

**GENDER AS A PERFORMATIVE ACT IN URBAN SPACES AND EVENTS: NON-
VERBAL MARKS OF MASCULINITY & FEMININITY****PERFORMATİF BİR EYLEM OLARAK KENTSEL ALANLARDA VE ETKİNLİKLERDE CİNSİYET:
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ABSTRACT

Women's seclusion and hegemonic oppression towards the subjugation of women can alternatively be well understood in contrastive analysis of how masculinities and femininities come to conflict public spheres and urban spaces. In this regard, this text will provide a sequence of ethnographic analyses on urban events and celebrations, public spaces and gendered interactions through non-verbal marks so that what is deemed as socially appropriate or improper are vividly presented. The main objective of this compact ethnographic analysis is that the subordinate femininities must be unearthed so that there could be a hope for a social cessation of internalization of both the seclusion and subjugation of female members of the subject society. The case instances are drawn from Turkish society, which has a fluctuant politics of gender and where the society is stigmatized with the ongoing repercussions of conventional and contemporary identity conflicts.

Keywords: Gender Studies, Non-Verbal Communication, Urban Spaces, Masculinity, Femininity.

ÖZET

Kadın gizliliği ve kadınların boyun eğdirilmelerine ilişkin hegemonik baskı, maskülenliğin ve feminenliğin kamusal alanlarda ve kentsel alanlarda nasıl bir çatışmaya girdiğinin karşılaştırmalı bir analizinde anlaşılabilir. Bu bağlamda, bu metin kentsel etkinlikler ve kutlamalar, kamusal alanlar ve cinsiyetle etkileşimler üzerine sözel olmayan işaretlerle bir dizi etnografik analiz yapacak ve böylece sosyal olarak uygun veya uygunsuz olarak kabul edilenlerin canlı bir şekilde sunulmasına sağlayacaktır. Bu kompakt etnografik analizin asıl amacı, bastırılmış feminenliğin ortaya çıkarılması gerekliliğidir ki böylece söz konusu topluluğun kadın üyelerinin tecrit edilmesinin hem de dışlanmasının içselleştirilmesinin toplumsal olarak durdurulması için bir umut olabilir. Durum örnekleri, çalkantılı bir cinsiyet politikasına sahip olan, geleneksel ve modern kimlik çarpışmasının yansımalarının devam ettiği Türkiye sahası üzerinden alınmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Cinsiyet Çalışmaları, Sözsüz İletişim, Kentsel Alanlar, Maskülenlik, Feminenlik.

INTRODUCTION

This research is an attempt into examining both men's and women's experiences of being revered, feared and explicitly approved in public spheres within the Turkish context. The study provides us with an analysis of how hegemonic masculinities collide with women's subordinate acts in urban spaces. The social interpretations and cultural perceptions of gender performance in public and civic spaces intersect with men's construction of masculinities and the ways in which men and women assign gendered definitions to urban spheres. In this regard, gendered non-verbal marks are analyzed based upon the extent to which they maintain and sustain certain code of socially acceptable gender performances, and the issues around women's seclusion through non-verbalized agencies and feminization of certain urban spaces are explored. In addition, the research methodologically utilizes primary ethnographic observations the author has collected over time and secondary data mainly through critical content analysis.

Being determined more by what one does than by what one is, gender is socially constructed (Butler, 1990; D'Emilio, 1983; West and Zimmerman, 1987). Similarly, space is socially constructed (Gieryn, 2000; Soja, 1996; Lefebvre, 1991). Space is produced by those who occupy it and reproduced in our imaginative thinking (Lefebvre, 1991). Spaces are geographical tools to implement social norms, which concretize gender relations (Knopp, 1990; Nusser and Anacker, 2013). The research uses the terms "space" and "place" interchangeably though the term "space" has slightly different implications. Space "consists of abstract geometries, such as distance or size, which can be measured" (Logan, 2012). Considering that urban refers

to a wide range of places, I separate the metropolitan area, (central) city, from the suburbs. Aiming to focus on the metropolitan urban spaces, I suggest that Chicago School scholars would significantly relevant to mention for the objectives of my research. They contended that, by focusing on the spatial distribution of the population by race and ethnicity, spaces function to construct "natural areas" of hetero- and homosexual practices. It is to say that spaces are used to implement both the heteronormative practices and other deviant forms of gender expressions. More interestingly, spatial formations and configurations impact on women's opportunities in the city (Heap, 2003). This aspect is supported by my research findings in the state buildings and the shopping malls in their practices of exaggerated femininities. I would also like to suggest the argument that the emergence of spatial changes resulted in some economic reconfigurations and restructuring of spaces, which eventually turned the city from a site of production into a site of consumption (Zukin, 1991). This aspect of newly configured spaces around consumption caused new expressive formations of masculinities and femininities. Additionally, it is vitally important to stress on the argument that patriarchy, as a system of social structures and practices (Walby, 1989), is an essential component of the Turkish culture, and is the primary guardian of the traditional gender expectations. Thus, these traditional gender expectations are enforced on the urban landscape. Feminist scholars suggest that the "man-made" environment is the "*material manifestation of a patriarchal society*" (Rose, 1984).

Defining Space

The spatial scope of this paper will solely be the realm of civic and public spaces excluding sacred and domestic spaces. The

civic space refers to a wide range of political, administrative and entertainment spaces including city councils, shopping malls, urban coffee houses, city squares. The concept of urban space is used as a heterogeneous and complex structure in which the gendered attributions occur. For instance, a comparative base to this research can be drawn from the neighboring society described as “greek society was organized along clear dichotomies such as oikos and polis, private and public, *female and male*, nature and culture — dichotomies that have obvious consequences for the interpretation of *gendered space*” (Trümper, 2015). Similarly, the binary use of gendered spaces through masculinized and feminized non-verbal marks will be further explored in the following sections.

Genderization of Urban Spaces

It is argued that “it is not just that the spatial is socially constructed; the social is spatially constructed too ” (Massey, 1994). The social reflections of gender can be immensely seen in the construction of public spaces, and the spatial configurations tend to present us a certain set of gendered dispositions. The social interactions within socialization processes require gendered habitus through which the socially acceptable forms of gendered acting are implemented. It is to say that “society becomes deposited in persons in the form of lasting dispositions, or trained capacities and structured propensities to think, feel and act in determinant ways, which then guide them” (Wacquant, 2005). A sense of habitus emerges and subtly dictates what is socially implemented which Bourdieu describes as “in this sense, habitus is created and reproduced unconsciously, without any deliberate pursuit of coherence, without any conscious concentration” (Bourdieu, 1984). It is relevant to say that the spatial ideology

that has implications on gendered attributions comes along with the public deployment of hegemonic and subordinate masculinities as well as the seclusion and subjugation of women to the spatial normativity. In this regard, it is essentially important to mention the involvement of Turkish women in the public sphere as a means of women’s concern to publicly reflect on their femininity. There has been a sense of emancipation through the unveiling of women in clothing and some other non-verbal aspects, however, the women remain unliberated as the Kemalist approach to women could not fully accomplish women’s liberation in both civic spaces and public spheres. The exact same argument was made by Kandiyoti in her following words “women would be refashioned as modern, equal, and active citizen-subjects. Kemalist perception of women’s emancipation did not envision women’s participation in the public sphere as a denial of patriarchal gender roles. In other words, women could be a part of the public sphere as sexual subjects and their primary role as mothers and house managers would remain intact” (Kandiyoti, 1987). After all, the deeply internalized hegemonic display of patriarchal dominion of men remains intact, and women have been given a social platform to a certain degree which will not violate men’s public space and the patriarchal order.

Performativity of Gender in the Construction of Subjectivities

One aspect that needs to be further elaborated on is that there is an intentional reason why the article uses the term *performative*. Derrida’s claim about the source of performativity is crucial; he sees the power of the performative as something that comes from their iterability, or repetitiveness in other words (Kroløkke and Sørensen, 2006). Thus, a significant part of

performativity depends on the repetitiveness of the acts (Butler, 1990). Moreover, Butler views it as “a ritualized production” (Butler, 1988). Basing my argument with regard to the formation of gender on the view that gender is performative provides us solid reasons lying behind the process of how gendered expressions in urban spaces are constructed through a set of acts. Considering the idea there is nobody who is a gender prior to doing gendered acts, and that “no gender identity is behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results” (Butler, 1988), the article views “actions, behaviors, and gestures as both the result of an individual's identity as well as a source that contributes to the formation of one's identity which is continuously being redefined through speech acts and symbolic communication” (Cavanaugh, 2015). In order for the article to serve the exploration of the hegemony of heteronormative standards practiced in urban spaces, I argue for the idea that it is our continual repetition of gender acts in the most mundane of daily activities that these standards are *reproduced, transmitted, and eventually modified*. Furthermore, such field exploration supports the argument that “our most personal gendered acts are continuously being scripted by hegemonic social conventions and ideologies” (Felluga, 2011). Therefore, one could inevitably contend that the enactment of gender norms in the most mundane of daily activities in urban spaces contributes to the creation of our sense of subjectivity.

RESEARCH METHODS & OBJECTIVES

For the research results to be compatible with the standards of scientific validity, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork

in several cities over three months of participant observation. These cities include public spaces in Aydın, İzmir, and Denizli. I regularly visited these cities in the course of three months and stayed in each city for two weeks of each month. The remaining two weeks of each month, I spent it for data analysis and writing of the paper. During the course of the fieldwork, I gathered necessary secondary data to theoretically support the proposed arguments of my research, which are reflected in each section. I divided the fieldwork participation into two phases of observation. In the first phase, I spent most of my time in public squares forming such proximity with others that I was able to observe and even overhear their conversations. In some occasions, I even had the opportunity to engage in a narrative interview type of conversations with some locals, whom I questioned with regard to their gendered practices. In the second phase, I sought to partake in public events which have traditional implications. Reasons for selecting such urban spaces and events are the fact that, as I argue, these spaces suggest gendered practices, and the people in them perform such activities that require masculine or feminine features of gender. Having traditional and cultural meanings attached to some of these places, the selected spaces suggest *spatial configurations of gender*. Varying from soldier-send off ceremonies to circumcision rides in public, I stood in the crowd to collect data relevant to my research objectives. On the other hand, I visited some locations which I hypothesize to be gendered. These locations include shopping malls and administrative state buildings. All the data I gathered out of such short-scaled ethnographic field observation are recorded in the following chapters. Additionally, I collected testimonial data from some of the sex workers I encountered,

and these testimonies are crucial to understanding the ways in which gender is obstructed through socially demanded representations of gender. As for the analysis of my data, I deployed methods of discourse analysis of my participants as well as interpretive analysis of the fieldwork data. By connecting the data assembled in the fieldwork to the salient theories of the research subject, I formed a link between the theoretical frameworks and the implementations of theoretical arguments in the every-day practices of my participants.

I would like to draw attention to the rationale lying behind such observational research on gender. One of my goals in conducting the research is to shed light into the ways through which gender is collectively reproduced in the every-day practices of my participants. I intend to demonstrate the subtle ways in which gender is performed, and gender expressions are publicly exhibited through the means of non-verbal signs. All these research attempts ultimately aim to understand the male orthodoxies, female subjugations, and heteronormative subschemas as represented in public places.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Non-verbal marks play a tremendous role in the expression of gendered performativity in public spaces and are majorly implemented through the social and cultural construction of gendered signs. Kinesics is a major concept through which eye contact, gesture, and posture can be understood in social interactions. Haptics, which is the study of touching, majorly deals with touching as nonverbal communication and includes handshakes, head contact for men, holding hands and hugs in nonverbal interactions. Proxemics, on the other hand, is the study of spatial distances stemming from

cultural and sociological aspects and this research will be mainly concerned for the public distance which is one of the four components of proxemics. There is also a need to explore the aspects of paralanguage which analyses pitch, volume, intonation and vocal characterizes such as laughter. Last but not least, artifacts play a significant role in our non-verbal interactions and deals with outer features such as clothing, facial hair as mustache, earring and jewelry being the case for this research (Littlejohn and Foss, 2009).

Despite the religious aspect defining the borderline of female femininity, there has been a considerable shift in the application of gaze, modesty, and expressions of beauty in modern Turkey. However, though the modernization of Turkey should not be underestimated, many of the conventional aspects in the expression of gender have remained intact due to the long-standing influence of social, religious and cultural gender narrations. For instance, a long-standing gaze upon a male person has negative implications for a woman. There is a need to constantly turn the eyes away in order to protect modesty and female dignity. Conversely, the masculine image for a man is often presented through a long-continued gaze on women, and it consolidates the chaser and hunter image of men. There is even a proverb which well justifies the male gaze "Güzele bakmak sevaptır - To look at something beautiful is not a sin" which has been commonly used by men to justify their desirous gaze. Similarly, walking habits have many implications on both the female subjugation in public and the performance of hegemonic masculinities. Wives or women following the lead of men in public is not a rare scene in Turkey, furthermore, the lead has some excessive applications on women such as grabbing the woman's arm or hands and pulling her alongside himself as though

she is a vehicle he is dragging along. Another aspect of gesture occurs when a woman accompanied by a man is speaking with another man, there is always a masculine/male confirmation between two men, meaning two men would often nod their heads to show gratitude. There is always a superior and often subtle connection between men showing the conversation with the woman was decent and everything is safe. Even when the same woman is helped by another man and thanks to the man in return, the accompanying guy often offers his own appreciation in a quite masculine manner. Correlatively, the posture has various reflections on the implications of gender such as sitting habits in public, and masculine manners in men's walking habits such as frowned face, sharp stares, open arms and legs. It' is perhaps a common implementation of manliness that women cover less space than men when it comes to sitting in public. Wide-stretched legs occupying the space of women and showing a sense of masculinity and belonging to male normativity through this particular gesture of legs have been subject to complaints made by Turkish women. Likewise, binding hands on the back and walking with a rosary hanging from male hands are some salient examples of masculine gender performativity in public spaces.

Haptics, which is the study of touching in non-verbal interactions, seems to have diverse applications when it comes to gendered dispositions of both male and female members of Turkish society. For the women, a handshake is mostly used if encountered by a man, and more intimate hugs are preferred among women. However, men do not comply with an intimate way of greeting but instead prefer to touch the edge of their heads instead of kissing where cheeks touch each other. This particular way

of greeting that men performs has many implications on the political affiliation of the person as it has been adopted by many members of the nationalist party in Turkey. As well as the haptics, proxemics which is the study of spatial distances has consequences on gender performativity that has been both culturally and sociologically developed. For instance, public distance in civic spaces such as public transportation shows us that women avoid sitting in between or next to men with concerns over female dignity and piety . On the contrary, regardless of the sex difference, spaces such as cash point lines show closer distance violating the private space but the overall consensus is that there is a common practice of women's seclusion from any kind of touching to men in public (Wood, 2005).

Paralanguage is another aspect of non-verbal communication which has been subject to both public and political debates. Despite the fact that there is a common understanding of women making use of higher pitch and fluctuating intonation, laughter, one of the vocal characterizers, has been attempted to be disregarded as shameful and degrading for women. Using high volumes of laughter in public places is thought to bring shame and defame to women's honor. Moreover, this argument was posited by the former deputy prime minister, Mr. Bülent Arınç, suggesting that women should not burst into laughter in public. It has both socio-religious and political implications of how vocal use can be a threat to women's honorable femininity and gender expression.

Gendered Artifacts

Another example can be drawn from the use of artifacts through clothing and use of facial hair as a means of gendered expressions in public. One of the most outstanding cases in clothing as a means to

perform gender is the practise of cross-dressing which has a long history in both Turkish show world and public life. Huysuz Virjin, a well-known Turkish figure who has pioneered cabaret in Turkey, stands out to be the first crossed-dress man publicly appear in the form of a drag queen. He can be counted as the first drag queen of Turkey and has reached a reputable level of fame and respect through her crossed-dressed man image. It's a common phenomenon in Turkish society that the televised reflections of men in woman's clothing are excluded from the public judgement and shaming. These televised images of men in exaggerated femininity are far away from hate speech and defamation as it is done to transgender women. Moving from the world of television to the public scene, another well-known comedian, Fehmi Dalsaldı, appears in public spaces as 'Azize' and interviews people while being recorded for a TV appearance. Azize is a woman in fancy woman's clothes and has the man behind her which can be vividly seen based on her voice tone and body shape. However, she is well accepted by the public community and people show a great level of interest to her. She refers to women with her emphasized femininity and tackles issues such as marriage, men's issues, and so on. Contrary to their public space appearance, there are hundreds of crossed-dressed men under disguise who enjoy appearing as a woman in their private life. Based on the fieldwork testimonies, some of the clients of Turkish sex workers are ordinary looking family men who cross-dress to have sexual intercourse with them.

From the sexual repression of desires towards the explicit and public representation of sexuality, clothing has been a significant platform to express gender and sexuality. A great example of it can be drawn from the homosexual masculinity which has

been subject to a considerable shift over the last decade both in the sense of clothing and body marks as plucking of eyebrows and skinnier features in men's outfit being two of the examples. Certain body moves and gestures can as well be attributed to homosexual men that differ from those of the heterosexual masculinity performance. Resembling the wide-spread female attributions, narrower and upright sitting positions, bendy hand gestures, and most importantly cramped walking manners have been adopted by Turkish queer community to non-verbally indicate a sense of femininity that they consider is in alignment with their sexuality. As a matter of fact, these gendered configurations applied through non-verbal marks have gradually served the emergence of a social schema defining and drawing the lines of male homosexuality and femininity. Similar to the global perception, short hair is not deemed as feminine and women with short hair has been criticized to lack femininity and to be lesbians. Similarly, for an ordinary Turkish man of conventional family background, it is one of a big challenge to appear in both family and public life with earrings simply because it is believed to take away a man's masculinity and desired gender role. In the case of growing mustache, it has various social and political implications on the public performance of masculinities, and represent nobility and honor. Though having a mustache represents the group of men affiliated with the conservative party nowadays, it used to, and still does to a certain degree, symbolize the middle-aged secular middle-class men and publicly demonstrates a degree of manliness and belonging to the patriarchal ancestry. Because it's socially linked to bravery and connotes Ottoman-like masculinity, many of the male members of the current generation

grow mustache not with those political and class concerns but with concerns over their masculine and manly image to the public (Ghoussoub and Sinclair-Webb, 2006).

On the other side, jewelry and make-up are considered as a woman's symbolic weapon for her femininity. As well as the socially expected overdone make-up on women, the public display of golden bracelets collected at the wedding ceremony as a gift from the guests carry such deep cultural and social definitions. One of them is that the bride who is wearing it shows to the public in a given public space that she is an honorable married woman, and she honors her husband and his family by publicly showing them off. A golden bracelet, overall, has a profound gendered meaning which is the symbolic power and independence of Turkish women, meaning women should strive to earn enough money to buy herself a golden bracelet. This example can be compared to men carrying rosary beads as a means of portraying their masculine image. Last but not least, it's of significant importance to touch upon the cultural perception of red lipsticks. Many women have feared to apply red lipstick which might imply low dignity and bring about shame. There are stories told by women about how they were beaten by their families because of their choice of red lipstick. It culturally represents an inferior woman, a woman of less dignity and honor, and a woman who is engaged in sex work.

Gendered Spaces and Events

In this section, certain spaces and events which have cultural and social indications will be analyzed based on the extent to which they foster gendered performativity in Turkish society.

Circumcision Ceremonies

A little boy clothed in traditional circumcision apparel is taken on a city tour

inside a fancy car followed by other family members in a convoy. The onlookers are amazed by the excitement of the little boy and the family proudly looks out the window celebrating their son's entering into manhood. There is perhaps not a greater event which shows off a little boy's entering into manhood and demonstrates a public event of masculinities. Surrounded, appreciated, and applauded by other men, a circumcised boy internalizes his both social and physical difference from the opposite-sex and absorbs his new identity together with the masculinities it comes along with. He is now compatible with the religious commandment but most importantly is a complete male member of his society. Seated like a king in apparel similar to king's, holding a staff with a crown on top of his head, a circumcised boy ideologically represents the society's appreciation of manhood and masculinities attached to it. In such a collective celebration as both the religious fulfillment and a rite of passage, manhood is attained in the appraisal of other mature men. In the aftermath of such ceremony, the masculine hegemonies come to the fore, to be learned and practised by the circumcised boy.

Soldier Send-Off

The military service and manhood are inseparable components in Turkish society where it has been traditionally believed that a man is incomplete without a military training. It is a platform where almost everything consolidates and reinforces the hegemonic masculinities one learns before the military service. What is interesting is that the public celebration of these soldier send-off ceremonies stands out as one of the most remarkable examples of publicly praising the soldier's journey to complete manhood. Carried on the shoulders on other men with the sound of drums and fierce

ovation, the soldier is sent off to the realm of militarized hegemony of men (Ghoussoub and Sinclair-Webb, 2006).

Coffee Houses

Unlike both the coffee shops in the West and the contemporary coffee places in Turkey, coffee houses in some less urbanized parts of the cities I visited and in the rural areas suggest a sense of gendered field where certain masculine performativities are acted on. Referred as “Men’s domestic alienation and their tendency to seek confirmation and male companionship outside the home” (Kandiyoti, 2003), men’s desire to constitute his male identity with other men turns into a gendered space as coffee houses where men entertain one another, drink Turkish tea, gossip and play board games. Turkish coffee houses have always been a public space where men who are often irresponsible and non-domestic escape to spend the whole day with other like-minded men. A certain dress-code is applied in these coffee shops; traditionally speaking, men whose jackets hang on their shoulders with pointy-toed shoes and rosary beads in their hands. Though the dress-code may have changed over time, one can still clearly argue for a normative code of dress in these coffee houses. In such a public space where the masculinities are performed in pure performativity, coffee shops of Turkey serve as a stage for gendered entertainment for a day without masculine gender roles such as bread-winning and family protection. Far away from all these conventional gender roles, male companionship in these male-dominated public houses reflect on the social burden the gender roles put on men.

Shopping Malls

The image of a “Young, slim women who care how they look” comes to one’s mind when it comes to the genderization of shopping malls. A woman image who is

fashionable, self-controlled, young and skinny and whose hair and make-up is nicely done, kind and meek-mannered, doesn’t ask for her rights, and easily adapting to the changing demands of the store manager (Özbay, 2016). There is not only the practice of an emphasized femininity but also a need for extra femininity where women consciously act on the role of a female with exaggerated femininity (Özbay, 2016). The performative act of extra femaleness and exaggerated femininity in shopping malls is not only a means to subjugate to the demands of men but also to the interests of the company. Being have to well-mannered, stylish, and meek, shopping malls in Turkey are gendered spaces where femininity play a much more emphasized role than the male masculinity.

State Buildings

Administrative spaces construct a huge part of the urban spaces within Turkish society and have their unique codes in gendered mannerism, clothing and other non-verbal aspects. For instance, contrary to the social expectations in women being modest, spaces that deal with administrative tasks such as city halls represent women in a completely opposite way whereas men remain quite conventional being calm, middle-class, mustached, and domestic. Women in these spaces are fashionable, outspoken, and wears dresses and make-up in a quite feminine form. Though the outlook is highly feminized, the manners including gestures, voice, and body postures comply with the masculine features. A woman image with a skirt above the knees and thick masculine voice, smoking and single parent, can be drawn based on the female representations occurring in administrative spaces. However, this image has been subject to change as the current government

has allowed covered women to work on state buildings.

CONCLUSION

Among others, Turkish society also offers us gendered aspects from almost all corners of social and cultural living. The gendered performativity is not only implemented through verbal speech, virtual elements, and the use of certain hegemonic vocabulary but also through the means of non-verbal marks people both consciously and subconsciously use. Overall, it can be said that in most of the aspects of gendered dispositions in Turkish society, there are dichotomies in both femaleness and maleness depending on the public space. On one side, shopping malls, which are in-door spaces, can possess highly feminized

attributions, and on the other hand, there is female seclusion in outdoor spaces through social prohibition and condemnation in touching, laughing, clothing, eye contact, and gestures. On one hand, the entertaining cross-dressed men both in public and television are well-welcomed, on the other hand, the statistics place Turkey in the first seats when it comes to transgender killings. In conclusion, in spite of modernized Turkey with her westernized institutions, the hegemonic masculinities remain internalized, sneaked into the social DNA of the society, and the aftermath of the Ottoman hegemony will long show its devastating consequences on the post-colonial identity of the members of the Turkish society.

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