). "[Transgression] consists of carrying out sexual practices seen to be outlawed under conventional mores, such as sadomasochism and public sex, or wearing the clothing conventionally attributed to one sex class whilst being a member of the other. Transgression does not require changing laws, going on demonstrations, or writing letters. It can be achieved by doing something that some gay men and lesbians may always have enjoyed, whilst relabeling it politically transformative in and of itself" (Jeffreys, 2003, 42). Although I understand Jeffrey's concern related to queer politics relation to being dissident may not evolve public ways of doing politics, I would like to highlight particularities in different cases, in different contexts. She claims this way of "activism" is the comfortable and useless way since they don't have to aim grand scale of social change through their "political" acts. Contrary to what she offers here, I would like to claim that being an activist or politically active subject, is closely related to the self-identification of subjects. The political conjuncture may be different in every country. Thus dressing up as fancy as possible and just being able to go out to have a party or casually hook up with someone may be trickier than it seems when İstanbul's and Taksim's precarious political and urban conditions are considered. I remember a discussion in one of the Pride Week's meetings where we were discussing the risks of having a solidarity party in the Taksim area right after a bombing. Someone at some point said, "it is political to be out, to be able to go to a party these days. So we should definitely do it." Here in Turkey, living under the state of emergency since July 2016, even stepping outside and having a date in public sphere may be perceived as political by some individuals as my fieldwork revealed. Another point would be highlighting the history of LGBTI+ activism and its close ties with night clubs, bars and cafes. Contrary to Jeffrey's arguments, I would like to highlight the importance and effects of night club activism as a way to bring people together and form communities for themselves.

4.4 Visibility vs. Clocking: 25th İstanbul LGBTI+ Pride March

Michel Foucault has problematized and discussed the means of state control on its subjects in relation to access to medical facilities, discipline in educational mediums,

military camp constructions which have functioned as an example for urban planning in certain cases and production processes in factories (1980,1988,1995). None of these mediums seem to be free from the observing gaze that paves the way to the disciplinary power. These institutions have certain aims as Foucault argues: to "[t]rain vigorous bodies, the imperative of health; obtain competent officers, the imperative of qualification; create obedient soldiers, the imperative of politics; prevent debauchery and homosexuality, the imperative of morality" (1995,172). Here Foucault aims to draw attention especially to the term "observation" which is hierarchical: there is an inescapable hierarchy between the observer and who is being observed since one would be able to have the formation on the other. "The success of disciplinary power derives no doubt from the use of simple instruments; hierarchical observation, normalizing judgement and their combination in a procedure that is specific to it, the examination (Foucault 1995, 170). He explains the complex mechanism of disciplinary power and it's relation to visibility. It would be relevant to mention this aspect of his arguments since visibility politics of "dissident subjects" and how les-bi individuals negotiate their visibility may be closely related to becoming political(lly active). Visibility politics in LGBTI+ context while enabling subjects to claim their space in political or social mediums, may also expose individuals to disciplining mechanisms such as normalizing gaze and exclusions.

> "In discipline, it is the subjects who have to be seen. Their visibility assures the hold of the power that is exercised over them. It is the fact of being constantly seen, of being able always to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection. [...] In this space of domination, disciplinary power manifests its potency, essentially, by arranging objects" (Foucault,1977,187).

Visibility and political potency comes with it, may enable and solidify LGBTI+ individuals' political ground. However it may also constrain individuals by the disciplinary power. Politics of visibility have been the focal point of many identity politics movement such as Kurdish and Armenian identity politics by claiming their cultural, political and social spaces, and histories. Similar to minority rights movements LGBTI+ movement aimed to gain its rights through the visibility of individuals especially starting with 2000s, with cooperation and visibility of other movements such as anti-militarist and feminist movements (İlaslaner 2015).

In order to claim a political ground for LGBTI+ subjects, or to demand equal citizenship treatment as Bell and Binnie mentions, the politics of visibility holds a

relevant ground for this struggle. Brouwer (1998), in his piece on AIDS activism, stigmatization and visibility, highlights how double edged the issue of visibility might get. “Visibility politics, then, might be defined as theory and practice which assume that 'being seen' and 'being heard' are beneficial and often crucial for individuals or a group to gain greater social, political, cultural or economic legitimacy, power, authority, or access to resources. With this understanding, individuals and collectives which call for their greater visibility might create or demand more (or different) fictive or non-fictive texts about themselves, more (or better) visual images of themselves in public media, or more (and better) physical presence in public spaces” (Brouwer 1998,118). Being seen and being heard are two major factors that define LGBTI+ and minority politics of visibility. Activists might aim to achieve it through showing affection to each other in public and having sequin clothes in Marches, or aim to legislate a hate crime law for trans individuals who are being murdered through the publicity of Hande Kader’s case. Physical and political visibilities are evaluated together since these two aspects support each other. Visible subject positions may help emergence of recognition of so called “dissident citizens” by the state, and political legitimacy may emerge from this physical emergence.

As my fieldwork revealed, les-bi individuals have their own ways to negotiate their outness. I asked all of my interviewees how they would act out on the street when they have their girlfriends or casual hook-ups with them. For most of them their comfort in public would be district dependant. They would feel more comfortable and assumingly more confident about holding their girlfriends hand in central areas such as Taksim and Kadıköy. Deniz highlighted her dependency on the districts as follows:

> “It depends on the area I'm in. You wouldn't walk with the same attitude in Bağcılar as you would do in Taksim. You are mre comfortable in touristy areas. It's applicable to lesbians as well. In Taksim and Kadıköy I walk hand in hand with my girlfriend. I have never restricted myself from doing it. But I wouldn't do that in Zeytinburnu. It's obvious. May be Beşiktaş and Sultanahmet. Touristic places. Because people in those areas are worldly-wised in those kinds of scenes, they are more aware. There are lots of gay people coming from abroad.”[130]

[130] “Ama tabii bunun mekan mekan farklılığı var. bağcılarda Taksim'de yürüdüğün gibi yürüyemezsin, turistik mekanlarda daha rahatsın. Lezbiyenler için de geçerli ben mesela Taksim Kadıköy filan kızarkadaşımla el ele yürüyorum yani. Hiçbir kızarkadaşımla el ele yürümezlik yapmadım. Ama tabii bi Zeytinburnu'nda yürüyemem. O bellidir, Beşiktaş Sultanahmet belki. Turistik ortamlar yani. Çünkü ordaki insanlar daha görmüş geçirmiş oluyolar ya da bunun farkında oluyorlar, yurtdışından gelen bi sürü eşcinsel insan var.”

Deniz's claim on district dependency of comfort, my other interviewees mentioned their public visibility in similar ways. Kübra would highlight her careful attitude around her house, because they live with her mother as a lesbian couple. Eventhough she came out about it, she does not prefer to disturb her mother. Çınar also highlights her discomfort around her neighbourhood in Üsküdar. Nehir highlights her outness and comfort regarding the issue but highlights her position around the central sphere of Kurtuluş and Taksim.

> "Wherever I am, I'm out holding hands, kissing... But I don't generally go outside of this central sphere, my workplace is in Beyoğlu, my whole social sphere is there. I live in Kurtuluş. But even if I go to Maltepe, to my parents' place, I don't feel like I'll be attacked when people see me."[131]

In Chapter 2, in Nehir's interview, visibility also means going public, being out about your self-identification and hyper visibility that may result in LGBTI+ phobic violence, and/or commodification of these subject positions. The recognition and visibility comes with its price: threat of violence and/or restrictions of certain subjects from certain circles. "Through co-optation, enforced hyper-visibility, or the greater surveillance capabilities that visibility enables, collectives might find their efforts attenuated or deflected" (Brouwer 1998,119). The recognition and visibility may result as losing one's job, suffering from violence and discrimination in daily life. Les-bi individuals I interviewed, I would say generally concerned about being out in their work environments. Especially Çınar and Özlem were strategically out in their workplaces: being out to your friends or people like yourself, and only being out to your superiors in order to keep your authoritarian position.

The best example of the issue of visibility and clocking would be İstanbul LGBTI+ Pride March in on 25th June 2017. Pride March was banned in the last minute once again, and police blocked every possible side street to reach to İstiklal Street. Eventhough many LGBTI+ individuals were experienced from the previous years' bans, and they did not wore anything "extravagant," they were still banned to walk on İstiklal, just because they were "clocking." "[...] Police blockaded the whole Taksim area the day

[131]"Nerde olursam olayım, ben şeyim açığım...ne biliyim sevgilimle el ele mi tutuşuyorum, öpüşüyo muyum bilmemne falan...bi de hani gerçekten atıyorum işte, gerçi çok az uzaklaşıyorum buralardan, iş yerim Beyoğlu'nda, bütün sosyalleşme alanım orda, Kurtuluş'ta yaşıyorum. Ama mesela annemlere gittiğimde de Maltepe'ye şey değilim yani ay biri görücek mi ya da biri geliip saldıracak mı falan, öyle şeylerim yok.

of the march and allowed people to enter Istiklal Avenue based on their "types" throughout the day, leading to farcical dialogues. Police forced a person wearing a rainbow pattern to strip, said "normal people can pass," among so many others. (Tar 2017).

"Clocking" could have been possible anything from a rainbow coloured socks to cropped tops or mini shorts. Even if one did not clock it through the outfit, the way they behaved or their looks would be enough. At the end of the day, nobody could understand how and through which criteria police have made these distinctions between "homosexuals" (dissident) and "heterosexuals"(norm). Their secret criteria might have been perception of generalized dissidency where everyone on the street would count as a part of the dissident LGBTI+groups. On the one hand this blockage meant being stigmatized as out of the norm from the start; on the other hand it meant LGBTI+ community's gaining more visible political subjectivity. This dilemma covers a relevant ground in relation to coming out, being passable, clocking yourself and closeting yourself: all of these may cause dangerous violent encounters and stigmatization. "Politics" as Bell and Binnie also mentioned is always already meshed with the sexual when it comes to LGBTI+ and/or queer ways of politics since discrimination itself is nourished from "dissidency" or "dissident sexualities." Being able to find ways to become visible, to claim a political ground comes hand in hand with one's self-acceptance and self-identification as a part of LGBTI+ community. "Dissident identities" or certain identities' dissidency might become as an issue when they are visible.

The "politics" question I directed during the interview can be perceived as grand scale of LGBTI+ politics or more personal modes of conducting identity politics. There are contradictory actions and feelings my interviewees adopt as they define "politics" and their own positionality towards it. Visibility and clocking oneself become central issues in this context when one thinks about these social encounters and their possible political or personal echoes. Even if les-bi individuals do not necessarily perceive themselves as LGBTI+ rights activists, I claim that there are many ways in which the politics in the personal shape their daily encounters, with some having the potential to turn into larger political struggles.

As a concluding remark, claiming for equality in the same system which les-bi and LGBTI+ individuals suffer from through ignorance or hate crimes, might be perceived as paradoxical. The conceptualization of dissident sexual citizenship highlights the ways in which heteronormativity privatizes and contains "other" sexualities. That is why many of my interviewees tend to define their self-expressions as subversion from the norm. These processes of delegitimisation and exclusions from public, social spheres would cause ignorance on basic equal rights claims of individuals such as legislating certain laws for themselves, getting the same education with their counterparts or having the same employment rate with their counterparts. Acceptance of such dissident positionality may open up alternative ways of struggle. At the same time, claims of recognition by les-bi or LGBTI+ individuals and communities may restrict the possibilities of dissident, maybe queer, attempts to move beyond identity politics. Thus dissident positions do not inherently contain the possibility of transformation, as some of my interviewees also highlighted; rather they may confine les-bi individuals into restrictive and taken for granted categories. Social change may not be granted through les-bi encounters or their dissident orientation. Yet, one cannot deny the solidarity and empowerment these encounters enable for les-bi individuals.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

My fieldwork covered a young generation of women in İstanbul who frequented dating applications and bars. Throughout this research I explored various mediums of socialization in their relation to solidarity building practices among lesbian and bisexual identified women. It is important to acknowledge the generational and class based commonalities and differences between my interviewees, which have shaped my research findings and conclusions. In this research, I focused on a relatively younger generation of women from 18 to 33 since I aimed to inquire about both physical and virtual forms of les-bi women's socializations. If I had included women in higher age groups, there would have been different mediums of socialization and findings (ICQ, chatrooms, women-only places).

During this fieldwork, the main obstacle, at first, was to convince les-bi women from applications and bars to accept being the interviewed. After we get to know each other better, or increased the level of virtual chats, communication and meetings were more relaxed.

Theoretically, eventhough I would like to mention sexual intimacy and intimate relationships in more detail, and my fieldwork was full of narratives related to intimate relationships between women, I could not get into this aspect as much as I aimed to, due to time limitations in the writing process. The thesis was shaped by my general shift of focus to community and solidarity making processes of lesbian and bisexual women after I started the research. Thus, intimacy remains an important, unexplored aspect of les-bi women's socializing in this thesis.

After the fieldwork I conducted, I started to think more critically about the question of consent in relation to "clocking." Since it was not possible to talk to anyone who defined themselves as "trans" during this research, further research might cover "clocking" from trans individuals' point of view. Trans individuals might have more complex and different perceptions on clocking oneself. Because for some of them, clocking and making oneself visible might have traumatic consequences such as encountering police violence, harassment or legal penalties, and id check while one is in a bodily transition process. Thus they might choose not to clock themselves. Here visibility politics and its close relation to claiming political ground might be subjected to a radical change since it preconditions being "out". While Pride March and being on the street that day was relevant to spot individuals who would clock themselves, it might be

also relevant to talk to lesbian and bisexual trans individuals and highlight how differently they might experience being out, being clocked and being visible (Zengin 2014). Another aspect to explore might be the constant urban change in central spaces and how it affects the ways LGBTI+ individuals socialize.

This research aimed to understand how les-bi individuals positioned themselves in terms of dating practices and how they would frequent these mediums while negotiating their outness, as well as the normativities regarding different mediums. While women-only virtual and physical mediums typically offer relatively safe spaces and networks for les-bi socializations, norms and expectations regarding these mediums might be distinctive and oppositional. Some of my interviewees perceived their self-identifications and/or ways they socialize as inherently and by default "political." This might need further elaboration. While the dissidency les-bi individuals "inherently have" as some of my interviewees highlighted might open up political possibilities, such dissidency does not necessarily lead individuals or grops into acts of social change (Keating 2012) as I discussed in Chapter 4.

In Chapter 2, I discussed coming out as a relevant process for one's self-identification. I did not have the intention to talk about coming out when I started my research, but it was mentioned with great importance in my interviewees' narratives, while explaining how they come out to themselves and how they started to socialize people like themselves. For most of my interviewees, coming out to a close friend and being able to check some of the les-bi or LGBTI+ frequented bars or doing google search with the keyword "lesbian" tend to be important in the process. Coming out to oneself covered a relevant ground for most of my interviewees' self-identification and self-expression processes with loose relation to activist discourse which was utilized starting from 2000s in İstanbul (İlaslaner, 2015). For some of my interviewees their coming outs have personal motivations such as creating their own safe, comfort zones rather than aiming for political motivations like increased visibility. I perceived coming out as a point where personal and political are "clicked" as my some of my interviewees highlighted, through acknowledging their self-expressions as lesbian or bisexual, even if they did not aim for it. Coming out was relevant to mention in terms of how social encounters with other les-bi individuals is closely related to being out to oneself or others. Although I preferred to be cautious while using the concept of queer during my fieldwork, I realized that it became necessary as some of interviewees mentioned it as as a more "flexible" way of their self-identifications. My interviewees negotiate the coming out process

through their own subjective positions: some prefer to come out to their parents or working environment, some prefer to keep the scale smaller by close circle of friends. My interviewees mentioned a feeling of safety, and solidarity after coming out and "clocking" themselves to other women since it enables them to flirt more freely. In some of my interviewees' narratives, coming out might be related to more visible, more accepted ways of self-identification as "women who desire women," as Özgü and Nehir highlighted. However I tried not to condense my interviewees or any lesbian or bisexual individual into binaries of being out or closeted since every individual had their own ways to negotiate this process.

In Chapter 3 I argued that les-bi individuals socializations might be related to forming community networks and solidarity building processes. These two concepts were closely related in our interviews since my interviewees mentioned personal and political networks of socializations with their need for "solidarity with people like themselves." In this chapter I started out with norms and regulations which bars and applications had through the narratives of my interviewees. In this part, the ways my interviewees mentioned how they socialize in applications and bars, was contradictory and complex. Because they all stated both their enjoyment regarding these mediums being the "comfort zone" for their self-expressions, and suffering from strict door policies, bar fights that complicates flirting with other women or harsh beauty standards in virtual mediums, which all define who's favourable and who is not. Despite sometimes brutal and humiliating behaviours my interviewees encounter during socialization, this does not stop them from frequenting bars and applications. Because les-bi individuals seem to have few options to frequent compared to their gay counterparts. Solidarity that emerges from similarities and commonalities, might need further elaboration as it was mentioned by my interviewees. "Solidarity" in most of the narratives, connoted agreement, unity, support and consensus as my fieldwork revealed. Sharing a common sexual orientation and/or being subjected to similar difficulties in life, such as coming out to family, not being able to have long lasting relationships, or feeling of loneliness in predominantly heterosexual mediums. My interviewees mentioned solidarity as forming alternative families, being in solidarity through one's profession, making others less lonely and helping others to find their ways to flirt, to meet other women. Eventhough the concept of community was mentioned with positive remarks in most of the interviews, I discussed and aimed to highlight exclusions which are implicated in the idea of having "common things" such as sexual orientation, self-identifications and being minority. In that sense, differences

between certain groups and/or individuals tend to define the boundaries, the tensions, exclusions in LGBTI+ groups. Bisexuality in this research might have been evaluated together with lesbianism because of their commonalities regarding sexual orientation. However as my fieldwork also revealed, one should not generalize sexual orientations of individuals, since having things in common would not be enough to form a "community." Some of lesbian identified my interviewees mentioned the tensions between themselves and bisexual women, or mentioned cases where lesbian women would belittle or terminate their relationships with bisexual women because they would be perceived as "unfaithful." Thus bisexuality and the tension between lesbian and bisexual groups or communities might be explored in more detail through further research.

In chapter 4, I discussed how the question of politics became puzzling for some of my interviewees. The "politics" question had two tracks: one was if they perceived themselves as political(lly active), second one was if they perceived the ways they socialize as political. Questions related to "politics" caused some uncomfortable pauses, or a level of constraint, since some people I talked to found "politics" to be vast and dangerous. Part of my motivation while asking these questions had to do with trying to understanding their perspective on identity politics and the politics of visibility. The responses I received were various: while some of them never perceived themselves or ways they socialize as political, for some of them their self-identifications as lesbian or bisexual women would inherently be political because they perceived themselves as 'dissident.' Throughout the research, my interviewees positioned themselves against certain norms, such as "being heterosexual," or "having heteronormative relationships or lifestyles." I argue that dissident citizenship would be a relevant concept here since being political has been shaped and has closely been related to positioning oneself as "dissident." With this connection I aimed to understand the ways in which self-expressions as lesbian or bisexual or queer which might be perceived as "personal" and "private;" might at the same time have "political" and more "public" characteristics. At the same time, I tried to introduce a critical perspective to les-bi individuals' self-perceptions as dissident. Citizenship was criticized in the mid 1990s from multiple aspects: its ignorance on people of colour and women's movements in USA (Yuval-Davis 1991), and because of its limits and dependency on the nation state model and liberal ideology (Richardson 2000, Sparks 1997).

Even if some of my interviewees do not define or express themselves as politically active; they seem to be fluctuating between their self-expression as lesbian or bisexual as

"dissidents" and their personal wish to put distance between themselves and politics on a grand scale. Les-bi individuals self-expressions as dissident subjects may contain the potential of change through visibility politics, Marches, creation of les-bi friendly "safe" mediums to socialize. At the same time, dissident category they perceive themselves to be a part of, may not guarantee social change since they may not turn into practical-political acts such as working for hate crime laws, equal rights, equal employment or education. The claim that "les-bi individuals are inherently political" often remains unsubstantiated and unspecified in the narratives of my interviewees.

Politics of visibility was relevant in the narratives of my interviewees, even if they tend to abstain from it in certain cases such as their work environments and familial relationships. Related to being visible, "clocking oneself" and not being able to abstain from this, because of certain performances, styling and attitudes, were mentioned in detail in Nalan's and Nehir's narratives. Clocking, or outing oneself with one's agency are both closely related to politics of visibility as I highlighted in the case of latest Pride March. As most of my interviewees suggested they liked to be part of Pride Marches because they felt like majority, relaxed, in a feast mood. The March was the most effective and large-scaled way of showing one's existence to claim a common ground for their self-expressions as LGBTI+ individuals.

At the end, all distinctions between binary categories (related to sex or gender or orientation) would be deficient and misleading while one is trying to describe or restrict identities which are as complex as individuals themselves as my fieldwork revealed. As many of my interviewees highlighted, defining oneself "as one of the letters within LGBTI+ umbrella" can be tricky since one's self expressions and self-identifications might be in constant change. Because of all of these fluctuations, discrepancies and various perspectives on self-identifications reaching a concrete resolution for identity politics might be a phantasy or utopia as Munoz would argue. "Queer" as self-identification, as many of my interviewees mentioned, may open up new possibilities while enabling flexibility regarding gender performances, and sexual orientations. Seemingly distant categories like, "homosexual vs. heterosexual," may provide les-bi individuals their own safe spaces, and solidarity networks with "people like themselves" which might gloss over the differences. However, accepting these two orientations as "conflicting" or opposite, may lead to the normalization of "heterosexuality," while it may become the inevitable anchor point to define "other" sexualities, as many scholars argued. Thus this process would lead to stigmatization of "homosexuality" (LGBTI+

individuals on a grand scale) through the concept of "dissident." Even if it may lack certain practicalities in terms of "politics that may trigger transformation", "queer" seemed to open up new possibilities, and more fluid and changing self-identifications for some people I interviewed. Similarly embracement of "dissident" may function in a similar way; while it requires certain recognition and acceptance of what norms are. At the end, all distinctions between binary categories (related to sex or gender or orientation) would be deficient and misleading while one is trying to describe or restrict identities which are as complex as individuals themselves. Self-identification processes are unique and personal as well as political. Thus, I aimed not to generalize them. Through highlighting these constantly changing, sometimes non-binary accounts of my interviewees I aimed to discuss possible "queer" or "alternative" ways of self-identifications which might have the potential of subversion on predominantly heterosexual structures.

Throughout this research I explored the tension between the personal and the political and how they might be related from the point of view of lesbian and bisexual individuals. I aimed to cover solidarity buildings and how these might be related to politics at large. Finally, I aimed to explore lesbian and bisexual ways of socialization and intimacy in order to highlight lesbian and bisexual visibility within gay dominated same sex literature and politics. I hope this research would trigger further investigations on "desire between women" and enable more ground for researches in in this field in Turkey. This research demonstrated how surfaces related to identity politics and politics, and the relation between them might get slippery when one tries to define them with strict boundaries which might also be explored further from the critical perspective of queer theory and queer ways of doing politics.

APPENDIX: INFORMATION ABOUT INTERVIEWEES

Çınar (27) is a white collared, accounting specialist, from Black Sea region of Turkey who studied in Uludağ University. She is one of the few women I have met from the application. She told me that she came out to herself four years ago as "gay. She came out to her close circle of friends throughout the years but not to her family. She uses both applications and bars as mediums to meet "other people like herself." Additionally she frequents some meetings or events of multiple LGBTI+ organizations to meet other people. She does not perceive herself as politically active, she attends LGBTI+ themed parties and went to LGBTI+ Pride Marches before the bans.

Nehir (28) is a white collared person from central part of Turkey and works as a website editor. She came out to herself around 2009 as a lesbian woman. However she explained that she aims for various (lesbian and bisexual) visibilities in different contexts and does not restrict her desire with binary categories anymore. For this reason, she identifies herself as pansexual. Nehir expressed she came out practically to everyone in her life from close circle of friends to her family. She uses applications and bars to socialize with other LGBTI+ individuals. She is also part of collective organization Lezbifem and attends some Pride Week meetings.

Özgü (26), is a psychology major who graduated from Boğaziçi University and continues her studies She is from İstanbul. She defines her coming out as a lesbian woman, layer by layer which started in her childhood when she tries to frame it. Özgü has not come out to her parents yet, because she perceives their relationship as distant. She socializes and meets other les-bi women both in applications and bars. In different parts of our conversations she mentioned her involvement in various LGBTI+ organizations. She highlighted her gratitude related to some LGBTI+ organizations when she first encountered them in different contexts.

Özlem (33), is a white collared employee who works as a call centre trainer. She states she grew up in Turkey, but because her mother is German, she defines herself as half-German. We have met through the application. She came out to herself, her close circle of acquaintances and her mother as a lesbian woman in 2008. However at this point she defines herself as "AP gender fluid lesbian woman" who thinks definitions and desires

are changing. She firstly started to socialize in kizkiza.com, and then moved on to bars and applications. Özlem also highlights she attended some feminist and LGBTI+ marches since she came out.

Merih (27), works in a organization company in İstanbul. She came out to herself and her parents as a lesbian woman in 18 which caused her to leave the house for a while around 2007. She started to hang out in bars and worked in some of them for a while. In the last couple of years she started to frequent applications as well. She highlighted her close relationship with some of the LGBTI+ organizations like LambdaİstanbuI, when she first came out.

Esra (25), is a sociology major in Boğaziçi University who is originally from East part of Turkey. She told me she first came out to herself as a lesbian woman in 2014. However she highlights the ever changing nature of her desire and she finds it hard to compartmentalize her orientation. She came out to her sister, and her close circle of friends. She does not have a close relationship with her parents, thus she did not come out to them. She mentioned how she first came out through les-bi websites and applications and moved on to LGBTI+ friendly bars and parties. She plays football in a LGBTI+ football team which gives her a comfort zone. She does not perceive herself as politicall active but expressed her interest in LGBTI+ political actions and marches.

Lusin (18), is a highschool graduate who aims to become a veterinarian "in order to help other living creatures." She is Armenian and lives in İstanbul with her parents. She came out to herself a year ago which was followed by coming out to her close circle of friends and frequenting applications and bars. She started to play football in the same LGBTI+ friendly football team with Esra. For Lusin, her friendships in Kamp Armen and encounters in dating applications were important when she first come to identify herself as a lesbian woman. But she highlighted she cannot be sure about this self-identification since her desire changes as well. She attends Pride Week meetings from time to time and attends events organized by the same group.

Nalan (26), is a lawyer who builds her solidarity mechanisms with LGBTI+ community around this profession. Eventhough she grew up in İstanbul, she states she is originally from Diyarbakır and how this part of her identity affected her. She mentioned coming out

to herself as a bisexual woman was triggered by exposition of other people. She is out to her colleagues, parents and friends. She highlighted she is more physical encounter person, but she tries to use applications as well. She takes part in LGBTI+ people's law cases and has connections with many LGBTI+ organizations in İstanbul, , because of her profession as a lawyer.

Deniz (27) is a food engineer, graduated from a university from Thrace region who is not contented with her job at this point. She grew up in İstanbul with her family. Eventhough she came out as a lesbian woman when she first came out in 2011 while logging into Twitter with a reverse triangle, she self-identified as a "genderqueer woman" while we did the interview. She stated that she came out to her close circle of friends but not to her parents. Deniz frequents bars and applications in order to socialize with other women. She does not perceive herself politically active, since she thinks it requires a specific kind of formation, but she attended Pride marches throughout the years.

Kübra (33), is a philosophy student in Boğaziçi University. She and her family are originally from central part of Turkey, but she moved to İstanbul when she was 18, for her university. In her narrative, she highlighted the importance of her sisters, relation to her coming out as a more "libertarian lesbian woman." She mentioned chatrooms, old fashioned forums, and woman-only lesbian bars she frequented while she first came out to herself. Our talk was informative in terms of understanding the socialization mediums' change throughout the years. Kübra came out to her mother, who is the closest person from her family, in 2015. But she was out to her close circle of friends since she became politically active in different feminist and les-bi organizations such as SFK and Lezbifem.

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