

ENCOUNTERS WITH BLINDNESS: REPRODUCTION OF THE CONTEXT
OF NORMAL IN EVERYDAY INTERACTION BETWEEN BLIND
INDIVIDUALS AND THEIR SIGHTED RELATIVES/ FRIENDS

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EDUCATED BLIND INDIVIDUALS AND THEIR SIGHTED
RELATIVES/FRIENDS**

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis analyzes the understanding of the normal that is socially defined as the antonym of the stigmatized by centralizing sightedness and blindness and using the theoretical frame of Goffman's *Stigma Theory*. The inquiry adopts sightedness and blindness not as individuals' attributes but as contexts in flux in everyday interactions. In light of the relevant literature review, 20 face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted with twelve legally defined blind persons and eight sighted persons in Turkey - each participant has at least one relative or friend from the other group. The aim is to reveal how the context of the normal is encountered and re/produced in the interactions between the biologically sighted and the blind individuals. With a qualitative approach, interview data were grouped and analyzed in line with concepts of *Performances*, the first chapter of Goffman's *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. At the end of this study, themes under which the normal of sightedness is reproduced and further discussed. The thesis argument is supported

with the findings showing that the understanding of normal is socially constructed and reproduced in everyday interactions.

Keywords: Normal, Stigma, Symbolic Interactionism, Sightedness, Blindness, Disability



ÖZ

KÖRLÜK İLE KARŞILAŞMALAR: EĞİTİM DÜZEYİ YÜKSEK OLAN KÖR BİREYLER İLE BU BİREYLERİN GÖRME YETİSİ OLAN YAKINLARI ARASINDAKİ GÜNLÜK ETKİLEŞİM İÇİNDE NORMALLİĞİN YENİDEN ÜRETİMİ

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Bu tez, görme ve körlük konularını merkezine alarak ve teorik çerçevesini Goffman'ın *Stigma Teorisi* ile çizerek, toplumca damgalanmışın karşıt anlamı olarak tanımlanan normal kavramını analiz etmektedir. Araştırma, görme yetisini ve körlüğü bireylerin nitelikleri olarak değil, günlük etkileşimlere bağlı olarak değişen bağlamlar olarak benimser. İlgili literatür taraması ışığında, on yasal olarak kör tanımını taşıyan ve on gören kişi olmak üzere ve her katılımcının diğer gruptan en az bir akrabası veya arkadaşı bulunması şartıyla toplam 20 kişiyle yüz yüze yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Amaç, biyolojik ayırım olarak gören ve kör bireyler arasındaki etkileşimlerde normal bağlamıyla ne şekilde karşılaşıldığını ve bu bağlamın nasıl yeniden üretildiğini ortaya koymaktır. Nitel bir bakış açısıyla, görüşme verileri Goffman'ın *Gündelik Yaşamda Benliğin Sunumu* kitabının ilk bölümü olan *Performanslar*'daki kavramlar doğrultusunda gruplandırılmış ve analiz edilmiştir. Bu çalışmanın sonunda, görme normalinin yeniden üretildiği temalar gruplandırılmış ve tartışılmıştır. Tezin ana argümanı, normallik anlayışının sosyal

olarak inşa edildiğini ve günlük etkileşimlerle yeniden üretildiğini gösteren bulgularla desteklenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Normallik, Damga, Sembolik Etkileşimcilik, Körlük, Görme Yetisi, Engellilik





To my family.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
RFPs	Relatives, Friends, or Partners
TÖA	Türkiye Özürlüler Araştırması
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
WHO	World Health Organization
WHS	World Health Survey

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I would like to start with a short story exemplifying the central problem of this research. A blind friend of mine once shared with me an anecdote he experienced in a short film set. The director wants him to play a blind man drinking his tea while sitting in a tea garden. After a take, the director is not happy with the way my friend is picking up his glass. He expects him to *search for his tea gropingly* and then find it. *The director wanted me to drink my tea in a way that sighted people would expect from me, but I unintentionally did the same thing. He asked how I did that and was amazed. But this is what many of blinds do; I do not necessarily fumble for our things all the time; it is about simply memorizing where I put my glass...*¹ Experienced in many interactions between people with visual disability and sighted individuals, anecdotes like this have encouraged me to ask; how are perceptions of *visual disability* and *sightedness* produced within everyday interactions? How are the expected presentations of the “normal” and the “stigmatized blind” determined?

1.1. Research Problem and Questions

“[A blind person’s] most ordinary deeds – walking nonchalantly up the street, locating the peas on his plate, lighting a cigarette — are no longer ordinary. He becomes an unusual person. If he performs them with finesse and assurance they excite the same kind of wonderment inspired by a magician who pulls rabbits out of hats” (Goffman, 1963, p.15).

¹ Yönetmen çayımı içmemi istedi, kafasında belli bir çay içme şeklim vardı herhalde. Ama ben çayı yine aynı şekilde içiverdim. Bayağı şaşırdı, nasıl denk getirdiğimi soruyor böyle. Ama körler illa şey değil ki; her zaman el yordamıyla bir şeyleri aramıyorum mesela; o an zaten bardağımı nereye koyduğumu ezberliyorum direkt.

We all make certain assumptions “as to what to the individual before us ought to be,” says Erving Goffman in his book *Stigma: Management of Spoiled Identity* (1963, p.2). In my friend’s case, the sighted director shows that he has certain expectations from blinds. My friend has different traits “in the category of persons available for him to be, and of a less desirable kind,” attributed in the mind of the other – in this case, the director – as a reduced individual “from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one,” as he can be included in Goffman’s explanations about *stigmatized* persons. Relatedly, for Goffman, stigmatized is briefly somebody with an undesired differentness (Goffman, 1963, p.3-5), such as not having eyesight. This study aims to problematize both sides of this interaction: normalcy and stigma, referring to sightedness and blindness respectively.

Further, the fact that the director in the above example can easily grab his tea as a sighted individual is what makes him *normal* due to the interactional context of his encounter with my friend. If a blind person does the same, it is *amazing*. According to Reich (2006), only through interaction, people with *visual impairments* are demonstrated to be lacking normal abilities and are turned into *visually disabled* ones. Then, it is deducible that the social realization of disablement is rooted in how normalcy is constructed and maintained. To understand the disabled body, the researcher has to adjust her focus towards the concept of the norm and the normal body (Davis, 1995, p.34); since “[t]he ‘problem’ is not the person with disabilities; the problem is the way that normalcy is constructed to create the ‘problem’ of the disabled person” (Davis, 1995). The mentioned problem lies within the mutual existence of and interaction between the normal and the stigmatized. Delving into the phenomenon of disability reveals that interaction may highlight the sighted’s abilities, even more than the blind’s disability. This salience encouraged me to question this in existing disability studies; do they extensively focus on the normal? With this question, this inquiry aims to emphasize *normal* among its research problems.

For Goffman, the stigma of the blind and normalcy of others who fit the expected norms, i.e., the normals (Goffman, 1963), have been, are being, and will be exercised and produced through interactions. We can question memoirs like the one

mentioned at the beginning of this chapter in Goffmanian understanding of stigmatization. This study aims to question these everyday interactions in reverse by diverting the spotlight onto the normal rather than the stigma. Research questions regarding these issues are as follows:

- i. How can we understand the functioning of normalcy in relation to sightedness and blindness with reference to Goffmanian concept of stigma...
- ii. How can we interpret experiences of blindness and normalcy...
- iii. How can we explain the differences and similarities of blind attributes and normal attributes of persons...
- iv. How can we elaborate differences and similarities regarding the negotiation of things, persons and spaces by the normal and the blind...
- v. How can we examine the ways normals and blinds construct self-views and their own identities...

...in everyday interactions between blind individuals and their sighted relatives, friends, or partners?

1.2. Theoretical Framework

“Symbolic interactionism is a micro-level theoretical framework and perspective in sociology that addresses how society is created and maintained through repeated interactions among individuals” (Carter and Fuller, 2016, p.1). Erving Goffman (1922-1983), classified as a symbolic interactionist in today’s textbooks, puts interaction at the center in his analysis as well. His understanding of interaction does not define the fixed situation; instead, it is developed through and within the context (Goffman, 2018, p.14). He suggests a central concept – *Stigma* – around which all the theory revolves; interactionally developing characteristics of a person through which she might become dis/reputable by the other interactant. For Goffman (2018), while stigma and normal are defined as different forms of interaction, they are different products of the same fabric.

Which attributes a stigma or a normal correspond to may vary in different periods and cultures. Here, a paradoxical point appears in Goffman's *ipso facto* dynamic theory where neither the individual nor the society stands as a mere ontological ground creating what characteristics to be regarded as stigma or normal. Goffman does not intend to refrain from this paradoxical standpoint; he intentionally adopts it to grasp phenomena without any stagnant component. Thereby, the existence of phenomena is profoundly connected to the framing context of changeable interaction (Goffman, 2018).

In *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, Goffman (1963) merges this abstract side of his theorization with mundane, tangible, exemplifying interactions. In the first chapter, he scrutinizes *social identity*. A stranger's social identity is defined with her attributes acquired through her first appearances when she comes into our presence. Social identity and stigma are addressed relationally.

The second chapter of the book examines *information control* in line with *personal identity*, an individual's criminological (not psychological) identification (Goffman, 2018, p.88). Namely, if the person's lack of credibility is not immediately noticeable through his social identity, "managing information about his failing" (Goffman, 1963, p.42), i.e., about what is not normal about him, is at stake. For example, if a person has stuttering problems, he may try to hide his difference by not talking much. In line with this information control, Goffman examines different mundane interactions regarding concealments or revelations of the *failing*.

In the third chapter, Goffman's theory of stigma is addressed with group alignment and *ego identity*, referring to the "'felt' identity, namely the subjective sense of [person's] own situation and his own continuity and character that an individual comes to obtain as a result of his various social experiences" (Goffman, 1963, p.104). For him, ego identity refers to subjective considerations through bracketing social and personal identities together.

In the fourth chapter, Goffman emphasizes the stigmatized's situation and her response to that situation. Entitled as *The self and its other*, this section refers to deviations and norms, the normal deviant, stigma, and reality.

Finally, Goffman takes the dynamics of shameful differentness as the basis for social reality and examines their relationships with neighboring matters associated with *deviance* (Goffman, 1963).

Points raised in his book *Stigma: Notes on Management of Spoiled Identity* and his theorization go parallel with various examples of interactions. Disability and blindness in his work reserve considerable relevance being two blatant examples of stigma. “[D]isability in Goffman’s work as an occasion that has led to a consolidation of the ‘we-the-normals’ experience, as well as to the possibility of unpacking the normal/ disabled interactional scene” (Titchkosky, 2006, p.144). His theory encourages us to think that since normalcy is an unnoticeable background expectation, it is not readily visible to human experience. In other words, eyesight is taken for granted as a normal and unmarked ability, and this is why it has to be uncovered. A physical encounter with a blind individual is sufficient for blindness to be conspicuously revealed (Titchkosky, 2006, p.207-8).

Thereby, it is intended in this study to disclose what is unmarked and to tackle what is readily not visible. With the remarks of this inquiry, the aim is to bring what is invisible into view. Regarding these, adapting a theoretical ground in line with Goffman’s analysis on Stigma frames my analysis.

1.3. Significance

Most academic works tend to underestimate the ramifications of disability and apply similar approaches to this phenomenon. “When it comes to disability, rehabilitation sciences, medicine, psychology, education, and social policy research dominate the field. [...] Traditional approaches ignore that impairment is a common experience in human life [...]” (Waldschmidt, 2017, p. 19). The initial significance of this study

is that it aims to apply an interactional approach on the context of blindness which lacks in the existing literature.

A considerable part of the existing literature still strives to overcome the conflicting dichotomy of *medical* and *social* theory models of disability. It is flooded with different variations of the same argument: neither of the models is sufficiently applicable to study the phenomenon of disability. “[d]isability is neither to be located inside nor outside ‘society’ or ‘nature’ [...]” Thus, “neither the perspective of ‘society’ (social model) nor the perspective of ‘nature’ (medical model) can function as a special domain of reality that allows the delimiting and fixing of a universal explanatory mode of describing disability” (Schillmeier, 2008, p.612-3). Although its radius is small, this inquiry could be regarded as a humble step towards decentralizing both the entities of society and the individual.

“The ‘problem,’” Davis writes, “is not the person with disabilities; the problem is the way that normalcy is constructed to create the ‘problem’ of the disabled person” (Davis, 1995, p.24; Adams, Reiss and Serlin, 2015, p.373). The majority of the disability literature tend to centralize either the *disabled* actor or the *able-bodied* society. As a result, they depict a stagnant disablement of and by the society, thus a stabilized deviance of blinds. On the other hand, there are post-modernist and post-structuralist perspectives that intend to break that stability of the subjects. The growing impact of these perspectives in disability studies reflects the late 20th century in line with the cultural turn in sociology (Thomas, 2006, p.179). Among the two groups of the existing literature, this thesis intends to emphasize the normal and the stigma by focusing on interactional processes. Therefore, the interactional focus on the normal is another significant contribution of this thesis.

1.4. Methodological Framework

The methodological framework consists of the operationalization of concepts, method and methodology, and thesis plan sections.

1.4.1. Operationalization of the Concepts

Besides theoretical endeavors, there are many methodological attempts to reveal relatively indecisive concepts in disability studies.

1.4.1.1. Visual Disability, Impairment, Handicap, and Blindness

Disability is a challenging concept to operationalize as its definition may vary across countries which may inevitably influence findings of any research that includes more than one country (World Health Organization, 2011, p.21). According to World Health Organization (WHO) Report on Disability, disability is a concept that has a constantly changing definition due to the fact that its dependence on the interaction between persons is maintained through time. This emphasis on interaction implies that blinds and “attitudinal and environmental barriers” interact in different ways through which blinds’ participation in everyday life is restrained and thus is not realized on equal grounds with others (World Health Organization, 2011, p.4). With this highlight on interaction, dis/ability is not defined as a trait attributed to the individual but relations.

In 1980, World Health Organization strived to overcome the ambiguousness of the first three concepts mentioned below by taking the repeatedly used concepts of normal and abnormal as a yardstick:

Impairment: “loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological or anatomical structure or function.”

Disability: “the inability to perform an activity [...] considered normal for a human being, resulting from an impairment.”

Handicap: “inability to perform a normal social role resulting from an impairment or disability.” (Barnes and Oliver, 1993, p.7)

Oliver and Barnes (1993) criticize these definitions in diverse aspects. They conclude that the need for these classifications stems from argumentations revolving around social interaction. To illustrate, the process of social interaction between

blinds and sighted people can identify the former “not only as *impaired* but also as *disabled*” as disability cannot be defined without interaction (Reich, 2006, p.247). Considering them as disabled individuals could result in what WHO calls a handicap; a risk of performing their social role (WHO, 1980). Therefore, “persons are impaired for a number of reasons, but that it is only by society that they are disabled” (Bolt, 2005, p.539) or eventually handicapped. According to the definitions above, handicap stems from an impairment, but impairment does not necessarily cause handicap. While impairment is body-related, a handicap is about social roles. Definitions of disability and handicap are similar in the way that they both refer to performances. While the former centralizes the social role performance that is required by the outside world, the latter is about persons’ everyday activities and accessibility issues.

Hence, when we simply refer to the individuals who have complete or severe sight loss, which of the following words is appropriate to use? Visually disabled? Impaired? Or handicapped? Due to changing definitions and different cultural, social, and political attributions to these notions, none is used in this study. Instead, the concept of *blind* is chosen as an umbrella term to refer to persons legally defined as blind due to complete or severe loss of sight.

The legal definition of blindness is “20/200 or less in the better eye when using the best correction that can be provided by ordinary eyeglasses, or he/she has a visual field of 20 degrees or less” (Bickford, 2004, p.123). This means some of the respondents of this study as well have either little vision of light, or a complete visual loss. They are all referred to as blind since they all fit this definition.

The choice of the word blind is only an analytical and practical choice to avoid confusion. This emphasis is delicate as *partial sightedness* (low vision) refers to perceiving light, shadows, and sometimes colors. Despite this, when a large group of low sighted individuals explains this condition of theirs, people “usually decide to dismiss this information by categorizing him as totally blind. Those viewing from the sighted perspective decide his status for him, since he looks blind to them”

(Schillmeier, 2008, p.614). This brings us to how abnormalcy is shaped and categorized – an even normalized according to pre-determined patterns.

1.4.1.2. Differences: Normal and Stigma

In Goffmanian understanding, representations contain differences that can be grouped as desired and undesired ones. Undesired differences reflect characteristics deviating from what is expected from an individual within a particular context (Goffman, 1963).

Stigma may stem from “abominations of the body – the various physical deformities, [...] blemishes of individual character [...] or] race, nation and religion” (Goffman, 1963, p.4). Due to the first phrase in this quote, in Goffmanian analysis, having complete or severe visual loss (blindness) is considered one of many characteristics resulting in stigmatization. Stigma connotes “an undesired differentness” from what is anticipated. “For those who do not depart negatively from the particular expectation at issue,” Goffman (1963, p.5) calls, *the normal*.

“Normals are those who, at least in the face of some individuals and within some interactional situations do not represent *undesired differentness*” (Titchkosky, 2000, p.204). Desired differences refer to the characteristics regarded as normal and expected from an individual (Goffman, 2018), such as wearing eyeglasses or having brown and sighted eyes.

1.4.2. Method and Methodology

As a reference guide throughout the research in this study, Ruane’s *Essentials of Research Methods* (2005), specifically Chapter 2 on ethics, is used as a source for the ethical framework. In line with Ruane’s book, verbal informed consent is obtained from the voluntarily participating individuals; and the researcher has shown attention to privacy and anonymity. Face to face semi-structured in-depth interviews with 20 participants are used as the methodological tool. Twelve blind persons (Group A) make up half of the interviewees. Eight sighted individuals who

are relatives, friends, or partners (RFPs) (Group B) of blinds (who are not necessarily from Group A) constitute the other half of the respondents.

Since the snowball technique is used to draw a sample, its representativeness and reliability may be a point of discussion. Every respondent is considered to make a fitting participant of this qualitative research since their personal experiences are different, which is qualitatively more relevant than generalizing. With a slightly greater number of woman respondents, a gender balance is ensured. The age interval is between 20 to 50.

From a Goffmanian symbolic interactionist standpoint, another reflexive note is necessary due to the method chosen. In-depth interviews as a tool of data collection can be argued to be a limitation or a disadvantage of this thesis regarding the changing nature of the performance in accordance with different audiences and settings. Namely, individuals may act differently as much as they react differently during the interviews. In this analysis, this is accepted as a potential consequence for two reasons. It is essential to capture how the respondents express themselves, so their intentions or motivations are not a primary concern of this study.

1.5. Thesis Plan

In the introduction chapter of this thesis, a general overview of the study is given with a specific focus on the statement of the research questions, the academic motivations behind the choice of the topic, a detailed examination of the way this topic is problematized, and the goal of the study.

In the chapter on the literature and theory, there are thirteen sub-sections. The section reviews statistical, theoretical and field examples from the existing literature from abroad and Turkey. The section leans on respectively symbolic interactionist interpretations and new perspectives on positive/negative self-views, concerns disability and theories, regards gender and blindness.

In the methodological framework chapter, there are eight sub-sections. The methodological perspective and methods used are elaborated, sampling and field related information of this thesis are covered, the analytical standpoint is examined. After these sections, limitations and strengths of the study are mentioned.

In the analysis chapter, data gathered from the field is processed with Goffman's relevant concepts and theories.

After the analysis part, the final chapter is allocated for discussions on the findings and concluding remarks. This is the chapter in which the study is closest to produce possible answers for research question. This section also paves the way for ideas on further research domains.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE AND THEORY

This chapter is allocated to the literature review on disability and normalcy. It could be observed in the literature that there is a tendency of taking disability as the unit of analysis, which often results in underlying the phenomenon as a negative difference. It is argued in this thesis that when a study takes disability as its unit of analysis, the researcher has to position themselves within the “normal.” To break this vicious circle of marginalization, the unit of analysis of this thesis is determined to be the normal. Throughout this chapter, I have two goals; first, revisiting the current disability and normalcy literature, and second, discussing the literature and theory by centering the normal as the object of analysis.

2.1. Statistical Literature

Extensive research was conducted in 59 countries between 2002-2004 by WHO called World Health Survey (WHS). It estimates adult disability prevalence around the globe as 15.6 percent “ranging from 11.8% in higher income countries to 18.0% in lower income countries” (WHO, 2011, 27). The disability prevalence rate in Turkey is found to be 20.6% (p.275). These numbers demonstrate that Turkey has an average percentage of disability population regarding other countries included in the survey worldwide.

Unlike the estimates by WHS, “Türkiye Özürlüler Araştırması” (TÖA) (Turkey Handicapped Research), which is accepted as a reliable source by the Turkish government, assesses disability proportion to the overall population in Turkey as 12.3% (Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü, 2002, p.5). It is crucial here to notice that numbers demonstrated by the WHS are more up-to-date and that Turkey is one of

the many countries using estimates by WHO due to “lack of statistical information on disabled population” (Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü, 2002, p.VII).

WHO estimated that “[g]lobally, at least 2.2 billion people have vision impairment or blindness” (WHO, 2019, p.xiv). Visual impairment frequency is higher among older age groups and economically more disadvantaged populations (WHO, 2019, p.5). WHO Report on universal eye health considers visual impairment and blindness predominantly related to starting points of biological actions and implementations to avoid or cure.

TÖA estimates that individuals with visual disability make up 0.60 percent of the national population in Turkey as of 2002. The research elaborates on seeing disability with different concepts regarding types and degrees of visual loss. Among these groupings, while individuals who are categorized as “blind” constitute 11.75% of the visually disabled population, 21.12% is the proportion of “individuals with severe visual loss” among the total population with visual disability.

WHO takes visual loss as a spectrum and urges a group of concepts to analyze and distinguish the degrees of visual impairment. According to Report on Vision by WHO (2019), “[v]ision impairment occurs when an eye condition affects the visual system and one or more of its vision functions” (p.2). This means that persons wearing eyeglasses or contact lenses are defined to be visually impaired. Disability, on the other hand, refers to the “impairments, limitations and restrictions that a person with an eye condition faces in the course of interacting with her or his environment – physical, social, or attitudinal.” (p.2).

Concepts of *visually impaired*, *low vision*, or *vision loss* do not have universally acknowledged definitions (Blindness Statistics, 2019). To draw its object of analysis among many distinct concepts, the scope of this inquiry encloses two defined groups of interest; persons with severe and complete loss of sight. WHO defines severe loss of sight as “presenting visual acuity worse than 6/60” and complete loss of sight

(blindness) as “presenting visual acuity worse than 3/60²“. (WHO, 2019, p.10-11). Regarding these two groups, globally, 0.49 percent of the world population in 2015 were blind while around 2.95 percent³ (WHO, 2019, p.10-11) “had moderate to severe visual impairment,” which women made up 55 percent (Bourne et al., 2017).

2.2. “Loss of Sight” The Discourse on Blindness

“Loss of sight” appears as a questioned phrase in this thesis. Due to the existing literature, the necessity of operational definition results in a dilemma. Questioning how the normal is constructed needs to start from this phrase. *Loss of sight* or *vision functions* have to be critically handled to delve into the normalization of sightedness. Namely, the sense of sight declares and justifies its normalcy with its own function, fulfilling the need to see.

Nevertheless, the absence of sight does not necessarily mean an unfulfilled need neither as a loss. Indeed, seeing does not make sense to somebody born as a blind person (Dirier, 2018). Blindness is handled in this thesis as a difference and reality without any negative or positive connotations, while the perspective of normal relates blindness with a specific *loss* or *malfunction*. Throughout the historical review of disability – and thus, its *abnormalization*- it is crucial to remember that blindness could have been regarded as a mere difference.

2.3. Classical Models of Disability Theory

Being associated with a marginalized location within society, culture, economics, and politics, “disability” refers to one of the significant social phenomena symbolizing *difference* for decades. However, the connotation of this difference has changed through time frequently. Disability was considered in everyday life in relation with moral explanations in different times and places of history such as “a reflection of God’s dismay (ancient Greece), [an] evidence of an intimacy with God

² “60 refers to a specific measurement determined according to a print size of a vision chart at a certain distance.”

³ “globally of the 7.33 billion people alive in 2015, an estimated 36.0 million [...] were blind, 216,6 million [...] people had moderate to severe visual impairment”

(medieval Europe) and a divine response to parental wrongdoing (Renaissance period)” (Goodley, 2011, p.6). Called the Moral Model of Disability, this perspective is still the most widespread view despite its being the oldest of all disability models (Goodley, 2011, p.7).

As of the seventeenth century (Historic England, n.d.), a different perspective emerged with a modern outlook, and disability started to be postulated as a tragedy causing social and medical suffering rather than a divine message (Oliver, 1990). According to this viewpoint called the Medical Model of Disability, stemming from a physical or mental misfortune of the individual, being disabled is perceived as a distinct pathology that needs caring and fixation. According to Goodley (2011) and Oliver (1990), both moral and medical explanations “promote an individual model of disability, reducing *the problem of* [emphasis added] disability to the flawed tragedy of individual personhood treatable through the interventions of charities and healthcare professionals” (Goodley, 2011, p.6).

Nineteenth-century onwards, the Medical Model of Disability started to be criticized as well. Both strategies the model brought about – to kill or to cure – were transmitting the same main cultural idea: disabled people represent ‘what not to be’ and are, therefore, ontologically invalid or ‘uncivilised” (Goodley, Hughes & Davis, 2012, p.18). The former strategy was itself giving an inhumane, eugenic idea, and the latter was not successful. Indeed, medicine was not keeping its promises of fixation but still marginalized disabled people under the name of science (Goodley, 2011).

“The challenge to orthodox views [of both moral and medical approaches] came not from within the academy but from disabled people themselves” (Barnes, Oliver & Barton, 2002, p.4). Eventually, the two extreme approaches of disability specified were confronted with criticizing perspectives, which are called Disability Studies today. As of the 1980s, political activism and theoretical changes regarding disability have concurrently emerged and developed. The growing awareness canalized the thought that several social, cultural, historical, economic, relational, and political prevalent factors dis-able people (Herndon, 2002, p.122).

Accordingly, dis/ability is not individual-based nor natural, yet it is socially constructed for this view. This attitude called the Social Model of Disability emerged through grassroots organizations – initially “from the intellectual and political arguments of the Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS)” (Shakespeare, 2006, p.197). Similar organizations flourished in Britain and were followed by disability activists from the rest of the world. Being the starting point of these movements, Social Model attributes society itself as the primary source of disability by declaring that society’s responsibility is to regulate the environment accessible for all people. Disabilities refer to neutral differences and have to be treated accordingly. Thereupon, differences should not be fixed or eliminated but should be accepted (Burcu, 2015).

The social model is considered a “paradigmatic leap” (Olkin, 2009, p.12) and underlined the distinction between impairment and disability. Although its definitions are still controversial, the Social Model aims to distinguish impairment (bodily lacking, defect, or dysfunction) and disability (restricting, marginalizing, oppressing, or disadvantageous circumstances caused by any social organization) (Waldschmidt, 2017). For the first time in history, impairment *per se* is not explained as the inevitable source of disability, but the social is included in the equation.

2.4. Disability Studies: A Cultural Perspective

The Social Model of Disability paved the way for many following questions. People were searching for the reasons behind the need for social categorization of “disabled.” Groups advocating Social Model fell short of questioning “[w]hy do modern societies see the need to categorize people as ‘normals’ and ‘deviants’” neither did they question “[i]n which ways [...] ‘otherness’ – and disability [as] a form of alterity – [are] (re-)produced in history, society and culture” (Waldschmidt, 2017, p.20). Questioning these, several critical perspectives emerged. Among those, the Cultural Model of Disability as an analytical tool criticizes Social Model for its practical use in transnational policies. The Social Model’s basic ideas have been incorporated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with

Disabilities (UNCRPD) and classifications of disability in 1980 and 2001 by WHO. Indeed, the model proposed better social policy-related solutions between the lines since it encumbers society by creating an accessible environment by removing “the obstacles that persons with disabilities are facing” (Waldschmidt, 2017, p.21).

Nevertheless, these arguments are criticized for dreaming of “a barrier-free utopia” (Shakespeare, 2006, p.201). They resulted in an endless problem-solving perspective towards disability and altered the focus onto “accessibility and participation, mainstreaming and human rights policies” (Waldschmidt, 2017, p.21) rather than sociological reproduction of disability. Accordingly, this endless problem-solving perspective has provided an introspectively justified authority for the normal to define *the endless problem*.

Although the Social Model as “the big idea” of the British disability movement had had a significant influence politically (Shakespeare, 2006, p.199), it proposed a vague distinction of disability and impairment when it comes to qualitative research. In everyday life, distinguishing clearly between “the impact of impairment, and the impact of social barriers” (Shakespeare, 2006, p.201) is hardly feasible. For Shakespeare (2006), disability is a phenomenon being practically produced through interaction between individual bodies and social environments.

Cultural Model comes to the fore with these critical arguments on interaction and construction of disability. Disability is re/produced through its level of conformation to dominant social and cultural norms. Normalcy draws sharp characteristics of what individuals ought to be. To study disability, one has to focus on normalcy from which the disability is considered to deviate and thus, due to which it is reproduced (Davis, 2006). Namely, in order to study normalcy, disability has to be contemplated. Disability is among “undesirable traits” (Saxton, 2006, p.8-9), as Davis asserts on the construction of normalcy and invention of the disabled body in the nineteenth century. Disability is an articulation “of disgust for [...] ‘inappropriateness’” under a “tyranny of normalcy” (Goodley et al., 2012, p.19) in the context of the nineteenth century in which “[t]he distinction between the normal body and its broken counterpart is sharpened and naturalized by both literary

representations [...] and by certain cultural and social practices” (Goodley et al., 2012, p.20).

2.5. Normalcy and Disability Studies

Disability Studies focusing on normalcy consider disability neither an individual fate – as individualistic-reductionist models mentioned above do – nor see it as a mere effect of discrimination and exclusion – as the Social Model does. Disability Studies instead consider “the other side of the coin, the commonly unchallenged [normalcy] and [investigate] how practices of de-normalization result in the social category we have come to call ‘disability’” (Waldschmidt, 2017, p.24). Writings on disability have focused on the disabled person as the object of analysis, just as a race studies researcher analyzes the person of color. However, studying race has gradually shifted its focus towards whiteness (Davis, 1995) as the interactionally constructed *normal whiteness* is from what a person of color deviates socially.

“In the course of the nineteenth century, the real identity of normal and pathological vital phenomena, apparently so different, and given opposing values by human experience, became a kind of scientifically guaranteed dogma, whose extension into the realms of philosophy and psychology appeared to be dictated by the authority biologists and -physicians accorded to it” (Canguilhem et al., 1991, p.43). Questioning this dogma might seem confusing at first glance since the normal, by definition, is commonly thought of as a concept that has always existed (Davis, 1995). Nonetheless, the concept “‘normal’ as ‘constituting, confronting to, not deviating or differing from, the common type or standard, regular, usual’ only enters the English language around 1840” (Davis, 1995).

In earlier centuries, the concept of the “ideal” preceded this term. The ideal meant a divine perfection which human beings can never attain. Settled years of industrialization initiated and accelerated the social process of normalcy. The connection between the body and industry required information about the prospective workers. Due to this need, knowledge of society was obtained through statistics for the first time in the late eighteenth century in France. Definition of an

exemplifying profile with the most fitting traits to the new system inevitably described other characteristics as non-fitting to the society. This exemplifying profile was the “average person,” who paradoxically became an ideal. Deviations from this ideal had to be minimized, according to statistical researchers and many classical social thinkers of the time. Although decades have passed since its configuration, this social meaning of normalcy today has not gone under substantial changes. (Davis, 1995)

Although the two terms connote each other, the concept of normal differs from “the ideal” regarding its enforcement since most of the population is somehow part of it. (Davis, 1995) While “the ideal” is a stage that human beings cannot reach, “the normal” does refer to particular characteristics specific individuals might have, or sometimes even be able to obtain – for example, being an employed adult in contrast to the deviance of unemployment. Accordingly, the idea of a norm “creates the idea of deviance or a ‘deviant’ body,” a not-normal one, so to speak (Davis, 2006, p.8). Disability, or being blind in particular, is among different groupings under this defined title of not-normal, which is, in many cases, a state of being not normal for one’s entire life. However, disability is rarely studied with reference to the reproduction of normalcy in micro relations and everyday interactions as much as on a societal level. Therefore, searching for normalcy within disability studies in line with the related theory of symbolic interactionism becomes crucial.

2.6. Normalcy in Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic Interactionism, as referred to be a subfield of sociology, comprises of different social thinkers who have one thought in common: “society is created and maintained through repeated interactions among individuals” (Carter and Fuller, 2016, p.1). Social interaction requires at least two individuals “being physically in one another’s response presence” (Goffman, 1983, p.2). Every interaction takes place in different temporal and spatial circumstances, and thus, each interaction is peculiar and distinctive (Carter and Fuller, 2016). Due to the changing nature of interaction and experiences with one another, society cannot be treated as it is “structured, patterned or stable.” Accordingly, related themes such as meanings,

symbols, or social roles must be treated as social phenomena in constant flux (Carter and Fuller, 2016).

Normalcy for this view thus refers to social interaction, a social reality that owes its ontological ground to the interaction itself. “When disabling conditions are visible, or what Goffman (1963) terms ‘discredited’, social situations can be tense, uncertain, and ambiguous for people – and this can be so for invisible conditions too, in that they often involve strategic management during interactional exchanges” (Thomas and Sakellariou, 2018, p.5; p.41). We encounter strangers on the streets, at the workplace, or in any other publicly used place in everyday life. We navigate daily a “‘world of strangers’ where people are unfamiliar yet seen by one another.” (Garland-Thomson, 2009, p.33). In line with Goffman’s thoughts that are planned to be elaborated in more detail in the following chapters, Garland-Thomson (2009) says that we need to gather information about the unknown others as much as we can within the limited time of our encounters. People’s appearances give us clues about their personalities. How they look usually determines how to relate to them, and “we [constantly] need to determine whether the strangers we encounter are going to help us, mug us, bother us, see us again, or just leave us alone” (p.34).

Some of these infinite possibilities of individual actions or characteristics are considered normal and are commonly unchallenged, categorizing the rest as abnormal. Waldschmidt (2017) argues in line with the interactional nature of the process that these attributions are not stable, yet disability is often referred to as deviant. Besides her highlights on the cultural model of disability, she underlines that “disabled and nondisabled persons are interdependent” (Waldschmidt, 2017, p.25) as the two categories mutually define and produce each other within the interaction of persons and institutions. Furthermore, she holds the importance of problematizing not only disability but rather the interplay between normality and disability” (Waldschmidt, 2017, p.25-6).

It must be noted here that normalcy – not *normality*, which entails a fixed meaning (Adams et al., 2015) – cannot be thought of as a homogenous group of individuals. Schillmeier (2007), in his research on blind persons’ negotiation with money,

emphasizes that “spaces of sightedness and of blindness become present differently, and, still, they are not opposite or separated in social praxis. They crisscross, connect, and separate, and are becoming absent and present for each other” (p.596). This brings us to question sightedness and blindness together – the stigma and the normal if we look from the other side of the coin.

2.7. Goffman and Stigma

“[S]tigmatas were originally inflicted through marking or branding, on certain individuals who had transgressed the norms or values of a particular society” (Goffman, 1963; Oliver, 1990, p.65). They are formed through social interaction whereby individuals are marginalized from society due to their discreditable or some other undesired attributes. Goffman sees Stigma as a social phenomenon in that “the meaning of mark of difference (attribute) is generated *between* people” (Titchkosky, 2000, p.203) and does not have a concrete reality apart from human beings. This mark, however, does not necessarily result in Stigma; it “*becomes* a stigma” through interaction. Therefore, interactants and the context also play essential roles in the social construction of Stigma (Titchkosky, 2000). Features of the mark of difference are crucial in this process. Goffman addresses desired and undesired differences; the former are held by the normal, and the latter are held by the stigmatized. He conceives encounters between the two as one of the primal scenes of sociology (Goffman, 1963, p.13). In his regard, this encounter is where everything starts with interaction, which is why sociology needs to “return to the primal scene of interactions between the normal and the stigmatized in order to unwrap the mystery of the genesis of social identity and difference” (Titchkosky, 2000, p.204-5).

While some stigmas seem to be temporary or escapable, some of them – such as one’s height, race, or blindness – might refer to a permanent stigma, i.e., a social discredit or devaluation (Goffman, 1963). This individual departs from ideas of normalcy expectations (Thomas and Sakallariou, 2018, p.4). Stigmatized and normal people are dependent on each other in a “perpetual inferior/superior relationship” (Coleman, 2006, p.146). This relationship is experienced in different ways. For example, *normal* RFPs of a stigmatized individual are, for Darling (2013),

“typically able to overlook an attribute that is discredited by others in society” (p.17). This act of “overlooking” (Garland-Thomson, 2009) is crucial to study in this thesis since it reflects how blind individuals’ RFPs negotiate with stigma throughout everyday interactions. On the other hand, sighted strangers are often unaware of the blind individual’s true identity, and they engage in interactions more differently than RFPs. They rarely get through the stage of “fictional acceptance,” which refers to “pretending not to notice their stigmatizing features. For example, [sighted persons] may avoid using words like *see*” when they are with a blind person (Darling, 2013, p.18; Davis, 1961). This exemplifying act by the sighted influences sighteds’ assertiveness and presentation of their selves. Before tackling the presentation of self, though, stigma and normal need to be elaborated in detail.

Among the infinite variety of human attributes, which are to be considered desired or undesired depends on the context. The context is “to some extent arbitrarily defined” (Coleman, 2006, p.141). Any human attribute holds the possibility of being stigmatized; still, Goffman addresses power relations regarding the ability to stigmatize. Namely, stigmatizing is up to the “dominant group” who “can determine which human differences are desired and undesired” and thus, stigmas tend to mirror a dominant group’s value judgments more often (Coleman, 2006, p.141-2).

2.8. Displacement of The Term Stigma

How to challenge this biased way of grouping differences into desired and undesired, then? In line with dominant groups’ value judgments, Goffman’s stigma is dual with the normal. Namely, “[n]o term has identity in and of itself. Its identity is established in relation to all other terms, which in themselves have no positive identity” (Gross, 1986, p.32). Derrida expresses that, Western philosophical thought has acknowledged a restricting metaphysics whose binary oppositions favor particular values while disapproving the oppositely located ones (Best and Kellner, 1991). However, reducing the social into two abstract poles constructs “a far-from-innocent hierarchy of values which attempt not only to guarantee the truth but also serve to exclude and devalue inferior terms or positions allegedly. This binary metaphysics works to position” sightedness over blindness or normal over stigma

positively, “thus positioning negatively the supposedly inferior term” (Best and Kellner, 1991, p.21). Derrida discloses “the impossibility of [a term’s cohesive] spatial and temporal identity” due to a possibility of an infinite deconstruction process (Gross, 1986, p.34). Namely, while dealing with the stigma and the normal, it is hardly possible to overcome the limits of metaphysical systems. This does not imply an impossibility of their critique, though (Gross, 1986, p.31).

Subversion of the structure within which binary relation between the normal and the stigma rests is possible through reversal and displacement of the two terms (Gross, 1986, p.36). This thesis acknowledges that the two terms are interchangeable and only analytical parts of the same. Though this study does not claim to destructure the dichotomy between the two analytical concepts, it attempts to reversely position the subordinate term of Stigma in the dominant position of the Normal.

2.9. Goffman and Presentation of Self in Everyday Life

Some of the interactionist themes found throughout Goffman’s scholarship are symbols, shared meaning, identity (Carter and Fuller, 2016, p.1). Goffman (1990), regarded as a symbolic interactionist, prioritizes micro relations over the structure. He comes to the fore with the *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* predominantly parallel with his dramaturgical analysis. Presentation of self and performances it involves as conceptual constructs mainly refer to the analogies of theatre; persons are considered actors on the social stage of life who actively create an impression of themselves through different fronts, concerning people around, who make up the audience (Calhoun, 2012).

The analogy of theatre does not necessarily imply that individuals are insincerely acting as if they have way different identities and underlines his distinction between cynical and sincere actions, neither of which have positive or negative connotations, unlike their commonsensical meanings (Calhoun, 2012, p.51-2). Indeed, the performer may be fully taken in by her role and may be believing and be sincerely convinced that she is what she stages, or she “may not be taken at all” by her own routine. Thus, Goffman reserves the term cynical to the persons without any belief

in their own actions and any ultimate concern with the audience's beliefs while he calls individuals believing in “the impression fostered by their own performance” sincere (Calhoun, 2012, p.51-2). Measuring and comparing - through the interviewees’ expressions about their perceptions and presentations of their own identities- how often they adopt these two kinds of impressions and their effects are significant in Goffmanian analysis.

According to this role theory of self, “the point of articulation between society and individual is denoted by the concept of ‘role’ and involves individuals who are incumbent in statuses employing self and role-playing capacities to adjust to various types of expectations.” (Turner, 2004 p.165) In other words, the individual presents herself to whom she interacts under these expectations. With these expectations and performances, society is argued to be a network consisting of different social roles (p.26-27; Burcu, 2015, p.52).

2.10. The intersection of the Dramaturgical Analysis and the Stigma

The expectation from blind and sighted individuals sharing the same spaces is to act and interact as social and moral beings. “Their meetings may be described in terms of unfocused or focused gatherings. Unfocused gatherings are typical for public spaces where people interact but follow their own separate lines of concern. Blind people may sometimes experience this as “problematic” (Goffman, 1963; Maseide and Grotland, 2015, p.597). Individuals need to show “implicit or explicit claim to be a person of a particular kind” to which they “automatically [exert] a moral demand upon the others, obliging them to value and treat him in the manner that persons of his kind have a right to expect” (Goffman, 1956, p.6). However, the problematic situation mentioned above tends to occur here; the stigmatized individuals’ claims and the normals’ manners they encounter might not overlap, or the other way around (Goffman, 1963). This is the point where performances in the interaction between blind and sighted individuals and the phenomenon of stigma are merged. In fact, this point can be considered among crucial circumstances where the phenomenon of normalcy is (re)produced.

The focused gatherings are more intimate, different, and simpler since “interacting persons know about each other and share a focus of attention” (Maseide and Grottlund, 2015). However, this interaction referring to more personal spaces of individuals cannot be explained without the phenomenon of normal either. As mentioned in Section 2.7., interactions with RFPs entail the tendency of “overlooking” the Stigma, which includes different mechanisms of normalizing the blindness in that particular context of the private sphere. Indeed, both focused and unfocused interactions require utilizing both sources written by Goffman if we are to focus on normalcy.

Goffman suggests continuity running through his writings (Smith, 2006, p.5). One of his significant achievements is demonstrating “how the particulars of the conduct of ‘co-present’ persons, that is persons who are physically present to one another, are amenable to sociological analysis.” (Smith, 2006, p.4). Both *Stigma* and *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* have this co-presence as their starting point. When the mentioned primary scene of sociology takes place, the stigmatized may feel unsure how the normal will identify or receive her (Goffman, 2006, p.136). In this case, since the blind is aware of this uncertainty, her actions towards the sighted may tend to change accordingly, which is considered a peculiar filter influencing their performances.

Similarly, a sighted person who encounters the blind might tend to alter interactional signs she may transmit. The orderliness of face-to-face interaction results in intentionally or unintentionally conveyed signs through content, manners, posture, mimics, and body gestures. In the case of blindness, visually transmitted signs – which refer to a crucial part of interaction for Goffman (1963)- become insufficient in the interaction in some cases, even if the encountering persons are not strangers to each other.

In these encounters, a possibility of mixed and unanchored interaction occurs. Both of the parties may feel uncomfortable due to this shaky confrontation.

“We will feel that the stigmatized individual is either too aggressive or too shamefaced, and in either case too ready to read unintended meanings into our actions. We ourselves may feel that if we show direct sympathetic concern for his condition, we may be overstepping ourselves; and yet if we actually forget that he has a failing we are likely to make impossible demands of him or unthinkingly slight his fellow sufferers. Each potential source of discomfort for him when we are with him can become something we sense he is aware of, aware that we are aware of, and even aware of our state of awareness about his awareness; the stage is then set for the infinite regress of mutual consideration” (Goffman, 1963, p.18).

Therefore, that Stigma was written with an unstigmatized person's – Goffman's- perspective gives us clues for possible uncomfortable atmosphere the encounters of stigma might take. These mundane encounters from both interactants' perspectives are what is aimed to be analyzed within the unity of the two books by Goffman.

2.11. Empirical Studies on Normalcy and Disability

Goffmanian inquiries on the issue are influential. Thomas and Sakellariou (2018) argue that “normalcy and disability are ‘part of the same system’ since disability defines the negative space the ([normal]) body must not occupy” (Thomas and Sakellariou, 2018, p.7; Davis, 1995, p.157). In this study called *Disability, Normalcy and the Everyday*, theoretical and empirical studies are referred to. Moreover, normalcy is highlighted as a disability when it comes to everyday interaction and negotiation between persons and spaces. Reich (2006) also examines the interaction and mutual recognition between sighted and blind individuals in the public sphere. He reveals public interactional disablement emerging throughout sixteen conversations between non-disabled shop assistants and blind customers in two different shopping places in Sweden. He brilliantly opens up how the impairment turns into disability due to the problem of “having to explain listeners the information that one participant is impaired should be considered interactionally relevant” (p.249). In other words, with implicit or explicit references, the blind customer needs to assure that the shop assistant is aware of her impairment as much as the former feels the necessity to inform the latter of his acknowledgment of *the elephant in the room*. This need for mutual recognition is not only crucial for a healthy conversation, but also for shopping in accordance with the needs of the customer – for example; the blind customer may need “a music player ‘with more

buttons” or “a stereo ‘that is easy to use’” (p.254). His analysis exemplifies that the “non-disabled participants are assigned the role of helpers and supporters.” At the same time, blinds “become defined as needy and inferior” (p.258-9) as blind participants are forced to utilize improved cooperation and efficiency through sacrificing maximal social respect and empowerment.

Implicit in the discourses of the shopping experience as an everyday ritual, there is a *consumer normalcy* (re)produced (Baker, 2006, p.36). Baker talks about physical presence in the shopping place is not the only requirement of this normalcy, but it also stipulates demonstrating competence and control of the shopping experience, which creates a tension between blind consumers’ agency and others’ acceptance. Baker analyzes *customer normalcy* by focusing on blind customers’ shopping experiences with Goffmanian highlights on everyday life interaction. For her, both presentations of these customers’ selves and their stigmatized position within experiences should be focused on. Indeed, “the shopping experience may fundamentally change the way an individual thinks about him/herself and his/her capabilities in the marketplace” (p.38). When a blind individual carries out everyday ritual activities such as shopping, she also demonstrates that she is capable of doing that activity as much as others are. Departing from this view, Baker infers in line with Goffman’s thoughts that “[t]he normal appearances that they are concerned with are not normal appearances *for them* but normal appearances *of them*” (Goffman, 1971, p.259; Baker, 2006, p.39). Goffman’s work can indeed be read in Baker’s way, starting with the presupposition that disabled individuals have the intention of looking like they are *normal consumers*. However, considering Reich’s work above, such a presupposition might result in bias-related analysis errors. Therefore, being among blind people, in some cases, the blinds want to be regarded as persons who would appreciate the assistance of people around; in some cases, they might perform as normal actors in the related public space. Undoubtedly both analyses enable valuable perspectives in line with Goffmanian thought.

Among significant empirical inquiries regarding the interaction of normal within public space, Schillmeier’s work (2007) is noteworthy. He explores how “ordinary acts” of dealing with money and with money technologies fabricate enabling *and*

disabling – dis/abling – spaces” (p.594). He argues that blindness visualizes the power of dis/abling, normativity imposing, standardizing, and standardized materialities of money in everyday life (Schillmeier, 2007). From a Goffmanian standpoint, Schillmeier addresses the vulnerability, trust, and –almost an obligation of – “‘egocentric preserve’ a circumstance which one understandably tries to avoid, as nobody likes to display his or her insecurities with personal affairs publicly” (Schillmeier, 2007, p.597).

Schillmeier’s (2007) example shows “how blindness and sightedness are not inherent properties” (p.598) but for outcomes of relations between individuals and spaces. Maseide and Grottlund (2015) also delve into blind individuals’ interaction with spaces and spatialities, yet they focus more on the dominance of the visual world around us. Blind and sighted individuals do not live in separate worlds, but they have to share spaces. The article is based on ethnographic data in order to explain “enactment and management of physical and social spaces” for blinds (p.594). Among the exemplifying ethnographic data analyzed, authors tackle a physical encounter of a blind man and a group of sighted individuals in front of an exit door. Intending to “help” the man, the sighted group of individuals physically assisted him in an exaggerated way that they “‘shoved’ him toward the exit door” (p.603). All persons in this story are considered as objective bodies in a shared space bumping into each other. The action of sighted individuals can be considered as a possible intrusion in blind man’s “‘territory of self’” which violates “normative rules of social interaction (Schillmeier, 2007, p.606). However, the blind individual evaluated the situation with its practical consequences and from a positive point of view. Thus, they “‘indicate the ambiguities of action, morality and meanings in social space” (Thomas and Sakellariou, 2018, p.7). This work underlines how blinds are socially forced to have a “thick skin” and not react to every intervention they encounter.

As a blind sociologist, Siegfried Saerberg refers to Goffman (1963) and argues that “sighted strangers exchange glances, gestures, body movements, and facial expressions in the highly ritualized act of initiating and maintaining conversation” (2010, p.364). He focuses firstly on how space is constructed and lived differently

by blind and sighted individuals. The distinction he comes up with enables him to evaluate how blind pedestrians would negotiate the physical environment when they “try to elicit route descriptions from sighted strangers” (p.364). The exciting part of this study is not only that it covers a simple everyday interaction between the blind and the sighted, but it also elaborates discursive, acoustic, and physical signs within that interaction. Called “‘Just go straight ahead’ How Blind and Sighted Pedestrians Negotiate Space,” the article comprises analysis with over 300 encounter recordings.

Van Amsterdam et al. (2015) offer us another source leaning on disability issues and self-conceptualization of the body in their work. In their study, the authors explore “how physically disabled youth who participate in mainstream education discursively construct and position themselves in relation to dominant discourses about sport and physicality that mark their bodies as ‘abnormal’ and ‘deviant’” (p.152). Besides its sociological remarks, it gives a comprehensive but compact view of education-related literature on disability and education.

Conceptualization of normalcy among young people is also studied by Almog (2018). Almog points out after two years of longitudinal interviews with sixteen legally blind students that they have their coping mechanisms of “integrating their identity both as disabled and as students” (p.1). The interviewees addressed blindness as a difficulty but not as a “central thing in life” (p.6), which for the author resulted in normalizing their disability in their mundane relations.

2.12. Disability Studies: Gender

Many studies in the relevant literature could be elaborated with disability and gender from Goffman’s perspective. Darling strives to “apply a sociological framework to explain the relationship between society and self-concept in individuals with disabilities” (Thompson, 2014). Her piece (2013) revitalizes interactionist and identity scholarship of the earlier years while simultaneously paving the way for crucial theoretical and practical future advancements. This inquiry’s theoretical framework goes parallel with her standpoint.

According to West and Zimmerman, “[t]he concept of ‘doing gender’ demonstrates the socially constructed nature of masculinity and femininity as developing out of repeated, patterned interaction and socialization processes. The authors contend that gender emerges through interaction, directly contradicting the normative perspective of gender as an innate state of being or individual quality” (Carter and Fuller, 2016, p.7). In the light of these arguments, they expanded on Goffman’s arguments on gender displays “by demonstrating the salience of gender in interaction as a master status” (Carter and Fuller, 2016, p.7).

In Fraser and Greco’s reader on the body, disability is seen as part of a system in which value is attributed to body parts, and accordingly, gender conceptualizations are reproduced. “Women and men with disabilities are seen as less attractive, less able to marry and be involved in domestic production.” (Fraser and Greco, 2004, p.170). Indeed, masculinity is a widely studied topic under the heading of disability and self-conceptualization. Men with disabilities often experience constraints imposed on their wider social participation.” (Meekosha, 2005, p.7) such as; pertaining manual labor, seeking health care only when there is an extreme need, not receiving unemployment or welfare benefits (since it is a needy position for a man and he has to deserve the money he earns through his own labor), and being an active participant in bodily sports (Gahman, 2016, p.702).

There is also an emphasis on women with disabilities in the literature who are considered as having “an impairment of femininity and sexuality” if they are not non-disabled. Burcu (2015) points out that women with disabilities are targets of double discrimination, and in return, it becomes a major challenge for them to present their selves due to different social expectations. Burcu, (2015) underlines that women’s and disabled people’s bodies are subject to a certain socially constructed understanding of a naturalness (p.87). Namely, social characteristics of both woman’s body and blind individual’s body are predetermined by the ableist (Goodley, 2014) and normalizing society through some biological excuses (sex and bodily impairment) (Kafer, 2013, p.14).

2.13. Studies on the Normal in Turkey

Empirical disability studies in Turkey are heavily studied with particular patterns. Among related thesis studies, there are either problem-solving-oriented inquiries mostly on institutional participation/accessibility or studies gathering information of a group of disabled people without theoretically enframing the analysis and describing them as passive victims of discrimination. Esra Burcu's (2015) disability reader called "*Engellilik Sosyolojisi*" (Sociology of Disability) could be referred to as a representing compilation of related sources. Studies leaning towards disability mainly refer to the topics of participation in employment and education. One of the most prevalent kinds of disability groups as objects of analysis is mentally challenged individuals.

Additionally, almost every three out of four studies are handled within social policy disciplines or technological developments regarding the accessibility of the disabled. (Burcu, 2015, p.182-283). However, the studies can be discussed in line with the concept of normal.

Uzunasl n (2016) utilizes Goffman's Stigma in his master's thesis on blind and orthopedically handicapped individuals. Through in-depth interviews with 45 participants, he divides his findings into three aspects: social Stigma, relational/interactional Stigma, self-stigmatizing. He underlines the fact that persons *are exposed to* all three negative aspects. Although the central focus of his study is not the normal, between the lines of his findings, he proposes that "lives that are unfamiliar or unknown to the individual should not startle her/him or cause her/him to act defensively" (p.117). It could have been essential to merge this topic with the normal of the disabled since stigmatizing mechanisms might be pointed at who has unfamiliar or unknown traits. Uzunasl n's inquiry made me think about what normal is for disabled individuals. If the author aims to address the keys to "consider disability only as a difference" or as "a cultural wealth" (p.116), their everyday normal has to be added to the equation.

Gelgeç-Bakacak (2008), in her Ph.D. thesis, focuses on the distinction of normal and pathological regarding the understanding of mental illness. She emphasizes that discrepancies of biomedical definitions pushed other disciplines such as sociology to delve into the meaning of the two concepts. Although her focal point is not Stigma, sections from her interviews demonstrate that individuals distinguish ab/normals through specific characteristics that lead to stigmatization. For example, having ragged clothes, having long shaggy beard and hair (p.97), laughing and talking *too* loudly in public spaces (p.98), and cursing and talking aggressively with strangers (p.100) are referred to be some of the signs of being abnormal for the participants. Her analysis provides a range of exemplifying data for respondents' conceptualization of the ab/normal in terms of social, behavioral rules, religious and ethical rules and traditions, the discrepancy between social status and roles, gender inequality, and violence.

Ünal (2018), in her doctoral dissertation, leans upon “self-concept development of Turkish people with physical disabilities in relation to their body [appearance] and functionality” (p.iv). One would infer from Ünal's research that she elaborates *the normal* as a produced, preferred, and imposed “category of ableness” and underlines that this category's authority grounds its validation on its existence, i.e., has an introspective validation (Ünal, 2018, p.10). She strives to reveal disabled individuals' internalization and questioning of idealist and ableist societal norms and their effects on disabled persons' lives (p.143). She adopts a qualitative methodology and conducts grounded research due to the scarce literature on the topic in Turkey (p.29). Her research made me think how a psychological aspect (such as internalization of *normal*) and a sociological angle (such as social reproduction of *normal*) of a phenomenon are intertwined and thus have to be carefully examined.

Eryiğit-Günler (2011) puts the disease of “chronic renal failure patients who undergo hemodialysis treatment” at the center of her research in line with social roles, expectations, and *problems*. She discusses this condition as a primary trait while defining the individuals and considers it an undesired difference with a theoretical focus of Goffman's theory on Stigma. Namely, the essentiality of the disease is at the center, and its negative effects are presumed to have a dominant

effect on their social lives. She assumes that individuals would want to fulfill normally defined social roles. She argues that *ill persons* are exempted from some of the social role expectations, and their families provide the greatest support by fulfilling those roles for them (p.87), yet this has to be critically questioned. Her medical approach considers the normal as an inevitable ruler of social life to which the *ill individuals* are exposed passively and have to obey. In her thesis, the normal is argued to be in a superior stigmatizing position who always should remember the possibility of being a prospective ill as well (p.93), which in my opinion, paves the way to reproduce the stigmatizing understanding.

Aydın (2013), in her master's thesis called "Labelled Bodies: A Sociological Assessment on Handicap," conducts a literature weighted research. She reveals theoretical discussions on disability, social construction, and labeling. The author underlines how disability is constructed as if it produces the "problem" (p.59). The chapter on the social construction of normal and disability provides a ground to discuss labeling processes theoretically. In terms of otherness and handling the normal, the thesis can be utilized to overview the related literature.

Şentürk (2010) invites us to reconsider the "normal" subject in the theories of social sciences. In his speech, he leans towards a post-structural understanding of disability by arguing that discourses on ab/normal bodies are re/produced simultaneously (p.7). Disability is understood as an institutionally approved trait, and this causes defining, classifying, and discriminating differences.

Akoğul (2019) studies a crucial phenomenon in the everyday lives of individuals with disabilities: staring. Through respondents' experiences, it is aimed to reveal how staring affects their lives and how they are handled. Among her choice of words, she utilizes the concept of normal to refer individuals who do not have an impairment or chronic disease. Crucial points of interaction are raised in line with Goffman in the chapter called "How does the stigmatized individual interacts with the 'normal' individual?" (p.17). Understanding of Stigma and the phenomenon of normal is elaborated thoroughly on the basis of staring. In line with her study, it is possible to argue that staring as an everyday interaction reproduces the normal and the stigmatized.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Normalcy becomes a stigma within everyday interactions if and when able-bodiedness is thought in line with specific stereotypical characteristics, such as a tragic failure to elaborate blindness only as a difference. Accordingly, persons with the ability to see can be considered the collectively failing group rather than individuals. To displace what W. I. Thomas (1966) said once, the “tragic” view of *ability* – or *normalcy*- “dominates social interactions and social policies” (Oliver, 1990, p.2-3). This statement indicates that the normal is contextual as much as it is political. The chapter allocated for the methodological framework demonstrates ways to delve into this context called *the normal*.

3.1. Method and Methodology

Social research is broadly divided into two approaches: qualitative and quantitative. Both approaches are used to link the data to ideas or concepts. The data mentioned is connected to empirical representation (Neuman, 2014, p.204). While the quantitative approach is used to reach a standardized result through numerical data, the qualitative approach enables us to analyze “voluminous, diverse, and nonstandard” data (Neuman, 2014). This study adopts a qualitative approach to explore meanings, experiences, everyday interactions which could be unearthed in a more detailed manner through in-depth interviews.

Theories and methodologies are expected to be intermingled in social research. Symbolic Interactionism, the Goffmanian paradigm in specific, is oriented toward the micro-level analysis (Neuman, 2014, p.85). The methodological standpoint that this research has adopted is aimed to be explained following Neuman’s (2014) proposed steps of the qualitative approach to social research. Firstly, due to these

steps, *normalcy* concerning blindness and Stigma are acknowledged in the preceding chapter with a socio-historical context. Secondly, the Goffmanian perspective is adopted as an approach, and the research questions are posed in accordance with it. The choice of this particular paradigm is aimed to be justified by referring to other relevant discussions regarding the topic. As the third step, after collecting the data, concepts from *Presentation of Everyday Life* by Goffman are utilized with *Stigma* theory. Here, the fluidity of concepts alleviates overcoming a static disablement analysis, thus reaching an unfixed understanding of *the normal*. These methodological tools have enabled the research to capture the fluctuating nature of interactions between blind and sighted individuals, with an ever-changing contextual nature. Many points raised and concepts revealed in the two theories of Goffman overlap. After the study design, data is collected, analyzed, and interpreted as the final step (Neuman, 2014, 18-9).

3.2. Data Collection

For the method, semi-structured in-depth interviews are conducted with 20 blind and sighted individuals. The snowball sampling method is used to reach eligible respondents for this study as they are chosen due to their blindness or social relevancy to blind people. This method of sampling fits the purposed of this study in terms of reaching out to purposively selected target groups. The first target group is educated blind individuals aged between 18-50 from Turkey. The second target group is educated sighted individuals who are relatives, friends or partners of blinds. The second group's age interval is 18 to 50 as well.

3.3. Interviews

The researcher has reached volunteer participants with an open call text disseminated through WhatsApp and e-mail groups of a non-governmental organization (NGO) on disability in Ankara. A blind friend, who is also a member of this NGO, voluntarily placed this call in their circles. After volunteers contacted me to participate in this study, two different methods of interviews were utilized: face-to-face and phone interviews. Fifteen of the interviews were conducted face to

face, and the remaining were conducted on the phone. Throughout interviews realized via phone, notes were taken for analysis since voice recording was not feasible.

Face-to-face meetings were carried out in a private and silent room of a café in Kızılay. Some participants expressed that they had found the general atmosphere comfortable to have a sincere conversation. The researcher ordered some tea or dessert for the interviewees to thank them, as it was promised as a sign of goodwill while arranging the dates of interviews. Each interview was conducted one-on-one, lasted for approximately 90 minutes, and was recorded after ensuring the participants' consent. All interviewees' feedbacks and further questions were taken as notes. At the end of the interview, respondents expressed that they had found the interview positive in general.

3.4. Respondents

Respondents are Bachelor's degree students or graduates from different disciplines, and their age interval is 20 to 50. Twelve of the respondents are blind, and the remaining eight are sighted individuals who know at least one blind individual personally. Six participants volunteered to introduce their RFPs as prospective interviewees; ten participants are included in this study from these volunteering respondents' networks. Another characteristic among the interviewees is that nineteen are heterosexual, and one is homosexual. Among blind interviewees, five participants are fully blind from birth, and seven individuals can only see the light or are very low sighted. Since all low-sighted and sightless respondents are legally defined as blind, they are referred to as blind for the sampling. All blind participants use a white cane, which they define as a source of independence of movement individually. All participants reside in Ankara (10), İzmir (7), İstanbul (1), Ordu (1), and Konya (1). Two respondents from Ankara, and all respondents from İstanbul, Ordu and Konya were interviewed with phone while the rest were interviewed in person. All blind participants and three sighted participants are members of certain NGOs working on disability in Ankara, İzmir, and İstanbul. Further information on the participants are shown below.

Table 1. Respondents Table

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	City	Blind/ Sighted
Pelin	F	30	Ankara	B
Gonca	F	28	Ankara	B
Nevin	F	26	Ankara	B
Gamze	F	23	Ankara	B
Tülay	F	25	Ankara	B
Leman	F	23	Ordu	B
Kerem	M	49	Konya	B
Sinan	M	37	İstanbul	B
Hasan	M	36	Ankara	B
Birol	M	24	İzmir	B
Orhan	M	21	İzmir	B
Veli	M	50	İzmir	B
Koray	M	27	İzmir	S
Cihan	M	33	Ankara	S
Ahmet	M	29	Ankara	S
Akif	M	24	Ankara	S
Naci	M	26	İzmir	S
Ali	M	31	Ankara	S
Tilbe	F	34	İzmir	S
Oya	F	32	İzmir	S

3.5. Interview Protocol

Interview questions were grouped under different themes, yet they took final shape within each interview's unique trajectory. First, the *demographic information*-related questions were asked. Second, according to the participant's associations with sightedness, *difference*-related questions were asked. What was the meaning of being blind or sighted? In which ways were those two traits different or the same in social life? The aim of asking comparative questions about sighted and blind individuals is to enable exploring how the interviewees construct or give meaning to their understanding of *normalcy*. Accordingly, those questions are designed to examine the ways sighted persons and blinds construct self-views and elaborate differences and similarities regarding their perspectives on stigmatized and normalized features as the research questions address. Third, a group of questions was allocated to the theme of *interaction*. The points where the normal and Stigma are re/produced have been sought within the interactional contexts. Mainly the social confrontations between the normal and the deviant have been crucial for the analysis. This theme mainly refers to interactions engaged in public and private

spheres with sighted or blind strangers or RFPs. How both parties act and react in these encounters; has been a valuable query.

Regarding research questions, the mentioned interview questions aim to reach the experiences of blindness and normalcy as much as participants' negotiation of things, persons, and spaces. Apart from these themes, there are *the respondents' interpretations* of their evoked memories and attributed meanings about mundane *ab/normal interactions*. The questions are prepared to examine the functioning of normalcy in comparison with blindness and Stigma, which is addressed in the first research question. The conducted questionnaire can be found at the end of the thesis.

3.6. Analysis

Presentation of self is an extensive term referring to all acts of performance in the dramaturgical analysis. According to Goffman (1990), the term performance is used to “refer to all the activity of an individual which occurred during a period marked by his continuous presence, before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers” (p.13). Performances are explained with the grouped concepts below in Goffman's book. These concepts are used in the analysis

3.6.1. Dramaturgical Analysis

Dramaturgical analysis centralizes interaction and symbolic meanings behind individuals' everyday performances. Goffman examines performances under Presentation of Self with the following elements below. These elements are aimed to be elaborated with the concept of the normal.

3.6.1.1. Front

The front divides into two; the setting and the personal front. The setting is the fixed background providing the props for the scene. Personal front refers to the “items of expressive equipment, the items that we most intimately identify with the performer himself and that we naturally expect will follow the performer wherever he goes” (Goffman, 1990, p.14). The personal front consists of appearance and manners.

Among a blind's unfixed equipment, the white cane is an expected prop that would be exemplified for the field of this thesis. For instance, the dominant context of blinds' stigmatization results in the expectance from the blind to carry a white cane or wear sunglasses everywhere. An example of a fixed equipment for the same context is deteriorated eyes. Goffman's often elaborated examples are: age, gender, clothing, or expressive features, gestures and mimics.

3.6.1.2. Dramatic realization

"While in the presence of others, the individual typically infuses his activity with signs which dramatically highlight and portray confirmatory facts that might otherwise remain unapparent or obscure." Dramatic realization stems from one's need to emphasize what one wishes to convey during the interaction (Goffman, 1990, p.19). The insecurity about acceptance lies behind this term. Indeed, Goffman associates the term with the persons who think they would not fit in a group and face the danger of stigmatization (Goffman, 1963), which is also an example of the relation of the dramatic realization with "in-group alignment" examined under the Section 3.6.2.4 below. A blind's overly performed efforts of breaking the ice when meeting with a new sighted friend who seems uncomfortable with blindness can be counted as an example for the dramatic realization concerning the field of this thesis.

3.6.1.3. Idealization

"To the degree that a performance highlights the common official values of the society in which it occurs, we may look upon it, as a [...] reaffirmation of the moral values of the community" (Goffman, 1990, p.23). Namely, it refers to the intention of reflecting one's self as the same with or similar to the contextually defined ideal person. Idealization occurs to demonstrate or highlight one's characteristics that overlap with the normal (Goffman, 2018, p.44-5). For example, eyesight is often associated with understanding the other even though the biological condition does not necessarily bring about this social capability. In this context, eyesight is idealized for normal communication.

3.6.1.4. Maintenance of Expressive Control

“[P]erformers commonly attempt to exert a kind of synecdochic responsibility, making sure that as many as possible of the minor events in the performance [...] will occur in such a way as to convey either no impression or an impression that is compatible and consistent with the overall definition of the situation that is being fostered” (Goffman, 2018, p.33). A field-related example to “[t]he overall definition of the situation that is being fostered” is a sighted person’s anger management towards the blind. For example, a sighted person is insulted by a fellow sighted and expresses her anger. However, unlike the former case, she refrains from showing her anger towards a blind. This performance exemplifies the sighted person’s maintenance of her expressive control. In the latter context, anger is not an acceptable normal action, which should be analyzed with the hierarchy the context reproduces.

3.6.1.5. Misrepresentation

As the audience tends to accept incoming signs, the performer may be misunderstood at times, “and [this] makes it necessary for him to exercise expressive care regarding everything he does when before the audience” (Goffman, 2018, p.37). If he performs differently than he intends to, misrepresentation is the case. Misrepresentation can be intentional as well. An example of this is eye contact in this study. Namely, to give an impression of a normal interactant, a low-sighted (officially blind) individual makes eye contact by guessing where the other’s face is. This performance exemplifies the blind’s misrepresentation giving off an impression as if he is sighted.

3.6.1.6. Mystification

It refers to restrictions placed upon contact and the performer's social distance between herself and the audience (Goffman, 2018, p.45). Goffman elaborates mystification with failing or embarrassing traits of the performers that she prefers to hide. These traits’ meaning and, thus, what they connotate depends on the

interactional context. For example, the biological difference of a low-sighted person's eyes can turn into an embarrassing trait to hide when the context normalizes eyesight over blindness. Considering the field, when the sighted hides from the blind, the convenience of eye contact in a context can be an example of mystification.

3.6.1.7. Reality and Contrivance

In addition to the sincere and cynical acts elaborated in the theoretical framework, there is a thin line between reality and contrivance examined with anticipatory socialization by Goffman (2018, p.78). For him, patterned performances are expected from persons with similar traits in society. Since we all are born into these accepted performance patterns, what is contrived concerning our social status and our real performances often overlap. This aspect of Goffman's performances is processed with a sociological approach, and its psychological angle is overlooked in the analysis.

3.6.2. Stigma

In Goffman's presentation of the everyday self, front, backstage, and outside are three distinctions regarding the realization of the performance, preparation for the role, and being entirely out of that particular play (Goffman, 1990). He mainly operates front, where actual play is at issue, and he opens up the performance under different groupings of an act (Calhoun, 2012, p.51-65). In the research design of this study, these groupings of (a) personal front, (b) dramatic realization, (c) idealization, (d) maintenance of expressive control, (e) misrepresentation, (f) mystification, and (g) reality and contrivance are used for classifications explored under the play in general (Goffman, 1990, p.28-82). These concepts and the concepts from Stigma below are the analysis tools to examine the data gathered through interviews.

Stigma theory also enables me to use a group of concepts that are mentioned in the introduction part.

3.6.2.1. Stigma and Social Identity

It is an essential concept concerning blind individuals' point of view when normalcy is analyzed. Namely, looking from the other side, if stigmas reproduced by the sighted refer to interpretations about blindness, then stigmas that blind people reproduce can be evaluated as interpretations about normalcy. Therefore, blind people's reflections on normalcy and their interactions with normal people can be used to explore dominant normalcy understanding.

3.6.2.2. Information Control and Personal Identity

While analyzing the normalcy, it is crucial to focus on information control by normals. What is tried to be hidden by normal when they are confronted with the context of blindness? Information control refers to these factors. This concept is also processed in the analysis as the opposite of Dramatic Realization, which refers to intentionally revealing some points in the performance of normals.

3.6.2.3. Ego Identity

"The stigmatized individual [...] finds himself in an arena of detailed argument and discussion concerning what he ought to think of himself, that is, his ego identity" (Goffman, 1963, p.124). After the confrontation with the blind, what the sighted feel of herself, can be one of the questions related to this analysis. Goffman evaluates this notion with the following concept, In Group Alignment, in which the person's Ego Identity is at stake.

3.6.2.4. In-Group Alignment

"The individual's real group [...] is the aggregate of persons who are likely to have to suffer the same deprivations as he suffers because of having the same stigma; his real 'group,' in fact, is the category which can serve as his discrediting" (Goffman, 1963, p.113). In the analysis of normalcy, this concept is evaluated not with the understanding of "suffering" of disability stigma, but with feeling as a member of a

group. It is vital through which factors normals feel belonging to their group, in which their Ego Identity is revealed.

This research design does not expect to posit every interpretation about Presentation of Self and Stigma under only one group, but this is only an analytical guide to examine the overall material systematically. With a special focus on expressions about normalcy, raw data will be gathered under classifications and then processed with relevant theoretical interpretations. In light of repeatedly encountered patterns and distribution among the groupings, comparison and analysis are strived to be generated.

3.7. Merging Tools from Dramaturgical Analysis and Performances

The central theory used in this thesis is the Stigma Theory, yet this theory alone does not suffice to grasp the fluid and interactively processing re/production of the normal as a context. This is because the methodological tools the Stigma theory provides are more static and constructional. While Goffman argues that Stigma is an interaction, he develops stagnant tools that prevent the process and capture individuals as the main actors. In line with his idea of a contextual phenomenon of Stigma, we have to catch what is processual with additional tools. Due to this challenge, dramaturgical analysis tools in the Performances from the “*Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life*” are used for connection and mobility between the stagnant terms of the Stigma. The means provided from Dramaturgical Analysis are aimed to enable this study to have a more process-based framework.

In the studies handling disability, there is often one taken for granted common ground: the normal. Unlike them, the methodological framework here tries to take the context of sightedness (normalcy) as its object of analysis; it is considered as a machine operating through confrontations and interactions.

3.8. Reflexivity

“[R]eflexive knowledge is self-aware, value-oriented knowledge. [It is created] to build on specific moral commitments, consciously reflect on the context and processes of knowledge creation, and emphasize the implications of knowledge. When we create reflexive knowledge, we ask questions such as: Why and how are we creating this knowledge? What is the relevance or importance of this knowledge, and for whom?” (Neuman, 2014, p.36).

One of the main difficulties was the fact that the sampling itself implies an inevitable discrimination of blind people as they are chosen only because they carry the characteristic of living with this disability. For instance, if I as a researcher would choose to study able-bodied METU students' thoughts about disability, it would be easier to arrange meetings with people in accordance with my sampling. However, something pulled me back when I saw a young blind student whom I never met before at the campus; I hesitated to ask whether she could contribute to my study just because she was blind. “What if this offends her”; I found myself asking this question. The thought of approving and reproducing of a discriminative attitude towards disability made me want to quit at start and this was a main difficulty.

My fear grew with the gatekeeper's these very words; “Our group has had enough of these interviews actually, so I do not know how many of them would want to volunteer in your study.” It should be asked how meaningful it is when a sociologist goes to the field, asks many questions or does observation, leaves the field, and usually ends her study with a written document that usually does not touch those people again. It should also be asked, why is literature – especially in Turkey- not loaded with articles on the interviews which the gatekeeper told me about? Is what we do worth these? I find it horizon-widening to question a sociologist's own methods and consequences of the field, such as causing a group of people to “have enough of the interviews”.

Owing to my curiosity, I strived to overcome these two hardships by sharing them with the interviewees and asking them what possible reasons or solutions would be.

At this stage, a reflexive perspective has to be adapted since they pointed out the prejudice about disability. They underlined that these over-polite attitudes towards people living with disabilities -for example, over-thinking whether one would offend a blind person, fear of “doing anything wrong”- stem from, an internalized prejudice of considering people with disabilities as disadvantaged, suffering people who need help and additional care. Therefore, it has been vital for me to see that I, as a daughter of a low-sighted father, have certain presuppositions and prejudices, and as a researcher, I am glad that I have faced them.

On the other hand, this was not the only challenge of having a low-sighted close kin. After I had reached blind participants, I have felt very comfortable around them this time. Namely, I felt like I was *one of them*. This “process of identification” sometimes leads to unrealistic expectations and overseeing differences stemming from “normal’s normalizing [being] so complete” (Davis, 1961, p.129). This carried the risk that my personal standpoint as a normal and as a professional would have been blurred.

Planning the meetings with blind individuals limited accessibility as blinds use only certain streets and transportation options. I thought conducting interviews via phone, which was their preference instead of video talk, could cause limitations in terms of observation, but it turned out to be more or less the same.

Coming to the sighted participants, it has been a challenge to reach RFPs of blind individuals. This was due to firstly, I could not reach any active platform or an NGO specific to “people knowing blind persons” and secondly, blind volunteers were reluctant to tell people around them about the study. Their reluctance stems from concerns about anonymity as a few participants explained. It has been crucial to make them feel comfortable since the topic is usually a red line that should not be crossed. Their considerations were being offensive to blind individuals in general. This red line is aimed to be revealed more in the analysis part.

As I have reached interviewees with a help of my friend, I had the advantage of gaining rapport. Additionally, both sighted and blind individuals were all socially

comfortable people with excellent communication skills that eased interviews very much. The advantageous aspect of in-depth interview also should be pointed out, it provided the questions to be shaped in accordance with the interviewee. The fact that they gave consent for voice recording was another advantage. Another strength is the fact that participants consist of both sighted and blind individuals. Interviews conducted with blinds are also thought as interactions between a sighted and a blind, which is considered to be another advantage. Additionally, gender equality was intended at the beginning of the research, yet women outnumbered men. This is thought as an unintended but an advantageous consequence of positive discrimination in the sampling.



CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

From a Goffmanian standpoint, an individual cannot be steadily defined as stigmatized or normal. This argument can be explained in two ways. Firstly, he says that the normal and the stigmatized cannot be defined without interaction. Namely, he handles both as contexts reproduced within the interaction with all interactional elements such as time, space, wordings, or interactants involved. Secondly, their distinction is hardly possible also because the normal and the stigma have layers themselves. This difficulty of distinction is the very point Goffman prefers to stand on, as it allows to analyze the changing nature of interaction without fixing identities. To overcome this hardship in his interaction analysis, Goffman uses the two words as analytical tools. He adopts the frequency of being normalized and stigmatized as the basis when he operates the terms as pronouns. For example, Goffman calls the non-disabled person “normal” as they are less frequently stigmatized and more frequently normalized in everyday interactions due to dominant societal norms. This way, he unveils the interactions within which the context of normal is reproduced, i.e., how the attributions of the normal are (re)affirmed. Surely, his operational efforts could be considered a fixing approach in a post-modernist discussion, which this thesis does not adopt as a central deliberation.

Hence, the interactants with the ability to see are hitherto called normals for analytical reasons in this thesis as well. Due to the same reason, the blind/ low sighted and the stigmatized are interchangeably used. When two normals interact, the context of normal continues to be reaffirmed, i.e., the normal ways of interaction are operated seamlessly, such as making eye contact. Namely, within two normals’ interaction, the reproducing contexts of normal are hardly visible. On the other hand,

when the engagement is composed of blind/low-sighted and sighted interactants, the normal ways of interaction may not be operated smoothly. Then, the conflicting points of interaction can be observed more easily since differences of the interactants might push them to reproduce the normal in less usual ways. Thus, observing the interaction between the stigmatized and the normal gives away the conflicting encounters. Due to interactant's un/desired differences, these conflictual points might precede the stigmatization process of the blind as much as the normalization process of the sighted.

Many "sign vehicles," i.e., "many sources of information" about an individual, convey what to expect from her in a social context and what she wants others to know about her (Goffman, 1956, p.1). In line with Goffman's concepts of performances, these sign vehicles of interactions will be elaborated with the themes that are repeatedly mentioned in the interviews. The aim is to find out the main points of interaction through which the normal is reproduced.

The existence of blindness undeniably involves evolutionary and biological construction processes. It has to be acknowledged that seeing refers to a physically constructing biological state, yet its absence inevitably brings about social phenomena. Thus, the limits in this analysis are drawn around the stigmatizing social attributes and their social processes of reconstruction. Namely, setting aside the biological and physical aspects, the sociological reflection of seeing and its interactive products are unveiled in this thesis. For instance, while it is a biological condition that eye contact is not possible between a blind and his friend, thinking that he may not understand her fully due to this condition refers to an interactive and social reproduction of a social superiority of sightedness.

4.1. Front

Being the first concept of the chapter called Performances in the book *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, "front" divides into two sub-categories; the "setting" and the "personal front." The setting involves any physical items that enable "the scenery and stage props for human action." It is an essential component that would

influence the interaction between persons and the individual's interaction with spaces or objects (Goffman, 1956, p.13).

One day we went to the cinema with friends who had just met [my blind friend]. They asked me a bunch of questions afterward. "Was she comfortable?", "What did she specifically enjoy; did she like just being there or the sound effects?" [...] Of course, I didn't ask her these. Those questions include a subtitle with giant letters and neon lights "because you don't see things, you know" (Ali, 31).⁴

For Goffman, consistency is expected between the performer's personal front and the setting. The consistency here refers to the dominant normal culture. The normal value associated with this consistency in this expectation suggests that the blind does not enjoy a movie or cannot be a participant in this intellectual mode of consumption. The normally defined consumption of a movie is heavily centered on visibility. Namely, a blind's personal front and a movie theater where a visual spectacle is shown do not cohere for the normal. Goffman says that such an expectation of coherence represents an ideal type (1956, p.16). Thus among other characteristics of an ideally typical person expected to be in a movie theater, one comes into the front: sightedness.

The setting has a considerable effect on the interaction in which the normal is sought. The settings "establish the categories of persons likely to be encountered there" (Goffman, 1963, p.2). A blind, in this case, is not among the group of anticipated others to be present at this setting of interaction. If she were so, her presence would not raise a "special attention or thought" (Goffman, 1963). Indeed, Ali's friends do not ask Ali whether it was challenging for him to see a movie, nor they ask if they do something wrong with him, but they do both when it comes to Ali's blind friend. Therefore, the reproduced normal refers to the ability to be present at particular settings without compelling any special attention or thought. The ontological aspect of blindness has to be elaborated in line with "the ability to

⁴ Bir gün sinemaya gittik, benim arkadaşlarım vardı [görmeyen arkadaşım] o gün tanışmışlardı. Neyse film bitti, bana sorup durdular; rahat etti mi, işte tam neyi sevmiş, ortamdan mı keyif almış yoksa ses efektlerinden mi... Ben ona sormadım bunları tabii ki, resmen "hani çünkü görmüyorsunuz ya" mesajı içeriyor bu sorular. Hatta böyle büyük harflerle neonlu falan yanıp sönen alt yazı şeklinde bir mesaj.

be present.” In the context of normal, blindness is not defined as a thing. Its elusiveness hinders acknowledging its existence within the normal social. It can be deduced from this point that the reproduction of normal might not carry the intention of suppressing the disabled; the normal essentially does not contain a space to position the blind.

The second theme is the personal front, involving the pieces that are primarily associated with the performer. These expressive sign vehicles are often expected to be with the performer everywhere she goes, though they may be relatively fixed (such as an outward turned eye) or relatively mobile (such as a white cane). Depending on the function they fulfill, the stimuli of the personal front are divided into two by Goffman; “appearance” and “manner.” (Goffman, 1956, p.14-15)

She did not have a pen nor a notebook, but she had this writing kit for the Braille alphabet that made rattling sounds. Our classroom was crowded and loud, but this voice caught my attention. (Ali, 31)⁵

People don’t understand my visual disability when I take somebody’s arm and walk without my white cane. Then they treat me like a sighted person for a while. They get surprised when they find out [that I don’t see]. (Gonca, 28)⁶

Besides the consistency expected between the personal front and the setting, the sub-concepts of appearance and manner are also expected to harmonize with each other and with the setting. For example, in the setting of a classroom, the unfixed appearance of Braille writing tools attracts attention. Indeed, Ali notices the rattling sounds of a blind’s Braille writing kit because that sound is unexpected in the setting of the classroom. Similarly, in the setting of public space, a blind’s manner of walking is not assumed to be almost independent. The confusion occurs since the

⁵ Defter kalemi yok da Braille alfabesiyle mi ne sesler geliyor sınıf da kalabalık ama dikkatimi çekti. Ben o zaman dedim ki tanışmak istiyorum. Sonrasında birkaç kere görmediğini fark etmedim. Görüyor ama az görüyor zannettim ama hiç görmüyormuş meğer.

⁶ Anlamıyorlar koluna girip yürüyünce, bir de beyaz bastona gerek yok ya öyle yürürken. Konuşup ediyorlar, sonradan anlayan oluyor aa hiç anlaşılmıyor diyor mesela.

blind is associated with the sign vehicle of a white cane, sunglasses, or with particular restrictions regarding the blind's physical mobility.

Goffman (1963) defines social identity as socially constructed attributes and characteristics that enable us to categorize the individual we encounter and anticipate what she is "ought to be." We can say that social identity primarily depends on the dominant social norms of the society, and thus, the stigma, the normal, and social identity influence each other. The social identity that is attributed to blind individuals carries the possibility of strict categorizations or stereotyping.

People I don't know were calling me Sabriye at school. One day I asked one of them who on earth this Sabriye is. He said he met her once and confused me with her since we were both visually disabled. He knows this girl but sees me for the first time! How is this possible? 'My name is Pelin,' I said, 'do not forget this! [hits her hand on the table twice]. Don't think of people stereotypically, and do not ever confuse me with someone else again!' (Pelin, 30)⁷

The interaction above is an exemplifying encounter in which a social identity categorization of blinds results in a stereotypical expectation. The person who interacts with Pelin has met Sabriye only once, and he remembers her visual impairment as a part of her social identity. In line with Goffman's social identity definition, if neither Sabriye nor Pelin were blind, he might not have confused them with one another. Therefore, at this point of interaction, the normal of the sighted is reaffirmed through the social identity of who the blind is.

In line with the arguments on social identity, expectations about the stigmatized's personal front are normally reproduced.

As it is told by Tülay (25) that "they [sighted people] are surprised when they see that I manage to pretty myself up since physical beauty is by nature a visual

⁷ Tüm görme engelliler aynı tipe sahiptir gibi bir yargı var. [Sabriye] diye bir kız vardı okulda, orada denk geldim bu bakış açısına. İdari taraf da öğrenci tarafı da beni görünce "[Sabriye] nasılsın?" diyordu. "Ona benzettim", diyorlardı. Görece benden uzun saçlı, teni daha açık renkli benden kısa bir kız old öğrendim. Fakat ben görüldüğümde neden adım [Sabriye] oluyor, ona benzetiliyorum. Hayırdır dedim kim bu [Sabriye]. "Bir ara tanışmıştık" dedi, "nasıl benzetebiliyorsun" dedim. "Görme engelli olunca sen karıştırdım" dedi. Beni ilk kez görüyorsun, onu tanıyorsun. Benim adım Pelin dedim bunu unutma [iki kez masaya vurur] insanlara engeli dolayısıyla belli bir tip olarak düşünme, beni sakın karıştırma bir daha.

thing [for them].” This “by nature” visual sign vehicle results in different reactions as follows.

Sometimes people [refer to my blindness and say] ‘and yet you are so beautiful, such a shame...’ (Pelin, 30)⁸

When I do my hair, people say, ‘Wow, you look so pretty.’ It becomes an extraordinary issue, not a casual thing; they embarrass me. (Nevin, 26)⁹

These interactions show that beauty is an attribution not to be associated with the blind. In the first interaction above, although she is considered beautiful, there is the “and yet” factor of a biological difference, whose social context does not overlap with the normal understanding of beauty. Unlike this victimization, the second context of interaction above might seem more benevolent. Nevertheless, it refers to confusion, which also serves the reproduction of the normal understanding of beauty. The moments of unmet expectations about a stigmatized person’s social identity and her personal front lead to an uncomfortable situation (Goffman, 1963). The most commonly referred actions within this context for the sighted interactant are getting surprised, expressing pity or adulation, staring (Goffman, 1963, p.16; Garland-Thomson, 2009), or complimenting. For the blind respondents, the repeating points in interviews are; feeling more accustomed to this discomfort (Goffman, 1963, p.19), embarrassment, expressing anger, becoming quiet, or ignoring this part of the interaction.

Data gathered regarding appearance have a common ground; the normal understanding puts the perception of the self onto the grounds of seeing and being seen. Namely, the desired difference of normal is reproduced as being worth looking at and being looked at. Undoubtedly, this is not a generalizing ground as Goffman says that interactions change depending on time, space, and interactants involved.

⁸ “Çok da güzelsin çok da bakımlısın maşallah”. Bu lafı da çok duydum. [...] bir övme bile bir yine yüceltme noktasında.

⁹ Bi’ saçımı yapıyorum, çok eskrem bir şey değil. “Çok güzel olmuşsun”lar “vay bee”ler... Bunun üstünde durmaları yani utandıran bir şey ayrıca.

However, the dominant normal understanding tends to repeat itself within everyday interactions more, as this is the way it is reproduced. (Goffman, 1956)

Therefore, it is not considered normal when someone without the ability to look *looks nice*. This could be associated with today's societal episteme, which is looking at and being looked at. If the dominant form of interaction were based on another ground, the positioning of the blind would have been different. Thus, the dominant interaction form determines the way of normalizing.

4.2. Dramatic Realization

The *right to look well* brings us to the issue of inequality nourished by a hierarchal order. A structural hierarchy that has been inherent within the understanding of normal is often revealed in dramatically noteworthy performances (Goffman, 1963), from long discussions with high pitch voices to repeatedly under-handed implications or gestures. This section refers to the exaggerated moments of the interactional hierarchy and also to the dramatic efforts of balancing the interactionally produced order of attributions.

I'm the union rep, so I have a reputation at work; people come and ask me things. I go to the union meetings and then talk to my co-workers about those important things. I have normalized my life in a sense. They ask me when there's something they don't know. I have this respect awakening effect on people because of this. (Sinan, 37)¹⁰

Goffman mentions the stigmatized person's efforts to have a "mastery of some areas of activity" in order to "attempt to correct his condition" (1963, p.10). This deduction carries the possibility of stereotyping, for performances are hardly dependent on only one purpose. This set aside a blind's expertise just like Sinan's might pave the way to balance any possible interactional hierarchy. It could be deduced from his efforts that he needs an additional specialty to be socially relevant. Since blindness does not have a place in the normal understanding, adding up normal

¹⁰ *Sendika iş yeri temsilcisiyim, orada aktif çalışıyorum sendika toplantılarına gidiyorum. Orada aktarılanları gören görmeyen herkese anlatıyorum. Ben hayatı o anlamda normalleştirmişim. İş yeri temsilcisi olduğum için gelip bana da soruyorlar birçok insan. Bu anlamda çok fazla bir tanınırlığım ve bilinirliğim var işyerinde.*

ways of interaction to his biological difference seems to be a solution to exist among the normal. However, the need for expertise reaffirms the normal. Below is the relevant quotation from a blind high school teacher who has expertise in religious culture and moral knowledge.

They might not have respected me, for I don't see, but [due to my expertise] people genuinely look up to me. When there is a funeral home, there my social status shines more. People want me to read the Quran, pray for the soul of the deceased, and say a few wise words to the crowd. Well, I fulfill a social need [...]. Even a man with a golden door needs a neighbor with a wooden door. (Kerem, 49)¹¹

Kerem acknowledges the structural hierarchies and interacts accordingly. He serves something that the sighted ones, the “golden door owners,” would need. In addition to socially showing off one's achieved desired differences, dramatical efforts are at stake about responsibilities in the professional or educational life. According to the interviews, sometimes a dramatical performance is included in the interaction about the hard work one does.

OK, there are accessibility issues. I've had to study twice as hard as my friends sometimes. On top of that, I have to exaggerate my hard work to convince others that I have earned what I have achieved. (Oya, 32)¹²

It has to be mentioned that due to structural accessibility issues, blinds as Oya find themselves in a disadvantaged position in terms of time and efforts. Besides, the normal reproducing point raised here is the presupposition of this disadvantage by the more sighted interactant. In the context of sighted normal, a student's hard work is possible through the use of her eyes. The episteme of the blind student is

¹¹ *Ama mesela ilahiyatçı olduğumdan dolayı ama genelde tek görme engelli olduğum için odak noktası olduğum oluyor. Ama görmeyen kişiden çok öğretmen olduğum için böyle olduğumu düşünüyorum. Sohbetin gidişatı hep senin kontrolünde olmuş oluyor, farklı bir saygı duyuyorlar. Taziyeye gidiyoruz mesela, orada sosyal statü yönlendiriyor ortalığı, Kuran-ı Kerim okuyup üç beş kelam etme konusunda başka hoca yoksa bana düşmüş oluyor. Toplumsal açıdan bir ihtiyacı gideriyorsunuz sonuçta. Dua ediyorsunuz. [...] . Senin bir üstün yanın olmalı yardım alacağın arkadaşına katkı sağlıyor olman gerekiyor. Altın kapının da tahta kapılı komşuya ihtiyacı olur.*

¹² *Tamam erişilebilirlik sorunları var, zaten fazla iyimserlik oluyor eşitiz demek, aşmam gerekenler var ama bir de ben göstermek zorundayım çünkü bir şeyleri başarmak için, hak etmek için yeterli olmadığını düşünüyorlar senin. Abartıyorum artık çok çalıştım diye anlatıp, bundan anlıyorlar anca.*

structured in a different way than the visual way of knowing since the information is gathered mostly through touching and hearing. This is one of the reasons Oya tries to compensate that her way of study is valid. This struggle comes to the fore as a form of a dramatic realization. On the one hand, dramatic reflection by her reaffirm the normal episteme of sight as the struggle itself is acknowledging the dominance of visibility. On the other hand, it could be argued to be the only interactional way to prove that another way of knowing is possible.

Goffman expresses that the stigmatized is likely to move within a particular social circle in which the other interactants are more used to his stigma and have normalized it in a way (1963, p.52). Yet, meetings with someone new may require some tactics to eliminate the normal's confusion, especially stemming from having difficulty in ignoring the "failing" (Goffman, 1963, p.116). Blindness is a difference that can not be positioned within the sighted normal context, and the blind uses particular techniques when they introduce this new difference to the persons being unfamiliar with it. An example of these ice-breaking techniques can be a humorous sentence adopted by the stigmatized or directly informing the sighted about the visual impairment.

Sometimes when I meet someone new, I say 'Oh, hi! I didn't see you there', and we laugh together. Works like a charm. (Hasan, 36)¹³

I have to break the ice, or I'll just be excluded. I need this awareness so I can be assertive and guide them to start the conversation. (Koray, 27)¹⁴

Making fun of the difference in the first interaction is noteworthy. Turning the unknown difference into some issue to laugh at is a widely used technique among the interviewees. Expectedly the stigmatized becomes more experienced in handling the bizarre atmosphere resulting from the engagement with the difference of

¹³ Şey yapıyorum, tanıştıyorlar ya "Aa görmemişim kusura bakma merhaba" diye kendimi tanıtıyorum, hemen ortam yumuşuyor gülüyoruz. Her seferinde de işe yarıyor valla.

¹⁴ *Kaynaşmak zorundayım yoksa direkt dışlanıyorsun. O farkındalığının olması gerekiyor ki konuşmayı yönlendirip karşı tarafı rahatlıyorsun, mesela konuşmayı başlatmadan falan olmuyor, bir itmek gerekiyor başta.*

blindness (Goffman, 1963). Hasan and Koray are aware of the possibility of a tactfulness or distance from the sighted interactants. They sometimes need to step up to clear the air and show the *elephant in the room* (Koray, 27). This initiative requires a humorous attitude at times or acting too friendly. The interviews show that breaking the ice involves acting more enthusiastic and adapting a more outgoing attitude than the person actually feels. These ways of dramatizing pave the way for positioning the context of blindness within the dominant structure of the sighted normal through interactions. Though they eliminate the fear of the unknown for particular moments, this way requires those performances in every conflictual engagement.

The theatrical performance to ease the mentioned encounters also may involve acting too friendly. Goffman says that normals do not mean any harm, and “when they [act oddly], it is because they don’t know better. They should therefore be tactfully helped to act nicely” (1963, 116). However, this perspective carries the possibility of giving the responsibility of a “friendly” interaction to the stigmatized and taking away the subjectivity of the normal in terms of educating herself. This perspective also contributes to the validation of the sighted’s normalized episteme. On the other hand, acting too nicely is a repeating theme of the conflicting encounters. This responsibility of acting nice ends up with a discriminative understanding while there are times it becomes practical in everyday interactions.

Sometimes people just start a conversation and act too friendly to me on the bus. I know they are trying to get used to interacting with someone who is visually impaired, so I let them comfort themselves. It’s always nice getting to know somebody anyway. (Orhan, 21)¹⁵

Thus, repeating performances of acting nicely for both analytical groups have to be handled. Orhan’s point demonstrates an interactively developed familiarity of blindness for the normal understanding. Correspondingly, this datum overlaps with Goffman’s arguments about the topic of vulnerability from an angle. Goffman’s

¹⁵ *Fazla iyi ve böyle canayakın davranıyorlar. Otobüste oluyor en çok mesela ama ben takmıyorum, iyilik ettiğini hissetmek mi istiyor artık ya da merak ediyor nasıl bir şey benimle konuşmak. Kendini alıştırmaaya çalışıyor belki. Sadece körüm diye yani. İyi oluyor, yeni insanlarla tanışmış oluyorum, sorun etmiyorum ben yani.*

points show that the stigmatized are normally considered vulnerable and in need of a friendly attitude. However, in line with Orhan's words, we can come up with two points regarding the concept of vulnerability.

Firstly, the unknown of blindness is introduced step by step through friendly acts to protect the normal context's vulnerability to the unfamiliarity of blindness. The sighted person speaks to Orhan only because of his biological difference, as it can be inferred from Orhan's explanation.

Secondly, the stigma of blindness is attributed to an individual in this case. Orhan is the blinds' representative, and a homogenous blind community is assumed. Acknowledging Orhan's presence only because of his biological difference from a sighted subject validates the normal's dominant position. Therefore, it attributes a vulnerability or failing to the blind instead of the sighted's. The normal context bumps into the sighted one, and validation of their superiority is reached through having mercy on the other. It is associated with a sense of pity, as some of the interviewees argue. For them, this is a reaffirming action *that [the sighted] is so much better than [the blind], it's like she is trying to compensate [the blind's] bad situation with kind attitude.* (Tülay, 25)¹⁶.

4.3. Idealization

The normal is reproduced as superior and is idealized through these themes of interactions: comparison, communicating means, dehumanizing and help, and degendering. Everyday interactions are inevitably gendered and every finding in the analysis chapter can be discussed with gender related issues. However, it has to be noted here that, gender is not among the central concerns of this thesis.

What about the interactions in which more than one person is stigmatized? Comparing two stigmatized persons came to the fore in the interviews. In the

¹⁶ *Sanki bir şeyi telafi ediyor böyle iyi davranınca çünkü kötü bir durumdayım ama o benden üst konumda ya...*

Goffmanian sense, normalizing requires comparison. This attribute can only be noticed through corresponding with others that have less undesired differences (Goffman, 1963, p.3-4).

I have a visually disabled friend; one day, she came to my campus. We hung out together with my friends. [...] one of my friends said, ‘It seems that you are just like us after all. [Sighs]. ‘After all our conversations, is this really how she finally finds out that I am like her?’ I thought. ‘I mean, your friend walks a bit differently; it’s like she hugs the person next to her while walking around. But your walk and posture are not like that.’ [...] they kept comparing me with my friend anyway and found me more normal than her. (Gamze, 23)¹⁷

Fully blind means that you cannot see completely; I am not fully blind I am a low-sighted person. When I’m with my blind friends, people say that I look like a sighted woman. And with them, honestly, I feel like one. (Gonca, 28)¹⁸

The possibility of attributing more normal features to individuals depending on the interaction indicates that the expected features of stigma have degrees. These layers provide a basis to compare. In the first example above, an expectation of blinds’ homogeneity in terms of the way of walking is revealed through another blind person’s difference. If Gamze and her friend were sighted and Gamze’s friend had a slouchy posture, would Gamze’s friends compare her with her friend as if these two persons are members of a hypothetical group? Thus, for the sighted interactants, the unknown of the blind requires gathering information from blind subjects, generalizing and comparing the less and more common aspects of the phenomenon with the normal. Comparing the subjects discloses the reaffirmation that the normal of sightedness is regarded as a cornerstone originating comparison among the

¹⁷ Bana mesela bir arkadaşım şey demişti bir tane daha görme engelli bir arkadaşım vardı, misafir olarak gelmişti okula benim arkadaşımdı. Biz onla gezdik, kız gitti, bir arkadaşım dedi ki “Gamze sen de aslında aynı bizim gibiymişsin ya,” dediler. Zaten sizin gibiyim ve zaten sizin gibiydim? Ya yok o kız biraz değişik yürüyor, ama sen aynı bizim gibisin. Dedim hepimiz aynıyız hepimiz insanız sonuçta. Onunla beni kıyaslayıp beni daha normal buldular. O kız sarılır gibi yürüyor dedi bana. “Biz seninle o kadar konuştuk sen o kızla görüşünce mi benim senin gibi olduğumu düşündün,” diye hissettim.

¹⁸ Yurt dışında direkt blind diye geçiyor [...]. Sıfır ıstık ya da algı olduğu için onlarda, ben kör değilim sonuçta az görenim. Görmeyenlere fiziksel olarak yol gösteririm rehber olurum. Onların yanında gören olurum, başkaları da bunu diyor.

stigmatized. However, it is unclear where the normal ends and the stigma starts. Indeed, sightedness and blindness are not opposite in praxis (Schillmeier, 2007) and as they mutually define each other (Goffman, 1963, Waldschmidt, 2017). Indeed, in the second example above, Gonca as a subject who would have been attributed as less normal in a different interaction turns into a normal subject in a different interaction.

“I can introduce my blind friend with others like; ‘this is Ayşe, Gonca; Gonca, Ayşe [making the introducing hand gesture in the air each time he tells a name, then laughs]. See? Even in this, I’m using body language.” (Cihan, 33)¹⁹

For Cihan, the normal way of introducing someone is done with mimics and gestures. Hence, his adaptation to communicate with the sighted and the blind are different. Other ways of interaction are possible; but, the sighted normal can not think of any other way of interacting. This is because, in the normal context, predominantly visual communication means are available, such as body language or eye contact. Although other communication means are as functional as the visual way, they have not normalized as much as the visual ground of sharing information. Among all means of communication, its idealization prevents noticing other communication elements such as tone of voice, choice of words, pauses, laughs, and other empirical ways of exchanging information such as hearing, smelling, or touching.

Gamze, as a low-sighted individual, might be talking a lot; she says that speaking is her primary communication means. She thinks her sighted friends are “impatient” for not listening to her enough, “*they get bored very easily.*” This is another example of idealized visual context as people around her expect more visual information to exchange. On the other hand, communicating with a fully blind friend frustrates her sometimes since “*he moves too slowly when I ask for the salt on the table, or when we need to hurry*” (Gamze, 23). Her points explain that the idealized communication means is also fluctuating depending on interactants. Indeed, the level of sight or

¹⁹ *Orada tanıştıyorum; bak bu Ayşe, Gonca; Gonca Ayşe diyerek [eliyle tanıştırma hareketi yapıyor, kişileri gösterir gibi]. Ama orada bile şu tanıştırma el hareketini yapıyorum [gülüyor].*

inclusion of visual aspects of communication change the ideal normal to be reproduced. This exemplifies the hierarchies between different idealized normals.

The depth of the interaction changes the stratification of normal as well. Many blind and low-sighted respondents said they would appreciate a visually impaired future spouse more than a sighted one. In line with Goffman's words, blinds "value the understanding of the blind for the blind and [...are] glad for the understanding [that person] could give" (Goffman, 1963, p.107). As discussed, the biological difference of interactants might change the functioning of the communication tools. In line with this, both analytical groups' epistemic limitations are different, resulting in conflictual points of interaction.

The conflictual contexts in the communication between a sighted and a blind require extra effort in everyday interaction. For example, one of the interviewees shared that he could not have learned how to light a stove for years [from sighted persons] until his blind friend taught him how (Koray, 27). This example discloses that the idealized normal of communicating does not overlap with the blind context of interaction.

We call it [the language of] 'blindish '. When we see a statue, sometimes there are statues in art exhibitions; we touch its surface together. [...] I wrote a piece on my mustache. It turns out he didn't know I had one, so I let him touch my mustache [laughs]. (Naci, 26)²⁰

Goffman heavily lays his arguments on the presumption that both analytical groups idealize the desired differences that the normal holds (1963). However, the idealized position of the normal may or may not be accepted by any interactant. Though the frequency of the normal's re-idealization could outnumber, we have to remember that, within the interaction and depending on the context, structural hierarchies may

²⁰ Biz şu an onu şöyle kapatmaya çalışıyoruz, körcül diyoruz, bir heykel görünce elliyoruz onunla birlikte, bazı sergilerde heykeller falan oluyor. Ben ona bazen tarif etmeye çalışıyorum görsel şeyleri. Ama dokunabildiğimiz yerlere de dokunuyoruz. [...] Geçen ben bir metin yazdım bıyıklarım ile ilgili, bıyıklarımın olduğunu bilmiyormuş meğer, dokundu etti falan geçen. Yanlışlıkla parmağını da ağzıma soktu [gülüyor].

not be reproduced. Naci and his friend's mentioned means of communication refer to a shared ground in which the sight does not reign.

The interview data show that the blind is thought to be a living being who cannot take care of himself and needs help for most of his life. The possibility of a visually impaired person's different, but non-dependent everyday life is not normally assumed from literally picking the blind up when she gets into the bus to holding her white cane "like a leash" (Gamze, 23) to guide her in the subway, the blind encounters with dehumanizing actions. These interactions mainly come from strangers; thus it is mainly the stigmatized social identity of the blind that is leaned on and reproduced. Indeed, personal identity is not even the case as the blind is dehumanized.

When we go to the doctor's office, he asks my dad about my soreness. Dad says, 'My son can hear, you can ask him.' But he asks the next question to my father again, unbelievable. (Orhan, 21)²¹

[The waiter asks] 'Does she add sugar to her tea?' What does this mean; am I not here? (Tülay, 25)²²

Goffman mentions this non-person attitude (1963, p.18) in his book *Stigma* and says that this is about acting "as if he [is] a non-person, and not present at all as someone of whom ritual notice is to be taken." Undoubtedly ignoring the blind's presence reproduces a sighted-normalcy. The preassumption of needing help and acting on it reaffirms this perspective as well. Namely, dehumanization covers over-protective or interventionist attitudes as follows.

Do you know how many people say 'Hey Miss, your phone is closed, just so you know.', a day, like, a lot. Why would I keep my phone's screen light on?

²¹ *Doktor babama soruyor mesela "Neresi ağrıyor," diye. "Oğlum duyup konuşabiliyor, kendisine sorabilirsiniz," dese bile yine ona soruyor, anlamıyorum ben gerçekten.*

²² *"Çayına şeker atar mı," diyor. Ben yokum orada sanki, ne saçmalık bu?*

I don't see [laughs]. I always have to convince them that I can't see but surprisingly my brain works. (Tilbe, 34)²³

Owing to the gathered data, the normal of sightedness is often connected with understanding other people, knowing what to do in a social situation, reading the room, being in control, being the subject of an action, and living independently, among many other abilities that came up during the interviews. As has been mentioned above, visual impairment comes with some biological consequences, and this analysis can shed light on the widely accepted social inferences that are irrelevant to the biological condition.

The normal is reproduced when an individual with visual impairment is treated as she is not a human. The sighted is thought to have desired differences capable of thinking, understanding, or hearing. In addition t, the “desired but undesired differences” (Goffman, 1963) that can be referred to as myths are at stake when it comes to abilities. Among these differences, a strong memory, sixth sense, an extreme bump of locality are found. These so-called positive abilities being normally related to blindness bring benevolent discrimination, and indirectly, an idealization of sightedness to the mind.

For Deegan (2014), Goffman's “dramas and dramaturgy are dialectically related to feminist analysis” (Deegan, 2014, p.80). In line with the idealization, for Goffman (1956), performances that “tend to incorporate and exemplify the officially accredited values of the society” (p.23) assure a presentation of an idealized self whether it implies an inferior social status than the reality. To illustrate the former, he underlines the presentation of a more idealized self paving way to upward social mobility; he points out the sign vehicles reflected differently, such as wealth. As an example to the latter, the fact that people of colour feel obliged to affect “[t]he

²³ Ben telefonumun ekranını kapalı kullanırım, şarj yemeye gerek yok, insanların whatsappını banka hesabındaki miktarı görmelerine gerek yok. Abartmıyorum Ceylin, ben beş bin insana telefonumun ekranının özellikle kapalı olduğunu açıklamak zorunda kaldığımı hatırlıyorum. “Telefonun açık değil.” Bak! “Sen onu açamadın.” Abi, bir dakika, n'oluyoruz, anlatabiliyor muyum... Görmüyorsak da kafamız çalışıyor, bunu anlatmak gerekiyor bir de.

ignorant, shiftless, happy-go-lucky manner” around whites is an illustration of playing up an idealized performance (Goffman, 1956, p.25).

In line with Goffman’s discussions, as a carrier of two undermined social statuses, a disabled woman’s officially accredited idealized self would exemplify negative attributes. Namely, an ideal blind woman is officially valued to be an asexual and genderless human (Kallianes and Rubinfeld, 1997, p.203). Indeed, blind men also are “constrained in their opportunities to nurture and to be nurtured, to be loved and to love, and to become parents if they so desire” (Fine and Asch, 1988, p.13).

West and Zimmerman (1987) argue that, “[i]n order to enact gender, people with disabilities must be recognized by others as appropriately masculine or feminine”. Performing the hierarchy between the normal and the stigmatized has its way through attributions of gender. Indeed, Goffman (The data gathered show that usually, sighted persons do not consider the blind as a gendered human being. In order to fit into the ideal definitions of gender, among other normalized traits, a person needs to be able-bodied.

The deceptively socially constructed gender issues are prominent since blind individuals are physically and mentally able to enjoy their gender identities and sexual orientations. However, blinds “are often treated as asexual, genderless human beings” (Women With Disabilities in Australia, n.d) due to the expectations about defined normal male and female body (Burcu, 2015), such as considering a non-disabled woman as a future mother. Although expectations such as the example of “future mother” are discriminatory especially for women, the fact that blind women are not even included in these widely encountered expectations can be thought as another layer of stigma (Corbett et. al., 2009, p.198-9 ; Women With Disabilities in Australia, n.d.).

We all hear, especially from older people, that we would get married eventually, right? Even though one does not plan to marry, she would be just “OK, whatever” about it. This everyday thing does not happen to her. This

message of “you are not normal” hits her when this is not assumed by people as often. (Cihan, 33)²⁴

Girls used to change in front of me before the PE class in high school. I may not see, but I was a boy, and it was weird, I think. (Orhan, 21)²⁵

This woman guided me to the bathroom, but we entered the ladies’ room. When I reacted to this, women there said, “you won’t do any harm” well, what should I do with this sentence? (Birol, 24)²⁶

Birol’s point – similar to Orhan’s – induces that men are normally thought to be “harmful,” but blind men are not. Cihan’s point infers that a woman is thought to be married in her future. Mixed with gender attributions of Turkish society, in the definition normal woman and man do not include the blind. It can be firstly deduced from these points that the blind can be thought of as a genderless group in some interaction contexts. Secondly, blind women are more likely to be exposed to double discrimination (Meekosha, 2005). Both being blind and being a woman are regarded on an inferior level normally, as the interviewees point out.

Helping out as a form of flirtation, I think, is common. Even if a woman is able-bodied, she is thought of as someone in need, and a guy comes over, saves her; this is an accepted thing. Helping out to a dude is not a wide way of flirting. So when you help out a blind woman, [you give off] some mixed signals (Tülay, 25).²⁷

²⁴ *Sen evleneceksin anne olacaksın denince evet deyip geçiştiriyor aslında istemiyor bunu duymak. Ya da bunu duymaya OK, sorun etmiyor. Daha çok maruz kalma durumu hoşuna gidiyor belki birçok insanın, görmeyene söylenmeyince “tamam duydum bunları, cebime koyayım bitti” deme seçeneği olmuyor. Normal değilim’i daha bir gözüne sokar gibi mi oluyor bilmiyorum.*

²⁵ *Yanımda giyinip soyunuyorlardı beden dersinden önce. Yani görmüyorum ama erkeğim sonuçta, aşırı garip bir şey bu bence.*

²⁶ *Bir kadın gel ben seni götürüyem dedi kadınlar tuvaletine götürmüş meğer, girdikten sonra anladım. “N’apıyorsunuz burası kadınlar tuvaleti mi” dedim “Senden zarar gelmez,” diyor hemen oradaki diğer kadınlar. Rahatsız olmazlarmış çünkü zarar veremezmişim, ne yapayım ben bu lafla şimdi?*

²⁷ *“Bir kur biçimi olarak yardım etmek” var bence ve bu kadına daha çok yapılan bir şey, daha fazla yapılması normal karşılanıyor en azından. Erkeğe yardım etme kur davranışı içerisinde yer alan bir şey değil. Engellilikle bağlantılı yardım etmek ile diğer türlü olan yardım etme kolay karıştırılıyor.*

In line with Tülay's thoughts, this blurred flirting area risks exposure to sexual harassment and emotional abuse. Indeed, "*after weeks of flirting and texting,*" Leman (23) says, her able-bodied flirt "*suddenly friend-zoned*" her when the relationship had started to require a commitment.

4.4. Maintenance of Expressive Control

The normal tends to secure its affirmed position within the society through maintenance of expressive control. Below are the repeating themes grouped.

Expressive control is vital for a coherent performance, Goffman (1956) says. Namely, "performers commonly attempt to exert a kind of synecdochic responsibility, making sure [...] to convey [...] an impression that is compatible and consistent with the overall definition of the situation that is being fostered" (Goffman, 1956, p.33). Accordingly, trying to keep the atmosphere neutral or positive by the sighted is a repeating issue in the interviews. For example, the sighted tries not to get mad easily at her blind friend, at least in the first months of their friendship. The unknown territory of arguing with the blind is discomforting. Since interacting on equal grounds allows expressing one's own frustration or bearing the other person's anger, this struggle brings an unequal context to mind.

We were chatting in class, and our teacher warned both of us. I weirdly felt happy when she was mad at her too. She is not different from us. Actually, when I say "her and us", it sounds like "they are humans too" as people say for the LGBT individuals, but I tried to mean that we are all the same. (Akif, 24)²⁸

At first times I approached him carefully as if he is fragile. Then I allowed myself to be mad at him. We fought a lot, had disagreements, and this changed my perspective toward disability as a topic. (Naci, 26)²⁹

²⁸ Bir hoca daha vardı, onunla konuştuk diye bizi uyarmıştı. Garip bir şekilde mutlu hissettim ona kızılınca. O bizden bir farkı yok, hoca gözümüzde bi büyülmüştü. Gerçi "biz" "o" deyince "onlar da insan" denir ya lgbt bireylere, onun gibi oldu ama hani aynıyız anlamında demek istedim.

²⁹ Başta daha hassas davranıyordum, kırılgan olabileceğini, destekleyebileceğimi düşünüyordum. Sonra ona öfkelenmeye izin verdim kendime. Ona da öfkelenim çok tartıştık, çatıştık, bu benim engellilikle ilgili bakışımı değiştirdi aslında biraz.

These interactions show that impairment carries the risk of turning into disability when the normal context and reactions are at stake. As mentioned at the beginning of the analysis chapter, asking the two questions of “what would have happened between two sighted individuals” and “how the same interaction changes between a blind and a sighted” shows us where the conflict happens. Without his friend’s undesired difference in the normal context, Akif would not have thought about the “her and us” distinction. Similarly, Naci would not have approached one of his sighted friends cautiously as if he had a distinct social vulnerability. Goffman says that under the maintenance of expressive control lies the concern of an incoherent performance. Naci’s point on “approaching carefully” turns out not to be coherent with his perspective, and he rearranges his expressive frame. On the other hand, Akif’s teacher tries to maintain a coherent equal attitude toward every student in the class. Her perspective evokes Akif’s thoughts as she challenges the normal context of the sighted.

When I accidentally drop a glass of tea, people start to blame each other for placing it too close to my hand. It can’t be someone else’s fault every single time. I want to be able to make a mistake; I can take responsibility. (Sinan, 37)³⁰

The right to make a mistake is also a search for the opportunity of maintaining one’s own coherent performance. From Sinan’s words above, we can see the struggle of a coherent performance to be maintained that does not nourish his stigmatization. In his interview, he makes the comparison of his particular social condition with a sighted person. Having the right to exist as an individual who makes mistakes or acts clumsy sometimes is what he claims to have as a trait – though blindness defined by the normal context does not allow that.

³⁰ *Çay düştü diyelim elinden gören birinin, bu tür durumlarda kişi kendini kötü hissediyor. Bunu ben yapınca [çayı düşürdüğümde] karşınızdaki daha çok çayınızı karıştırmak istiyor, kontrolü bana vermiyor. Bu olay başıma gelince bir kaza olmasın diye düşünüyorum. “Olur böyle kazalar” diyorlar, ya da o evde başka biri varsa kızıyor ona “niye tutturmadın, niye dikkat etmedin” diye öbürüne kızıyor. Kaş göz ediyor belki o sırada görmüyorum. “Ah neden ben halletmedim” diyorlar. Sakat olarak hayatta hata yapma şansınız yok, hata yapınca hatanın kendisi zaten fiziksel kusurunuz olduğu için. Hata yapabilmek istiyorum, hep üstleniliyor. Hatayı yapınca sizi tanımayan insanların yanında yapmam lazım.*

In line with Goffman's (1963) arguments, lowering the expectations about the stigmatized reassures the normal's superior position. Whether the other interactant is one's thesis advisor or his superior at work, lowered expectations might be expressed consistently when the responsibilities of the stigmatized are in question. At this point, two issues have to be highlighted. Firstly, these interactions may include the stigmatized's persuading explanations about his success being dramatically delivered, as covered in the section on "dramatic realization." Secondly, low expectations may lead to admiration or jealousy.

When people find out that I've graduated from [...], they are like, 'wow, good for you, though you're disabled...' When I say that I am a Ph.D. student, they say that I should be proud of myself and they congratulate me, and ask how have I managed this (Tilbe, 34)³¹

They are more attached to life [...] they in general make peace with this, I've started to think after I had met [my blind friend]. If I were visually disabled, I would be really grumpy." (Cihan, 33)³²

Goffman mentions this issue of "making peace" and admiration. One of his quotations from a blind individual is as follows; "You develop a 'philosophy.' People seem to insist that you have one and they think you're kidding when you say you haven't" (1963, p.121). Goffman's arguments on the normal attitude towards a stigmatized's stance of good adjustment insinuate that this adjustment is not normally expected. The normal has low expectations towards the blind and try to explain this difficulty overcoming will with an admiration. This admiration connotes almost a miracle, which would be the only explanation that assures the sighted's normal position.

I was a successful, hard-working student in high school. I took my exams with the teacher due to accessibility issues. Others were asking me whether the

³¹ Biri diyelim seninle sohbet etti, değersizsin ya başta. Doktora yaptığımı öğrenince, "oo hocam maşallah engelinize rağmen" diyor. Yüceliyorsunuz, gözünde sekiz kat değeriniz artıyor. Doğa üstü sanki, "Maşallah nasıl yaptınız," diyor.

³² Hayata daha bağlılar, [...] bununla barışmış durumdalar hele arkadaşımın tanıştıktan sonra buna daha bir inandım. Ben baya huysuz olurdum görmüyor olsam.

teacher helped me in the exams, I could not convince them. [...] at my college, someone said that I'm here because of the disabled quota. (Oya, 32)³³

The idealization of sightedness means that its ways of performing an action are the only acceptable and possible ones. Since this perspective rejects the blind's ways of performing, their achievement is thought to be unbelievable at times. Indeed, a "blind person's most ordinary deeds – walking nonchalantly up the street, locating the peas on his plate, lighting a cigarette", and in this case doing well on the exams, "- are no longer ordinary" (Goffman, 1963, p.15).

The jealousy between two normals would result in the thought of injustice. It would even be regarded as a red flag to possible corruption of the normal *equal* system. However, when the same case is between a normal and a stigmatized, jealousy functions as a re-normalizing mechanism since it assumes that a stigmatized cannot be as successful as a normal. This struggle of bringing the normal back to the top tries to explain a blind's success with an intervention – that could only come from a normal actor – such as the teacher's help or the system's quota for disabled students. Namely, the changes that seem to be challenging the normal are only thought to be coming from within the existing hierarchy for the normal understanding. Therefore, the sighted's expressions are tried to be maintained in line with the assumed hierarchy. When the normal overpraise or be jealous of the stigmatized, she tries to explain the success of the blind to ensure the context of the superior normal.

4.5. Misrepresentation

In Performances, Goffman says that misrepresentation refers to expressive care to refrain from misunderstandings about what one represents. For him, misrepresentation may stem from the performer's manipulating actions to represent himself differently or the audience's misunderstandings (1956, p.37-8). Stigma theory predominantly revolves around the misrepresentation of the stigmatized. For

³³ *Bire bir sınav olduğum için öğretmen mi sana yardım ediyor gibisinden birkaç insan yüzüme söyledi, imalar. Hiç mi yardım etmiyor sana hoca, belki bir iki sorunu yapıyordur. Bunları söylediklerine şaşıırıyordum, ben çalışkanım çünkü. [...] Üniversitede de devam etti, sen buraya engelli kontenjanıyla girmişsin deyip duruyordu.*

Goffman, if it is possible to reflect a more normal representation, the stigmatized may resort to misrepresentation and manipulate the normal accordingly.

Goffman says that “the blind sometimes learn to look directly at the speaker even though this looking accomplishes no seeing, for it prevents [...] unknowingly violating the code regarding attention cues through which spoken interaction is organized” (1963, p.104).

[As a teacher] I use gestures and mimics to have dominance in the classroom and they ease drawing the children’s attention. (Hasan, 36)³⁴

This false impression of being able to communicate via eye contact, gestures and mimics might stem from the need for private psychological gain. (Goffman, 1956, p.38-9). By mimicking the sighted, the blind performer, in fact, reaffirms the validity of these interaction methods, which would contribute to the reproduction of the sighted’s normal. It has to be noted here that this reproduction often involves coping mechanisms for integration and group alignment.

Goffman’s moral career in his book *Stigma* (2018, p.64) comprises inferences from misrepresentation. He says that the stigmatized go through similar phases of life such as a confrontation and acknowledgment of his so-called inferiority and dealing with the normal by internalizing the values and norms it represents. We can say that the blind’s internalization phases also tend to involve his own actions reaffirming the dominant understanding of normal.

Even though I don’t need it, I accept it when people ask for help. It is important to make a positive impression. Some people don’t accept; then they seem grumpy. They create a negative impression for the sighted ones, but I want to show that not all of us is like that” (Veli, 50)³⁵

³⁴ Öğretmen olunca sınıfta jest ve mimikleri kullanmam gerekiyor. Sınıf hakimiyetini ve dikkate alınmayı sağlıyor. Öğrencilere karşı hitabeti kullanmanın parçası bu çünkü.

³⁵ İhtiyacım yok diyelim, yine kabul ediyorum, orada önemli olan olumlu bir bakış açısı yaratmak. Kimi kör mesela “Git,” diyor “ben yardım mı istedim,” diye tersliyor. Kötü bir algı oluşturuyorlar görenlerde, halbuki her görmeyen öyle değil diye özellikle kabul etmek lazım yardımı.

Veli acts as if he is what the normal expects him to be, which is an example of misrepresentation toward the sighted audience. Namely, the sighted context positions the blind subject as an individual in need, and Veli acts upon this expectation, i.e., reaffirms it, for a positive impression.

Among the involuntary misrepresentations, taboo words and expressions stand out in interviews. Sayings and proverbs about sight are common in Turkish, so the sighted interviewees commonly expressed their concerns about how the low-sighted or blind others would think of them is a repeated theme.

“Have you looked at the- she can’t! Have you seen the- no, I can’t say that either. Have you gone over the text our instructor uploaded yesterday?” Most of the time, I think of these details before I speak.(Ahmet, 29)³⁶

She says she doesn’t mind, in fact, she uses those words, but I don’t know; I pay attention anyways. When I let the words slip, I don’t go back to this topic and apologize. That would make us uncomfortable. (Ali, 31)³⁷

Parallel to Goffman’s (1963) discussions on hiding the “failing” of the stigmatized, refraining from words on seeing and unintentionally letting them slip out carries a meaning of highlighting the failing of the blind for Ahmet and Ali. These words might not refer to the ineptitude to apologize between two sighted interactants. When the word “blind” is used as an insult between sighted individuals, the conflicting moment of interaction might not stand out either.

To a sighted friend] he said, ‘Are you blind?’ then turned back to me and apologized. (Gamze, 23)³⁸

³⁶ *Gördüm, baktın mı okudun mu derken onları nasıl çevirebilirim diye düşünüyorum birkaç cümle öncesinde. [Bir yazar] okunacak mesela, “[Yazıya] bakt-... bakamaz!... şey yaptın mı... göz attın mı da denmez... bitirdin mi?” diyorum o anda bunları yaşayıp. “Bakabildin mi” yi nahif bir biçimde kullanarak şey yapmaya çalışıyorum.*

³⁷ Aslında takmıyor da ben yine de dikkat ediyorum kullanmamaya. Hatta kendi “televizyon izledim” falan diyor mesela. Ağzımdan kaçtığı da oluyor ama çok üzerinde durmuyorum o anda çünkü “Pardon,” falan desem ortam iyice garipleşecek, olmamış gibi yapıyorum.

³⁸ [Yanımızdaki bir görene] “Kör müsün be?” diyor sonra bana dönüp özür diliyor.

Gamze's friend uses the word "blind" as an insult. For him, a level of clumsiness or lack of noticing something is associated with blindness. As mentioned, pejorative social associations with blindness are reproduced contextually apart from the individuals holding the biological difference. However, this interaction exemplifies that the negative association is directed at the present subject holding the biological difference. Indeed, all blind interviewees agreed on the personal level of this insulting attitude, and the majority expressed that blindness has to be considered a neutral difference. The difference turns into a not-normal failing with these associations that are followed mainly by embarrassment or apologies.

Among other taboo expressions, the fear of being misunderstood for intentionally making an offensive joke is noteworthy. A few interviewees expressed that they actually like making offensive jokes, and they can easily take one. However, they are afraid to misrepresent their sympathetic performance when making jokes about sightedness to their blind friends. In other words, for some, offensive and dark humor cannot be directed at blinds, although it can be for other differences. Although dark humor itself carries offensiveness, and it is seen as convenient among the normals, they conflict with their own limitations when the other interactant is blind. Ali thought that "*everything has a limit*," he finds it harmful to joke about blindness. Respondents explained that their reservation is because blindness is an unchangeable condition. Nevertheless, when thinking out loud about their differences carrying the risk of stigmatization, such as being gay, having a hearing impairment, or being a woman, they reflexively thought about their ways of thinking. For example, Akif questioned himself during the interview whether he approaches blindness in a discriminative manner. He said he also is stigmatized due to an unchangeable trait, for which he would welcome an offensive joke or which he would not prefer to change. It is firmly possible that he would agree the reproduced normal is challenged when the choices on offensive humor are questioned.

According to Goffman, the society tells the stigmatized that she resides within the larger group, i.e., she is a normal human being. This position of normal is constructed within the social. However, there is a definite difference about her to a

certain degree, which results in her stigmatization. This difference is also collectively produced just like the normal; otherwise, it would not be an issue standing out. Concisely, the stigmatized is treated as she is just like anyone else and that she is not. This politics of identity causes the stigmatized to be in a constant discussion of whom she thinks she ought to be, i.e., her ego identity (Goffman, 1963, p.123). Goffman's mentioned discussions on politics of identity are identical with his definition of ambivalence. A sighted person's ego identity is in limbo; her attributes are in some cases better than the blind; at times, the two groups are interpreted as the same; and occasionally, the blind are thought to be having superior traits than the sighted.

Though I'm not that much of a dominant, I act tough and surly if I want my things to get done seriously. (Oya, 32)³⁹

The expression above shows the superior attribution of the sighted about being taken seriously. Like Oya, the stigmatized have to find ways to fit in in order to overcome this understanding. Therefore the interactant has to balance her in-group and out-group alignment processes when the ambivalence is at stake. Additionally, being in limbo between two groups – the “fellow-sufferers” with whom she shares the same stigma and “the normals and the wider society they constitute” (Goffman, 1963, p.112-5) – precedes the concerns about a possible misrepresentation of her reflected identity. It could also lead to a willingly performed misrepresentation as Oya acts stricter than she is.

In addition to the stigmatized person's ambivalence, the sighted group's confused attributions are relevant to misrepresentation and group alignment. In other words, the blind is sometimes regarded to be different and sometimes same in everyday interactions. The gathered data demonstrate how this grouping is reproduced among the interactants.

³⁹ *Bazı durumlarda özellikle ciddi takılıyorum, suratsız duruyorum ki biraz ciddiye alsınlar. Yoksa hiçbir işim hallolmuyor.*

As soon as I entered the coffee house, this waiter came over and said, “Here are your friends,” and took me to a table of visually disabled people whom I don’t know. (Nevin, 26)⁴⁰

Mom says, “Your future husband should be at least 70 percent disabled. Not more, because he would need many things; but not less, since he would have unfaithful tendencies and would not appreciate you.”(Tülay, 25)⁴¹

My best friend is blind, and I don’t know why this is an issue for people. (Akif, 24)⁴²

The three examples above firstly demonstrate expectations on two groups’ contextually changing same and different traits. Secondly, they show the fluid expectations of difference and sameness among the same group. Therefore, expecting the two groups to be friends or romantically involved only with each other rigidifies the existence of each group while it reaffirms each individual’s in-group alignment to their assigned groups. The waiter expects Nevin to meet her friends who could be blind just like her. If Nevin were not blind, his assumptions would be vaguer as she would fit the normal more. Tülay’s mother thinks her daughter could only be happy with another disabled person. People around Akif find it odd that his best friend is blind, as similar persons are expected to be friends. On the other hand, Akif’s friendship shows how the biological difference may not necessarily result in social incompatibility.

Goffman directly points out the existence of the two groups in the book *Stigma* and articulates their reproduction indirectly with the performance of misrepresentation in his book *Presentation of the Self*. The latter is about the representation of one’s own group. In line with respondents’ expressions above, it can be inferred that the

⁴⁰ Kafeye girdiğim gibi garson geldi “Arkadaşlarınız şurada” deyip beni aldı bir masaya götürdü. Masada görme engelliler oturuyormuş full, beni de onların arkadaşı diye düşündü otomatikman, tanımıyorum halbuki.

⁴¹ Annem diyor ki mesela evleneceğin kişinin engel oranı en fazla %70 olsun ama tamamen engelsiz de olmasın çünkü senle gezerken başkalarına bakar, gözü başkalarına kayar, sen anlamazsın göremezsın diyor. %70 olmasının sebebi de bana mukayyet olması, bana sahip çıkması gerek o yüzden, engeli daha yüksek olursa bu sefer onu yapamaz diye..

⁴² En yakın arkadaşımın görme engelli olması insanları neden geriyor ben anlamıyorum.

very existence of two groups results in their misrepresentation, whether intentionally or not. In other words, if there were not two contextually constructed groups from a biological difference, social discrepancies would not be defined according to which misrepresentation emerges. In line with this, the grouping is so strong that persons acknowledge or, at times, intentionally reaffirm them for social interests, as mentioned above.

4.6. Mystification

Holding the audience – or the other interactant- in a state of mystification concerning the performer is a way to decrease any possible misrepresentation. Generating awe would also awaken certain respect and wonder for the other for Goffman. In addition to this, “[t]he matters the audience leaves alone [...] are likely to be the matters about which [the performer] would feel shame were a disclosure to occur” (Goffman, 1956, p.46). Goffman underlines in his definition of mystification that the audience might not further question the performer’s undisclosed information if a “shame” is hidden intentionally.

Although Goffman’s mystification says a lot about interaction, blindness is not one of the stigmatizing symbols that could be easily hidden or mystified; the visibility of the blind is inevitable (Goffman, 1963, p.48). Thus, blindness cannot be handled as a mystified trait. In contrast to the stigma of blindness, Goffman says in *Stigma* that even the most normal of the normals may have a semi-hidden failing (1963). Therefore, mystifying a stigma is not different from mystifying a normal trait since both are only different levels of the same, merging and changing. This understanding of the normal’s levels overlaps with the section on “less normal” above.

There’s this issue, how often you see someone - you know the saying; who speaks the most makes more mistakes than anyone. (Ali, 31)⁴³

⁴³ Şey olayı vardır ya, birini ne kadar sık görürsen – denir ya ne kadar çok konuşursan o kadar hata yaparsın diye.

Ali has had a hearing impairment since birth. He gave this information immediately after our interview started. For Ali, his friendship with Gamze did not start because of her low-sightedness, but it is one of the factors that has made their friendship stronger. Ali's points infer that he and Gamze are two stigmatized persons who do not mystify their difference. It can be argued that, on the one hand, feeling more confident and challenging the understanding of normal around other non-mystifiers and normals are empowering. On the other, this social declaration inevitably stems from an acknowledgment of the normal to be challenged. Another interviewee, who is gay, thinks hiding one's difference or generating a mystification would only make one's own life difficult. He also thinks that not hiding their differences is a vital element of his relationship with his blind friend.

Mystification can be examined with the term "information control" from the *Stigma*, as their definitions are alike. Information control does not only refer to hiding an undesired difference but also overlooking it. Goffman mentions a technique in line with this overlooking attitude. Namely, when a blind goes to the same market, restaurant, or other public spaces, it helps the sighted persons around get used to the differentness. This attempt to create a personal physical space is called "breaking through" by Davis (Goffman, 1963, p.51). Some blind interviewees explain their preference for this daily round (Goffman, 1963, p.91) with this familiarity.

I usually go to Migros on the street next to my apartment. They have special assistance there; they accompany you and read the prices while shopping. [...] most important thing, they are used to see me and how to behave around me. (Nevin, 26)⁴⁴

In addition to accessibility issues, the main reason for Nevin is the familiarity in that shop. Hence, breaking through means creating a social atmosphere in which the stigmatized are more normal than in public. Breaking through can be analyzed as a coping mechanism to surpass possible conflicting points with the sighted. Thus, the concept is associated with the blind's indirect mystification towards the audience

⁴⁴ *Evimin orada caddede Migros var oraya gidiyorum. Migroslar engelli hizmetleri gibi bir şey yapmış, etiketleri okuyorlar, girdiğinde çıkana kadar yardımcı oluyorlar [...] gide gele artık etrafımda nasıl davranacaklarını çözmüş durumdalar, iyi oluyor.*

outside the created social circle. In other words, when the blind is less visible in the unknown public space, she encounters stigmatizing interactions less often.

Though they may change in the interaction, social hierarchies between the sighted and the blind have been ordered and fixed through the years. Within the already structured social order of interaction (Goffman, 1963), the sighted refrains from exhibiting her desired difference of sightedness around the blind. Namely, the sighted mystifies her ability to see; and every positive comeback of sightedness when interacting with a blind. This performance of mystification is learned and systematically repeated that it has had been taken for granted in everyday encounters.

For example, we are sitting in the cafeteria with a few friends, and one of them looks at me and asks, “What did you eat yesterday?”. My blind friend thinks the question is directed to him and answers. We don’t interrupt him; this is a harmless thing. In the worst-case scenario, when [our blind friend] finishes his sentence, the other person asks the same question again, this time by saying my name. (Birol, 24)⁴⁵

In the example above, the sighted takes her advantageous communicative position for granted and mystifies her ability to interact visually. Indeed, by not telling their blind friend to whom the question is actually directed, all sighted individuals in the group mentioned above are aware of their normal way of visual-based interaction and intentionally obscure this. According to the respondent, this is easier and kinder, which overlaps the functional, systematically repeated, and the taken-for-granted act of mystifying the normalcy.

4.7. Reality and Contrivance

Goffman’s last term in the Performances is reality and contrivance, referring to sincere and cynical acts. Goffman says that the performer may or may not know whether her actions are sincere or cynical (2018, p.76-7). This is also the case for

⁴⁵ *Kantinde oturuyoruz ya, başka arkadaşlar da var işte, mesela bir arkadaş beni gözüyle imleyerek dün ne yediğimi soruyor diyelim. [Arkadaşım] soru kendisine soruldu sanıp cevap veriyor, biz onu kesmiyoruz o durumda. Öğrenmiş oluyoruz işte, zararı yok. En kötü ihtimalle arkadaşım bana tekrar soruyor ismimi söyleyerek, “Peki sen ne yedin, Birol?” diye. Sohbet devam ediyor.*

the audience. In this section, sincere and cynical acts are handled from a sociological perspective in line with blindness.

While engaging with a sighted interactant, the blind is aware of more information than the sighted thinks he is delivering. For the sighted, information is gathered primarily visually through the body language of the other. However, the blind's ways to gather information are unknown to the sighted.

I have this inner sight; I feel – I know it when people find me strange. (Gamze, 23)⁴⁶

Regarding Goffman's reality and contrivance, the performer's reality and her contrived actions are thoroughly connected with social expectations (Goffman, 2018, p.78). Indeed, understanding the other or reading the room, so to speak, is not among the anticipated traits attributed to the blind socially. Gamze's reality and contrivance, in this case, cannot be separated regarding Goffman.

Additionally, Gamze's point on "mind-reading" refers to a knowledge of the other's often insincere act. Indeed, Naci says that his blind friend sometimes tells him that "he can feel others' staring," which turns out to be true every time. This uncertain way of gathering information about the sighted makes the normal's dominant state shaky as well. At moments of staring, deep silences, or winking, the stigmatized's way of comprehension comes to the fore. In order to distinguish the cynical and sincere acts, the episteme of the sighted is limited to the eye. Whereas the blind can distinguish other information more effectively, as inferred from blind interviewees. Since the ways of gathering information cannot be conceptualized normally, the normal find these ways miraculous as "mind-reading" or "having a purely good heart that enables a wisdom about others."

The blind can also be wrong about distinguishing her reality and her expected performance. The blinds are considered to be more in danger by the normal understanding. Their vulnerability to insincere acts is underlined more in the

⁴⁶ *Bi altıncı hissim var içgörü diyebiliriz. Hissediyorum direkt- hatta biliyorum yani o anda insanların beni garipsediğini.*

interviews. Both analytical groups agree that not seeing could ease getting fooled, yet it is not as easy as the sighted would think for some blind interviewees. In addition, going out of the house might not be considered dangerous between two normal or two stigmatized interactants. However, between a stigmatized and a normal, the stigmatized's vulnerability to the outside world is a major issue. On the distinguishing abilities of the two acts, the normal does not know the blind's defensive ways as their defense mechanism mainly lays its back to being able to see.

Throughout the section on analysis, I have examined data from the field with Goffman's performances of the front, dramatic realization, idealization, maintenance of expressive control, misrepresentation, mystification, and reality and contrivance. The analysis revolved around interactions of the normal context with concepts of stigma, social identity, information control, personal identity, group alignment, and ego identity.

It is found that the normal sighted refers to the persons that are expected to be present in public settings. The normal's front is associated with performing both as a spectacle and as a spectator. In other words, the understanding of the normal is based on the episteme of looking. The normal context is also reproduced by the expectation of particular sign vehicles presented by the blind and the sighted social identities.

With dramatic realization, the normal is the context in which the sighted are assumed to have sui generis expertise and respect. One of the closest contexts to the normal for the stigmatized blind is through developing and dramatically performing different abilities that compensate for the stigma. Other ways reproducing the normal context are the blind's breaking the ice with the sighted or the latter's engaging with the former in a forcefully friendly way.

The context of the normal is reaffirmed through its everyday idealization. The hierarchies between sight differences create the levels of the normal and everyday comparisons between/ among the analytical groups of the analysis. It is found that the dominant normal way of creating an equal communication ground is through visual signs of interaction. Another finding is that, the hierarchy between the blind

and the idealized sighted is nourished by the context of help by the latter for the passivized former. In addition, the normal sighted attribution comes with having dominant gender roles and identities of individuals and individuals' personal identities.

Maintaining expressive control serves the normal context by keeping the existing order between blinds and sighted persons. The normal is socially accepted to take responsibility for their actions and success more than the blind. If the assumed context is not maintained, the normal is either amused or jealous and tries to explain that the order is kept the same.

The concept of misrepresentation demonstrated in the analysis that the normal performance includes particular gestures, mimics, and eye contact. The sighted normal refrains from assuming blind as an outsider – who needs to align herself to the other social group of blinds – yet does not consider them group members. This dilemma stems from the concerns of misrepresentation by the normal performer, and it keeps the ego identity of the blind in limbo.

Data analyzed with the concept of mystification and information control demonstrate that mystifying of the normal comes from hiding the prominent social. In other words, the normal context of the sighted is reproduced by getting so used to the apparent stigma that it becomes invisible. The field shows accustomed aspects of the stigma that turn into a part of the normal context.

Comparing the performer's actual intention and her performance substantially necessitates a social psychological approach; thus only the sociological aspect of the analysis is revealed. Reality and contrivance as a twofold concept show that real performances' normal and stigmatized contexts may or may not overlap with their socially expected characteristics, such as the myth of the blind's sixth sense or mind reading abilities.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, the socially defined understanding of the normal is strived to be analyzed with Goffman's *Stigma Theory* and Dramaturgical Analysis - Performances from his *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. The Normal is analytically conceptualized as the opposite term to the Stigma. Relatedly, having eyesight is practically operationalized as the opposite difference to being blind. Therefore, the theoretical framework overlaps with the two groups analyzed in field research. From humor to anger, all aspects of everyday interaction between the sighted and the blind are elaborated contextually. Throughout the analysis, the social attributions to sighted and blind individuals are compared with data gathered by semi-structured in-depth face-to-face interviews conducted with the two analytical groups.

According to the findings of this thesis, the functioning of normalcy concerning sightedness and blindness is hidden in everyday interactions. The context of normal ensures a social order of interaction, and its practical convenience results in systematic reproduction of itself. The experiences and attributes of sighted and blind individuals are interpreted under different performances of interaction. Goffman (1963) mentions that if he refers to an individual as normal, he does not assume a fixed group of "the normals," he only analytically utilizes the term by underlining its contextuality. Parallel to this, differences and similarities of normal social attributes due to this biological difference are analyzed. It is found that the the understanding of normal is reaffirmed within everyday interactions in different ways.

It is concluded in this study that the normal is contextually reproduced in interactions, as explored with research questions. In line with the research questions at the beginning, data collection revealed the meanings of what normal is in different social contexts among friends, relatives in private and public spaces. Here, it is found that what the normal is for the blind and the sighted differ. One of the essential detail the study concludes, with Goffman's arguments, is that the normal and the stigma are only different levels of the same. This study uncovers what the normal is in general for all interactants.

The central argument of this thesis is that the understanding of normalcy is socially constructed and reproduced in everyday interactions. Among the findings of the thesis, individuals, to whom the concept of normal is attributed, are identified with social opportunities or initiatives such as being in the public sphere, appealing to the eye, specializing in a field, arousing respect, using gestures and facial expressions as the dominant way of communication, adopting gender roles, having a sexual orientation, making mistakes and being rewarded. The contribution of this thesis to the literature is the use of Goffman's two theories by applying them to micro-relationships to deepen the analysis of the normal. The findings show that the context of the normal sighted is reproduced in everyday interactions. This study can be considered a step towards further studies to distinguish and compare the meaning of the normal for both analytical groups in the future. The understanding of the normal by different socioeconomic statuses can be another future area of study.

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APPENDICES

A. QUESTIONNAIRE SHEET

Görüşmeci Mülakat Formu

Görüşmeci No:

Demografik Bilgiler

Yaş:

Medeni Durum:

Cinsiyet:

Eğitim Durumu:

Yönelim (Görüşmenin sonlarına doğru soruldu):

Bölümü/ Mesleği/ Uzmanlık alanı:

1. Çevrende görme engeli olan / olmayan yakın(lar)ın var. En son ne zaman iletişime geçtiniz? Nasıl bir iletişiminiz var?

Tanımlar

2. Yakınının / senin görmeme durumuna referans verirken özellikle kullanmamı istediğin / kullanmamamı tercih ettiğin bir kelime var mı?
3. Gören kişi ve görmeyen bireyi tanımlayabilir misin?
4. Görmek ya da engelsiz olmak senin için ne anlama geliyor?
5. Yakınının / senin ne zaman ve nasıl görme engeli(n) oluştu?
6. Körlerin / görenlerin gözünden gören / kör kişi nasıl bir konumda sence?
7. Körlerin / Görenlerin oluşturduğu belli bir gören / kör tiplmesi olduğunu düşünüyor musun? Anlatabilir misin?
8. Gören ve görmeyen bireyler senin için nasıl bir konumdadır? Senin açıdan engelsiz / engelli kişi sosyal anlamda nasıl konumlanıyor? Hangi noktalarda bu ikisi farklılaşıyor/ benzeşiyor?
9. Bir körün ya da görenin yapması/yapmaması gerekenler var mıdır?

Etkileşimler

10. Günlük hayatta ne sıklıkta engelsiz / engelli bireylerle iletişime geçiyorsun? Ne tarz bir iletişim biçiminiz oluyor? (Nerelerde, ne zaman, remi/gayri resmi, hangi aktiviteler sırasında... gerçekleşiyor?)
11. Bir körle etkileşime girmek ve bir gören kişiyle etkileşime girmek arasındaki farklar neler senin için? Farklı / aynı davrandığın durumlar neler?
12. Özel alan ve kamusal alanda çevreyle girdiğin etkileşimler hangi noktalarda farklılaşıyor?
13. Sosyal açıdan seni en rahat hissettiren etkileşim kiminle gerçekleşiyor? Hangi ortamda? Engel konusunda en rahatsız olduğun ortam/ diyalog örneği verebilir misin?
14. İnsanlar sence seninle rahatça etkileşime geçebiliyor mu? (Çekinme ya da girişkenlik, görgü kurallarına uyma gibi konular) Yakının için aynı soruyu soracak olsam?
15. Kişisel mesafe koyma konusunda rahat hissettiğin/ sıkıntılar yaşadığın durumlar neler? Yakının için neler?
16. [Görmeyen görüşmeci ise;]
Görenlerin seninle karşılaştıklarında rahatsız hissettikleri anlara karşı belli bir duyarlılık geliştirmiş durumda mısın? Hayır, ise, açıklar mısın?

[Gören görüşmeci ise;]
Körlerin seninle karşılaştıklarında rahatsız hissettikleri anlara karşı belli bir duyarlılık geliştirmiş durumda mısın? Hayır, ise, açıklar mısın?
17. Önceki sorunun cevabı “Evet”, ise;
 - Bunu fark ettiğin anlarda nasıl hareket ediyorsun?
 - Bu durumlarda karşılıklı olarak buzları eritmek için ne gibi hareketler sergiliyorsunuz?
 - Buna en sık başvurman gereken ortamlar hangileri oluyor?
 - Karşıdaki de senin kadar çabalıyor mu böyle anlarda? Senden farklı neler yapıyor?
18. Resmî kurumlarda ve devlet dairelerinde insanların sana ve yakınına yaklaşım biçimini kıyaslar mısın? (Hastane, karakol, vs.)
19. [Görmeyen görüşmeci ise;]
Ailende başka görmeyen birey var mı? Varsa o kişiyle senin ve ailenin iletişimini kıyaslayabilir misin?

[Gören görüşmeci ise;]
Ailende görmeyen ya da engelli birey var mı? Varsa o kişiyle iletişimin nasıl?

Ayrımcılık ve Damgalanma

20. Körlüğün bir sınav, ceza, lütuf ya da benzeri anlamlarla bağlantılı görülmesiyle ilgili ne düşünüyorsun? Senin için ne anlama geliyor bu konunun seninle konuşulması? Yakının nasıl tepki veriyor?

21. Görmemenle / Yakınının görmemesiyle ilgili olarak salt “bakım alma” ya da ihtiyaçlarının karşılanması gerekliliğini vurgulayan kişilerle nasıl bir iletişime girmeyi tercih ediyorsun? Yakının nasıl tepkiler veriyor?
22. Senin / Yakınının görmemek ile ilgili olarak dışlandığı ortamlar oluyor mu? Ne zaman, neredeyken, kimlerle (hangi grup içinde) karşılaşıyorsun bu durumla? Bu durumla başa çıkma yöntemlerin neler? Yakının nasıl tepki veriyor?
23. Görmemeye ilişkin önyargılarla karşılaşıyor musun? Neler? Yakının bu konuda ne düşünüyor?
24. Ayrımcılığın hangi formları var? Hangisiyle hangi durumlarda daha çok karşılaşıyorsun? Yakının bu konuda ne düşünüyor?
25. Gereksiz yardım ya da tavsiyelerle karşılaşıyor kalıyor musun / yakının karşılaşıyor mu? En çok nerede (kamusal/ özel alanda) karşılaşıyor/sun bu durumla? En çok kimler yapıyor bunu (yaşlılar, erkekler, esnaf, anne, vs.)? Yakının buna nasıl tepki veriyor?
26. [Görmeyen görüşmeci ise;]
Gören bir birey olsaydın sosyal hayatında neler farklı olurdu? Yakınınla ilişkinizde neler değişirdi?

[Gören görüşmeci ise;]
Görmeyen bir birey olsaydın sosyal hayatında neler farklı olurdu? Yakınınla ilişkinizde neler değişirdi?

Toplumsal Cinsiyet Roller

27. Görmeyen biri olarak karşı cinsten olsaydın sosyal hayatında neler farklı olurdu? / Görmeyen yakının karşı cinsten olsaydı sosyal hayatında neler farklı olurdu?
28. Ailenin ve arkadaşlarının senin / görmeyen yakınının toplumsal cinsiyet kimliğine dair yaklaşımlarını kıyaslayabilir misin? Kadın/ erkek olmanla / olmasıyla ilgili ne gibi tutumları var? Örnek verebilir misin?
29. Bir erkek ya da kadın kör ise kendi cinsiyet grubuyla / karşı cins ile iletişimi değişiyor mu sence? Ne açılardan? En çok hangi ortamlarda ve kimler tarafından oluyor bu? (aile, arkadaş ortamı, sokak, çoğunluğun engelsiz / engelli olduğu ortamlar, ..)
30. “Friendzone”la(n)ma anın var mı? Anlatabilir misin? Yakınınla bu deneyimlerinizi kıyaslayabilir misin?
31. Romantik partnerin/ romantik duygular beslediğin biri var mı, ya da yakın zamanda oldu mu? Ondan diğer insanlara [aile & arkadaşlar] ilk bahsettiğin zamanı anlatabilir misin? Yakınının benzer deneyimi olduysa anlatır mısın? Aynı durumda yakının olsa bu konudaki deneyimleri farklı olur muydu?

32. Senin / görmeyen yakınının aktif bir cinsel hayatının olup olmaması ya da *körlerin cinsel ihtiyaçlarına dair mitlerle ilgili sorularla karşılaştığın oluyor mu? “Sizde şöyle oluyormuş doğru mu?”* gibi. Buna dair anılarını paylaşabilir misin?
33. [Evliliğe değilse] Evlilikle ilgili ne düşünüyorsun? Ailen ya da arkadaşlarıyla bu konuda konuştuğun zamanlar oluyorsa bahsedebilir misin? Çocuk sahibi olmakla ilgili konuştuğunuz zamanlar? Yakınının benzer deneyimi olduysa anlatır mısın? Aynı durumda yakının olsa bu konudaki deneyimleri farklı olur muydu?

Günlük Hayat

34. İşyerinde/ okulda;

- Bir günün nasıl geçiyor?
- En çok kimlerle iletişime geçiyorsun, iş / okul arkadaşlarından ve aldığın sorumluluklardan bahsedebilir misin?
- İş arkadaşlarıyla / arkadaşlarıyla aran nasıl? Patronlarla / hocalarla aran nasıl?
- Ailenin çalışmanla / okumanla ilgili düşünceleri ve beklentileri varsa neler? Bundan konuştuğunuz bir zamandan bahsedebilir misin?

35. Hobilerin var mı? Neler?

- Ne sıklıkta yapıyorsun, nasıl merak saldın?
- Bununla uğraşan başkaları var mı çevrende?
- Bununla uğraşmaktan ailene arkadaşlarına bahsettiğin zamanları biraz anlatabilir misin?
- Başkalarıyla paylaşılan bir şeyse; mesela gösteri düzenlediniz mi? Nasıl geçti?
- Bu uğraşınla ilgili olumlu olumsuz tanımadığın insanlardan aldığın yorumlar var mı?

36. Boş zamanında:

- Ne gibi aktivitelere dahil olursun? (sinema, tiyatro, dernek, konser, kafe, bar, AVM, spor...) Ne sıklıkta?
- Bunları kimlerle birlikte yapıyorsun?
- Belli başlı mekanları mı tercih edersin yoksa çoğunlukla yeni yerler mi denersin? Neden?

Benliğin Sunumu

37. Kendini özellikle farklı yansıttığın oluyor mu bazen? Nasıl bir farklılık? Bunu hangi durumlarda yapma ihtiyacı hissediyorsun? Yakının bu konuda nasıldır?
38. Sık sık makyaj yapar mısın, ya da güzel giyinmek için ayrıca bir özen gösteriyor musun? Yakının bu konuda nasıldır?
39. Görmeyen yakının/ Beyaz baston veya güneş gözlüğü kullanıyor mu/sun? Bunları kullanma sebepleri nedir? (İnsanlara görmediğini belli etmek, yönünü bulmak, gözlerinin estetik olmayan yapısını insanlardan saklamak vb...) Yakınınla bu aksesuarlara ilişkin bir anınız var mı?

40. Bağımsız hareket özgürlüğünün senin için anlamı nedir?
- Senin / Görmeyen yakınının bağımsız hareket özgürlüğü(n) varsa ne zaman ve nasıl kavuştu(n)?
 - Bağımsız hareket için bir şeyler yapıyor musun? (aktivizm gibi)
41. Kişisel alanın senin ve yakının için anlamı nedir? Senin ve yakınının kişisel alan ihlaline uğradığınız oluyor mu? En çok nerelerde/ kimler tarafından? Yakınınla deneyimleriniz hangi noktalarda benzeşiyor ya da farklılaşıyor bu konuda?
42. Ev işleri yapıyor musun? Birlikte yaşadığın kişilerle aynı sıklıkta mı yapıyorsun? Bu kişilerle bu konuda nasıl bir iletişim içindesiniz? Yakınınla deneyimleriniz hangi noktalarda benzeşiyor ya da farklılaşıyor bu konuda?
43. Çoğunluğun kör/engelsiz olduğu ortamları kıyaslayabilir misin? Hangisinde daha sık bulunuyorsun? Konular, konuşma ve tutumlar nasıl fark ediyor? Yakınınla deneyimleriniz hangi noktalarda benzeşiyor ya da farklılaşıyor bu konuda?

Körlük ve görme kıyası

44. Körlük doğuştan ise, öncesi ve sonrası olarak kıyaslama yapabilir misin? Sosyal açıdan neler değişti?
45. Gören bir çocuk ve kör bir çocuğun yaşantıları arasında ne gibi farklar var? Hangi noktalarda benzeşiliyor?
46. [Görmeyen görüşmeci ise;]
Ailenin çocukken fazla korumacı olduğunu düşünüyor musun? Karşı cinsten olan kör çocuklardan farklı bir muamele gördüğün oldu mu? (Kör kız vs. kör oğlan çocuğu) Bu durum insanlarla olan etkileşimine nasıl yansdı?
47. Çocukken ya da başka bir zaman maddi manevi bir istismara uğradın mı? Bunu kimlerle paylaşabildin? Yakınınla deneyimleriniz hangi noktalarda benzeşiyor ya da farklılaşıyor bu konuda?

B. TURKISH SUMMARY / TRKE ZET

Bu tez, grmeyen / kr bireyler ve bu bireylerin gren yakınları arasındaki gnlk hayat etkileşimi iinde “normal” bağlamının yeniden üretimini sosyal etkileşimci bir yaklaşım ile incelemiştir. Tez, grmek ve grmemenin salt biyolojik farklılık olması n kabul ile başlar. Bu farklılığın sosyal olarak inşā edilen anlamlarının bireye atfedilmeyecek kadar bağlamsal ve etkileşimsel olduklarını iddia eder. Bir başka deyişle, grmekle ilgili biyolojik farklılığının sosyal anlamlarının ortaya ıkması, bu farklılıkla karşılaşmalara bağlıdır. Bu teze gre bu karşılaşmalar etkileşime giren bireyler, etkileşime girme zamanı ve yeri gibi farklı etkenlere gre değışeceği iin grmeye ve grmemeye sosyal olarak yklenen olumlu ve olumsuz anlamlar kişilere değıl bağlamlara atfedilmelidir. Tezin literatrdeki nemi, grmemenin damgası zerine alışan araştırmaların aksine, grmenin normalliğini analiz objesi olarak ele almasıdır.

Bu tezin giriş blmnde, araştırma sorularının ifade edilmesi, konunun seilmesinin arkasındaki akademik motivasyonlar, bu konunun sorunsallaştırılma biiminin ayrıntılı bir incelemesi ve zel olarak odaklanılarak alışmanın genel bir zeti verilmektedir.

Literatr ve teori blmnde on  alt blm bulunmaktadır. Bu blmde, yurt dıřından ve Trkiye'den mevcut literatrden istatistiksel, teorik ve saha rnekleri incelenmektedir. Bu blm sırasıyla sembolik etkileşimci yorumlara ve olumlu/olumsuz benlik grřlerine dair yeni bakıř aılarına dayanıyor, sakatlık ve teorilerle ilgili, cinsiyet ve krlkle ilgilidir.

Metodolojik ereve blmnde sekiz alt blm bulunmaktadır. Metodolojik bakıř aısı ve kullanılan yntemler detaylandırılmış, bu tezin rneklem ve alanla ilgili bilgileri ele alınmış, analitik bakıř aısı incelenmiştir. Bu blmlerden sonra alışmanın sınırlılıkları ve gl ynlerinden bahsedilmiştir.

Analiz bölümünde sahadan toplanan veriler Goffman'ın ilgili kavram ve teorileri ile işlenir.

Analiz bölümünden sonra, sonuç bölümü, bulgular ve sonuç açıklamaları üzerine tartışmalara ayrılmıştır. Bu, çalışmanın araştırma sorusuna olası cevaplar üretmeye en yakın olduğu bölümdür. Bu bölüm ayrıca daha ileri araştırma alanları hakkında fikirlerin yolunu açmaktadır.

Çalışmanın saha araştırmasında on iki kör üniversite mezunu ya da üniversite öğrencisi olan birey ve sekiz kör yakına sahip gören birey ile yarı yapılandırılmış derinlemesine mülakatlar gerçekleştirilmiştir. Görüşmeciler Ankara, İzmir, İstanbul, Konya ve Ordu'da ikamet etmektedirler. Görüşmelerin beşi telefon yoluyla geri kalanı ise yüz yüze gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırma evreni seçimindeki amaç gören ve görmeyenler arasındaki etkileşimde normallik bağlamının yeniden üretimini sosyolojik olarak daha etkili gözlemlenebilmesidir. Bir başka deyişle, etkileşimde bulunan tarafların biyolojik farklılıkları görmeye yüklenen normallik anlamını ortaya çıkarmaktadır. Mülakat katılımcılarına görme ve görmeme bağlamlarına ilişkin sorular yöneltilerek normalliğe atfettikleri anlamlara ulaşmak hedeflenmiştir. Sorular aracılığıyla farklı sosyal bağlamlar, zaman ve mekanlarda gören ve görmeyen bireylerden günlük yaşam etkileşimlerine örnekler verilmesi ve bu yaşantılarının kıyaslanması istenmiştir. Tezin araştırma soruları aşağıdaki gibidir.

Kör bireyler ve onların gören akrabaları, arkadaşları veya partnerleri arasındaki günlük etkileşimlerde;

- i. Normalliğin görme ve körlük bağlamında işleyişini Goffman'ın damgalama kavramından hareketle nasıl anlayabiliriz?
- ii. Körlük ve normallik deneyimlerini nasıl yorumlayabiliriz?
- iii. Kör özelliklerin ve kişilerin normal özelliklerinin farklılıklarını ve benzerliklerini nasıl açıklayabiliriz?
- iv. Nesnelerin, kişilerin ve mekanların normal ve kör tarafından müzakere edilmesiyle ilgili farklılıkları ve benzerlikleri nasıl detaylandırabiliriz?

v. Normallerin ve körlerin kendi görüşlerini ve kendi kimliklerini inşa etme biçimlerini nasıl inceleyebiliriz?

Tez, Goffman'ın (1963) Damga Teorisini ve kavramlarını teorik çerçeve olarak belirleyerek analiz etmiştir. Bu kavramlardan “normal” ve “damgalı”, iki grubun bağlamsal olarak yeniden üretilmesini incelemek için analitik bir ayırım yapma amacıyla kullanılmıştır. Bu ayırımın sahadan elde edilen verilerle tematik olarak analizi için Goffman'ın (1956) “Günlük Hayatta Benliğin Sunumu” kitabındaki Performanslardan yararlanılmıştır. Teorik çerçeve bölümü engellilik ve normallik üzerine literatür taramasına ayrılmıştır. Literatürde, analitik terim olarak engellilik kelimesini kullanma eğiliminin olduğu ve bu durumun genellikle görmemenin olumsuz bir farklılık olarak atfedilmesine neden olduğu gözlemlenebilir. Bu tezde, çalışmanın analiz birimi olarak engellilik kabul edildiğinde araştırmacının kendilerini “normal” içinde konumlandırması gerektiği tartışılmaktadır. Bu marjinalleşme kısır döngüsünü kırmak için bu tezin analiz birimi normallik olarak belirlenmiştir. Bu bölüm iki amacı yansıtmıştır; birincisi, mevcut engellilik ve normallik literatürünü yeniden gözden geçirmek ve ikincisi, analiz nesnesi olarak normali merkeze alarak literatürü ve teoriyi tartışmak.

Goffmancı anlayışta temsiller, istenen ve istenmeyen olarak gruplandırılabilirler farklılıklar içerir. İstenmeyen farklılıklar, belirli bir bağlamda bir bireyden beklenenden sapan özellikleri yansıtır (Goffman, 1963).

Damga, “bedenin iğrençliklerinden – çeşitli fiziksel deformasyonlardan, [...] bireysel karakterdeki [...] veya] ırk, ulus ve dindeki kusurlardan” kaynaklanabilir (Goffman, 1963, s.4). Bu alıntıdaki ilk ifade nedeniyle, Goffmancı analizde tam veya yüksek görme kaybına (körlük) sahip olmak, damgalanmaya neden olan birçok özellikten biri olarak kabul edilir. Stigma, beklenenden “istenmeyen bir farklılığı” çağırıştır. Goffman (1963, s.5), “Söz konusu belirli beklentiden olumsuz olarak ayrılmayanlar için” diye normaldir.

“Normaller, en azından bazı bireyler karşısında ve bazı etkileşim durumları içinde istenmeyen farklılığı temsil etmeyenlerdir” (Titchkosky, 2000, s.204). İstenen farklılıklar, normal olarak kabul edilen ve bireyden beklenen (Goffman, 2018),

örneğin gözlük takmak veya kahverengi ve gören gözlere sahip olmak gibi özellikleri ifade eder.

Bu tezde kullanılan merkezi teori Stigma Teorisidir, ancak bu teori tek başına normalin akışkan ve etkileşimli olarak yeniden üretimini bir bağlam olarak kavramak için yeterli değildir. Bunun nedeni, Stigma teorisinin sağladığı metodolojik araçların daha statik ve yapısal olmasıdır. Goffman, Stigma'nın bir etkileşim olduğunu savunurken, süreci engelleyen ve bireyleri ana aktörler olarak yakalayan durağan araçlar geliştirir. Bağlamsal bir stigma olgusu fikrine uygun olarak, süreçsel olanı ek araçlarla yakalamamız gerekmektedir. Bu zorluk nedeniyle, “Günlük Yaşamda Benliğin Sunumu”ndan Performanslardaki dramaturjik analiz araçları, Stigma'nın durağan terimleri arasındaki bağlantı ve hareketlilik için kullanılır. Dramaturjik Analizden sağlanan imkanlar, bu çalışmanın daha süreç temelli bir çerçeveye sahip olmasını sağlamaya yöneliktir.

Engelliliği ele alan çalışmalarda, genellikle normallik ortak bir zemin olarak kabul edilmiştir. Bhasedilen çalışmalardan farklı olarak, bu tezdeki metodolojik çerçeve, analiz nesnesi olarak görme (normallik) bağlamını almaya çalışır ve çatışmalar ve etkileşimleri inceler.

Bu çalışmadaki başlıca zorluklardan biri, örneklemenin kendisinin, yalnızca bu engel ile yaşama özelliğini taşıdıkları için seçildikleri için, körler için kaçınılmaz bir ayrımcılığı ifade etmesiydi. Örneğin bir araştırmacı olarak sağlıklı ODTÜ öğrencilerinin engellilikle ilgili düşüncelerini incelemeyi tercih etseydim, örneklemime göre görüşmeler düzenlemek daha kolay olurdu. Ancak kampüste daha önce hiç görmediğim kör bir genç öğrenciyi gördüğümde bir şey beni geri çekti; sırf kör olduğu için çalışmama katkıda bulunup bulunamayacağını sormakta tereddüt ettim. “Ya bu onu rahatsız ederse”, kendimi bu soruyu sorarken buldum. Engelliliğe karşı ayrımcı bir tutumu onaylama ve yeniden üretme düşüncesi, başlangıçta bırakmak istememe neden oldu ve bu temel bir zorluktu.

İlk görüşmecimin "Grubumuz aslında bu röportajlardan bıktı, bu yüzden kaçının sizin çalışmanızda gönüllü olmak isteyeceğini bilmiyorum.", demesiyle bu çekincem arttı. Bir sosyoloğun sahaya gitmesi, sorular sorması veya gözlem yapması, sonrasında sahayı terk etmesi ve genellikle o insanlara bir daha

dokunmayan yazılı bir belge ile çalışmasını bitirmesinin ne kadar anlamlı olduğunu sorguladım. Şunu da sormam gerekti ki, literatür -özellikle Türkiye'de- neden bu kişinin bahsettiği mülakatları içeren makalelerle dolu değil? Bu yapılanlar sosyal gerçekliği yeterince yansıtıyor mu? Bir sosyoloğun, bir grup insanın “görüşmelere doymasına” neden olan yöntemlerini ve bunun sonuçlarını sorgulamayı ufuk açıcı buluyorum.

Merakımdan dolayı bu iki zorluğu görüşmecilerle paylaşarak ve olası sebepleri veya çözümleri neler olabilir diye sorarak aşmaya çalıştım. Bu aşamada engellilikle ilgili ön yargıya dikkat çektikleri için refleksif bir bakış açısı benimsemem gerekti. Engellilere yönelik bu aşırı kibar tutumların, örneğin, kör bir insanı gücendirip gücendirmeyeceğine fazla kafa yorma, “yanlış bir şey yapma” korkusu gibi, engellileri dezavantajlı olarak görme şeklindeki içselleştirilmiş bir önyargıdan kaynaklandığının altını çizdiler. Bu nedenle azgören bir babanın kızı olarak bazı ön yargı ve ön yargılarım olduğunu görmek benim için çok önemliydi ve bir araştırmacı olarak bunlarla yüzleştığım için mutluyum.

Öte yandangörmeyen bir yakın akrabaya sahip olmanın tek zorluğu bu değildi. Kör katılımcılara ulaştıktan sonra bu sefer onların yanında kendimi fazla rahat hissettim. Yani, onlardan biri olduğumu hissettim. Bu “özdeşleşme süreci” bazen gerçekçi olmayan beklentilere yol açabilir. Bu, normal ve profesyonel olarak kişisel bakış açımın net kalmaması riskini taşıyordu.

Çalışmanın analiz kısmında Goffman'ın vitrin, dramatik canlandırma, idealize etme, ifade denetiminin elde tutulması, yanlış sunum, gizemlileştirme ve gerçeklik ve düzmece ile sahadan gelen veriler incelenmiştir. Verilerin gruplanmasıyla birlikte damga, toplumsal kimlik, bilgi denetimi, bireysel kimlik, grubun hizasına çekilme ve ego kimliği kavramlarının normal bağlamı ile etkileşimleri incelenmiştir.

Vitrin kavramının altında gruplanan veriler göstermiştir ki görme normalliğinin atfedildiği bireyler görmeyenlerin aksine halka açık alanlarda karşılaşılması beklenen kişiler olarak tanımlanmaktadır. Normalin vitrini, hem bir gösteri sunabilen hem de seyirci olarak performans sergileyebilen anlamına gelmektedir. Başka bir deyişle, normal bir bireyin en önemli bilgiye ulaşma ve etkileşime girme yolunun bakmaktan geçtiği tespit edilmiştir. Körlerin ve görenlerin belli toplumsal

kimliklerinin olması beklentisi de toplumsal olarak beklenen bazı görsel özellikler aracılığıyla normallik bağlamının yeniden üretildiğini göstermiştir.

Dramatik canlandırma kavramı ile analizde anlaşılmaktadır ki uzmanlık geliştirme ve saygı uyandırma nitelikleri gören normal ile özdeşleştirilmiştir. Damgalanmış kör için normale en yakın bağlamlardan biri, damgalamayı telafi eden farklı yetenekler geliştirmek ve sivrileceği bir biçimde bu uzmanlıklarını sunmaktır. Bulgulara göre görmeyen birey, gören ile iletişim kurmak için sıklıkla sosyal olarak inisiyatif almaktadır. Görmeyenin bu girişkenliği ve normal olanın damgalanmış olanla karşılaşma anındaki tutukluğu gören normalliğinin yeniden üretildiği bir başka günlük hayat etkileşimi olarak işlenmiştir.

Normalin bağlamı, günlük hayatta idealize etme yoluyla da yeniden inşa edilmektedir. İdealize etme, görmek ve görmemek arasındaki hiyerarşilere işaret eder. Bu hiyerarşilerin çeşitliliği her zaman normalden daha normalin ve damgalıdan daha damgalının var olabileceğini göstermektedir. Bu açıdan normal bağlamının günlük yaşan etkileşimleri içinde bir skala olarak yeniden üretildiği sonucuna varılmıştır. Eşit bir iletişim zemini yaratmanın en normal anlaşılan yolunun görsel göstergeler ile etkileşime girmek olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Görmeyen ve idealize edilmiş görenin arasındaki hiyerarşinin yeniden kurulduğu bir başka etkileşimsel nokta, görenin yardım eden ve görmeyenin yardım bekleyen konumunda bulunması beklentisidir. Kör bireylerin toplumsal cinsiyet rollerini, cinsel kimliklerini ve yönelimlerini benimseyemeyeceklerine dair önyargılar göstermektedir ki, günlük yaşamda normal bağlam bu özelliklere yalnızca görenlerin sahip olabileceği üzerine kurulmuştur.

İfade denetiminin elde tutulması, körler ve gören kişiler arasındaki mevcut düzeni koruyarak normal bağlama hizmet eder. Varsayılan bağlam korunmazsa, normal bu durumu bir mucize olarak görebilmekte ya da kıskanabilmektedir. Bir başka deyişle, bir görmeyenin başarısı inanılamayacak kadar zor gerçekleşebilecek bir olay ya da mucizevi bir durumdur. Görenin bu tepkisi başarı ile görenin normal olarak daha etkin bir şekilde özdeşleştirilmiştir. Öyle ki gören, normali yeniden tanımlayabilme özgürlüğü ve gücünü yalnızca kendine atfedebilmekte ve körün başarısını bir gören ile açıklamaya çalışabilir.

Yanlış sunum kavramı, analizde normal performansın jestleri, mimikleri ve göz temasını içerdiğini göstermiştir. Gören normal, kendini diğer körler grubuna dahil etmesi gereken bir yabancı olarak kör olduğunu varsayarak etkileşime girmemektedir. Buna rağmen bir kör, bir gören ile etkileşime girdiğinde görenin temel aldığı görsel işaretler olan jest, mimik ve göz temasını taklit etme çabasına girebilir. Bu veri göstermektedir ki normal olan etkileşim yolu görme çerçevesinde tanımlanmıştır. Gören bir yandan körü kendi grubunun bir üyesi olduğunu belirtirken, bir yandan görenlerle o kadar da eşit olmadığını ima edebilir. Bu ikilemi temsil eden veriler ışığında körün ego kimliği, yani hangi gruba dahil olduğunu hissetme durumu, arafta tutulmuş olur.

Gizemlileştirme ve bilgi denetiminin elde tutulması kavramlarıyla analiz edilen veriler, bariz olan normalin gizemli hale getirilmesi çabası işlenmiştir. Başka bir deyişle, gören normal bağlamı görünmez hale gelecek kadar görmeme damgasını benimsemiştir. Sahada, damganın normal bağlamın bir parçası haline gelen alışılmış yönlerini ortaya çıkmıştır.

Performansı gerçekleştirenin gerçek niyeti ile performansının karşılaştırılması, büyük ölçüde sosyal psikolojik bir yaklaşımı gerektirdiği için analizde bu kısım ele alınmamış ve sadece sosyolojik olarak incelenmiştir. İki yönlü bir kavram olarak gerçeklik ve düzmece, gerçek performansların normal ve damgalanmış bağlamlarının, körlerin altıncı hissi veya zihin okuma yetenekleri efsanesi gibi sosyal olarak beklenen özellikleriyle örtüşebileceğini veya örtüşmeyebileceğini göstermektedir.

Tezin bulguları arasında normal kavramının atfedildiği bireylerin kamusal alanda bulunma, göze hitap etme, belli bir alanda uzmanlaşma, saygı uyandırma, baskın iletişim yolu olarak jest ve mimikleri kullanma, toplumsal cinsiyet rollerini benimseme, bir cinsel yönelime sahip olma, hata yapma ve ödüllendirilme gibi imkan ya da inisiyatiflerle özdeşleştirildiği sonucuna varılmıştır. Bu tezin literatüre katkısı Goffman'ın Damga ve Günlük Hayatta Benliğin Sunumu kitaplarının harmanlanarak normal algısının analizini derinleştirmek için mikro ilişkilere uygulamasıdır. Bulgular göstermektedir ki görme üzerinden inşa edilen normallik algısı günlük hayat etkileşimleri içinde yeniden üretilmektedir.

Bu tezde, toplumsal olarak tanımlanan normal anlayışı, Goffman'ın Stigma Theory and Dramaturgic Analysis - Performances from the Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life adlı eseriyle çözümlenmeye çalışılmıştır. Normal, analitik olarak Stigma'nın zıttı olarak kavramsallaştırılır. Buna bağlı olarak, görme yetisine sahip olmak, pratikte kör olmanın zıttı olarak işlevselleştirilmiştir. Bu nedenle teorik çerçeve, saha araştırmasında incelenen iki grupta örtüşmektedir. Mizahtan öfkeye, görenler ve körler arasındaki günlük etkileşimin tüm yönleri bağlamsal olarak detaylandırılır. Analiz boyunca, gören ve kör bireylere yönelik sosyal atıflar, iki analitik grupta yapılan yarı yapılandırılmış derinlemesine yüz yüze görüşmelerle toplanan verilerle karşılaştırılır.

Bu çalışmada, araştırma sorularıyla araştırıldığı gibi, normalin etkileşimlerde bağlamsal olarak yeniden üretildiği sonucuna varılmıştır. Başlangıçtaki araştırma soruları doğrultusunda, veri toplama, özel ve kamusal alanlarda arkadaşlar, akrabalar arasında farklı sosyal bağlamlarda normalin ne anlama geldiğini ortaya çıkardı. Burada kör ve gören için normal olanın farklı olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Çalışmanın Goffman'ın argümanlarıyla sonuçlandığı temel ayrıntılardan biri, normal ve damgalamanın aynının yalnızca farklı seviyeleri olduğudur. Bu çalışma, tüm etkileşimciler için genel olarak normalin ne olduğunu ortaya çıkarır.

Bu tezin temel argümanı, normallik anlayışının sosyal olarak inşa edildiği ve günlük etkileşimlerde yeniden üretildiğidir. Tezin bulguları arasında, normal kavramının yüklendiği bireyler, kamusal alanda bulunma, göze hitap etme, bir alanda uzmanlaşma, saygı uyandırma, mimik ve mimik kullanma gibi sosyal olanaklarla ya da girişimlerle özdeşleştirilmiştir. baskın iletişim biçimi, toplumsal cinsiyet rollerini benimseme, cinsel yönelime sahip olma, hata yapma ve ödüllendirilme gibi ifadeler. Bu tezin literatüre katkısı, normalin analizini derinleştirmek için Goffman'ın iki teorisini mikro ilişkilere uygulayarak kullanmasıdır. Bulgular, normal görüşlü bağlamın günlük etkileşimlerde yeniden üretildiğini göstermektedir. Bu çalışma, gelecekte her iki analitik grup için normalin anlamını ayırt etmek ve karşılaştırmak için daha ileri çalışmalara doğru bir adım olarak kabul edilebilir. Normalin farklı sosyoekonomik statüler tarafından anlaşılması, gelecekteki başka bir çalışma alanı olabilir.

Goffman'cı bir bakış açısından, bir birey sürekli olarak damgalanmış veya normal olarak tanımlanamaz. Bu argüman iki şekilde açıklanabilir. İlk olarak, normal ve damgalanmış olanın etkileşim olmadan tanımlanamayacağını söylüyor. Yani her ikisini de zaman, mekan, sözcükler ya da etkileşimde bulunanlar gibi tüm etkileşimsel öğelerle etkileşim içinde yeniden üretilen bağlamlar olarak ele alır. İkinci olarak, normal ve damgalamanın kendilerinin de katmanları olduğu için, bunların ayrımı da pek mümkün değildir. Bu ayrım zorluğu, kimlikleri sabitlemeden etkileşimin değişen doğasını analiz etmeye izin verdiği için Goffman'ın üzerinde durmayı tercih ettiği noktadır. Etkileşim analizinde bu zorluğun üstesinden gelmek için Goffman, iki kelimeyi analitik araçlar olarak kullanır. Terimleri zamir olarak işletirken normalleşme ve damgalanma sıklığını esas alır. Örneğin, Goffman, baskın toplumsal normlar nedeniyle günlük etkileşimlerde daha sık olarak damgalandıkları ve daha sık normalleştirildiği için engelli olmayan kişiyi “normal” olarak adlandırır. Bu şekilde, normal bağlamının yeniden üretildiği etkileşimleri, yani normale ilişkin atıfların (yeniden) nasıl doğrulandığını ortaya çıkarır. Kuşkusuz, onun operasyonel çabaları, bu tezin merkezi bir tartışma olarak benimsemediği post-modernist bir tartışmada sabit bir yaklaşım olarak düşünülebilir.

Bu nedenle, görme yeteneğine sahip etkileşimler şimdiye kadar bu tezde analitik nedenlerle normaller olarak adlandırılmıştır. Aynı nedenden dolayı kör/az gören ve damgalanmış olanlar birbirinin yerine kullanılmaktadır. İki normal etkileşime girdiğinde, normalin bağlamı yeniden onaylanmaya devam eder, yani normal etkileşim yolları, örneğin göz teması kurmak gibi sorunsuz bir şekilde işletilir. Yani, iki normalin etkileşimi içinde, normalin yeniden üreten bağlamları pek görünür değildir. Öte yandan, angajman kör/az görüşlü ve görmeyen etkileşimcilerden oluştuğunda, normal etkileşim yolları sorunsuz bir şekilde işletilmeyebilir. Daha sonra, etkileşime girenlerin farklılıkları onları normali daha az olağan yollarla yeniden üretmeye itebileceğinden, etkileşimin çatışan noktaları daha kolay gözlemlenebilir. Bu nedenle, damgalanmış ve normal arasındaki etkileşimi gözlemlemek, çelişkili karşılaşmaları ele verir. Etkileşimde bulunanın istenmeyen/istenmeyen farklılıkları nedeniyle bu çelişkili noktalar, görenlerin normalleşme süreci kadar körlerin damgalanma sürecinden de önce gelebilir.

Bir birey hakkında birçok “işaret aracı”, yani “birçok bilgi kaynağı”, sosyal bağlamda ondan ne bekleneceğini ve diğerlerinin onun hakkında ne bilmesini istediğini iletir (Goffman, 1956, s.1). Goffman'ın performans kavramlarına uygun olarak, bu etkileşimlerin gösterge araçları, görüşmelerde tekrar tekrar dile getirilen temalarla detaylandırılacaktır. Amaç, normalin yeniden üretildiği ana etkileşim noktalarını bulmaktır.

Körlüğün varlığı inkar edilemez bir şekilde evrimsel ve biyolojik inşa süreçlerini içerir. Kabul edilmelidir ki görme, fiziksel olarak inşa edilen bir biyolojik duruma işaret eder, ancak onun yokluğu kaçınılmaz olarak sosyal olguları beraberinde getirir. Dolayısıyla, bu analizdeki sınırlar, damgalayıcı toplumsal nitelikler ve bunların toplumsal yeniden inşa süreçleri etrafında çizilir. Yani biyolojik ve fiziksel yönleri bir yana bırakılarak görmenin sosyolojik yansıması ve etkileşimli ürünleri bu tezde ortaya konmaktadır. Örneğin, kör ile arkadaşı arasında göz temasının mümkün olmaması biyolojik bir durum iken, bu durumdan dolayı onu tam olarak anlayamayabileceğini düşünmek, görmenin toplumsal üstünlüğünün etkileşimli ve toplumsal bir yeniden üretimine işaret eder.

Çoğu akademik çalışma, engelliliğin sonuçlarını hafife alma ve bu olguya benzer yaklaşımlar uygulama eğilimindedir. “Engellilik söz konusu olduğunda, rehabilitasyon bilimleri, tıp, psikoloji, eğitim ve sosyal politika araştırmaları alana hakimdir. [...] Geleneksel yaklaşımlar, bozulmanın insan yaşamında yaygın bir deneyim olduğunu görmezden gelir [...]” (Waldschmidt, 2017, s. 19). Bu çalışmanın ilk önemi, mevcut literatürde eksik olan körlük bağlamında etkileşimsel bir yaklaşım uygulamayı amaçlamasıdır.

Mevcut literatürün önemli bir kısmı hala tıbbi ve sosyal teori sakatlık modelleri arasındaki çelişkili ikiliğin üstesinden gelmeye çalışmaktadır. Aynı argümanın farklı varyasyonlarıyla dolup taşıyor: Modellerin hiçbiri engellilik olgusunu incelemek için yeterince uygulanabilir değil. “[d]olabilirlik ne 'toplum'un ne de 'doğa'nın içinde veya dışında konumlanmamalıdır [...]” Böylece, “ne 'toplum' perspektifi (sosyal model) ne de 'doğa' perspektifi (tıbbi model) engelliliği tanımlamanın evrensel bir açıklayıcı modunun sınırlandırılmasına ve sabitlenmesine izin veren özel bir gerçeklik alanı olarak işlev görebilir” (Schillmeier). , 2008, s.612-

3). Etki alanının küçük olmasına rağmen, bu araştırma hem toplumun varlıklarını hem de bireyi merkezden uzaklaştırmaya yönelik mütevazı bir adım olarak kabul edilebilir.

Davis, “sorun” diye yazıyor, 'engelli kişi değil; sorun, normalliğin engelli kişinin 'sorunu' yaratmak için inşa edilme şeklidir” (Davis, 1995, s.24; Adams, Reiss ve Serlin, 2015, s.373). Engellilik literatürünün çoğunluğu, ya engelli aktörü ya da güçlü kuvvetli toplumu merkezileştirme eğilimindedir. Sonuç olarak, toplum tarafından ve toplumca değişmez bir sakatlığı, dolayısıyla istikrarlı bir sapma tasvir ediliyor. Öte yandan, öznelere bu istikrarını kırmayı amaçlayan post-modernist ve post-yapısalcı bakış açıları vardır. Bu bakış açılarının engellilik araştırmalarında artan etkisi, sosyolojideki kültürel paradigma değişimine paralel olarak 20. yüzyılın sonlarını yansıtmaktadır (Thomas, 2006, s.179). Mevcut literatürün iki grubu arasında, bu tez etkileşimsel süreçlere odaklanarak normal ve damgalamayı vurgulamayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu nedenle, normale yönelik etkileşimsel odaklanma, bu tezin bir diğer önemli katkısıdır.

Bu tezin bulgularına göre, görme ve körlükle ilgili normalliğin işleyişi günlük etkileşimlerde gizlidir. Normal bağlamı, sosyal bir etkileşim düzeni sağlar ve pratik uygunluğu, kendisinin sistematik olarak yeniden üretilmesiyle sonuçlanır. Gören ve kör bireylerin deneyimleri ve nitelikleri, farklı etkileşim performansları altında yorumlanır. Goffman (1963), bir bireye normal olarak atıfta bulunursa, sabit bir “normaller” grubunu varsaymadığından, yalnızca bağlamsallığının altını çizerek terimi analitik olarak kullandığından bahseder. Buna paralel olarak, normal sosyal özelliklerin bu biyolojik farklılığa bağlı farklılıkları ve benzerlikleri analiz edilir. Normal anlayışının günlük etkileşimlerde farklı şekillerde yeniden doğrulandığı bulunmuştur. Bu çalışmaya ilerideki katkılar arasında toplumsal cinsiyet ya da sosyal sınıf gibi değişkenleri merkeze alarak engelli ve engelsiz bağlam normallik kavramının günlük hayat etkileşimi içinde nasıl yeniden üretildiği ve nasıl farklılık gösterdiğini incelemek olabilir.

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