COMING OUT TO PARENTS:
TRANSFORMATION OF THE FAMILIES WITH LGBTQ CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT

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The challenges faced by the families of choice of LGBTQs when confronted with the heteronormative structure of family in society have already been covered at length, both in Turkish and foreign literature. In contrast, there have to date been few academic studies of the experiences of families that were established according to the settled heteronormative norm in society, but then come to include a self-identifying LGBTQ child as a family member. In this regard, this thesis departs from the question: How does the family transform after self-identified LGBTQ children come out to their families of origin? In a search for answers, this study focuses on families with self-identifying LGBTQ children, and investigates coming out as an interactive familial process. Furthermore, in highlighting the important role of such family groups as LISTAG, LADEG+ and Ankara Rainbow Families in Turkey, it claims that the presence of different sexualities in the family can bring about change in society. These arguments are investigated through data collected during semi-structured, open-ended and in-depth interviews with 11 mothers who came to be activists after the disclosure of their children, and their 11

self-identifying LGBTQ young adult/adult children, meaning that 11 family systems are examined. Benefiting from the conceptualizations of Family Systems Theory, such as 'system', 'subsystem', 'boundary', 'change', and 'adaptability', this study explores how the coming out experiences of LGBTQ children to their families of origin affect intra-familial dynamics.

Key words: Families of origin of LGBTQ persons, Family Systems Theory, family dynamics, coming out, transformation

ÖZ

EBEVEYNLERE AÇILMA:
LGBTQ ÇOCUĞU OLAN AİLELERİN DÖNÜŞÜMÜ

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LGBTQ kişilerin kendi istekleriyle kurdukları ailelerin toplumdaki heteronormatif aile düzenine karşı çıktığı hem Türkiye'deki hem de yurtdışındaki literatür tarafından uzun süredir tartışılmaktadır. Ancak toplumda yerleşmiş heteronormatiflik üzerinden kurulan ailelerin, kendilerini LGBTQ olarak tanımlayan çocukları olduğunda ailenin hangi kavramlarla analiz edileceği keşfedilmemiş bir mevzudur. Bu bağlamda, bu tez 'LGBTQ kişiler köken ailelerine açıldıktan sonra aile nasıl dönüşür?' sorusu ile yola çıkmıştır. Cevap bulmak amacı ile kendini LGBTQ olarak tanımlayan çocukları olan ailelere odaklanılmış, açılma sadece bireysel düzeyde değil, aile içi etkileşimleri olan bir süreç olarak ele alınmıştır. Ayrıca Türkiye'de LİSTAG, LADEG+, Ankara Gökkuşağı Aileleri gibi aile gruplarının önemini vurgulayarak farklı cinselliklerin ailede karşılaşmasının toplumda değişim yaratmak için zemin hazırladığını iddia etmiştir. Bu iddialar, çocuklarının açılmasından sonra aktivist olmuş 11 anne ve onların kendini LGBTQ olarak tanımlayan genç yetişkin/yetişkin çocukları ile yarı yapılandırılmış, ucu açık ve derinlemesine yapılan görüşmeler üzerinden

araştırılmış, böylece 11 aile sistemine bakılmıştır. Bu çalışma, Aile Sistemler Teorisi'nin 'sistem', 'alt sistem', 'sınır', 'değişim' ve 'uyarlanabilirlik' terimlerinden yararlanarak, kendilerini LGBTQ olarak tanımlayan çocukların köken ailelerine açıldıktan sonra aile içi dinamiklerin dönüşümünü analiz etmeyi amaçlamıştır.

Anahtar kelimeler: LGBTQ kişilerin köken aileleri, Aile Sistemler Teorisi, aile dinamikleri, açılma, dönüşüm

To my mother…

"My mother is a poem
I'll never be able to write,
though everything I write
is a poem to my mother."

                 Sharon Doubiago

&

          To my angel in the space,

       My dear cousin, Boysan Yakar…

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Every child's story starts with the family.

Coming out, that is, disclosing one's sexual identity and/or orientation to others, is considered to be a significant step in the establishment of an LGBTQ identity. For those who disclose their sexual identity and/or orientation, coming out to the family of origin has important meaning for many LGBTQ persons, as LGBTQ persons are considered mostly to be family-less, given the frequency at which they are ignored or rejected by their families of origin. How LGBTQs are represented in the media supports the misapprehension that they are deviant and even pose a risk to the dominant norms and values in society. Additionally, previous studies of LGBTQs' families of origin have tended to revolve around examples of denial, homophobia and transphobia. Although there is a common view that coming out to parents leads children to be excluded from the family, there are also examples that contradict this, even in dominantly heteronormative cultures (Beeler & DiProva, 1999).

Coming out is, indeed, a significant process of transformation for those who decide to disclose, and the aftermath for the individual may be dramatic. The action of coming out to the family affects not only the LGBTQ person herself/himself, but also family members, given the broad relationship networks that make them socially independent. Although it is certain there will be many

changes in the life of the individual after coming out, the characteristics of these changes vary from person to person (Laird, 1993). Accordingly, the issue of change within the family dynamic is to be examined through specific contexts (Oswald, 1999).

In search for answers, this study follows Stacey and Biblarz's (2001) inquiry into how the sexual orientation of parents matters, taking a similar question as its focus: 'How do the sexual orientations and/or identities of children matter for family dynamics, if they matter at all?' considering the fact that sexuality is one of the primary building blocks in the construction of the family. Accordingly, the major aim of this study is to investigate 'How does the coming out of an LGBTQ child transform intra-familial dynamics?' To be more specific, this thesis aims to examine 'How does the coming out of a self-identifying LGBTQ child affect the dynamics of the mother-child dyadic relationship?'

To find answers to this question, this study focuses on the coming out experiences of families with a self-identifying LGBTQ member. The study begins by suggesting that coming out is firstly an interactive act, before being a political act. The communication loop that exists among family members becomes the vehicle through which members express themselves, and influence and transform each other. However, it is also evident that communication cannot be limited to the family, and so there is an obvious need for other strategic partners, and this turns coming out into a political act. Secondly, coming out has repercussions not only on the individual, but also the person(s) to whom she/he decides to come out. In this sense, coming out to the family of origin has some particular effects also on family members. Thirdly, this study proposes that different sexualities are encountered first in the family, since familial relationships are mostly weak in their boundaries and strong in their intersections with each other, especially in Turkey. In this regard, the intimate relationships found within families allow parents to realize and observe characteristics related to the sexual identity and/or

orientation of their children from a very early age. Moreover, it is certain that 'queer' parenting has challenged the traditional 'family' form, although it is apparent that prior to establishing their 'own' families, they, as 'queers', had already challenged the existing family form within the families into which they were born – their families of origin. Considering that the process of disclosure includes not only individual experiences, but also familial experiences, an analysis of the transformation of families in which the lives of heterosexual parents are turned upside-down by the presence of a child with a queer identity will allow the transformation process of families with different sexualities to be followed. In this regard, this study argues that encountering different sexual identities in the family may bring about a change in society, starting from the family. In other words, the transformation of society in regards to LGBTQ issues begins in their families of origin, and in this respect, the process of coming out promises more than merely what comes out.

For the examination of these arguments, this study makes use of data about families with adult LGBTQ children who came out to their families of origin. It focuses on the experiences of both the mothers and children before, during, after the coming out, and in this way, aims to explore the process of coming out in its various aspects, including both the individual and reciprocal experiences of different members of the family, and the transformation of intra-familial dynamics within this process. Its arguments are discussed through the main concepts of Family Systems Theory, which are system, subsystem, boundary, change and adaptability, the methodology of which shows a high level of compatibility with the arguments of this study. The suitability of Family Systems Theory for such an investigation, and its ability to explain various patterns in complicated systems, eases the investigation of the intersectionality of various issues, including not only sexuality and family relations but also womanhood, motherhood, identity, body, marriage, partnership, etc. Taking coming out as a crisis that leads to

transformations in family dynamics is encouraged by the proposition of Family Systems Theory that the past and the present create one's ongoing adjustment (Sroufe et al., 1990; Egeland et al., 1993); and "the child as a part of the family system will be an active participant in the creation of relationships over time (Rutter, 1987 as cited in Cox & Paley, 1997, p. 257)." Although the trigger for transformation would seem to be caused by a particular family member, each member of the family system is a part of the change, and takes an active part in the re-structuring of the family system. In other words, as Minuchin (1985) says "the individual life cycle and the family life cycle cross-cut each other in complex ways (p. 290)."

This study also plays a significant role in its approach to the issue of sexuality from the perspective of Family Systems Theory, in that it focuses on the importance of sexuality within familial dynamics. The issue of 'family' has been discussed at length in feminist critique and Queer Theory, but this study combines them all in one work. It highlights the importance of sexuality, as one of the main issues in feminist critique and Queer Theory, and its transformative effects on the family, as referred to in Family Systems Theory as an open and dynamic system whose elements are interdependent. All of these arguments are explained in the second chapter, in which Family Systems Theory provides an invaluable base for an analysis of the transformation of the family with the coming out process of an LGBTQ member.

Another significant contribution of this study is its examination of the transformative effects of the coming out process by considering the social, cultural, and political context of Turkey, where LGBTQs are excluded from society due to their 'marginalized' identities. The issue of different sexualities is of significant importance, since LGBTQs are stigmatized by the world in which they live, which is socially constructed according to heterosexual norms, and by society, which prioritizes the heterosexual family form. In this regard, it is

important to provide an understanding of the socio-political structure in Turkey, and to analyze the transformation of the family within these societal influences.

1.1.   Studies about Family Dynamics in Turkey

Studies of the family in Turkey cover a broad spectrum of subjects, including the work-family life distinction, family business, migration, value of child, family planning, family doctors, family education levels and the issue of abortion, and many different disciplines have taken an interest, including those involved in economy, anthropology, psychology, demography, medicine and educational sciences, looking at family dynamics from different perspectives. Furthermore, there are also a wide range of topics in sociological studies relate to the family, such as urban life, economic crisis, marriage and impacts of migration on family structure, although in this section, focus is only on the sociological studies into the changing family dynamics in Turkey.

Accordingly, up until the 2000s, sociologists had focused mainly on the issue of modernization in Turkey, and its implications on Turkish families, and these studies were highly engaged in traditional social values. Sociological studies over the last five decades have tended to highlight traditional values in Turkish culture, such as the extended family structure, and consider the issue of family dynamics in line with the changing effects of the period, commencing with the decline of Ottoman Empire and the foundation of Turkish Republic from a historical perspective (Baştuğ, 2005). Moreover, in the 1980s and 1990s, sociologists generally approached family dynamics with emphasis on its function in forming gender roles. The sociological analyses of family dynamics and the modernization

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process of Turkey also came to include studies dealing with the issues of continuity and change in family dynamics from a class-based perspective at the end of the 1990s and beginning of the 2000s (Ataca & Sunar, 1999; Sunar, 2005; Bolak, 2005; and Sunar & Fişek, 2005).

From the 2000s, studies of the changing family dynamics in Turkey started to become more varied, in both subject and in approach. Although sociological studies tended to focus on different aspects of family dynamics, they could be divided into two main dimensions in terms of their approach to the family.

Firstly, there are a number of studies investigating family dynamics that consider the family as a whole, as one piece, and looked at how outside factors affect family dynamics, addressing issues of kinship, religion and spatial culture, among others, and their influence on the changing family dynamics. On this issue, Baştuğ (2005) focuses on changes in the Turkish family and household structure, considering the family and household as being connected to a larger kinship structure, while Erder (2005) looks at changing family dynamics and kinship relations under the effects of urbanization and migration. Furthermore, Nauck and Klaus (2008) analyze changes in the family in Turkey considering the effects of religion, the cultural effects of modernization and peasantry.

Secondly, there are several studies focusing on how changing situations within the family affect intra-family dynamics. For instance, Ulusoy, Demir Özcan, and Baran Görgün (2005) analyze the relationship between parenting methods and the problems that children face during adolescence. Feyzioğlu and Kuşçuoğlu (2011), in contrast, study the changing family dynamics when a parent becomes a single parent as a result of death, divorce or separation. Demir Özcan, Ulusoy, and Baran Görgün's (2007) investigation is into how teenagers are affected when family members have mental disorders. Furthermore, Adak (2007) looks at the changing family relationships of women when they join the labor market. Kalaycıoğlu,

Çelik, and Beşpınar (2010) also analyze changing family dynamics, looking into the kinds of challenges faced by family members, and the strategies they develop to deal with the situation during the migration process when men migrate to a foreign country alone.

1.2.   Sociology of 'the closet'

Seidman et al. (1999) describe the importance of 'the closet' from two sociologically and historically significant dimensions. First, the closet represents a means of protection for homosexuals that in return reproduces the heteronormative aspects of society. Second, the closet has been becoming normalized and routinized, which may be interpreted as both a victory and loss in identity politics, and can be considered a separation between the private and public lives of homosexuals. They found that the situation regarding the normalization and routinization of homosexuality corresponds to the individuals' consideration of homosexuality in regard to identity.

To date, studies of LGBTQ persons have mostly been conducted as part of investigations of deviance, gender or sexuality, although many sociologists have chosen to study the experiences of what are considered 'unusual' LGBTQ families and their specific situations. However, considering the fact that the LGBTQ issue is the focus of one of the most compelling and active social movements in both the United States and Europe, failing to establish a link between the 'usual' and 'unusual' families in the society would clearly diminish the effectiveness of any sociological explanation.

Literature on different sexual orientations and/or identities begins most often with an investigation of homosexuality in a country, and Turkey is no exception in this regard. There was a major tendency among sociologists in the 1960s to analyze sexuality and homosexuality in terms of the intersubjective meanings, identities and categories through which sexuality is constructed (Epstein, 1994). This tendency to include subjects that had previously been disregarded in analyses due to their incompatibility with the mainstream data, rather than eliminating 'the other' from the frame, gained strength with symbolic interactionism in the United States and labeling theory in the United Kingdom. Symbolic interactionism led to the inclusion of such phenomena as meaning, process and identity in analyses; while labeling theory failed to address, and that would later become the basis for debates on constructionism and deconstructionism (Stein & Plummer, 1994). Accordingly, Goffman's work on stigma (1963), Humphrey's work (1970) on those who partake in anonymous sexual practices in public tearooms and Lemert's work (1975) on deviance are significant in the sense that they show how those with a non-heterosexual sexual orientation and/or identity were still in the closet, not only in their public lives, but also in their family lives in the 1970s (as cited in Epstein, 1994).

After the rise of the sexual liberation movement in the 1970s and 1980s and the challenge it presented to the sociology of sexuality, the sociology of homosexuality came to be addressed also in feminist writings. The relevance of the feminist approach lies in its conceptualization of sexuality as a power field, while lesbian feminism can be considered compelling in terms of its rethinking of the relationship between gender and sexuality (Stein & Plummer, 1994). The strong relationship that exists between identity, politics and sexuality, which was first emphasized in Berger and Luckmann's (1967) social construction of reality from a socio-historical perspective, has been subjected to even deeper analysis in gay and lesbian studies, and especially identity theory, going one step beyond the

studies of power relations between male and female sexuality. The LGBTQ movement has come to be seen as a representation of the sexual revolution through identity and minority politics, and LGBTQ persons have been recognized as historical actors in this revolution as new sexual politics have appeared in the scene (Escoffier, 1985).

With the rise of queer theory, the binary references to sex (male/female), gender (feminine/masculine) and sexuality (homosexual/heterosexual) have needed to be rethought by sociologists. Considering the influence of these dual conceptualizations on social dynamics, queer theory claims that the social identity of the individual is socially constructed, although these social constructions come with a price tag (Valocchi, 2005). In this sense, the most important sociological argument put forward by queer theory is that it is not possible to make a proper analysis of social life without an analysis of the sexual meanings attached to it (Epstein, 1994).

In conclusion, although 'coming out of the closet' has been studied both sociologically and historically from the various perspectives mentioned above, the closet has always been seen as something that is taken for granted among LGBTQs in the heteronormative world; and continues to be the most basic issue, even within the queer framework. Sedgwick (1990) claims that 'the closet' is "the defining structure for gay oppression in this century" (p. 71 as cited in Hudak & Giammattei, 2014). In this regard, although the issue of the closet is mostly evaluated in the frame of homosexuality, there remains an obvious relationship also with heterosexuality, and this warrants further study in the future to understand how homosexuality fits into the conceptual network of heteronormativity.

1.3.   Studies of LGBTQ issues

LGBTQ issues came to the academic agenda in the late 1950s, although the studies of West (1959), Bieber et al. (1962), O'Connor (1964), Apperson-Behrens & McAdoo (1968), Loney (1973) and Thompson et al. (1973) came from a biased cultural perspective that considered homosexuality to be a mental illness (as cited in LaSala, 2003). Following the 1973 declaration by the American Psychiatric Association identifying diversity in sexual orientation and/or identity as a healthy condition, studies into the LGBTQ issues started to become more varied. Studies addressing LGBTQ issues, especially in the field of sociology, have focused on three main topics, being political implications and stigmatization; the act of coming out; and family and kinship.

First, studies identifying the political implications related to LGBTQ persons and the stigmatization that they face in society are numerous, with particular focus on the changes in how American gays and lesbians live their lives in terms of normalization, routinization and the disclosure of their identities (Seidman et al., 1999; Seidman, 2002). Moreover, there are a number of researches (Kaufman & Johnson, 2004; Myers et al., 2004; Muraco, 2005; Land & Kitzinger, 2005; Robitaille & Saint-Jacques, 2009) investigating the stigmatization that LGBTQ persons experience; and how this stigmatization occurs in and transforms the relationships between heterosexual and LGBTQ persons. Furthermore, studies have been made into the strategies developed by LGBTQs to deal with stigmatization, and the effects of stigmatization on the way LGBTQ persons see themselves in society (Peplau & Fingerhut, 2007). Taking a different perspective, Waites (2005) and Stein (2005) made analyses of the rights LGBTQs have access to as citizens of particular countries. In the same vein, the stance of the state

towards LGBTQ-parent families, and their struggle to gain the same rights as heterosexual parents in society, are discussed in researches by Hequembourg (2004), Mezey (2008; 2013), Polikoff (2008), Gartrell et al. (2011), and Shapiro (2013). Another research theme with political implications is the struggle faced by LGBTQ persons to gain legal recognition of their partnerships, both to benefit from economic advantages of a legalized relationship, and to be recognized by their families of origin and society as a whole (Reimann, 1997; Gartrell, et. al, 1999; Dolan & Stum, 2001; Hequemborg & Farrell, 2001), and the politicization of both LGBTQs and heterosexuals in the fight for sexual minority rights has also been a subject of academic interest (Sturken, 1992; Hare, 1994; Hom, 1994; Tasker & Golombok, 1995; Thornton, 1995; Lewis & Fraser, 1996; Gartrell et al., 1996; Allen, 1999; Oswald, 1999; Thompson, 1999; Herdt & Koff, 2000). Finally, there are a few academic studies merging the issue of sexual identity with other identities, such as ethnicity and religion, including those penned by Tremble, Schneider, and Appathurai (1989), Alpert (1997), Yip (1997), Kirkman (1998), and Roscoe (1998), and analyzing identity politics in the context of social movements (Broad, 2002).

Second, although experiences of coming out are related directly to other issues, such as stigmatization, political environment, family and kinship, there have been a number of studies focusing particularly on coming out, explaining the dynamics and effects on LGBTQs and/or their social circle throughout the process. This body of work includes studies of the preferences among young of LGBTQ persons when choosing whom to come out to in the family, such as those by Waldner and Magruder (1999), Armesto and Weisman (2001), Rostosky et al. (2004), and D'Augelli et al. (2005). The works of Savin-Williams (1989), D'Augelli et al. (1998), and Floyd et al. (1999) look into the impacts of family reactions on the mental health of LGBTQ children. Moreover, controlled coming out, referring to the management of the process of disclosure by LGBTQs when choosing whom to

come out to, is addressed by Newman and Muzzonigro (1993), Jackson and Brown (1996), Reimann (1997), Caron and Ulin (1997), Tasker and Golombok (1997), D'Augelli et al. (1998), Mays et al. (1998), Lott-Whitehead and Tully (1999), Healy (1999), Oswald (1999), Allen (1999), Carrington (1999), Sullivan (2001), and Waller and McAllen-Walker (2001). Researchers (Strommen, 1989; Savin-Williams & Dubé, 1998; Fields, 2001; Saltzburg, 2004; Aveline, 2006) have also looked at the other side of the coin, focusing on the experiences of other members of the family with an LGBTQ member, and the challenges that faced by parents. Additionally, there are studies (Ben-Ari, 1995; LaSala, 2000; Savin-Williams, 2005) looking at how some parents compare the death of a person that they love with learning of their child's non-heterosexual sexual orientation and/or identity, with the claim that parents pass through numerous stages of grief, including shock, shame, guilt, and denial.

Third, studies of family and kinship are common in the field of LGBTQ studies, including those of Kurdek and Schmitt (1987), Kurdek (1988), Weston (1991), Crosbie-Burnett and Helmbrecht (1993), Gartrell et al. (1996), Patterson, Hurt, and Mason (1998), and Cantú (2001), who highlight the importance of kinship networks within LGBTQ communities over those with their relatives in their families of origin, showing how LGBTQ persons create their own families and gain social support (as cited in Oswald, 2002). On the other hand, Allen (1999), Thompson (1999), and Herdt and Koff (2000) suggest that heterosexual family members with LGBTQ relatives also build familial networks with their friends, especially within support groups, rather than with members of their families of origin. Broad (2011) also investigates the struggle of LGBTQ families in their rhetorics. Moreover, there are studies (Tremble et al., 1989; Hom, 1994; Patterson et al., 1998; Naples, 2001) into the changing meaning of 'family' that have enhanced the relationship between family and politics.

Studies focusing in particular on LGBTQ families include analyses of the familial dynamics of transgender couples, both during and after the process of sex re-assignment surgery, of which Hines (2006), Schilt and Westbrook (2009), Pfeffer (2010; 2012), Sanger (2010), and Ward (2010) can be given as examples. Parenting has been one of the most significant and prevalent issues covered in studies of LGBTQ persons. Bozett (1987), Bigner (1999), Barret and Robinson (2000), Mallon (2004), and Lewin (2006) all highlight the confrontations that exist between the heterosexual and non-heterosexual attributions to parenting, and the challenges faced by LGBTQ persons (especially gay men) as parents in the face of traditional perceptions of parenting. The issues of same-sex marriage, and specifically, how the children of same-sex parents define family, and how their perspective differs from that of the children of opposite-sex parents, have been addressed by Wainright et al. (2004), Wainright and Patterson (2006; 2008), Rosenfeld (2010), Fedewa and Clark (2009), and Regnerus (2012). Accordingly, differences in the family dynamics and parenting (motherhood and fatherhood) of LGBTQ parents have also been studied (Dunne, 2000; Agigian, 2004; Stacey, 2006; Berkowitz & Marsiglio, 2007; Mezey, 2008; Mamo, 2007; Biblarz & Savci, 2010; Bergman et al., 2010). The union of LGBTQs and heterosexuals through kinship networks and/or in a form of family, and the availability of mutual support, are issues that have been discussed by Shallenberger (1996), Mays et al. (1998), Oswald (1999), and Carrington (1999).

In the specific case of Turkey, academic works related to the LGBTQ community flourished in the 1990s, and accelerated even further throughout the 2000s. That said, this wasn't always the case, as before that, the sum of information related to LGBTQ issues in Turkey was limited to comparisons of countries as investigated in foreign reports. This lack of research indicates that the issues faced by LGBTQ persons had been largely overlooked in the academic field. Like in Western countries, studies in this field have been dominated by psychologists since the

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beginning, and it was only with the advent of the 21st century that sociologists started contribute to the field with investigations of issues related to LGBTQ persons from a sociological perspective. That said, these studies have been very few in number and highly deficient in scale. From 2000 until 2010, only a few studies were published on the issue, and their perspectives were derived mostly from psychology (Uğurlu Sakallı, 2006; Mitrani, 2008; Yıldırım & Hacıoğlu, 2010), medicine (Yavuz et al., 2006), and media (Bakacak Gelgeç, & Öktem, 2009) rather than sociology. The sociological point of view was covered especially from the perspectives of psychology and the media as a result of their convergence with such topics as discourse, identity, crime and the state, which were already being discussed within the field of sociology.

After 2010, the existing scope of study started to be extended, and at the same time, an increase was witnessed in the diversity of topics studied, including studies in relation to medicine (Şahan Engindeniz, 2014a; Candansayar, 2014), social policy (Yılmaz, Göçmen, & Atlay, 2014), media and cinema (Ulusay, 2011; Depeli, 2013; Şahan Engindeniz, 2014b), psychology (Şah, 2011; Öztürk & Kındap, 2011; Başar, 2014; Kaptan & Yüksel, 2014; Kağnıcı, 2015; Turan et al., 2015), politics (Buz, 2011; Agtaş, 2012; Yalçın & Yılmaz, 2013; Canveren & Özeren, 2014), education (Duyan et al., 2011; Acımış & Tekindal, 2013; Altunpolat, 2014), marriage and reproduction (Nüfusçu & Yılmaz, 2012; Özcan et al., 2013), and identity (Kayır Öztunalı, 2015). The most significant difference between the periods before and after 2010 is that while sociology was an approach that benefitted temporarily from other perspectives prior to 2010, all topics have had to be addressed in conjunction with the field of sociology since 2010, with some subjects, such as identity, being elaborated only from a sociological point of view. In short, the sociological perspective has started to be used more frequently and prevalently.

In this vein, the 2009 study "Media discourses on homosexuality and managing heterosexism in Turkey" by Bakacak and Öktem analyzes how the media represents homosexuality; how those images lead to a specific perception of homosexuality in society; and what kinds of strategies homosexuals develop to cope with that perception. Another study makes a historical analysis of the LGBTQ Rights Movement in Turkey and its political engagements, from the Gezi Movement of May 2013 up to the local elections held in March 2014 (Yalçın & Yılmaz, 2013). Furthermore, in "The View of the Intervening of LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) on the Constitution Writing Process", Depeli (2013) stresses the stance of the mass media in civil constitution debates. Canveren and Özeren (2014), in "An examination of LGBT inmates in Turkey based on x/Turkey case by the European Court of Human Rights", conduct a study of LGBT prison inmates in Turkey. Departing from the European Court of Human Rights' (ECHR) judgment on the inadequacy of Turkey's prisons for homosexual prisoners, the authors investigate the inadequate physical standards of prisons, the legislative gaps in criminal law and the apparent failure of Turkish politics to improve the situation. Kayır Öztunalı's (2015) study "Sociological evaluation: The issue of gender identity from the perspective of LGBT people" points out how patriarchy and capitalism reproduce certain social processes, arguing that social, economic and political amendments should be applied if more democratic and liberating systems are to be achieved. Ural and Beşpınar (2017) investigate the relationship between the masculine respectability of gay men with class and habitus. In their study "Class and Habitus in the Formation of Gay Identities, Masculinities, and Respectability in Turkey", they found that social class and habitus are highly influencial on the norms of masculine respectability, and so affect how gay men form and maintain their gay identity.

Moreover, Selek (2001) in the book "Maskeler Süvariler Gacılar/ Masks, Cavalries, Gacis[1]" explains the discrimination that trans persons face in Turkish society with an analysis of hate crimes committed against trans persons in Turkey. There are also books focusing on the individual experiences of LGBTQs related to their LGBTQ identities, including "Eşcinsel Erkekler/ Homosexual Men" (Hocaoğlu, 2002), as the first book in Turkish literature to broach the issue, which contains interviews with 25 gay men who provide details of their lives in matters such as family relations, work-home lives, personal problems and the challenges that they face in their lives, and their feelings in this regard. "Eşcinsel Kadınlar/ Homosexual Women" (Özbay and Soydan, 2003), in contrast, explains how homosexual women in Turkey build their sexual identity and/or orientation, and provides insight into their perceptions towards men, their approaches to womanhood, feminism, discrimination and identity, their family relations, and their working lives, based on the findings of interviews with self-identified homosexual women in Turkey. In "Lubunya: Transseksüel Kimlik ve Beden/ Bottom: Transsexual Identity and Body", Berghan (2007), based on the findings of 11 interviews, looks into how transsexuals challenge and reproduce the existed patriarchal structure in society in the process of building their LGBTQ identities. The body of LGBTQ literature also contains books that compile different essays, articles and translations related to the issue. For instance, Mutluer (2008) in "Cinsiyet Halleri: Türkiye'de Toplumsal Cinsiyetin Kesişim Sınırları/ Gender States: Intersection Boundaries of Gender in Turkey", highlights the intersections of various issues like sexuality, education, ethnicity, immigration, media, etc. from different perspectives of gender studies in Turkey. "Cinsellik Muamması: Türkiye'de Queer Kültür ve Muhalefet/ Muamma Sexualities: Queer culture and dissidence in Turkey" (Çakırlar & Delice, 2012) also presents an historical analysis of queer theory and its political discussions, looking at the period from the

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[1] I have translated all original Turkish titles where no English translation is available. The original titles can also be found in the Reference List at the end of the study.

2000s up until 2012, while "Queer Tahayyül/ Queer Imagination" (Yardımcı & Güçlü, 2013) is another compilation of works about the issue of 'disidentification', in which it is claimed that queer theory, as an issue of identity politics, is not solely the concern of LGBTQ persons, in that it addresses the issue of identity politics from the perspective of disidentification in general. Lastly, Darıcıoğlu (2015) in "Queer Temaşa/ Queer Spectacle", investigates how LGBTQ persons themselves evaluate the issues of sexuality and body.

Furthermore, there are a few studies into the dynamics and connections between family and sexuality, although they are limited. Among these, Yılmaz's (2003) 'Deaths behind traditions: Honor crimes' focuses on honor crimes in Turkey from the perspectives of sociology, criminology and law, while Eroğlu and Gölbaşı's study (2005) 'The importance of parents in sexual education: What are they doing, what are they feeling?' stresses the role of parents in sexual education. Bulut and Gölbaşı (2009) address the issue of communication on sexuality between daughters and mothers in their article entitled 'The evaluation of communication between adolescent girls and their mothers related to sexual issues'. Moreover, Baba can be considered a significant figure in Turkey based on her combining of the issues of family structure and diverse sexualities in Turkey. In her 2011 study 'The construction of heteropatriarchal family and dissident sexualities in Turkey', she elaborates how nation states lead a certain form of sexuality to occur and internalize through nationalist ideologies. In the work 'The aspects of family and sexuality through non-Muslim characters in Nabizade Nazım's novel Karabibik', Alver (2013) illustrates the relationship between family and sexuality and its intersection with religion. Öztan (2014), in the work 'Familism, biopolitics and gender regime in Turkey', discusses the politics of family, sexuality, and body through the AKP's policies and discourse.

It is apparent that academic works related to the issue at hand fail to consider its socio-historical and cultural aspects, which may have various impacts on family

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dynamics in families with LGBTQ children. Although there have been studies analyzing the reactions of parents to their non-heterosexual children (Savin-Williams, 1989; Strommen, 1989; Ben-Ari, 1995; D'Augelli et al., 1998; Savin-Williams & Dubé, 1998; Floyd et al., 1999; Waldner and Magruder, 1999; LaSala, 2000; Armesto and Weisman, 2001; Fields, 2001; Rostosky et al., 2004; Saltzburg, 2004; D'Augelli et al., 2005; Savin-Williams, 2005; Aveline, 2006), there is no information about what happened "beyond-the-closet" (Martin et al., 2010). As can be understood from the presented literature review, this literature has some obvious gaps. This study, in focusing on the changing family dynamics beyond-the-closet, fills a gap both in Turkey and in international literature related to the family dynamics of LGBTQs' families of origin.

1.4.   Contributions and Limitations

One of the most important contributions of this study is that it is the first scholarly work focusing on parents with LGBTQ children in Turkey. Although the subject has been covered in magazine articles and in conference presentations, there has to date been no academically written work produced in Turkey in this regard.

Secondly, including gays, lesbians, and trans persons in the same study had some disadvantages, and it was also difficult to address both the common and different experiences of the respondents, especially the mothers. That said, this study can be considered valuable in its inclusion of both parties, that is, the mothers of gay and lesbian children, and the mothers of trans children, who come together in the same family groups; and it was very important for me to reflect the broad range of perspectives experienced by the mothers. I think that the contributions of each and

every mother is equally valuable for the family groups, and it was this that led me to insist on gathering all of them under the same study.

Further value can be drawn from this study in its combining of Family Systems Theory with cultural theory in its analysis. The conceptualizations of Family Systems Theory related to change and adaptability aid the analysis of this thesis on the transformation of family. As stated in Family Systems Theory, interventions that occur into the existing organization of a family system are influential at multiple levels. When a change occurs in a family system, the system reorganizes itself through a feedback loop to ensure its continued functioning, which shows not its stability, but its ability to adapt to new conditions (Sameroff, 1983). In this regard, Family Systems Theory is important when investigating the acts of each subsystem (i.e. family members as individuals, dyadic relationships) in reply to those challenges to analyze the trajectories of transformation (Parke, 2004). Although new motives ultimately develop in the family system, this ability to adapt does not mean that a family system is more balanced, in that contrarily, it may also construct new susceptible motives (Cox & Paley, 1997). In this sense, the families of LGBTQ children in this study should not be evaluated in terms of their familiarity with the issue of sexuality. Most of the respondent mothers already knew LGBTQ persons in their social circles, but it wasn't until they learned that their children were LGBTQ that changes to their personhoods occurred.

Although the issue of change in the family systems approach is mentioned in terms of the dynamics between family subsystems, the family system as a whole and extra-familial systems, it still fails to consider the significance of cultural tenets (Leslie & Glossick, 1992; Rosenblatt, 1994 as cited in Yerby, 1995). Unless cultural dynamics are included in the analysis, the study cannot go beyond being abstract about theoretical conceptualizations. Further investigation is required to analyze the dynamics between family systems and the sociocultural characteristics of society within which family systems exist. In this sense, another significance of

this thesis is based on its representation of the reciprocal relationships of individuals, family and culture by investigating and placing the individual and dyadic implications into a larger cultural context. Accordingly, it is necessary to understand the historical and sociocultural characteristics of Turkish society if one is to comprehend the feedback loop in the family system that puts the family in an actual transformation.

While Family Systems Theory highlights the importance of practice and the dynamics within the systems, cultural theory provides a methodology that prioritizes the construction of meaning and cultural representation, and this study brings the two together in the same melting pot, based on the understanding that the family is a system that is highly influenced by cultural tenets. Moreover, it cannot be denied that perceptions of LGBTQ persons are related mostly with the cultural contexts in which they live.

Additionally, the use of Family Systems Theory is most common among psychologists, who use it to analyze family members in the event of a crisis that triggered a significant transformation in family dynamics, including events such as death, divorce, abuse, wife and child-battery, but omitting, noticeably, coming out of a self-identfying LGBTQ person to her/his family of origin. However, it is also worth noting that especially in such countries as Turkey, where an LGBTQ identity is accepted as a 'deviance' from the socially perceived 'normal' sexual identity of heterosexuality, coming out is obviously a transition point for family dynamics that affects the entire family system. By taking cultural tenets into consideration, this study contributes also to the scope of Family Systems Theory, expanding upon its coverage in both sociological and areic senses.

Lastly, the approach of this study, which includes both children and parents, is very rare in academic works, where the norm is to examine the experiences of parents from the perspectives of their children. Furthermore, the pairing of mother

and child, in other words, including mothers and children from the same family unit, gives this study a unique perspective in the sense that it allows an understanding of the different actors' perspectives of the same family system and subsystem.

Although this study makes some obvious contributions to literature, there is one specific limitation that should be mentioned. I was unable to conduct interviews with any children who identified themselves as bisexual, or their mothers, as no mother of a bisexual child was participating in the family groups.

1.5. Outline of the Study

This study is composed of seven chapters. The first chapter introduces the research question of this study, with explaining its peculiarity in its intersectioning of such issues as sexuality, family, marriage, partnership, socialization, identity, motherhood, and womanhood by benefiting from the conceptualizations of Family Systems Theory. It also reviews academic and non-academic works, and events involving the LGBTQ movement in Turkey, and in doing so, points out the importance of this study in filling a gap in literature both locally and internationally. It continues with an explanation of the contributions and limitations, and concludes with an outline of the study.

The second chapter explains the method used in the study and the process of field work, describing the methods used to determine the research question, and to investigate the determined points in the field. To this end, it explains the significance of an ethnographic study in clarifying the research question, provides a description of the characteristics of both mothers and their adult LGBTQ

children, as well as an understanding of the research area. This chapter continues by analyzing the importance of positionality for the researcher under the subheadings of 'Being an Insider', and 'Storytelling: Why is this process so emotional?'. The first part will point out the advantages and disadvantages of being an insider in the field, while the second part will cover the internal conflicts that I, as a researcher, faced during the field work, and will explain the importance of storytelling in the need to reflect the subjective perspective regarding the focus of the study.

The third chapter presents the main family theories in social sciences, starting from interactionism and culminating in the identity approach. It will show how the perspective from which the issue of family is analyzed changes from considering family as a single unit, to considering it as a system that is in interaction with other systems in society. In this sense, it will also explain the feminist critique since it poses a paradigm shift in family theories. Afterwards, the main theoretical perspective, Family Systems Theory, through which the focus of the study is examined will be discussed, by pointing out its major conceptualizations, which are system, subsystem, boundary, change, and adaptability. Lastly, the reasons why Family Systems Theory is adopted as the main theoretical frame in the study, and in what ways it contributes to the field, will be explained.

The fourth chapter presents the research question, identifying its significance in sociocultural and political history, and the status quo of Turkey.

The fifth chapter presents the first part of data analysis, detailing the first encounters of mothers with the possibility of having an LGBTQ child, and their first experiences in the process of disclosure. In this sense, the initial experiences of mothers before learning of their children's sexual identity and/or orientation, and their first reactions at the moment of coming out (or when they understood the reality of their child's LGBTQ identity) will be analyzed. The chapter continues

with focus on the complicated feelings experienced by mothers while their taken-for-granted perceptions of their children's heterosexuality are dissolving, and how their hopes, dreams, and expectations for their children's future lives start to change after coming out.

The sixth chapter, which is the second chapter of data analysis, is the core of the analysis on the transformations witnessed within the family system. The first part explains how mothers' personhoods are transformed around sexuality, and not just the establishment of a sexual identity. In doing so, this section identifies shifts in the mothers' perceptions of sexuality, womanhood, body, family, motherhood, and partnership, and shows how these shifts in the never-ending construction of identity are actually connected, and are also interdependent on each other. The second part of this chapter focuses on dyadic relationships, namely, the subsystems in the family system. The mother-child, father-child, spousal/partnership and sibling dyads are all taken into consideration, analyzing the changes in relationship dynamics after the disclosure of a self-identifying LGBTQ child to her/his family of origin. The third part of this chapter discusses the important role of mothers when coming out to bring about change in society. How mothers assume the role of gatekeeper, being often the first targets when their child comes out to her/his family of origin, and the significant support of family groups (such as LISTAG, LADEG+, and Ankara Rainbow Families) in the coming out process of mothers will be described.

The seventh chapter closes the study with a conclusion of the results, summarizing the main points of the study and discussing the findings in accordance with the arguments put forward at the start of the study, and proposing further studies to fill other gaps in the body of existing literature.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGICAL CHOICES, FIELDWORK EXPERIENCES, and RESEARCHER'S POSITIONALITY

This chapter is divided into two sections, namely 'Methodological Choices and Fieldwork Experiences' and 'Researcher's Positionality'. The first section will discuss the organization of the fieldwork, beginning with an explanation of the ethnographical field study conducted in the preliminary preparation for the study. The second section explains the structure of the main fieldwork, including the organization of the interviews, the structure and content of the questionnaires, and the scheduling of the interviews. The second section of this chapter raises several questions related to my positionality as a researcher in the fieldwork. First of all, I will explain what being an insider means for me in this study, after which I will answer a question that was once asked of me by my supervisor: Why is this process so emotional? In a further approach, the uses of storytelling encountered during the study will be analyzed, not merely in terms of its significance to the narrative turn in social sciences, but also its specific importance to this study. My main intention in this second part is to explain my positionality as a researcher and to discuss how I interacted with the respondents in the study.

2.1. Methodological Choices and Fieldwork Experiences

2.1.1. Ethnography as Primary Fieldwork

In a sociological analysis of any transformation in what Geertz (1973) refers to as 'interpretive science', ethnography may be one of the most appropriate methods for the investigation of lived experiences due to its consideration of social and cultural dynamics. The aim of ethnographic research is to "capture varying tempos and rhythms of movement and connection, illuminating implications for both people and places (McHugh, 2000)". Although I was planning to conduct interviews for my M.S. study, I wanted to formulate a research question that was based not only on my subjective curiosity, but also on the current dynamics that I was able to observe within the families involved in the movement. Moreover, I wanted to carry out a study into the families of origin of LGBTQ persons in Turkey after identifying a gap in literature of studies focusing on their situation. To this end, conducting an ethnographic study provided me with the opportunity to observe the interactions of individuals with both insiders and outsiders. For instance, I was able to observe directly the attitudes, behaviors and gestures of individuals during parent-to-parent or parent-to-child conversations, which afforded me the opportunity to witness all of those 'unintended' comments, gestures and actions.

This part of the fieldwork entailed three weeks of participant observation as a preliminary fieldwork in various locations. One such location was a funeral home, where people were coming to pay their respects to the parents of an LGBTQ activist who had died in a car accident. I had the opportunity to follow up this observation, having been invited to the home of the activist for parties organized

by friends and family. Refusing to mourn in a conventional way with crying and lamenting, the activist's friends organized large parties in the house of their friend with lively music and various foods. A third location was a café owned by someone who is sympathetic to the cause of LGBTQs and parents with LGBTQ children, who use it to come together with friends or as a venue for meetings.

I was able to observe approximately 70 people in many different environments, and heard many stories regarding both individual and familial transformations. Although one would doubt the appropriateness of a funeral home for the formulation of a research question of this study, given the somber atmosphere of such places, this was not the case at all. In fact, I found during my observations there that people were more inclined to talk about their past and current lives, and how their lives have/had been during their transformation. These ethnographic interviews proved to be very rewarding, and led me to focus on this particular subject. After the ethnographic interviews and participant observations, I enriched the data with a content analysis of websites, news stories, media articles and reports, and it was only after completing all these processes, which took almost two months, that I formed the research question of the study.

2.1.2. During the Field Work

The study is based on data gathered during semi-structured, open-ended and in-depth interviews swith 22 respondents, comprising 11 mothers, who became activists after the disclosure of their children, and their 11 children who identify as

LGBTQ. Most of the mothers in this study are active members of family groups[2], although some have not come out publically. All interviews were carried out voluntarily and with anonymity, with confidentiality being one of the most important features of the study given the wealth of private information garnered about people's personal lives. In this regard, it was important to make the respondents feel safe and comfortable to encourage them tell their stories as openly as possible. The interviews took between one-and-a-half hours and five-and-a-half hours. Finding respondents to take part in the study was relatively easy, given my involvement with the LGBTQ movement in Turkey, and I have come to know many people through my connection to the community of parents with LGBTQ children (LISTAG). The fieldwork was conducted mostly in Istanbul, where family groups are better established and are more active. LISTAG was at the time holding its meetings in Boysan's House,[3] which was suitable both for me and for most of the respondent mothers as an interview venue, although other interviews were conducted in other locations in Istanbul, including cafés and the interviewees' homes. Other interviews were conducted in Ankara, where two of the respondents reside, with one being conducted in the workplace of the respondent and the other in a café, and some were conducted via Skype when the respondents lived in other cities or abroad. This broad variety of meeting places and methods, which was a result of my desire to make the respondent feel comfortable, made the scheduling of meetings a very challenging aspect of the study.

The first group of respondents comprises 11 mothers with LGBTQ children, all of whom were active members of LISTAG (Families and Friends of LGBTIs in

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[2] The only focus group in existence while I was conducting the interviews in Istanbul was LISTAG. LADEG+ was founded by a group of members of LISTAG in November 2016.

[3] Boysan Yakar was a well-known LGBTQ activist who died in 2015, and after his death, his family opened his house for social and cultural activities. Today, various NGOs and associations hold their meetings and organize other events in his house. http://boysaninevi.com/.

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Turkey)[4]. Although some have not openly 'come out' as having LGBTQ children, for varying reasons, they are all involved in the movement against the inequality and violence faced by LGBTQs in Turkish society. Within the group are two mothers of trans woman children, one mother of a trans man child, three mothers with lesbian daughters, and five mothers with gay sons. The age range of the respondent mothers is 45 to 74, and aside from one mother, all grew up in urban areas in different parts of Turkey. Regarding income levels, one of the 11 respondents is in the 1000–1999 TL monthly wage bracket; one earns 4000–4999 TL, and one earns more than 5000 TL. The income levels of the majority of the sample fall within the 2000–3999 TL wage bracket, with three earning between 2000–2999 TL and five earning 3000–3999 TL. According to a 2015 study by the Turkish Statistical Institute, the mean disposable income per household in Turkey is approximately 1,400 TL (Institute, 2006–2015), meaning that most of the mothers have a middle class background. Coming to education, five of the eleven are university graduates and one has a master's degree, while four of the mothers did not continue education after high school. Of the 11, six are retired, two are civil servants and one owns her own business. Furthermore, one identifies herself as a housewife, although she worked in the past in various fields, and one is unemployed. For both economic and occupational reasons, seven of the eleven live in rented housing and four are owner occupiers. In addition, six of the mothers are single and three are still married, while two mothers identified their relationship status as 'other'.

The second group of respondents comprises 11 LGBTQ children of the mothers introduced above, of which five identify themselves as gay, three as lesbian and three as trans. Their ages vary from 19 to 44, with three in the 19–24 age group; one between 35 and 44; and the rest aged 25–34. One of those who identify

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[4] Some of are now active members of LADEG+ (Support Group for Parents and Kins of LGBTIQ+s).

themselves as lesbian is married, and one of those who identify themselves as gay is living with his partner. The other respondents live alone or with their families of origin. Of the total, three respondents are students; three have a bachelor's degree; and one works after having graduated from a technical high school. The other four respondents have master's or doctorate degrees. Aside from those who are still students, eight work in such professions as management manager, academia, the arts and translation. The incomes of those who are working vary quite significantly. One earns less than 1000 TL a month; one earns 1000–1999 TL; one earns 2000–2999 TL; two earn between 3000 and 3999 TL; and three earn more than 4000 TL per month. According to 2015 data provided by the Turkish Statistical Institute, the average income level of the respondents places them in the middle class in Turkey (Institute, 2006–2015). Although not all of these children have openly and publically stated their sexual identity and/or orientation due to occupational and security concerns, they are all open to their families of origin and participate actively in the LGBTQ movement in Turkey. Details of the 22 respondents are provided in the following table.[5]

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[5] The names of all the respondents in this study are pseudonyms.

Table A: Table for Mothers[6]

#	Person	Age Interval	Marital Status	Living Arrangements	Income (Monthly)	Educational Status	Occupational Status
1	Nuray	45-54	Single	Alone – In Turkey	3000-3999 TL	University	Tradeswoman – Owner
2	Perihan	55-64	Other	2 – In Turkey	2000-2999 TL	High-School	Retired
3	Sevim	>65	Married	2 – In Turkey	>5000 TL	High-School	Retired
4	Canan	55-64	Single	Alone – In Turkey	2000-2999 TL	University	Government Officer
5	Birgül	55-64	Single	3 – In Turkey	2000-2999 TL	Graduate Studies	Retired
6	Fatma	45-54	Other	2 – In Turkey	3000-3999 TL	University	Government Officer
7	Hatice	45-54	Single	Alone – In Turkey	1000-1999 TL	High-School	Unemployed
8	Ayşen	>65	Married	2 – In Turkey	3000-3999 TL	High-School	Retired
9	Duygu	45-54	Married	4 – In Turkey	4000-4999 TL	University	Retired
10	Ayla	55-64	Single	2 – In Turkey	1000-1999 TL	Associate Degree	Retired
11	Nalan	55-64	Single	Alone – In Turkey	3000-3999 TL	University	Retired

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[6]   Numbers of mothers are written in a synchronized way with the numbers of children. For instance, Ayla (10) is the mother of Eda (10).

Table B: Table for Children

	Person	Self-Identified Sexual Identity/ Orientation	Age Interval	Marital Status	Living Arrangements	Income (Monthly)	Educational Status	Occupational Status
1	Emre	Gay	18-24	Single	Alone – Abroad	1000-1999 TL	Undergraduate	Student
2	Nehir	Lesbian	25-34	Single	Alone – In Turkey	4000-4999 TL	Graduate Studies	Government Officer
3	Levent	Gay	35-44	Living together	2 – In Turkey	2000-2999 TL	University	Private Sector – Qualified Worker
4	Mert	Trans Man	25-34	Single	2 – In Turkey	4000-4999 TL	Graduate Studies	Private Sector – Owner
5	Burak	Gay	25-34	Single	2 (with his mother) – In Turkey	3000-3999 TL	University	Private Sector – Qualified Worker
6	Cem	Gay	18-24	Single	2 (with his mother) – In Turkey	<1000 TL	University	Private Sector – Qualified Worker
7	İrem	Trans Woman	25-34	Single	2 – In Turkey	3000-3999 TL	Technical High-School	Private Sector – Owner
8	Ahmet	Gay	25-34	Single	Alone – Abroad	1000-1999 TL	Graduate Studies	Freelance Artist
9	Aslı	Lesbian	18-24	Single	4 (with her family) – In Turkey	0 TL	Undergraduate	Student
10	Eda	Trans Woman	25-34	Single	2 (with her mother) – In Turkey	0 TL	Undergraduate	Student
11	Ceren	Lesbian	25-34	Married	2-Abroad	>5000 TL	Graduate Studies	Private Sector – Manager

Laird (1993) states that "in all domains of gay and lesbian families, researchers must develop strategies that elicit 'detailed, wholistic accounts … that reveal the complexity, the richness, the diversity of their lives' (as cited in Savin-Williams & Dubé, 1998, p. 320)." In order to make a reliable investigation of family dynamics, it is important to extend the number of family members participating in the study, and to this end, and considering the limitations of this master's thesis in terms of scale, I opted to conduct interviews with both mothers and children. As mentioned in the data analysis, it was easier to find mothers with LGBTQ children to include in the study, since the number of mothers involved in family groups is dramatically higher than fathers.

Another important aspect of my fieldwork is that it includes mothers and children from the same family unit. In other words, rather than garnering data from 11 children identifying themselves as LGBTQ and from 11 randomly selected mothers of self-identifying LGBTQ children, the study is of 11 mothers and their own children, which permits a full analysis of 11 family systems. The dyadic relationship between a mother and her child also carries a great significance as a subsystem in Family Systems Theory, and a study that does not recognize the importance of this relationship would lead to biased data, being limited to interviews with children about their parents, as has been seen in other studies combining gender, sexuality and family. That said, it is important to state that the aim of conducting interviews both with mothers and their children is not to cross-check their individual accounts. As Yerby (1995) asserts, "… one is grounded in a particular time and culture; possesses specific cultural, gender and political biases; works from a context that includes a specific history of biological and social experiences (including family experiences); and communicates through language that reflects the culture that it represents, it is difficult to legitimately claim that one can position himself or herself 'outside' or 'above' that which is being observed (p. 346)." Accordingly, the aim in interviewing the mothers and children

separately is to garner more valid information about their internal experiences, and more detailed information about the transformation of the family, since coming out is an interactive process.

I compiled a total of 43 questions for the study, including 25 for the mothers and 18 for their children. The questions were compiled during two field studies, and after the first I had the opportunity to adjust the content and the sequence of the questionnaire. The interviews were semi-structured in form, but having an outline of the questions ensured all points were covered. In this way, the consistency of the different interviews was maintained, and while following this outline was very difficult, it was very important for the study. As every respondent had their own ways of telling stories, this method allowed me to identify any similarities between, in particular, the mothers of lesbian and gay children, and their commonalities and differences with the mothers of trans children. This methodology also threw light on the particularities of each story by recognizing deviations from the general outline. The interviews did not flow in line with the outline of the question list, although this was never the intention as it was deemed more important not to interfere in the free and natural flow of conversation. The questionnaire was, in fact, necessary for me to follow the outline of the significant points. Before concluding the interviews, I made certain that every point had been covered to ensure the reliability of the analysis.

The questionnaire includes some questions that are appropriate for both the mothers and children, and some that are specific to one side. For both, there are questions investigating the periods before, during and after the moment of coming out, if there was a specific moment of disclosure. For some children, there was no specific moment at which they revealed their non-heterosexual identity/orientation, as some of the mothers were able to understand from their actions and speech, representing a different mode of coming out. Both parties were asked to voice their experiences of the moment of coming out, while the mothers

were asked a specific question about whether there had been signs that led them to consider the possibility that their child may not fit into the heterosexual norm. To investigate their pre-coming out experiences, mothers were asked about their suspicions related to their child's LGBTQ identity, while the children were asked how, when and to whom they came out, and whether they had experienced any drawbacks in coming out to their families of origin. It should be noted that the intention in this study is to understand the experience of the coming out process for LGBTQs, rather than their questioning of their sexual identity and/or orientation.

To investigate experiences during the coming out process, I focused specifically on the initial feelings, fears and thoughts of mothers, in that coming to terms with their children's non-heterosexual identity/orientation is one of the most significant aspects of this study. It was apparent that mothers were better able to recall their experiences before and after their child's disclosure, but had difficulty in remembering details of the very moment of coming out. This part of the fieldwork was particularly difficult, in that I had to press the mothers to remember the moment so as to garner more information about what kinds of dynamics drive the chaotic emotions that mothers face at that time. As a result, I was able to gather very valuable data, from which it could be understood that the personal feelings of the respondents in the study at the moment of coming out, and in the immediate aftermath, were significantly different to the findings of other studies around the world. This led me to understand the importance of the cultural tenets of the perception of sexuality.

Neither the mothers nor the children had problems in speaking about their post-coming out experiences, and it was easy to gather data from the natural flow of the conversation; and it was fascinating to follow the process that they shared with me. It was apparent that having to recall their memories of the time could make them feel embarrassed and disappointed in their past actions, and for some, recounting

these memories in as much detail as possible to another person who was asking specific questions about those times was very challenging. That said, I was impressed at their courage in reliving these periods in their lives.

In most interviews I had to interrupt the flow to ask about their first meetings with other parents and relatives who were in the same position, and it was striking to see how they came together to help and support each other, which was obviously more than their own children, and to witness the power that they pose when they are together.

In the next part of the interview, the changes in the various dimensions of the mothers' lives were investigated, such as their worldviews, their everyday life practices, their perceptions of certain concepts, their social circles, and how all those changes affected family relations. After listening to their stories, I attempted to learn more about the changes that occurred in the relationships between the mother and child, and with other family members, to understand how intra-familial dynamics are transformed. I asked about the dynamics of each dyadic relationship in the family before and after the coming out experience, as well as the characteristics of each relationship within the family, aiming to gain an understanding of the familial bonds and the relationship types, and how they transformed throughout the process. Although this study focuses mainly on the dyadic relationship between the mother and child, as Family Systems Theory suggests, it is important to extend the scale of research beyond the dyadic subsystems (Minuchin, 1985), and so the garnered data also details the relationship dynamics between spouses, siblings and partners. This perspective allowed me to analyze the struggles faced by mothers as women in the relationships that they have personally constructed. For instance, an analysis of the issue of the body displays perfectly the mothers' perceptions of their own bodies, and how their perceptions were altered as a result of the sex re-assignment of their trans children. Contextualizing mothers based not only on their role as a parent, but also on their

roles in a partnership, provided additional information on how marriage or partnership relations influence parent-child relations (Cox & Paley, 1997).

A review of the responses of the respondent mothers to the questionnaires reveals a number of connections between the main conceptualizations of Family Systems Theory, including system, subsystem, boundary, adaptability, and change, through which transformations in the family system are analyzed. The questions inquiring about the pre-coming out experiences of the mothers were asked to allow a comparison of the mothers' feelings after the coming out of their children. Furthermore, the questions about the most challenging incident provides clues about what 'typical' parents would experience before obtaining support and help from other mechanisms, such as family groups.

Since this study focuses on the transformation within intrafamilial dynmics, following the changes in mothers' personhoods, it focuses on various dimensions of mothers' lives, including their private lives, domestic activities, social circles, and their perceptions of phenomena within those dimensions. Questions probing their post-coming out experiences investigate mainly in what ways mothers' routines have changed, both practically and perceptually. In other words, through these questions, the aim was to pursue the shifts in mothers' attitudes and habits to analyze which fields of the respondent mothers' lives were affected by the disclosure of their children's LGBTQ identity. In this regard, it was important to follow the domino effect of transformation which resembles a large and expansionist process, starting from the shifts in the assigned meaning of LGBTQ identity in society and continuing with changing perception of sexuality, womanhood, motherhood, partnership, and friendship. Furthermore, it allowed a significant comprehension of the transformative power of the dynamics in mother-child dyad on the other dyadic relationships of mothers, such as other dyads in family, partnerships, and friendships. The questions inquiring to the shifts in mothers' social circles were to indicate the changing priorities in mothers'

relationships. Highlighting such shifts in the mothers' personhoods is crucial, in the sense that boundaries of the respondent mothers' identities must be flexible, out of necessity rather than by choice, since the perceived position of LGBTQs in society causes their children to fall on the one side of the scale. This makes the coming out process a continuously challenging process for mothers in which they have to make difficult decisions at every turn. With the deep love for their children and the fear of the possibility of losing them, after confronting the fact that their children's LGBTQ identity is innate, mothers must then undergo even more challenging processes. That said, after the crisis of the disclosure of their children in the family system have started to be resolved through these shifts, the adaptations of the mothers to the new dynamics of the system are evident. Questions related to the transformation in the mothers' perceptions of sexuality, womanhood, motherhood, partnership and friendship show that these issues cannot be questioned separately, in that these shifts are highly concentric, and this leads to an attached and coherent transformation in mothers' personhoods.

Finally, the questions related to the respondent mothers' participation in family groups aim to investigate the transformative effect of family groups, questioning both the effects on the respondent mothers of being together with other parents, and their effects on other parents in society. While the support and transformative effects of family groups reveals itself spontaneously through the previous questions, it is aimed to further highlight the importance of mothers projecting their own stories to change the perceptions of other parents related to LGBTQ issues.

2.2. Researcher's Positionality

> Gender could render me suspect, ally, or even data depending on who was on the other side of my table … Our informants are always looking to us and at us and gauging how to interact. This is not a methodological obstacle; this is a social and empirical fact (Meadow, 2013, p. 8).

Positionality for a social researcher is one of the most important issues to be discussed in the course of a fieldwork, given its importance as a variable in the interaction between the researcher and the researched. As indicated in feminist ethnography, "knowing is itself determined by the relationship of knower to known (Visweswaran, 1994, p. 48)". Since the researcher has their own gender perceptions, it is inevitable that respondents will come to certain conclusions that are established according to their already existing conceptualizations. This issue of mutual representation is actually reciprocal between the researcher and the respondent, and is not an issue that is limited to the field of ethnography. In this sense, a social researcher, regardless of whether or not she/he is an ethnographer, is "a positioned subject" (Rosaldo, 1989, p. 19 as cited in Meadow, 2013, p. 8).

2.2.1. Being an Insider

In addition to my sociological education, I have been an insider in this community for many years, and my familial bonds have also brought me a familiarity with this community. My cousin was openly gay and was active in the LGBTQ movement, before we unfortunately lost him in September 2015. He dedicated his life to

increase awareness of LGBTQ issues and bringing about change in society. Furthermore, my aunt has been actively participating in the movement as the mother of a gay son, and is also one of the founders of both LISTAG and LADEG+. In addition, I am one of the founders of LADEG+, and in this sense, I have been actively participating in the LGBTQ movement in Turkey for many years, working with both self-identifying LGBTQ children and their parents.

This position as an insider brought both benefits and drawbacks. My established links in the LGBTQ movement in Turkey provided unparalleled accessibility, and the people with whom I conducted interviews were very happy to spare the time for the interviews and for conversation. I have had endless opportunities to reach out to people and get involved in activities or meetings. Given their familiarity with me, both the participant observation carried out in the preliminary fieldwork and the interviews during the main study were not like conducting a research, but like any other day.

It is also worth noting that my connection with the respondents eased their concerns about the sensitivity of the information they imparted during the interviews. My record of not causing any trouble for the movement helped me in gaining their trust, assuring them that I would respect their privacy. As an insider, I was aware of the insecurities and fears that the respondents could harbor about mentioning names and the institutes to which they belong, and so I guaranteed their confidentiality at the very beginning of the sessions. I made a further promise that I would not use any information that they did not want me to use, and I turned off the recording device when they wanted to go "off record". I never used any of the actual names of the respondents, and all the people they mentioned during conversation were substituted for pseudonyms. In this way, I was able to make them feel comfortable when speaking about maybe their most private moments about the coming out process. In short, I believe that my position as an insider played a significant role in gaining their trust.

Furthermore, my status as an insider also gave me a strong sense of understanding of what the respondents were speaking about, although this can be a double-edged sword. As LaSala (2003) emphasizes, researchers may project their emotions during interviews, which could result in the respondent giving biased information, and I found it particularly hard to hide my emotions while carrying out the fieldwork. Some conversations made me feel happy, while at other times I got quite upset; however, I did my utmost to not react to the interviewees' responses so as not to lead them to focus on certain points.

Moreover, independently from my statements, the respondents made assumptions regarding my sexual identity and/or orientation based on my chosen field of study, and consequently, they drew conclusions about my links to the community to which they have a sense of belonging. For instance, one of the respondent children asked me about my sexual orientation and/or identity, making the assumption that my involvement in the same community is due to an LGBTQ identity. When a researcher has strong bonds with the community they are studying, the researcher's insider position may lead the respondents to assume that the researcher's perspectives overlap with theirs. In this thesis, the main characteristic of the studied community is the stigmatization of LGBTQ identities in society, and for the respondents, there is a pre-assumed commonality with the researcher that develops during the fieldwork. I believe that these inferences were an important factor in them opening up to me, as the sense of kind of kinship made them feel that they were still in their safe zone.

As is often stated as a disadvantage in qualitative research, being an insider within the community being studied can make it difficult to recognize the significance of certain reactions or statements (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). For instance, investigating the transformations in the daily lives of mothers and their personhoods amazed me so much that I was unable to recognize, when a respondent said "I am very happy with the person that I have become.", that they

were actually referring to the significance of lived and past experiences. After discussing this issue with my supervisor, I came to realize that I should focus on not a specific moment, as a final point that mothers reach, but rather the long and challenging process that led them to utter that specific sentence.

Additionally, it was hard for me to address the emotions involved in the process of disclosure until my supervisor suggested I highlight the expressed chaotic feelings in the garnered data that led at times to violent acts, crying or psychological breakdowns. I made the mistake of taking for granted the people that mothers become after coming to terms with their children's LGBTQ identity. However, this study also changed my point of view of the emotional fluctuations and collapses of mothers. Before the fieldwork, my familiarity with the issues of parental ignorance and disappointment after the disclosure of a child to their families of origin had made me think that those mothers in family groups were special in the sense they could embrace the issues related to LGBTQ persons. I had thought that their coming to terms with their children's sexual identity and/or orientation was their peculiarity. However, after this study, I came to realize that those mothers were once 'typical' mothers, and that emotional chaos was actually very common for most of the parents.

Moreover, LaSala (2003) claims that inside researchers may miss information that relates to the common knowledge they share with other members of the community, and so as a self-reflective note, I should state that it is not easy to analyze relationalities when a researcher is so closely ingrained in the object of her/his study. This, however, does not mean that my analysis strategies are hindered; on the contrary, as by objectifying my subjective experiences I was able to take a look at my self-construction, and criticize my own approach to the field, which led me to create a stronger bond with my object of study.

2.2.2. Storytelling: Why is this process so emotional?

"Sociology is bound up both with obtaining stories and telling stories

(Plummer, 1995, p. 19)."

Before becoming activists, the respondent mothers were 'typical' parents who had no choice but to handle the new challenges by themselves and/or with the support of their close social circle. Although coming out is a highly personal experience, it is important not to forget its effects on familial relations, just as it is impossible to analyze the process of disclosure without taking into account the cultural tenets that are embodied within the dynamics of the process. In this regard, this study led me to investigate the issue of familial transformation associated with the coming out of a self-identifying LGBTQ child while constantly holding the personal, familial and cultural contexts together.

It is a fact that the feelings, reactions, behaviors and experiences that are triggered by a disclosure are separately on an individual level for both mothers and children, and they impart their experiences of the process in a very personal sense. That said, by considering coming out as an interactive process, and understanding that what occurs at the fringes as a result has influences on both sides, it goes beyond being just personal, becoming rather interpersonal. In this study, it was important to pinpoint and analyze the period between confronting the coming out and embracing the situation, since it is there that the most chaotic dynamics exist. In other words, one of the main goals in this study is to highlight the fundamental aspects of the mothers' personhoods, and the variances and fluctuations that occurred at the boundaries that afterwards brought the mothers a level of flexibility. For instance, from the interviews it could be understood that the deep

love for one's child is one of the fundamental reasons why mothers never abandon their children. For me as a researcher, listening as mothers shared their memories and feelings about their children and hearing how much they regretted their behaviors during the early periods of the coming out process, was a highly emotional moment. It impressed me that after the coming out of their children, mothers made a history-reading of the whole period, from birth of their child to the present day, and come to interpret certain events through selective memories; and it was a very deep settlement and an invaluable history-telling and reading.

In this sense, I believe storytelling to be one of the most significant elements in this thesis. Although the sociology of storytelling was associated mostly with narrative turn in the social inquiries of the 1980s, it cannot be denied that the medium is one of the best ways of investigating lived experiences also in other methodologies. Stories serve to reveal traces of the identity on which an individual is built upon within a specific culture, and can unearth inconspicuous motives behind people's actions. In a political sense in particular, one cannot ignore the power of the ideological value contained within stories (Polletta et al., 2011).

As Plummer (1995) suggests, telling stories is not solely an explanation of the facts in people's lives, as while people tell their stories, "they turn themselves into 'socially organized biographical objects' (p.34)". Furthermore, storytelling, as also emphasized in literature on accounts, is a first-person interpretation formed through social and cultural dynamics. In this regard, storytelling, rather than merely giving structured answers to questions, is a subjective way of explaining what culturally normative is (Orbuch, 1997). In this sense, the significance of a researcher's role in the collection and analysis of people's stories comes to light in the combining of those personal statements within the cultural toolkit in which they are specified and connotative. Considering the fact that the interviews in this study actually tell the stories of the mothers and their children, the value of storytelling in this study should not be underestimated.

In accordance with one of the assumptions of this study, social change begins first within the family, involving actors who are going through the same experience, which in this case is the act of coming out. Empathy for each other comes to exist through communications among family members. Meanings are intersubjectively produced and reproduced in family systems (Yerby, 1995). In this sense, telling a personal story is a way of transferring personal experiences that are sensed through the meaning sets that are formed and reformed within family systems. In other words, storytelling is a social process that makes live experiences meaningful (Ellis & Bohner, 1992). Since most of the respondent mothers and children are now activists, beyond this study, they continue tell their stories also in public, and these stories develop a life of their own once they enter the public realm, becoming a political "means of social change" (Plummer, 1995, p. 58).

Furthermore, I believe that this study is reciprocally important and valuable for both me and the respondents, and especially so for mothers, since this study means a lot for the future goals of family groups in Turkey. For some respondents, this was the first study in which they had participated, and many voiced their excitement at taking part in such an academic study in Turkish literature, being happy to tell the story of their struggle against discrimination and stigmatization in society.

While some of their stories were emotional and enlightening to me, others brought feelings of discomfort, and this led me to question my own ideas about deep issues. For instance, I was impressed by the refusal of the mothers to acknowledge the perspectives of others, regardless of who they are, even taking the risk of never seeing their own parents again. The courage of the respondents thrilled me, and I was also impressed by the long journey undertaken by the mothers. As McNamee (1988) states, "a systemic epistemology does not ignore the role of the observer as a participant in the system being studied (p. 55)", in that how a researcher deals with internal conflicts depends on her/his own skills (as cited in Yerby, 1995, p.

358). Accordingly, what was important, and what I was well aware of, was that I needed to provide the respondents with space for honesty by not judging or labeling them, as only then could they reveal those instances that may otherwise be kept secret in their stories due to feelings of disappointment, shame or denial.

Finally, the respondents and I shared intense and sensitive moments that stirred deep emotions while they were telling their stories. This made it very hard to protect my stance as a researcher, and to keep my distance when witnessing both their tears and laughter during the interviews,as not only were their stories impressive, but they also touched some parts of my personal story, which took a great shift with the loss of my cousin. At the time of my cousin's death, I was working on a different thesis and preparing my doctorate applications based on that thesis. After his death, I stopped everything in my life, my studies, my applications and even relationships. I had a two month period of silence which I was actually very loud inside, until I decided to find an outlet for my grief. Although I was about to start the fieldwork for my previous thesis, I decided to change the topic, as I was no longer the same person. In this sense, the stories of both the mothers and children, as reminders of the starting point of this thesis, led me continuously to confront my past experiences, which was very painful and challenging for me, and in this regard, this thesis is my farewell to my cousin.

After finishing the interviews, the respondent and I hugged and thanked each other as a closure. Although all of us were aware of my role as a researcher and theirs as respondents, I think this small ritual was very important for the respondents, in that it prevented them from feeling alienated from their own stories as experimental objects of a study. Their stories were so intimate and invaluable for my study, and that made me remember the fact that everybody has their own story to tell.

CHAPTER 3

ANALYSIS of FAMILIAL TRANSFORMATION THROUGH the CONCEPTS of FAMILY SYSTEMS THEORY

The family has long been a topic of interest in many fields of research, including sociology, psychology, anthropology, economics, etc., although studies that take the family as their primary focus were quite limited at the beginning of the 20th century. After a critical turn in the 1960s, many theoreticians started to stress the very dynamics of the issue of family. In this chapter, the evolution of family theory from the early 20th century until today is discussed, beginning with a discussion of the main assumptions made in the field of family studies, in accordance with their thematic variance, followed by an analysis of Family Systems Theory. The chapter continues with a detailed explanation of the main terms of Family Systems Theory, as the main theoretical frame utilized in this study, after which, a discussion is made of how the dominant orientation in this field of family studies has been challenged by studies of sexuality and LGBTQ persons.

3.1. From Interactionism to Identity in Family Theory

Hill and Hansen, in their 1960 article 'The Identification of Conceptual Frameworks Utilized in Family Study', presented the five main approaches that dominated family studies, namely the interactional, structure function, situational, institutional and developmental approaches. The interactional approach was first developed in the 1930s and had its heyday in the 1940s and 50s, before starting to decline in the 1960s and 70s. The symbolic interactionism approach, which was pioneered by Cooley, Dewey, Thomas and Mead, focuses on interactions between family members. Within this approach, individuals assign meanings to objects, and explaining their actions requires their views of these objects to be studied. Mead considers interaction to be a social process through which individuals display actions towards each other (Blumer, 1986). That is to say, actors define themselves and each other through their social interactions, and in that sense, family, in interactionist theory, is 'a unity of interacting personalities' (Burgess, 1926), with each actor having social roles both in society and in the family. Family members have particular responsibilities, expectations, attributes and behaviors in their familial roles, and it is how they approach these roles that is the focus of the investigation in the interaction approach (Hill & Hansen, 1960).

The structure-function approach extends the single-unit scale of the family of the interactionist perspective, considering it rather as a social system. Before the 1950s, family tended to be discussed within the scope of major social movements and such major processes as industrialization, capitalism and urbanization, until Talcott Parsons, Kingsley Davis, Robert Merton, George Homans, Marion Levy, George Murdock and others considered the issue of family as a separate phenomenon to be investigated, and introduced the structural functionalist

perspective of family. Undoubtedly, structural functionalism was and remains as one of the most influential and pioneering theories in the field of family studies. Parsons, a leading figure in structural functionalism, made significant contributions to the development of family theory, indicating that family is a significant issue for both the individual and for the functioning of society as a whole, although he was criticized for the typological approach he used to describe families (Cowan et al., 1993, p. 149). Within structural functionalist theory, the nuclear family is highlighted, along with its function of providing a convenient and primary basis for the socialization of family members and for maintaining the social order by keeping the family structure stable. In other words, stability in the family is seen as the main feature of social order in society, for which the theory prioritizes a gendered division of labor within the family. The family, with all its functions, is what connects individuals to the general social system (Demo & Allen, 1996).

The situational approach, similar to the psychological habitat-ecological approach, shares the same notion with interactionists that the family is a single unit that is governed by the interactions of its members. However, where the situational perspective differentiates from the interactionist approach is that situationalists claim that the family is a 'social situation' in which purposive behaviors take place. In this regard, the family is the basis for an analysis of both behaviors and situations (Hill & Hansen, 1960).

The institutional perspective bears similarities to the structure-function approach and the organismic-type approach led by C. C. Zimmerman, in the sense that it studies institutions based on the claim that institutions take part in the functioning of the whole society. This approach is based generally on historical analysis, and so includes mostly descriptions of the phenomena in the field. It considers the family to be the unit in which the basic needs of all human beings are met, and an institution within which culture is represented. In this regard, the family system

merits investigation, being the place where individuals satisfy all their basic needs and learn all their cultural values, which is how these needs and values are transmitted from generation to generation.

Lastly, the developmental perspective presents a frame for the interpretation of the normative and non-normative transitions in one's life, and according to this theory, the family should be analyzed in a developmental way. The developmental approach furthers the interactionist understanding of family, putting forward the idea that the family is systematic in nature, and families can be differentiated from each other in terms of such systematic characteristics as "interdependence, selective boundary maintenance, modification of structure (ability to adapt to change), and task performance" (Aldous, 1978, pp. 26-27 as cited in Rodgers & White, 2009). Taking these characteristics into account, developmental theory analyzes the developmental nature of both the family as a whole and its individual members. Through the features of the theory, White (1991, p.7) defines family as "an intergenerational social group organized and governed by social norms regarding descent and affinity, reproduction, and the nurturant socialization of the young (as cited in Rodgers & White, 2009, p. 231)." The most important aspect of the developmental approach is that it describes the setting and schedule of events rather than their process and change, and this is what makes it unsuitable for gay and lesbian studies, in that it analyzes family in terms of such heteronormative conceptualizations as nuclear family, marriage and children. In this regard, the developmental perspective lacks the ability to explain when LGBTQ persons form their own families and become mothers and fathers (Demo & Allen, 1996).

Apart from the approaches mentioned above, another theoretical perspective has flourished since the 1960s – identity theory. Although not covered in any article on the development of family theory, identity theory is worth mentioning here, in that it is on occasion referenced in this study, especially during the data analysis. Identity theory suggests that a reciprocal and reflexive relationship exists between

the self and society (Stryker, 1980). The concept has its origins in symbolic interactionism, found in the works of George Herbert Mead in 1934. According to Mead (1934), the self arises from the mind of the individual, which is itself established through social interaction, and it is these social interactions that constitute the foundation of the social structure. Identity, as a phenomenon, refers to the positionalities of individuals in their social interactions and in the society in which they live. Accordingly, studies of identity categorize it into three dimensions, being the meanings assigned to roles that individuals perform in the social structure, such as mother, husband or doctor; meanings assigned to the group identities of individuals that occur through their sense of belonging to a group; and person identities, which refers to how individuals differentiate themselves from others in society. The main goal of identity theory is to understand how meanings are assigned to those different identities, and how those meanings are situated within/through the interactions of individuals (Stets & Serpe, 2013).

3.2. Paradigm Shift in Family Theories: Feminist Critique

The Theory Construction Movement emerged to satisfy a need to build more systematic theories related to the issue of family in the 1970s. The main aim of the movement was to defend the idea that family, as a field of study, should have its own theory and should be investigated separately from other such disciplines as sociology and psychology (White, 2005). Following on from an article by Hill and Hansen (1960), Broderick (1971) published an article entitled 'Beyond the Five Conceptual Frameworks: A Decade of Development in Family Theory' in which he covered the principles and assumptions of the main theoretical discussions

applied in the field of family studies. He stresses that, along with the critiques of Bardis in the chapter 'Family Forms and Variations Historically Considered', Sirjamaki on institutional approach, and Stryker on symbolic interactionism in Christensen's (1964) 'Handbook of Marriage and the Family', three-fifths of the family theories elaborated in Hill and Hansen's (1960) article could survive within the field of family studies, although some scholars still continue to use all five. The family theories he claimed were still relevant were symbolic interactionism, structural functionalism and developmental theory, which, he claimed, continued to further both practical and theoretical frames of family theory (1971).

In the 1980s, and continuing into the late 2000s, family theories took a dramatic intellectual turn that broadened the scope of the field of study by including more perspectives, including feminism and postmodernism, and perspectives from other disciplines, such as biology and history, within its theoretical frame, while also combining different approaches (Bengtson, 2005). Accordingly, since the 1980s, as Doherty et al. (1993) emphasize, there has been an intellectual shift in the field of family theory with the inclusion of feminist and ethnic minority interventions; changes and diversifications in existing family types, including more professionals from different disciplines; an increase in theoretical and methodological variety, referring to language and meaning; constructivist and contextual perspectives that recognize values, ethical and religious issues more; synthesizing science and practices, highlighting the cultural dimension with self-reflexive and historical methods within social sciences.

One of the most important contributions of the feminist critique is that it poses challenges to the notion of family as a single unit. Thanks to feminist interventions, a paradigm shift has occurred in the meaning of family, from being a single unit, to becoming a more complicated and plural formation within its relationality with to other spheres of life (Bora & Günal, 2011). While traditional family theories glorify the white, heterosexual nuclear family form and the

normative gender roles and division of labor in which men are responsible for income and women for the home (Luxton, 2015), the feminist perspective presents a significant critique on the concept of 'gender role' and pushes family theory away from its conservative stance that degrades gender to a 'depoliticized' role that was built with little regard for its associations with other structural dynamics. Prior to feminist critiques, gender was connected innately to the biology of human beings, but then biological sex became separated from gender, which had been constructed through societal relations, and was never stable.

Moreover, the feminist perspective introduced some major discussions to the debate regarding the subordinate position of women within the family. As Thorne (1982) claims, the feminist understanding considers family to be "a source of both oppression and creative rebellion, support and struggle" for women (as cited in Thompson, 1992, p. 6). In modern society, men and women are both family members and workers, which is a solid ground from which feminist theory can analyze the gender-b(i)ased systems of relations with their roots in everyday life (Ferree, 1990). Conceptualizing the challenges faced in patriarchal systems, the feminist approach has been very successful in bringing about a problematization of the dual nature of gender identities in society, and embracing all women, regardless of any diversity. Feminism provides a basis for an analysis that investigates not only the relationships within the family, but also their connections to larger social and economic forms, and so includes class differentiations among different families (Cheal, 1991; Luxton 2011 as cited in Luxton, 2015).

Another challenging issue that is addressed by feminist theory is its endorsement of the existence of 'other' types of families that had always been ignored, excluded and disgraced in society. Addressing the family values and dynamics of such families, the feminist perspective takes a clear view of diversity within the family and among families, recognizing that various types of families exist with different dynamics. In this regard, an analysis that is based on conventional family theories

will focus on one type of family, and the hierarchical and gendered roles and division of labor come to be problematized (Ferree, 1991 as cited in Demo & Allen, 1996). Although the feminist intervention posed great challenges to the field of family theory, it actually fell short of opening up the issue of sexual diversity (Stein & Plummer, 1994). Although literature addressing the issues of family and sexuality saw a rapid expansion into the fields of sexuality, gender and their influences on the transformation of family in the 1960s, 70s and 80s, the expansion apparently lost pace in the following decades (Fahey & Layte, 2007).

3.3. Family Systems Theory

Family theories to date tend to highlight the importance maintaining the nuclear family system, and so have mostly investigated the situations that derive from any deviations in the dynamics and social roles in the family (McHale & Sullivan, 2008). At the end of the 20th century, systems theory, pertaining more to physical systems in the beginning, but then expanding into biological and social systems, flourished in the field of family theory, attracting the attention of many theoreticians from a wide range of disciplines, including sociology, psychology, communications, etc.

Minuchin (1985), investigating the organization of the family and the boundaries within, following a structural approach (Combrinck-Graham, 1990; Hoffman, 1981), listed the basic principles of systems theory in six dimensions. First, "any system is an organized whole, and elements within the system are necessarily interdependent," which she describes as the main pillar of systems theory. Second, "patterns in a system are circular rather than linear," implying that interactions in

the system cannot be ignored and occur in a circular way. Furthermore, any change in the system occurs through that cycle of interaction, while the characteristics of the change depend on choice. Third, "systems have homeostatic features that maintain the stability of their patterns," which is a feature that is also significant in the comprehension of the functioning of a system. Fourth, highly correlated with the third, is that "evolution and change are inherent in open systems." This claim related to changes in the system is based on the theory of Prigogine (1973 as cited in Minuchin, 1985). For Prigogine, when an open system faces any form of intervention brings about a shift in the existent patterns, the interference affects the stability of the system, and as a consequence, the system tries to regain its stability. Fifth, "complex systems are composed of subsystems." In this sense, every individual, and the compositions of which they are a part can be considered different subsystems. For instance, the child is a subsystem, just as there is a parent subsystem and a parent-child subsystem. Sixth, "subsystems within a larger system are separated by boundaries, and interactions across boundaries are governed by implicit rules and patterns." For improvement, the symbolic boundaries and rules regulating interactions are required to change. In contrast, in a dysfunctional system, the boundaries between subsystems are blurred or are so strict that they cannot comply with any intervention. As can be concluded from these characteristics, systems theory is not based on the individual, but on the system itself. The functioning of the system is at the core of the theory, in which individual is accepted as an interdependent and active part of the system; and the system, in turn, has guidance over the individual's behavior (Minuchin, 1985). Through all these traits, by considering family a system that depends on dynamic interconnections between its parts, the systems perspective pushes the limits of the theoretical knowledge related to social interaction beyond solely individualistic elements. In short, systems theory becomes 'the study of relationships' (Yerby, 1995).

One of the reasons why the family, as a system, is so strongly elaborated upon in systems theory is that the systems approach prioritizes "an equally vital direction for research" (Minuchin, 1985, p. 295). In other words, the interactions among the different parts of the system should be attributed reciprocally equal importance, and continually involve each other. Family is more than appropriate as the object of such a study. In this sense, although studies of family relations have been dominated by developmental psychological approaches in which the child is accepted as an active agent within the family dynamics, and are concerned more with dyadic or triadic interactions between family members, systems theoreticians may also be involved in the field of family studies (Minuchin, 1985, p. 295-300).

In this sense, Family Systems Theory, derived from the tenets of functional theory, finds its roots in the family therapy of the mid-1930s, when Nathan Ackerman started to see his child clients together with other family members, and it is now common practice among therapists to see family members together in sessions (Combrinck-Graham, 1990). This approach to therapy, which defines "the family as an organized system and the individual as a contributing member, part of the process that creates and maintains the patterns that regulate behavior (Minuchin, 1985, p. 300)" poses a challenge to current mainstream perspectives in psychology.

Yerby (1995) explains the differences that Family Systems Theory brought to the field of family:

> Family Systems Theory offered a challenge to psychoanalytic theory and humanistic psychology when it shifted its focus from the internal psychological processes of the individual to interaction patterns within whole families. Systems theory has taught us to see our own and other family members' behavior as interrelated, to locate predictable patterns of interaction that seem to exert more power over the family than do any individual family members themselves, to see problems in terms of relationship struggles rather than the "fault" of one person who is "scapegoated" and "blamed" for others' pain, and to explore the

> intergenerational legacy of family experience. Most of all, systems theory
> has helped us to pay attention to our interdependence (p. 340).

After gaining recognition among sociologists, general system theory has also come to gain influence within the field of family studies. The basic concepts of system theory have been adapted for studies conducted by such family sociologists as Hill (1972) and Straus (1973), and since the 1980s, beginning with Broderick and Smith in 1979, systems theory come to be used in especially three dimensions as part of family studies, namely, analyzing family processes; the relationship between the family system and other systems; and investigating the change in the systems. In short, Family Systems Theory has come to be used by many sociologists in an attempt to comprehend family dynamics and processes (Doherty et al., 1993), and in doing so, has come to benefit from the basic concepts of general system theory, which are system and subsystem, boundaries, adaptability and change.

3.3.1. System and Subsystem

Sprey (1999) states that "the concepts of system and systemness are basic tools in family studies" (p. 668 as cited in Stamp, 2004, p. 6). Family Systems Theory utilizes the basic principles of general systems theory in analyzing the family as a system, and describes the family as a structured whole in which family members are considered interdependent of each other (Kelley et al., 1983), and in this sense, family members, the subsystems that they constitute, and the family as a whole influence each other (Hughes & Gullone, 2008). From this standpoint, families should be examined taking into consideration the interrelationships that exist

between members (Reis et al., 2000), since a change to one part of the system transforms the entire system.

Systems perspectives have four main dimensions through which hierarchies are embodied in society, namely class, race, gender and age. In family systems, class and race are mostly stable, while gender and age differentiate from member to member (Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1988). Furthermore, the subsystems in the family system may also be evaluated through the hierarchy that exists between them; for instance, a parent subsystem may be higher in the hierarchy then a sibling alliance. Decisions relating to the assignment of a higher or lower position for a part, subsystem or system in the hierarchy are related mostly to the power held by the subject within a certain context (Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993).

In this sense, to analyze the reciprocal impact of the individual members, family system theory focuses on the dynamics in the dyadic or triadic relations of the family members (Stamp, 2004). Family Systems Theory argues that the family, as a system, is composed of such subsystems as the husband-wife dyad and the parent-child dyad, and these subsystems also maintain reciprocal relationships. In this regard, the basic unit of analysis should be considered the individual, while the interactions between individuals constitute the grounds of the subsystems. Such an understanding leads the analysis to include both children and parents (Belsky, Rovien, & Fish, 1989). In addition to the subsystems, which are smaller than the system itself, systems that are larger than families, known as suprasystems, should also be taken into consideration to comprehend how the family connects with other systems. Extended families, and ethnic or racial community groups may be given as examples of suprasystems in Family Systems Theory (Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993).

3.3.2. Boundary

The boundary concept is another significant issue from the systems perspective, in the sense that it defines the limits of the system, and specifies what is included in and excluded (Spencer Brown, 1972 as cited in Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993). Boundary is the most basic term for the family, in that other elements of the system, such as systemness, hierarchy, change and adaptability, are explained through an analysis of boundaries. Depending on the level of permeability of the boundaries, the parts, and so the system itself, may permit the transition of any intervention into or out of the system, and according to the level of permeability, systems may be considered open or closed. Although systems are, in theory, totally closed when they have opaque boundaries, totally closed systems cannot exist practically in family studies. All families are open systems, given that they interact inevitably with their environment (Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993). In this sense, there are two ways of formulating the concept of boundary: as "an assessment of permeability or of the inverse, the internal cohesion of the family (the degree of involvement) (Constantine, 1986 as cited in Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993)"; and the "emotional connectedness of family members (Olson et al., 1979)."

3.3.3. Change and Adaptability

General systems theory also aids in understanding transformation in the family. Considering the principle of interdependency of all parts, Family Systems Theory deals with the issue of change as a process that occurs throughout the entire family system (Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993). In other words, any change in an individual or subsystem, which are accepted as dynamic phenomena, will result in the remaining parts in the system changing accordingly. Regardless of whether the change is good or bad, this theory highlights the role of that specific change within the process of transformation. In this sense, in a circular causality, "all effects are the result of multiple causes, and effects in turn influence the causal pathways (Murray, 2006, p. 234)." This means that a transformation in the family, such as divorce, occurs not as a single event, but as a series of triggers for many subsequent changes, and this results first in disequilibrium, followed by a progressive re-stabilization of interactions within the family system (Hetherington, 1992).

In the issue of change, the characteristics of adaptability and viability of the system are very significant concepts, in the sense that it is through these characteristics that the family, as a system, has the capacity to rearrange itself in response to external interventions, allowing it to continue performing (Sameroff, 1983 as cited in Cox & Paley, 2003). According to Family Systems Theory, both normative and non-normative challenges are influential in multiple situations, following a feedback loop that leads the change to expand throughout the entire system. In the end, new patterns of action occur as an adaptation of the family in the face of these challenges. The adaptability and viability of a family system is in direct proportion to the level of variety in the system, and inversely proportional to

the level of conflict and tension within the system (Klein & White, 1996). This does not mean that the process of change has come to an end and the system has become stable after its adaptation; on the contrary, the changed familial system may have developed new susceptibilities that may lead it to undergo another process of transformation. In this regard, the transition points that foster reorganization are matters of great importance in understanding the discontinuities in the dynamics and functioning of the family (Pianta & Walsh, 1996 as cited in Cox & Paley, 1997). In this sense, developmental processes in the family necessitate a certain level of discontinuity (Rutter, 1987 as cited in Cox & Paley, 1997).

According to Family Systems Theory, there are two orders of change, being first order and second order. First-order change refers to the changes that occur at the surface level, and it is through these types of change, although the action that starts the process may change, that the system dynamics are affected (Guttman, 1991; Nichols & Schwartz, 2005 as cited in Murray, 2006). On the other hand, major changes in the family system occur only through second-order changes, through which the system transforms and rearranges around new patterns (Becvar & Becvar, 1988; Keeney, 1983; Montgomery & Fewer, 1988; Watzlawick et al., 1974 as cited in Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993).

In this sense, one of the most significant challenges faced by families in transition is difficulties family members face in adjusting their familial roles to fit in with the changing/changed family relations. This situation may be harder for the family members of non-traditional families, having not been established upon normative roles (Cherlin, 1981; Hetherington et al., 1989 as cited in Hetherington, 1992).

To conclude, family system theory, which emerged out of the application of the basic principles of general systems theory in family studies, goes beyond the issue of individual development to include investigations of family dynamics and

relationship patterns. This provides a productive ground for family sociologists, who are thus able to investigate the family as a system in which family members are interdependent and reciprocally influential on each other's attitudes and behaviors. The existence of such a system within the family, and all the incorporated characteristics, compels us to evaluate all family members as the parts of a whole, in which subsystems are organized in a hierarchical way, have and the capacity to change and adapt. That said, certain challenges result in first-order changes, while others bring about second-order changes in the family system. How difficult it is for a family to undergo this transition process may also depend on the type of family, in that some transitions could be relatively more challenging for LGBTQ families or families with LGBTQ persons, than for more conventional families.

3.4. Endowments of Family Systems Theory

In this chapter, the major and minor theoretical perspectives used in the field of family studies have been explained, alongside a thematic review of the theoretical frameworks that have been developed since the 1950s, with details of their pioneers and major tendencies.

It is apparent that past theories served to highlight the consensus, stability and function of the family; and their subject of analysis was the individual herself/himself, while contemporary theories mostly consider the family as a system within which there are diverse dynamics that are contextual and open to change. The family in the contemporary era is to be analyzed through interactions which are subject to change through time; however, this change, unlike in the

traditional point of view, occurs altogether in the family. Although contemporary theories totally disregard the elements that conventional theories take as indicators, such as function, stability or hierarchy, there is an obvious and dramatic shift in the focus of analysis to include certain levels of ambiguity and flexibility, which opens the way for an analysis of diversity. This vast network of intra- and extra-familial relationships leads family researchers to extend their scope to become more encompassing, through which not only individual personalities, but also the dynamics of the dyadic and triadic interactions in the family are analyzed.

This kind of theoretical thinking allows a tracing of the links between the family and systems of a larger scale, and in this sense, applying systems theory to a family research makes it easy to identify any deviations and transformations, considering the 'family as a central institution, a key role in the process of change' (Bengtson, 2005, p. 36). Accordingly, transformation may occur at any level of a system, and 'a change at one level can stimulate further change in individuals, relationships, and the whole family system' (Paley & Cox, 2003, p. 195). Addressing this issue, Kantor and Lehr (1975) indicate that the application of systems theory in family studies would result in significant improvements in the field (as cited in Holman & Burr, 1980). Similarly, Satir (1972), and Watzlawick et al. (1967; 1974) have made a number of other conceptual and theoretical contributions. In accordance with these studies, it is clear that beyond the theoretical tenets of traditional family theories, Family Systems Theory empowers family research by covering the reciprocal interactions that exist between family members (Hughes & Gullone, 2008).

Although family theorists have been improving the scope of the field by addressing many issues related to the family, and feminist and postmodern critiques have contributed to the field by broadening its contextual and methodological range, studies to date have still failed to provide an analysis of the particular dimensions at which family and sexuality intersect. Additionally, it is

obvious that traditional family theories lack the scope to analyze particular family systems, especially those that are stigmatized by society, as certain crucial points of view, such as the hierarchical power dynamics between gender, sexuality, and sexual identity and/or orientation would be missed.

In this sense, studies of different sexual identities and/or orientations can be considered significant and compelling, in the sense that they allow the limits of the field to be pushed to investigate and describe more about those stigmatized families and the diversity that they represent, and at the same time, criticizing the heterosexist suppositions of mainstream family theories (Demo & Allen, 1996).

The interaction between parents and children has been significant for many of the theoreticians mentioned above, being a common thread in family literature, This study makes use of systems theory as its point of focus, given its suitability for investigating and explaining the various patterns found in complex systems. Furthermore, it allows for a deeper analysis by including personal development in one's life course and one's associations in an even more private system, such as the family (Minuchin, 1985). Analyzing familial transformation from the perspective of systems theory fills obvious gaps in the theoretical discussions in the field of family studies, and opens a path for further studies of intrafamily dynamics.

Furthermore, while it benefits from the conceptual frame of Family Systems Theory, this study also poses an intervention into family systems thery and its application in the field. Reviewing previous works, it can be concluded that although psychologists utilize Family Systems Theory and develop other theories pertaining to its conceptualizations, they benefit from its use mainly in their analyses of such family crises as death, divorce, abuse, wife and child-battering, etc., and so offer only a limited scope of analysis. In this regard, this study aims to amplify this theoretical perspective by considering coming out of a self-identifying

LGBTQ family member to the family as a crisis, which was not taken into consideration as a crisis to date, and whose transformative domino effect is evident in the transformation of intra-familial dynamics.

To conclude, in this thesis, the coming out of a self-identifying LGBTQ child to her/his family of origin is an intervention into the family system, and can be considered a crisis within the conceptualizations of Family Systems Theory. The mother and child individually, and their dyadic relationship, are taken as subsystems, while the family is the system. The conceptualization of boundaries in Family Systems Theory are explained through the boundaries between the identities of mother and child, and the issue of flexibility is further explain through the analysis of changes in mothers' personhoods. The domino effect of the transformation among subsystems that is triggered by the disclosure of an LGBTQ child is also explained in terms of its effect on the dynamics of the mother-child dyad and within the other family dyads (including mother-father, father-child and siblings). This then has a transformative effect on the entire family system, and on the dyads outside the family, such as partnership and friendships, as mothers are led to question their own relationships. This influence on other dyads offers a good indication of the mothers' adaptability both in the new family dynamics and in their new identity as the mother of an LGBTQ child.

CHAPTER 4

SOCIAL, CULTURAL and POLITICAL CONTEXT of TURKEY

The struggles against gender inequality find their roots over a century ago in Turkey; although the issues that they address have changed since the 1990s as the struggles themselves became diversified in their agendas and the ways they engage in politics (Beşpınar, 2014). In the issue of sexual identity and/or orientation, Turkey is an in-between country in terms of its geopolitical location, where the countries to its east assign strict punishments to LGBTQ persons; while countries to its west continue to improve their legal positions. From the earliest stages of the foundation of the Republic (1923) and the nation-state building process, issues related to LGBTQ persons were largely overlooked as something that affected only a small minority, and a deviation from 'the natural', heterosexuality being reflected as the dominant order (Baba, 2011).

Although same-sex relations are not regarded as illegal in the Turkish legal structure, there is no specific law protecting the rights of LGBTQs against the criminalization and discrimination they face. LGBTQs in Turkey do not have the right to marry or adopt children, and trans persons cannot obtain legal identity cards that reflect the identities to which they feel connected unless they undergo the sex reassignment surgery and a 'permanent loss of reproductive capacity'. That is to say, in Turkey, one of the most significant intrusions of state power manifests itself through its heteronormative stance regarding the formation and livability of certain kinds of sexualities. Although debates of sexual diversity have come to be

high on the agenda and have even gained recognition in some countries, the issue does not seem to be even close to being resolved in Turkey. The issue of sexuality, and the associated controversies, has reflections also on the family, which is one of the most significant components of Turkish culture.

Since Ottoman times, social relations in Turkey have had a patriarchal structure, and the dominant ideology, in many aspects of life, is generally structured around the hegemonic relations, which, in fact, favor men. The situation does not seem to have changed in contemporary Turkey. The political dynamics and conservative approach of the current governing party towards the issue of family provide a clear understanding of the status quo in Turkish politics. Since the early 2000s, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) has supported a "conservative, religion-inspired and essentially patriarchal value system" (Acar & Altunok, 2013), and its neo-conservative perspective has become embodied in its discourse and the public policies through which it fosters conventional gender roles in the family. The resulting interventions have mostly been concentrated in the fields of reproduction, sexuality and family (Acar & Altunok, 2013), and have had serious repercussions on the lives of LGBTQs. In 2010, the CNN Turk news channel reported that the minister responsible for women and family affairs had said that she believed homosexuality to be a disease. In such a social structure, LGBTQs are regarded as a threat to the heteronormative culture and authoritarianism in Turkey.

Given the dominant cultural trends, a claim that LGBTQ families are far different from the other families in terms of the challenge that they pose to the hegemonic family formation would be hard to deny. These 'exceptional' families come to be seen as 'unusual/unacceptable', in that there an obvious polarization arose between LGBTQ families and the settled heteronormativity of the 'traditional' Turkish family structure.

Martin et al. (2010) asserts that the normalization of LGBTQ persons remains incomplete in certain significant sociocultural fields, including the family, in that some families do not accept the identity of their LGBTQ children, and try to 'turn' their children back to their 'natural' sexual identities. As a result, LGBTQ persons in Turkey may sometimes be more inclined to share their emotions and experiences with their friends rather than their families, based on their fear of losing familial love and disappointing their families. In some cases, there may be a fear of the possibility of violence in the family. When families learn of their children's non-heterosexual orientations and/or identities, the 'cultural toolkit' that they have loaded is one of the most important elements influencing their reactions (Martin et al., 2010).

LGBTQs, as part of an organized community entitled 'Lambdaistanbul' in Istanbul, Turkey, have been engaged in a political struggle against gender inequality since 1993 under the banner, 'You are neither wrong, nor alone!/ Ne yanlış, ne de yalnızsınız!' (Lambdaistanbul Official Website), while Kaos GL (Kaos Gay and Lesbian Cultural Research and Solidarity Association), which has the motto 'Liberation of homosexuals will also free heterosexuals!/ Eşcinsellerin kurtuluşu, heteroseksüelleri de özgürleştirecektir!', was established in Ankara, Turkey's capital, in 1994 (KaosGL Official Website). On the academic front, SPoD (Organization for Studies of Social Policies, Gender Identity, and Sexual Orientation) was founded in 2011 by a number of activists, academicians and students (SpoD Official Website). Moreover, parents of LGBTQs in Istanbul have been actively engaged to the movement since 2006, and have founded independent organizations such as Families and Friends of LGBTIs in Turkey (LISTAG) in 2008 (LISTAG Official Website), and the Support Group for Families and Kins of LGBTIQ+s (LADEG+) in 2016 (LADEG+ Official Website). Another group has been established by the parents of LGBTQs in Ankara, called Ankara Rainbow

Families, while other smaller groups exist in different peripheral cities across Turkey.

Deeply concerned with the social and political discrimination faced by their children in every aspect of their lives, parents started to become involved in the political field in order not to leave their children 'unprotected' or 'abandoned' in the face of all the hostility that society in general poses. This parental engagement would appear to have accelerated the volume and influence of the LGBTQ movement in Turkey, and the movement has gained more attention owing to their presence as families. Today, both the parents and their LGBTQ children face many difficulties, but they continue fighting for their rights together, as 'families' anyways.

Although the issue of LGBTQs and 'family' has been addressed in literature, focus has mostly been from the perspective of LGBTQ side (Baba, 2011; Somay, 2012; Cogito, 2011). Awareness of this gap in literature was not filled immediately with the emergence/participation of parents in the movement; however, it clearly brought results, being recognized in the naming of the 18th Istanbul Pride Week (Warning! Beware of the family!/ Dikkat! Aile var!), in which the theme was family. Furthermore, a documentary entitled 'My Child', including interviews with parents who told their own stories, was shot in 2013, and collected ten national and international awards.

The issue of families of LGBTQs is obviously still an immature topic that warrants further investigation, although the issue needs to be examined from the perspective of both the child and parent. Only such a holistic approach can provide literature with a comprehensive and enlightening analysis of the families of LGBTQs. In this regard, the significance of this study lies in its uniqueness, in the sense that it includes the perspectives of both parents and their LGBTQ children. Other than literature pertaining to 'the families of choice' through which individuals

determine whom they call 'family' in terms of their sense of belonging, as Goss stated (as cited in Weeks et al., 2001), families with LGBTQ children still seem to be evaluated through the traditional formation of family in literature. In this sense, families of LGBTQs and their parents are to be examined, considering also the characteristics of Turkish culture.

LGBTQs are often victims of hate crime in Turkey, and parents must come to terms with the fact that the peaceful life that their children enjoyed may no longer be possible, given the number of LGBTQs who are hurt or even killed as victims of hate crimes each and every day in Turkey. Parents may eventually come to terms with their children's sexual orientation and/or identity, but they must also accept that their children have become what they would once have referred to as 'the other' from the perspective of the dominant ideology in society. They worry about what will happen when people learn about their child's sexual orientation, and do not have the heart to allow society to harm their beloved children, whether physically or psychologically. That said, there are also parents who, unable to come to terms with their children's situation, disown them, or even kill them, while other parents in the LGBTQ movement put their feelings of love above the rules of the normative structure to which they have been exposed.

For instance, Ayla, one of the respondent mothers who has a trans woman child, said that she did not want her daughter to wear miniskirts after surgery, as she was afraid that if people understood that she was a trans woman, they would verbally, physically and/or psychologically harass her. She is fully aware that in society, trans persons are often victims of hate speech and criminal acts, and these are increasing day-by-day. In other examples of hate crimes against LGBTQ persons in Turkey, the body of Hande Kader, a trans woman, was found burned and thrown by the wayside in 2016, while another trans woman named Başak was found dead close to a lake after she had been missing for four days. Furthermore, many trans persons commit suicide as a result of their difficult living conditions.

For instance, Eylül Cansın shared a video in which she blamed society for not letting her live her life as a human being and for giving her no opportunity to find a job, before jumping off the Bosphorus Bridge in Istanbul in 2015.

All in all, LGBTQ persons lack the choices and freedoms that are enjoyed by those whose lives are compatible with heteronormative structure of Turkish society. Although they may try hard to find work that will give them the chance to support themselves, they remain stigmatized in society, forcing them to prioritize their fight for their right to live. Although the problems of unemployment and poverty have been in Turkey for a long time, LGBTQ persons are obliged to deal with those issues due primarily to their sexual identity, which makes their fight to live different from the current problems in the market, since they are marginalized by the society because not of their level of education or income, but their LGBTQ identity. In Turkish society, many LGBTQ persons are victims of hate crime, and arguing that hate crimes against LGBTQs are in fact political, members of the LGBTQ community have long been seeking a law that protects their right to live as human beings in society.

CHAPTER 5

ENCOUNTER and SETTLEMENT

Coming out, as a moment of disclosure, refers to a complex process that has effects on both the person coming out and the person she/he is coming out to and consequently, the process of coming out poses challenges to the entire family system. To understand the nature of these challenges, it is necessary to consider the fact that coming out, as a dynamic process, is embedded within familial relations (Scherrer et al., 2015).

This study focuses on the transformation of the family system after the respondent mothers learn of their child's non-heterosexual orientation and/or sexual identity. The study opens with a discussion of the overall findings of the research, and these constitute the two main parts of the analysis. The first part presents an analysis in two subparts. The first of these explains the initial relationships shared between the mothers and their children prior to them coming out, and then their reactions when faced with the fact that their child is lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or queer/questioning (LGBTQ). The nature of the relationships the respondent mothers shared with their children prior to them coming out is garnered from questions aimed at identifying any attitudes and behaviors in their children that the respondents recognized while their children were growing up; and whether there were any signals that particularly caught their attention and led them to question their children's sexual orientation and/or sexual identity prior to their disclosure. The following stage contains an analysis of how and when the mothers learned

that their child was LGBTQ, as well as their initial reactions, including how they reacted, felt and behaved, and what they said and did.

In the second subpart, focus is on the expectations of mothers since giving birth to their children, and how they face up to the fact that those dreams are compatible only with the socially assigned gender roles that are constructed through the dominant normative heterosexual context in Turkish society. The questions asked for this part constitute a study of the hopes, dreams and expectations of mothers for their children, what they dream of for their children's futures, and whether/how those plans changed after learning about their children's non-heterosexual orientation and/or identity.

5.1. Initial Experiences and Reactions of Mothers

The initial experiences and reactions of mothers reflect how they comprehend and interpret signs pointing to non-heterosexuality, while their reactions to having to confront their children's non-heterosexual orientation and/or identity are indicative of how they feel and deal with the situation. In other words, when non-heterosexuality becomes evident in the family, the reactions of the mother provides us with data about the conflict between the situation and the meaning system established by mothers through various societal dynamics.

5.1.1. Initial experiences: Reading 'signs'

The initial experiences of the respondent mothers center around two main aspects, being physical appearance, and the friends their children choose. As the findings related to the mothers of homosexual sons and trans children are similar, they will be analyzed together; while for the mothers of lesbian daughters, the experience is generally different.

It could be understood from the interview findings that most mothers, based on the attitudes and behaviors of their children, understood early in their child's life that their child did not fall within the socially assigned gender roles. For instance, the mothers of homosexual sons and trans children recognized several effeminate mannerisms in their children, such as in their postures and gesticulations, and in the way they laugh, sit and pose for a picture. Moreover, they indicated that their sons had more feminine fashion tastes, preferring to wear skinny jeans, colored and patterned shirts, and ornamental jewelry, and growing their hair long.

Ayla, who has a trans woman child, said:

> My child had been like a girl since she[7] was two. She would dance, twist, play. When we went to visit my friend, who has daughters, she would play with their dolls. Everybody asked me why she was playing with dolls … When I put iron cars and trucks in front of her, she would kick them away … She put lace covers on a hairbrush and would play with it like it was a doll, since there were no dolls in our house.[8]

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[7] The Turkish language contains no differentiation between "she" and "he", with the word "o" used for both. Accordingly, during the interviews, when the mothers spoke about their children, they used the word "o". This raises obvious problems when discussing trans persons, and so she or he is used throughout this study in accordance with the gender the child identifies herself/himself.

[8] *"Benim çocuğumun iki yaşından beri hal ve hareketleri bir kız çocuğu gibiydi. Yani dans eder, kıvırır, oynar. Kız çocuğu olan arkadaşlarıma gittiğimde onların odasına gider, barbie bebeklere*

Nuray, who has a homosexual son, stated:

> He did not play the games that other boys did. He easily adapted to the games that are accepted as 'girls' games … He was always interested in shiny clothes and colors. He like me to wear my shoes made of patent leather or my high-heel shoes and to wear heavy make-up … We registered him at a kindergarten, but after a while the administrators said that he was always joining in with the girls' games, and wanted to play with dolls.[9]

Another indicator for the respondents that their sons may be homosexual or trans is the child's social circle, with many mentioning that their children rarely hung out with people of the same sex, preferring to establish close relationships with their cross-gender friends. For instance, the mothers of homosexual sons generally indicated that their sons had more female than male friends, especially in their teens, and stated that they were suspicious of their children's more effeminate friends. This pattern of friendship was a point that drew mothers' attention and led them to pay more attention to their children's social environment.

Hatice, the mother of a trans woman child, explained her experiences related to the friends of her child:

> She had a (male) friend with whom she would go to school whose attitude seemed feminine to me. I had never noticed this in my daughter; I only recognized it in the friend. I got angry with my daughter, and said that she had better not to go to school with that friend. My daughter asked me why; and I said that her friend's attitude seemed strange to me and she would get a bad name if they were seen with him. I learned that they continued to go

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saldırır. Herkes der ki 'Bu niye bebekle oynuyor?' … Demir arabaları, rayderleri, kamyonları önüne koyarım, o bir tekme atar … Çocuk bizim evde bebek bulamaz, saç fırçasının üzerine dantel koyar, onu bebek gibi oynatırdı."

[9] *"Diğer çocukların oynadığı oyunlardan oynamazdı. 'Kız' oyunları diye tanımladığımız oyunlara daha rahat adapte olurdu … Parlak giysileri, renkleri severdi. Benim rugan ayakkabılarım olsun, topuklu ve parlak, çok makyajlı olayım öyle severdi … Kreşe gitmeye başlamıştı, kreşten de bize 'Kızlarla hep oynuyor. Bebeklerle oynamak istiyor.' gibi şeyler söylediler."*

to school together, but would pass by my workplace separately in case I saw them together.[10]

As is apparent in the example above, some of the respondent mothers adopted strategies to attract the attention of their children more towards activities that are compatible with heteronormativity, in other words, to 'change' their children, rather than giving up their own expectations. For example, believing that their feminine behavior is a result of the son spending too much time with the mother, they would try to convince them to spend them to spend more time with the father in the hope that they would take on more masculine traits. They may also encourage their sons to adopt a more masculine physical appearance by wearing masculine clothes and having short hair, preventing them from associating with certain friends, especially the more feminine ones, and making efforts to 'correct' mannerisms that may be deemed effeminate in public.

Canan, the mother of a trans man child, said:

> He never wanted to wear dresses or skirts, and would take off the clothes I made him wear; he wore what he wanted. He was playing football like crazy. People referred him as a bicycle acrobat … He would make a ball out of his socks and would secretly play football in his bedroom. He was closed to me. He cut his hair very short several times. I would forbid him do it, but he would take money from his grandmother to get a haircut … One day I said to him that if he lives in our house, he would do so in accordance with our rules, or else he should move in to his grandmother's house … I always recognized him as different from other kids, but I never thought it was about something like that.[11]

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[10] *"Bir tane arkadaşı vardı, onunla beraber okula gidip geliyorlar. Çocuğun davranışları biraz efemine geldi bana. Kendi çocuğumu görmüyorum tabi, onu görüyorum. Biraz kızdım kızıma, 'Beraber gidip gelmeseniz daha iyi olacak galiba.' dedim. 'Neden?' dedi, 'Ne bileyim çocuğun hareketleri biraz tuhaf geliyor bana. Senin de adın çıkar evladım.' dedim. Meğer benim iş yerime kadar beraber gelip, ben görmeyeyim diye orada ayrılıp sonra yine beraber devam ediyorlarmış yollarına."*

[11] *"Asla elbise, etek giymek istemiyordu. Benim giydirdiğim kıyafeti çıkarıp kendisi istediği kıyafeti giyiyordu. Deliler gibi futbol oynuyordu. 'Bisiklet cambazı gibi.' diyorlardı ona … Çorapları top yapıp odasında gizlice futbol oynuyordu. Bana kendini kapatmıştı. Saçlarını kısacık kestiriyordu.*

For the mothers of lesbian daughters, the situation is different, as they have no suspicions about their daughters' attitudes or social circles. In this regard, recognition of their daughter's sexuality occurs more smoothly than for the mothers of gay and trans children. Furthermore, in Turkish culture there is no strict conceptualization of deviant acts among girls with close girlfriends, having close bodily contact with girlfriends or sleeping in the same bed. Olson (1982) raises the same issue in his study of the differentiated roles of women and men in work, pointing out that women and men have conjecturally differentiated lives because of the 'duofocal' organization of Turkish families, which implies that women live in an environment of female kinship; whereas, men live in an environment of male kinship (as cited in Sunar & Fişek, 2005, p. 16). Moreover, women who behave more masculine are referred to as 'tomboys', but are still 'women' from both a societal perspective and in their mothers' eyes. It can thus be concluded that the mothers of lesbian daughters have little opportunity to understand that their daughter may not be heterosexual, or their suspicions may not be enough for them to conclude that their daughters are lesbians.

Duygu, the mother of a lesbian daughter, said:

> She played football with her brother when she was little. When we gave her a doll, she put it aside and was always playing football. She would climb on the door sills and on top of the sofas, but we thought she was just a hyperactive child … After high school, during which she was very careful about her appearance … and had a few boyfriends … , but she, afterwards, started to act very masculine … , and then started to be with women.[12]

Ben izin vermiyordum ama babaannesi parasını veriyormuş, saçını kestiriyordu … Bir gün dedim ki 'Karar ver ya bizimle bizim kurallarımızla yaşayacaksın ya da babaannenin evine taşınacaksın.' … Farklı bir çocuk olduğunu farkediyordum ama böyle bir şey olabileceği aklımın ucuna bile gelmiyordu."

[12] _"Aslı küçükken abisi ile çift kale maç yapardı. Kız bebek verirdik, bebeği bir kenara koyar, mütemadiyen futbol oynardı. Kapılara iki ayağını koyarak tırmanırdı, tavanlara çıkardı, kanepenin tepesinde sürekli. Hiperaktif diyorduk hep … Lise çağlarında saçıyla çok uğraşmaya başladı …_

Nalan is a similar case, being a mother of a lesbian daughter:

> I did not recognize the signs, and I ignored them when I could recognize them. For example, her girlfriends would often come to our house, and I would say to myself that every girl's girlfriends come over to their houses. My mother raised her because I was working very hard, and so I was only able to take care of her when I was not too busy. When I learned that my daughter was a lesbian, I blamed myself for not watching her enough. Seeing my daughter coming home with her girlfriends and her success at school, I deduced that there was no man in her life; I compared her with myself. She was a very good role model for both our family and society. I thought that as she did not have a boyfriend and she was very successful, she was just like I expected.[13]

As can be concluded from the example above, mothers develop strategies for dismissing their thoughts. Mothers with lesbian daughters make no attempt to change any part of their daughters' lifestyles before they come out, since they did not ascribe their daughters' habits to a non-heterosexual orientation. As Pearlman (1992) states, mothers generally see their daughters as strong, feminist and different in society, but in using these attributes to dismiss their suspicions, they may overlook the fact that they are also common attributes of lesbianism.

In addition, prior to their child coming out as lesbian, a common trait was seen in the respondent mothers when faced with warnings from others, especially other mothers, about the possibility of their children being 'different'. In such situations, the respondent mothers tended to feel uncomfortable with such outside

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erkek arkadaşları oluyordu … Ama sonra da erkeksi davranmaya başladı … ve sonra da kızlarla beraber olmaya başladı."

[13] *"Ben farkedemedim işaretleri. Farkettiğim dönemlerde de yok saydım. Mesela evimize çok sık kız arkadaşları geliyordu. 'Herkesin kız arkadaşı gelir.' diyordum. Ben çalıştığım için anneanne büyüttü kızımı. Ben vakit buldukça ilgilenebildim. Yoğun çalışan biriydim. O nedenle kendimi suçladım da. Çok fazla gözlem yapamadım. Kız arkadaşları geldiğinden ve 'Bir de bak hiç hayatında erkek yok. O yüzden başarılı.' diyordum, yani başarısını ona bağlıyordum. Kendimle kıyaslıyordum. Hem toplumun hem bizim hem aile çevremizin istediği güzel bir modeldi. Hayatında erkek yok, deli gibi çok güzel okuyor, çok başarılı. Çok güzeldi yani. Tam böyle istediğimiz bir model."*

interference, and defended their children, closing such conversations by saying that they were quite aware of their children's mannerisms. Although such interventions made them feel uncomfortable, they ignored what was being said about their children.

Canan, the mother of a trans man child, had the following to say about outside interference:

> When he was in middle school, he wrote a letter to one of his girlfriends. The school counselor at his school invited me to the school to talk about my child's situation. My child threatened his girlfriend, telling her not to get close to her other friends. The counselor, that day, said to me 'There is 'something' with your child.', but what I understood from her words was that my child was a very impulsive child and so was having problems adjusting. I started to defend my child in such a situation, because he had a serious health problem and had to be away from his friends. He could not keep his close friendships, as he could not meet them when he was sick. I attempted to explain the situation to the counselor, saying 'We experienced similar things when he was at primary school; he was jealous of his close friends.' I had never thought that his condition was different; I had always thought that he had those problems because of his lack of a social circle. After the counselor said 'There is something', I started to be more attentive, because he was started to pull away from me, too.[14]

Nalan, who has a lesbian daughter, described her experience with another mother:

> During her high school years, the mother of a friend of hers came to visit me, as she wanted to stop my daughter from seeing her daughter. I declined her request, and said that she would have to talk to her own daughter if she wanted to prevent them from meeting. I still refused to label my daughter.

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[14] *"Ortaokuldayken bir kız arkadaşına mektup yazmış. Rehberlikten çağırdılar. Gittim görüşmeye. Kız arkadaşını tehdit etmiş, 'Başkalarıyla olma benimle ol.' demiş. İlk orada rehberlik öğretmeni bana 'Bir şey var. Var bir şey.' dedi. Onu da şöyle değerlendirdim. 'Atak bir çocuk ve uyum problem yaşıyor.' diye düşündüm. Savunmaya geçiyorsunuz böyle bir durumda. 'İlkokulda da buna benzer olaylar yaşadık. Sağlık sorunları var, sosyal yaşamdan uzak kalıyor, arkadaşlarıyla ilişkileri kopuyor. Tekrar onlarla kaldığı yerden devam edemediği için çok sevdiği arkadaşlarını paylaşamıyor.' diyerek açıkladım. Hiç aklıma gelmiyordu başka bir şey. 'Bir şey var.' cümlesinden sonra bir şeyler aramaya başladım ben de, çünkü o dönemden sonra benden uzaklaşmaya başladı."*

The mother insisted that our daughters were too close, staying at each other's houses, and that such a relationship should not continue. I thought what the woman was saying was absurd, and I rebuked her for having such a reactionary mind in this era … I spoke to my daughter, and she said nothing. I could have asked her whether such a situation existed, but I chose to ignore the issue, thinking there could be no such possibility. I just criticized the mother.[15]

All of the examples presented above narrate the initial experiences of the respondent mothers before they learned of their children's sexual orientation and sexual identity, and as can be seen, the experiences differ from case to case, related in some instances to different behaviors and attitudes to other children, and sometimes to their social circle and friends, and their perceived 'strange' characteristics. To address these issues, mothers adopt strategies to 'reverse' the situation, for instance, convincing the father to spend more time with their children, or encouraging their children to act in conformity with heterosexual norms. In other words, they try to get their children to behave in line with socially assigned gender roles, compatible with their sex at birth.

At the same time, mothers generally find ways to ease their minds and ignore reality, and choose to ignore the interventions and warnings of other mothers who suggest that there may be something 'unusual' about their child.

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[15] *"Lise çağında bir arkadaşının annesi beni ziyarete geldi, 'Kızınla kızım buluşuyor, lütfen engel olun.' diyerek. Ben karşı çıktım. 'Buna nasıl engel olabilirim? Yani siz engel olmak istiyorsanız alın karşınıza kızınızı, konuşun. Niye engel olayım?' dedim. Ben hala konduramıyorum. 'Çok samimiler, bize de geliyor gidiyor. Benim kızım da siz de kalıyor. Bu ne samimiyet, olamaz böyle bir şey.' dedi. Hatta çok saçma buldum yani. Bu çağda bu nasıl bir zihniyettir diye yadırgadım da … Hatta Ceren'e de dedim, hiç bir şey diyemedi o da. Ben en azından o zaman sorabilirdim, 'Gerçekten böyle bir durum var mı? Sen ne diyorsun?' diyebilirdim. O kadar reddetmişim ki, hiç. Anneyi eleştirdim sadece."*

5.1.2. Initial reactions: Denial then clash

All of the mothers remember the precise moment when they had to face up to reality, as the truth could no longer be denied. Up until that point in their lives, when many things changed (as will be elaborated upon in the following sections), all of the respondents said that they had tried to find ways of rejecting and ignoring their suspicions, and attempting to change the situation. When asked whether their suspicions prepared them for learning the truth, they said that none of the signs of their children being non-heterosexual eased the process for them. How they learn varies from mother to mother. For instance, Levent and Mert told their parents at the same time while sitting together in the living room, while Ceren told her family about her lesbian identity during a family dinner with her mother, brother and his wife. In contrast, for Perihan and her daughter Nehir, who is a lesbian, there was no exact disclosure moment. In another example, Fatma, who is the mother of a son who identifies himself as a gay, found messages on her son's phone. In short, for all mothers, the experience of their child coming out is different, although what is common is that they generally refer to that moment as a turning point in their lives.

Just as LGBTQ persons develop strategies for coming out, mothers develop strategies to deal with the situation, and the mothers of gay and lesbian children develop very similar but varied strategies that may involve mild oppression, or at the other end of the scale, physical violence.

Duygu explained how she had treated her daughter after she came out as a lesbian:

> I mistreated Aslı after she came out. I turned round all of her pictures in the display cabinet and said my daughter is dead to me. I told her that this was not acceptable and that she would have to leave the house. I thought all of

this would go away; that I could make things right by pressuring her. There were times that I wished she had not been born, rather than having to go through this difficulty when I first found out about her homosexuality. She is facing many difficulties, she has been feeling very bad, and there are more upsetting things to come. I sometimes wonder whether we would be this sad if she was disabled.[16]

It can be understood from this example that mothers sometimes liken their children's LGBTQ status to a disability. For Duygu, she sometimes felt that she would prefer to deal with the difficulties of her daughter being disabled rather than her being a lesbian. This likening of LGBTQ to a disability is interesting, in that it treats being gay, lesbian or trans as a deficiency. This situation of lumping having non-heterosexual orientation and identity in with disability shows again the socially constructed perception of having a non-heterosexual orientation or identity as a disease or illness.

Nalan, the mother of a lesbian daughter, described her initial feelings:

I thought how my daughter was now also being excluded like I had excluded the transvestites on the street, because I thought of them as equal with my daughter, my daughter having become like them in my point of view. This way of thinking had been drummed into us. Because I thought that about my daughter, why would 'the others' not think the same?[17]

On the other hand, coming out as a dynamic process occurs differently for mothers of trans children, who generally come out to them as a result of feelings of bodily discomfort. While the mothers of gay and lesbian children in this study had a

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[16] *"Açılması üzerine Aslı'ya kötü davrandım. Vitrindeki ona ait resimlerin hepsini ters çevirdim. 'Benim için kızım öldü.' dedim. 'Gidersin bu evden, olmaz böyle şey.' dedim ve geçebileceğini, baskıyla düzelebileceğini zannettim. İlk bu eşcinselliği öğrendiğim zaman 'Keşke Aslı doğmasaydı. Yani bu zorluğu yaşayacağına hiç olmasa mıydı?' diye düşündüğüm oldu. Aslı zorluklar yaşayacak, çok üzüldü, daha üzücü şeyler var. Bazen diyorum, 'Sakat olsa acaba böyle üzüntü duyar mıydık?'"*

[17] *"Hep böyle ben nasıl dışlıyorsam o köşe başındaki travestiyi, aynı şekilde dışlanacağını düşündüm, eşit gördüm. Çünkü ben o travestiye nasıl bakıyorsam, benim kızım da o seviyeye gelmişti gözümde. Öyle bir şey işlemişti bize. Ben öyle düşünüyordum, onların da benim gibi düşünmesi çok doğaldı yani."*

relatively smooth coming out process, those with trans children face many challenges related to their children's sexuality in a shorter time, since their children want to undergo sex re-assignment surgery as quickly as possible. Accordingly, unlike the mothers of homosexual children, during the interviews with mothers of trans children, the discourse was not about their children being affected by same-sex individuals, but their desire to have an opposite-sex body. All of the mothers with trans children described quite different post-disclosure experiences.

Canan, who has a trans man son, explained her situation:

> *"When he told me for the first time, everything went dark. You give birth to a child; you give birth to it as a female, but then he comes to you and says 'Mom, I'm a man; my soul doesn't match my body.'"*[18]

The reactions of mothers to this situation are wide ranging, and include ignorance and interference, with some differences, but also some commonalities. Previous studies analyzing the initial reactions of parents to non-heterosexual disclosure list shock, shame, guilt, rejection, anger, denial, panic, deep loss, disappointment, embarrassment and betrayal as examples of the feelings that parents undergo, and the mothers interviewed in this study had similar feelings when faced with this issue. The respondent mothers of trans children may often experience the five stages of grief, which are denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance, such as in the work of Kübler (1969). What is different in this study, however, is that these mothers of trans children state that they felt a deep sense of loss of their children when they learned about their sexual orientation and/or identity, while mothers of homosexual children tend to avoid such feelings. In other words, in contrast to a number of previous studies (Ben-Ari, 1995; LaSala, 2000; Savin-

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[18] *"Bana ilk söylediği anda her yer karanlık oldu. Bir çocuk dünyaya getirmişsin, bir kız çocuğu olarak dünyaya getirmişsin. Ama geliyor sana 'Ben erkeğim, ruhum bedenime uymuyor anne.' diyor."*

Williams, 2005) analyzing the initial reactions of parents with LGBTQ children to their coming out, the reactions of the mothers in this study bear little similarity to the five stages of grief.

Ayla described the feeling of loss of her child after learning she was a trans woman:

> After the doctor told me that my child was transsexual, I sat down at the garden of the hospital and cried for almost four hours. Everybody told me that they were sorry for my loss. I didn't argue; I had indeed lost someone. I lost my 16 year old son, for whom I had a circumcision ceremony, for whom I had many hopes. The doctor told me that my son was dead, and I now had a daughter. I cried for three or four hours because of the death of my son, then it suddenly occurred to me that I had a 16 year old daughter, although she hadn't grown biologically in my belly. This was a different baby, and I didn't know how to raise it. This baby tells everything, it has desires, and it says that its body doesn't belong to it. I heard no such thing until that day. I've never seen a mother who has a child like this. My mother is a biology/chemistry/physics teacher, and she never told me about such a thing. My father is both a judge and a prosecutor; he never told me that such a thing existed, neither had the father of my children, who is a doctor. My baby and I were left alone on that bench. It was very dark, because no one knows about that baby, neither my mom nor my dad knows, not the father of my children, nor my social circle or the community; and I did not know how to raise that baby at all.[19]

As a result of their fears and lack of knowledge of transsexuality, the respondent mothers all attempted to reject the fact that their children wanted to undergo sex

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[19] *"Doktor bana senin çocuğun transseksüel dedi. Oturdum hastanenin bahçesinde bağıra bağıra ağladım, neredeyse üç-dört saat. Herkes 'Başın sağolsun.' dedi bana. Bir şey söyleyemiyordum zaten. Gerçekten başım sağolmuştu. Çünkü ben orada 16 yaşındaki, sünnetini yaptırdığım, bir sürü hayal yüklediğim oğlumu kaybetmiştim. Yani doktor bana 'Senin oğlun öldü, senin bir kızın var.' demişti. Üç-dört saat 'benim oğlum öldü'ye çok ağladım. Sonra bir anda aklıma geldi, ama benim 16 yaşında bir kızım varmış. Ama o biyolojik olarak benim karnımda büyümedi. Farklı bir bebek. Ben o bebeği nasıl büyüteceğimi bilmiyorum. O bebek her şeyi söylüyor, istekleri var ama o bebek 'Bedenim bana ait değil.' diyor. Ve ben hiç böyle bir şey duymamışım bugüne kadar. Hiç böyle çocuğu olan bir anne görmemişim. Benim annem biyoloji, kimya, fizik öğretmeni, bana hiç böyle bir şey anlatmamış. Babam hem hakim hem savcı, hiç böyle bir şeyin varlığından konuşmamış. Çocukların babası da doktor, o da hiç bahsetmedi. O bankın üstünde bir ben bir bebeğim kaldık. Çok karanlık. Çünkü o bebeği annem de bilmiyor, babam da bilmiyor. Çocukların babası da, çevrem de, toplum da hiç bilmiyor. Ama ben de o bebeği nasıl büyüteceğimi hiç bilmiyordum."*

re-assignment surgery. It can be understood that the mothers of trans children take less time to come to terms with their children having an affection for people of the same sex than the mothers of gay and lesbian children due to the more pressing concern of sex re-assignment surgery. Although they may try to convince their children not to go through with the surgery, they must still to come to terms with their children's sexual identity and/or orientation, since their children are eager to alter their physicalities to be more compatible with how they feel about themselves. In this regard, it is important to note that the feelings mothers harbor about sex re-assignment surgery is a very deep issue, making the data coming provided by the mothers of trans children very significant in the sense that before, during, and after the surgery, mothers are required to put a great deal of both emotional and physical labor into it, since the surgery is a process that involves so much intervention and details about their children's health. Before the surgery, while their child is taking hormones, it is clear that the respondent mothers had a great deal of concerns about the social, psychological and sanitary outcomes. While carrying those concerns, the mother is supposed to stay with their child to take care of them in hospital, regardless of their acceptance or denial of the issue. Furthermore, after the surgery, the process continues for both the child and mother, as while the surgical interventions may have finished, the medical interventions and psychosocial effects of the transformation still remain. In this sense, it is very difficult for mothers to adapt to the new appearance of their child, to accept that the child that they gave birth to has transformed her/his body into a different one, and to get used to the changes in their children's lifestyles.

Canan, the mother of a trans man child, and Ayla, the mother of a trans woman child, explained the complex feelings that they felt while their children's bodies were changing:

> Canan: It is very hard to accept the fact that his appearance has changed. The person you call your child goes away and is replaced by a stranger. At

certain times it was very ugly. I couldn't look at him, look him in the eye. It seemed artificial. It was like a shell covering something that I know to be the true version ... I told myself that I have a son now. Everybody thinks a newborn smells bad, but he used to smell like a flower to me when he was first born, which was why I gave him a flower's name. He was born as a female after all. He chose his new name after asking for his father's opinion; he asked him what he would name his child if it was male. Of course it is not an easy name to pronounce. I call him 'my child' most of the time. Not everybody knows what we've been through, not everybody understands. There's no need for that confusion, he is 'my child' after all.[20]

Ayla: I had a hard time putting a bra on her for the first time, I had to show her how. I was doing her waxing. When I did it for the first time, I thought 'This leg looks very much like my dead child's leg. What am I doing?' and then I thought 'This child looks like my dead child.' I also grieved for my other kid. Every now and then, I take his picture from where I hide it and kiss it, I miss that kid. After the sex-reassignment surgery, when she first went to the bathroom, she called for me, asking how to pee properly. Something stuck in my throat, I couldn't react. I taught her about bladder hygiene all over again. The next day they removed her bandages; there was a vagina from that point on. I told myself the baby was born. I made her room pink. I decorated her room's door as I would a newborn's door. These were for the sake of my feelings. This was my ritual. That baby had grown outside of me for all these years, it was an external pregnancy. The end of it was painful. That day was like a celebration for me, my baby was going to be born and it was going to be over. I had pink newborn candies made. I got a Barbie notebook and a pink feather pen so that people could write stuff in it as they came and went. That was how I got through that birth. It would have been really hard for me to cope all by myself.[21]

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[20] *"Görüntünün değişmesini kabul etmek çok zor bir şey. Benim çocuğum dediğin kişi gidiyor, yabancı biri geliyor. Bazı dönemler çok iticiydi. Bakamıyordum, göz göze gelemiyordum. Yapay duruyordu. Aslını bildiğim bir şeyin üzerine kondurulmuş bir kabuk olduğunu düşünüyordum. Dışarıdan görünen o değildi, o kabuk gibiydi ... 'Oğlum var.' diyorum şimdi kendime. İnsanlar yeni doğan çocukların kötü koktuğunu düşünür, çocuğum bana hep çiçek kokardı. Bu yüzden bir çiçek ismi vermiştim ona. Bir kız çocuğu olarak dünyaya gelmişti sonuçta. Babasına sormuş erkek olarak doğsaydı adını ne koyardı diye ismini değiştirmeden önce. Tabii ki söylemek kolay değil. Ben genelde 'benim çocuğum' diyorum. Ne yaşadığımı bilmez kimse, anlamazlar. Karıştırmaya hiç gerek yok, 'benim çocuğum' sonuçta."*

[21] *"İlk sütyen takışımda zorlandım. Buradan şu şekilde takıyorsun diye gösterirken. Ağdasını ben yapıyordum. İlk ağdasını yaparken de 'Bu bacak benim ölmüş çocuğumun bacağına çok benziyor. Ben n'apıyorum?' diyorsun. Sonra 'Bu çocuk ölmüş çocuğuma benziyor.' diyorsun. Diğer çocuğumun da yasını tuttum ben. Hala sakladığım yerlerden çıkarıp resmini öpüyorum, özlüyorum o çocuğumu ben. Cinsiyet değiştirme operasyonundan sonra tuvalete ilk girdiğinde bilemeyip*

Fear was another common feeling that was encountered among the respondent mothers during the fieldwork, and so it was important to dig into the various dimensions of that fear among the respondent mothers. It can be understood from the garnered data that the feelings of fear were triggered by various issues, such as what homosexuality or transsexuality is, what will happen in the future, what people will say and what will happen in their children's lives in the future. All of the respondents looked into whether it was actually an illness, and most spent a great deal of time and money taking their children to doctors, trying to find treatment for their children. Each and every one of them had feelings of guilt, blamed themselves or the child's father for their attitudes towards their children, re-thought about how they had raised their children and questioned whether they had done something wrong. Some also accused their children of 'choosing' such a path for themselves. Finally, all said that they were concerned that their children may be exposed abuse, harassment or violence. All in all, the fears of the respondent mothers are connected to their beliefs that their children suffered some illness, that they had done something wrong while raising their children, or that their children had experienced some kind of harassment that caused them to become LGBTQ. It is interesting to note that the mothers experienced all these worries simultaneously, and due to the complexity of their feelings and thoughts, they did not know where to start looking into the issue. For this reason, most of them said that they had been late in discovering the issue, and coming to terms with what an LGBTQ identity truly is.

'Böyle mi çiş yapılıyor?' diye beni çağırdı. Boğazıma bir şey battı, kaldım öylece. Yeniden tuvalet temizliği öğrettim ona. Ertesi gün bandajlarını açtılar, artık bir vajina var ortada. Dedim 'Bebek doğdu.' Odasını pembe yaptım. Kapısını süslettirdim, yeni doğan kapısı yaptırdım. Bunlar hep kendi duygularım içindi. O da benim ritüelimdi. Kaç sene o bebeği ben dışımda büyüttüm, dışta hamilelikti. Sonu sancılıydı. O gün benim bayramımdı, bebeğim doğacak ve bitecekti bütün iş. Yeni doğan bebek şekerleri yaptırdım pembe pembe. Barbie defteri, tüylü bir kalem aldım, gelen giden yazsın diye. O doğumu da öyle yaptım ben. Kendi başıma altından kalkmam çok zordu aksi taktirde."

Ayla, the mother of a trans woman child, spoke about her thoughts right after learning about her child's LGBTQ identity:

> I hugged her, I said 'It will pass, we will figure it out.' As I said that, I wondered whether my son had been raped while I was staying at the hospital, as we were taught that if something like this happened to people, it would mean that they had been assaulted or raped. 'Or maybe she just can't get out of puberty', I thought. I also blamed the fact that I had been in hospital for the last four months, thinking that it may have caused her distress. Then I thought it may be because her father was out of Istanbul and couldn't take good care of her, thinking that she may be feeling anger towards her dad. The first thing I did was to get an appointment with the doctor. I wanted to get her checked to find out if she had been raped, though I didn't tell her that, saying that they were routine puberty controls. The doctor told me there was no such thing and that I should just hug my child.[22]

Nalan, who has a lesbian daughter, spoke about her efforts to find someone to blame:

> I thought that I made mistakes. I divorced my husband; I didn't take care of my child properly. Although I'm a civil servant, I didn't send her to schools appropriate for our financial situation; she ended up being surrounded by rich kids at school. I told myself that I had always made wrong decisions. I blamed my daughter as well, for being marginal, for becoming spoiled among the rich kids and for making this choice.[23]

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[22] *"Gittim sarıldım ona, 'Geçer bu, buluruz bir çaresini.' dedim. Onu söylerken 'Acaba oğlum tecavüze mi uğradı ben hastanedeyken?' dedim. Çünkü bize insanların başına böyle bir şey geldiği zaman, tacize ya da tecavüze uğramıştır diye öğretildi; ya da 'Ergenliği atlatamıyor.' dedim; ya da 'Dört aydır ben hastanedeyim, o yüzden büyük sıkıntı içine girdi.' dedim. Sonra yine düşündüm, babası İstanbul dışında ve çocuğuyla yeterince ilgilenmediği için böyle. Yine düşündüm, 'Öfkesi var herhalde babaya.' dedim. Yaptığım ilk şey doktordan randevu almak oldu, çocuğum tecavüze uğramış mı diye kontrol ettirmekti amacım. Çocuğuma söylemedim ama, 'Ergenlikteki herkese yapılan kontroller.' dedim. Doktor bana 'Öyle bir şey yok. Sadece çocuğunuza sarılın.' dedi."*

[23] *"'Ben kocamdan boşandım, yanlış yaptım; çocuğumla yeterince ilgilenmedim, yanlış yaptım; kendi ölçülerimize göre bir okula vermem gerekirken zengin çocukların arasında okuttum, çok yanlış yaptım, çok yanlış yaptım, ben ne yaptım?' Hep böyle kendimi suçluyordum. Artı kendimi bırakıp, 'Neden o da marjinal oldu? Zengin çocuklarıyla okuduğu için de şımardı. Neden böyle bir tercih yaptı?' diye kızımı da suçluyordum."*

Another reaction experienced by many mothers to a disclosure is a desire to keep it a secret, due to feelings of both fear and shame, as they are afraid that something may happen to their child when people learn of their situation, and they feel shame at having an LGBTQ child. For instance, Sevim, the respondent mother of a homosexual son, said that when her son came out to her, she wanted him to keep it from other people[24] because she was afraid of making a big deal of his homosexuality.

> I did not want to listen to what he was trying to say to me. I did not want that information. I told him 'Okay, but do not tell anyone, as it will hurt both you and me. This is not something that exists here in society. What will other people say?' My husband agreed with me, and we tried hard to prevent him from coming out to others … But after my son had come to terms with his sexual identity, he started to become more and more active in the field, giving interviews and participating in TV programs. I learned afterwards that some of our relatives had already seen him on TV while I was still trying to prevent him from disclosing his identity to others.[25]

For some mothers, the danger is not actually about what people say or think about their children, but what people might do to them.

Duygu, the mother of a lesbian daughter, said the following in this regard:

> Who knows, they might figure out she is gay, they might mistreat her, pull a knife on her, as they do this or kill trans persons all the time. It happens. Anything can happen in this country. She was holding hands with some girl in the summer at Kızıltoprak. Maybe they were kissing. She said that people who saw them called them homosexuals and lesbians. Not everybody is as informed about these issues. They may threaten them with

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[24] 'Other people' is used in place of the word 'el alem' in Turkish, which is used to refer to people in society, but in a sense, prioritizes their staus as a stranger to the person.

[25] *"Bize bir şeyler anlatmaya çalıştı ama ben çok da açık olmadım, oradan gelen bilgileri istemedim. Dedim ki – baba da bana katıldı tabii – 'Tamam, ama bunu kimseye söylemeyeceksin. Hem sen zarar görürsün, hem biz zarar görürüz. Burada toplumda olan bir şey değil bu. El alem ne der?' gibi tipik şeyler. Bayağı da bunu yapmaya çalıştık … Ama tabii oğlumuz (yaşı da olgun bir yaş olduğundan) acayip bir şekilde aktivist oldu. Oğlumuz televizyona falan çıkmaya başladı. Herkes görmüş onu, sonradan öğrendim ben. Ama biz hala 'Aman kimseye söylemesin.' halindeydik."*

knives, or throw nitric acid at them. Every kind of evil is possible. Being so open about it frightens me. At least it's safer in a room, up to a certain point.[26]

Considering the Turkish societal context, mothers are afraid that their children may face a broad range of abuse, from verbal to physical, and so they prefer this situation be kept secret.

Birgül, the mother of a gay son, explained her fear related to her son's security:

You can easily control and keep an eye on your child during primary, secondary and high school. She/He takes the school bus to school and returns home the same way. However, when she/he starts university, you feel like you have lost control of your child. She/he starts to go to Taksim and to pubs. Okay, I accepted my son. But, what if someone recognizes him being gay and attempted to hurt him; what if something terrible happens to him? This certainly includes harassment and rape.[27]

For most of the respondent mothers, nothing changed in the severity of their suspicions and reactions to the situation, even if had previously come across LGBTQ persons in their social environments before learning of their children's sexual orientation and/or identity. For instance, despite having more than a few LGBTQ friends, one of the respondents still could not help herself from having negative feelings about her son after he came out. That is to say, even though she had encountered LGBTQ persons in her social environments – although not as close friends – it did not change what they lived through after their child came out.

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[26] *"Ne bileyim eşcinsel olduğunu anlayıp – daha çok translara yapıyorlar, daha çok transları öldürüyorlar ama- kötü davranan olur, bıçak çeken olur. Olur olur yani. Bu memlekette her şey olabilir. Zaten yazın Kızıltoprak'ta mı ne bir kız ile el ele dolaşıyorlarmış, belki öpüşüyorlardı. 'Hep görenler bunlar eşcinsel, lezbiyen diyorlar.' dedi. Herkes bilgili değil. Bıçak çeker, kezzap atar. Her türlü kötülük olabilir. Çok aleni yapmak korkutuyor beni. Yine bir odanın içinde olsa bir derece."*

[27] *"İlkokul, ortaokul, lisede çocuğunuzu çok güzel denetliyorsunuz. Okula gidiyor servisle, geliyor. Kursa gidiyor, geliyor. Ama üniversiteye geçince bütün denetim kalkıyor gibi oluyor. Taksim'e gitmeler başlıyor. Barlara gitmeler başlıyor. O zamanlar hep şundan tedirgin olurdum: benim çocuğumu ben kabul ediyorum tamam ama yolda yürürken, gittiği bir barda ya da bir arkadaş grubunda biri onun eşcinsel olabileceğini düşünüp, ona bir kötülük yapar mı, başına bir iş gelir mi. Tabii bunun içine taciz ve tecavüz de giriyor."*

Only one of the respondents did not have to endure such an experience, as she already knew her son was homosexual, and it did not pose a problem for her as an advocate of minority rights. The respondent had been part of the social movements of the 1980s in Turkey that emerged following a military coup that year that saw conflicts between members of the left- and right-wing movements. Her membership of some organizations brought her into close contact with LGBTQ persons, and so she had already adopted a 'non-normative' ideology, rejecting marriage, military service, etc. Accordingly, she was not only familiar with LGBTQ issues and the community, but also shared a similar ideology and acted in solidarity with them, and so could 'normalize' the situation of non-heterosexual orientation in general. All in all, closer encounters with LGBTQ persons may lessen the severity of the experiences of mothers during the coming out of their child, although some encounters, especially through the media, may bring more negative attitudes.

For instance, most of the mothers said that they knew Bülent Ersoy or Zeki Müren, who are very popular LGBTQ singers in Turkey, from television, while fights involving trans persons in the media had a negative effect on their opinions, giving a biased idea that all trans persons are aggressive, and all are sex workers, while those who are not involved in the sex trade have very different and unusual lifestyles. In short, their knowledge of LGBTQs is limited to the perspective transmitted through the media, and the way that the media represents the LGBTQ community empowers the pervasion of heterosexual norms, thus widening the polarization between heterosexuals and non-heterosexuals in society (Görkemli, 2012).

Hatice, the mother of a trans woman child, said:

> I was continuously seeing the same dreams: she had breasts done. When I woke from those nightmares, I tried to calm down by telling myself that there was nothing like that, I was in my room now, somebody would

certainly have told me if there were such a situation. I was continuously seeing the same nightmares: she had gotten silicone gel breast implants, and had her nails painted. But I was of course getting psychologically worse, because I could not get over what I saw in my dreams. One day, I went to a doctor who told me that that this was not a 'preference' she had made. He asked me what I am afraid of this much. I said to him 'We can see the figures are in the media.', and he answered 'Everything is not exactly as you see in the media.'[28]

Furthermore, most of the mothers admitted that, especially in their childhood, people around them did not talk about LGBTQs in a positive way, and would often swear when referring to them, seeing them as something to be feared. Growing up in such an environment, many mothers said, they also developed negative attitudes to LGBTQs, perceiving non-heterosexuality as an illness, something to be afraid of and something inferior. Through opinions gained from the media and the doctrines of their social environment, the respondent mothers fear that their children could turn out like 'those people', Furthermore, observing their children very carefully and the images of the popular figures in the media led them to think that every LGBTQ persons would be like those figures. If their children do not try to be like those people, they feel relief and abandon the idea that their children are not one of those LGBTQs. For some of the respondent mothers, it was media personalities who were their ultimate point of reference in their understanding of gay or trans persons before they became more knowledgeable of the issue. The possibility that their children may become like famous media figures frightened them, and recognizing signs of this in their children made them uneasy and tense. The mothers of gay and trans children in particular experience a strong sense of uneasiness, while those with lesbian daughters are aware of the fact that they are

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[28] *"O sıralarda hep şöyle rüyalar görüyordum. Göğüs yaptırmış. Kabustan uyanır gibi uyanınca 'Neyse, odamdayım. Yok böyle bişi. Böyle bişi olsa biri bana söylerdi, öyle bişi olsa duyardım.' diyordum. Hep aynı rüyayı görüyorum. Silikon yaptırmış, ojeler vardı. Yine kötüleşiyordum tabii, etkisinden çıkamıyordum. Yine bir doktora gittim. O bana 'Bu bir tercih değil.' dedi, ben çocuğumun cinsel tercihi farklı dediğimde. 'Neden korkuyorsun bu kadar?' dedi doktor. Ben de, 'Ekranlarda görüyoruz nasıl olduklarını.' dedim. O da 'Her şey medyanın sana yansıttığı gibi değil.' dedi."*

relatively luckier than other mothers. For some mothers, the fact that their sons are homosexual or trans is the worst nightmare for them.

Lastly, the respondent mothers were asked whether the age and gender of their child was influential in their reactions to the coming out. It can be concluded that both have significant impacts. The age of their child had a role in shaping their strategies to cope with the situation. Although it did not shorten the length of time it took for them to come to terms with the fact that their child was LGBTQ, it is apparent that the more senior the child, the less mothers are able to intervene in their children's lifestyles. The mothers of children who came out to their parents relatively later, such as after the age of 25, did not resort to such steps as seeing doctors. Moreover, the gender of the child was also found to be influential on the mothers' reactions to the disclosure. As mentioned above, mothers with lesbian daughters had a relatively easier time accepting the news than those with homosexual sons or trans children. Among these, the mothers with trans children had a harder time coming to terms with their children's non-heterosexual orientation. The process of sex reassignment surgery itself was found to have caused a great deal of both psychological and economic stress for mothers.

To sum up, this section has presented the initial reactions of the respondent mothers after learning of their child's LGBTQ identity and/or orientation. Although how they learn of their child's non-heterosexual status varies from mother to mother, they all describe the moment as traumatic, and describe their first reaction as being to look for someone or something to blame. Most believe that their child has been subjected to abuse, harassment and/or rape, and so take them to a doctor to find a 'cure', believing they can be treated. They may sometimes blame the father for not spending enough quality time with their children, or themselves for not bringing them up properly during childhood or puberty.

Furthermore, as can be understood from the examples mentioned above, fear and shame are the most commonly experienced feelings. Mothers worry about how things will turn out for their children, in that the situation is completely alien to them. As a result of a lack of information, they also feel shame because of their children, and want to hide their children's non-heterosexual status from their social circle. This social anxiety of coming out related to the feelings of shame will be explained further in the 'Setting a New Objective: Coming out of Mothers' section, in which it can be seen that the post-disclosure experience is quite different for the mothers of trans children.

Mothers in this position must adapt to the bodily transition period of their children, before even understanding what 'trans' means and the fact that their children have a non-heterosexual orientation and/or identity. The traumatic experience they go through becomes deeper with the need to adapt to their child's change of appearance, name and even the names of their children's roles with respect to them, such as daughter and son. This necessitates separate consideration when discussing the experiences of the mothers of trans children.

One of the most important conclusions that can be drawn from this section is that every mother, at the beginning of and during this transformative process, worries about what society will say about their children's sexual identity and/or orientation. Feelings of shame related to sexual taboos drive them to hide the truth from people around them, while at the same time witnessing their children's joy of freedom after having come out to their families of origin. Relying upon their previous experiences in society, they know that society does not like 'those kinds' of people, and shuns those with non-heterosexual sexualities, making them unwelcome due to the dominance of heteronormative values. The hatred felt in the society may also manifest into physical violence, and even murder.

5.2. Mothers' Confrontations: Collapse of Dreams

After facing the challenge of the coming out of their child, mothers then experience concerns about the dreams and expectations they had for their children. In this section, how mothers deal with the change in expectations of their children will be discussed.

To begin, it will look at how mothers had seen their children's futures prior to their coming out, and with what expectations they raised their children. Afterwards, it will discuss whether those dreams and expectations changed, and if so, in what way. A further analysis will be made of how they deal with the vacillations between societal values and the difficulties they face in behaving consistently, and how they have addressed their understanding of what it means to be a 'good' mother.

As Seidman (2002) states, the process of routinization, as something that LGBTQ persons experience in the process of coming out, is dependent on one's internalization of their non-heterosexual identity (as cited in Martin et al., 2010). Therefore, it can be concluded that mothers of LGBTQ children have same expectations and dreams for their children that all mothers do. The process of disclosure comes with various unexpected challenges for mothers, and the difficulties they must face are not limited to the moment of disclosure, in that they must also be aware of the importance of parental acceptance in children, regardless of their identity. However, it is also worth noting that before considering the many difficulties that mothers face, the moment of disclosure itself can be a terrifying, weird and confusing event that leads mothers to ignore the issue and try to escape its influences.

These challenges may vary, as mothers of lesbian daughters and gay sons will have different experiences to the mothers of trans children. For the mothers of lesbian daughters and gay sons, the difficulties are mostly related to coming out to other people in their social environment, which is a topic that will be explained in the following sections, and meeting their children's partners, while also adjusting the hopes and dreams they have for their children.

Duygu, the mother of a lesbian daughter, stated:

> I had a lot of dreams. I had always wanted a daughter. I dreamed about doing her hair, putting hairclips in her hair, etc. When she was little, I used to do her hair and she would throw away the hairpin. I used to buy her fancy clothes and she would put them away after just wearing them only once. She used to wear her father's shirts and neckties. She used his shaving lotion and pretended she was shaving. I used to buy her red shoes made of patent leather, she wouldn't like those; she would buy herself men's shoes. She is currently shopping in the men's sections of stores. I don't intervene anymore; she wears whatever she wants. Once I told her to change her masculine manners, and she told me that's was who she was. One cannot change who one is … It's every mother's dream that her child will have a happy family … I wanted her to wear a wedding dress; and I wanted to have grandchildren.[29]

For the mothers of trans children, the process is more challenging and the implications are obviously more significant. Although coming out to others and meeting one's child's partner are still concerns, the changes in the lives of both the mother and child associated with sex re-assignment surgery is even more demanding. All of the respondent mothers of trans children admitted that it was a very new phenomenon for them, being the mother of a child who wants to change

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[29] *"Çok hayalim vardı. Ben kız çocuk çok istedim. Hep kızım olsun saçını yapıyım, tokalar takayım. Küçükken saçını yapardım, tokayı fırlatır atardı. Ben gider ona süslü elbiseler alırdım; bir kere giyer sonra atardı elbiseyi. Babasının gömleklerini giyer, kravatlarını takardı. Traş köpüklerini sürer, traş oluyor havası yaratırdı. Kırmızı rugan ayakkabılar alırdım; onları beğenmez gider erkek modeli ayakkabı alırdı. Şu anda da erkek reyonundan giyiniyor. Artık karışmıyorum, istediği gibi giyiniyor. 'Çok erkeksi tavırların var değiştir.' dedim bir keresinde; 'Onlar benim huyum. Ben böyleyim.' dedi. İnsanın huyu değişmez … Her anne istiyor mutlu yuva kursun … Gelinlik giysin, torunlarım olsun."*

her/his biological body, and having to live with a trans person. Seeing such changes in the body of their child means sweeping away all of one's dreams, since the body upon which they were built no longer exists. It can be concluded that witnessing such a physical change in one's child comes with feelings that one has lost one's child. Gender is at the root of many expectations, with influence in such fields as military service, pregnancy and wedding rituals, and the expectations of parents related to their child begin to be established in accordance with gender-role stereotypes even before the baby is born. The sex of a baby something that parents wait to learn with excitement during pregnancy, and parents most commonly expect their child to behave in compliance with traditional gender-roles. This situation shows that the sexual identity and/or orientation of a child is pre-assumed by parents from the earliest ages, and this can lead to disappointment when things do not go as expected (Martin, 1990). For the respondent mothers of trans children, in the earliest stages of sex re-assignment surgery, most said that they had tried to hold on to the 'inner' characteristics of their children, rather than their physical appearances, although there was a need for them to re-form their expectations while their children were re-forming their bodies.

Canan, a mother of a trans man child, said:

> When he was in college, he used to talk about wearing strapless shirts and how it made him look more feminine. I really liked to hear that. I thought he was at last embracing the identity he was born with. I felt relieved. As I had never experienced anything like this, I couldn't put a name on it. I had never known such a thing. I had thought of my child as someone who would get married and have kids someday. I longed for him to have a happy marriage, unlike mine, and if not, I hoped that he would become a confident, down-to-earth woman like me, at the very least. When he began undergoing surgery, I broke down and cried. I thought that I had lost my daughter. He had really beautiful breasts; they looked really nice and sexy

on him. 'Such a shame', I thought. The fact that this was what he wanted did not matter at that point; you can't think properly.[30]

Hatice, the mother of a trans woman child, said:

There were dreams, of course. She is going to do his military service, I'm going to buy her a car, and if she gets married, this and that will happen, etc. The word 'son' is enough to make me sentimental now. I used to have a son, now I don't. You lose your child. There is a period in which you tell yourself that you now have a daughter. I mourned my loss and wondered with sadness why this had happened to me. I had so many dreams, and had a lot of scenarios in my mind. We were supposed to have long years together, but she and I drifted apart; she took a different road. We cried for our dreams. I cried because I had lost my child, because that child does not exist anymore. It's like a death. You will never get to see your son again.[31]

As mentioned earlier, the mothers of gay sons and trans children saw attitudes and behaviors in their children that made them think that they may be LGBTQ, but they did not want to rely on those thoughts. They trusted that their expectations and dreams were closely tied to the societal doctrines of being a good parent, in which the child is prepared for the trials of life through unconditional parental love. In this sense, being a 'good' parent is what society teaches parents, such that it becomes something 'natural' and 'instinctual' (Martin et al., 2010). The

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[30] *"Üniversitede straplezler giyip daha kadınsı göründüğünden bahsederken çok hoşuma gidiyordu. Ne idi hoşuma giden diye sordum. 'Kimliğini benimsedi ve doğduğu sürecin devamındayız artık.' diye düşündüm. İçim rahatladı. Çünkü diğer türlüsünü hiç görmemişsin, adlandıramıyorsun. Öyle bir örnekle karşılaşmamışsın. Çünkü çocuğunu evlenip çocuk sahibi olacak biri olarak görüyorsun. Benimki gibi değil, mutlu bir evliliği olsun diye düşünüyorum. Öyle bile olmasa kendinden emin, ayakları yere basan bir kadın olsun. Ben öyle bir kadınım, benim gibi bir kadın olsun isterdim. O ameliyata girdiğinde tabii ben bir patlama yaşadım, ağladım. Kızımı kaybettiğimi düşünüyordum. Çok güzel göğüsleri vardı, çok yakışıyordu, çok seksiydi, 'Yazık oluyor.' diye düşündüm. Onun istediğinin olması çok ön planda olmuyor, düşünemiyorsunuz o anda."*

[31] *"Hayaller vardı elbette. Askere gidecek, ona araba alacağım falan şeklinde. Evlenirse şöyle olur, gibi. Oğlum kelimesi bile hüzünlendirebiliyor beni, bir oğlum vardı artık oğlum yok. Çocuğunu kaybediyorsun. Artık bir kızın var demeye çalıştığın bir dönem. 'Neden benim başıma böyle bir şey geldi? Neden ben? Hay benim kaderim!' diyerek üzüldüm. Ben çok hayal etmiştim; böyle olacaktı, şöyle olacaktı, daha çok uzun yıllar biz bir arada olacaktık, ama o farklı bir yola gitti, uzaklaştı. Hayallere ağladık. Çocuğumu kaybettiğim için ağladım. Çünkü artık o çocuğun yok. Ölüm gibi. Çünkü oğlun yok, bir daha onu göremeyeceksin."*

culturally conceptualized expectations of 'good parenting' go some way to explaining the strategies that mothers use to deal with the disclosure of their child's LGBTQ identity, compelling them to look for ways of making their children give up their so-called 'habits' rather than giving up on the dreams and expectations they have for their children. In Turkish culture, the meaning of motherhood for women exceeds its ascribed meaning of reproduction. Although it promises undefinably pleasing feelings and rewards, it is, at the same time, the hardest profession, demanding such sacrifices such as the leisure time and independence of the mother (Kulakac et al., 2006). Motherhood has long been accepted as sacred, representing many moral values that are basically heteronormative (Baba, 2011). Since issues related to sexuality are taboo in Turkish culture, good mothering is considered to be related to "chastity" (Dedeoglu, 2010). In this sense, motherhood is a gendered concept, while good mothering is considered to be about teaching about what traditional gender roles require.

Furthermore, led by their ignorance of why their children are the way they are and their desire to not giving up on their dreams, mothers decline to blame themselves fully for their previous actions, based on the fact that they had never been informed about the possibility of having an LGBTQ child. In this sense, they lay some blame with their own mothers and fathers, and on society as a whole, none whom spoke of the possibility of their child being LGBTQ.

Ayla, the mother of a trans woman child, gave details of her experiences:

> Since neither my mother, father nor other people told me that some children could be like this, I was violent to my child. I beat her, yelled at her, hit her and pushed her. When she wore a bracelet, I would call her

'ibne (faggot)'. I would tell myself that she will become normal, and this was all because she spent a lot of time with me.[32]

Baba (2011) states that "female same sex desire is not considered a threat unless it extends to the exclusion of men". Accordingly, the data in this study indicates that for the mothers with gay sons and trans children (but not for the mothers of lesbian daughters), there had often been such suspicions about their children's sexuality that society had compelled them, as mothers, to address. In other words, there is significant evidence that society leads the mothers of gay sons and trans children to question their children's sexuality.

Sevim, the mother of a gay son, said:

> He was going through some problems, socially. At that time I feared he was gay. I guess, for whatever reason, it's mostly mothers who have this fear about their sons. We are very afraid of this. It feels like this is the worst thing that can happen to us.[33]

Relating their experiences after having their suspicions of their child's non-heterosexual sexual identity and/or sexual orientation and/or orientation confirmed, most mothers said that this was 'one of their most terrifying nightmares'. It is worth noting that all mothers saw signs of an LGBTQ identity in their children, and for all of them, those signs became meaningful after they became more knowledgeable of the issues of sexual identity and/or sexual orientation.

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[32] *"Annem, babam, el alem bana 'Böyle çocuklar da olabilir.' demediği için ben de çocuğumu şiddete maruz bıraktım. Dövdüm, çemkirdim, vurdum, zorladım. Bileklik taksa 'Sen ibne misin?' diyordum. Düzelir düzelir, çocuk bu. Boyuna benimle gezip tozuyor ondan böyle diyordum."*

[33] *"Sosyal olarak bir takım problemler yaşıyordu. Bu arada eşcinsel olur mu diye bir takım korkularım vardı. Galiba büyük çoğunlukla annelerin erkek çocuklarla ilgili böyle korkuları var nedense. Çok korkuyoruz bundan. Sanki hayatımızın en korkunç şeyi gibi geliyor."*

For example, Duygu, the mother of a lesbian daughter, stated:

> The truth is Aslı always tried to make me notice, until the day she came out, but I couldn't see it. As I didn't know anything about it, I was not familiar with this situation. She says she used to hide under the table and cry. Learning about these things makes you sad. You blame yourself for not realizing it. Why didn't I notice it when she was playing football at the age of 5? I used to think she was behaving like that to make her brother happy. We failed to understand the situation.[34]

Considering the fact that coming out is an interactive process, there is a period in which the mother and child struggle to understand each other. This contentious period, although having seemingly no end, becomes smoother over time, but at its climax, mothers are haunted by chaotic thoughts for the future, in the absence of knowledge of how they will internalize their children's non-heterosexual orientation and/or identity and how they will come to terms with what is required of them. They go through difficult times, wavering between their dreams for their children and their adjustment to how their children want to live.

Ayla, the mother of a trans woman child, said:

> *"I loved my child more than anything, but apparently I loved my own dreams more."[35]*

Between learning about their children's non-heterosexual identity and/or orientation, and their efforts to come to terms with it, mothers pass through a period of psychological struggles, difficult challenges and anger, all at the same time, while having strong feelings of love for their children.

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[34] *"Aslında Aslı bana hep bir şeyler anlatmaya çalıştı açıldığı güne kadar ama ben anlayamadım. Bilmediğim için yabancı olduğum için hiç bişi anlamadım. Masanın altına girip ağlarmış. Bunları öğrenmek insanı tabii ki çok üzüyor. Niçin ben bunları farketmedim. Beş yaşındayken neden uyanmadım o maç oynarken. Herhalde abisini mutlu etmek için yapıyor diye düşünürdüm. Bunu anlayamamışız."*

[35] *"Çocuğum en sevdiğim varlığımdı, ama demek ki kendi hayallerimi daha çok seviyormuşum."*

Hatice, the mother of a trans woman child, said:

> When I first saw the messages, I had a mental breakdown and was hospitalized. I thought it would be better for my father to be dead than my child being like this, and my father is one of the most valuable people in my life. My child must have been extremely valuable for me to say that. Even my father meant nothing to me at that point. It turns out she was the purpose of my life. There is nothing more important than your child. If she/he's happy, you're happy.[36]

What lifts mothers out of that utterly confused period is the love that they have for their children. As Oswald (1999) indicates, the process of disclosure is a process of communication that brings about changes in the understandings of both oneself and others. In this sense, a mother being able to overcome the difficulties by relying on their love for their children is not unilateral, in that it can be the continuous efforts of children to explain themselves, sometimes even being stubborn, and the enduring patience, courage and love that they give their mothers, that keeps mothers going through the chaos in their hearts and minds.

Mert, a trans man, said:

> They were constantly bargaining with me. My mom used to say 'Make love to whomever you want, cut your hair the way you want; we can even change your name, but don't use medication or have surgery'. I transitioned in the city where my parents lived, although I didn't live there. I intentionally did it, I had to transition before their very eyes. I knew that they would not accept it if they saw me all of a sudden afterwards.[37]

Throughout this entire process, mothers re-shape their dreams and expectations related to their children, although it can be said that while the dreams and

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[36] *"İlk mesajları görüp sinir krizi geçirip hastanelik olduğumda -ki babam en değerli insanlardan biri benim için- 'Çocuğum böyle olacağına, keşke babam ölseydi.' dedim. Demek o kadar değerliymiş ki evlat, bunu diyebildim. Baba bile bir yerde hiç kalmış demek ki. Yaşama amacım buymuş demek ki. Evlat, ötesi yok. O mutluysa, sen mutlusun."*

[37] *"Pazarlık yapıyorlardı sürekli. 'Kiminle istiyorsan seviş, saçını nasıl istiyorsan kestir, istersen ismini değiştirelim ama ilaç kullanma, ameliyat olma.' diyordu annem. Ailemin bulunduğu şehirde geçirdim değişimimi, orada yaşamamama rağmen. Bilerek, gözlerinin önünde değişmem gerekiyordu çünkü. Bir anda görürlerse eğer kabul edemeyeceklerini anladım."*

expectations of these mothers have shifted, they have also preserved their normative nature. When asked about their hopes for their children for the future, the mothers all share a common ground in which they prioritize their children's careers and happiness in their relationships, providing them with the sense of being a family. Their greatest wish is that their children can find a job and earn money for their survival, because they believe that only when their children have status in society can they be strong enough to fight discrimination and make people mind their words. In addition to their expectations regarding their child's career, mothers are afraid of society's ignorance of their children's successes and abilities, and fear they will be underestimated in society based purely on their sexual identity and/or sexual orientation. They want their children to have a life partner with whom they can build a family, and in this sense, it can be stated that mothers still have a very heteronormative sense of family. They do not expect their children to be alone for the rest of their lives, and want them to marry, build a family and have children, if possible.

Ayla, the mother of a trans woman child, spoke about an experience of hers in a seminar on sexuality:

> There was a woman who was in love with a trans man. She was talking about how much she loves him and how happy she is. Afterwards, a mother who has a trans man child went to that woman and said that she felt very relieved, as she had always been afraid that her child would be alone for the rest of his life. The mother thanked the woman for giving her hope.[38]

Later, after gaining an awareness of their hopes and love for their children, mothers start to emphasize with their children's feelings, and understand the challenges that they have been experiencing in society. At this point, mothers face

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[38] *"Bir toplantıda denk geldim. Bir kadın vardı, bir trans erkeğe aşıkmış. Onu ne kadar çok sevdiğinden, nasıl mutlu olduğundan bahsediyordu. Toplantıdan sonra bir anne – trans erkek çocuğu varmış onun da- gitti dedi ki 'Sizi dinledikten sonra çok rahatladım. Çocuğum ölene kadar yanlız olacak zannediyordum. Ama siz bana umut verdiniz. Teşekkür ederim.'*

feelings of guilt at having prioritized their own concerns and leaving their beloved children to fight these difficulties alone.

Hatice, the mother of a trans woman child, said:

> *"I blamed myself so much afterwards for leaving her to face all this pain by herself."[39]*

To conclude, although requiring much effort from both the mother and the child, the mother's dreams and expectations for their child's future tend to shift after their children have come out. The greatest fear among mothers is related to their child's security in society, since LGBTQ persons are still largely unwelcome in Turkish society. Considering all of the hopes and fears of mothers, and the similar expectations they have for their LGBTQ children, it is worth mentioning that the order of precedence for mothers varies in parallel with the different risks faced by lesbians, gays and trans persons in society. Mothers with lesbian daughters and gay sons care mostly about their sons' and daughters' careers, and are afraid that their children may be subjected to abuse and violence. In contrast, the mothers of trans children consider their children's survival to be the highest priority, since among the LGBTQ community, it is trans persons who are the primary targets of hate crimes in Turkey. In this regard, their mothers' primary aim is to keep their children alive.

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[39] *"Sonrasında zaten bu kadar acıyı kendi başına çekmesine izin verdiğim için kendimi çok suçladım."*

CHAPTER 6

TRANSFORMATION

Considering that gender is one of the core social constructs through which society regulates family, both externally and internally, it is important to state that a child's disclosure of her/his LGBTQ identity has expansionary effects on the family system as a whole (MacNish & Gold-Peifer, 2014). Accordingly, after explaining the experiences and reactions of mothers to their child's LGBTQ identity, and looking at how they confront their socially constructed expectations that are in accordance with gender role stereotypes in society, this section analyzes how and in what ways the coming out of LGBTQ persons triggers shifts in perceptions, both in the mothers and in family dynamics. To this end, the first part of this section focuses on how coming out brings about changes in how mothers deconstruct and reconstruct their personhoods, while evading the socially constructed perceptions of shame, taboo, and sin. It continues by highlighting the shifts in mothers' worldviews after their children come out as LGBTQ, and discusses how their perceptions of such issues as sexuality, womanhood, family, body, motherhood and marriage transform while they gain knowledge about LGBTQs.

The second part analyzes how transformations occur within the family dynamics under the influence of those shifts in mothers' personhoods, looking also at the changes that occur within the family dynamics when a member comes out as LGBTQ. This part covers also the transformation of the mother-child, father-child,

spousal/partnership, and sibling dyadic relationships after an LGBTQ person comes out to her/his family of origin.

The third and final part of this chapter addresses the issue of the struggles of mothers to create a change in the societal perception of LGBTQs, discussing the coming out process from the perception of mothers with emphasis on the significance of cultural challenges in Turkey. Since a child identifying herself/himself as LGBTQ also puts mothers in the closet with a 'new' identity as the mother of an LGBTQ child, they face many new challenges when coming out to their social circles. In that sense, this section shows how mothers, as gatekeepers of their children, reveal their child's LGBTQ identity to others, both in their extended families and in their social circles, which mechanisms they use once deciding to come out, how important support groups are for mothers in dealing with the challenges of disclosure, and most importantly, in addition to providing support for other parents with LGBTQ children, how they struggle to bring about change in society by fighting for the rights of LGBTQs. In this regard, the actions of family groups go well beyond merely providing support, being also interest groups.

6.1.   Changing Personhoods[40] of Mothers: Trilogy of Shame, Taboo, Sin

As Švab and Kuhar (2014) state, after parents have gone through the disclosure of their LGBTQ child, as the developmental models indicate, parents must undergo a certain identity work to adjust their identity to their children. In this sense, their perceptions of their child's identity and their expectations for her/him are likely to change. All of the respondent mothers mentioned that their children's coming out was a turning point in their lives, and so it can be understood that the disclosure of their children launches a wave of changes for them that are both intrinsic and extrinsic. Accordingly, the data from mothers during this study, including insights into the impact of learning that their child is an LGBTQ person, offers significant scope for analysis of the personal path they face and their value judgements related to what society has to date imposed upon them. When both aspects unite in an individual's life, a shift in the worldview of the person would be expected. As Oswald (1999) discusses, to include their LGBTQ children in their lives and to be more included into her/his life, families have to change any homophobic ways of thinking they may harbor, and this necessitates changes in more than one aspect of the parents' worldviews. Accordingly, this section looks at how mothers reflect their children's on themselves, and in what ways it leads to shifts in their perceptions in such significant concepts as sexuality, womanhood, family, motherhood and marriage.

After recognizing the marginalized position of their children in society, parents start to question why their children are regarded as deviant, invisible or inferior,

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[40]   I chose to utilize the word 'personhood', given its close connection with sociological concerns, rather than 'self', which is used predominantly in philosophical terms, and 'identity' in the field of psychology.

and make comparisons between what society calls their children and what they think and feel about them. They come to understand that the connotations for lesbian, gay and transgender to which they have been exposed by society do not fit their children at all – in short, their children are nothing like how society depicts them. As Martin, Hutson, Kazyak, and Scherrer (2010) point out, parents cannot associate the horrible words they hear in society with their own children, since they know them better, having raised them. Through these realizations, this time more carefully, they begin to get to know their children again.

It is important to state that as the trigger of these changes, mothers are influenced and amazed by the courage and consistency in the way their children stand up to who they really are and how they want to live, and that they chase passionately their own way to be accepted by their families and by society. It is a fact that children become inspirations to their mothers while the mothers undergo significant changes in their personhoods. Furthermore, mothers come to question their worldviews as their children are questioning their identities, and re-construct their personhoods while getting to re-know their children. That is to say, there occurs a two-dimensional death, birth and transformation. They empathize with their children, consubstantiate themselves with them, and more importantly, watch them learn about themselves; and for duration of this process, children become role models for their mothers.

Hatice, a mother with a trans woman child, said:

> My daughter gave me love and courage. Because she was braver than I was. She was able to express her own sexual identity. My child wore her skirt and went out despite all the societal pressure; whereas, I was the one who was afraid of the people and hid her situation. I could take her as my model. Her friends also had an impact on me. Because the more time I spent with these kids, the more I witnessed to the effort and courage they showed in order to survive. In fact their situation is much harder than ours,

we are more at ease but we hit the bottom much harder. I said 'Pull yourself together!' to myself.[41]

One of the first changes in perception experienced by mothers related to their child's identity is the hopes and dreams they harbored for their children's future lives, which was analyzed in more detail in the previous section. They come to realize that these are not their own expectations, but rather the expectations that are dictated by social norms in society. As explained in the previous section, the expectations of mothers are constructed in accordance with the dominant heteronormative values, beginning at the birth of their child. It can be concluded that after the disclosure of their child, they elude from these dreams, which are, in fact, accorded to socially assigned gender roles. Having let their previous dreams go, they come to build more realistic dreams that are in line with their children's expectations from their lives.

Nalan, the mother with a lesbian daughter, stated:

> Of course I had dreams. I thought she was going to have a career and get married. All of those dreams are gone; they were nonsensical anyway. I gave away her dowry. How much we have evolved. Those dreams seem so ordinary and trivial now. The moms of LISTAG have evolved. We have changed.[42]

As mothers get to know about issues related to LGBTQ persons, they have the opportunity to question their own perspectives of sexuality. In doing so, they come to understand their ignorance of their own sexual orientation, which they,

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[41] *"Kızım bana sevgi ve cesaret verdi. Çünkü benden daha cesurdu. Kendi cinsel kimliğini dışa vurabildi. Ben çocuğunun durumundan dolayı etraftan korkan, gizleyen tarafken, benim çocuğum toplumun her türlü baskısına rağmen cesur bir şekilde eteğini giyip sokağa çıktı. Onu örnek alabildim. Onun arkadaşlarının da etkisi çok oldu bende. Çünkü bu çocuklarla daha fazla beraber oldukça, onların ayakta kalmak için gösterdikleri çabaya ve cesarete hayran kaldım ben. Bizden daha zor durumlardalar aslında, biz daha rahatız ama daha çok dibe vuruyoruz. 'Kendine gel!' dedim kendime."*

[42] *"Hayallerim vardı tabii. Kariyer sahibi olacak, kızımı evlendireceğim. O hayallerin hepsi gitti, saçma sapan şeylermiş. Çeyizini dağıttım. Ne kadar evrildik. O hayallerin hepsi çok sıradan, çok banal geliyor şimdi. LİSTAG anneleri evrildi. Değişim geçirdik yani."*

afterwards, come to define as heterosexuality. As their knowledge of sexuality expands, they realize that there is much they can learn, and not just about their children, but themselves as well.

Ayla, the mother of a trans woman child, stated:

> I learned what heterosexuality meant and that I was a heterosexual long after, as we had always thought only that there is a woman and a man, they get married and have a child. We learned that by heart, like 2x2=4. That's why it's hard to accept these concepts. What is a homosexual, what is a trans? There was supposed to be a man and a woman. Rearranging those concepts was hard for us.[43]

Duygu, the mother of a lesbian daughter, said:

> I learned that biological sex, sexual identity and sexual orientation are all different things. At nights I looked at the pamphlets, they are on my nightstand … I was ignorant of this issue. I didn't even know about the word heterosexual. Husband and wife, spouses and children; the nuclear family was all I knew.[44]

As they become conscious and knowledgeable about the issue of sexuality, their curiosity and awareness become greater. While getting to re-know their children, mothers also realize that this journey requires a comprehension that transcends their concerns about their children. They get to know other LGBTQ children, and start to empathize with them due to the challenges those children face. This empathy leads mothers to question the issue of sexuality beyond the limits of their own children. As they meet other LGBTQ persons, they get to know the variety in the issue of sexual identity and/or orientation. They may have ignored what their

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[43] *"Çok sonra öğrendim ben heteroseksüelliğin ne demek olduğunu, kendimin heteroseksüel olduğunu. Çünkü biz bir kadın olur, bir erkek olur, evlenirler çocuk olur zannediyorduk. Bunu böyle 2x2=4 gibi ezberlemişiz. Onun için zorlaşıyor bu kavramları yerine koymak. Ne demek eşcinsel? Ne demek trans? 'Bir erkek olur, bir kadın olur.' diyorsun. Onları oynatırken çok zorlanıyoruz işte."*

[44] *"Biyolojik cinsiyet, cinsiyet kimliği ve cinsel yönelim farklı şeylermiş bunu öğrendim. Açıp bakıyorum gece kitapçıklara, baş ucumda duruyorlar … Ben bu konuda bilinçsizdim. Heteroseksüel sözcüğünü bile bilmiyordum. Karı-koca, eşler ve çocuklar, bildiğimiz tek şey çekirdek aile idi."*

children were saying to them, but when meeting new people, they listen respectfully, since this is somebody else in front of them. As they listen to more stories, they are able to compare their situation with that of others, raising their attention and giving them the opportunity to learn more about the issue. Although they may still be concerned most about their own children, the issue becomes more conceptual in their minds, and empathizing, as a method, helps them to understand the feelings of their children.

When asked whether she had made peace with the transsexuality of her child, Ayla, the mother of a trans woman child, said:

> The process was over for me on the day of the operation. My process was over, too … The operation was successful and everything was over. I think acceptance means accepting the issue. You don't just accept the fact that your child is female, you accept the whole concept of transsexuality. We have always believed in the reality of a man and a woman having a baby scenario, that's why accepting means digesting and accepting the definition of transsexuality. Once you digest and accept it, it doesn't matter if it's your brother, your husband or your child. This is how I accepted it. I didn't particularly accept my child's situation; I accepted the fact that children are not born as either man or woman, or necessarily as heterosexual. Once you accept this diversity, you can accept people as they are. I constantly empathized. I feel like I am a woman, but I'm in a male body; a hairy male body that I want to get out of. That's why I gave her nail polish, did her waxing, dyed her hair and bought her cosmetics.[45]

The mothers' reconstructions of their personhoods is also triggered by shifts in their perceptions of womanhood. While questioning their understandings of

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[45] *"Ameliyat olduğu gün bitti süreç benim için. Benim sürecim bitti ... Sağ sağlim ameliyat bitti, her şey bitti. Ben şekerleri dağıttım. Bence kabul etmek demek, konuyu kabul etmek demek. 'Benim çocuğum kızmış'ı kabul etmiyorsun, transseksüelliği kabul ediyorsun. Eşcinselliği kabul ediyorsun. Biz hani 'bir kadın olur, bir erkek olur ve çocuk olur'u kabul etmişiz ya; kabul etmek demek transseksüelliğin tanımını sindirmek ve kabul etmek demek. Bunu sindirip kabul ettiğin zaman ister kardeşin olsun, ister eşin olsun, ister çocuğun olsun. Ben öyle kabul ettim. Yani çocuğum özelinde değil; çocukların sadece kadın, erkek ve heteroseksüel olarak doğmadıklarını kabul ettim. Bu çeşitliliği kabul ettiğin zaman sen, karşındaki kişileri kabul edebiliyorsun. Hep empati yaptım. Ben kadın hissediyorum kendimi ama bir erkek bedenindeyim. Killli tüylü bir adam ve o bedenin içinden çıkmak istiyorum. Onun için ojesini aldım verdim. Ağdasını yaptım, saçını boyadım, makyaj malzemesi aldım."*

womanhood, they reconsider what their own mothers taught them, how their husbands/partners behaved towards them, and in what ways they fulfill the expectations of others from them as women. In the past they lived in accordance with traditional gender roles, fulfilling their so-called responsibilities in such areas as cooking, washing the dishes, cleaning the house, doing the laundry, etc. They come to realize that those tasks were not their destiny, but rather expectations from society, and that their feelings of responsibility are actually constructed through societal norms. This leads them to address the issue of equality between the woman and man in the division of labor at home, after which, domestic works are no longer the responsibility only of women. Equality becomes their focus in every field of their lives. In addition to the domestic division of labor, mothers start to care about their own sexual satisfaction. They realized that they were taught to give priority to men in the fulfillment of sexual needs, but after gaining an awareness of the equality of different gender roles, mothers also started to give primacy to their own sexual desires and expectations. In the end, they were able to see the difference between the social construction of womanhood and what they feel about their own womanhood.

Hatice, the mother of a trans woman child, said:

> The prototype of an ideal woman has also changed for me. We learned from our mothers that a woman should be like a prostitute in bed, a chef in the kitchen, and a lady in the parlor, while a man is the one who earns money and brings it home, who takes the kids out on the weekends. I remember that my girlfriends and I used to dream of getting up in the morning, making the bed, cooking and waiting for our husbands by the window. He would come home and eat the food that we had cooked, etc. Neither of my two marriages worked like this, and so eventually my perception changed. Sexuality used to be all about the man's happiness. To have desires of your own was shameful and unnecessary. We believed men shouldn't be offended and should be able to do it the way they want. Sexuality was never discussed in my family. I didn't even talk about getting periods with my mom. It's not like this anymore. I cook if I can, he can do it if I can't. If life is communal, we should cook together. I will

cook or clean, not because they're women's natural duties, but because I want to … and when it comes to sexuality, I'm in a position to acknowledge my own desires. SORRY, NOT SORRY.[46]

They realize that their socially constructed knowledge of womanhood has also influenced their perceptions of sexuality, and they come to realize that womanhood and sexuality are actually in a very equal and reciprocal relationship. After reconsidering and changing the way they experience womanhood, they also question their married lives and their sexual relationships. They reconsider their sex lives, deciding what they want from a partner and to what extent they are willing to self-sacrifice to maintain their relationships. As in the issue of womanhood, there are also shifts in mothers' perceptions of sexuality that lead them to a more self-interested understanding in which they prioritize their own pleasure in matters of sex, gaining an understanding that the desire and pleasure that they seek through their sexual relationships are not something sinful or to be ashamed of. Through this shift, taboos related to the enjoyment of sex gradually fall apart, and they now realize that prioritizing men during sex is actually something taught to them by their social environment, and not something that is based on their own thoughts of sexuality. Within this process of awareness and inquiry, mothers learn to put their own pleasure at the top of their priorities in sexuality.

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[46] *"İdeal kadın tiplemem de değişti benim. Annemizden nasıl gördük biz: kadın yatakta orospu, mutfakta aşçı, sokakta hanımefendi olacaktı. Eskiden erkekler de parayı kazanan ve eve getiren bir adam, haftasonları çocukları alıp gezdirecek bir baba. Eskiden hayalimiz şuydu mesela, hatırlıyorum kız arkadaşlarla küçükken, sabah kalkacağız, yatağımızı toplayacağız, yemek yapacağız sonra da cama geçip kocamızı bekleyeceğiz, adam gelecek yemek yiyecek falan. Ama iki evliliğimde de ben bunu yaşamadığım için daha sonradan değişti tabii bu algı. 'Adam mutluysa sen mutlusun'du aslında cinsellikte. Senin bir isteğin varsa 'ayıp, ne gerek var' şeklindeydi. 'Adamı da rencide etmeyelim bırak o nasıl biliyorsa öyle yapsın'dı. Ailede de cinsellik hiç konuşulmazdı bizim. Regl dönemini bile konuşmadık annemle. Şimdi öyle değil ama. Yemek yaparım ya da yapmam, ben yapamıyorsam girsin o yapsın. Hayat müşterekse beraber yapalım yemeği. Yemek yapmayı, temizlik yapmayı kadının yapması gereken zorunluluklar olduğu için değil, yapmak istediğim için yapacağım … Cinsellikte de kusura bakmasın artık benim de isteklerim var diyebilen bir duruma geldim şimdi."*

Hatice, the mother of a trans woman child, stated:

> Up until now, in my sexual life, things always happened in accordance with my partners' desires; maybe I even endured things that I didn't want to. All right, I am a woman, but I questioned why womanhood has to mean so many sacrifices. In terms of sexual orientation, nothing changed, I didn't question that much. But I questioned sexuality.[47]

Nalan, the mother of a lesbian daughter, said:

> My perspective of sexuality has changed. My partner's desires are not the only thing that matters, as my own pleasure is also important … For example, now I wish I was bisexual. I know about the pleasure one can gets from being with a man, but I don't know about the pleasure of being with a woman, or how it is experienced. I'm curious about it. I think it's a valuable addition to sexuality. Maybe bisexual people have twice as much pleasure. When there are two different sexes, you get to smell one flower, but the other flower smells nice too. I wish I was a bisexual, I would like to experience how it feels.[48]

Furthermore, especially for mothers of trans children, the body becomes an issue to be further questioned. While their children are undergoing sex re-assignment surgery, they also consider the importance of the body for the individual, and face the fact of how connotations regarding gender roles are socially constructed through the body. The experiences that they have with their children lead them to look into their own feelings with their bodies as women. They witness their children's struggle with their bodies, their courage in transforming their bodies in such a way that allows them to feel comfortable with their identities, and how they

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[47] *"Şu ana kadarki cinsel hayatımda hep partnerlerimin isteği doğrultusunda yaşandı bazı şeyler, belki de istemediğim şeyleri yaşadım. Kadınım tamam ama 'kadınlık neden bu kadar özveride bulunmaktı'yı sorguladım. Ama cinsel yönelim olarak bir şey değişmedi, öyle çok sorgulamak olmadı. Ama cinselliğimi sorguladım."*

[48] *"Artık cinselliğe bakış açım değişti. Sadece karşımdakinin istekleri değil, benim zevk almam da çok önemli … Ben şimdi mesela 'Keşke biseksüel olsaydım.' diyorum. Bir erkekle haz nasıl duyuluyor biliyorum ama bir kadınla haz nasıl duyuluyor, nasıl yaşanıyor bilmiyorum, merak ediyorum. Bunun artı bir zenginlik kattığını düşünüyorum cinselliğe. Çünkü bir erkekten haz alıyorsam, belki de biseksüel olan kişilerin aldığı hazzın iki kat daha yüksek olduğunu düşünüyorum. Farklı iki cinsiyetle, bir çiçeği kokluyorsunuz ama ötekinin de kokusu güzel. Keşke biseksüel olsaydım, tatmak isterdim."*

fight to make people understand that nobody but themselves have the right to decide what they can do with own their bodies. Accordingly, mothers come to reconstruct their ties with their bodies. It can be concluded that by observing their children, mothers realize the fact that the body is a significant issue through which identity is fulfilled, and this leads them to embrace their own bodies, and fight against the understanding that provided legitimacy to people who lay claim to women's bodies.

Canan, the mother of a trans man child, said:

> Sexually, I went through a very blind period. Unintentionally blind. Now I can be with someone that I want, someone who suits my taste and who is also good for my son. After all, how many years I have left to experience my sexuality, away from shame, darkness, impossible, getting dressed and undressed? I have some wrinkles now, but it's okay. My self-esteem has increased greatly. I wasn't at peace with my body. When I was a teenager, and after I had given birth, I was not happy with my body. I couldn't make peace with it. Although I tried a lot of things, such as diets and exercise, I had always returned to those feelings about my body. Now I am in a stable position. Once I got rid of that entire burden, I found myself. Of course my son had a part in it. He accepted the risk of death in order to become himself. I am a woman; I can be myself as well.[49]

Afterwards, all of the mothers admitted that for the first time in their lives they were comfortable talking about sexuality. In other words, while sexuality had been previously an issue to be repressed and subjected to intervention, it became an issue of private space to be respected for both the mother and child, and an issue

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[49] *"Çok kör bir dönem geçirmişim cinsellik konusunda. İstemeden kör bir dönem. Şimdi, istediğim biriyle kalben de, oğluma da iyi gelecek, kriterlerime beğenilerime de uyan biriyle birlikte olabilirim. Şurada kaç yıl daha cinselliğimi yaşayacağım ki ayıptan, olmazdan, utançtan, karanlıktan, soyunup giyinmekten uzak olarak? Hele de özgüvenim arttı ya, çizgiliyim biraz ama hiç önemli değil. Özgüvenim acayip arttı. Bedenimle ben de barışık değildim. Ergenliğimde ve doğum sonrasında bedenimden memnun değildim. Bedenimle barışamadım. Deliler gibi diyetler, sporlar vs. bir sürü şey denememe rağmen tekrar geri dönüşlerim oldu. Şimdi ama stabil haldeyim, o yüklerden kurtulduktan sonra kendimi buldum. Oğlumun tabii ki etkisi oldu. O, ölümü göze alarak kendisi olmak istedi. Ben de bir kadınım, kendim olabilirim."*

that could be talked over. All mothers stated that they can now converse about sexuality with their children.

Sevim, the mother of a gay son, said:

> People ask me whether my son is 'active' or 'passive'. That question flips me out. I tell them 'I don't ask my daughter how she does things in bed; I don't know.' I say it like I am telling them to come to their senses. Indeed, I don't want to know about these things, they're none of my business. Of course I can talk to my son and daughter about sexuality, but I won't talk to them about their bedrooms. That part is private and has nothing to do with me.[50]

Discovering their own notions about womanhood and sexuality helps mothers understand the feelings of their children, and as their perceptions change, their approaches to their children's needs and experiences also change. No longer do they harbor the old beliefs that their children are doing something deviant.

Duygu, the mother of a lesbian daughter, said:

> I used to look down on trans people; I would humiliate them. Now I love them. My daughter says 'I can't be with men; I'm disgusted by them.' How can you force someone to do what he or she doesn't want to? It's like making someone marry by force. It's retrogressive, and I won't stand by that.[51]

Hatice, the mother of a trans woman child, said:

> The fact that my child is a trans woman does not bother me, not even sexually. It used to bother me, but not anymore. Now we know; we are informed. I guess the fact that she is the passive party used to bother me,

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[50] *"Bana soruyorlar mesela 'Senin oğlun aktif mi, pasif mi?' O zaman çıldırıyorum işte, diyorum ki 'Ben kızıma da sormuyorum yatakta nasıl yaptıklarını, bilmiyorum.' diyorum, 'Kendinize gelin.' der gibi; ve hakikaten hiç bilmek istemiyorum ve hiç de beni ilgilendirmiyor. Cinsellik hakkında tabii ki konuşabilirim oğlumla da kızımla da. Ama yataklarını konuşmam, çünkü bu kısım özel, orası beni hiç ilgilendirmez."*

[51] *"Eskiden translara kötü bakardım, aşağılardım onları. Artık onlara bile bayılıyorum. 'Yapamam.' diyor, 'Tiksiniyorum erkeklerden.' diyor. Zorla nasıl yaptırılır bir şey? Zorla evlendirmek gibi bir şey. Gericilik yani bu. Olmaz."*

but as we became more informed, we learned that that is not the way it works. Nothing bothers me about this now. The only things that bother me are that people may laugh at her or do things that might upset her, etc.[52]

The inquiries of mothers into relationships are not limited to the sexual aspect, in that they also question their relationships with friends and family, namely, their social environment. In doing so, they come to realize that they cared about other people in their social circle more than they deserved. By putting themselves in the prior position, they begin to value themselves the most. Following all of the shifts that lead mothers to place themselves at the center of their own lives, their expectations from themselves become greater. While they feel that they have taken control of their own lives, their plans for their future shift, and they become more self-involved, since their priority is now themselves.

Hatice, the mother of a trans woman child, said:

> I used to jump whenever someone called me, even when I had things to do. Now it's not like that. Now I can tell them that I have things to do, I have a daughter, I have things that I want to do so, I can't come. I can now tell people that they're wrong. I used to say nothing, fearing that I might hurt them; now I talk. It's time for me to revolt as well, isn't it?[53]

Canan, the mother of a trans man child, said:

> They tell me that I'm still young and that I should get married again. Am I able to stand on my own two feet? Can I live the way I want? Can I take care of myself? Have I fulfilled my responsibilities? Did I raise a child? Did I get a good education? I have fulfilled my duties as a mother. Although she's living far away from me, I visit my own mother on

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[52] *"Çocuğumun trans kadın olması beni rahatsız etmiyor, cinsellik olarak da. Eskiden rahatsız ediyordu da artık değil. Şimdi artık biliyoruz, bilgilendik ya. Edilgen taraf ya, o beni rahatsız ediyordu sanırım. Ama sonra bilgilendikçe öyle olmadığını öğrendik. Bu açılardan beni rahatsız etmiyor hiçbir şey. Sadece toplum açısından rahatsız olduğum şeyler var: gülmeleri, onu üzecek şeyler yapmaları vs."*

[53] *"Eskiden olsa, benim neyim olursa olsun biri çağırdığında giderdim. Şimdi öyle değil artık işlerim var, kızım var, yapmak istediklerim var, gelemem diyebiliyorum. İnsanlara 'Haksızsın.' diyebiliyorum. Onlar üzülmesin diye susardım. Artık öyle değil, söyleyebiliyorum. Artık ben de başkaldırayım, değil mi ama?"*

holidays as often as I can. Why would I marry and have to take care of a man? Because that's what generally men want, someone to take care of them. I may have a relationship. It doesn't matter anymore if I'm married or single. I live for myself. Maybe it's too selfish, even not ethical. But after going through all these difficulties, I will live for myself.[54]

Whether or not a mother is able to transform her personhood is highly related to the issue of flexibility, and the study of the flexibility that can lead to actual life changes is highly significant within this thesis. Coan (1974) defines flexibility as the "willingness to think about and make alterations in one's life pursuits … thought to be a behavioral expression of the personality trait of experiential openness (as cited in Whitbourne, 1986, p. 164)". In this study, the coming out of an LGBTQ child represents a turning point in her/his mother's life, since it brings about many changes in her life. In other words, experience becomes a trigger of actual life changes, which become embodied as shifts in identity. Considering the fact that identity construction is a never-ending process, ground-breaking events such as the disclosure of an LGBTQ child will have an obvious influence on the mother's commitment to the current identity situation, to a certain extent.

In this sense, 'flexibility' can be considered an appropriate term when describing the transformation in personhoods of mothers; and is also evident in a comparison of mothers' previous confrontations with LGBTQ persons and their experiences when their own children come out as LGBTQ. The mothers' previous encounters with LGBTQs evidently had no effect on the boundaries of their personhoods, and it was only their children's disclosure that undermined their existing perspectives of sexuality, womanhood, family, motherhood and marriage, and led them to

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[54] *"Bana 'Evlen, gençsin daha.' diyorlar. Ben kendi ayaklarım üzerinde durabiliyor muyum? İstediğim gibi yaşayabiliyor muyum? Kendime de bakıyor muyum? Sorumluluğumu da yerine getirdim mi? Çocuk da yetiştirdim mi? Kendi ayaklarım üzerinde durmak için çaba gösteriyor muyum? İyi bir eğitim aldım mı? Anne olarak da görevlerimi yapmışım. Gücüm yettikçe anneme de gidip bakıyorum tatillerde, uzak olmama rağmen. Bir erkeğe bakmak için neden evleneyim? Çünkü erkekler genellikle kendilerine bakacak birini arıyorlar. Bir ilişkim de olabilir. Evli ya da bekar olmam farketmiyor artık. Ben kendim için yaşarım. Çok bencilce, belki etik bile değil. Ama ben bu kadar zoru yaşadıktan sonra, bundan sonra kendim için yaşayacağım."*

reconstruct their perceptions in this regard. Furthermore, it is evident that not all interventions into their personhoods led to shifts, although as the most crucial cultural characteristic of motherhood in Turkish society, they did refuse to give up on their children. From this, it can be understood that the coming out of their children stoked the respondent mothers' identities, and forced them to rethink certain conceptualization they had of sexuality. It is a key point that a certain level of flexibility in certain issues became possible, since the issue was related to their children.

Considering the fact that Turkish culture places the child above all other values, facing such an event within the family, especially with their own children, makes mothers more vulnerable to the effects of the event, and makes the experience harder to ignore, since the relationship between the mother and child is based more on 'emotional sharing and touching' (Sunar & Fişek, 2005, p. 14). Accordingly, the mothers of LGBTQ children in this study were pushed into a very challenging process that brought many adaptations and changes to their lives. Experiencing the process of coming out with their children makes mothers more open to experience, which increases the possibility of flexibility in their personhoods, and consequently introduces a life change (Whitbourne, 1986).

Ayla, the mother of a trans woman child, said:

> My child made me flexible. If you ask me what my child taught me, I would say the existence of the clitoris … I learned to give space to others, not being to be pushy, not to expect anything, accepting everybody as they are, questioning myself, discovering what I like and don't like. What started all of this was rebellion. My child was able to tell me that she was a girl, and I was able to empathize with her and understand her. I worked, struggled with all my might to keep her dreams from being stolen. I gave birth to her once again, I raised her. I looked at her, a baby daughter … My repressed girlhood, childhood … I was able to open up along with her. We grew up together. I completed unfinished businesses with her. She expressed herself so clearly and she didn't give up. We were not like that; we cowered easily. When we were unhappy, we acted. We acted for the

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sake of other people, because society told us this was the right way. This has been a rebellion for me.[55]

The flexibility in the mothers' personhoods points to the articulation of identity as a continuous process of never-ending transformation. Flexibility through openness to experiences goes hand-in-hand with transformations in identity. Accordingly, with the satisfaction of being able to flex the limits of their personhoods, mothers start to feel more comfortable when dealing with the change, and give themselves more space to enjoy new experiences, thus increasing their adaptability. They realize that there are many things they can do, learn, and share, and become eager and less fearless when faced with the prospect of improving themselves and experiencing new things. Furthermore, they come to consider the time before their children came out to them as time wasted. Although they have faced very challenging experiences and have had regrets about their behaviors in the past, all mothers come to evaluate the disclosure of their children as a fortunate experience, being content with the state at which they arrive. The disclosure of their LGBTQ children becomes a milestone in their lives and a breakthrough experience, since it brings about actual life changes. Mothers are well aware of the transformation in their identities, and feel are happy with the individuals they become. In this sense, it is important to note that for mothers, the coming out of their LGBTQ child represents a turning point in the never-ending process of identity construction. That is to say, the identities in their continuous process of construction are reciprocally transformative; and there is no other way for identities in a family

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[55] *"Çocuğum beni esnetti. Bana sorarsan çocuğun sana ne öğretti diye, klitorisin varlığını öğretti … Diğer insanlara alan vermeyi, üstelememeyi, beklentiye girmemeyi, herkesi olduğu gibi kabul etmeyi, kendimi sorgulamayı, ben neyi seviyorum neyi sevmiyorum bunları keşfettim. Bunu başlatan şey başkaldırıydı. Benim çocuğum bana 'Ben kızım.' dediğinde, onu diyebildi ya bana, ben de empati yapıp onu anladım ya, onun hayallerini çaldırmamak için çalıştım ya, herşeyimle mücadele ettim. Onu yeniden dünyaya getirip büyüttüm. Onu seyrettim, bir kız çocuğu… Benim sıkıştırılmış genç kızlığım, çocukluğum… Onunla beraber ben de açıldım. Beraber büyüdük. Yarım kalan şeylerimi onunla tamamladım. O kendini çok iyi ifade etti ve vazgeçmedi. Biz öyle değildik, hemen siniyorduk. Mutsuzken de rol yaptık. Başkaları için rol yaptık. Toplum böyle olması lazım demiş çünkü. Başkaldırış oldu yani."*

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system to continue their transformation without influencing each other. In this regard, the entire family system experiences alternations together when a ground-breaking event happens.

Nalan, the mother of a lesbian daughter, said:

> I learned what heterosexuality meant at the age of 57. What a shame that I learned that my own sexual orientation was heterosexuality at the age of 57. This situation has taught me so many things … It changed my life and perspective completely … Up until then, I had been seeing but not realizing. I started to realize … My daughter has broadened my horizon. I started to research everything that I heard. After I became an activist, my horizon expanded even further. One day I told my daughter that it's good that she is homosexual; my world has changed because of it … For example, at a conference they asked me: 'What kind of connection do you think there is between feminism and being lesbian?'. I said I don't know feminism enough to make such a connection. I read Virginia Woolf. I read whatever I could find about feminism. This is how this situation contributed to me. I wouldn't believe in a million years that I could evolve because my daughter is homosexual.[56]

Such shifts in their perceptions of womanhood and relationships also regulate their daily routines, in that they revolt against what societal values tell them to do, being more aware of the value of their time and actions. They begin to regulate their daily routines in accordance with their own values, rather than doing what others expect from them.

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[56] *"Heteroseksüelin ne demek olduğunu 57 yaşında öğrendim. Kendi cinsel yönelimimin heteroseksüellik olduğunu yazık günah 57 yaşında öğrendim. Bana çok şey öğretti bu durum … Benim hayatımı, bakış açımı tümden, her yönüyle değiştirdi … Görüyordum ama farketmiyordum. Onları görmeye başladım … Kızım benim ufkumu açtı. Yeni öğrendiğim her şeyi araştırmaya başladım. Artı aktivizme başladıktan sonra ufkum daha da genişledi. Bir gün kızıma dedim ki 'İyi ki eşcinselsin, benim dünyam değişti.' … Mesela bir konferansta bana şöyle bir soru geldi: 'Lezbiyenlikle feminizm arasında nasıl bir bağlantı kuruyorsunuz?' Ben de dedim 'Feminizmi tam anlamıyla bilmiyorum ki bağlantıyı kurabileyim.' Virginia Woolf aldım okudum. Ne kadar feminizmle ilgili kitap bulduysam aldım okudum. Bana böyle dönüyor işte katkıları. Rüyamda görsem inanmazdım kızım eşcinsel oldu diye benim gelişebileceğime."*

Nalan, the mother of a lesbian daughter, said:

> I still see my old friends, but it's not like it used to be. I find them empty now. I prefer spending that one hour that I would spend with them doing different things. I may read or I just be by myself. I started taking violin lessons at the age of 62 … Those were dead times, I feel sorry for those times spent poorly. Now I wear myself out as if I want to make up for all that poorly spent time. I go to bed at 4 or 5 in the morning. I listen to music, I read. I try to fit everything I want to do into the present, because I don't have much time left. I have 10 years at most if my body can hold up physically. I exercise, take classes, go to LISTAG, do housework, try to keep up with my children and relatives … I haven't spent my time well until now. If I had this mindset back then, I would have spent it differently.[57]

One of the most important shifts in mothers' perceptions is related to motherhood, their understanding of which undergoes change alongside their approaches to womanhood and sexuality. As the level of general awareness about their social roles as wife, friend, child, and kin increases, mothers also reconsider how they behave in regards to their children and what being a mother means. They rediscover what their child means to them, and realizing that their child is the most important person in their lives, they come to understand that they should be accepted in all aspects.

Ayla, the mother of a trans woman child, said:

> Life isn't just about making jam and pickles, rolling up socks and folding laundry. We've practiced motherhood conditionally, like a business endeavor: 'If you behave well I will take you to the movies. If you tidy up

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[57] *"Eski arkadaşlarımla görüşüyorum hala ama eskisi gibi değil. Şimdi boş geliyorlar bana. Orada geçireceğim bir saati, daha farklı değerlendirebilirim diye düşünüyorum. Kitap okurum, kendimle başbaşa kalırım. 62 yaşında keman kursuna yazıldım mesela … O zamanlarım ölü zamanlarmış, acıyorum o zamanlarıma. Yanlış değerlendirilen zamanlar. Şimdi sanki bütün o yanlış değerlendirdiğim zamanları geri almak istercesine kendimi hırpalıyorum. Sabah 4'e, 5'e doğru yatıyorum. Müzik dinliyorum, kitap okuyorum. Yapmak istediğim her şeyi şimdiye sığdırmaya çalışıyorum vaktim az kaldı diye düşünerek. Fiziki anlamda bedenim el verirse maksimum 10 yılım var. Spor yapıyorum, kursa gidiyorum, LİSTAG'a geliyorum, evin işleri, çocuklarıma yetişmeye çalışıyorum, akrabalara yetişmeye çalışıyorum … Zamanımı çok güzel değerlendirmemişim. Şu zihniyetim olsaydı, farklı değerlendirirdim."*

your room I will take you to the park.' Our mothers tell us that they made so many sacrifices for us. She made sacrifices, but she also expected something in return. This is how I think now. Motherhood, parenthood, humanity, and friendship should mean a deed done without expecting anything in return. We learned about unconditional motherhood. It's your child, along with her/his body, genitals, thoughts and the food that she/he likes.[58]

Duygu, the mother of a lesbian daughter, said:

"Now I would understand, even if it's my grandchild, and our approach would be different. I would give a positive reaction even if she/he was trans; it is our child at the end of the day."[59]

As Baptist and Allen (2008) stated, "the belief in family unity (Cramer & Roach, 1988), the willingness to be transparent and self-reflective (Boxer et al., 1991), and the unchanging positive feeling towards their gay family member (Robinson et al., 1989), were central to the family's political response". With the acceptance of an LGBTQ member in the family, the family as a whole becomes politicized against discrimination, although some families prefer not to engage in public political acts, which Baptist and Allen (2008) call "a closeted form of activism (p. 103)". For Baptist and Allen (2008), having a personal political stance requires 'a process of personal awareness and growth'; and this process requires intense reflection, which makes the family present a political response. Accordingly, learning those concepts related to the issue of sexuality provides them with a basis of demarcation between what they really think and what society has imposed them to date. Of course, it takes time to internalize the differences in society and realize

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[58] *"Hayat sadece reçel-turşu yapmak, çorap dürmek, çamaşır katlamak değil. Anneliği de biz koşullu yapmışız. Ticaret halinde yapmışız: 'Uslu olursan seni sinemaya götüreceğim. Odanı toplarsan seni parka götüreceğim.' Annelerimiz bize der ki, 'Sizin için çok fedakarlıklar yaptık.' Feda etmiş ama karşılığını da beklemiş. Öyle düşünüyorum artık yani. Aslında hiç bir şey beklemeden yapılan şey annelik, ebeveynlik, insanlık, arkadaşlık. Koşulsuz anneliği öğrendik. Çocuk demek bedeniyle, cinsel organlarıyla, düşünceleriyle, beğendiği yemekle çocuğun."*

[59] *"Şimdi bir torunumda olsa anlarım mesela ve farklı olur yaklaşımım. Trans da olsa olumlu yaklaşacağız, çünkü evlat bizim için."*

how the different are discriminated against; however, stigmatization for those who are seen as different in society and the pressure preventing them from living a simple human life leads them to raise their voice against injustice, and so they become activists.

Canan, the mother of a trans man child, said:

> It's not like I understood everything all of a sudden, but I evaluated the situation and tried to look at it from his perspective. While looking, I questioned certain things. It all comes down to the question 'Why am I treating this kid like this? or the anxiety of 'What if he dies?'. From time to time he asks me if it's worth it. Then he told me he was an activist; and I looked at myself and said 'I am an activist as well!' (laughing) [60]

Ayla, the mother of a trans woman child, said:

> I am one of the 'other people', too. I didn't know about liberty or diversity. I could see that there are thousands of different kinds of flowers, but I thought that's just the flowers. There are different religions, languages, races, and genders. There isn't necessarily a man and a woman; sexlessness also exists. We are accustomed to seeing people who are not like us as deviant. We don't call them diverse; we call them deviant. We thought it was all pretension. Now I don't discriminate, whether in nature, gender, race or ethnic roots. I can now say everyone can be herself or himself; the important thing is that they are human. What matters is for human beings to show respect for each other. When people have boundaries, that's where humanity flourishes. But until my child opened up to me, I also committed acts that lacked boundaries in all these senses. All in all, it turned out good.[61]

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[60] *"Anlamaya başlamak, hemen her şeyi anlamak gibi değil. Durum değerlendirmeleri yapıp onun penceresinden bakmaya çalışıyordum. Bakarken bazı şeyleri sorguladım. Yine kilit noktası 'Ben o çocuğa neden böyle davranıyorum?' ya da 'Ya ölürse.' hep bu kaygı. 'Bak değer mi?' diyor ara ara bana. Sonra 'Ben aktivistim.' dedi. Sonra baktım ben de aktivistim (kahkahalarla gülüyor)."*

[61] *"'El alem' denen insanların arasındaydım ben de. Özgürlükleri, çeşitliliği bilmiyordum. Çiçeklerin bin bir çeşit olduğunu görüyordum ama 'Çiçekler böyledir. diyordum. Din, dil, ırk, cinsiyet farklılığı vardır; illa ki bir kadın, bir erkek olacak diye bir şey yoktur; cinsiyetsizlik de vardır. Biz bizden olmayan, bizim gibi olmayan insanları hep sapık olarak görüyoruz. Çeşitlilik demiyoruz da sapkın diyoruz. Özenti diyorduk. Şimdi ben de, ne doğa da, ne cinsiyette, ırkta, etnik kökenlerde hiç bir ayrım yok artık. 'O öyleyse öyledir, insan olsun yeter.' diyorum. İnsanlar*

To conclude, the aim in this section is to provide an understanding of the interaction between identity and the social, and analyzing shifts in mothers' personhoods allows us to understand how mothers faced up to the conflicts between their social identity and role identity.

Identity is a very controversial issue that has been being discussed mostly by psychologists. According to theories of identity, although they have commonalities, social identity and role identity differ in their distinct configurations in terms of the field of research. In this sense, social identity refers to the formation of an identity through which a person is bonded to a group that is in harmony with her/his perceptions, actions, and knowledge. Groups, as a social category, allow individuals to socially categorize themselves in the same set (Stets & Burke, 2000; Švab & Kuhar, 2014), while role identity refers to the formation of an identity through which an individual identifies herself/himself through the presence of roles and counter-roles. Briefly, social identity can be explained as belonging to a group, whereas role identity refers to fulfilling the requirements of the role (Švab & Kuhar, 2014).

What those two conceptualizations of identity signify in this study is that mothers face conflicts between their social identities as members of a society in which heterosexuality is the dominant norm and being LGBTQ is considered deviance, and their role identities in motherhood, which is accepted as unconditional and divine by the same society. Although membership of this society and being a mother both have socially constructed definitions, the discord between them compels mothers to choose one over the other. After experiencing many new things, in time, all of the mothers in this study came to prioritize their role identities as mothers rather than as ordinary members of society, choosing to focus

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birbirine saygılı olsun yeter. İnsanların sınırlarının olduğu yerde insanlık başlıyor işte. Ama ben de çocuğum bana açılana kadar bu sınırsızlıkların hepsini yaptım. İyi bişi oldu yani sonuçta.''

on the happiness of their children and the support that they can provide, rather than being concerned about what people may say about them and their children.

Afterwards, they create a new social identity within family groups (such as LISTAG, LADEG+, and Ankara Rainbow Families), in which they gather with other people around the same goal, which is to support other parents with LGBTQ children in their efforts to live humanely in Turkish society. These social groups have emerged as arenas in which mothers can continue in their role identities as mothers when they meet other LGBTQ children, which results in all children in the LGBTQ community in Turkey referring to them as 'mother'. This role of being mother to all LGBTQ children is evident within the rhetoric of the LGBTQ community. With their new identities, after letting go of their former expectations of their children in such matters as marriage, pregnancy, grandchildren, and military service, and so their former personhoods, mothers come to prioritize the happiness and freedom of their children.

A brochure supplied by one of these family groups says that the journey they started with the aim of giving their children a free and honorable life, transforms the journey of their freedom by leaving behind the trilogy of shame, taboo and sin that society imposes upon them. In the end, they open their eyes and realize their personal existence in society, and reconstruct their own identity as a citizen, a woman, a wife, a lover, and a mother.

As Ayla, a mother of a trans woman child, stated:

> Ayla has awakened, learned her rights and has learned to fight for her children's dreams, since hers were stolen from her. She learned about equality and sexuality. She learned that she was a heterosexual at the age of 47. We can now talk about sexuality. We have given up on the shame-taboo-sin trilogy. We became activists.[62]

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[62] *"Ayla uyandı, haklarını öğrendi, hayallerini çaldırdığı için çocuklarının hayallerini çaldırmamayı öğrendi, eşitliği öğrendi, cinselliği öğrendi, heteroseksüel olduğunu 47 yaşında*

Considering coming out as an interactive process, there is a period of struggle between the mother and child as they try to understand each other. This contentious period, although it seems to have no end, becomes smoother in time, but at its peak, mothers harbor chaotic thoughts for the futures of both parties, while internalizing their children's identity and coming to terms with its requirements. What lifts mothers out from that utterly confused period is the awareness of the love that they have for their children.

This part of the analysis is very significant, highlighting the vacillations of mothers between their feelings of love for their children and the societal values of shame, taboo and sin associated with sexuality to which they are exposed in society, as well as the notions of what a 'decent' mother should do considering the perception of LGBTQ persons in Turkish society, while also showing how mothers are left alone on their journey. Although they may have a hard time understanding and coming to terms with their child's LGBTQ identity, they hang on to them and struggle by their sides against everything and everyone – even their husbands and their own mothers and fathers – if the happiness of their child is at stake. Through this process, mothers' personhoods undergo significant transformations in terms of sexuality, womanhood, family, motherhood and marriage. They question what society has exposed them to so far, and their perceptions change regarding those issues as they gain a deeper understanding of them. As part of the coming out process of their self-identified LGBTQ children, mothers reconstruct their personhoods under the influence of their experiences with their children. In other words, the identities of the respondent mothers transform because of the issues that affect their children. With their 'new' transformed personhood, it is evident that the respondent mothers learn to

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öğrendi. Cinselliği konuşabiliyoruz artık. Yani ayıp-yasak-günah üçlüsünü bıraktık. Aktivist olduk."

prioritize their own conceptualizations, which brings about a shift also in their lifestyles.

6.2. Transformation of Intrafamilial Dynamics

"Individuals are 'persons in context' who both 'create and are structured' by the relationship systems in which they exist (Massey, 1986, p. 23 as cited in Oswald, 1999, p. 66)." In other words, a change in one family member affects the lives of the other members of the family, which concurs with Family Systems Theory. In this sense, the coming out process is a transformative experience for the LGBTQ child herself/himself, but also for the family as a whole. Accordingly, analyzing familial relationships can be deemed important if one is to comprehend the complete transformation that a family undergoes after the coming out of one member as LGBTQ.

It can be stated that the coming out experience is a turning point for mothers, with knock-on effects through which the family reality is re-formed. According to McHale and Sullivan (2008), "systems are organized wholes, and their constituting elements or subsystems are interdependent (p. 193)." Family Systems Theory claims that a single event that brings about change in an individual or subsystem does not remain limited within it, but rather spreads throughout the system. In the end, a single event changes the entire family system.

After covering the transformation of mothers' personhoods in the previous part, the next section will analyze the effects of the coming out of a family member on family relationships, and specifically on the subsystems of the mother-father, father-child and sibling dyads, using the data garnered from interviews with both

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mothers and children. Focusing on the changes within the family dynamics will provide an understanding of the manifestation of such a challenging event, which members of the family system understand as a 'turning point' through its reflections not only at a personal level, but also in the sociocultural aspects of heteronormativity, homophobia, and transphobia (Švab & Kuhar, 2014).

In agreement with previous research (Savin-Williams, 1989; Heatherington & Lavner, 2008; LaSala, 2010; Scherrer, 2014; Scherrer et al., 2015), one of the most important findings of this study is that although the quality of the dyadic relationship is influential in the decision of person to disclose, considering the parent-child dyad, it is the mother that is most often the target of the disclosure than the father. When it comes to the structure of the urban middle-class Turkish family, this result is an expected one, having been identified in a number of previous researches (Hortaçsu, 1989; Fişek, 1991; Sunar, 2002; Sunar, 2005). Previous research has shown that young people in urban society tend to share their feelings and emotions with their mothers rather than with their fathers. While the father-child relationship has 'instrumental' meaning for fathers, the mother-child relationship has an 'expressive' meaning for mothers. The appreciable difference between the levels of emotional intimacy between the mother-child and father-child dyads leads the mother-child relationship to include fewer discords, sanctions and penalties, and more flexibility (Sunar, 2002).

Canan, the mother of a trans man child, explained her loneliness throughout the process, although she was married at the time:

> It struck me when I saw the Lambda magazine in his room. That was when I really understood … that my child was one of those people. I couldn't share it with his dad, or anyone really. My relationship with my husband had already collapsed. I didn't think that he would understand. He said that this was biologically impossible and dropped the subject altogether. Maybe

he is macho under a modern disguise, or someone who simply lacks the ability to think. You expect too much, but he is a man who doesn't think.[63]

Ayla, the mother of a trans woman child, described how she had to struggle by herself to make her child continue with her education:

> I went to her school to speak to them, and to learn if she would be able to continue, given her transsexuality. They told me that she needed to drop out. I cried a lot that day. It was even harder than the day at the hospital. My child is perfectly healthy and smart, and wants to get an education, and I also want her to get an education, like any other kid. She cannot go to school because her soul doesn't belong in the body she was born with. She doesn't have equal rights. I was determined to figure this out in some way. I enrolled her in an open high school, but I had to deal with many bureaucratic challenges in that process. I read and told it to her. I bought her nail polish to trick her into it. There were no teachers whatsoever. Think about it, she was a teenager with hormones who was going through a transition and wasn't going to school, and I was trying to get her to finish high school. I talked about geography to her and asked her questions while she painted her nails. We, my child and I, studied mountains, plains, history, and wars together. [64]

From the garnered data it can be claimed that what mothers go through to understand their children's sexual identity and/or orientation and to adjust to their children's lives is very challenging and demands great sacrifice when compared to what fathers must endure. From the statements of the respondent mothers, there is

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[63] *"Odasında Lambda dergisi görünce anladım. Ben asıl orada anladım … Çocuğumun da öyle biri olduğunu anladım. Babasıyla paylaşamıyorum, hiç kimseyle paylaşamıyorum. Eşimle olan ilişkimiz zaten kopmuştu. Bu konuyu anlayabileceğini de düşünmemiştim zaten. 'Biyolojik olarak olmaz.' dedi babası ve çekildi kenara. Modern görünümlü bir maço ya da düşünceden yoksun biri belki de. Çok fazla şey bekliyorsun ama düşünmeyen bir adam."*

[64] *"Okuluna gittim konuştum. 'Transseksüel bir yapıdaymış devam edebilecek mi okula?' dedim. 'Hayır, almanız gerekiyor.' dediler. O gün çok ağladım. Hastanedekinden daha acı geldi bana. Çünkü benim çocuğumun eli ayağı tutuyor, akıllı ve okumak istiyor, eğitim almak istiyor. Ben de onun okumasını istiyorum. Yani her çocuk gibi. Sadece ruhu doğduğu bedene ait değil diye çocuğumu okuldan almak zorunda kalıyorum. Yani kimseyle eşit haklara sahip değil. Yine bir çare bulacağım ben dedim. Açık liseye kaydettirdim. O süreçte de bir sürü bürokratik şeyle uğraştım. Ben okudum, ona anlattım. Oje aldım onu kandırdım. Öğretmen yok, bir şey yok. Bir çocuğu düşünsenize, değişim dönüşüm, ergenlik, hormon kullanıyor ve okula gitmiyor; ve ben liseyi bitirsin diye uğraşıyorum. Onun için bir şeyler yapmam lazım. Oje aldım, o oje sürerken ben ona coğrafya anlattım, sorular sordum. Birlikte yeniden dağları, ovaları, tarihi, savaşları oturduk çalıştık."*

an obvious difference between mothers and fathers in terms of the level and pace at which they internalize the disclosure of their children, and in the level top which they come to terms with their children's LGBTQ identity.

Duygu, the mother of a lesbian daughter, said:

> Sometimes when her father gets angry, he uses the word 'ibne (faggot)', and Aslı gets really mad when he does that. Her father has accepted the situation, but he still doesn't show up to the meetings. Maybe he is hoping that she will change.[65]

In such a situation, mothers are compelled to come up with strategies to ensure fathers are included, either emotionally or financially, since they mostly prefer to stay out of the process. Even if fathers do get involved in the process, they have apparent difficulties in adjusting to their children's LGBTQ identity. It is worth noting that the children in this study only occasionally brought up their fathers, and I had to ask specifically about their relationships with their fathers. On the whole, fathers became the topic of the conversation only when the respondents spoke about the disappointing aspects of coming out. Although the experiences of disclosure vary from case to case, for the majority, the maternal relationship was stronger the paternal bond. In fact, there was a common anger towards their fathers based on their ignorance and their refusal to discuss issues of sexual identity and/or orientation, even when they spoke openly and clearly to their fathers.

Ayla, the mother of a trans woman child, told how she tried to include the father in the process:

> He supported her education and gave some money for her surgery, because I threatened him … I used to call and threaten him, to bring her to him and leave her there. This was how I managed to register her in college, but I feel she still has dreams about going on vacation with her father, visiting

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[65] *"Babası bazen kızdığı zaman 'ibne' lafını kullanıyor, o zaman Aslı acayip sinirleniyor. Babası da kabullendi ama hala katılmıyor toplantılara. Belki de değişeceğini umuyor."*

him where he lives and living with him in the same house, etc. But unfortunately, that's who her father is.[66]

Eda, a trans woman, explained her reaction when she realized that her father still had difficulties coming to terms with her appearance:

One day we met and he saw foundation on my face, he asked 'What is this?'. I said 'You are a doctor, do your homework.' He still had my old name on his phone, and he still called me 'my son'. I used to take his phone and change my name. My father still hasn't invited me to his home. We talk on the phone; and we meet when he comes here.[67]

Mert, a trans man, said:

"At the time I was going for surgery, my parents' relationship was about to fall apart. My father left home. We spoke very rarely. I was so mad. I thought 'Wasn't I your precious child? What happened now?'"[68]

Aslı, who identifies herself as a lesbian, said:

My father is a man who keeps himself to himself. He is not exactly an understanding person. If you met him, you would say that he is an understanding person, but he doesn't get certain things. He asks 'How is this possible? Women and men are like magnets, positive and negative,

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[66] *"Babası okumasına destek oluyor, ameliyatlarına destek oldu biraz, benim tehditimle … Tehdit ettim babasını arayıp, 'Ben sana getiriyorum bu çocuğu, sana bırakacağım.' diye diye, tehdit ede ede üniversiteye kaydını yaptırttım. Ama kızımın içinde kalan şeyler var tabii; mesela babayla tatile gitmek, babanın yaşadığı yere gitmek, babayla aynı evde oturmak gibi. Onları ben hissediyorum. Ama maalesef babası böyle biri işte."*

[67] *"Bir gün buluştuğumuzda yüzümdeki fondoteni gördü, 'Bu ne?' diye sordu. Ben de 'Doktorsun, dersini çalış.' dedim. Telefonunda eski ismim duruyordu, hala beni 'oğlum' diye çağırıyordu. Alıyordum telefonunu, ismimi değiştiriyordum. Hala yaşadığı yere davet etmedi beni. Telefonda konuşuyoruz, buraya geldiği zamanlarda buluşuyoruz."*

[68] *"Ameliyat olacağım dönemde annemle babamın ilişkisi iyice kopma noktasına geldi. Babam evi terketti. Çok ender konuşuyorduk. Acayip sinirlendim. Kendi kendime 'Bu zamana kadar ben senin canın evladındım da şimdi n'oldu?' dedim."*

they should be drawn to each other. How is it that positive attracts positive?' How is this relevant? It turns out that they can.[69]

Among the respondents, there were also cases in which the child chose not to come out to their fathers at all, or not directly, and the reasons for this vary from one child to another. For instance, Ceren, who identifies herself as lesbian, chose not to come out to her father because he was very sick, being confined to a hospital and close to death, and she did not want to talk to her father about her sexual orientation in his last days. İrem, a trans woman, had no experience of disclosure with her father, since he had not maintained contact with his family after divorcing her mother when İrem was very young, and so she had never even met him. Furthermore, there are also cases in which the mother preempted the child's disclosure to the rest of the family. For instance, Aslı's mother told her whole family, including Aslı's father, immediately after Aslı came out to her. Mert, a trans man, came out to his mother while they were speaking on the phone. Although he had planned to come out to his parents at the same time, he took advantage of an opportune moment to disclose. It can be concluded from these cases that for some children, the father, despite being one of the main familial figures, may not play a significant role in the coming out of their child, compelling children to disclose only to their mothers.

Fathers who do not share equally their children's experiences of disclosure generally prefer to communicate with their children about the experience through the mothers. This indirect form of communication puts a distance between children and their fathers, and as a result, their fathers' words lose effect.

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[69] *"Babam kendi halinde bir adam. Çok anlayışlı biri değil. Görseniz çok anlayışlı biri dersiniz ama bazı şeyleri anlamıyor. Ben ona nasıl hissettiğimi anlatıyorum, anlamıyor. 'Nasıl olur ki?' diyor. 'Erkekle kadın mıknatıs gibi, artı ile eksi birbirini çeker. Eksi eksiyi, artı artıyı nasıl çeker?' diyor. Ne alakası var bunun onunla. Çekiyor demek ki işte."*

Mert, a trans man, spoke about his father objecting to his sex re-assignment surgery:

> I was at work. I saw that my mom had called so I went to the bathroom and called her back. She said 'Your father absolutely does not approve of this.' I told her to give the phone to my father so that he could tell me directly what it was that he did not approve of. She handed the phone to him, and he said 'It's exactly what your mom told you.' I asked 'How so?' He answered 'I absolutely do not approve of this.' I asked 'Dad, what is it that you don't approve of?' He said 'I won't accept such a thing like this, this can't happen.' I said 'This is happening whether you accept it or not. We'll talk when I get back.' and then I hung up the phone.[70]

For quite a few of the respondents in this study, they conspired to come out to their parents at the same time. Levent, who identifies himself as gay, opened the subject of his sexual orientation with his parents after arranging a certain time to go to his parents' house to have dinner with them, and came out to his mother and father at the same time while chatting in the sitting room of their house. There are a few fathers who take an active role in both family groups and in the LGBTQ movement, some of whom appeared in the documentary 'My Child,' in which they told the story of their children being LGBTQ. It is, however, obvious that the number of fathers who take an active role in both the process of disclosure of their child and in the aftermath is significantly lower than mothers.

Siblings also constitute an important part of the process, as part of the family system. Just as mothers and fathers are influenced by the effects of disclosure, so are the siblings of LGBTQ persons, and their role in the family dynamics is worth mentioning here. Siblings have an important role in the analysis, not only as part of the family system, but also in their active role in the process of parents coming

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[70] *"İşteydim. Arada annem aramış. Tuvalete gittim ve annemi aradım geri. 'Baban kesinlikle onaylamıyor.' dedi. Ben de 'Anne babam neyi onaylamıyorsa ver telefonu ona, bana kendisi söylesin.' dedim. Annem telefonu verdi babama. Babam bana 'Annenin dediği gibi.' dedi. 'Nasıl yani?' dedim. 'Ben onaylamıyorum kesinlikle.' dedi. 'Neyi onaylamıyorsun baba?' dedim. 'Ben böyle bir şeyi kesinlikle kabul etmiyorum, yok böyle bir şey.' dedi. Ben de 'Kabul edersin ya da etmezsin, ben gelince konuşuruz.' dedim, kapattım telefonu."*

to terms with their child's LGBTQ identity. However, it should be pointed out that the effect of disclosure on the siblings' lives was mentioned neither by the mothers nor the LGBTQ persons themselves, and so the only obtainable data is the provided information about their supportive, disincentive or ineffective actions. Accordingly, in this study, the behaviors of siblings following the disclosure are generally spoken about in a positive way. It can be said that they emerge as one of the most supportive figures for the whole family during the process of disclosure. If the child has any siblings, they may often play a highly supportive and mediating role between the LGBTQ person and the other members of the family, especially when explaining the situation to the mother and the father, prior to the mother taking on a similar mediating role between the LGBTQ child and other people. Sometimes it is a sibling that prepares parents for the coming out of their brother/sister, tranquilizing and informing them that being LGBTQ is not an illness. In such cases, it can be claimed that siblings take on a mediating role between the parents and the LGBTQ child.

Nalan, the mother of a lesbian daughter, said:

> I also have a son. He has such a good heart that even when she came out and the atmosphere was tense, he was able to say 'Mom, don't be upset. I am married and even I may come up to you one day and say that I'm gay.' He doesn't intervene in anybody's private lives. We are lucky in terms of our family. There is no one that would find this odd among us. I was the worst of them.[71]

Ayla, the mother of a trans woman child, said:

> My son has been a huge source of support for me. I complained to him, and said that his brother claimed he was a woman. He said 'Mom, that's a

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[71] *"Bir de oğlum var. Öyle iyi yürekli ki; kızımın açıkladığı gergin ortam da bile 'Anne üzme kendini, ben evliyim ama belki ben de bir gün eşcinselim diye karşına gelebilirim.' diyebilen bir çocuk. Kimsenin özel hayatına karışmaz. Şanslıyız yani aile bakımından. Bizde yadırgayacak kimse yok, en kötüleri bendim."*

thing.' I wasn't convinced at first, and I hung up on him. After seeing a psychiatrist, I came to realize that this was really a thing. His brother came to be my daughter's companion, advocate and father. He was also the one who told his father about the situation.[72]

Perihan, mother of a lesbian daughter, said:

> When my daughter was in middle school, her sister told me that it was possible that she was a lesbian … My daughter have never told her father or me that she was a lesbian, and we hadn't asked her about it. It was her conversations with her older sister that probably led her to believe that we would be fine with it, and that the most important thing was her happiness.[73]

Although very rare, there are also cases in which a sibling is unable to internalize the situation before the parents do, although throughout the process, they progressively come to understand how their sister/brother feels with the help of their mothers and siblings. LGBTQ children expect their siblings be on their sides during this process, and while they are struggling with their parents to come to terms with the situation, they want their siblings to lend a hand.

Aslı, who identifies herself as lesbian, explains her relationship with her brother:

> I don't have a very close relationship with my brother … I told him that he had lost his sense of brotherhood and that all he did was to be shocked while all this was happening. My mom said to him 'Your sister is a lesbian.' and he just went to his room because he was scared. My mom was treating me roughly; he should have done something to help me. He is a

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[72] *"Oğlum çok destek oldu bana. Ben dedim ona 'Bu kızım diyor.' dedim. O da 'Anne öyle bir şey var.' dedi. Ama ben onun söylediği lafı beğenmedim başta. 'He he' dedim kapattım telefonu. Psikiyatrdan sonra dedim hakikaten de böyle bir şey varmış. Abisi kızıma hep yandaş, yoldaş, baba oldu. Babaya da oğlum anlattı."*

[73] *"Kızım ortaokuldaydı. Ablası bana 'Kardeşim lezbiyen olabilir.' dedi … Kızım ne bana ne de babasına ben lezbiyenim dedi, ne de biz ona bunu sorduk. Herhalde ablasıyla olan konuşmalarıyla bizim bunu hoşgördüğümüzü, önemli olanın onun mutlu olması olduğunu anladı."*

> grown 25-year-old man, after all. He should have told my mom that I am his sister, and that he should stay by my side, no matter what.[74]

To conclude, it is hard to know for certain just how much effort fathers and siblings put into the process of coming out of an LGBTQ family member when the only data source is interviews with the mothers and their self-identified LGBTQ children. That said, based on the available data, it can be concluded that fathers participate in the disclosure process to a lesser degree than mothers, while siblings tend to be very supportive before, during, and after the disclosure. It is also hard to access direct data about fathers since the fathers take only a passive role in their children's lives, or if they are no longer alive. Furthermore, only a limited number of fathers participate in family groups for families with LGBTQ children, and in the LGBTQ movement. Whether or not children choose to talk directly with their fathers about their sexual orientation and/or identity, it is apparent that fathers are often reluctant to be involved in such social environments. In this sense, it was very difficult to find fathers who were prepared to be interviewed for the study, and consequently, analyzing whether or not, and in what ways, fathers undergo a transformation with the disclosure of their children was all but impossible. It is important, however, not to forget that coming out is an interactive process that affects the whole family, bringing shifts in perception related to the issue of sexuality in all members of the family. As Oswald (1999) states, struggles related to the process of disclosure may be resolved if 'family members unlearned heterosexist values and beliefs' (p. 66). The challenges faced by fathers with the disclosure of their children should be considered in terms of not only psychological, but also cultural frames (Martin et al., 2010). In Turkey, any issues related to LGBTQ are often grouped under the term 'homosexuality', which is mostly assumed to be male homosexuality (Eskin et al., 2005), and being a

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[74] *"Abimle çok yakın bir ilişkimiz yok ... Abime de 'Kardeşlik hissiyatını kaybetmişsin; bu kadar olaylar olurken sen çıkıp sadece şok olma tepkisi verdin.' dedim. Annem 'Senin kardeşin lezbiyen.' dedi'. Sadece korkup odasına gitti. Annem beni hırpalıyor, 25 yaşında adamsın; kalk gel, bana yardım et. Anneme 'N'olursa olsun o benim kardeşim, ben onun yanındayım.' de, bir şey de."*

homosexual is accepted as an insult for men, in that heterosexuality is seen as a sign of manhood. Sexuality is something that can happen between men and women, and any other combination is considered to be against the hegemonic perception of masculinity. In Turkish society, heterosexuality is accepted as being at the top of the gender hierarchy (Ozeren & Aydin, 2016). In this sense, the process of a disclosure may be more difficult for fathers than for mothers, since issues related LGBTQs are more commonly associated with manhood in society. For the children whose fathers are still in their lives, there is hope that they may be more included in their lives. Although they may not be able to internalize their children's LGBTQ identity, or come to terms with their lifestyle to the same level, or as quickly, as mothers and siblings, the fathers connected to the study do not totally deny their children's situation, nor do they disown them for being LGBTQ. That said, many LGBTQ children in Turkey are beaten up and murdered by family members because of their LGBTQ identity. As Cowan (1991) claims, "In line with the view that systems are dynamic and changing through time, transitions do not occur at a discrete point in time but rather are best understood in process terms: Reorganization of a system during a transition unfolds over time (as cited in Cox & Paley, 1997, p. 252)."

From the garnered data, it can be concluded that the entire family undergoes a transformation with the coming out of an LGBTQ child. Although parents may face difficulties in comprehending and adjusting to the new reality, the family system reorganizes itself around this new reality in time. Mothers do not go through the same experiences as fathers at the moment at which their children come out to them. Through the efforts of their LGBTQ and other children, parents are able to alter their heteronormative perceptions regarding the issue of sexuality. It has been proven that patterns in a family may reform when a challenge is encountered, and with shifts in those patterns, the challenge becomes a transition point in the family system (Minuchin, 1985).

6.3. Setting a New Objective: Coming Out of Mothers

"Heterosexuals' freedom will also free homosexuals."

(Yakar, 2013)

As McGill (1992) states, "… the individual and systems dialectic is linked to the dialectic of family and culture; that is, the family story is linked to the cultural story (as cited in Yerby, 1995, p. 354). In this sense, how stories of individuals connect to their family systems, as explored in the previous section, are highly interdependent on the features of the prevailing culture. Accordingly, the significance of Family Systems Theory lies in its focus on the dynamic relationships that exist between the individual, family, and other larger systems. Taking this into account, this section analyzes the process of coming out as experienced by mothers, and explains how they reveal their children's sexual orientation and/or identity to their social environments, how things that they pay attention to while doing this are related to the cultural story of Turkey, how their self-consciousness as mothers of LGBTQ children evolves, and how their journey leads them to come out publicly as activists.

In Turkey, heterosexuality is the presumed sexual identity, meaning that coming out as a process is actually a continuous process of coming out to different people. LGBTQ persons are meant to come out whenever they enter a new social environment, since it will be taken for granted that their sexual identity and/or orientation is heterosexual. The same is valid for family systems, in that the process of coming out is continuous, being interrelated with features of the social sphere that surround LGBTQ persons. That is to say, the existance of the closet in society is a direct result of the socially assigned heterosexual identity. When LGBTQ children in Turkey come out to their families of origin, a closet emerges

also for the family members. In this regard, coming out becomes inevitably 'relational', in that sexual identity and/or orientation of an LGBTQ person affects not only her or him, but also those to whom they come out. In other words, coming out can be considered a contagious (Sedgwick, 1993) process that puts the parents in the same closet as their LGBTQ children. After the coming out of their children, parents are supposed to share the discrimination and hatred of society suffered by their children (Švab & Kuhar, 2014).

After mothers learn about their children's sexual identities and/or orientations, they experience the same feelings of being marginalized in society. As mothers begin to reveal their children's LGBTQ identity to others, they come to understand how their children feel much better, in that they experience a similar process of disclosure. The primary concern of mothers regarding society is 'what might other people say?' Since homosexuality and transsexuality are still taboo in Turkish society, the internal conflicts experienced by mothers does not end with them coming to terms with issues related to LGBTQs, and they face huge difficulties in getting used to not caring what other people think. When asked who these 'other people' are, the respondent mothers listed other parents, relatives, kin, friends, neighbors, colleagues, school teachers, local grocers, and even the fathers and siblings of their children. However, over time, with the help of their children and family groups, among other sources, as mothers themselves transform, they learn to disregard other people's thoughts about the situation.

Sevim, the mother of a gay son, said:

> Two years after my son came out to me, he asked me to join him, his boyfriend and a girl they knew on 15-day tour. I accepted his invitation. When I think of those times, I ask myself what was bothering me, because I went on a trip with them. My son and his boyfriend stayed in the same room; and I stayed with their girlfriend in the same room. That was a great holiday … When I think of those times, my son being homosexual was not

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what was bothered me. My concern was what people would say about my son being homosexual.[75]

Canan, the mother of a trans man child, said:

He would come home late because he thought I would feel ashamed if anyone saw the way he looked. Honestly, I was uneasy, I thought about what people would say … I thought people would see him and talk about how 'she' became a 'he' … That really hurt. The fact that people can see your pain and make fun of it … That really offends me … I was very worried about how the situation looked. This period lasted three years until he was 25. My friends at work and those outside work, my social circle in my hometown, even when I met someone new, I went through a period where I lost track of the people I had told that I had a son, because some people had known that I had a daughter. They used to ask me 'Didn't you have a daughter?' There were times that I answered 'No, you must be mistaken' (With laughter).[76]

As explained in the previous sections, mothers are usually the first targets of a disclosure, while at the same time being gatekeepers for their children as they come out to their second social circle, which includes grandparents, other relatives in the extended family, and those in other social environments, such as friends and neighbors. Mothers, as gatekeepers, decide which and how much information should be provided to whom (Scherrer et al., 2015). It is often the mothers who are supposed to come out their children's sexual identity and/or orientation to the rest of the family, and like their children, they are selective about who they come out

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[75] *"Oğlum bize açıldıktan iki yıl sonra ben, oğlum, onun sevgilisi ve başka bir kız arkadaşları ile 15 günlük bir tura gittik. Sen de gel bizimle dediler. Şimdi düşünüyorum 'O zaman ne idi benim kabullenemediğim?' diye. Çünkü gittim onlarla beraber tatile. Onlar bir odada yatıyorlar. Ben kız arkadaşlarıyla biro dada yatıyorum. Çok da güzel bir tatil geçti … Şimdi şimdi düşünüyorum; demek ki benim tek şeyim oğlumun eşcinsel olması değil, çevre buna ne diyecek baskısıymış."*

[76] *"Geç saatte eve geliyor, komşulara mahçup olacağımı düşünüyor, çünkü görüntüden dolayı. Tedirginim ben de 'Elalem ne der?' cümlesi var yani … Elalem bakıyor 'Bu erkek mi olmuş?' diyor gibi düşünüyordum … Bu çok acı veren bir durum. İnsanın acılarını görüp bununla alay etmek… Çok ağrıma gidiyordu … Dışarıya nasıl görünür kaygısı çok taşıdım. 3 yıl öyle geçti, oğlumun 25 yaşına kadar. İş yerimdeki arkadaşlarım, arkadaş çevrem, ailem, memleketteki sosyal çevrem, yeni biriyle tanıştığım zaman bile. Mesela bir dönem kime oğlum var dediğimi unuttum. Çünkü kızım olduğunu bilenler vardı. 'Senin kızın yok mu?' diyorlardı, 'Yoo yanlış biliyorsunuz, karıştırıyorsun.' dediğim olmuştur (kahkahalarla gülüyor)."*

to, and develop strategies in this regard for their social circle. This strategy when coming out to others usually involves repeating the sentence used by their child at the moment of coming out. Another strategy is to advise their social circle to watch the documentary 'My Child', to talk about family groups for parents with LGBTQ children, and then to speak about LGBTQ celebrities before broaching the issue of their own situation.

Nalan, the mother of a lesbian daughter, said:

> She said 'You know your social circle better than me; I'll leave it up to you. There's no problem for me, do it the way you feel comfortable.' They are so strong. I don't want to wear myself out by trying to tell this to a friend who would not understand; but if I think someone is mentally available, first I make him or her watch 'My Child'. Then I tell them that my daughter is also a homosexual. Making them understand didn't take a great effort, it was actually rather easy. They were unable to give me advice, as it was all in the movie. I didn't have to explain anything. The movie really helped; it made it really easy for me. I did the same with my siblings; first I sent them the movie, then I told them.[77]

Mothers mostly talked about their children's sexual identity and/or orientation first with their close friends or with those who they accepted as wiser and more knowledgeable. Relatives other than the nuclear family are usually told later, as a result of the mothers' feelings of social responsibility, pressure and competition within the family.

Canan, the mother of a trans man child, said:

> Initially, I opened up to a family friend who knows about my family and the struggles we have. They would get along with my child as well; I knew they loved him. Maybe I was just expecting approval of my child, though I

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[77] "'Sen çevrendekileri daha iyi bilirsin. Sen değerlendir. Benim için hiç bir sorun yok. Sen nasıl rahat hissedeceksen.' dedi. Onlar o kadar güçlüler ki. Bunu anlayamayacak kafa yapısındaki bir arkadaşıma söyleyip kendimi yormak istemiyorum. Ama daha kafa yapısı müsait arkadaşlarım varsa önce 'Benim Çocuğum'u izletiyorum. Sonra da 'Benim kızım da eşcinsel.' diyorum. Yani uzun uzun bir şey anlatmama gerek kalmadı, çok kolay oldu. Öneride de bulunamadılar çünkü filmde de vardı. Benim hiçbir şey açıklamama gerek kalmadı. Çok yardımcı oldu film, çok büyük kolaylık oldu. Kardeşlerime de öyle yaptım, kargoladım filmi önden, sonra anlattım."

also knew they would understand … I opened up to my family much later. In their eyes, I was a strong woman who could handle everything by herself, but at that point I was powerless, and the thing I valued the most was at stake. That was the point where my child mattered, not me. How much legitimacy would the things I said have, how much value can they bear in their eyes? Once I was someone who could make the impossible possible, but now I was desperate. They wouldn't approve. I was already going through some marital problems and was about to separate from my husband. They knew about it. On top of that, this happened. I was destroyed. Moreover, they loved me so much; they depended on me for everything. From that powerful position, I was about become a failure. I was going to lose everything, my dignity, my importance, etc.[78]

As the research of LGBTQ persons indicates, the sequence in which people are come out to highlights that blood ties are also of secondary importance for mothers. It can be claimed that the conceptualization of families of choice as a network that can provide support for LGBTQs also works for mothers, in that their familial feelings with the people in those groups are stronger than their families of origin. This feeling also emerges with the experience of disclosure of their children; and mothers' experiences of coming out are, in fact, influenced by what they learn during the process of their children's disclosure. It can thus be concluded that children become role models for mothers, not only in their transformation at a personal level, but also in social environments.

Hatice, the mother of a trans woman child, said:

I did not tell all of the members of my family about my daughter's coming out one-by-one; I only came out to my mother. Some of them saw and

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[78] *"İlk olarak çok güvendiğim, ailece görüştüğüm biri, ailemi, aile ilişkilerimi çatışmalarımı bilen birine açıldım. Çocuğumla da iyi anlaşırlardı, onu sevdiğini de biliyordum. Belki de çocuğuma onay verilmesini bekliyordum. Ama az çok anladığını da biliyordum … Aileme daha sonra açıldım. Onların gözünde kendiliğinden her şeyi halleden, güçlü bir kadındım. Ama burada gücüm yoktu, ve en değerli varlığım söz konusuydu. Burada benim önüme geçti işte çocuğum. Söylediklerimin ne kadar hükmü olabilir, onların gözünde ne kadar değerli olabilir? Çünkü olması imkansızı başaran biriyken, burada çaresizlik söz konusuydu. Kabul görmezdi. Zaten evliliğim yüzünden olumsuz bir durum söz konusuydu, üzerine ayrılmak üzereydim. Bunlardan da haberdar olmuşlardı. Bir de üzerine bu. Yerle bir olmuştum. Kaldı ki onlar beni çok önemserler, her işlerini yaparlarken beni beklerlerdi. Öyle güçlü bir yerden hiçbir işi başaramamış durumuna düşecektim. Saygınlığımı, önemimi, her şeyimi kaybedecektim."*

heard about my daughter … but they preferred to talk behind our backs than face-to-face. Although I really care about my family, I came to the point where my child was more important than anything and anyone else in my life. I really don't care about my aunts anymore. I learned, thanks to my daughter, that blood ties are just a story, and that emotional ties are more important. I have changed thanks to my daughter … There are now at least 10 children who call me mother. I am, indeed, happy now. My daughter opened my eyes.[79]

Although they may have met other LGBTQ persons before, it can be stated that the respondent mothers had not internalized the issues of LGBTQs until their children came out to them, in that, as mentioned before, value of the child and strong feelings of unconditional love placed in children in Turkish culture leads mothers to consubstantially evaluate their children's experiences as their own. It is likely that the coming out of mothers to their social circles leads others to face their own experiences of LGBTQ persons. When people encounter the same situation in their own family, the encounter becomes more real to them, and they may start to question the attitudes they harbored in the past. In facing their past, they may also prompt a realization in others. In other words, the disclosure of a mother raises the general awareness of the issues of LGBTQ persons in their social environments. In this sense, although the respondent mothers had no plan to bring about change in society in activism terms, their coming out led to a change in their close social circles, which can be considered a starting point of a societal change.

Nalan, the mother of a lesbian daughter, said:

I never came across anything like this in my environment when I was growing up, but they had brought my aunt's son from our hometown for him to be treated. I remember vaguely my mom taking him to a doctor. My brother had not wanted to take the poor boy with him to the beach because

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[79] "*Bire bir söylemedim tüm akrabalarıma, bir tek anneme ve babama söyledim. Bir çok akrabam görmüş, duymuş. Ama bunu bana gelip bire bir söylemediler … Arkamdan konuşuldu. Ki aile bağlarına önem veren biri olarak ben, teyzelerim de hiç umrumda değil artık. Biraz da ben şunu öğrendim sanırım burada kızım sayesinde: kan bağı hikayeymiş. Duygusal bağ daha önemliymiş. Kızımın sayesinde ben değiştim … Bir çocuğum varken bir sürü çocuğum oldu. Bana anne diyen en az on tane çocuk var şimdi. Şimdi mutluyum aslında. Kızım benim gözlerimi açtı.*"

it was 50 years ago, and he was a kid who wore perfume, he let one of his nails grow, had unusual bangs and he wore a scarf around his neck. I felt sorry for him after seeing my brother treat him that way. I couldn't understand what he was. As he was alienated in that way and was taken to doctors, I had the impression that this was a sickness. Now my mother talks about him. She confesses her 50-year-old sins. She remembers how she took him from one doctor to another. She recalls him begging her not to leave him at the hospital, telling her that the doctors had been molesting him. Now my mother says 'Maybe they really molested him; what had I done?' She says 'That was because I didn't know any better.' Now, even my mother is questioning her deeds.[80]

Although they consider the level of closeness of the relationship or the level of education of those to whom they come out, the reactions of other people are sometimes unexpected for mothers.

Canan, the mother of a trans man child, said:

… I started telling my family about it … My little brother and I don't have a close relationship, but at least he thought this was God's work. His wife and older child had also the same understanding. I didn't know back then, but our children were seeing each other. Things had been working themselves out without me having to put in much effort. My mother's reaction amazed me. I told her that my child said this to me, and that the doctors had said the same thing. I told her that this was irreversible. Either way, I was going to lose my child. My mother loved him in a different way, since she knew his illnesses and the pain he went through when he was growing up. She is not a very educated woman, but she loves to read. She came to accept the situation not because she had knowledge, but with the help of her faith. My older brother was cold about it at first, but they called when we were at the hospital. My sister has estranged herself. She

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[80] *"Benim çevremde yoktu ama ben çocukken halamın oğlunu tedavi olsun diye memleketten buraya getirmişlerdi. Ben hayal meyal hatırlıyorum. Annem doktora götürmüştü burada. Hatta oğlan kardeşim çocukcağızı yanında plaja götürmek istememişti. Çünkü düşünün bundan 50 sene önce çocuk kokular sürünen, bir tane tırnağını uzatan, kahkülünü aşağıya bir şey yapan, boynuna fular bağlayan bir çocuktu. Oğlan kardeşimin tepki göstermesine çocuk adına çok üzülmüştüm. Onun ne olduğunu anlamıyordum. Çocuğun o şekilde dışlanması, ve doktora götürülmesi onun o durumun hastalık olduğuna dair bir izlenim bırakmıştı bende. Şimdi annem onun yorumunu yapıyor. Düşünün 50 yıl öncesinin günahını çıkarıyor annem. Ben o çocuğu doktor doktor gezdirdim. Bir gün şey demiş, 'N'olur beni burada bırakmayın. Doktorlar beni taciz ediyor.' demiş. Şimdi annem 'Belki de gerçekten taciz ettiler çocuğu, ben neler yaptım?' diyor. 'İşte bilmeyince yaptım ne yapayım evladım.' diyor. Şimdi annem bile yaptıklarını sorguluyor."*

still hasn't accepted it, and she has a daughter in medical school. I don't see my sister. My child telephoned her, but she told him that she was not ready for this. She was afraid that her husband would find out and prevent her from seeing me. The fact that he is a doctor doesn't mean he will understand. I told her that it was up to her. She said she couldn't accept it. I said 'He is my child, I worked really hard to win him over, I can't lose him because of something like this'.[81]

When both mothers and children are asked about the reasons behind their decisions and the importance of coming out to others, their answers bear similarities. Both want to stop people from asking irrelevant questions, and want to feel comfortable about sharing their experiences, even in their daily routines. They do not want to live a dual life in which there is a 'normal' and a 'deviant' part, because it makes them feel lost and desperate. Furthermore, being honest with others about their lives also means being honest to themselves. Both mothers and children feel that coming out allows them to actualize their true personalities, and avoids contradictions between what they do and say. In this sense, a total reversal is witnessed in which coming out becomes 'the normal', while not coming out becomes 'the deviant'.

Nalan, the mother of a lesbian daughter, said:

> Most likely, the reason why we come out to others is to avoid entering a situation in which we can't answer people's questions, such as 'When is she going to get married?', 'Does she have a boyfriend?', 'Why does she have a reaction towards men?', etc. They say that my daughter should be

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[81] *"…Aileme söylemeye başladım … Erkek kardeşimle aramız iyi değil ama o da Allah'tan geldiğini düşündü. Onun eşi de büyük çocuğu da aynı anlayışı gösterdi. Onlar görüşürlermiş meğer. Ben çok uğraşmadan bazı şeyler kendiliğinden çözülmeye başlamış yani. Annemin tepkisi beni çok şaşırttı. Ona bana böyle dedi dedim. Doktorlarda öyle söyledi dedim. 'Bunun geri dönüşü yok.' dedim. 'Çocuğumu ya öyle kaybedecektim ya da böyle kaybedecektim.' dedim. Annem de hastalığı dönemlerini bildiği için, acıyla büyüdüğünü bildiği için ayrı severdi oğlumu. Çok eğitimli bir kadın değil, okumayı sever. Olsun varsına gelmişti. Çok bildiğinden değil inancıyla. Abim önce soğuktu. Ama hastanedeyken aradılar. Kız kardeşim uzaklaştı. Hala kabul etmedi, ve kızları tıp okuyor. Kız kardeşimle görüşmüyorum. Çocuğum telefon etmiş ona, 'Hazır değilim.' demiş. Eşi öğrenir de benimle görüştürmez diye korkuyormuş. Doktor olması onun böyle olmadığı anlamına gelmiyor. 'Sen bilirsin.' dedim. 'Kabul edemiyorum.' dedi. Ben de 'Benim çocuğum, kazanmak için çok uğraştım, böyle bir şey için kaybedemem.' dedim."*

living with her mother instead of her girlfriend. When I tell them that this is what she wants, I am in a powerless position, and I say 'Yes' to everything. After I come out to them, I feel like I have given a much clearer answer … It is contradictory to tell a child that she can't do this and that after raising her as a free person. It is a really big contradiction. I didn't want to deal with these kinds of questions. Rather than trying to explain it at length, I choose to come out. It makes me feel relieved.[82]

Canan, the mother of a trans man child, said:

"They were seeing it. You become overwhelmed; you want to talk about it; you become uncomfortable; you are helpless; you are looking for help; you wish that someone could listen to you, and understand you."[83]

Levent, who identifies himself as gay, explained his reasons behind his decision to come out to others:

We come out so that we don't have to hide, because hiding is really exhausting … Although it's a burden, it doesn't feel like it because you hide everything even from your loved ones. A lot of people live like this … I know, because I had been suppressing my feelings for a long time. If I was from a different social background, I could even have got married by now. I have friends like that who have got married and divorced, and were able to come out to themselves only much later. There are also a lot of people who cannot get a divorce and are now leading a double life, spending time with their 'wives' and being gay at the weekend. A lot of us live divided lives like this. On the one hand, you have your 'gay' life, and on the other, you have your 'normal' life. We try to combine them as much as possible, but it's not possible when your life is in danger. Then not coming out becomes the most viable option. Society needs to be in a very

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[82] *"İnsanların sorularına cevap verememek sıkıntısına girmemek adına açılırız herhalde. Mesela 'Ne zaman evlenecek, erkek arkadaşı var mı, neden erkeklere tepki veriyor?' gibi sorularla muhatap olmamak adına. 'Ceren kız arkadaşıyla oturacağına annesiyle otursun.' diyorlar. 'O da öyle istiyor.' dediğimde her şeye 'evet' diyen ezik kadın pozisyonuna düşüyorum ben de o zaman. Bunu açıklayarak daha net cevap verdiğimi düşünüyorum … Zaten çok özgür yetiştirdiğimiz çocuklara kalkıp da 'Hayır, yapmayacaksın.' demek çelişki. Büyük bir çelişki. Böyle sorularla muhatap olmak istemedim. Uzun uzadıya anlatmaktansa açıldığım zaman rahatlıyorum."*

[83] *"Görüyorlardı. İçin doluyor, anlatmak istiyorsun, rahatsız oluyorsun, çaresizsin, yardım arıyorsun, birileri seni anlasın dinlesin istiyorsun."*

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different place for these ends to meet. Until then, there will always be dividedness.[84]

All in all, after mothers come out to others, certain shifts occur in their social circles. Starting to participate in family groups, opening up about their children's sexual orientation and/or identity, and supporting their children in living how they want result in some people disappearing their environment, while also bringing in new social networks. Joining new social circles where they can talk freely about LGBTQ issues makes them realize that this is actually a very common experience.

Canan, the mother of a trans man child, said:

> I was in a new social circle; I was seeing my friends from middle school. That made my social circle expand. Some of them became very close friends, and I came out to them. Then I learned that they also have people like these in their families. Everybody has something like this in their lives.[85]

Hatice, the mother of a trans woman child, said:

> I first called LISTAG; I didn't go there actually. It was not until I learned about the breast issue that I figured it would get even harder, and I wouldn't be able to handle it all by myself. I called the support line again and talked to one of the mothers. To be honest, I don't remember what we talked about, but I can't put into words the calmness that her voice brought me. It was unbelievable. After that phone call, I was extremely happy. I

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[84] *"Gizlenmek zorunda kalmamak için açılırız. Çünkü gizlenmek çok yorucu bir şey ... O sana ekstra bir yükmüş gibi gelmiyor aslında yük olmasına rağmen çünkü en yakınlarından bile her şeyi saklıyorsun. Bir çok insan böyle devam ediyor hayatına ... Ben de çok uzun süre hislerimi bastırdığım için biliyorum. Eğer sosyal yapım daha farklı olsaydı, ben de belki çoktan evlenmiş olurdum. Öyle arkadaşlarım da var; evlenmiş, boşanmış, kendi kendine çok sonra itiraf edebilmiş. Boşanamamış ya da ikili hayat yaşayan da bir sürü insan var; 'karısı' ile vakit geçiren ve haftasonu eşcinselliği yapan. Çoğumuz aslında bir şekilde böyle ayrı iki bölmede yaşıyoruz. Yani bir 'eşcinsel' hayatın var, bir de 'normal' hayatın var. Bunları mümkün olduğunca birleştirmeye çalışıyoruz. Bazen mesela hayati tehlike varsa bu olamıyor tabii. O zaman açılmamak daha doğru olabiliyor. O zaman da bu uçurumun kapanması için toplumun bambaşka bir yerde olması gerekiyor. Ama bu olana kadar hep bir bölünmüşlük olacak."*

[85] *"Yeni bir çevreye dahil olmuştum. Ortaokul arkadaşlarımla buluşuyordum, haberleşiyordum. O sayede arkadaş grubum genişledi. Onlardan bazıları çok yakın arkadaşlarım oldu. Onlara açıldım. Onlara açıldığımda, onların da ailelerinde olduğunu öğrendim. Herkesin hayatında böyle bir şey var."*

was not at my best during the phone call, but her voice was also trembling. I told myself 'You're with someone who is just like you'. Even talking to my mom couldn't make me feel this good ... If anybody had said to me in the early times of my daughter's coming out that you would go to events and openly talk about your child's sexual identity and/or orientation, I couldn't even laugh. I said 'Me? Never!' CETAD and LISTAG, especially LISTAG, really did me good. People said to me 'You recovered yourself after LISTAG, your face is glowing now'. I sometimes even say that things happening this way was better, as I met so many new people … I have even taken my mother to CETAD, although she had never spoken in front of an audience before.[86]

By sharing their anxiety with other parents in similar situations, it can be stated that mothers were able to come to terms with their children's LGBTQ identity more easily. At the end of the interviews, although they had gone through rough processes, parents generally highlighted how their feelings of fear and anxiety had turned into ones of trust in their children. In this sense, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as Families and Friends of LGBTIs in Turkey (LISTAG), Support Group for Families and Kins of LGBTIQ+s (LADEG+), Ankara Rainbow Families, and the Society for Sexual Education Treatment and Research (CETAD) are the most significant organizations helping mothers overcome their ignorance of issues of sexual orientation, sexual identity, and gender identity. While acquainting themselves with the the meetings and events held by LISTAG, LADEG+, Ankara Rainbow Families, and CETAD, mothers are able to confront and confess their previous bad behaviors related to their children.

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[86] *"İlk aradığımda LİSTAG'ı, gitmedim. Ta ki göğüs olayını öğrenip bundan sonrasının daha kötü olacağını ve kendi başına kaldıramayacağımı anlayana kadar. Tekrar aradığımda destek hattını, annelerden biriyle konuştum. Ne konuştuğumu hatırlamıyorum işin açıkçası. Ama o sesin bana verdiği rahatlığı sana anlatamam. İnanılmazdı. Telefonu kapattım ve bir mutlu oldum bir mutlu oldum ben. Telefonda konuşurken ben kötüydüm ama telefondaki diğer annenin de sesi titriyordu. 'Senin gibi biri daha var karşında.' dedim kendime. Annemle konuşsam bana bu kadar iyi gelmezdi ... O zamanlar bana deselerdi ki 'Gidip bir yerlere konuşacaksın, bilmem ne yapacaksın.' Gülemezdim bile. 'Ben? Asla!' derdim. Kabullenme dönemim çok kötü geçti çünkü. Ama dediğim şimdi buna çok üzülüyorum. Onlar kayıp zamanlar çünkü. Kendimi suçluyorum. 'Okusaydın kadın, öğrenseydin.' diye kendime kızıyorum şimdi. Bu anlamda CETAD ve özellikle LİSTAG bana çok iyi geldi. Herkes bana 'Kendine gelmişsin.Yüzüne renk gelmiş valla.' diyor ... Hatta bazen rahatlıkla şunu söyleyebiliyorum ki, belki de böyle olması iyi oldu, ben bu kadar yeni insanlar tanıdım ... Annemi bile CETAD'a getirdim ki annem hayatında bir ortama girip konuşma yapmamış insan."*

In addition to the emotional relationship between mothers and children, with which comes strong mutual support, there are those support groups, mainly LISTAG, LADEG+, Ankara Rainbow Families, and CETAD, through which mothers become knowledgeable about issues of gender identity, sexual identity, and sexual orientation, and where they can learn how other parents deal with the challenges of disclosure. One of the most significant moments in the field study was this moment, in that most of the mothers made similar remarks immediately after talking about their children's coming out. All agreed that their fear was due mostly to their lack of knowledge of the issue. All said that the period after learning about their children's sexual orientation and/or identity up until their participation in LADEG+, LISTAG, Ankara Rainbow Families, and CETAD events was a time of ignorance and a huge waste of time. All said that they did not know how they had let themselves be so ignorant, when they had been very careful and knowledgeable when raising their children. Most said that although they liked to read, they had not read anything on this issue; and they chose not to read up on the subject even after their children's disclosure. They highlighted that while they had always said their children were the most precious things in their lives and that their happiness and health were the most important things to them, none could understand how they could surrender to such ignorance and make them lose sight of the most important thing in their lives, being their children.

Sevim, a mother of a gay son, said:

> After he came out, of course there were difficulties between us, because he expected instant acceptance, like 'Okay, I came out, now let's figure this out'. I couldn't react that way, because I was dealing with myself at the time. That's the way it goes with pretty much everyone at that point. The kid comes out, throws the ball at you and then he leaves. Or he assumes that everything is over because now we know about it, but it doesn't work that way. He has known what he is since the age of three or five. He has come to this age with an awareness of himself. He knows himself. That awareness, making peace with oneself, is a precondition for coming out, while parents must face the years of knowledge he has had for the first time

in their lives. They suspect, or they may not, but at that moment, it all becomes clear. After that, time starts to run for the parents. It is really not easy … When a mother talks about this, or a child says 'I came out to my mother but she won't accept it', I can tell them to take a minute to consider that now it's time for the parents to make peace with it go through this process … It would have worked out without LISTAG, but it would have taken much more time. At the end, I came to realize that I had been unfair to my son and that I was being a hypocrite. I was telling him that I love him and accept him, but at the same time I did not accept his loudly spoken identity. I only came to think this after seven or eight years. I consider that as time lost.[87]

Another important role of the above support mechanisms is as places where mothers can build new social networks with which they feel safe and confident. When outside those safe zones, they come out to people with the aim of building more safe zones, and so become selective to whom they come out, considering people's discriminative or non-discriminative attitudes about the issue. Their quest to feel a sense of 'belonging and wholeness' leads them to come out to people they choose, and deal with their personal process of disclosure with them more easily (Baptist & Allen, 2008).

Canan, the mother of a trans man child, said:

I worked in a different place for a while. I didn't tell my coworkers there, but they found out by digging into it. Then they said that they could have

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[87] *"Açıldıktan sonra benimle zorluklar yaşadı tabii. Çünkü o istiyordu ki 'Tamam, bak ben açıldım artık. Hadi gel, konuşalım, halledelim.' Ben de onları yapmadım yani, çünkü ben de kendimle uğraşıyordum o sırada. Öyle oluyor. O dönem hemen hemen herkeste aynı oluyor. Çocuk açılıyor, atıyor topu, sonra çekip gidiyor; veya 'Hadi, öğrendin artık, bitti her şey.' diyor. Ama öyle olmuyor. Çünkü bir çocuk üç-beş yaşından beri ne olduğu hakkında bir fikirle gelmiş bu yaşına kadar. Kendini tanımış. Kendiyle barışmadıkça zaten açılmıyor. Onun hayatı boyunca oraya kadar getirdiği bilgiyle anne baba ilk defa karşılaşıyor. Şüpheleniyor ya da şüphelenmiyorlar ama o anda herşey tamam oluyor. Şimdi artık o anne babanın süreci başlıyor. Kolay bir şey değil bu gerçekten … Karşımdaki anne bundan bahsederken ya da çocuk 'Anneme açıldım ama o kabul etmiyor.' derken bana, 'Bir dakika dur. Şimdi annen kendi ile barışıcak, o süreci yaşayacak.' diyebiliyorum … Eğer LİSTAG olmasaydı, yine hallolacaktı ama daha uzun sürecekti. Zaten ben de başlamıştım son dönemlerde artık 'İki yüzlülük yapıyorum, oğluma haksızlık ediyorum … Hem çocuğuma ben seni kabul ediyorum, ben seni seviyorum diyorum. Ama çocuğumun bangır bangır söylediği kimliğine sahip çıkmıyorum.' demeye; ama yedi-sekiz sene sonra ben bunları düşünmeye başladım. Bunlar hep kayıp."*

helped if I had told them. How could I have come out to someone when I know that they would never accept it? I think this way today as well. You don't have to come out to everyone. People who understand are worth it, but I cannot spend time on those who wouldn't. The most obvious example is my sister. When I see her, I think it's a waste of time. If I am an educator and an activist, I will discuss it with people with whom I can move forward.[88]

In taking the side of their children by rejecting all heterosexist norms of society, mothers realize how parental support is crucial not only for their children's well-being, but also their place in the eyes of others. Mothers realize that what they want is to protect their children against discrimination in society from the very beginning; and support of their children is key in this regard. Mothers of trans children in particular realize that being on the side of their children can prevent them from acts of violence.

Ayla, the mother of a trans woman child, said:

> I didn't move out of my neighborhood. Why would I? We hadn't done anything to anyone; we didn't kill, steal, rape or assault anyone. My child said that she was a woman; that was it. This is between my child and me. Why would I leave my home? People should become more aware; they should get to know about these things. My mother grew up in this neighborhood. The grocery man and the mukhtar are my childhood friends. No one asked me anything. My child felt ashamed during her transition; she used to keep her head down when we were passing through the grocery store. I used to yell at her to keep her head up. They couldn't ask anything to my child or me because I was with her. [89]

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[88] *"Bir ara başka bir ortamda çalıştım. Oradaki iş arkadaşlarıma söylememiştim. Kendileri kurcalaya kurcalaya öğrenmişler. Sonra da 'Bize söyleseydi yardımcı olurduk.' demişler. Ben yoklaşmışım onları. Asla kabulü olmayan birine, nasıl baktığını bilirken ben nasıl açılayım? Şimdi de böyle düşünüyorum. Gerekli değil herkese açılmak. Anlayabilecek insanlar tamam ama anlayamayacak insanlarla vakit kaybedemem. En yakın örneği kız kardeşim. Onu gördükten sonra bunun zaman kaybı olduğunu düşünüyorum. Eğer ben eğitimciysem ve aktivistsem daha hızlı yol alabileceğim insanlarla devam ederim."*

[89] *"Mahallemden çıkmadım. Niye çıkayım? Biz kimseye bir şey yapmadık, kimseyi öldürmedik, kimsenin evine girip hırsızlık yapmadık, kimseye taciz tecavüz etmedik, kimseyi gasp etmedik. Neymiş benim çocuğum 'Kızım ben.' demiş. Bu benimle çocuğumun arasında olan bir şey. Niye ben evimden çıkayım ki? Hem insanlar da artık farkında olsunlar, bilsinler artık. Burası annemin*

Hatice, the mother of a trans woman child, said:

> We were going to the doctor one day. She prepared as she normally would to go out, did her makeup, but her makeup is a full makeover now. She wore a coat, but her coat is furry, it is no longer a male coat. We walked down the street together arm-in-arm for the first time. I realized then, through the influence of CETAD of course, that if anyone stared at my child, I would do the same back to them, implying 'What are you looking at?'. My daughter took me to many shops with the excuse of buying something. Although I said there is no need, we were still entering the stores. It is the place where she lives, she introduced me to people at every store we entered. Then I realized she was doing it on purpose … Each time she said 'This is my mother.', I felt proud of her. Then, I said to myself that I should be with my child. I understood she would feel better if I am on her side … Then, I realized my child is a good child; she was never a bad child. She did not hurt anybody; everybody loves her … We learned from CETAD and LISTAG that her situation is innate, and there is nothing to be ashamed of. I said to myself 'Don't be ashamed of your child; be proud of her because she didn't do anything wrong, not to anybody.' … I said to myself 'Be on the side of your child from now on.' From that day, I have been with her … Afterwards, everything got better. She started to visit my house every day. Her friends started to come to visit me. I used to be upset at having only one child, now I have seven or eight children … Now I want to tell everybody that I am with my child, in fact, with 'my children'.[90]

çocukluğunun geçtiği mahalle, bakkal muhtar falan benim çocukluk arkadaşlarım. Hiç biri önümü kesip bana bir şey sormadılar. Benim çocuğum utandı değişim dönüşüm zamanında, kafası önünde geçiyordu dükkanın önünden. Ben koluna girip bağırıyordum 'Kafanı kaldır.' diye. Ben olduğum için onun yanında, çocuğuma da bana da hiç bir şey soramadılar."

[90] *"Bir gün doktora gidecektik beraber. Hazırlandı tabii, dışarı çıkacağız. Makyaj yaptı ama makyaj tam makyaj artık. Bir mont giydi, montlar tüylü, artık erkek kıyafeti değil. Sokağa çıktık, ilk defa kol kola dışarıda beraber yürüdük. Orada şunu farketmiştim, CETAD'ın etkisi olmuştu tabii, biri bakarsa ben de ona bakacağım, 'Ne bakıyorsun?' dercesine. Kızım da her gördüğü mağazaya beni sokuyor, 'Anne sana şuradan bir şey bakalım mı?' diyerek. 'Yok, lazım değil.' diyorum ama biz yine de giriyoruz mağazalara. Orası onun yaşadığı yer sonuçta, her girdiğimiz mağazada da beni tanıştırıyor. Sonra onu farkettim, aslında o bilerek her yere soktu beni o gün … O 'Tanıştırayım, annem.' dedikçe ben gururlandım aslında orada. O zaman dedim ki ben yanında olmalıyım herhalde çocuğumun. Yanında olursan bu çocuk kendini daha iyi hissedecek, onu anladım … Orada şunu farkettim, beni çocuğum çok iyi bir çocuk, kötü bir çocuk değildi zaten. Kimseye de kötü bir şey yapmamış, herkes onu çok seviyor … CETAD ve LİSTAG'tan da öğrendik ki biz, bu durum doğuştan ve utanılacak bir şey yok. Onun için ben artık utanmayacağım, daha çok ben çocuğumla gurur duyarım kötü hiçbir şey yapmamış kimseye … 'Ben yanında olayım artık.' dedim kendi kendime. O günden sonra da heryerde yanındaydım ve bunu lanse ettim. Ondan sonra her şey daha da güzel oldu. Her gün bana gelmeye başladı. Bütün arkadaşları bana gelmeye*

Accordingly, it can be said that mothers, like their LGBTQ children, long to be accepted with their new identity as mothers of LGBTQ children. What family groups provide mothers is the chance to embrace their new identity by meeting other parents like themselves, thus normalizing the situation. Realizing just how much familial support is critical for their children's well-being, a group of parents gathered and organized 'LISTAG' in 2008 in Istanbul, and 2016 saw the creation of another family group, 'LADEG+', by the parents and kin of LGBTQ persons. Both groups seek to address the issue of discrimination towards LGBTQs in Turkey, to improve awareness of issues related LGBTQs, and to provide support to families experiencing the same situation. Through these NGOs, it is evident that the personal identities, according to which mothers had defined themselves as unique with their feelings of shock and loneliness, leads to the creation of a social identity through which they can identify themselves as part of a group. This reconstruction of the self indicates a shift from an individual-based identity to a group-based identity. In other words, the respondent mothers were lonely, having to deal with the grief and shock of having an LGBTQ child. As they come to participate in family groups, they learn to get over their feelings of fear, loss and guilt, and come to be at peace with their new identity as the mother of an LGBTQ child with the support of family groups, as well as with their new identity as political activists. Both the personal and social identities of mothers form around the same source as they come together around a goal that brings about a merging of different dimensions of identity over time.

In this sense, family groups in Turkey such as LISTAG, LADEG+ and Ankara Rainbow Families, are, at the same time, both solidarity groups and interest groups. These groups also emerged as support groups for parents and relatives to help each other deal with the challenges of the coming out processes of both their

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başladı. Ben güya tek çocuk sahibiyim diye üzülürken, bir anda benim 7-8 tane gerçeken çocuğum diyebileceğim çocuklarım oldu ... Ben artık, çocuğumdan da çıktı iş, 'çocuklarımın' yanındayım demek istiyorum."

children and themselves, although they can also be considered as interest groups, having brought parents into the LGBTQ movement in Turkey as activists. In this regard, they take on the task of raising general awareness of LGBTQ issues by participating in demonstrations, filming documentaries, organizing national and international consciousness-raising events, and forming connections with the government.

Ayla, the mother of a trans woman child, explained why she had been participating in the support group:

> When I first found out, I felt like my child and I were alone in this world. I thought nobody had ever gone through something like this. I felt really alone; it was horrible. I just want parents to not kick their children out of their homes. When a child comes out, the parents should embrace her/him; that is the important thing. The child should be able to sleep and eat at home. The reason why I joined the family group is to prevent children from being left without families … Talking about these things, giving interviews and informing people has been my mission since then, because people need to start talking. I have been through so much pain, I have cried a lot. If there weren't any other mothers, I would have been extremely alone.[91]

Mothers seek to make a change in society, in that some still feel that the societal norms that class their children as second-class citizens prevents them from being at peace with their children's sexual identity and/or orientation. Accordingly, they fight to change society for not only to gain a peaceful life for their children, but also for their own inner peace.

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[91] *"Ben öğrendiğimde dünyada bir ben bir de çocuğum varmış gibi hissettim. 'Kimse böyle bir şey yaşamamıştır herhalde.' dedim. Çok yalnız hissettim. Korkunç bir şeydi. Benim tek istediğim aileler çocuklarını evden atmasın. Önemli olan çocuk açılınca, aile onu alsın, kucaklasın. O da evinde yatsın, evinde yemek yesin. Benim bunları yapma amacım o: çocuklar ailesiz kalmasın … Ben zaten o zamandan hedeflemiştim röportaj vermeyi, konuşmayı, insanları bilgilendirmeyi. Çünkü bazı şeyleri artık bazı kişilerin anlatması gerekiyor. Çok acı çektim, çok ağladım çünkü ben. Çok yalnızdım diğer anneler olmasaydı."*

Sevim, a mother of a gay son, said:

> LISTAG is very important; something that we could never imagine came
> to life; something amazing came out of nothing. A group had been formed
> in İzmir, another one in Ankara. We went to universities in different cities,
> movies had been screened, we had given talks, etc. We were the ones that
> were being talked about. We were on television. This is really important
> for both the LGBTQ community and the community itself. The community
> comes face-to-face with something they had been ignoring. I think the
> movie had a considerable impact. We had been talking, telling our stories
> even before then, but after the movie was released, it became possible to
> reach out to so many more people instantly. The movie had a really big
> impact on people. People said, 'We were not aware of something like this.'
> This is really important in the name of extinguishing homophobia and
> transphobia … For example, at the premiere of the movie, an audience
> member said, 'I had never thought that these people had families.' This is
> incredibly moving. Homosexuals, transsexuals exist in this society, and
> they were also once precious babies of their families. People can't envision
> that. LISTAG is very valuable in terms of breaking down these
> misconceptions.[92]

Canan, the mother of a trans man child, said:

> I need time to be completely at peace with it. I made peace with it, but my
> journey is not yet complete. That will only be possible with the acceptance
> of the majority in this society. We need to fight until these people are
> accepted within the norm. I need to see that my child is a respected
> individual before I can be completely at peace with it.[93]

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[92] *"Çok önemli LİSTAG. Hayal edemeyeceğimiz bir şey oluştu. Bir hiçten müthiş bir şey ortaya
çıktı. İzmir'de grup oluştu, Ankara'da grup oluştu. Başka şehirlerde üniversitelere gittik, filmler
gösterildi, konuşmalar yaptık vs. Basında bizden bahsedildi. Televizyona çıktık. Bunun hem
LGBTQ camiası için hem de bütün toplum için çok önemli. Toplum gözünü kapattığı, yoksaydığı
bir şeyle yüzyüze geliyor. Filmin müthiş etkisi olduğunu düşünüyorum. Çünkü biz ondan önce de
gidip konuşuyorduk, hikayemizi anlatıyorduk ama şimdi filmle bir sürü kişiye anında ulaşmak
mümkün ve filmin etkisi çok büyük insanlar üzerinde. İnsanlardan 'Biz hiç böyle bir şey
bilmiyorduk.' şeklinde geri dönüşler alıyoruz. Homofobinin ve transfobinin yok olması adına bu
çok önemli … Mesela filmin galasında bir izleyici 'Ben bu çocukların aileleri olabileceğini hiç
düşünmemiştim.' dedi. Bu inanılmaz derecede sarsıcı bir şey. Eşcinseller, transseksüeller bu
toplumda varlar, evet, ama onlar da bir ailenin bebeğiydi, sevgili çocuğuydu; bunu
düşünemiyorlar. Bunları kırmak adına LİSTAG çok değerli."*

[93] *"Barışık olmama daha var. Evet oldum ama daha yolum var. Bu toplumda çoğunluğun kabulüyle
mümkün o da. Çoğu insanın bu bireyleri de normların içine koyduğu zamana kadar savaşmak
gerekiyor. Çocuğumun da saygın olduğunu görmem gerekiyor tam olarak barışmam için."*

To conclude, through the shifts that mothers go through in their personhoods, they also come to make changes in their social circles. After a child comes out, the family is often pushed into a broader family closet, which is a situation within the family of origin where family members are put into the closet in relation to the broader kinship network, neighbors, friends and acquaintances, colleagues from work, and other social and community contexts. Information about the child's sexual identity and/or orientation is now shared among (some or all) family members, and this affects not only family relations, but also the actions of family members in the outside world. The family closet can be seen as a direct result of the social environment being permeated by homophobia, transphobia and heteronormative expectations (Švab & Kuhar, 2014).

While they have many concerns of how to deal with the situation, the awareness that comes with standing side-by-side with other parents and other LGBTQ children leads mothers to leave behind their personal fears and fight for the rights of discriminated groups, particularly LGBTQs'. Throughout this journey, all the respondent mothers have come to realize that this struggle against stigmatization is not solely for their children, but for themselves, too. When forming an organized social group, it is important not to forget the significant role to be played by the children. Many of the mothers state that they would not have had the chance to meet each other without the guidance of their children. In fact, it was the activist children in LambdaIstanbul that first motivated mothers to come together to provide support to other parents and to protect their LGBTQ children. Thanks to those children, there are now two main family groups in Istanbul, and one in Ankara (LISTAG, LADEG+, Ankara Rainbow Families), all of which are engaged in an active struggle against discrimination and the hatred suffered by LGBTQs in Turkey.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the literature review of studies of family dynamics, the sociology of 'the closet' and the LGBTQ issues explained in the first chapter, this study can find a home in the bodies of both national and international literature. From this review, it can be concluded that investigations into familial dynamics of LGBTQ persons have to date been few and far between, and while the families of LGBTQs have been studied from the perspective of 'families of choice', LGBTQ persons' families of origin is a topic that has received only limited attention to date. Furthermore, existing studies into the families of LGBTQs have examined the issue of coming out from an individual perspective, all but overlooking the issue of the dynamics within their family (Demo & Allen, 1996).

This thesis draws upon the conceptual frame of Family Systems Theory. As claimed by such theoreticians as Minuchin (1985), Yerby (1995), Cox and Paley (1997; 2003), Parke (2004), and Bornstein and Sawyer (2006), the most indispensable principles of systems theory, given their influence in a family analysis, are as follows: Systems are constructed through subsystems that are interrelated, coordinated and organized in a hierarchical harmony, and differentiated from each other through boundaries. Systems have their own circular order. Open systems have the capability of changing, restructuring, adapting, and advancing (as cited in McHale & Sullivan, 2008, p. 193). In this sense, the systems perspective serves as a fertile theoretical basis for the

consideration of families as open systems within extra-familial systems. Through its methodology that considers a system along with its subsystems, intrasystem dynamics and processes, Systems Theory permits the analysis of the family in its all expanses. In this respect, Family Systems Theory frees us from "a fixation on intrapsychic factors as primary motivators for human social interaction, allowing us to focus more on the study of relationships (Yerby, 1995, p. 343)".

Moreover, it is necessary to consider the cultural tenets of Turkish society if this qualitative analysis is to be bassed on the personal accounts of mothers and children, in that Turkey has a culture that is highly dominated by heterosexual norms. Inspired by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's 'Epistemology of the Closet', Baba (2011) claims that the modernization process in non-Western countries involves the naturalization of heterosexuality, and the same can be said for Turkey, although in Turkey, this approach still dominates. The leading political party in Turkey clearly encourages the heteronormative organization of the family, both in speeches and in the policies it has enacted since it was elected in 2002. Furthermore, Turkish media tends to refer to LGBTQ persons as 'deviant' and 'marginalized', contributing to the continued stigmatization and discrimination of LGBTQ persons in society, and making it very difficult to break the prejudices against LGBTQs.

This thesis argues that the coming out experiences of LGBTQ children to their families of origin brings about changes in the family system. This claim is supported by three arguments: First, that coming out is an interactive act, prior to it being political act. This argument originates from the communication loop among family members which leads the family as a system to create mechanisms for expressing themselves, and influencing and transforming each other. That said, obviously, communication cannot remain limited to the loop of family members, and so people need strategic partners in the coming out process, which turns coming out into a political act. Second, that the coming out of a self-identifying

LGBTQ child to her/his family of origin has influences on the lives both of the child and the other family members. In other words, the process of coming out occurs both at an individual level and at a familial level. Lastly, different sexual identities are firstly encountered in the family, and transformations through these encounters may bring about changes in society. In this sense, the process of coming out stands to make a much broader impact, extending a considerable distance beyond the family level.

An analysis of the data gathered in the course of this study points to the fact that the coming out of self-identifying LGBTQ children to their families of origin leads to changes within intra-familial dynamics. Throughout Chapter 5 of this thesis, the initial experiences of mothers prior to the coming out of their children, and their initial reactions at the point of disclosure are presented. Considering the collected data from all stages of the coming out process – before, during and immediately after – it can be stated that mothers often had suspicions pertaining to the physical appearance and social circles of their children, which were not, in fact, compatible with socially assigned gender roles. Here, the data provided by the mothers with lesbian daughters is in contrast to the data provided by those with gay sons and trans children, since Turkish culture is more tolerant of close relationships between girlfriends. Ignoring the possibility of having an LGBTQ child, mothers develop strategies to dampen their suspicions, and to make their children come to terms with the attitudes of assigned gender roles. The second part begins by describing some examples of coming out as a milestone memory and a turning point in the respondent mothers' lives. The process of disclosure among self-identifying lesbians-gays differs from that of trans children, whose decisions to come out are based on feelings of bodily discomfort, in that the mothers of trans children must endure a heavier but relatively faster process, and cannot take the time to come to terms with the issue of the sexual identity and/or orientation of their children, as sex re-assignment surgery is high on their child's agenda.

By considering the initial reactions and feelings of mothers, this study takes a different approach to other studies that work around Kübler's (1969) five stages of loss, which are denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. While mothers of trans children demonstrate reactions that are compatible with Kübler's work, those with homosexual children do not mention a feeling of loss of their children. Moreover, fear emerged as a common emotion that was experienced by every mother after the coming out of their children. The feelings that accompanied this fear among the respondent mothers were varied, but included feelings of guilt that they may have raised their children wrong, that LGBTQ is an illness to be cured, that their children hay have been abused, and that it was this that led them to becoming LGBTQ, and their concerns regarding their children's safety in society, having witnessed the perceived regularity of violence against LGBTQs in Turkey. Faced with the anxiety of coming out, mothers attempt to hide the truth about their children' sexual identity and/or orientation, while at the same time observing how their children are enjoying the freedom and honesty that comes with having come out to their families of origin. The second section of the fifth chapter, accordingly, focuses on how mothers face the fact that their children are regarded as 'the other' in the society, which leads them to criticize the hegemonic heteropatriarchal values of Turkish society to which they have been exposed. They come to realize that since the birth of their children, they have established many dreams for their futures, but come to face the reality that their dreams were no different to the gender roles that are socially assigned to their children. In other words, they realize that their hopes and expectations for their children (i.e. marriage, pregnancy, military service, wedding rituals, etc.) were highly connected to their children's assumed gender.

The first part of the sixth chapter continues by explaining the experiences of mothers after confronting their hopes, dreams and expectations for their children. The analysis in this part shows clearly how mothers must deal with a mix of

priorities, including feelings of deep love for their children, but also the societal values of shame, taboo and sin related to the issue of sexuality, which leads them to question their own values regarding the issue. All of the respondent mothers admitted that gaining knowledge was key to becoming more conscious of the issue of sexuality. Being between the 'deviant' and the children that they themselves have raised, and between what a 'decent' mother should do and what their children actually want them to do prompts them to look into the issue of sexuality in detail. Reaching out for more information puts them into contact with other LGBTQ persons and their parents, and this results in their inquiries into their own personhoods becoming deeper. They learn that sexuality is also an issue for them, and they also have a sexual identity and/or orientation, which is heterosexuality. In this regard, the issue of sexuality goes beyond being a topic related only to the well-being of their children, in that they come to see how it affects also their own lives. In this way, the socially constructed meanings of sexuality and womanhood are revealed to them, and they become aware of the fact that what they know of womanhood, and what they have already done to be 'women', is actually something that was taught to them by their mothers, husbands, partners and society in general. They further realize that the womanhood that they have embraced for years is actually very much isolated from their own desires and pleasures. With this awareness, they decided to rewind this alienation from themselves, and started to re-construct their own description of womanhood.

This questioning of sexuality that started with the coming out of their self-identifying LGBTQ children turned out to be a productive and transformative process for the respondent mothers, and also caused a shift in their perceptions of other aspects of their lives, such as womanhood, motherhood, the body, homophobia, transphobia, partnership, and friendship. In other words, mothers begin deconstructing and reconstructing their identities, triggered by their children's coming out. The reconstruction process of their personhoods compels

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them to reconsider various aspects of their lives in which they have a socially assigned secondary position. As they come to prioritize their own feelings, desires and expectations, their experiences of being secondary and discriminated against, and not being in control of their own lives, leads mothers to empathize with their children and other LGBTQ persons in society. Realizing their assigned secondary position in society and their increased empathy with those who are excluded due to their innate characteristics may be regarded as a trigger of the mothers' journey towards activism.

Accordingly, considering that the construction of identity is a never-ending process, the coming out of an LGBTQ child can trigger a transformation in the mothers' personhoods, as a mother's identity may transform as they come to terms with their LGBTQ child's identity. While analyzing the issue of transformation, two of the basic concepts of Family Systems Theory to be considered are boundary and flexibility. With the coming out of their children, the boundaries of mothers' personhoods flex and their identities continue their infinite construction process, although it is important to state that this flexibility is relative. Although they may have known other LGBTQ persons before having to face the fact that their children are LGBTQ, their previous confrontations with LGBTQs did not pose a challenge to the existing boundaries of their identities. With the coming out of their children, however, their personhoods are, in a sense, forced to change, since their child is irreplaceable for them. It is crucial to note in this regard that although the respondent mothers' identities indicate a level of flexibility, the transformation of their personhoods occurs in response to the situation of their children.

While undergoing the transformation of their personhoods, their self-admiration and self-confidence increase. They feel stronger, happier and more open to the possibility of change, strengthening their ability to adapt. Identities transform as a whole in line with the change's that splash and expand through the various

dimensions of one's life. The transformation in their personhoods does not remain limited to the issues of womanhood and sexuality, but rather extends through other fields of their lives, such as their perceptions of their social roles as a partner, wife, daughter, friend, colleague and mother, affecting also their socialization practices in their social environments and their daily life activities. For instance, they come to realize that being a 'decent' mother is not related to what society has been telling them. While re-constructing the meaning of motherhood, they recognize the fact that expressing love and support to their children is the most important role of a mother, rather than their children's compliance in such issues as heteronormative marriage, child-rearing or military service. In this sense, it is certain that the disclosure of the child as a subsystem triggers an invasive transformation in other subsystems, including the mother, and the dyadic relationship between the mother and child.

The realization and change related to their personhoods are a result of them gaining knowledge about issues regarding sexuality, and more specifically, LGBTQs. As mothers come to feel more comfortable about their children identifying themselves as LGBTQ, the relationship between mother and child as a dyadic relationship begins its transformation. After deconstructing what they have been taught, and reconstructing their own perspectives about the concepts mentioned above, the respondent mothers were able to reach deeper feelings, such as their love of their children, by putting aside concerns about what 'other people' might say. The feelings mothers gain as they come to terms with LGBTQ issues triggers the feelings of unity between the mother and child. As they reinforce their bonds, their boundaries become weaker, and this leads them to share more information about their individual lives with less secrets. For example, all of the respondent mothers stated that, for the first time in their lives, they feel more comfortable in sharing their notions about sexuality with their children, and such a fortified relationship increases empathy. This leads to the development of

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reciprocal support in the lives of both the mother and child, with mothers supporting their child in their desire to live free, and the child becoming more concerned about their mothers' feelings as women. Most of the children in the study were appreciative of their mothers' efforts to understand and come to terms with their feelings as LGBTQs. Becoming more aware of the challenges that their children face in the society opens a path for mothers to become activists in support of their children, and they start to realize their discriminated positions as women in society, in addition to their children's as LGBTQ. In this regard, when struggling for equal rights, mothers are fighting not only for their children but also themselves. They can now conceptually overlap the socially assigned deviant position of their children with their own discriminated positions as women in Turkish society.

As Sameroff (1983) states, the re-organization of a family as a system in the event of an intervention is related to the reactions of each family member and each subsystem within the family system, since all parts of it are interdependent. Accordingly, from the data garnered during the interviews with both the mothers and children, it can be concluded that there is an obvious difference between mothers and fathers in terms of the effort they put into the coming out process, and their active participation in it. The lack of paternal support is very obvious, especially for mothers of trans children, who are dealing with the process of sex re-assignment surgery. Transformation, as a way of strengthening the dyadic relationship between the mother and child, was common for all cases, while the father-child dyad remains the same or, in some cases, is negatively reinforced following the coming out. Most of the respondents, however, stated that coming to terms with an LGBTQ child is more difficult for fathers due to the cultural characteristics of Turkish society.

Similar to the variances in the father-child dyadic relationship, the nature of the sibling dyads also differ from case-to-case. In some families, a sibling even

becomes a mediator between the parents and the LGBTQ child, while others ignore the situation or may even turn against their LGBTQ sibling. In all cases, however, the person coming out said that they needed their siblings' support in the process of coming out to their parents.

On the other hand, the position of mothers in those dyadic relationships remains unchanged, in that all mothers play the role of reconciler in the family, and gatekeeper in the extended family and society, developing develop strategies to come out, as their children once did. In this matter, the children act as role models for their mothers. The significance of coming out of mothers is linked to the analysis of the third argument of this thesis, namely, that the societal transformation arising out of the LGBTQ movement may also begin with the transformation of family dynamics. The coming out of respondent mothers as mothers of LGBTQ children, and the knowledge about LGBTQs that they pass on to others leads these others to question their own perspectives. The coming out of the mothers has somewhat similar characteristics to the disclosures of LGBTQs. For instance, mothers are also selective about to whom they come out, and like their children, they also feel that they were living dual lives, involving lying and hiding, prior to coming out. If they find themselves in such a situation, they may prefer not to be a part of that social environment, and so their social circles also transform. They become distant from some circles, while becoming closer to others. In this sense, the role that family groups such as Families and Friends of LGBTIs in Turkey (LISTAG), Support Group for Families and Kins of LGBTIQ+s (LADEG+), Ankara Rainbow Families, and Society for Sexual Education Treatment and Research (CETAD) is very significant for mothers, both for learning about issues related to LGBTQs and providing a space for mothers where they can act and speak openly about their children. While mothers first participate in such groups to gain support and knowledge, in time, they pass on their own experiences in support of other parents and relatives, thus making it

easier for others to accept their new identity as a parent of an LGBTQ child. Since they know that their children did not do anything to deserve the stigmatization and discrimination that the society has against them, they engage in activities to give their children equal rights in society. Through their experiences with their children and other LGBTQ children, they realize that familial support is crucial for their children's well-being, and the 'the others' in society refrain from humiliating and violating the rights of LGBTQs when their mothers are beside them. From all this data related to family groups, it can be concluded that mothers' personal identities overlap with the social identity in family groups. While their experiences of coming out in the beginning make them feel unique and alone, they come to take support from family groups in time, and in time, they become a regular member and an activist in the movement.

During the ethnographic study conducted before starting the main fieldwork, one mother talked about the screenings of the documentary 'My Child' across the country. She said:

> When they first saw the film, people thought that the parents in the film were paid actresses/actors. However, after seeing us real and alive in front of them, they were so impressed. The fact that 'this is real' makes them think twice. Not only do they see us in front of them, they ask questions and get immediate answers. We, as parents, are talking to other parents.[94]

As Stacey (1996) points out, in the face of "institutionalized hostility towards homosexuality", non-heterosexual lives are brought together. Intersecting sociocultural differences come to form sexualities and lifestyles, and accordingly, these and other self-identifying heterosexual parents who watch the film share the same gendered histories. Self-identifying heterosexual parents can influence the perspectives of other self-identifying heterosexual parents when LGBTQs form

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[94] *"İnsanlar filmi ilk gördüklerinde oynayanların oyuncu olduğunu sanıyorlar. Ama bizi kanlı canlı karşılarında görünce çok etkileniyorlar. Bunun 'gerçek' olduğunu görmek, onları iki kere düşündürüyor. Sadece bizi karşılarında görmek değil, sorular sorup hemen cevap alıyorlar. Biz ebeveynler olarak diğer ebeveynlerle konuşuyoruz."*

social groups to support each other. In telling their stories, these parents have a great opportunity to change the prejudiced and socially constructed stereotypes about LGBTQ persons that other parents have in their minds. Such a sharing of emotions can lead raised feelings of empathy between parents, increasing their capacity to transform the societal relations that revolve around the issue of sexuality. In this respect, as a result of the common understanding of the sacrosanctity of family in society, seeing those parents and listening to their stories can make others think that this may also happen to them. Such interactions between the parents in the group and the other heterosexual parents in the audience opens the way for empathy to emerge, and this may lead to more significant changes in society. That is one of the reasons why the visibility and availability of parents in the political field has increased the recognition of the LGBTQ movement.

From the data garnered from the interviews it can be concluded that coming out to one's family of origin is a significant step for self-identifying LGBTQ children. In a society like Turkey in which heterosexual norms and values are dominant, the family may be both a shelter that protects LGBTQ children or a dungeon from which children want to escape. In other words, the families of origin of LGBTQ children may be a shelter against the discrimination and stigmatization that they face in society, but they may also be the main threat to their safety. In this study, shelter families are investigated throughout the journey of the disclosure of their self-identifying LGBTQ children, beginning from their first notion that their child may be LGBTQ, and culminating in them becoming activists in the LGBTQ movement and struggling for both their own rights, and the rights of their children. The respondent mothers all say that their children are the most indispensable element in their lives, and that it is impossible to even think of life without them. That said, there are also families who opt to deny their children's sexual identity and/or orientation, and in the most extreme cases, may reject them or even kill

them. During the ethnographic fieldwork, while speaking to a parent in LISTAG who was checking the emails sent to the organization, a message came from a young homosexual man from the deeply conservative southeastern part of Turkey. Telling his harrowing story, he said that after coming out to his parents, they became angry and started to act violently. He talked about his plans to run away from home, and finished his message with the words:

"If something happens to me, you know who my murderers are."[95]

In such a country as Turkey, the main cultural tenets of sexuality are dominated by heterosexual norms, just as gender roles are assigned with a heteronormative basis. In such a strict culture, no room is left for LGBTQs to live 'normal' lives, since sexuality is taboo. Today, it is obvious that self-identifying LGBTQ persons in Turkey do not share the same rights as self-identifying heterosexuals. Although the more politically and economically advanced countries in the world have move towards recognition of LGBTQ rights to varying degrees, Turkey lags very far behind. The LGBTQ issue is a subject of intense polarization in society. Hate crimes against LGBTQ persons have been increasing in line with the dominant political trend, which is highly correlated with Islamic tendencies. The leading political party in Turkey speaks often about the heteronormative family organization, and while the leading opposition party has LGBTQ persons working in their local teams and municipalities, the dominance of the leading party prevails in issues related to LGBTQs. Although it has been several decades since the American Psychiatric Association declared in 1973 that being LGBTQ was not an illness, having an LGBTQ identity is still seen in this way in Turkish society, and sometimes as an act of deviance, and there is a refusal to accept its innate nature.

Although having an LGBTQ identity is not a crime under Turkish law, the rights of LGBTQs are not adequately protected. Hate crimes and propaganda targeting

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[95] *"Başıma bir şey gelirse, katillerimin kim olduğunu biliyorsunuz."*

LGBTQ persons has been increasing every year. In 2016, a person took photographs of an LGBTQ person waiting in line to see a doctor and shared them on social media to make fun of them; and use of the word 'gay' was banned from television as a swearword. Many LGBTQ persons have suffered discrimination, bullying, violence, abuse or rape, and many young LGBTQ persons have committed suicide because of the difficulties of their lives or the psychological trauma. Many others have been killed just because of their LGBTQ identity. According to a report by Transgender Europe, in terms of the number of crimes against trans persons, Turkey ranks first in Europe and the ninth in the world. In the period between January 2008 and April 2016, 43 crimes were committed against trans persons in Turkey (T24: Bağımsız İnternet Gazetesi, 2016).

To date, it has not been possible to study families who have rejected their children due to their LGBTQ identity beyond interviews held with the children themselves. In this regard, a possible future study could look into the experiences of families who totally opposed their children's non-heterosexual identity and/or orientation, as this may provide a comprehensive understanding of the dominant heteronormative values that lead families of origin to reject their own children, and the intra-familial dynamics that emerge during such a process.

Furthermore, although the respondent children in this study experience doubts and fears before coming out to their families of origin, they still appreciate the importance of their mothers, fathers and siblings in their lives. It is necessary to state that one of the main significances of this thesis lies in its emphasis on the transformative challenge that an LGBTQ member poses when coming out to a family system that has been formed by two heterosexual individuals, and which has developed according to heteronormative expectations. From this perspective, this thesis investigates the experiences of mothers throughout the coming out process, as from the garnered data it can be understood that fathers tend to stay out of the process, in contrast to the mothers, who even become activists for LGBTQ

rights. Although they do not reject their self-identified LGBTQ children, and continue to support them financially, the fathers still remain emotionally either unresponsive or improbative, while more senior relatives seem to find it easier to come to terms with their grandchildren's LGBTQ identity. Moreover, there seems an obvious difference in the numbers of mothers and fathers participating in the family groups in this study, which again points to the recessive position of fathers towards their children's LGBTQ identity. In this regard, how fathers experience the coming out of a child would be a very interesting study for the future.

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APPENDICES

A: QUESTIONS for MOTHERS

Questions about experiences of mothers before the coming out:

1. Was there anything that drew your attention before your child came out to you? If yes, what were they?

2. Did you behave or do anything in accordance with your suspicions?

3. How did you learn about your child's sexual identity and/or orientation? What did you feel/think?

4. Did your suspicions negatively or positively influence your initial reactions? Was there anything that prepares you for the moment of disclosure?

5. Was your child's gender and age influential on your feelings towards the situation?

Questions about the changes in mothers' lives after the coming out:

6. How did the other members in your family learn about your child's sexual identity and/or orientation? How did they react?

7. Were there any changes in your social circle? If yes, in what ways and how?

8. Did you know any other LGBTQ person in your social circle before you learned about your child's sexual identity and/or orientation?

9. To whom did you tell about your child's sexual identity and/or orientation first, and then? To what extend? How much did you disclose in different social context?

10. What were your opinions about gender roles, marriage, parenting, sexuality etc.? And how did they change after the coming out of your child?

11. Is there any idea disturbing you about your child's sexual identity and/or orientation? If yes, what is the most disturbing thing when you think about your child is an LGBTQ person?

12. What were your dreams about your child before her/his coming out? Did they change after the coming out? How did you feel about it?

13. Did you have any fears about your child before the coming out? Did they change after the coming out? Are they anything still scaring you?

14. Do you think there are risks for your child's well-being in the society? If yes, what are they?

15. What was the most difficult challenge/experience/person/moment through all this process (from the moment the children came out)?

16. Were there any challenges that you faced after your child disclosed to you? If yes, how did you deal with it/them? What made you feel stronger and capable of handling it?

17. Are there any challenges that you now have in your life? If yes, what are they? How are you dealing with them?

18. Do you think that being mother of an LGBTQ child has differences among different sexualities? For example, is being mother of a lesbian child different from being mother with a trans child? If yes, in what ways are they different?

19. What do you think about the challenges that your child was faced with through this process of coming out? Did you do anything about them? If yes, what were they? Did doing them cause changes in your life?

20. How did this process work for the father and other siblings (if there are)?

21. Do you feel comfortable with being mother of an LGBTQ?

22. If no, what are the reasons; and do you think one day you will be?

23. If yes, how long did it take for you to feel that way?

Questions about family group:

24. When did you first join to the family group (LISTAG)?

25. What was your aim when you came to the family group? For what reasons, did you choose to come and change?

26. What are your responsibilities in the family group? Are there any occasions that you are purposively not involved?

27. What is the meaning of the family group in your life?

B: QUESTIONS for CHILDREN

1. When/to whom did you come out first? Why?

2. If the target was not a family member, when did you coming out to your family of origin? Why did not you first come to your family of origin?

3. Did you intentionally do anything to make your family of origin realize your sexual identity and/or orientation?

4. Did you think about any plans or strategies to come out to your family of origin?

5. What did you feel after you came out?

6. What happened (incident by incident) when you disclosed?

7. What were your emotions or concerns about coming out?

8. Do you think there were certain risks in coming out to family of origin? If yes, what did you think about to deal with them?

9. How long did it take for the family members to be comfortable with your sexual identity and/or orientation, if you think they are now? Did you do anything special for them to ease the process?

10. Why did you put labor on them getting terms with your sexual identity and/or orientation? Why did you coming out?

11. How was your relationship with family members? Did your relationships with them change after you came out?

12. How were family members' opinions about homosexuality and transsexuality before you came out to them? Did they change after you came out?

13. What do you think they now think about LGBTQ persons?

14. How did your family of origin learn about LISTAG? If you guide them to go there, why did you do that?

15. How did you come out to other people in your extended family? Why?

16. Where did you feel uncomfortable in this process? What were the challenges?

17. What do you think about where your family of origin felt challenged?

18. What did the members of your family of origin expect you before the coming out? Did they change? If yes, what are they now?

19. Do you have any fears, considerations, drawbacks about your future life?

C: TABLE for MOTHERS[96]

	Person	Age Interval	Marital Status	Living Arrangements	Income (Monthly)	Educational Status	Occupational Status
1	Nuray	45-54	Single	Alone – In Turkey	3000-3999 TL	University	Tradeswoman – Owner
2	Perihan	55-64	Other	2 – In Turkey	2000-2999 TL	High-School	Retired
3	Sevim	>65	Married	2 – In Turkey	>5000 TL	High-School	Retired
4	Canan	55-64	Single	Alone – In Turkey	2000-2999 TL	University	Government Officer
5	Birgül	55-64	Single	3 – In Turkey	2000-2999 TL	Graduate Studies	Retired
6	Fatma	45-54	Other	2 – In Turkey	3000-3999 TL	University	Government Officer
7	Hatice	45-54	Single	Alone – In Turkey	1000-1999 TL	High-School	Unemployed
8	Ayşen	>65	Married	2 – In Turkey	3000-3999 TL	High-School	Retired
9	Duygu	45-54	Married	4 – In Turkey	4000-4999 TL	University	Retired
10	Ayla	55-64	Single	2 – In Turkey	1000-1999 TL	Associate Degree	Retired
11	Nalan	55-64	Single	Alone – In Turkey	3000-3999 TL	University	Retired

[96] Numbers of mothers are written in a synchronized way with the numbers of children. For

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D: TABLE for CHILDREN

	Person	Self-Identified Sexual Identity/ Orientation	Age Interval	Marital Status	Living Arrangements	Income (Monthly)	Educational Status	Occupational Status
1	Emre	Gay	18-24	Single	Alone – Abroad	1000-1999 TL	Undergraduate	Student
2	Nehir	Lesbian	25-34	Single	Alone – In Turkey	4000-4999 TL	Graduate Studies	Government Officer
3	Levent	Gay	35-44	Living together	2 – In Turkey	2000-2999 TL	University	Private Sector – Qualified Worker
4	Mert	Trans Man	25-34	Single	2 – In Turkey	4000-4999 TL	Graduate Studies	Private Sector – Owner
5	Burak	Gay	25-34	Single	2 (with his mother) – In Turkey	3000-3999 TL	University	Private Sector – Qualified Worker
6	Cem	Gay	18-24	Single	2 (with his mother) – In Turkey	<1000 TL	University	Private Sector – Qualified Worker
7	İrem	Trans Woman	25-34	Single	2 – In Turkey	3000-3999 TL	Technical High-School	Private Sector – Owner
8	Ahmet	Gay	25-34	Single	Alone – Abroad	1000-1999 TL	Graduate Studies	Freelance Artist
9	Aslı	Lesbian	18-24	Single	4 (with her family) – In Turkey	0 TL	Undergraduate	Student
10	Eda	Trans Woman	25-34	Single	2 (with her mother) – In Turkey	0 TL	Undergraduate	Student
11	Ceren	Lesbian	25-34	Married	2-Abroad	>5000 TL	Graduate Studies	Private Sector – Manager

instance, Ayla (10) is the mother of Eda (10).

E: LIST of ABBREVIATIONS

LGBTQ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer/Questioning

LISTAG Families and Friends of Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Trans and Intersexuals in Turkey

LADEG+ Support Group for Parents and Kins of Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Trans, Intersexuals, and Queer+s

KAOS GL Kaos Gay and Lesbian Cultural Research and Solidarity Association

SpoD Organization for Studies of Social Policies, Gender Identity, and Sexual Orientation

CETAD Society for Sexual Education Treatment and Research

F: TURKISH SUMMARY/TÜRKÇE ÖZET

EBEVEYNLERE AÇILMA:
LGBTQ ÇOCUĞU OLAN AİLELERİN DÖNÜŞÜMÜ

Bu çalışmanın amacı kendilerini LGBTQ olarak tanımlayan kişilerin köken ailelerine açıldıktan sonra aile dinamiklerinin dönüşümünü incelemektir; bu sebeple, bu tezde, kendilerini LGBTQ çocukların ailelerine açıldıktan sonra açılmanın anne-çocuk ilişkisinin dinamiklerine olan etkilerine odaklanılmıştır.

Şu ana kadar yapılan akademik çalışmalara bakıldığında, LGBTQ ailelerinin deneyimlerini anlatan çalışmaların sınırlı olduğu görülmektedir. LGBTQ meseleleriyle ilgili yapılan çalışmalar genellikle kendilerini LGBTQ olarak tanımlayan kişilerin deneyimlerine dayanmaktadır. Bazı çalışmalar, LGBTQ kişilerin ebeveynlerini ya da yakınlarını konu edinse de açılmadan hemen sonra sergilenen tepkileri incelemek ya da ebeveynlerin deneyimlerini LGBTQ çocukların anlatıları üzerine kurmakla sınırlı kalmıştır. Dolayısıyla uzun bir süredir tartışılan 'kuir ebeveynlik' (queer parenting) ve LGBTQ kişilerin 'seçtikleri aileler' (families of choice) kavramlarının geleneksel, heteronormatif ve ataerkil aile yapısına bir meydan okuma olduğu reddedilemez bir iddia olsa da, LGBTQ kişilerin içlerine doğdukları, iki heteroseksüel kişi tarafından kurulmuş ve heteroseksüel normlarla beslenmiş aile düzenine bir tehdit oluşturmaktan dolayı aile içi ilişkilerde farklı boyutlarda gerilimler gözlenmektedir.

Bu bağlamda bu çalışma üç temel argüman üzerine kurulmuştur. Birincisi, açılmanın siyasi olmadan önce iletişimsel bir hareket olmasıdır. Ailedeki iletişim

döngüsü, aile bireylerinin kendilerini anlatmalarını ve birbirlerini etkileyip dönüştürmelerini sağlamaktadır. Ancak kişinin iletişiminin sadece aile içinde sınırlı kalamayacağı göz önüne alınırsa, açılma süreci kişilerin stratejik siyasi ortaklara ihtiyaç duymalarına sebep olur; dolayısıyla açılma siyasi bir eyleme dönüşür. İkinci argüman ise açılmanın sadece açılan kişiyi değil, açıldığı kişiyi de etkilemesidir. Bu tez bağlamında düşünülürse, LGBTQ kişinin köken ailesine açılmasıyla sadece kişinin kendisi değil, aile üyeleri de etkilenecektir. Üçüncü olarak da, bu tez farklı cinsel kimliklerin ilk olarak ailede karşılaştığını iddia etmektedir. Bu karşılaşma, toplumun LGBTQ meselelerine dair algısında değişim yaratmanın ilk adımı olarak görülebilir. Dolayısıyla açılma ile ortaya çıkan pratikler, aslında açılmanın ötesinde birşeyler vadetmektedir.

Bu tez, belirtilen iddialar doğrultusunda, köken ailelerine açılmış yetişkin LGBTQ çocuklar ve annelerinin açılma öncesi, esnası ve sonrasında yaşadıkları deneyimler ve bu deneyimlerle beraber gerçekleşen dönüşüm hakkında veriler içermektedir. Tezin saha çalışması iki ana bölümden oluşmaktadır. İlk kısmını oluşturan üç haftalık etnografik saha çalışması farklı mekanlarda yürütülmüş ve bu tezin araştırma konusunun netleşmesine destek sağlamıştır. İkinci kısım ise saha çalışmasının ana kısmı olup kendini LGBTQ olarak tanımlayan ve köken ailesine açılmış 11 genç yetişkin/yetişkin çocuk ve onların anneleri ile en az bir buçuk, en fazla beş buçuk saat süren görüşmelerden oluşmaktadır. Kişilerin çalışmaya katılımı gönüllüdür ve tüm çalışma gizlilik ilkesi temel alınarak yürütülmüştür. Dolayısıyla bu tezde geçen isimler kişilere verilmiş takma isimlerdir. Çalışmaya katılan kişilerin hepsi kimliklerini kamusal alanda paylaşmasalar da çocuklar (evlatlar) grubu Türkiye'deki LGBTQ hareketine aktif destek veren çocuklardan, anneler grubu da harekete eklemlenmiş olan LGBTQ aileleri ve yakınları gruplarına (LİSTAG, LADEG+, Ankara Gökkuşağı Aileleri)[97] aktif katılan

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[97] Bu tezin saha çalışması yapılırken İstanbul'da LGBTQ aileleri ve yakınları grubu olarak sadece LİSTAG (Lezbiyen, Gey, Biseksüel, Transseksüel, İnterseks Bireylerin Aileleri ve Yakınları

annelerden oluşmaktadır. Çalışmaya katılan çocukların (evlatların) ve annelerin özelliklerini anlatan tablolar devam eden iki sayfada gösterildiği gibidir.

Tablo A: Çalışmaya katılan annelerin tablosu[98]

	Kişi	Yaş Aralığı	Medeni Durum	Yaşam Düzenlemeleri	Gelir (Aylık)	Eğitim Durumu	Meslek Statüsü
1	Nuray	45-54	Bekar	Yalnız – Türkiye	3000-3999 TL	Üniversite	Esnaf - İş yeri sahibi
2	Perihan	55-64	Diğer	2 – Türkiye	2000-2999 TL	Lise	Emekli
3	Sevim	>65	Evli	2 – Türkiye	>5000 TL	Lise	Emekli
4	Canan	55-64	Bekar	Yalnız – Türkiye	2000-2999 TL	Üniversite	Devlet memuru
5	Birgül	55-64	Bekar	3 – Türkiye	2000-2999 TL	Lisansüstü	Emekli
6	Fatma	45-54	Diğer	2 – Türkiye	3000-3999 TL	Üniversite	Devlet memuru
7	Hatice	45-54	Bekar	Yalnız – Türkiye	1000-1999 TL	Lise	İşsiz
8	Ayşen	>65	Evli	2 – Türkiye	3000-3999 TL	Lise	Emekli
9	Duygu	45-54	Evli	4 – Türkiye	4000-4999 TL	Üniversite	Emekli
10	Ayla	55-64	Bekar	2 – Türkiye	1000-1999 TL	Önlisans	Emekli
11	Nalan	55-64	Bekar	Yalnız – Türkiye	3000-3999 TL	Üniversite	Emekli

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[98] Anneleri ve çocukları gösteren sayılar birbiriyle eşleşecek şekilde yazılmıştır. Örneğin, Ayla (10), Eda (10)'nın annesidir.

Tablo B: Çalışmaya katılan ve kendilerini LGBTQ olarak tanımlayan çocukların tablosu

	Kişi	Kişinin Kendini Tanımladığı Cinsel Kimlik/Yönelim	Yaş Aralığı	Medeni Durum	Yaşam Düzenlemeleri	Gelir (Aylık)	Eğitim Durumu	Meslek Statüsü
1	Emre	Gey	18-24	Bekar	Yalnız – Yurtdışı	1000-1999 TL	Lisans	Öğrenci
2	Nehir	Lezbiyen	25-34	Bekar	Yalnız – Türkiye	4000-4999 TL	Lisansüstü	Devlet memuru
3	Levent	Gey	35-44	Birlikte yaşıyor	2 – Türkiye	2000-2999 TL	Üniversite	Özel Sektör – Nitelikli işçi
4	Mert	Trans Erkek	25-34	Bekar	2 – Türkiye	4000-4999 TL	Lisansüstü	Özel Sektör – İş yeri sahibi
5	Burak	Gey	25-34	Bekar	2 (Annesi ile birlikte) – Türkiye	3000-3999 TL	Üniversite	Özel Sektör – Nitelikli işçi
6	Cem	Gey	18-24	Bekar	2 (Annesi ile birlikte) – Türkiye	<1000 TL	Üniversite	Özel Sektör – Nitelikli işçi
7	İrem	Trans Kadın	25-34	Bekar	2 – Türkiye	3000-3999 TL	Meslek Okulu	Özel Sektör – İş yeri sahibi
8	Ahmet	Gey	25-34	Bekar	Yalnız – Yurtdışı	1000-1999 TL	Lisansüstü	Serbest Sanatçı
9	Aslı	Lezbiyen	18-24	Bekar	4 (Ailesi ile birlikte) – Türkiye	0 TL	Lisans	Öğrenci
10	Eda	Trans Kadın	25-34	Bekar	2 (Annesi ile birlikte) – Türkiye	0 TL	Lisans	Öğrenci
11	Ceren	Lezbiyen	25-34	Evli	2 – Yurtdışı	>5000 TL	Lisansüstü	Özel Sektör – Yönetici

Saha çalışması hakkında bahsedilmesi gereken en önemli kısımlardan biri de benim araştırmacı olarak LGBTQ topluluğunun içerisinden biri olmamdır. Aldığım sosyolojik eğitime ek olarak, uzun zamandır hareketin içerisinde olmam, hayatını LGBTQ meselelerine dair toplumdaki farkındalığı arttırmaya adamış kuzenimin gey kimliğiyle açık yaşaması ve yengem Sema Yakar'ın da tezin saha çalışmasını yürüttüğüm dönemde İstanbul'daki tek LGBTQ aile ve yakınları grubu olan LİSTAG'ın kurucularından ve aktif üyelerinden biri olması LGBTQ aile grubuyla olan bağlarımın güçlenmesini sağlamıştır. İçeriden biri olma pozisyonunun bana, katılımcılara rahatça ulaşabilme imkanı sağlamasına ek olarak, katılımcıların da, LGBTQ hareketinin ya da aile grubunun amaçlarına zarar verecek herhangi bir şey yapmayacağıma dair güven duyması, kişisel hikayelerini benimle rahatlıkla paylaşabilmelerini sağlamıştır. Bana karşı hissettikleri yakınlık ve güven hislerinin, çocuklarına uyguladıkları şiddet gibi kendilerinin de gurur duymadığı, gizli tuttukları anılarını benimle paylaşmalarına katkıda bulunduğuna inanmaktayım.

Avantajlara ek olarak, Dwyer ve Buckle (2009)'ın da belirttikleri gibi, bir topluluğun içerisinden olmak araştırmacının belli tepkilerin ve söylemlerin önemini farketmesini zorlaştırmaktadır. Görüşmeler esnasında annelerin 'İyi ki böyle bir insan oldum.' söylemini bir mutlu son olarak değerlendirmem tam olarak bu noktaya örnek olarak verilebilir. Bu durumu, tez danışmanımın beni, bu söylemin arkasında yatan dinamikleri araştırmaya yönlendirmesiyle sorguladım ve bu sorgulama analiz boyunca devam etmiştir. Böyle bir saha çalışması deneyiminin ve saha esnasında böyle bir uyarıyı almış olmamın verileri analiz etme becerilerimi geliştirdiğine inanmaktayım.

Saha çalışması deneyimlerine ek olarak, bu çalışmanın en önemli özelliklerinden bir diğeri de verilerin hikaye anlatımına dayanmasıdır. Bu zamana kadar olan niteliksel çalışmalar da hikaye anlatımının gücünün azımsandığını ve kullanıldığı alanın sınırlı kaldığını düşünmekteyim. Bu doğrultuda, bu tezde hikaye

anlatımının güçlü rolünün vurgulanması gerekmektedir. Hikaye anlatımı veri toplama aşamasında bu tez için bir araç olmaktan çok, veri toplama şeklinin kendisi olarak gerçekleşmiştir. Hem çocuklar, hem de anneler kişisel hikayelerini kendi akışında anlatmışlardır. Dolayısıyla hikaye anlatımları düz bir öykü anlatıcılığından ziyade, derin ve duygusal anlar yaşanan, annelerin seçici hafızalarının yardımıyla geçmiş deneyimlerini çağırdıkları paha biçilemez bir geçmiş okuması haline gelmiştir. Böyle bir geçmiş okumasına şahit olduktan sonra belirtmek gerekir ki: Herkesin kendine ait bir hikayesi var; ve her çocuğun hikayesi ailesiyle başlar.

Ayrıca annelerin ve çocukların hikayelerinin benim kendi hikayemle olan bağının da bu çalışmadaki hikaye anlatıcılığına katkıda bulunmaktadır. 2015 yılının Eylül ayında kuzenim Boysan Yakar'ı kaybetmemle başlayan, duygusal olarak kendimi kapadığım ve yazmakta olduğum başka konudaki tezimi, hazırladığım doktora programı başvurularımı, hatta ilişkilerimi bile durdurduğum o dönemde, içimdeki derin yas duygusunu bir yere yönlendirme arayışımla beraber bu tez, benim kuzenim için hazırladığım bir vedalaşma olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Dolayısıyla hem çocukların ve annelerinin hikayelerinin taşıdığı önem, hem de araştırmacı olan benim kendi hikayemle olan bağları, hikaye anlatımını bu tezin duygusal olarak en yüklü kısımlarından biri haline getirmiştir.

Bu doğrultuda, tezin saha çalışmasında anneler ve onların yetişkin LGBTQ çocuklarıyla yapılan görüşmelerle toplanan veriler Aile Sistemler Teorisi'nin (Family Systems Theory) kavramsal çerçevesi etrafında analiz edilmiştir. Bu teorinin ilkeleri genel sistemler teorisinden gelmekte olup, temel olarak ailenin değişime açık bir sistem olduğunu, içerisindeki alt sistemlerin birbirine bağlı ve kesişen bir yapıda olduklarını ve dolayısıyla alt sistemlerden birine olan etkinin bütün aile sistemini dönüştüreceğini iddia etmektedir. Sözü geçen müdahaleyi bir kriz olarak ele alan ve yaygın olarak psikologlar tarafından kullanılan bu teori, aile sistemindeki krizleri daha çok kayıp, ölüm, boşanma ve şiddet gibi olaylar

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üzerinden ele almıştır. Daha önce Aile Sistemler Teorisi uygulanarak yapılan veya açılma meselesine odaklanan çalışmalarda görülmeyen bir şekilde, Aile Sistemler Teorisi'nin temel kavramları olan 'sistem' (system), 'alt sistem' (subsystem), 'sınır' (boundary), 'değişim' (change) ve 'uyarlanabilirlik' (adaptability) bu çalışmanın içerisindeki veriler ile örtüşmüştür. Bu bağlamda, bu çalışmada aile 'sistem'e, ayrı ayrı aile üyeleri ve onların ikili ilişkileri 'alt sistemler'e denk gelmektedir. Kendini LGBTQ olarak tanımlayan çocuğun ebeveynlere açılması 'müdahale/kriz' (intervention/crisis), açılma sürecindeki dönüşüm 'değişim' olarak ele alınmıştır. Bu değişim sürecinde annenin kimlik sınırlarının çocuğun cinsel kimliği üzerinden yaşadığı 'esneme' (flexibility) ve 'uyarlanabilirlik' analiz kısmında ayrıntılı bir şekilde annelerle yapılan görüşmelerden alınan kesitlerle örneklendirilerek anlatılmaktadır.

Analiz kısmına geçmeden önce bulguları kültürel içerikte değerlendirebilmek adına Türkiye'nin sosyal, kültürel ve siyasi durumuna göz atmak gereklidir. Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin kuruluş dönemlerinden beri cinsel kimlik ve cinsel yönelim mevzuları, toplumun azınlık sayılabilecek bir kesimini ilgilendiren ve 'doğal' olan heteroseksüellikten bir 'sapma' olarak değerlendirilmiştir (Baba, 2011). Türkiye jeopolitik olarak arada kalmış bir konuma sahip olup, doğusundaki ülkelerde LGBTQ kimliğe sahip kişiler kimliklerinden dolayı ağır cezalara maruz bırakılırken, batısındaki ülkelerde LGBTQ kişilerin yasal konumları sürekli gelişmektedir. Buna karşın Türkiye'de, LGBTQ kimliğe sahip olmak yasal olmayan bir durum olarak sayılmasa da, Türkiye'nin LGBTQ kişilerin toplumda uğradıkları ayrımcılığa karşı kendilerini koruyabilecekleri bir yasal düzenlemeye sahip olmadığı da çok aşikardır.

Bunlara ek olarak 2000'lerin başında iktidar parti olarak başa gelen Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi "muhafazakar, dinden ilham alan ve özünde ataerkil bir değer sistemi" benimsemektedir; ve benimsediği değerler doğrultusunda siyasi söylemleri ve uygulanan kamu politikaları açık bir şekilde geleneksel aile yapısını

ve geleneksel cinsiyet rollerini desteklemektedir (Acar & Altunok, 2013). Baskın politikaların iddia ettikleri ve Türkiye toplumundaki yaygın algı göz önüne alınırsa, kendilerini LGBTQ olarak tanımlayan çocukların ailelerine açıldığında ebeveynlerin verdiği tepkilerin toplumdaki yaygın kültürel eğilimler çerçevesinde ele alınması gerekliliği göze çarpmaktadır.

Türkiye'deki LGBTQ kişiler tarafından 'Ne yanlış, ne de yalnızsınız!' söylemiyle 1993'te 'Lambdaistanbul', 1994'te 'Eşcinsellerin kurtuluşu, heteroseksüelleri de özgürleştirecektir!' söylemiyle Kaos GL, ve 2011'de bir grup aktivist, akademisyen ve öğrencinin bir araya gelmesiyle SpoD (Sosyal Politikalar, Cinsiyet Kimliği ve Cinsel Yönelim Çalışmaları Derneği) kurulmuştur. Bunlara ek olarak, çocuklarının Türkiye toplumunda maruz kaldıkları sosyal ve siyasi ayrımcılığa karşı mücadelesine destek olmak ve LGBTQ ile ilgili meselelere dair toplumdaki farkındalığı arttırmak amacı ile 2006 yılında Türkiye'deki LGBTQ hareketine eklemlenen LGBTQ aileleri bir araya gelerek 2008 yılında LİSTAG (Lezbiyen, Gey, Biseksüel, Trans, İnterseks Bireylerin Aileleri ve Yakınları Grubu)'ı, 2016 yılında da LADEG+ (Lezbiyen, Gey, Biseksüel, Trans, İnterseks, Kuir+ Kişilerin Aile ve Yakınları Destek Grubu)'yı kurmuşlardır. Ayrıca Ankara Gökkuşağı Aileleri ve diğer illerde de yerel destek grupları oluşturulmuştur. Çocuklarının toplumdaki nefrete karşılık 'terkedilmiş' ya da 'sahipsiz' olmadığını göstermek amacıyla görünürlük sergileyen ebeveynlerin harekete eklemlenmesi, Türkiye'deki LGBTQ hareketinin toplumda yarattığı etkiyi ivmelendirmiştir. Bu yönde yapılan görünürlük çalışmalarına da, 18. Onur Haftası yürüyüşünün temasının 'Dikkat! Aile Var!' olması ve 2013 yılında ebeveynlerin kamera karşısına geçerek çocuğunun LGBTQ kimliği ile kendilerine açılmasıyla yaşadıklarını anlattıkları 'Benim Çocuğum' belgeseli örnek olarak verilebilir.

Transgender Europe tarafından yayınlanan trans cinayetleri raporuna göre Türkiye Avrupa'da birinci, dünyada ise dokuzuncu sırada yer almaktadır; ve sadece Ocak 2008 ile Nisan 2016 arasında bilinen 43 trans cinayeti işlenmiştir (T24: Bağımsız

İnternet Gazetesi, 2016). Bugün hala, Türkiye'deki genel yargıya ve siyasi hegemonyaya ters düştükleri görüşüyle her gün LGBTQ bireyler saldırılara uğramakta, oluşturdukları dernekler ve destek grupları hedef gösterilmekte ve kapatılmaktadırlar. Bir çok LGBTQ kişi toplumdaki dışlanmaya, nefrete ve insancıl olmayan yaşam koşullarına dayanamayarak intihar etmektedir. Bu grup için, açlık ve işsizlik gibi problemlerin uzun yıllardır gündemde olduğu Türkiye'de, LGBTQ kişiler, kendilerini heteroseksüel olarak tanımlayan ve heteroseksüellik normlarıyla uyumlu yaşayan kişilerin aksine sadece eğitim ya da gelir seviyesi gibi piyasa problemlerinden dolayı değil, cinsel kimliklerinden dolayı bu problemleri yaşamaktadırlar. Cinsel kimliklerinden dolayı sosyal, kültürel ve siyasi ayrımcılığa uğrayan, ilk önce yaşam hakları için mücadele etmek zorunda bırakılan LGBTQ kişiler toplumdaki eşitsizliğin en belirgin örneklerinden biridir. Dolayısıyla böyle bir toplumda ailelerin LGBTQ çocuklarına destek olması, yoğun bir şekilde ayrımcılığa uğrayan LGBTQ kişiler için eşsiz öneme sahiptir. Bütün bunları göz önüne alarak, bu tez, kendilerini LGBTQ olarak tanımlayan çocuklar, köken ailelerine açıldıktan sonra aile içi ilişkilerin dönüşümünü, anne-çocuk ilişkisine odaklanarak incelemiştir.

Toplamda 22 kişi ile yürütülen bu çalışma sonucunda oluşan bu tez, iki temel analiz bölümü içermektedir. Birincisi annelerin ilk deneyimleri, çocuklarının LGBTQ kimlikleriyle açılmasıyla birlikte bu gerçekle yaşadıkları ilk karşılaşmalarını ve bu karşılaşma sonrası çocukları ile ilgili o ana kadar kurdukları hayalleri ve taşıdıkları beklentileri ile yüzleşmelerini incelerken, ikinci kısım annelerin çocuklarının LGBTQ kimlikleri üzerinden kendi kişiliklerinde yaşanan değişimleri, aile içi ilişkilerdeki dönüşümü ve annelerin yeni kimlikleri olan LGBTQ çocuğun annesi olma kimliğiyle topluma açıldıklarında toplumda yarattıkları dönüştürücü etkiyi analiz etmektedir.

Toplanan veriler doğrultusunda görülebilir ki; çocukların LGBTQ kimlikleri ile annelerine doğrudan ya da dolaylı olarak açılmasından önce, özellikle gey ve trans

çocuk anneleri çocuklarının LGBTQ kimlikleriyle ilgili bazı işaretler görüp şüphelenmişlerdir. Bu işaretler, çocuklarının dış görünüşleri, hal ve hareketleri, giyim tarzları ve arkadaş çevreleri ile ilgili özellikler etrafında toplanmaktadır. Ancak kendilerini lezbiyen olarak tanımlayan çocukların anneleri diğer annelerden farklılık göstermektedir. Trans ve gey kimlikte olan çocukların annelerinin şüphelenmesine sebep olan işaretler, aslında öncesinde bazı 'uyaran'lar almalarına rağmen lezbiyen çocuk annelerine çocuklarının heteroseksüel olmayan bir cinsel kimliğe sahip olduklarını düşündürtmemiştir. Bu durum Türkiye'deki kültürel yapısının kadınlar arasındaki yakın ilişkiler ile ilgili genellikle katı kategorisel çıkarımlara varma eğiliminde olmamasıyla yorumlanabilir. Pearlman (1992)'ın da belirttiği gibi çocuklarının 'farklı' davranışları, lezbiyen çocuk annelerinin genel olarak çocuklarının lezbiyen olduğundan ziyade güçlü veya feminist olduğunu ya da toplumdaki genel duruştan daha farklı bir yapı sergilediğini düşünmelerine sebep olmuştur.

Çalışmada yer alan neredeyse bütün annelerin çocukları kendilerine açılana kadar bu gerçekle yüzleşmemek için bahaneler ürettikleri görülmüştür. Ancak çocuklar annelerine açıldıktan sonra, yani anneler gerçekle inkar edemeyecekleri bir şekilde karşı karşıya kaldıklarında, durumla yüzleşmekte zorluk çektikleri, durumu 'düzeltmek' adına çocuğu cinsel kimliğini değiştirmeye zorlamak, doktora danışmak, bu şekilde çok fazla zaman ve para harcamak ve çocuğa şiddet uygulamak gibi çeşitli stratejiler geliştirdikleri görülmüştür.

Ebeveynlerin çocuklarının açılması sonrasında verdikleri tepkiler üzerine yapılan çalışmalar, bu tepkileri, Kübler (1969)'in çalışmasında belirttiği yasın beş aşaması (inkar, kızgınlık, pazarlık, depresyon, kabullenme) ile özdeşleştirmiştir. Kübler'in çalışmasından hareket eden çalışmalar ebeveynlerin çocuklarının LGBTQ kimliklerini öğrendikten sonra çocukları için kayıp duygusu yaşadığını ve kaybettikleri çocuklarının arkasından yas süreci yaşadıkları iddiasından yola çıkar, ancak bu çalışma, trans çocuk annelerinin yas duygusuyla özdeşleşen hisler

yaşadığını gösterirken, lezbiyen ve gey çocuk annelerinin çocuklarına dair bir kayıp hissi yaşamadıklarını göstermektedir.

LGBTQ kimlikler hakkında bilgisiz olmanın etkisiyle, açılma sonrasında annelerin yaşadıkları kaotik duygulardan bütün annelerde ortaklık gösteren korkudur. Annelerdeki korku duygusu, çocuğun LGBTQ kimliğe sahip olmasının bir hastalık olabileceğine, bu kimliğin çocuğun uğramış olduğu bir taciz, tecavüz veya kendilerinin ebeveyn olarak çocuklarını yanlış yetiştirmeleri sonucunda oluşmuş olabileceğine dair endişelerden kaynaklandığı görüşmüştür. Bu bağlamda bir diğer en önemli ortak duygu ise suçlamaktır. Anneler, çocuklarını yanlış yetiştirdiklerini düşünerek kendilerini, yeterince ilgilenmediğini düşünerek babayı ve böyle bir yaşamı tercih ettiğini düşünerek çocuklarını suçlarlar. Bunlara ek olarak, annelerin 'El alem ne der?' düşüncesiyle diğer insanlardan utandıkları, dolayısıyla çocuklarının kimliklerini saklama eğilimi gösterdikleri ve medyada karşılaştıkları LGBTQ'lara uygulanan şiddet ve trans cinayetlerinden yola çıkarak çocuklarının başlarına kimliklerinden dolayı bir şey geleceğini düşündükleri görülmüştür.

Trans çocuk anneleri için açılma süreci görece daha talepkardır. Çünkü trans anneler daha çocuklarının hemcinslerine ilgi duyduğu gerçeğiyle yüzleşemeden, çocuklarının cinsiyet değiştirme ameliyatına girme sürecinde kendilerini bulurlar; ve cinsiyet değiştirme ameliyatı çocuklarının isimlerinin, görünüşlerinin hatta çocuklarını çağırdıkları kelimelerin (oğlum-kızım) bile değişmesi anlamına gelmektedir. Üstelik anneler çocuklarının 'trans' kimliklerinin ne anlama geldiğini anlamaya zaman ayıramadan, çocuklarının ameliyat esnasında yaşacağı sosyal, psikolojik ve sağlıkla ilgili sıkıntılardan dolayı çocuklarının yanında olmak durumunda kalırlar. Dolayısıyla trans çocukların anneleri için mevzu çocuğun LGBTQ kimliğini anlamlandırmanın ötesinde çocuğunun yeni bedenine alışma mevzusudur. Başka bir deyişle, beden, trans anneleri için başlı başına bir mevzu haline gelir.

Çocuklarının LGBTQ kimlikleriyle karşı karşıya kalmak, bütün anneler için çocukları ile ilgili o ana kadar kurdukları hayaller ve çocuklarına dair beklentileriyle de yüzleşmek anlamına gelmektedir. Uzun ve acılı bir süreç içerisinde hayallerini gözden geçiren anneler, bu hayallerin aslında onlara toplum tarafından öğretildiğini farkederler. Toplum onlara 'doğru' bir ebeveynin çocuğunu yetiştirirken neler yapması gerektiğini söylemiştir. Tam da bu noktada anneler toplumun onlara LGBTQ kimlikler hakkında söylediklerinin 'sapkınlık' ve 'hastalık' üzerinden kurulurken kendi yetiştirdikleri çocukların hasta olmayan, düzgün, kimseye kötülük yapmayan insanlar oldukları durumuyla karşılaşırlar. Ayrıca içinde bulundukları toplum her zaman anneliği yüceltmiş; annelere, anneliğin çocuğunu ne olursa olsun bırakmamak ve ona karşılıksız sevgi vermek olduğunu öğretmiştir. Bu ikilemler ve çocuklarına duydukları derin sevgi, anneler için terazide çocuklarının bulunduğu kefenin ağır basmasına sebep olur. Bütün bunların farkına varmak ise bu çalışmada değişimi tetikleyen ilk adım olarak kendini göstermektedir.

Bu tetiklenmeyle beraber ilk önce hayallerinin irdelenmesiyle başlayan süreç, annelerin çocuklarının cesareti ve kimlikleri konusundaki kararlılıklarından etkilenmesiyle, bu sefer toplumun onlara dayattığı normların etkisi altında olmadan çocuklarını tekrar tanıma çabasına dönüşür. Çocuklarının duruşundan etkilenen anneler, çocuklarını anlama ve LGBTQ meseleleri hakkında bilgi edinme süreci içerisinde ilk olarak cinsellik kavramını sorgularlar. Çoğu anne kendisinin de bir cinsel kimliği ve yönelimi olduğunu, bu meselenin sadece LGBTQ kişilere özel bir mesele olmadığını çocuğu kendisine açıldıktan sonra öğrenmiştir. Cinselliğin, Türkiye toplumunda tabu olmaktan çıkamadığını, cinselliklerini kendi istekleri doğrultusunda değil de partnerlerine öncelik vererek yaşadıklarını ve bütün bunların onlara kendi anneleri, arkadaşları, kısacası toplum tarafından öğretilmiş olduğunu farkederler; ve belki de hayatlarında ilk defa cinsellikle ilgili konuşabilmeye başlarlar. Durumun annelerin çocuklarına

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besledikleri derin sevgiyi farketmekten öteye geçtiği ve annelerin kimliklerinin sınırlarını, çocuklarının LGBTQ kimlikleri üzerinden esnettikleri burada net bir şekilde görülmektedir. Kendilerinin bastırılmış duygularını farkına varmak çocuklarının hislerine dair duydukları empatiyi de gelişmiştir. Başka bir deyişler, çocuklarının cinsel kimlikleriyle özgürce yaşamak istemelerini, kendi bastırılmışlıklarını ve içlerinde kalıp da yapamadıklarını farkettiklerinde daha iyi anlarlar. Aslında çocuklarının cinselliklerini sorgulayarak değil, kendi cinselliklerini sorgulayarak gelinen bu noktada anneler meselelere kavramsal bakmayı öğrenirler. Yani kendi çocuğunun 'hasta' ya da 'sapkın' olmaması değil de LGBTQ kimliklerin bu şekilde olmadıklarını anlarlar.

Annelerin cinsellik ile ilgili sorgulamaları kadınlık sorgulamalarıyla beraber ilerler. Kadınlıklarını da cinsellik meselesinde görüldüğü gibi, oldukları kişiler üzerinden değil de, kendi annelerinin ve partnerlerinin onlardan bekledikleri üzerinden kurduklarını farkederler. Dolayısıyla kadınlık mevzusu da cinsellik gibi toplumdan öğrenilmiştir. Kendilerini farketmek için yüzlerini çocuklarına dönerler; ve bu sefer çocuklar annelerinin rol modelleri haline gelir.

Cinsellik ve kadınlık kavramlarıyla ilgili dönüşüm, annelerin günlük hayat pratiklerine ve arkadaşlık ilişkilerine de yansımıştır. Kendi olmanın kişi için ne kadar önemli olduğunu farketmek, sadece cinsellikte değil, artık hayatlarının her alanında kendilerine öncelik vermelerini sağlamıştır. Özet olarak, çocuklarının LGBTQ olmasını öğrenmesiyle başlayan toplumsal kavramlara dair yapısökümünü, annelerin kimliklerinin sonsuz inşaasına devam etmeleri izlemiştir. Bu bağlamda, annelerin kimliklerindeki değişimin aslında 'esneme' ve 'uyarlanabilirlik' (flexibility and adaptability) meselesi olduğuna dikkat çekmek önemlidir. Annelerin yaşadıkları dönüşümler gönüllü dönüşümler değildir; aksine, çocuklarını kaybetmeyi göze alamayan annelerin, çocuklarını anlamak için çıktığı yolda bilgi edinmesiyle beraber cinsellik, kadınlık, annelik, beden, arkadaşlık vs.

üzerine olan algılarının toplumsal olarak kurulmuş algılar olduğunu farkedip, çözümlemesini yaparken kendi algılarının değişmesinin sonucudur.

Annelerin dönüşümüyle beraber anne çocuk ilişkisi de dönüşmüştür. Birbirlerini daha iyi anlamanın ve birbirlerine alan sağlamanın anne-çocuk ilişkisinde ilişkiyi güçlendirici etkisi yadsınamaz. Ancak toplanan veriler doğrultusunda annelerin çocuklarının açılma sürecine babalara göre daha fazla dahil olduğu ve daha fazla emek sarfettikleri görülmektedir. Babalar ya sürece dahil olmamışlar, ya çekinik bir rol benimsemişler, ya da annelerin çabaları doğrultusunda sürece dahil olmuşlardır. Çocukların ise babalarıyla olan deneyimlerinin, anne ile olan deneyimlerle farklılık gösterdiği, daha çok sevgisiz kalma ve hayal kırıklığına uğrama hislerini barındırdığı söylenebilir. Buna ek olarak, ailedeki diğer çocukların genel olarak kendini LGBTQ olarak tanımlayan kardeşlerine destek oldukları, hatta anne babayı sakinleştirip süreç için bir ön hazırlık yaptığı görülmüştür. Dolayısıyla kardeşler genellikle LGBTQ kardeşlerinin açılma sürecinde 'aracı' (medium) konumundadırlar. Kardeşlerin sürece dahil olmadığı aileler de ise LGBTQ çocukların kardeşlerinden destek bekledikleri açık bir bulgudur.

Anneler çocukların açılma sürecinde hem açılmanın birinci hedefi hem de çocuğun sosyal çevreye açılmasında 'kapıcı' (gatekeeper) rolü üstlendikleri görülmüştür. LGBTQ kişilerin kendilerinde de görüldüğü gibi, anneler çocuklarının LGBTQ kimliklerini çevreleri ile paylaşırken seçici davranmışlardır. Söylemek için seçtikleri ilk kişiler genel olarak aile içinden olmayan ve daha bilgili gördükleri, deneyimlerini anlayabileceğini düşündükleri kişilerdir. Annelerin diğer insanlara ve geniş ailelerindeki akrabalarına açılmak için belli stratejiler geliştirdikleri görülmüştür. Bunların en başında gelen ise 'Benim Çocuğum' belgeselini izletip, açıldığı kişilerin kafasında oluşabilecek sorulara belgesel yoluyla cevap bulmasını sağlamaktır. Bu bağlamda, açılmanın, toplumda yaygın kabul edilen bir kimlik olmasından kaynaklandığı unutulmamalıdır; yani LGBTQ kişiler için açılmak

durumunda kalmanın başlıca sebebi girdikleri ortamda kontrolleri dışında heteroseksüel olarak kabul edilmeleridir. LGBTQ kimliğin toplumca benimsenmemesi, anneleri de görünmez bir 'dolap' (closet) içine kapatmaktadır. Başka bir deyişle, LGBTQ kimliğin kabul görmemiş olması, LGBTQ çocukların annelerinin de dışlanması anlamına gelmektedir (Švab & Kuhar, 2014). Dolayısıyla, anneler de, özellikle çocuklarının heteroseksüel olduğunun varsayıldığı durumlarda, ya yalan söylemek ya da açılmak durumunda kalırlar. Çocuklar için geçerli olan 'dolap' (closet) ve 'dolaptan çıkma' (coming out of the closet) aslında anneler için de geçerlidir (Sedgwick, 1993).

Annelerin, geniş ailelerine açılma deneyimlerinde toplumu değiştirmek adına henüz bilinçli olmasa da ilk adımları attıkları görülmektedir. Hem çocuklarının açılmaları sonrasında ebeveynlerin, hem de LGBTQ kişilerle ilgili toplumdaki önyargılı algının değişmesi konusunda LGBTQ aile gruplarının (LİSTAG, LADEG+, Ankara Gökkuşağı Aileleri) etkisinin vurgulanması çok önemlidir. Çalışmadaki annelerin de olduğu gibi ebeveynler çocuklarının açılması ile ilk karşılaştıklarında 'sıradan' ebeveynlerdir. Kendilerini karanlığın içinde ve böyle bir durum sadece kendi başlarına gelmiş olması düşüncesiyle tamamen yalnız hissetmişlerdir. Kendi çabalarıyla ya da çocuklarının yönlendirmesiyle gittikleri aile grubunda diğer ebeveynlerle tanışmaları, deneyimlerini karşılıklı paylaşmaları ve CETAD (Cinsel Eğitim Tedavi ve Araştırma Derneği)'ın bilgilendirici toplantıları sayesinde anneler bilgilenmiş ve bu teze konu olan dönüşüm gerçekleşmiştir. Ayrıca, çalışmadaki annelerin farkındalık yaratılmak istenen hedef kitle gibi kendini heteroseksüel olarak tanımlıyor olması çok önemli bir dönüştürücü etkendir. Bu durum katıldıkları seminerler ve toplantılarda anneler kendi hikayelerini anlatırken karşılarındaki kişilerde 'Benim başıma da gelebilir.' düşüncesinin oluşmasına sebep olmaktadır.

Bu noktada kendini gey olarak tanımlayan bir oğlu olan Sevim'in anlattıkları örnek olarak verilebilir:

> …Mesela filmin galasında bir izleyici 'Ben bu çocukların aileleri olabileceğini hiç düşünmemiştim.' dedi. Bu inanılmaz derecede sarsıcı bir şey. Eşcinseller, transseksüeller bu toplumda varlar, evet, ama onlar da bir ailenin bebeğiydi, sevgili çocuğuydu; bunu düşünemiyorlar.

Sonuç olarak kendilerini LGBTQ olarak tanımlayan çocukların köken ailelerine açıldıktan sonra anne-çocuk ilişkisindeki dinamiklerin dönüşümüne odaklanan bu tez, literatüre şöyle katkılar sağlamıştır. Bu çalışma Türkiye'de LGBTQ köken aileleri hakkında yapılan ilk akademik çalışma olma niteliği taşımaktadır. Gey, lezbiyen ve trans çocuk annelerini analize dahil etmesi aile dönüşümüyle ilgili karşılaştırmalı bir bakış açısı kazandırmıştır. Ayrıca, çalışmaya katılan çocuk ve anneleri aynı aile birimlerinden seçmiş olması da aynı aile sisteminin dönüşümü hakkında bize daha kapsamlı analiz fırsatı sunmuştur. Öte yandan, bu tez, Türkiye'nin sosyal, kültürel ve siyasi yapısını da göz önüne alarak Aile Sistemler Teorisi'nin kavramları üzerinden veri analizi sunarak, aile sistem teorisinin aile sistemini diğer sistemlerle bağlama eksikliğini gidermeye çalışmıştır. Ek olarak, bu zamana kadar uygulanmış ve Aile Sistemler Teorisi'ne dayanan çalışmalarda aile sistemindeki 'kriz' ve alt sistemlere 'müdahale' olarak daha çok kayıp, boşanma, şiddet vs. konuları ele alınmıştır. Türkiye'nin kültürel, sosyal ve siyasi durumu göz önüne alındığında, LGBTQ çocukların köken ailelerine açılmasının Aile Sistemler Teorisi'nde bahsedilen kriz ve müdahale kavramlarına uygunluğu göze çarpmaktadır. Bu bağlamda bu tez, LGBTQ kimliğin açılması mevzusunu Aile Sistemler Teorisi'nin kavramsal çerçevesini kullanarak Türkiye'deki aile yapısının dönüşümüne olan etkisini inceleyen ilk çalışmadır.

Bu çalışmada ikili alt sistem olarak anne-çocuk ilişkisine bakıldığı ve erkeklik kavramının Türkiye'nin heteronormatif ve ataerkil aile yapısı da göz önüne alınırsa, bundan sonraki çalışmalarda baba-çocuk ikili alt sistemine odaklanmak,

ailedeki dönüşüme başka bir açıdan daha bakmayı ve bu dönüşümü daha kapsamlı anlamayı sağlayacaktır. Ayrıca daha önce de belirtildiği gibi, bu çalışmadaki annelerin dönüşümleri ve kimlik sınırlarının esnemesi ve uyarlanması gönüllü olmaktan çok zorunda kalınan bir mücadeledir. Annelerin çocuklarını kaybetmeyi göze alamayarak, çocuklarını anlamak için çıktıkları yolda öğrendikleri bilgilerle kimlikleri dönüşmüştür, ve yaşadıkları zorlu süreci diğer ebeveynler için daha kolay hale getirmek onlar için bir amaç haline gelmiştir. Ama hikayenin en başında aslında tüm anneler 'sıradan' annelerdir. Bu şekilde bir bakış açısıyla düşünülürse, 'sıradan' ebeveynlerin üzerine yapılacak bir çalışma ebeveynlerin politikleşme süreci ve açılmanın farklı dinamikleri hakkında alan açabilir.

G: TEZ FOTOKOPİSİ İZİN FORMU

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TEZİN ADI (İngilizce) : COMING OUT TO PARENTS: TRANSFORMATION OF THE FAMILIES WITH LGBTQ CHILDREN

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