THE INTERSECTION OF CLASS AND GENDER:
AN ANALYSIS ON FAMILY PERFORMANCES THROUGH COMING-OUT
PRACTICES OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL INDIVIDUALS


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Approval of the Graduate School of Social Sciences

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**ABSTRACT**

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Problematizing the taken-for-granted definitions and roles standardizing and normalizing the heteronormative nuclear family, from the critical perspective of Queer Theory, this study considers family as a whole of practices performed by and intimacy felt among the members included rather than a given and concrete entity. In order to reflect the idea of unstable, transforming and fluid characteristic of the family notion, this research focuses on both the biological and chosen family relations of non-trans lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals. Analysis conducted in the intersection of class and gender as the sub-systems affected by heteronormative social structure has revealed the subjective differences within family performances of LGBs from different classes, and different reflections of each identity in family practices regarding their gender. By doing so, social and personal life dynamics behind the concept of family has been explored and process of *practicing/ doing* family has attempted to be reflected throughout the study.

**Keywords:** Family Practice, Heteronormativity, Coming Out, Chosen Family

# ÖZ

## TOPLUMSAL CİNSİYET VE SINIF BAĞLAMINDA LEZBİYEN, GEY, BİSEKSÜEL BİREYLERİN AİLE PERFORMANSLARININ AÇILMA PRATİKLERİ ÜZERİNDEN İNCELENMESİ

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Bu çalışma, heteronormatif çekirdek aileyi normal ve standart bir yapı olarak gösteren toplumsal normlar ve herkesçe kabul edilmiş tanımları Queer Teori'nin eleştirel perspektifiyle sorunsallaştırıyor. Aile kavramı, verili ve sabit bir yapı olarak düşünülmek yerine içine dahil olan bireylerce hissedilen yakınlıklar ve icra edilen pratikler olarak ele alınıyor. Tez çalışması boyunca iddia edildiği şekilde aile kavramının sabit olmayan, dönüşen ve akışkan yapısı, görüşme yapılan na-trans lezbiyen, gey ve biseksüel kişilerin biyolojik ve seçilmiş aileleriyle olan ilişkisi üzerinden inceleniyor. Heteronormativite etkisinde şekillenen alt sistemler olarak toplumsal cinsiyet ve sınıf değişkenleri bağlamında yapılan incelemede, farklı sınıflardan LGB'lerin aile performanslarındaki öznel çeşitlilikler ve her bir kimliğin toplumsal cinsiyet bağlamında aile pratiklerinde oluşturduğu farklılıklar ortaya çıkarılıyor. Bunu yaparken aile kavramının arkasında yatan kişisel ve toplumsal dinamikleri ve aileyi pratik etme/ yapma süreci tez çalışması boyunca yansıtılıyor.

**Anahtar Kelimeler**: Aile Pratikleri, Heteronormativite, Açılma, Seçilmiş Aile

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To My Given and Chosen Families

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# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

LGB          Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual

LGBTI+       Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, and Other sexualities

LGBTT        Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transvestite, Transsexual

SOGI         Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

*What is family?* This is one of the most controversial questions of social sciences because answers given may be widely diverse for different individuals as well as for different fields of inquiries. In broadly speaking, for those who approach the issue from the field of economy, family might be described as an economic unit producing and consuming; or for most feminist thinkers, it might be described as a patriarchal unit where women are oppressed by men; or for some, it might also be described as the source of reproduction of humankind.

When the question is asked in a more narrowed down way like '*who is the family?*', the answers given would also be as diverse as the previous. For the majority of the people, the first definition comes up would be the definition of *nuclear family* consisting of parent(s) and child(ren); or, those who seek for a more official definition might say that family is a group of people bounded with each other by blood, marriage or adoption. However, people thinking in a more post-modern way might move the description beyond the taken-for-granted assumptions highlighting the boundaries of family, and might bring the emotions and relationalities to the agenda rather than defining certain persons or structures. As even seen from those limited examples,

> there is no single concept of the family which is true for all historical periods and in all places and definitions of family are relative to the social and cultural environments of people who think about families and who talk about families (Cheal, 2002:4).

It is possible to say, in another saying, that the more different approaches, cultures, times, places and individuals exist, the more the definition of family might be diverse.

In this framework, the main issues to be problematized in this study are: (i) the taken-for-granted recognitions on 'standard' heteronormative family considered as legitimate by social norms, and (ii) "otherization" made by heteronormative legislations as well as cultural norms against any other *family-like* networks including queer families. Considering the diversity mentioned in the beginning, I argue in this study that family cannot be defined and legitimized within norms, and family practices can differentiate with regards to various sub-factors like gender and class. In order to support this argument, I will explore the issue in the focus of my research question *"How do gender and class shape family practices of non-trans lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals?"*. By exploring the issue, while getting away to find one 'correct' answer for the question of "what is family", I have attempted to find the personal and social dynamics behind the concept of family and to reflect the process of *doing* family throughout the study.

Throughout the family sociology literature, we have seen that family issue has been researched in many different theoretical frameworks. Together with the effect of Individualization thesis, non-heterosexual relationships, non-standard family relations and fictive kinship started to be the issue of sociological inquiries. Later on, with the effect of feminist theory and postmodernism, queer potentials of the concept of gender as well as family have entered into the sociology literature. In this regard, I have benefitted from Queer Theory in order to analyze gender dynamic beyond the binary definitions as well as to reflect the unstable and fluid characteristic of family practices. Contrary to the binary definitions of gender within Classical Feminist Theory, Queer Theory has provided this study a broader ground with regards to its comprehensive view on performativity of gender. Due to the fact that I have problematized the heteronormative definitions and norms of *the family*, queer theory also allows me to see the family issue as a performance in some manner rather than a concrete entity. Additionally, analyzing class dynamics with Classical Marxist understanding might not be so effective for this particular group because of the subjective features of LGBTI+s as well as sociopolitical profile of Turkey. Therefore, I have analyzed the class variable by benefitting from Pierre Bourdieu's

class theory that has a more comprehensive view including the terms like economic, cultural and social capital as well as *habitus* and *field* – to be explained in further sections.

Owing to my long-term activism and professional work in LGBTI+ field, I have had many opportunities to observe the community as an insider. Relying on my academic background and LGBTI+ activism, I have developed some assumptions and arguments about the family practices of the community – to be explained further in details. Departing from these assumptions and arguments, I have analyzed how family practices do change for working class and middle class LGBs in the intersection of gender. Aiming to analyze how these variables affect the family practices of non-trans LGBs, I have carried out semi-structured in-debt interviews with 16 people for this research. In order to make class analysis, I have considered respondents' economic capital and education as the determinants. Data provided from the field research has been grouped in accordance to the gender and class differences of the respondents and in relation to the key concepts and sub-topics deriving from the data.

In this framework, focusing more on the relationalities among biological family members, first, I have explored how LGBs from different classes experience family in the intersection of gender dynamics; that is, (i) how they relate with biological relatives within heteronormative family order; (ii) what are the effects of coming-out within the family of origin for different habitus; (iii) what are the similarity and different experiences of working class and higher class people within their family of origin. This part of analysis has led me to see how problematic is the conventional meanings of the family for non-heterosexual people from different classes and in relation gender. Secondly, I have analyzed the responses of my interviewees with regards to their fictive kinship practices and their 'ideal' family descriptions. Here, I have revealed: (i) whether fictive kinship – mentioned in the related literature as an alternative support mechanism for the lives of LGBTI+s – can be a choice for LGBs living in different class habitus in Turkish context, and (ii) how 'ideal' family

imaginations are differentiated among the non-trans LGBs from higher class and working class. In one hand, I could support the arguments of fictive kinship literature on LGBTI+s written so far that the actual meaning of family comes from its functions provided by the members and intimacy felt among the members regardless of whomever performs as a member. On the other hand, I have revealed from the findings that the effects of *family-specific-doxa* - to be explained further – reflects differently on family practices of LGBs from different classes, as well as fictive kinship reality works different for LGBs in Turkish context.

As a result of the study, I have argued that beyond its conventional definitions and legitimacy provided by the state and society, family, which is expected to function as an unconditional support mechanism, may function differently for different communities. As we may see from the findings of this study, gender and class as sub-social-systems affecting our habitus are among the factors that causes these differentiations. Although functionalities and so-called intimacy provided by biological family cannot be denied totally, it has been revealed that individuals living 'illegitimate' and 'non-normative' lives within heteronormative social order may provide these supports from alternative *family-like* networks. Therefore, I have argued after all these discussions that family cannot be defined as a concrete entity which is formed with taken-for-granted roles and hetero-norms, but the diverse practices actually give the real meaning of family. Relying on the findings of this research, I have also argued that family as a fluid social network can be *queer*.

## 1.1. Rationale of the Study

Apart from the sociological importance of family as one of the most controversial concepts, cultural and legal reflections of it within the society are also problematic. In this section, I would like to address the rationale of the study by revealing these problematic areas.

First of all, in the legal aspect, majority of the countries in the world including Turkey legally recognize only the marriage of heterosexual couples as a condition of being a family. In Turkish Constitution, Article 41, for instance, says that "The family is the foundation of the Turkish society, and family is based on the equality between the spouses" and the following regulations for 'the spouse' are defined with respect to a woman and a man. "Law is not autonomous, standing outside of the social world, but is deeply embedded within society"; therefore, "law both reflects and impacts culture" (Mather, 2011). It would not be wrong to say that within the interrelation between the society's view and the laws, if something is illegal, it is most probably rejected by the majority of the society. As indicated in Braithwaite's and colleagues' article (2010), "media portrayals of families, as well as the scholarly literature, focus most centrally on families comprised of blood and legal kin living within the boundaries of heterosexual marriage and in relatively autonomous family households". This is a concrete example of how legal framework of a state and accordingly the general opinion of the society might determine the boundaries of a legitimate family, and how state and society marginalize others who are not fulfilling these norms.

In the cultural context, societal norms mostly deriving from the embedded traditions and culture of the given society are quite effective to determine what are the acceptable *family behaviors* and *feelings* within a 'legitimate' family. Although these unwritten norms are actually invisible, they are as strong as written rules for many cultures like Turkey as a determinant in the field. Considering the fact that for many society including Turkey a conventional and "normal" family is recognized as a heterosexual nuclear family, and society – not as a whole but as a majority of the people living in – expect anyone to live in this way. Even though there are many other living arrangements like people living alone, single parents, unmarried cohabiting partners, friends living together, and so on, expectation of the general public is shaped in accordance with the (hetero-)norms. According to the heteronormative social order, one has to fulfill the expectations and live compatible with the norms if they do not want to be excluded from the field.

> At the societal level, our beliefs about what a family is determine our beliefs about what it isn't. Our ideas about which family forms are acceptable, normal, desirable, and praiseworthy, determine which are considered abnormal, problematic, and in need of fixing or condemnation. (Newman, 1999)

Regarding Newman's quote, it can be said that LGBTI+ community - as the focus group of this study- is generally exposed to discrimination and "otherization" - marginalization in other words- from the society due to heteronormative societal norms. In this respect, family as one of the most heterosexist structures of society in which such intolerance and exclusion are seen frequently in heteronormative societies like Turkey will be problematized in the scope of this thesis.

## 1.2. Assumptions of the Study

The research question of this study has actually come up from assumptions thought in its preliminary phases. As a person who has been involved in LGBTI+ community for many years, I have had many opportunities to observe the community both from inside and outside. Relying on my long-term close relationships with my LGBTI+ friends as well as acquaintances, I have observed that LGBTI+s have "non-ordinary" relationships, out of traditional norms, with their families of origin. What I intend to say with "out of norm" is the differentiation of the relationalities that LGBTI+s formed with their biological family members or their nuclear families. As mentioned in the beginning, I have started to build the basement of this thesis relying on these "differentiation" assumptions.

According to the recent reports related to situation of LGBTI+s in Turkey[1], it can clearly be seen that the number of hate crime, hate speech and human rights violation

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[1] For detailed information on the related issue, following reports of Kaos GL Association, "*Cinsel Yönelim ve Cinsiyet Kimliği Temelli İnsan Hakları İzleme Raporu 2013 - 2014 – 2015 – 2016 – 2017*", "*2017 Yılında Türkiye'de Gerçekleşen Homofobi Ve Transfobi Temelli Nefret Suçları Raporu*", "*Homofobik ve Transfobik Nefret Söyleminin İnternet Seyri: Sosyal Medya Raporu 2018*", and "*Medya İzleme Raporu 2018*" retrieved from http://www.kaosgldernegi.org/yayin.php?id=6 may be checked.

cases based on sexual orientation and gender identity prejudices are quite high in Turkey. Regarding the results of the reports, it can be concluded that acceptance and tolerance level of general public towards LGBTI+s is still low in the country. In this regard, the first and the most general assumption of the initial stages of the study is that LGBTI+s are refused by their families of origin or could have weak ties with their family members due to lack of tolerance that their families show regarding their sexual orientation and gender identity. Although there are many examples that can be given as contrary to this assumption, hate crime cases happened within family of origin as well as personal family stories that I have witnessed or listened for many years allowed me to make this assumption at first stance.

For many societies, on the other hand, taken-for-granted assumptions for conventional families might be counted as: (i) the strong intensity of involvement between family members; (ii) the longevity of the family relations that might endure for lifetime; (iii) family history and tradition deriving from the strong prospect for future interaction (Newman, 1999:7). In this context, other well-known and socially accepted features of a family is to provide unconditional love, trust, commitment and support among its members. As one of the departing points of this thesis, I secondly assume that LGBTI+s who have weak familial ties with their families of origin fill this emotional gap together with their *chosen families* consisting of their lovers or close friends with whom they follow up the same identity politics and share similar life interests and values. As it can be seen in further chapters, concept of chosen family/ fictive kinship is so common among LGBTI+ community, but this can be considered as an assumption for my thesis.

Thirdly, departing from my observation within the LGBTI+ community, these people who have chosen or alternative "family-like" relations with non-relatives are generally activists in LGBTI+ movement, and regarding their economic and cultural capital they can be regarded as middle-class people who can continue their life in a

certain quality without providing any additional financial support from their biological families. Therefore, relying on this assumption the main reason why I intended to explore the class dimension as a separate variable for this study was to find out how lower class features like lower level education or lower income reflect the family formation and family practices of working class LGBTI+s.

In the preliminary phases of this research, I also assumed that gender would make a difference among the self-identification processes of non-trans lesbian, gay and bisexual people due to the different reflections of each group in the society. While level of homophobia reflected from the society is high towards gay men regarding their femininity, it is so common to observe that female same-sex sexuality is reflected as "attractive" and "accepting" by even mass media in order to attract heterosexual men (Diamond, 2005:105). On the other hand, bisexual sexual orientation regardless of their gender is invisible, because of the lack of information or heteronormative misbeliefs on the issue. In this context, I assume in this thesis that these different reactions and reflections deriving from gender would cause differentiation in the family practices of non-trans lesbian, gay and bisexual people in my study group.

## 1.3. Arguments of the Study

In the framework of the problematic areas mentioned in previous sections and assumptions regarding the family practices of non-trans lesbian, gay and bisexual people, I have a few arguments in this study. By building the study on a queer stance (to be explained in next sections), I will attempt to deconstruct the (hetero)normative perception of family through the diversity of 'alternative' family practices. In order to better reflect this diversity, LGBTI+ community as one of the main subjects of queer theory discussions regarding sexuality and gender will be the focus of the arguments of this study. Due to the fact that LGBTI+s are generally 'marginalized' and excluded from the heteronormative sociopolitical systems in Turkey, queer as a

theory as well as an identity politics struggle against the social norms has contributed to make me develop following arguments.

First of all, considering the heteronormative profile of Turkish society as well as thoughts I gained during my literature review, the fact – for majority – that biological families are some kind of emotional and physical support mechanisms is actually an assumption and cannot go beyond being a social norm for this thesis. In this context, by taking LGBTI+ community who are generally excluded by heterosexist societies, I intend to explore the fictional pattern of family from LGBTI+s' side. In order to figure this out, I will firstly analyze the legal and social criterion to be recognized as a family such as blood tie, marriage or adoption through the perception of my study group. I will try to see the concept of family out of (hetero-)normative definitions. Relying on the perspective of non-trans lesbian, gay and bisexual people in my study group, I will try to understand "what does family means for them" and "how does family make them feel" in this thesis.

During the course of this thesis, I will try to analyze the effects of such invisible systems like gender and class on family practices of my research group with the outputs of this study. As a result of this analysis, secondly, I will try to get that family is a socially accepted fact which is actually fluid, and based on practices/ performances. Relying on this analysis that I have reached through queer perspective, I argue that with regards to its performativity family is a social structure that can be deconstructed and become queer.

## 1.4. Theoretical Framework

In order to explore the research question of the study comprehensively, I had to construct the basis of the thesis in a theoretical framework which can cover the concepts of gender and class and link them to family practices. In this respect, the concepts of Judith Butler in *queer theory* regarding gender and Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of *class theory* will be combined for the conceptual spectrum of this study.

First of all, benefiting from Judith Butler's thoughts of performativity of gender, the effect of gender on personal life practices and, accordingly, on the family practices of non-trans LGBs will be the first issue to be analyzed in this thesis. Butler as one of the key scholars of queer theory argues that "gender is the mechanism by which notions of masculine and feminine are produced and naturalized, but gender might very well be the apparatus by which such terms are deconstructed and denaturalized" (Butler, 2004: 43). Problematizing the naturalization of heterosexuality as a norm and limitation for gender issue, Butler argues that gender is performative. Avoiding to reduce performances to sexuality or sexual practices of persons, Butler explains performativity as "a repetition and ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration" (Butler, 1999: 15). Therefore, relying on the queer perspective embraced on the family issue, Butler's thoughts will be a basis to be built on for the gender analysis of this study.

Secondly, analyzing the class variable in a more comprehensive way with Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of class theory rather than classical Marxist social classification will enable me to better see the subjective features of the study group deriving from their sexual orientation. I assume that position of non-heterosexual people in social stratification is not only depended on their economic capital, but it is also related to the cultural and social capital through the opportunities they can reach throughout their life courses as well as the habitus developed in the effect of many other features like gender, place, time, etc. Therefore, I believe that Bourdieu's concepts like field, habitus, doxa, etc. facilitate the analysis of this thesis regarding the class differences. Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus regarded as a collective repetition within the theory will be combined with the Judith Butler's performativity "as a *repetition* and *ritual*" in relation to class and gender.

Departing from the analytical rationale of queer theory, I have developed my motivations and justifications to use queer theory as a theoretical background for this

study. As an LGBTI+ activist who has been involved in the movement for many years and as a Gender and Women's Studies program student, I have several opportunities to evaluate the research problem objectively as a researcher as well as to experience queer lives by observing the LGBTI+ subjects from inside. This reciprocity has allowed me to see: (i) how identity struggle of LGBTI+s is reflected in old-school feminism in Turkey, (ii) what are the limitations and norms deriving from "*gender*" as an umbrella term for both theories and (iii) how *queer-ing,* "resistance to the 'normal', where 'normal' is what seems natural and intrinsic" (Song, 2012: 137) is possible as a survival strategy for LGBTI+s in such geography. Relying on that "Queer Theory is of significance since it is not only about and on queer people but about the entire society and by this it problematizes the ways individuals are constituted within and by sexual regimes" (Baba, 2011: 58), I have realized that queer theory would provide the most comprehensive insight to the study.

> Yet if the one thing that everyone can agree on is that queer theory is not any one thing, there is a case to be made that, in contradistinction to its widely promoted ethical openness to its future, queer theory has been less scrupulous about its messy, flexible and multiple relations to its pasts, the critical and activist traditions from which it emerged and that continue to develop alongside – posing new questions, reorienting themselves in relation to new objects, grafting themselves to new methodologies – in mutually informing ways. (Jagose, 2009:159)

Departing from the quote, I believe that while queer theory enables me to reflect my thoughts on gender and class variables comprehensively in the course of this study, unstable and continuing character of queer theory just as fluid and changing family practices also allow me to support my arguments on the deconstruction of the norms on conventional and 'standardized' family.

## 1.5. Contributions and Limitations

Considering the existing family sociology literature specifically focusing on non-conventional family practices, as far as we know the research question of this study

will be studied for the first time in Turkey. Therefore, originality of the research question will fill a gap in the existing family literature in Turkey and abroad.

Meanwhile, though there are many studies carried out in Turkey and abroad analyzing the concepts of gender and class together, there are so limited number of studies conducted in Turkey approaching the issue in the intersection of sexual orientation. Therefore, while the new framing of this study will make us able to see how gender and class intersect for non-trans lesbian, gay and bisexuals living in Turkey, it will also provide a ground for comparison with Western literature.

As a result of this study, it will be possible to analyze following issues in details and together: (i) Class differences among non-trans lesbian, gay and bisexuals living in Turkey, (ii) Different reflections of these groups in Turkish society regarding their gender (i.e. image of a lesbian woman or a gay man or invisibility of bisexuals), (iii) Relationality between gender deriving from subjective experiences of each group with their class positions, (iv) Reflections of these relationalities to family practices and performances. Relying on the detailed analysis within the research group in the intersection of gender and class, the study is expected to be a significant resource for scholars studying on LGBTI+ issues in Turkey.

On the other hand, scope of a master's thesis as well as the time limitation did not let me study the issue more comprehensively by including more variables as data analysis. Although LGBTI+s are most of the time regarded as one group sharing an identity politics, the scope of this study did not allow me to include transgender and intersex individuals due to the subjective characteristics of each identity and due to the level of exclusion they may face in heteronormative social order (This limitation will be explained in details in Methodology Chapter). Further, realizing that differentiation in urban and rural areas would affect the results of the thesis because of the subjective conditions of the local cities of Turkey with respect to the situation of LGBTI+s, we have decided to limit the research group with the people living with metropolitan cities.

## 1.6. Outline of the Study

Seeking to explore differentiating social dynamics behind the family practices of non-trans LGBs deriving from gender and class, in current chapter, I have given an overview of this study. Firstly, I have explained the rationale of this study by giving related legal and cultural context of Turkey in which heteronormative social norms cause acceptance or exclusion of certain groups. Relying on the background, further, I have given my assumptions and arguments. Lately, in the given theoretical framework I have explained, in this section, how this thesis may contribute to the existing literature and what were the limitations for this study have been explained.

Relying on the research problem of this study, methodological choices and the course of the field research have been explained in Chapter 2. As one of the most significant chapters of this study, I have given the rationale to choose semi-structured, in-debt interview technique, and explained the methodology of this study by reviewing the demographic information of the respondents and limitations needed for conducting this research. In this chapter, I have also told about the formation of research question which lead me to clarify the key concepts of this study, and I have also explained the motivations behind the interview questions by linking them to the key concepts. Additionally, I believe in this section telling about my field research process as both a researcher and an LGBTI+ activist have been beneficial to better understand my positionality and how I approach the issue during this research.

In Chapter 3, drawing my path with the concepts of personal life and intimacy, as the starting point of family discussions, I have given a comprehensive overview of the family sociology literature to date. In order to reveal the emergence and employment of heteronormative and nuclear family by the modern family sociology, I have reviewed the related family sociology through (i) the roots of nuclear family discussions by the grant theories, (ii) feminist criticisms towards these theories with regards to the notion of gender, (iii) the impacts of individualization on family and intimacy discussions with the emergence of such concepts like *democratization* and

*do-it-yourself-biography,* (iv) new sociological perspectives over non-conventional forms of family and intimacy, and (v) discussions over alternative family and fictive kinship. Giving an insight about the modern family sociology has allowed me to pave the way through the post-modern understandings over gender and family. Lately in this chapter, I have given an overview of *queer* as an identity, a theory and a way of struggle against heteronormative norms. Detailing Judith Butler's thought of performativity of gender in queer perspective, I have, lastly, combine these discussions with Pierre Bourdieu's conceptual framework of class theory in order to analyze the effects of class dynamics, as the second variable of this research, in the intersection of gender.

Chapter 4 is the most important part of this thesis where I have discussed and analyzed the data provided from the field research. Firstly, in this chapter, I have examined the importance of the visibility of sexual orientation for the lives of my respondents by exploring their coming-out experiences, as a breaking-point for recognition within their family of origin. Considering the effects of heteronormative social order, I have analyzed the personal and social dynamics behind the realization of coming-out for my respondents and different reactions of parents after coming-out in line with heteropatriarchal profile of Turkish society. In order to contribute to the arguments of this section, I have, further, analyzed the different reflections towards coming-out experiences deriving from the gender hierarchy. Secondly, considering family as a micro field, I have attempted to explore what are the personal conditions for the respondents to feel a family intimacy, and how – or with whom- LGBs may provide emotional and material support in case that they cannot provide it from the family of origin. Revealing that recognition, anxiety of loneliness and shared identity politics are the shared conditions to call *a* relationship 'family' for LGBs regardless of class, lastly, in this section, I have discussed the subjective factors and conditions deriving from working-class habitus.

Lastly in Chapter 5, I have given an overview about the findings of this research. Considering the findings and the analysis made together, I have attempted to link

these discussions to other related topics and analysis. Lately in the chapter, suggestions for further studies have been given.

# CHAPTER 2


# METHODOLOGICAL CHOICES


As one of the most significant parts of this study, methodology of this research and my research journey will be reflected in this chapter. While final form of the research question has been mentioned briefly in the Introduction section, here details of the identification of the research like operationalization of the main concepts in the problem, decisions taken during the preliminary phase of the research process, reformation and limitations in the research question will be explained with the justifications, firstly. Secondly, the research method, justifications to make this choice and contributions of this method to this study will be presented in the method section. Further, as a researcher who may be considered as an insider of LGBTI+ community, I will reflect my field journey relying on my personal experiences and self-reflexivity: my thoughts before and after my entire field experience, how my positionality helped me during the field process, what were the obstacles and problems that I encountered during the field. In the following section, demographic information and groupings of the respondents will be demonstrated. Lastly, formation of the interview questionnaire with the background info for the design of the questions as well as key concepts to be used in the data analysis will be clarified in the chapter.


## 2.1. Reformation of the Research Question


In the beginning of this study, the research question had been formulated to understand the perceptions and experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people regarding the effect of research variables to their family lives. However, it has been realized, later on, that within the framework of this study

the scope of the research group as LGBTI+[2] community is broader than to be researched in the scope of a master's thesis. Because in the context of intersectionality emerged from the subjective factors of any identity, it would not be possible for such research to analyze different sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions separately in the same research group consisting of a few of each identity. Similarly, analysis of such broader concepts within the limited number of people as the research group would not provide healthy and efficient results at the end of the research. Therefore, focus group of this research has been determined after the evaluation of the following discussions over the position of sexual orientation and gender identity variables within the sociological research.

Although it seems that sexual orientation and gender identity are intersectional concepts when they are analyzed within the same conceptualization in LGBTI+ literature, they are sociologically separate topics containing comparatively different social dynamics from each other. Turkey, for instance, is a country where awareness and tolerance levels regarding LGBTI+ issues are quite low due to many different social, geographical and cultural dynamics[3]. In such geographies, it can be argued that even in the LGBTI+ community itself there is an invisible social hierarchy in terms of the advantages and disadvantages driven by both gender and class.

In the context of gender, it is possible to talk about a hierarchy through (binary) gender inequality within the community. Although being LGBTI+ is regarded as "shared identity" in terms of the similarity of the oppression and discrimination they face, I assume in the context of this study that even within the *shared identity* as a social capital in the field there are gendered differences affecting the position of the person in the social hierarchy. For instance, it is possible to talk about a gender

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[2] In the LGBTI+ abbreviation, "+" includes many other identities who do not identify themselves with existing letters. For instance, Q represents queer as well as questioning; non-binary; gender non-conforming; P represents pansexual, and so on. For different sources, the letters may be more diverse.

[3] Kaos GL's annual report on human rights violations towards LGBTI+s in Turkey, "*LGBTİ+'ların İnsan Hakları 2018 Yılı Raporu*," can be seen for a detailed analysis.

difference between a gay man and lesbian woman in the context of their reflections in public discourse. While heterosexism labels any sexual orientation different than heterosexuality as "perverts" in many different situations, the level of tolerance and discrimination in the society are not the same for a gay and a lesbian every time. Similarly, when we put ourselves in the shoes of a transgender person in binary gender system, we could clearly see that advantages of being a *non-trans*[4] person with respect to the visibility in the society place us in a different position than them in the social hierarchy.

Recent human rights violation reports and reported hate crime cases[5] indicates that transgender people are marginalized more than non-trans people in Turkey due to the effect of the visibility of their gender expression. Thinking of this marginalization through the opportunities to reach economic and cultural capital, it is obvious that transgender people are generally deprived from these opportunities, thus such situation places them in disadvantaged position in social classification. Therefore, while analyzing the experiences of an unemployed transgender person, for example, we would not be able to realize if such socioeconomic factors like employment that could be affective on their family life are derived from their social class dynamics or from the discrimination they face due to their gender identity in Turkish society.

The situation is also similar for intersex people. Different from being a sexual orientation or gender identity, on the other hand, "intersex is an umbrella term including people with 'variations in sex characteristics' (Council of Europe, 2015:15)". Due to more-than-40 different variations 'with regard to their

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[4] Although *non-trans* do not exist as a defined word in English language, it is synonymous with "cis" or "cis-gendered". As the source is unknown, the word is used in Turkish language (as *natrans*) to give a more trans-inclusive perspective to the meaning.

[5] For detailed information, Kaos GL Association's *LGBTİ+'ların İnsan Hakları Raporu 2018* and *2018 Yılında Türkiye'de Gerçekleşen Homofobi Ve Transfobi Temelli Nefret Suçları Raporu* can be reviewed.

chromosomal, gonadal or anatomical sex' (Ghattas, 2013) or "corrective" medical surgeries and treatments, intersex status might not be bodily visible every time. For the same reason, intersex people might also not be aware of their intersex status, and, accordingly, they might not be exposed to same level of discrimination compared to LGBT+s. Due to the subjective features of intersex people different than sexual orientation and gender identity issues and the fact that it would be hard to reach people who are openly identified themselves as intersex for this study, intersex people and specific discrimination that they are exposed to should be analyzed in the scope of more comprehensive studies. In the lights of the information, study group of this research has been narrowed down as lesbian, bisexual and gay people who are non-transgender or identified themselves as non-binary. Narrowing down the study group as such and drawing the new framing of the study have enabled me to open up new windows providing new perspectives and analysis to the study.

Second major change in the reformulation and limitation of the research question is the decision taken to determine an age limit for the research group. In the initial question asked, there was no age limit for interviewees; however, it has been decided later on that sample should be chosen among people at or over the age of 25. The first reason why we have made this change is that puberty for people including such periods "emotional and social maturity, desire of independence, starting to be economically independent" (Yavuzer, 2005) might be lasted until the 17-24-year of people (Şen, 2011; Yavuzer, 2005; Çelen, 2007; Steinberg, 2007). Focusing on the ages between 18-25 years old, Jeffrey Jensen Arnett (2000) called this period *emerging adulthood.*

> Emerging adulthood is distinguished by relative independence from social roles and from normative expectations. Having left the dependency of childhood and adolescence, and having not yet entered the enduring responsibilities that are normative in adulthood, emerging adults often explore a variety of possible life directions in love, work, and worldviews. Emerging adulthood is a time of life when many different directions remain possible, when little about the future has been decided for certain, when the scope of independent exploration of life's possibilities is greater for most people than it will be at any other period of the life course. (Arnett, 2000: 469)

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This situation may be interpreted for Turkey as the period when university education is ended for regular university students and the process of "deciding to *be* something" has just started. Nevertheless, mobile and free-spirited (Adıgüzel et al., 2014) young people generally hesitate and are confused in this "feeling in between" situation, and I assume in this respect that first priority of a person under 25 would not be their family ties or familial relations. Therefore, for this study, in order to better understand the importance of their familial or personal relationships more, I have decided to put an age limit for my respondents.

When the situation is considered with regards to LGBTI+s, it is so common to see that getting older or aging makes the expectations and thoughts of LGBTI+s differentiated for their life. According to a research conducted among 1050 heterosexual and 1036 lesbian, gay and bisexual persons by Stonewall (2010), one of the prominent LGBTI+ association of the globe, LGBs over 50 are more likely to be single; more likely to live alone; less likely to have children; and less likely to see their biological family members in a regular basis. Similarly, in Turkish context, it is argued that older gay men are excluded from social spaces of gay communities (Ural & Beşpınar, 2017). Such facts enable us to comment that LGBTI+ people since the age of 25 may have anxiety about their future ages, and in order to guarantee their future they may start to assign different meanings than before to their immediate support networks (family or friends) that they gain attention, commitment and compassion. In this context, limiting the research group with non-trans LGBs over the age of 25 enabled this study to provide more efficient data on the concept of family.

## 2.2. Method

After determining the final form of research question and criterion for the research group, I have decided the methodological rationale in order to provide the best results for this study. Together with my thesis advisor, we have decided to use semi-

structured interview technique, because as a researcher of such multi-dimensional question I had to be well-prepared and competent on the issue before seeking the answers face-to-face from the respondent. In one hand, semi-structured interviews allow me take enough time to prepare a comprehensive questionnaire; on the other hand, semi-structured questions give chance to ask follow up questions in key points and gain a more in-dept understanding about the situation. The method also allows interviewees to feel comfortable as if they are in a daily conversation and provide enough space for them to tell their immediate thoughts about their very-personal details.

Further, I have decided to make interviews with 16 people to provide qualitative data for this research. Although research group seems limited with a small number of people, comparing with similar researches conducted previously we have decided with my advisor that 16-people was adequate to explore the family practices of the research group. Data including demographic information of the respondents as well as my field experience as a researcher collected in these interviews contributed to the argument of this thesis to be discussed further in next sections.

In order to use in the analysis, I also had to understand the effects of class difference besides gender difference. Therefore, I decided to set some differentiative criterion to reveal the class differences. Depending on the economic capital in the first phase, I have decided to set a standard salary limit as a breaking point of class differences. This limit has been determined as the differentiating line of lower class and middle class with respect to economic capital by searching for the data provided by the researches of one of the most prominent trade unions of Turkey. According to Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions' (Türk-İş) latest research published on February 2019, the limit of poverty for a 4-person family is 6609 TL, and for one-person the amount is 2478 TL. With respect to the data, people earning below 2499 TL for their living were counted as lower class and people earning below 2499 TL were counted as from higher classes in the first phase of this thesis.

As explained in details in previous sections, minimum age for the interviewees as a selection criterion for the efficiency of the research has been determined as 25. I have searched for people over the age of 25 since the beginning; however, snowball technique could not function every time due to the criteria. There were many cases encountered where I have found the person who would reflect lower class features, but their ages were under 25. In such cases, I had to cancel the interview.

Due the fact that my respondents are from LGBTI+ community, making them feel comfortable and safe during the interviews was one of my first priorities. Agreeing on the confidentiality of the information provided, all of the interviewees allowed me to have their voice recorded. Before start, I informed them about the content of the interviews, and made them sign the *volunteer acceptance form* which was submitted to and approved by Research Ethics Committee (IAEK). Because of hesitations for confidentiality and disclosure risks in the current conservative atmosphere of Turkey regarding the LGBTI+ issues, most of the interviewees do not want to sign the forms with their official ID names and used nicknames and surnames. Therefore, during the thesis, names of respondents and people mentioned in their stories are the chosen nicknames chosen for the mentioned persons.

The place for interviews was determined by the interviewee in order them to feel comfortable to talk as much free and open as possible. While a few of the face-to-face interviews were conducted in cafes, a few of them carried out with the LGBTI+ activists were held in Kaos GL office. Additionally, for a few of the interviewees who live in other cities or who were not willing to meet face-to-face in Ankara we have conducted the interviews through Skype, a video chat platform.

Interviews have taken place between August 2018 – February 2019. Duration of the interviews were ranged from 30 minutes to 1 hour. When I finalized the voice recording, I decoded all interview conversations in separate documents. In order to make my analysis easier, firstly, I have determined the key demographic information of the interviewees to reflect their class position, and I have listed them in Table.1.

Later on, after conducting my literature review and interviews, I have determined the key concepts for the analysis of the research question, and have formulated the structure of the analysis. By using these key concepts and sub-themes deriving from them, I have prepared another table including the related quotations from the interviewees. At last stage, relying on the quotations extracted from the interviews and linking them to the issues problematized in this thesis, I have supported the main arguments of this thesis.

## 2.3. Field Experience as an Insider

In this section, I am going to tell about my research journey which may also be considered for me as a part of the analysis. Therefore, further I am going to mention how I could reach my study group, which opportunities I had as an LGBTI+ activist (insider position) as well as the researcher (outsider), what kind of problems that I have faced during the research process, and, finally, how this process has affected me intellectually as a researcher.

In the lights of the criterion, in the preliminary phase of the search for the research group, I benefitted from my existing network of LGBTI+s built in years due to my closeness to the community as well as my professional work at Kaos GL Association. Kaos GL Association was founded in 1994 and established as a registered association in 2005; therefore, it may be considered as the oldest and the most comprehensive LGBTI+ rights-based organization of Turkey. In order to clarify the network building process, I would like to give a background information about myself; by doing so, I will prepare a ground for my field research where I have encountered many encouraging as well as problematic phases.

I have got involved in LGBTI+ community owing to my long-term LGBTI+ activism started in street demonstrations, marches and protests during my university years. Later on, I started to participate informative events like panel discussions, conferences and trainings organized by LGBTI+ organizations - Kaos GL in

particular due to its spatial convenience in Ankara. By this way, I have become acquaint with many LGBTI+ activists as well as strengthen my alliances with Kaos GL Association. Owing to the theoretical background on gender issues and queer theory I have gained during my master's program, I started to get involved in content production for Kaos GL's publications and website voluntarily in 2015. Lately in 2016, I have been employed as a professional staff member in the association. I may say that this was the biggest step I took during my community involvement and network building in LGBTI+ field, because of the opportunities provided by countless events that I have attended and joint work experiences with many local and international human rights/ feminist/ gender-based organizations. Reversely, I have also had a chance to introduce myself and my research interests to many people from the community.

Departing from that background, before entering in the field I was thinking that I would not face many difficulties during field research process including search for the research group, arranging and conducting the interviews. In the first phase of the process, I asked acquaintances face-to-face or via social media channels if they would be willing to make interviews for this research. In this phase, I have informed them about my research problem, what are my expectations from them and the main topics of my interview questions. By this way, I could reach 7 persons who have been active in or in an indirect connection with LGBTI+ movement in Turkey, and I could arrange the meetings without having any problem. Due to the fact that I have already known these persons personally for a while and their close connection to LGBTI+ related topics, we could conduct interviews as if we are in a daily conversation. Being an acquaint or a friend with each other allowed us -reciprocally- to feel relaxed about the interview process, and this also affected openness of their answers.

Before jumping into the problems encountered, it may be good to mention the contribution of some key persons for this study. Mehmet[6] and Deniz who have been involved in LGBTI+ movement for many years were the second and the third interviewes as well as the longest interviews carried out approximately one hour of my field research. Apart from the effects of their long-term activism, they are identified each other as fictive kin reciprocally, so their contribution to this study with their narratives is so significant. Especially Mehmet who can be counted as one of the key actors of the movement since his leadership from the initial phases enabled my field process to be more effective owing to his comprehensive answers including many conceptual bases for my data analysis as well as network/ close personal connections he offered for this study.

After interviewing with these 7 people, I have seen that almost all of these persons have similar life qualities which reflects middle-class features; that is, they are mostly university graduate, have a regular white-collar job and earn more than 2500 TL. Therefore, I realized that I had difficulties to find people from 'lower' class. In this phase, I asked Mehmet's suggestions to solve this problem. Firstly, he gave background information and contact details of three of his old friends known from the beginning of their LGBTI+ struggle, and before I contacted to these potential interviewes Mehmet had called them to talk about my study. Owing to Mehmet's credibility within Turkey's LGBTI+ movement as well as his well-known solidarity culture among LGBTI+ activists made these two people -out of three- trust me, and accept to be a respondent of my questions. Only one did not accept to make an interview because of the confidentiality problem. Meanwhile, I also shared posts on social media about my research, and owing to my network the posts could reach different segments of the community. By this way, I was able to reach a few people with working class features.

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[6] Real names of the persons in the study group are kept confidential. Nicknames given to all persons mentioned in the field study will be used during the course of the study.

At this stage of the thesis, I have realized another problem. Majority of the interviewees found were gay men, and I realized I was actually not so successful to find lesbian or bisexual women in any class. Therefore, I have shared posts about my research on social media channels, and I have started to search specifically for these groups of women. During these phases, owing to the network and solidarity culture within the community, I have had a chance to talk many lesbian and bisexual women and to have an insight about the dynamics of LGBTI+ community inside and outside of the movement. By this way, I have also reached many of women interviewees of this research.

During our conversations with people with working class features, I have always introduced myself as a researcher and give the key objectives of my study. On the other hand, I hesitated to tell that I work at Kaos GL. The reason of this hesitation was also what I have heard and witnessed since then in the activism that non-activist people with 'lower class' features might not prefer to talk with an activist due to a kind of distrust. Contrary to the trust that I have gained through Mehmet and for the sake of their common history, I have realized from the discourses of non-activist 'lower class' LGBs that they have lost some mutuality and intimacy to the ('*middle-class'*) movement. Relying on the literature mentioning the criticisms towards "middle class" visibility in the LGBTI+ movement, during this research, I could have a chance to make the analysis of how class and gender affect habitus of LGBTI+s from different classes.

I have also witnessed during my field research that LGBTI+ activism provide a social capital to the people who are actively struggling in the movement.

> As defined by Bourdieu, social capital refers to positions and relationships in groupings and social networks, including memberships, network ties, and social relations that can serve to enhance an individual's access to opportunities, information, material resources, and social status. (Ebaugh & Curry, 2000:190)

In this regard, although social capital does not mean to change the class position every time, I have observed in the community that social capital gained through

long-term activism (specifically for my interviewees) has a positive effect on individual's social status. The reason of this observation is that whereas a few of these interviewees could not benefit from the opportunities coming from their family of origin, they could reach many different opportunities through networks and resources deriving from their social capital. These opportunities has also contributed to their class mobility.

Further, whole process allowed me, as a researcher, to better see and analyze the dynamics of LGBTI+ movement as an insider and an outsider. I have realized that my insider position has made communication with the interviewees easier for me and them, because since the first contact everyone has predicted that I am a part of the LGBTI+ community and their approaches were all so friendly. Due to my open-mindedness about the LGBTI+ issues and the fact that anything they tell is not a taboo for me, my communication and interviewing process with respondents have gone very well, and this process has allowed me to get comprehensive answers from everyone. All of the respondents – even the ones that I have reached through social media channels and I have had any contact before – were so open to talk and happy to be part of such research.

**2.4. Respondents**

Demographic information related to the research can be seen in details from the Table.1. A short evaluation of the demographic information of the respondents related to this research will be given below in this section.

**Table1. Demographic Information of the Respondents**

| Person | Sexual Orientation | Age | Education | Occupation | Income | Hometown/ Current city |
|--------|--------------------|-----|-----------|------------|--------|------------------------|
| Kayra | Gay | 27 | Master's student | Unemployed (recently left) | 4000 - 5000 TL | Ankara/ Ankara |
| Mehmet | Gay | 40 | University student | Private Sector-General Manager | 6000 - 7000 TL | Yozgat / Ankara |
| Deniz | Non-binary/ Gay | 29 | High school | Journalist | 5000 - 6000 TL | Bursa / Ankara |
| Seyhan | Lesbian | 33 | University Graduate | Lawyer | Below 2500 TL | Ankara / Ankara |
| Can | Gay | 39 | University Graduate | Private Sector-Accountant | 3500 TL | Ankara / Ankara |
| Gaye | Bisexual woman | 30 | Master's student | Private Sector – Program Coordinator | 6000 TL | Konya / Ankara |
| Bahri | Gay | 45 | High school | Private Sector - Non-Qualified Worker | Below 2500 TL | Kırşehir / Ankara |
| Fadime | Bisexual woman | 27 | University Graduate | Pre-school teacher/ Manager | 8000 - 9000 TL | Giresun/ Trabzon |
| Hakan | Gay | 27 | University Graduate | Unemployed | Below 2500 TL | İstanbul/ İstanbul |

**Table 1. (Continued)**

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ela | Lesbian | 33 | Master's degree | Entrepreneur | 20.000 + TL | Bursa/ Londra |
| Umay | Lesbian | 32 | PhD Student | Research Assistant | 5000 TL | Sinop/ Düzce |
| Sultan | Bisexual woman | 33 | University Graduate | Lawyer | 5000 – 6000 TL | Adana/ Ankara |
| Ersin | Bisexual man | 30 | Primary school | Waiter | Below 2500 TL | Hatay/ Ankara |
| Efe | Bisexual man | 44 | PhD Student | Freelance | 6000 - 7000 TL | Istanbul/ Barcelona |
| Sumru | Lesbian | 43 | University Graduate | Masseur | Below 2500TL | Tunceli/ Ankara |
| Derya | Lesbian | 30 | Primary School | Unemployed | Below 2500TL | Kastamon/ Istanbul |

Aiming to analyze differences to be derived from gender, 8 non-trans women, 7 non-trans men and 1 non-binary[7] person have been chosen to make research interviews. While six people in the research group including the non-binary person have identified themselves as gay, I could have reached two men identified themselves as bisexual. One of these bisexual men hesitated for a while to identify himself. Relying on my observations the reason why this hesitation is that he is coming from a conservative background and he could not reach an opportunity to embrace his identity due to the lack of financial, cultural as well as social resources. Although he accepts that he only likes men, family and social pressure on him regarding the traditional values and norms avoid him to fully embrace his identity. On the other hand, I have reached 4 non-trans women identifying themselves as lesbian and 4 non-trans women identifying themselves as bisexual. Detailed gender analysis covering the self-identification and disclosure will be given in the further sections.

Regarding the age limit determined during the research question limitations, the youngest persons in the research group is 27 years old, and the oldest one is 45 years old. Determining the minimum age as 25 enabled me to understand the importance of family or just the meaning of family for my study group. As observed from the interviews conducted, how much older people gets, the importance and meaning of family gets intense. The finding will be linked with future expectations and seeking lifelong security in the next sections.

Regarding the economic capital, I could reach 6 people earning below 2500 TL that can be considered as lower class. On the other hand, due to the fact that one person in the group is living and working abroad at the moment, her salary exceeds 20.000 TL; therefore, regarding the economic capital and her education level she can be considered as high class. The rest of the group earn between 3000 TL – 10000 TL, and considering their education levels they carry middle-class features.

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[7] Non-binary: A person who identifies as neither male nor female

Although some of the respondents were born in small cities such as Kırşehir, Kastamonu, Yozgat, etc., almost all of them have been currently living in metropolitan cities for many years. Only Fadime and Umay has been living in considerably smaller cities currently, but they have spent many years in metropolitan cities of Turkey during their university education. In this regard, they were considered suitable for this study due to their metropolitan experiences.

## 2.5. Analysis of the Interview Questions

In general, questions in the interview are divided into 3 main sections: A. Personal and Demographic Information, B. Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) and Coming-Out Process, C. Family Relations.

Section A has provided the personal and demographic information about the interviewees for this research. In this section, it is generally aimed to have an insight about socio-economic status, in which social class they and their biological family actually belong in terms of the shared factors which would be enough to be identified as a new social class, and where they see themselves and their family with respect to their socio-economic conditions in their opinion. Questions in this section were designed to reveal the differences of the interviewees regarding personal and demographic features, so the section provided the subjectivities and necessary factors to reflect social classes.

Interview questions in Section B, firstly, cover the issues about the interviewees' sexual orientation and gender identity, and the mentality of their family members regarding gender issues. The main aim of the first part is to see how the attitudes and behaviors of their family on gender issues affect the feelings and, accordingly, the belongings the interviewees feel for their family of origin. Asking about the person who they came out first time in their life, it is aimed to understand where they locate their nuclear family members, kin, friends or whomever they disclosed first in their lives, and the reasons why they chose these person(s) or if this is their choice.

Underlying purpose of such questions is to have a clearer insight about the interviewees' *self-differentiation* in accordance with the expressed 'family feeling' in their nuclear biological families, and to understand how they construct or deconstruct 'familial ties' in their mind in the context of their self-awareness.

Depending on their coming-out processes to their families, different questions were asked to interviewees who came out (Section B.1) or did not come out to their biological family members (Section B.2). The purpose of the questions in Section B.1 is to learn the reasons why they did not disclose their SOGI to anyone in their family of origin and what are their insight about the concept of 'family'. By this way, the answers given will provide what familial bonds or familial ties means for them in reality, and set a ground for the questions in Section C.

In Section B.2, coming out processes of the interviewees are tried to be clarified in details. Questions include the following details: who they came out first in their family of origin, how they came out, what are the reactions of the(se) member(s), what changes among family members after coming out. Through their personal thoughts and experiences lived with their biological families, followings are tried to be clarified in Section B.2: (i) Impacts of their own LGBTI+ awareness on their self-identification*,* (ii) Impacts of their LGBTI+ existence on their familial relationships and the dynamics of the family itself, (ii) Impacts of their coming-out processes on their socio-economic conditions, (iii) Their perception of "being a family" in general. These data provided has enabled us to understand their family system dynamics by giving details about the existing subsystems, boundaries within family and potential changes and adaptabilities after the process.

Questions in Section C aims to reveal their inner thoughts, expectations and wishes for an 'ideal family' in their state of mind. First of all, it is asked who they call as "my family" while thinking of their entire life. Here, it is expected to have an answer out of two: member(s) of their family of origin or some other people/ thing(s). As one of the core aims of this study, inside of '*the others*' who could be a friend, kin, a

lover, an animal, etc. would be filled with the feelings they feel for them, life experiences they have gone through together, thoughts they share and the meaning they give to being a family in the following sections.

Section C.1 is designed for the interviewees who did not identify an 'alternative family' different from their nuclear family members, and it consists of the same question with the end of Section C.2. The overall aim of these last sections is to see how *queerness* including LGBTI+ existence as well as *queering* the normative boundaries challenge the heteronormative 'ideal' family recognitions.

Digging into the details of alternative family practices of the interviewees, Section C.2 firstly tries to find out what does this relation with their friends or lovers mean for them in general. In the beginning of the section, duration of their friendship, partnership or acquaintanceship, their shared stories, past experiences are asked in order to understand which conditions, which period of their life and what kind of experiences might consolidate their relationship *as if* they are family. Avoiding to fall into normative family / kinship discourse by relying on my queer perspective, I also asked them if they call this acquaints "as if my sibling, as if my mother" or "just a close friend, lover or closer than my family".

Clarifying the quality of their relationship with the acquaints, further, in the most important section of the interview I focused on finding out what are the difference of these relationships with the family of origin and *others*. Departing from three of my main concepts regarding family intimacy, I asked which situations and in which fields made they feel *trust*, *commitment* and *support* to their alternative family, and what else they have lived through together different than their biological family. Asking about the reason why they think they did not have the such support from or have the such feelings with their family of origin, I intended to support my arguments that blood tie cannot be attached with intimacy/ intimate feelings and do not make people 'family' unconditionally. If the interviewees had previously identified an alternative family relation for their lives, I have planned to learn in this

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section how intimacy that they *sincerely* feel for their friends/ spouses/ animals started to be felt and which conditions makes them feel such *family-like* intimacy. In relation to the intimacy questions, it is asked if this intimacy is reciprocal; that is, if their alternative family members think or feel about them in the same way they do. The reason why I asked this question is that in the family sociology literature while 'family feelings' are identified, they are mostly taken-for-granted as reciprocal feelings. Therefore, I tried to understand here whether 'mutuality' of these feelings might be a criterion to feel the *real* intimacy.

Lastly in this section, same questions with Section C.1 is asked to the interviewees. Firstly, and most importantly, it is asked what is their expectations from an "ideal family" including the details about the family members, emotions they would like to feel, and what does exactly make them feel as "home". With this question, I try to learn their expectations (if exist) from a 'dream family', so these details would contribute to my main arguments that apart from any legal definitions or societal norms family is just a performance and it may be performed in many different ways. Regarding these different performances, lastly, it is asked what are the differences between their real-life family experience and their ideals, and how they would like it to be in real.

As last words for this section, I would like to summarize the chapter with the methodological choices of this study by linking them into the theoretical perspective. In this chapter, data collection and analysis methods as well as complementary information regarding the respondents of the study as the sources of this data have been given in details. Relying on the given context and problematized fields in the first chapter, formation of the research question as the first step as well as formation of the interview question that have been provided the data for this research have also been discussed. Detailing these parts have enabled me to pave the way to describe my field research experience as both a researcher and an LGBTI+ activist. My dual position since the preliminary phases of this research have actually allowed me to observe the LGBTI+ community and its relationality with feminism from inside as

part of both movements as well as from outside as scholar studying on gender issues. While studying feminism and queer theoretically in academy, during my activism, I have had a chance to be included in the gender-related discussions carried under feminist and LGBTI+ movement. In this regard, I have decided to analyze my research problem with a queer perspective, because I believe that queer both as an identity politics and as a way of struggle for LGBTI+s is the best option to reflect the situation of the community. Additionally, *queer*(-ing) as a resistance against (hetero)normative gender definitions as well as any other heteronormative social structures such as family has made the best contributions to the arguments of this study compared to family and gender perspective of classical feminist theory. In order to indicate the rationale of this choice, in the following chapter I will give a comprehensive background of family discussions within family sociology literature.

# CHAPTER 3

# THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

## 3.1. Practicing Personal Life and Intimacy

The evolutionary process of human-beings indicates that humans are social animals that need other people to survive. As a survival strategy, people provide many kinds of support from their social group where they need a 'helpful hand' beyond their personal abilities. According to the anthropological studies since the beginning of the early ages of human history, people have formed many different social systems, and gotten organized with people around them under complex relational networks. That is why social scientists from many different disciplines have been trying to explore these social interactions among people which is called 'relationship': Relationships between state and society or between individuals, or familial relationships, intimate relationships, personal relationships, etc.

Looking at the issue from the sociological perspective, it can be said maybe the first step to be taken in order to understand the human relations is to start from personal life. When we think about the 'personal', the first concepts came to mind are, firstly, our *privacy* and, secondly, our immediate surroundings such as the *family* and *friends* which are also considered as the closest people to our 'private life'. However, if we try to understand the issues related to individual persons in a broader sense, we can easily say that personal is not just something related to 'individual' and 'private', but it is also interrelated to 'public' and public issues such as ethics, cultures, social norms, and so on.

One of the most important resources focusing on the issue is *The Sociological Imagination* of C. Wright Mills (1959). Mills problematizes the distinction of

'public' and 'private' with respect to personal life, and suggests that in order to understand the personal issues or to solve a personal trouble, sociologists have to analyze them as public issues at the same time. Similarly, public issues "must be revealed by relating them to personal troubles – and the problems of individual life" (Mills, 1959:226). In a hate crime case, for example, the motivation under such incident cannot easily be understood by investigating the personal clash between the perpetrator and victim, but the situation must be viewed in terms of various public issues such as race, gender, religion, etc. Similarly, gender as one of the most basic concepts of feminist debates, for instance, cannot broadly be explained in abstract, but we have to start from the historical personal experiences and performances transforming to masculinity and femininity by the time.

While personal life affects the issues of public sphere, as seen from the examples, it may also be *shaped by* the public. Findings of Lyn Richards's study (1990) is a clear example of how 'very personal choices of our private lives' such as owning a home, getting married or being a parent are the results of the promotion made by modern societies with socio-economic concerns and how they are represented as desirable and even 'natural'. Similarly, Holdsworth and Morgan (2005) discusses the situation specific to concept of *home* which is mostly identified with the feelings of security, warmth and intimacy. On the other hand, home is actually not only a physical place, but "a symbolic space which brings together dominant ideas of family, ownership, individuality and privacy" which are the parts of "a complex predetermined social script" (Morgan, 2011:14). In this context, it can be concluded that another aspect of 'the personal' seen from the sociological approach is that personal is socially constructed.

"Social constructionism", as a "way of looking at the nature of reality", "wishes to explore how a particular way of defining something came about, and why it continues to be" (May, 2011:7). In the context of personal life that has been mentioned so far, social constructions can be seen both as the abstract concepts such as gender equality, sexuality or social class, and as institutionalized social structures

such as state, family or religion. At that point the most important thing to keep in mind that all of these social constructions and the society itself should not be viewed independent from individual persons and relationships that constitute it (Elias, 1991), because individuals are the ones who *do* these structures and systems by their interaction *with other people* (May, 2011:170). In other words, society and social structures are not a 'thing', a 'force' or a 'concrete entity' that really exists out there, but something that we *practice* through our personal interactions (May, 2011:170). Morgan (2011) clarifies the issue with the example of neighboring. That is, someone may be defined as *neighbor* simply through virtue of the fact that they live near or next to a particular other person (p. 18), but when they start to interact with the other person positively such as taking care of each other's pets while they are on holiday or negatively like reporting them to the police, they actually start *practicing* neighborhood in certain manners.

The same thing can also be applicable for the concept of family as one of the basic social constructions of our personal lives. David Morgan was the first scholar introducing the term family to be used as "a quality rather than a 'thing' (1996: 186)". Analyzing the reverse contributions of the concept of family in relation to some specialized topics such as class, gender, body, time and space, Morgan (1996; 2011) criticizes how 'the Family' referenced in sociological literature has been given a concrete meaning associated with a normative status. As he argues while examining family as a single fact or a static structure, sociological inquiries, in one hand, failed to justice to the roles – performances in another saying- that construct family such as parenting or partnering, and to the daily practices enabling the survival of the family. On the other hand, while attributing the idea of family associated with these daily practices to such (hetero-)normative and standard model of family, sociological studies tend to "disadvantaged certain groups in society; not only gays and lesbians but also lone parents, couples without children and people living on their own for a variety of reasons" (Morgan, 2011:4). Therefore, Morgan

(1996, 2001) offers to use 'family practices'[8] in order to allocate a more comprehensive meaning to set of practices, roles and experiences lived with people we *feel like* family and in relationships that might be *regarded as* family, and to reflect the constantly changing process of 'being' and 'doing' family. By this way, he actually analyzes the shift in understanding of family "from institution to relationship" as well as from "traditional and public obligations to pleasure and values" (Jamieson et all., 2006: 4)

As one of the basic aspects of family practice, the *doing family process*, according to Morgan (2011), is a "relationality" and "circularity" within family practices that can be explained as "family practices constitute family members as well as family membership directs family practices" (p. 10-11). Here, it can firstly be understood that performing certain actions identified as family practice in a given time as well as in distinctive relationalities entitles the person who is directed the action as the family member. On the other hand, one of the most 'distinctive' aspects of family practices that might be a routine telephone call among relatives or a 'family visit' is that the action or performance must be *recognized* as family practice by the others. At that point, Janet Finch (2007) build her idea of "displaying families" on this recognition process. Finch's main argument is that *"families need to be 'displayed' as well as 'done'* (p. 66)". Here, she describes displaying as:

> Display is the process by which individuals, and groups of individuals, convey to each other and to relevant audiences that certain of their actions do constitute 'doing family things' and thereby confirm that these relationships are 'family' relationships. (Finch, 2007: 67)

Following the argument, Finch elaborates on the significance of the *legitimacy* of the family for people who formed other 'family-like' relationships relying on choice or active negotiation among the parties. Preventing to fall into 'normative' identifications of 'the family', Finch discusses that within the changing dynamics of family life "quality of the relationships" built among people and "how they are

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[8] A more detailed discussion including the theoretical and historical backgrounds of the word "practices" can be found in *Rethinking Family Practices (Morgan, 2011).*

expressed in practical actions" (Finch & Mason, 1993) are crucial and more important for identifying family rather than naming the members of the family.

Further, Morgan elaborates the idea of family practices by feeding it with the complementary approaches on intimacy as another important aspect of personal life discussions. Departing from Giddens' (1992) path of 'transforming intimacy' concerning the adult relationships to be discussed in details in further sections, Morgan (2011: 34) questions the content of intimacy and how it may vary for each individual or for the certain periods of the history. For many people, 'intimates' may be identified as family, friends, kin and lovers at first place, for example, and range till pets and inanimate objects. On the other hand, as he argues that "intimacy refer to a particular quality of a relationship" (p.35); therefore, even if the-most-intimate-persons to us such as spouses or parents might be assumed as the ones we should feel the intimacy, there are a lot of familial relations formed far from such feeling. Similarly, certain number and forms of intimacies that does not need blood relation or legal cohabitation to be practiced also exist out of the 'standard' definition of family. In this respect, as Lynn Jamieson (1998) emphasizes that "the word 'intimacy' has come to replace what would previously have been termed 'primary relationships', signifying a new focus on the quality as opposed to the structure of such relationships" (Gillies, 2003:2).

## 3.2. Transformation of Intimacy in Family Sociology

"Dependent on the 'sociological imagination' (Mills 1976), sociology examines how private experiences and personal difficulties are entwined with the structural arrangements of society" (Jacobsen et all., 2004: 25). In the previous section, this inter-relationality between public and private and how structure and personal agents are actually dependent on each other has been explained with the prominent references of the topic. As the focus of this research, later on, links between individual persons and state/ society as the two main parties of family discussions has been revealed, and through the intimacy discussions as one of the most

significant focuses within post-modern perspective in current family sociology our way has been paved to queer feelings and performative family relations. However, before jumping to the discussions on these two concepts as the departing points of this study, in this section, transformation of the intimacy through the family sociology literature has been indicated in order to understand the historical backgrounds and cornerstones of the topic better in the course of this study.

First of all, in this section, main theoretical traditions as Functionalism, Symbolic Interactionism and Marxism analyzing family from different perspectives have been summarized. Due to the fact that these grant theories considering family in a gender-blind, gendered or heteronormative way in general, theoretical journey of the concepts of family and intimacy have been approached in a queer feminist perspective. In order to consolidate the theoretical basis of queer discussions, feminist theory which problematizes family with respect to the concept of gender and public/private distinction has been discussed with the representation of the studies of main feminist scholars in the field.

Breaking part of this section is the discussions on Individualization thesis. Arguing that post-industrialization period has led people to seek more for their individual benefits, optimistic and pessimistic views within individualization has been mentioned in this section. Important part of the individualization thesis is to bring the discussions on intimacy into the agenda of family sociology literature. Departing from the intimacy discussions, non-standard forms of family have started to be mentioned widely by many scholars in Western family sociology literature. Therefore, within our historical order, studies covering the gay/ lesbian families and families consisting of friends has been mentioned in this section. The next has been discussing the main studies covering the chosen/ fictive kinship in details, and obviously indicating how intimacy actually has replaced blood or legal ties for being a family. Lastly, queer feelings and performativity have been discussed in this chapter.

### 3.2.1. Roots of Family Discussions

Family sociology has three main theoretical traditions: (i) Structural functionalism, (ii) Symbolic interactionism, (iii) Conflict theories that include feminism.

First of all, during the period of 1950s – 1960s in the effect of industrialization within modern societies, Talcott Parson's *functionalist* theory (1955) had a significant domination over family sociology debates. In the theory, while societies were changing in the effect of industrialism, the ways of family formation were also transformed from 'being an economic unit of production with many children, strong kinship ties and embracing several generations into the small nuclear family form' (Smart, 2007). Until that period, family and kinship relations were focused mostly on classical extended families producing basic goods and services and founded on patriarchal and ascribed status (Gillies, 2003:3). In the effect of functionalism, as the need for a specialized and mobile labor force grew, isolated nuclear families (Gillies, 2003:3) referring to a married couple and their children become recognized as "normal" or *ideal* in social order and accepted as *traditional* family form.

Different from functionalism, Symbolic Interactionism that is generally linked with George Herbert Mead, Erving Goffman and Howard Saul Becker's theories focuses family from more micro level. "Rather than seeing family roles as pre-existing and given structures that are adopted unproblematically, this school of thought focuses on the meanings and lived experience associated with those roles and how they are constructed through interaction" (Jacobsen *et al*, 2004:26). Arguing the active "being" of human, Symbolic interactionism does not lean towards any static 'structure' and 'institution' such as family. Sociological facts have been covered through social interactions and roles in the theory related to family sociology; later on, these concepts have been paved the way to transformation of these roles to practices and performances which are the key points of this thesis.

Thirdly, as one of the most prominent conflict theories Marxist theory argues that "the structure of society and the nature of social relationships are the result of past

and ongoing conflicts between those who own or owned the means of producing wealth and those who did not" (Jacobsen *et al*, 2004: 27); in this respect, society is divided into -mainly- two groups as the ruling class (*bourgeoisie*) and working class (*proletariat*) with respect to the 'economic' characteristics of social classes. Marxist perspective on family describes that family functions as a tool of capitalism to reproduce the inequalities and hierarchy in the society. The family, also perceived as a savior of capitalism in Marxist approach, where "men can exercise their frustration at their position in society in a manner that does not challenge the overall system of capitalism" (Jacobsen *et al*, 2004: 27). As a part of the Marxist explanation of family, Friedrich Engels' *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1884) might be counted as one of the very first analysis on family sociology. While exploring the evolutionary process of civilized humankind, Engels argues that concerns of men to own their private property and inheritance were the roots of the emergence of nuclear family and state. Family had been discussed, in this study, as a wheel of capitalism relying on women's exploitation within the family and working-class men exploitation at labor market. In sum, far from approached as an intimate entity, family was mostly analyzed as an economic unit constantly produce and consume under capitalist system.

In sum, understanding of family life gets along with the understanding of social changes and generally been linked to wider social forces (industrialization, capitalism, post-war social order/functionalism, patriarchy and latterly globalization) (Smart, 2007:16) by these grant theories[9]. While theorizing family life in a broader sense could enable sociologists to better see the bigger picture, on the other hand, it has been realized with post-modernism, in particular, that they could cause scholars to overlook the personal life differences and subjectivities beyond families. Parson's theory, for instance, accepts family as a normative nuclear one and focus on the functioning of the family and accordingly society, but functionalism was criticized

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[9] In order to have detailed introductions of the theories with respect to different disciplines, Veronica Jacobsen & others' *Theories of the Family and Policy* may be analyzed.

that it ignores the non-heterosexual or non-monogamous families in sociological inquiry. Similarly, Marxist way of thinking was also criticized that family diversity was also ignored and its only focus is capitalism and class struggle, so it ignores the patriarchal inequalities within the family. Such oversimplifications of family by these grant theories, later on, opened up new discussions within family sociology regarding alternative family formations. In this respect, perception of family in classical feminism as one of these critical discussions as well as transformation of the concept of gender within the theory will be discussed in next section as the basis of queer theory discussions to be explained in further sections.

### 3.2.2. Feminist Approaches towards Family & Gender

In the beginning of 1970s when second wave feminist movement started to spread the world, Parson's functionalist theory promoting this patriarchal and unequal family system founded on clear sex role distinction (Gillies, 2003:3) has started to be challenged by feminist thinkers. As Gillies summarized, classical feminist thoughts generally criticize the taken-for-granted assumptions and ideological construction of family in three dimensions:

> (i) Although existing assumptions on family are represented as 'natural' and 'inevitable' by male-dominated scientific work, the roles and functions within family is dramatically gendered; (ii) Socially constructed "public and private" distinction causes the exclusion of women from public sphere; therefore, such ideology should be deconstructed due to the fact that "personal is political"; (iii) The ideas of domestic privacy and autonomy could conceal the acts of cruelty, oppression and injustice that would lead domestic violence and oppression of women at home. (Gillies, 2003: 6)

As it may be seen from the key criticisms of classical feminism, gender inequality and the discussions of 'personal is political' are the core points of the main arguments. However, in late 80s with the effects of individualization (to be explained in details in the next section) and rising lesbian and gay movement, conventional definitions of gender has also started to be criticized as being heteronormative in/outside of the feminist movement. Here, one of the most important point to be

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addressed may be that how classical feminism perceives gender and women, at first place, as the subject of their struggle. In relation to the queer perspective of this study, it will be significant to explain the relationality of classic feminist theory with queer theory more in this section. As Jagose (2009: 160) explained that

> before there was queer theory – that is, before queer theory became the most recognizable name for anti-identitarian, anti-normative critique – feminist scholarship had already initiated a radically anti-foundationalist interrogation of the category of women.

That is, in the 80s when the non-normative thoughts of gender have started to be developed with lesbian feminist discussions[10], queer feminists started to criticize the identified notion of gender relying on essentialism that being a woman has been reduced to 'natural' characteristics. At that time, feminism started to think gender in the axes of any other identity such as race, sexual orientation and class. Accordingly, this differentiation in feminism paves the way to question the perception of gender in lesbian and gay studies and starts to think gender beyond identified sexualities and sexual orientations. In relation to the discussion, bisexuality as more than a sexual identity has also started to be discussed in queer base as an anti-identity, and an (unconscious) rejection against the limitation brought with only one-type of loving (Clausen, 1990).

> Queer Theory is helpful in focusing attention upon how sexuality affects social relations and has been important in developing critiques of normative assumptions about gender and sexuality. It also has the potential to offer feminism further tools through which to theorize the relationship between gender and sexuality. Queer Theory's emphasis on 'difference' may enable feminist theory to analyze power across and between identity categories and offers feminism theoretical tools through which to understand the sex/gender binary. (Munt, 2008: 27)

In the intersection of these problematized topics within feminism and queer theory, 'sexuality as a social category' (Stein & Plummer, 1994: 179) has started to be discussed within feminist discussions. These developments in the perception of gender and patriarchal power relations, later on, has opened up new discussions in

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[10] For the detailed discussions on the arguments of lesbian feminism, see the following resources: Radical Lesbians, 1973; Rich, 1986; Jeffrey, 1994; Frye, 1983; Wittig, 1992.

sociology literature. Before diving into the postmodern understandings of family in relation to gender and sexuality, it would be better to get back the transformation of family discussions in sociology. Therefore, individualization as one of the milestones of the transformation of conventional meaning of the family have to be addressed in order to link the further discussions of non-normative family and fictive kinship.

### 3.2.4. Individualization Thesis

"From a sociological perspective changes in family and personal relationships are a consequence of post-industrialization, which has led to the de- traditionalization and individualization of social life" (Gillies, 2003:2). Individualization thesis, also called de-traditionalization, have influenced family sociologist, in particular, and postmodern ideas about society in 1990s. There are two different views under individualization thesis thinkers: pessimists focusing on the breakdown of traditional ties leading to the disintegration of moral frameworks, and optimists focusing on the positive potential that such changes offer like democratization of personal lives and family diversity (Gillies, 2003:2).

Anthony Giddens (1992) as one of the pioneers of the theory focuses on the relationality of individual self and its reflexivity and, accordingly, explores the content and emotions in close relationships rather than approaching them as just social institutions. Giddens argues that instead of being an entity functioning for social or economic purposes, close relationships – the family in another saying- has become "pure relationships" where romantic love and sexuality of adults are the driving forces of the sustainability of the relationship. Claiming the "transformation of intimacies", Giddens shows intimacy is a necessary element – or the core- of the personal independency, emancipation, and the "democratization of daily life" (1992: 95). Besides bringing the transforming intimacy discussions into the agenda of sociology, another important aspect that Giddens open the path up is that this new wave of pure love was not only limited with marriage, reproduction or heterosexual couple, but it also includes same-sex relationships due to their open and negotiated

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status (Giddens, 2006). While this new understanding has made people question to their intimate relationships regarding egalitarian and emancipatory values, it has accordingly affected the stability of long-term normative relationships such as marriage. Parallel with this idea, close relationships have become more fragile since it depends on the individual decisions and feelings in it and traditions and social institutions such as state do not regulate them. This point may be considered as one of the most important cornerstones for the discussions emerged from individualization thesis, because after this period, state as a control mechanism on family regulations and functioning generally as a promoter of heterosexual marriage has started to lose its controlling effects on personal lives.

Ulrich Beck and Elizabeth Beck-Gernsheim, similarly, argues "placing intimacy at the heart of detraditionalized life" (Gillies, 2003:9). Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's theory (1995) argued that due to the increasing importance of individual-self/ identity in contemporary societies individual person as "the choosing, deciding, shaping human being who aspires to be the author of his or her own life" (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2001: 22-23) has become the central unit of our time. Being fed by the neo-liberal thoughts and globalization, individualization also argues that every individual is positioned as "an entrepreneur managing their own life" (Fitzsimmons, 2002:3) and tries to maximize their quality of life through acts of choice (Rose, 1996: 57). Within this "do-it-yourself biography" (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2001:3), as Beck-Gernsheim argues (2002: ix) "traditional social relationships, bonds and belief systems that used to determine people's lives in the narrowest detail have been losing more and more of their meaning"; therefore, individuals become less dependent on collective identities or social structures such as family, or traditional gendered roles. Parallel to Giddens' point of view, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995) underline the paradox while love and intimacy are becoming simultaneously ever more central as an ideal, yet they are ever more difficult to secure and maintain.

In sum, pessimist view in this thought assumes that modern families would lose its meaning completely as it happened in the transformation of extended families –

which were, once, identified as 'normal'- to modern nuclear family forms. In one hand, such arguments of the individualization thesis were supported by empirical data such as increasing divorce rates or increasing average age for marriage (Smart, 2007; 20). On the other hand, it was also criticized by many sociologists (Smart, 2007; Atkinson, 2008; Chambers, 2012; Dawson, 2012) that they undermine the positive potentials that "such changes may offer that greater diversity and plurality of lifestyles leads to a democratization of personal relationships" (Gillies, 2003:2), because even if traditional norms and structures have been transformed with the effect of individual selves, most of them like social class or family ties and obligations still matters for persons beyond their individual choices (May, 2011:6; Gillies et al. 2001; Ribbens McCarthy et al. 2003). In this context, post-modern family ideas have also come up beyond the fixed roles and identities taken-for-granted within the concept of family. As one of these thinkers Judith Stacey (1990, 1996) argue that '*brave new families*' implying gay and lesbian families would lead more egalitarian relationships that are freed from traditional family life constrains and struggles to embrace diversity as in postmodern kinship structures. In this period of transformation of family sociology, many other studies showing how the concept of intimacy had to date been studied as obliged and normatively defined in the household and ignored the same-sex relationships and close friendships (Duncombe & Marsden, 1993, 1995; Gubrium & Holstein, 1990; Finch & Mason, 1993; Jamieson, 1998; Weeks, Heaphy & Donovan, 2001).

### 3.2.5. Non-Standard Forms of Family and Intimacy

Looking at the modern family sociology literature before the effect of individualization, we can clearly see that majority of the studies was focusing on heteronormative and blood-related intimacies and family formations referring mostly "monogamous, dyadic, co-residential (and primarily hetero) sexual relationships" (Roseneil & Budgeon, 2004:137). Judith Butler (1992) called it 'heterosexual hegemony' which was also identified as the 'heteronormative family hegemony'; that is caused by "institutions, structures of understanding, and practical orientations

(…) make heterosexuality seem not only coherent – that is, organized as a sexuality – but also privileged" (Berlant and Warner, 2000: 548). In other words, the ideal of heterosexist nuclear family remains a constitutive element in social institution such as the law, social policy, even sociological research practices, as well as individual identities (Jagger & Wrigth, 1999). Such social constructionist view on family practices was also discussed by Pierre Bourdieu (1996) that the reason why we assume that family is something *natural* is because it represents itself with the self-evidence of what 'has always been that way'. He also challenged such socially accepted realities of family that 'social realities are social fictions with no other basis than social construction, and that they really exist, inasmuch as they are collectively recognized (1996, p.20)'.

Further, as Beck-Gernsheim named that '*post-familial family*' (1999) has taken over the family sociology that implies the new and alternative types of relationship among people who are not bonded each other by blood-tie or any other marital ties, but the intimacy, care and emotional exchange that they provide to each other. By the end of 1980s, some groundbreaking studies focusing on the huge gaps in existing literature on intimate relationships changed the meaning of the family and intimacy in sociology. Kate Weston's study *Families We Choose: Lesbians, Gays, Kinship* (1991) was the one and maybe the most important one of them due to its focus on non-standard intimacy created among lesbian and gay community. Analyzing the personal coming-out stories of lesbians and gays most of which was ended up with rejection, Weston questions if familial love endure and if kin ties prove genuine (p.51). Then, she originally argues that chosen families originated with a collective identity relying on sexual orientation does not imitate or substitute 'blood families', but "they play out the already existing kinship dialectic between what is given and what has to be worked at, and play on the fact that blood tie was never the only symbol for the enduring solidarity of intimate relations" (Strathern, 1993:195, 196). Following Weston, many other scholars (Weeks, Heaphy & Donovan, 2001; Roseneil, 2001; Stacey, 1998; Weinstock & Rothblum, 2004) also mentions the term of 'families of choice' "to refer to lesbian and gay relationships and friendship

networks actually serves to direct attention away from the extra-familial, counter heteronormative nature of many of these relationships" (Roseneil, 2006: 333).

Parallel to this thinking, various researches have been conducted in 90s which had been marginalized by the standard family sociology previously. By the 1990s, many scholars (Blieszner & Adams, 1992; Adams & Allan, 1998; Morgan, 1996) started to recognize the importance of relational properties and 'highlight the *process* as the dynamic aspects of relationships' (Adams & Allan, 1998: 2) rather than reducing them just to individual ties such as family. At that point, Jo VanEvery (1999) conducted a survey which may be considered as an analysis on 'family sociology' in the UK in the 90's, and she found out that:

> Regardless of how individuals organize their lives, and which relationships are important to them, in the 'reality' constructed by this sociological research only 'modern nuclear family households' exist. All other living arrangements are at best transitional and as such are not worthy of study, and 'family' is more important than 'just friends'. (VanEvery, 1999: 166)

In this period, it has been realized by scholars that 'innate' bonds, and practices of intimacy and care with biological families are actually 'the *obliged affections* and *affective obligations* of family feeling' (Bourdieu, 1996: 22). In other words;

> Certain kinds of intimacies are afforded legitimacy, public visibility, resources, and respect, relative to other, *marginalized* intimacies (Foucault [1976] 1990; Shah, 2011). Gayle Rubin's "charmed circle" (1993) articulates a set of sexual intimacies that are privileged (heterosexual, vanilla, and monogamous), relative to marginalized intimacies (homosexual, sadomasochistic, and promiscuous). (Forstie, 2017: 14)

Therefore, as deciding human-beings individuals started to form their 'non-standard intimacies' (Berlant and Warner, 2000) and non-standard families. With respect to this new understanding on *family practice,* it was not clear how to define the boundaries of a 'legitimate' family. Rather, it started to be accepted by many scholars as Jagger & Wright (1999:3) summarized:

> Family is neither a pan-human universal nor a stable, or essential entity. The groupings that are called families are socially constructed rather than naturally or biologically given. Families and family relations are, like the term itself, flexible, fluid and contingent.

Similarly, Galvin, Brommel and Bylund (2004) as scholars defining family from the social constructionist perspective told that family is "networks of people who share their lives over long periods of time bound by marriage, blood, or commitment, legal or otherwise, who consider themselves as family and who share a significant history and anticipated futures of functioning in a family relationship". It can be seen from their definition that even if these *chosen* practices and networks could not find place for themselves in the early phase of sociological literature, in postmodern sociology, by the time, 'family membership shifts from being a given, to a matter of choice' (Roseneil & Budgeon, 2004).

### 3.2.6. Chosen Family and Fictive Kinship

Effects of the discussions on non-normative intimacies and non-normative families rising after Individualization, sociology literature has developed in these alternative support systems. These networks, most commonly named through *kinship*, exist in many different cultures/ communities and for many different functionalities. In Gubrium and Buckholdt's (1982: 879) study, it is argued that "while for many the term 'family' is formally conceived as signifying kinship status, and indeed kinship may be implicit first rule for its assignment, in application the term is not limited to kindred". That means when people give an intimate meaning to kinship through being a family, accordingly it is assigned a specific role/ function to the kindred - even if the kindred are not the biological ones. Similarly, it is expected that 'those assigned the status show concern for whomever they are considered to be family' (p.880); therefore, whether it is called 'family' or not, people who do not have strong familial ties with their biological families generally form alternative and non-standard familial systems, mostly called kinship, with their friends or whomever they may provide constant social and emotional support and commitment. In this regard, I will give a brief background of how chosen family and fictive kinship literature has been developed, and, in relation to my research, what is the importance of fictive kinship for LGBTI+ community will also be analyzed regarding the related literature.

First of all, K.R. Allen, R. Blieszner and K.A. Roberto's study (2011) on alternative support networks may be the one of the most prominent studies to reveal how the meaning of kinship differentiate for different situations and for different purposes. They have found out how people reconstruct their support networks by converting kinship status when they are not supported by their immediate family due to different structural conditions or emotionally challenging circumstances. In this context, people reinterpret their newly formed family networks by assigning them "*as if*" family roles and somehow *substituting* them. As a result of the research, five types of kinship reinterpretations are identified: (i) *kin promotion* (i.e. describing a grandson as "*just like* a son"); (ii) *kin exchange* (i.e. older sister become '*like* mother'), (iii) *kin loss* (i.e. losing a kin after death, divorce or relocation), (iv) *kin retention* (i.e. *just like* a member of the family), and (v) *non-kin conversion* (i.e. fictive kinship). Similarly, Braithwaite et all. (2010) made a typology of voluntary kinship from a social constructionist perspective by focusing on how these kinship systems function for different people: (i) as *substitute family,* they completely replace with biolegal family; (ii) as *supplemental family,* they may supplement the roles of biolegal family; (iii) as *convenience family,* they serve instrumental in certain contexts such as workplace, school, etc.; and as *extended family,* they consider each other with biolegal family as part of the same family.

Besides naming the functionalities and types of these alternative systems, scholars focusing on the issue has named these relationships such as *fictive kin* (e.g., Chatters, Taylor, & Jayakody, 1994; Ibsen & Klobus, 1972; Muraco, 2006), *chosen kin* (Weston, 1991)*, self-ascribed kin* (Galvin, 2006)*, urban tribes*, *friend-keepers* (Gallagher & Gerstel, 1993; Leach & Braithwaite, 1996)*, other-mothers* (Collins, 2000), and *ritual kin* (Ebaugh & Curry, 2000). These various names have been conceptualized from academic studies on different societies and cultures.

As the most-commonly used term of these social relationship systems, fictive kinship, will be focused on this study. "Fictive kin are non-kin, imaginary kin, "as if"

kin, or "pretend" relatives – close others who assume family-like roles", and "fictive kin serve a purpose or meet a need, whether affective or instrumental" (Allen et al., 2001: 1159). Relying on that family life provides emotional support, financial assistance, and care throughout the life course, fictive kin relations are formed among many different groups for the different purposes.

In academic literature on the fictive kinship relations of older adults (Butler & Lewis, 1982; Allen, Blieszner & Roberto, 2011), we may see that these non-ordinary support systems involving the friends, care-workers and relatives function as a care and emotion mechanism. Scholars studying on fictive kinship among Afro-American/ black extended family networks (Chatters et al., 1994) found out that such networks are formed among the community for child care, exchange of goods and services if needed and educational achievements. Immigrant communities use fictive kinship networks in order to "mitigate against the development of alienation and social disorganization and as a resource for the solution of problems" (Ebaugh & Curry, 2000:190); that is, they also provide social and economic support for their survival in the adaptation processes. Further, fictive kinship literature has also been developed relating to networks and support systems among LGBTI+s and their *non-relatives*. As we may see in the studies of many scholars, Altman (1982), Weston (1991), Nardi (1992, 1999), Weeks (1995), Stacey (1998), Roseneil (2000) and Weeks et al. (2001), friendship plays an important role for the lives of LGBTI+ community. Friendship offers them 'emotional continuity, companionship, pleasure and practical assistance' (Roseneil & Budgeon, 2004), and by so doing, LGBTI+s can be able to 'build and maintain lives outside the framework of the heterosexual nuclear family, grounding their emotional security and daily lives in their friendship groups'.

As it has been mentioned in the beginning of the chapter, people have formed emotional and social support networks for their well-being and survival for many centuries. Such support is expected to be fulfilled by individual's immediate surrounding like family. When family cannot function properly due to spatial

differences, loss of the family members or denial by the majority of the family, people may generally form alternative family-like systems with other commonalities such as religion, hometown, identity or with fulfilling different needs and expectations like loneliness, care, practical assistance, etc. LGBTI+s, in particular, can be counted as the group who are deprived from the presence of their family due the experience of denial or ignorance, so they form fictive kinship relations with regards to fulfil the emotional and physical functions of family such as intimacy, respect, care and support. For many of them, their shared identity (politics) with other community members are also another reason to form a fictive kinship. In this regard, it may be said for each group that "although definitions of family are socially and legally contested, the functions that families serve are similar regardless of who performs the tasks" (Muraco, 2006: 1314). Therefore, this thesis argues that as long as functions and intimacy expected from family conventionally performed by certain persons, any network beyond definitions may be named as family. In order to support this argument, linkages of queer theory including performativity of sub-systems like gender and class will be detailed in the next section.

## 3.3. Queer Theory, Performativity of Gender and Class

During the course of previous sections in the literature review, I have given the theoretical background of how heteronormative family discussions emerged and evolved in relation to gender throughout modern family sociology. In this section, I have given an overview of queer theory, as the core point of this study, that attempts to perceive the social constructions such as gender, class and family out of heteronormative understandings and norms.

Discussing queer as more than an identity representing LGBTI+ community, in the first section, conceptual basis of *queer*, in what extends it represents LGBTI+ community, how it has become a way of struggling with heteronormativity and how it has been theorized in sociology will be explained in details. Secondly, as the first variable of the research question of this thesis, perception of gender will be reviewed

in relation to Judith Butler's thoughts of *performativity* of gender. Lastly in this section, in order to reflect the class differences as the second variable of this study, Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* within the social class discussions will be linked to the queer theory discussions.

### 3.3.1. *Queer*: Identity, Theory, and A Way of Struggle

*Queer* as a word in *proper* English carries various meanings such as odd, strange, freak, unusual, abnormal, bizarre, deviant, unconventional, and so on. Due to the fact that it means "faggot" in slang, in the societies where the word queer has been known it was mostly attached with LGBTI+ community as an insult. On the other hand, as a coping strategy with heteronormative order of the society, culturally marginalized sexual identities have adopted queer as an umbrella term in order to deconstruct any conventional hetero-norms and systems previously marginalizing them[11].

Apart from word meaning, queer has started to be used as a sociological concept within lesbian and gay studies that has become scholarly popular after 1990s (Butler, 1990, 1993; Sedgwick, 1990; Lauretis, 1991; Warner, 1993; Jagose, 1996). Main focus of and problematized area for queer theory is heteronormativity which has always been supported by capitalism, neoliberalism, imperialism, nationalism, militarism and religious conservatism (Çakırlar & Delice, 2012: 12). While heteronormativity considers being heterosexual as the only 'natural', 'norm(al)' and 'legitimate' sexual orientation, it also marginalizes any other identity and sexual orientation through social norms. During this marginalization – 'otherization' in other words, social norms consolidated by conventional values function like unwritten rules that determine what people must or must not do in order to be

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[11] In Çakırlar and Delice's book (2012: 15), it has been mentioned that queer has been firstly adopted by an LGBTI+ group named Queer Nation in March 1990. The group has rejected sexual classifications and refusal by heteronormative system, embraced so-called 'deviant' identities, and protested the idea of "being and behave normal".

'normal' and 'properly' live in heteronormative social order. As Sara Ahmed (2015: 182) also explains that hegemonic masculinity which can be described as the idealization of heterosexuality shapes what bodies can be as well as what they can do. In case of an 'inappropriateness' in social order such as sexually driven by a same-sex person, heteronormative culture and practices oppress and exclude *the others* with violence, discrimination and ignorance. In this respect, intimidated community may live as "obedient others" (Çakırlar & Delice, 2012: 11) or resist against the heteronormative order of the society.

"Resisting that model of stability – which claims heterosexuality as its origin, when it is more properly its effect- queer focuses on mismatches between sex, gender and desire" (Jagose, 2011: 11). In this respect, queer as a field of struggle is opposed to any kind of normative duality, labeling and structural norm; therefore, it actually represents a way of living and resistance against the 'normal'. Continuing its un-concrete practical and theoretical development, queer theory follows its critical policy within the studies on sexuality, LGBTI+, gender, disability, post-humanism, etc. (Tiftik, 2017:2). According to Teresa de Lauretis (1991: iii), queer theory offers a "forms of resistance to cultural homogenization, counteracting dominant discourses with other constructions of the subject in culture". That is how *queer* built its method and focus by bringing non-normative, different, odd, unusual, deviant, and etc. lives into its agenda. By doing so, queer theory and policy also avoid to be part of a certain sexual identity politics as a "collective identity" that generally privileges the middle-class white gays and lesbians, and criticize such identity politics as being ignorant to any other sexual orientation, gender identity, race, ethnicity and class, in particular (Gamson, 1996: 403). On the other hand, queer theory and policy are more related to differences and variations; therefore, it also avoids to fall into homo-hetero dichotomy and embrace any *otherness* marginalized by hegemonic sex and gender ideologies (Çakırlar & Delice, 2012: 16).

Michael Warner (1993) indicated that heteronormativity has an effect on all social institutions and ideologies, so resisting against heteronormativity means to resist

against these institutions and ideologies. In relation to the point, Çakırlar and Delice (2012; 17) said that every queer life knows that stigmatization they are exposed to is related with gender, family, state, consumption, nature, culture, reproduction policies, class identity and privacy. In heteronormative ideologies, family, in particular, as one of the most effective tools to promote heterosexism is idealized as the center of reproduction – reproduction of generations as well as the culture. While hetero-relations are idealized and categorized as desired relationships by the ideologies, normative culture actually decides *legitimate* and *illegitimate lives* (Ahmed, 2015: 187). Problematizing the 'legitimate' lives, heteronormative sex and binary gender perspectives, body, identity and culture organization, queer thought seeks for critical and alternative understandings. In this context, being queer and thinking queer against heterosexual matrix is a way of questioning not just for the subjects marginalized by the system, but for the heterosexuals themselves, because the issue is not just an equality struggle for gays and lesbians, but the functioning of heterosexist and phallogocentric[12] regime penetrated into academy, law, economy and art branches (Cogito, 2011: 5).

### 3.3.2. Butler's Performativity of Gender

Judith Butler has built her theoretical understanding upon postmodern thoughts, and drawn her perspective on gender and sex with a queer thinking. Her book *Gender Trouble* has been regarded as one of the key resources of queer theory literature to date. In this resource, she has mainly questioned the binary definitions of sexuality and gender describing identities basically either being *male – female*. As Butler (2008) argues that "gender by no means relevant to the biological root but it is constructed by virtue of codification, the body is not restricted to the external

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[12] "Phallogocentric refers to a combination of phallocentric and logocentric systems of thought. Jacques Derrida describes Western metaphysics as logocentric, centered on logic and on the spoken word as guarantor of presence and identity. He accuses Jacques Lacan of being both phallocentric, in naming the Phallus as the center of the Symbolic Order, and logocentric, in naming the Phallus as the source and origin of language, the transcendental signified, and names this stance 'phallogocentrism'." (Klages, 2012)

determinations which goes beyond the social domain". Further, criticizing essentialist categorization of "woman" and binary gender perspective of feminism, Butler questions the perceived reality of gender and discusses the effects of compulsory heterosexuality and gender hierarchy on the lives of queer subjects. In order to better understand the heteronormative dimensions of the notion of gender comprehensively, Butler suggests to approach the issue with the perspective of the performativity of gender and attempts to open up alternative grounds to discuss gender and sexuality. In this section, I have attempted to give an insight about Judith Butler's aforementioned thoughts on sexuality and gender in relation to queer theory.

First of all, Butler problematizes the notions of identity and assembly in the context of so-called "womanhood" and gender within feminist discourses. Criticizing the given and concrete notion of woman, and binary gender, in feminist identity politics, Butler suggests (2005: 46) that gender should be considered in the intersection of many other identities such as racial, ethnical, sexual, regional and class. Together with the given identification of "women" as the subject of feminism, she also rejects the idea of 'universal patriarchy' due to the subjective factors of each identity. Leaning on the fact that given sex and gender categories are socially and culturally constructed, Butler discusses that the heteronormative matrix [13] - compulsory heterosexuality, in other words –causes an exclusion of the individuals who have failed to fulfill the hetero-norms; therefore, feminism driven by binary sex and gender categories would fail to represent these subjects like *lesbians, gays, transgenders, butch and femme*, etc. Here, it is important to address that Butler has also a skeptical approach towards the biological roots of sex categories (naturalized as man and woman). If we may question gender as the cultural reflections of sexual differences, as she argues, it is also possible to examine whether so-called natural and essential facts about sex categories might have been produced in scientific discourses for other socio-political interests (p.52). In this regard, Butler has

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[13] Judith Butler (2006: 208) uses the term heterosexual matrix that "designate[s] grid of cultural intelligibility through which bodies, genders, and desires are naturalized".

benefitted from Monique Wittig's *One is not Born a Woman* (1980) that argues sexual categories are neither biological nor unchangeable; otherwise, the main reasons of this division are the attempts of meeting with economic needs of heterosexuality and of representing heterosexuality as a natural. Further, Butler suggests, as Wittig, that there is no difference between gender and sex categories, as gender is actually the mechanism itself which produces the binary sex category.

In order to clarify her criticisms over sex-gender division, Butler read the situation with a queer perspective through bodies as a tool or a place where all these socio-cultural sex and gender constructions take place, or, reversely, as the construction itself (1999: 54) with constant repetitions. Butler, in this regard, criticizes the "gender reality", as concrete, naturalized and essential "truth" given by the gendered cultural norms - by approaching skeptically to binary, (hetero-)normative and constructed extent of gender. Analyzing the situation with *drag*[14] performances, Butler argues (p.28) that during the show if one sees a man dressed *like woman* or a woman dressed *like man*, the latter term actually represents the perceived gender of that person. That is, while we assume that we have already known the assigned sex of the subject through appearance or anatomy of bodies, we automatically – or 'naturally' – construct a gendered self in our minds and regard the secondary reflection as an illusion. She also argues, in this context, that gender marker assigned to one's body are used to make this body "meaningful"; for instance, the time after the birth of a child when we try to answer 'if it is a boy or girl?' (p.190).  In this respect, Butler suggests in Gender Trouble (1990: 25) that there is nothing like a gender identity behind the gender markers, because that identity is embodied as performative by the expression which is actually regarded as the results of it. In order to criticize and shake the 'unquestionable' ground of binary gender, Butler suggests the term *performativity* "a repetition and ritual, which achieves its effects through its

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[14] To wear the clothes assigned with the opposite sex, and to act/ perform in line with the gendered reflections of that persona

naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration" (1999: 15).

While heterosexuality is naturalized by the performative repetition of normative gender identities, Butler suggests that the opposite is also possible with performativity. That is, by means of such non-normative performances such as drag, cross-dressing, etc., gender performativity could be, as Butler suggests, a strategy of resistance against (hetero)normative binary gender order. Parallel with the idea, Jagose indicated (2015: 107) that the infinite potentials of gender performativity are enabled non-normative subjects to break the heterosexual matrix by means of parody; that is, such parodies are the evidences that gender roles/ expressions can be imitated, so performed in infinite possibilities. In this context, the discussions above have given such studies a critical ground to imagine the given sex/ gender beyond the binary hierarchical categories.

### 3.3.3. Bourdieu's Field Theory in Relation to Queer Thinking

In Pierre Bourdieu' sociology, many contrary concepts and theory are combined, and sociological relations cannot be understood without being considered in their historical and theoretical backgrounds. In his reflexive perspective, dichotomic theories and conceptualizations are not practical to fully understand social facts; therefore, he emphasizes the importance of holistic approach instead of the dualist approaches such as subject-object, public-private or theory-practice (Dursun, 2018). Therefore, Bourdieu's holistic perspective rejecting any kind of dualism or dichotomic understanding allows us to combine it with queer theory. Avoiding to get lost into his social theory and methodology, in this section, as important concepts for this thesis analyzing the intersection of gender and class, Bourdieu's concepts of *capital* and *habitus* have been addressed more in details.

*Game metaphor* as one of the most well-known studies of Bourdieu is useful to understand his original concepts, *field, doxa, illusio, capital* and *habitus*. In the metaphor,

> If we need to summarize, *field* is the space where the game (or the struggle, in sociologically speaking) is played. Individuals become familiar with some ways/ habits to make them reach the result in line with *capital*s they have, rules they accept without questioning (*doxa*) and interests that they believe to reach at the end of the game (*illusio*). As a result of the situations encountered, these behavioral patterns gotten to reach the result lead individuals to create a common disposition continuum. Bourdieu calls this disposition continuum *habitus*. (Özsöz, 2015)

First of all, contrary to Karl Marx's reductive class analysis which is based on owning the means of production and economic capital, Bourdieu analyzes different class positionalities with the distribution and ownership of *economic*, *cultural*, *social* and *symbolic* capitals. Different from Marx's definition of capital, Bourdieu's *economic capital* is defined through the ownership of any kind of income and properties, and cannot be thought separate from other types of capital. Secondly, *cultural capital* is the "capital of information" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2003: 108) that is actually the culture of powerful received from old generations and conveyed to next generations through the way of similar educational process in families, and that can be through the similar educational qualities, tastes, language, habits and lifestyles of individuals. Thirdly, *social capital* is the total of social relations which individuals have in a field. It consists of such facts like the membership in related social groups, the connections with others in the group and obligations and privileges that group imposes on or provides to the individual (Göker, 2007: 282). Lastly, *symbolic capital*, as an abstract term, is the combination of each capital, and a kind of symbolic power used to be effective in specific fields. Having a university diploma, a credible career title or antique collections can be counted as the symbolic capitals.

Further, I would like to read the concept of *habitus* in relation to the main concepts and arguments mentioned in the related literature in this study. Regarding the family sociology literature reviewed so far, we have seen the importance of David Morgan's

contribution to family sociology by including the 'family practices' to the literature. David Morgan (2011) lists dictionary definitions of *practice* to constitute a basis for his suggestion of using family practice as a new concept: 'habitual doing or carrying on something usual', 'habitual action or pattern of behavior', 'established procedure', or, in a more daily usage, as "normal or routine, what is repeated, what is taken for granted" (Morgan, 2011: 24-25). In these definitions, habits are generally referred to individual behaviors; on the other hand, in sociologically speaking, habits or Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* is more attached to collective behaviors.

Parallel to Morgan's implications on practice in some manners, according to Bourdieu, habitus can be explained as set of practices that reciprocally shape individual's behavior and, reversely, is shaped by the individual as well. Individuals in certain classifications have internalize some subjective practices since their childhood, and act in accordance with collective behavior in certain manners, meanwhile 'each agent, wittingly or unwittingly (…) is a producer and reproducer of objective meaning' (Bourdieu, 1977: 79).

> The concept of habitus bridges the gap between the individual and the collective, because it describes as much the meta-individual structures – 'the rules of the game' – as their incorporation in mostly rather subconscious individual judgements on tastes, norms and behaviours – 'knowing the rules' and acting according to them. Since habitus is at the same time individual and collective, it allows explaining specific individual behaviours and preferences, but also uncovers them as collectively shared and reproduced in the wider structures of society. (Schneider & Lang, 2014: 90)

Linking the concept of habitus with the subjectivity of individuals, "Bourdieu theorizes social class as a social practice, not as a category or as a lifestyle, or even a set of dispositions but as an activity in which categorization, structures, dispositions and agency combine" (McDermott, 2011: 67). Thinking all dimensions of heteronormativity and Bourdieu's concept of field and habitus together, it can be said that "perception of masculinity and femininity, norms and values on sexual practices and individual survival strategies" (Ural, 2010: 46) cannot be thought separately from their social class – and habitus, because habitus is the "socialized subjectivity" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 126).

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As McDermott (2011: 66) indicated that although it may be regarded as theoretically problematic with the postmodern concerns of queer theory with a class analysis in the beginning, Bourdieu's comprehensive understanding that explain social classification through his conceptual framework including different types of capital and habitus have been employed lately in studies seeking to investigate the intersection of sexuality and class (McDermott, 2004; Johnson, 2008; Skeggs, 1997; Taylor, 2007). While perceptions of queer theory and Bourdieu's reflexive understanding of social facts criticize the binary perceptions toward social world, Bourdieu's incorporation of the social into the body, through the concept of habitus in particular, allow me to combine the theories by analyzing the intersection of class and gender in the lives of queer identities.

## 3.4. Studies Carried Out in Turkey

LGBTI+ issue has started to be studied for the first time in the 90s in Turkey. The reason why may be interpreted as the sociopolitical atmosphere of that time, because sociopolitical atmosphere of a country directly reflects to the academic discussions of that time. During the period of the 70s and 80s, there were wide-scale social movements and rights-based activism in Turkey, but, as far as we know, they were mainly class-based political struggles; therefore, it is not possible to find any LGBTI+ related academic study at that time. In the 80s, feminist movement started to raise its voice in Turkey, so gender discussions have been brought to the agenda of sociology in Turkey. Whereas in Western literature number of LGBTI+ - even *queer*- related studies have been increasing at that time, publications on LGBTI+s were limited in Turkey with a few informative brochures and magazines prepared by LGBTI+ activists and groups. After the establishment of Gender and Women's studies departments in a few universities in 90s[15], LGBTI+ issues have slightly

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[15] Gender and Women's Studies Departments and programs were established at Istanbul University in 1993; at Middle East Technical University in 1994; at Ankara University in 1995 and at Ege University in 1999.

started to be studied academically within the concept of gender in feminist literature. On the other hand, academic literature on specifically LGBTI+ and queer issues has been developed mostly in recent decade due to the strengthening profile of the LGBTI+ movement in the country and changing/ developing socio-political dynamics in the global sphere towards the issues. However, agenda and research interests in this field in Turkey are still very differentiated from Western literature, because of the geographical and cultural factors. In the effect of conservative Middle Eastern tradition and different cultural and religious factors, topics like sexuality and gender are still so controversial – even taboo for some segments of the society – and, accordingly, it is difficult to study and produce on such issues. When we searched for the studies on the issue, we can see that Turkey is still dealing with the problematic areas such as LGBTI+ representation in different fields, access to basic goods and services such as health, social work, etc., family relations of LGBTI+s, and reflections of class differences for LGBTI+s.

Focused on the LGBTI+ and queer concepts, studies reached from official website of Council of Higher Education Generally vary in many different disciplines of social sciences as well as literature, media and journalism, and health. Academic studies carried out in social sciences are focusing on LGBTI+ movement (Kural, 2012; Bolat, 2013; Seçkin, 2015), gay masculinity (Öztürk, 2011), intersectional identities (Yıldırım, 2018), gender discrimination towards LGBTI+s (Arık, 2014; Arayıcı, 2019), LGBTI+ refugees (D'Epifanio, 2011) and spatial segregation (Hancıoğlu, 2015). Researches in the field of media, journalism and literature generally focus on the representation of LGBTI+s (Yeşilyurt, 2015), constructions of masculinity/ femininity, comparative analysis among novels/ movies/ journals from queer perspective (Aşçı, 2013; Candemir, 2016). LGBTI+ topics researched in the field of health mostly on the attitudes and perceptions of health professionals towards the community (Keleş, 2015; Arslantaş, 2017; Soner, 2017; Sadıç, 2018), experiences of LGBTI+s in health care services (Karakaya, 2017) and mental health related issues of the community (Baydar, 2015; Eroğlu, 2015; Savcı, 2015; Serbes, 2017).

In relation to the focus of this research within family sociology, I have mainly reviewed studies analyzing the following issues: the effects of class dynamics on LGBTI+ identity, queer families and kinship relations, queer approach to families, the effects of coming out processes on familial relations and identity development of LGBTI+s. Although different class dynamics are still an important matter for Turkish society, studies analyzing LGBTI+ identity and social class together can rarely be found in sociology literature in Turkey. Academic studies to date have approached the class and identity issue from different fields like spatial segregation (Hancıoğlu, 2015), masculinity (Özbay, 2005; Levent, 2015), new social movements (Erdoğan & Köten, 2014), identity formation of gay men (Ural, 2010) and masculine respectability (Ural & Beşpınar, 2017). In one hand, they are significant for this study, because of their problematized areas like heteronormative society and gender issue in the focus of LGBTI+s. On the other hand, the focuses of these studies – except Haktan Ural's studies - are not fully related with the aim of this study. In the intersection of sexual orientation and class, Haktan Ural's thesis (2010) is quite related with this research as aiming to understand the reflections of class differences among gay men in Ankara. In spite of the different focus points of our researches, Ural's study method and queer perspective analyzing the class dimension were influential for this research.

Further, taking the family into research focus, studies carried out on LGBTI+ people in Turkey are generally divided into two: (i) studies analyzing coming out experience of LGBTI+s; (ii) studies analyzing family from queer perspective. Firstly, coming-out experience has to date been studied in relation with its effects on family relations (Kabacaoğlu, 2015; Eroğlu, 2015; Ece, 2017) and on LGBTI+ movement (Ertetik, 2010) in academic literature in Turkey. As we may see from the range of the academic studies, coming out is still a problematic area for LGBTI+s in Turkey with regards to their personal life. Secondly, academic researches focusing on family from queer perspective are carried out in relation to parenthood (İş, 2013) and queer family relation of trans sex workers in Istanbul (Çalışkan, 2014). These two studies are also important for my research, because they both analyze the family practices

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and kinship relations from non-conventional perspective. Additional to these researches, Burcu Baba's article (2011) on heteropatriarchal family in the focus of marginalized sexualities have to be addressed in relation to family and LGBTI+ issues.

As we may see from the course of this chapter, family discussions in sociology literature have followed a path parallel to the socioeconomical and sociopolitical discussions of that time. In relation to the main concepts of my arguments as personal life and intimacy, I have mainly reviewed family sociology from conventional descriptions to queer discussions. In the beginning, economy-oriented theories like Marxism and Functionalism had mainly analyzed family as an economic unit and had not taken internal subjectivities of the family into consideration. At that time, family had been basically considered within heteronormative level and gendered factors within family had been ignored by these theories. Later on, parallel with the sexual liberation discussions and changing political discussions family started to be discussed with regards to gender perspective and to be criticized with regards to public private discussions in the scope of Feminist theory. Furthermore, individualization discussions and concepts like democratization and do-it-yourself biography in relations have started to be effective together with neoliberal politics in the world. In this context, family has begun to read from non-conventional and non-heteronormative oriented perspective with the effect of feminist theory and individualization theory. These discussions have paved the way to Kate Weston's same-sex family relations and David Morgan's new perspective that sees family as a compilation of practices rather than a concrete entity. Departing from this point, I have built my theoretical base of queer family, queer intimacy and performances.

Lastly in this section, queer theory discussions including the comprehensive perception of gender through Judith Butler's perspective and linkage between performativity and habitus in relation to Pierre Bourdieu's discussions on class theory have been reviewed. In conclusion, I have linked Western literature with

studies carried out in Turkey on LGBTI+ and queer issues in relation to class and gender. Throughout this chapter, we can see that while LGBTI+ family and fictive kinship literature have been developed since 80s in Western literature, in Turkey similar studies have started to be researched parallel with development of gender studies. Additionally, we can also see that the range of the studies in Western literature has been varied in many different topics extended family discussions, in Turkey, LGBTI+ and queer issues have focused mainly on topics like recognition and social challenges that LGBTI+s face. Although there are many gender related LGBTI+ focused studies in Turkey, intersectional studies are rarely found. In this respect, as a study intersecting the concept of gender and class considered with a queer perspective, this study will contribute to family sociology literature in Turkey. Considering that Anglo-American queer literature has been criticized to be quite "white", to ignore any intersectionality deriving from nation, ethnicity, religion and class, and to be insufficient to understand non-Western gender and sexuality regimes (Çakırlar & Delice, 2012), I believe that the study will also fill a gap in the literature by providing a base for comparison with Western literature.

# CHAPTER 4

# PRACTICING FAMILY AS 'THE OTHER'

Assuming that family is one of the most problematic areas in regulating people's lives, I problematize, in this study, the heteronormative notions of 'the family' promoted by the state regulations and cultural norms. Heterosexist profile of Turkey – and structure of 'traditional' Turkish family – generally marginalize LGBTI+ individuals in every sphere of daily live. While LGBTI+s – as 'the others' in heteronormative society - are deprived from their fundamental rights and freedoms by the state, they are mostly faced with refusal, rejection and denial after disclosure by their family of origin. In this regard, whether the conventional family regarded as the immediate surrounding and the initial support network of individuals' lives provide its basic functions such as emotional and material support for non-heterosexual community have been questioned in this section. In the purpose of exploring this problem, I have focused on the biological family experiences of non-trans lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) individuals in relation to the effect of gender and class. As mentioned earlier, gender and class are the social constructions reciprocally affecting our habitus and personal relations; therefore, I have aimed to see these effects on the family practices of the research group.

Firstly, in this section, the effects of gender as an inseparable part of the lives of non-heterosexual community have been analyzed in relation to their family practices with their biological family. Revealing the heteropatriarchal profile of Turkey, coming out experience as a way of '*queering* the family' has been explored in the course of the first part. Further, underlying the effects of gender hierarchy within coming-out experiences of my respondents, I have indicated how binary gender roles affect the social perceptions of non-trans gay, lesbian and bisexual identities for their

biological family members and how it can be criticized through performativity of gender.

Secondly, combining Bourdieu's field theory with his arguments of 'family is a realized category' (1996), I have built my arguments upon the family, as a *micro field of power*, and analyzed the family practices of the respondents by using the concepts of *habitus*, different types of *capital* as well as Atkinson's concept of *family-specific-doxa*. By this method, I have been able to see how different class dynamics and individual habitus affect the family experiences of the respondents. Due to the fact that researches to date analyzing fictive kinship practices of LGBTI+ community generally reflect middle-class features in the literature, in the second section, my main aim is to better see and compare the similarities and differences of the practices between middle and working-class non-heterosexual community in Turkey. Considering the formation of fictive kinship as a starting point for the discussion, I have questioned the personal conditions for the LGBs to name a relationship 'family' and explored the 'actual' meaning of family for them. In this regard, it has been revealed in this chapter that while some collective factors such as recognition, future anxiety and shared identity are irreversible to feel family intimacy for the lives of LGBs regardless of class, there are subjective factors deriving from working-class habitus.

## 4.1. The Importance of Visibility of Sexual Orientation in the Intersection of Performativity of Gender and Class

In Turkey, civil laws and regulations promote family as the building block of the Turkish society. While legal code has been regulated to protect the rights of nuclear family that is defined as a heterosexual family, state regulations of current government (in power since 2002) also promotes traditional family values in Turkish society. In *Family Values in Türkiye* (2010)[16], a research prepared by the General

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[16] Türkiye'de Aile Değerleri Araştırması, 2010.

Directorate of Family and Social Researches, values are described as "abstract and generalized behavioral principles that has been formed with strong emotional attachments of members of a community and that provides a basic standard to judge an individual's private acts and purposes" (p.1). The description made by the state authorities can be interpreted that traditional values have the power to judge and control individuals' private lives.

> Nation states create their sexual regimes not only to discipline and manage the populations but also to establish their differences from other states and set their borders through the bodies of the citizens under their mandate. The privileged position of heterosexual and patriarchal nuclear family within the nation-state and the subordination of women's bodies and labour in tandem with market relations resulted in a normative heteropatriarchal sexual order. As Andrea Smith contends "heteropatriarchy is the building block of the nation state form of governance".

As Burcu Baba (2010: 56-57) addressed the importance of heteropatriarchal family for nation state, government in Turkey always promotes compulsory heterosexuality to its citizens by encouraging them to get married and convey these heteropatriarchal values and culture to their kids as the next generation. By doing so, while the state represents heterosexuality as the 'normal' that 'everyone needs to be', it excludes LGBTI+ community as a threat to traditional values and to the conventional family norms, because of their "failure in reproduction" (Ahmed, 2012:183). Public morality as one of the most emphasized values that is always promoted by the state is also used as a tool to protect traditional heteronormative values and to marginalized any other identity or social formation falling outside of the *morality*. In this context, I would like to start with how gender – and sexual regimes - are effective on controlling the lives of non-heterosexual people during their coming-out process within their family of origin. At first, disclosure as a way of queering the conventional family has been explored in details in this section. Secondly, the effects of hegemonic masculinity on self-identification and coming-out processes of my respondents have been indicated by underlining the different reflections of each identity in this heteropatriarchal society.

### 4.1.1. Coming Out as a Way of Challenge the Heteronormative Family

As one of the most general facts about LGBTI+ community, my first assumption for this study was that LGBTI+s are generally refused by their families of origin or could have weak ties with their family members due to lack of tolerance that their families show regarding their sexual orientation and gender identity. Departing from the assumption, I have, firstly, analyzed the disclosure experiences of my respondents to their families, because

> 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 (Ece, 2017:71).

Analyzing the issue from a broader perspective by acknowledging the heteropatriarchal profile of Turkey, it can be seen that majority of the coming out experiences of people in my research group to their biological family members can be indicated as an example for these challenges. Among 16 people in my research group, 9 people have been disclosed to their family members and other 7 people are still hiding their sexual orientation. While only one person (Sumru, 43) out of 9 encountered a positive reaction from their family of origin, the other eight people have faced with refusal, disrespect, grief and ignorance by the family members they came out. In order to reflect how serious is the issue in Turkey regarding the level of marginalization towards LGBTI+ community, I believe that Deniz's case, as an extreme example of these negative reactions, should be addressed here. As Deniz, a 29-year-old queer/ non-binary[17] who is identified themselves as gay, has told that after one of their uncles learnt about their sexual orientation, he attempted to murder Deniz on the grounds of "honor". Although the other refusal cases were not resulted with such serious attempt, underlying reason of them may still be linked to honor as an important social value in Turkey.

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[17] Non-binary, also called as genderqueer, is a term to reflect people who are not exclusively masculine or feminine and are outside of gender binary. The pronoun to use is they/ them.

Due to the fact that honor is linked with a person's accountability in the society, families who has faced with the sexual orientation of their LGBTI+ children mostly experience self-blame, shame, guilt, disappointment and despair (Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2005: 20-24). The main reason of these reactions can also be interpreted as the fear of exclusion from the normative order of the society in our case. In order to protect the honor and respect of their 'family name', and in order to prevent potential rumors and subsequent exclusions they may face due to the neighborhood pressure, families, like in Deniz's case, prefer to do *anything* to hide and oppress such situation. Honor killing or an obvious refusal that is displayed to public through disowning or disinheriting the child might be counted as the extreme LGBTI+phobic reactions of heterosexist families. Here, I think how the honor killing attempt by Deniz's uncle has been reversed must also be addressed to reveal the 'two-sided morality' of Turkish society. As Deniz indicated when their uncle drove them to an isolated place to "kill" them, Deniz understood the situation and modestly threated his uncle back with the power of morality as well as with the power of their own *community*. As they stated that in the car Deniz said: "Uncle, I absolutely know what *you* were *doing* with *which transvestite* in which places so far. They are all my friends. If something bad happen to me now, be sure, they would show you up and you would not be able to go out public anymore". This 'modest' talk -or an obvious threat- was enough to convince their uncle for an opposite decision with the power of shame and neighbor pressure that may cause an exclusion from society. This narrative is important here to figure out that in Turkey although there is a deeply embedded heteropatriarchal culture promoted by the value of public morality, it is still so common to see that people, men in particular, are involved in non-normative sexual affairs as long as it is not visible in (heteronormative) public eye. Additionally, as it will be discussed in details further, Deniz's "threat" can also be read through the power of LGBTI+ community that protects LGBTI+ subjects from the potential threats coming from the society and family.

While getting back to the coming-out experiences, I would like to see the issue from a queer perspective by analyzing the details of coming-out experiences of the

respondents from their perspective. As mentioned above, nine people in the group could come out to their parents or some of their immediate family members. The interesting fact, here, is that all nine of them have a direct or indirect connection with LGBTI+ movement in Turkey. For instance, Can, a 40-year old gay, has realized about his sexual orientation in primary school, but he could disclose to his mother after he started to spend time with people in Kaos GL and Lambda Istanbul during his university years.

> In the beginning, I have realized it (his sexual orientation) late. I mean I have actually known what I am, but I have never socialized in LGBTI+ environment before. Therefore, 'what would I live or how would I live' were not so clear for me at that time. Later on, I started to visit Kaos GL by the time. After I started to socialize among LGBTI+s, my awareness that I should come out has been developed within the community.

As another good example, Efe, a 44-year old bisexual man, was afraid to come out to his mother until his 30s, because he knew that his mother is a very homophobic and dominant person. Besides the potential negative reactions that his mother would give, Efe was also afraid of the generational difference between himself and his mother; that is, he was afraid if his disclosure would cause a serious health problem on his old mother. Later on, after he started to be involved in LGBTI+ activism within LİSTAG, an organization consisting of and driven by the parents of LGBTI+ children in Turkey, he has developed his self-esteem to be disclosed to his mother, and with the power of emotional threat he could be able to overcome this challenge.

> Well, relying on my activism in LISTAG, I have never seen a mother or father who died after their child's disclosure yet. I have seen parents who act like they faint or shriek, but they were all fake. (…) After my coming out at the age of 34, my mother tried to control me like she has never done before. She was calling me and asking where I am, what I am doing. When she asked these, I was saying 'I am with my *mothers* (in LISTAG)'. This was a key message for her that 'if you would not accept me as my mother, I would find other mothers for myself, dear!'.

These narratives could be interpreted that LGBTI+ movement as a systematic resistance to heteronormative system has given them enough courage to embrace their identity and provide self-esteem to struggle the heterosexist system with their

existence. As İlay Ertetik (2010: 46) has written about the coming out experiences of LGBs in her research:

> By questioning themselves and the others around them, they come through that this is a system issue. Thus, they object the oppression, by expressing themselves. Because the system, heterosexism, force them to hide it, to make them invisible.

On the other hand, the answers given by the other 7 people in my research group who still hide their sexual orientation from their family of origin are divided into two. One part of this group is hiding their sexual orientation due to the fear of the refusal and grief from their family members, and they could not embrace their identity enough for resisting the heteronormative order. The other part includes persons who consider that coming-out is unnecessary because they can already live their life as they want without displaying themselves to heterosexual eyes. Bahri, a 45-year-old working-class gay man, as one of these respondents in my study group indicated that although he does not hide himself/ his gender expressions in public, he prefers remaining disclosed to his family.

> I am like: both disclosed and hidden, I can say. I am hidden like: I haven't said 'I am homosexual' to my mother. For example, when they asked why don't you still get married, I don't say 'because I am like that (gay)'. However, I am so relaxed at the same time. (…) I can walk together with my *transvestite* friends in *Kızılay* (…) This is, you know, the policy of Turkey, they said 'walk on the snow, but cover up your track'…

His reasons of hiding may be read that while he is able to live as he wants in public, he does not want to disturb the 'peace' at home. Or it may also be read as a matter of the linkages between privacy and sexuality. When getting back to the previous argument, we can read the reasons of other 5 as a *coping strategy* against heteronormative exclusion must be analyzed with respect to class dimension, because 5 out of the seven people are coming from a working-class background. According to Seidman (2004: 43), economic independence, family relations, vulnerability of queer people in working life and experience of closet/coming out indicate great differentiation among different class positions. Regarding the statement and the facts deriving from my field research, I can say that ownership of *economic* and *symbolic capital* directly affects the self-differentiation of the

individuals from their family of origin. As a working-class gay, Hakan's case with his mother is a perfect example to reflect working-class subjectivity within coming-out experiences. Hakan is university graduate, but unemployed at the moment. This made him financially dependent on the family income. As a working class single-mother as well as the only person providing income to the family, financial support, in fact, is the way important for his mother than anything else. Therefore, as he indicated below, his *real* coming-out experience is also dependent on this material conditions.

> I am a person who have not had a social status yet. But when I will reach a certain social class, when I will be independent and start to live my own life, I will tell this (that I am gay) to my mother. Then, it would be easier for her to accept it. As a mother, or as a woman with traditional values, she is a person who likes to be happy with money. She also becomes happy with my success. Therefore, when I will provide these living conditions, and when I will make her to believe that being gay would not cause something *bad* for my life, I am planning to tell her.

Further, Deniz's narrative on their class mobility by guaranteeing economic and cultural capital is also need to be addressed to clarify the situation. As Deniz, identified themselves as non-binary gay, told that they won a scholarship in a private college owing to their educational success. Then, in order to keep them as their student for their future credibility during university entrance exam, school administration has offered them full scholarship during their high school period as well as the administration has also guaranteed to cover education costs of Deniz's little sister for her high school career.

> When it happened, it has meant two things for me: 1. I was the person supporting my sister's education (which means I was powerful) and 2. I would have money. And then my disengagement with my family begins. (…) Therefore, my high school life was like a university life. I had become free.

This case could be the same for a heterosexual child at the same age, but the differentiating part of their experience in relation to their sexual orientation is that economic capital they have guaranteed for their future provides them a safer and more concrete ground that they could be less vulnerable against any case of refusal

or rejection by their family of origin. Additionally, as they said that the fact that they had a financial power in relation to their sister's education also made their parents to be financially dependent on them. In fact, socioeconomic conditions of their parents reflect the working-class habitus, so economic capital is a resource for their survival that cannot be rejected. This means, as Deniz indicated, that they would have enough power over their family to reflect their self-expression and to make them come-out *unconditionally*. Further statements of them also shows this unconditionality:

> In order to get any kind of support from my family (of origin), I had to be a person whom they want me to be. (…) I had to transform my personality. Due to the fact that I have refused to change and I have not changed, I have not gotten any emotional support from them, but they also could not throw me out.

Apart from their unconditional and uncompromising disclosure, the economic and cultural capital that Deniz has obtained from their educational career have allowed them to separate themselves from the habitus of their family of origin. Later on, they entered to Boğaziçi University, one of the most prominent academic institutions of Turkey, and moved to Istanbul for education, so they could substantially separate themselves from *the* family. Further, a 32-year-old lesbian woman, Umay's experience with her parents reflects the similar situation regarding class mobility. Umay has grown up a very conservative family reflecting working-class features. Due to the fact that her parents see homosexuality is "perversion and deviance", she could not/ is not planning to disclose to her parents. Owing to the economic and symbolic capital deriving from her academic background including 5-year overseas education (master's degree) and current PhD, she could be able to become independent and differentiate herself from her family of origin. As she indicated that her new social status has become a trump for her against the heteronormative oppressions of her parents:

> My family do not come down on me with the marriage issue anymore. Because I have my own life now, my money, my home, etc. If I would not have those, then, it would be bad. They would be thinking that they have the right to speak over my life. But now, whenever they open this topic, I can shut them up smoothly. Now they cannot dare to speak about it anymore.

Although Umay's case is not exactly related with her coming-out process, we can still see the power that economic and symbolic capital provide for all respondents in their self-identification process as well as in their struggle against heteronormativity in their micro field.

Apart from the narratives above, there are some "grey" cases in my study group that although disclosure has happened in some ways, family members behave like nothing happened and remain silence. Poulos (2009: 38) calls it "strategy of silence" that prevents the disclosure which "can unleash all sorts of grief", and it also "gives off at least the illusion of control". This is also called "transparent closet" (Švab, 2016) in the coming-out literature and it is used for such situation where "three dimensions that coincide: (1) they do not know how to react; (2) they lack information on homosexuality; and (3) they find themselves in the social vacuum of a family closet as a result of the homophobic society" (Švab and Kuhar, 2014: 27). For instance, Mehmet (40) was disclosed to his parents by his big brother in a very negative way. Later on, he started his LGBTI+ activism openly, and once when he was in a LGBTI+ themed conference, he was interviewed by a TV channel. As he said all of his family members have seen him on television and they all learn about his sexual orientation, but later on he has experienced the strategy of silence by his parents:

> You know, coming-out can be possible if the other side gives you a reaction or acknowledge the situation. They may deny, they may make you shut up or they may just ignore you, but at least they *do* something. Due to the fact that my mother had not done any of these throughout her life course, I was still not sure whether I was disclosed to her even when she died.

Similarly, Sultan (33) as an openly bisexual woman thinks that all family knows that she likes women too; however, when I asked her what she would like to change in her family of origin, she answered:

> For example, I wish they wondered about me. I wish they would make me feel that 'you are our child no matter what happens'. Instead of 'we do not ask, so you do not tell', I wish they would ask and try to understand me. Because this '*don't ask, don't tell*' way is actually a denial, overlooking or an ignorance. This is *more harming*. If they would fight with you, you might

feel better. Because even if they fight or do not accept, there *is* something there, some evidence that they recognize your existence.

In both cases, we are sure that parents *do* know what is homosexuality because of Mehmet's and Sultan's activist background, but parents' strategy is more related to the social pressure deriving from the effects of heteropatriarchal society. Non-heterosexuality may be a taboo and something 'abnormal' for them that must not be said out loud. The silence strategy of parents can be read as "the trace of something Other at the heart of utterance— something recalcitrant, unspeakable, unreasonable, unanalyzable" (Maclure et al., 2010: 495). Parents might give these silent reactions unconsciously, but most probably they might be thinking that silence or ignorance is the best way of denial, the denial of the presence of *the other*. Foucault (1976:133) said that "power and knowledge are quite clearly articulated in discourse". In this respect, this strategy of family members may be read that as being part of the 'legitimate', 'natural' and 'normal' side of the family, parents consciously or unconsciously situated themselves as the superior position in this gendered power relation, and by denying the existence of the other with the lack of discourse they actually impose the heteropatriarchal norms of the society over their non-heterosexual child.

Throughout this section, I have started to explore how heteropatriarchal gendered profile of Turkish society affects the personal lives and family practices of LGBs in my study group. Departing from the facts obtained from my field research, majority of LGBs would like to disclose their sexual orientation to their family of origin in order to *be recognized* as the first conditions of family intimacy for them. Regarding the mixed socio-economic and cultural backgrounds that these family members have, it can be said that coming-out is a challenge for each family regardless of different class habitus due to heteronormative cultural norms imposed in each segment of the society.

However, when we look at the seven non-disclosed people in my study group, we can see that 5 out of 7 are working-class people who cannot come out to their parents for different concerns and the other 2 are higher class people who sees disclosure is

unnecessary for them at the moment, because they can live their life as they want. Contrary to that LGBTI+ activism provides LGBs a concrete ground to accept and struggle for their *otherness,* working-class habitus – the lack of cultural and economic capital in particular- also limits their way of existence and demand of recognition. While it is possible to say, in this regard, that economic independency and involvement of LGBTI+ activism are the two separate dynamics – and the 'right' capitals (economic and social) in Bourdieusian perspective – developing the habitus of middle-class young LGBT people with a 'self-assured relation to the world' (Bourdieu, 1984: 54). Additionally, the heteropatriarchal gender challenge can be read as a more serious problem for the self-identification process and family practices of working-class LGBs.

In order to clarify the differences within family practices for different class habitus, I may consecutively compare the narratives of Deniz, coming from a working-class family habitus, and Efe, whose family reflects middle-class features. After disclosing the family members, whereas Deniz have faced with a "life-threat" from their uncle besides the ignorance of their parents, Efe was just emotionally rejected and ignored by his mother *for a while*. To overcome this challenge, Efe could operate an emotional threat against his mother and it worked - for his middle-class family reality - to reverse the homophobic rejection. On the other hand, it is obvious that this strategy would not work for Deniz's working-class uncle. Due to the fact that neighbor pressure driven by the public morality may be regarded as a determinant for working-class habitus to keep or lose one's respectability and positionality in heteronormative social order, Deniz, instead, used the power of shame by threating their uncle with neighbor pressure. This is a clear example of how concerns of *the* families, threats that LGBs may face and strategies of LGBs to overcome these threats may differentiate among middle and working class.

Further, as another important fact from this section that almost all reactions given after disclosure, such as grief, refusal or silence, are the results of hegemonic heteronormative cultural norms of the society. While parents remain silent about

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coming-out, they consciously or unconsciously impose the invisible hierarchical power, deriving from their 'unquestionable' heterosexuality, over their child, and, by this way, non-heterosexual subjects are tried to be weaken and silent in heteronormative order. In this regard, promoted by the demand of recognition within family and society, coming-out -whether it is accepted or not- as a challenge for heteronormative family can also be read as an attempt to *queer the family*.

## 4.1.2. Differentiating Reflections of Binary Gender Hierarchy on Coming-Out Experiences

In the previous section, the importance of coming-out for the recognition of personal lives of LGBs has been analyzed in relation to heteropatriarchal norms of the society. Relying on that background, reflections of invisible gender hierarchy imposed by the family members on the coming-out experiences of LGBs will be explored with regards to queer sexualities in this section. In Turkey, as a highly patriarchal country, it is easy to say that there is a deep gender hierarchy embedded in every aspect of the society. Although Turkish legal code is based on the equality of men and women - which is also a problematic binary definition, for Turkish society, we cannot talk about gender equality even in the binary gender system. Like many other countries around the world, masculinity is standing on the top of the gender hierarchy in Turkey. Pierre Bourdieu (2015:22) called it 'masculine domination' which does not need to justify itself; that is, the male-centered view imposes itself as impartial and its power actually comes from here. In patriarchal systems, male domination is internalized through social dynamics, and the hierarchically superior positions of men are considered as 'natural' which makes them closed to any kind of discussion. This is called 'hegemonic masculinity' (Connell, 1998).

Hegemonic masculinity does not only affect the gender hierarchy between women and man in heterosexual world, but in the intersection of many other sub-topics such as sexual orientation, gender identity and class it leads sub-hierarchies within LGBTI+ community. Generally speaking, while masculinity, in this context, is

mostly accepted by the society regardless of gender, femininity is perceived as suitable only for women. These taken-for-granted perceptions cause different reflections on the lives of lesbians, gays, and bisexuals living in this geography with regards to the level of discrimination or tolerance. Departing from this background, in this section, complex gender relations deriving from the heteropatriarchal and conservative profile of Turkey have firstly been explored. Additionally, reflections of the binary gender roles and expressions to the family relations of my respondents have been analyzed with the perspective of performativity of gender.

When we, firstly, consider the situation with respect to same-sex desires among men, perception of heteronormative society as well as self-identification of gay and bisexual men themselves differentiate in accordance with their positionality in sexual intercourse. As Bereket and Adam (2006:131) indicated in their study on emergence of gay identities, "Turkey has traditionally shared a sex/gender order common to Mediterranean, Middle Eastern, and Latin American regions (Murray, 2000) where male–male sexual relations are expected to embody a gendered division between an inserter partner (*aktif*) considered 'masculine' and a receptive partner (*pasif*) who is expected to show some aspect of the feminine gender in behavior, voice, or dress". Apart from the fluidity of performativity of gender in queer sexualities, when feminine gender expression occurs in a male body which is expected to be masculine in binary gender order, it is mostly cursed and refused by the society. The underlying reasons of this refusal and hatred are actually the direct correlation between being passive and being feminine, and the secondary position of femininity in gender hierarchy. For instance, feminine gay men and trans women are exposed to more serious discrimination and violence in Turkey, because for the perception of binary hetero-patriarchal society they have "lost" their masculinity, in other saying, they could not be 'man' enough. In this regard, considering the homophobic profile of Turkey, it is common to witness when a man expressed himself as gay, his gender performance is directly expected to be feminine as well as he is considered as being passive. Data I have obtained from gay and bisexual men respondents supports this correlation reflected by heteropatriarchal society. For instance, Kayra (27), Deniz

(30), Can (40) have experienced that after they came out to their parents one of the first things the parents asked if they are in active or passive position in sexual intercourse.

> When I disclosed to my father, he reacted negatively a bit. You know being passive is perceived as a bad thing, he told me that he wishes I was not passive *at least*. (Can, 40)

As another example, Deniz's mother asked them after their coming-out if it is painful to make anal intercourse. These narratives clearly show how society directly links with being gay and being feminine, and how it reflects in their perception as a subordinate situation in the effect of hegemonic masculinity. In *The Use of Pleasure*, Michel Foucault (1990: 215) told that such understanding has rooted in the Ancient Greece that "in sexual behavior there was one role that was intrinsically honorable and valorized without question: the one that consisted in being active, in dominating, in penetrating and in thereby exercising one's authority"; therefore, for this understanding "to be penetrated is to abdicate power" (Bersani, :252). If we go back to the narratives, I can say that normally those parents would not ask sexual practices of their child so openly, if their children were heterosexual. However, in these cases, in parents' minds being gay can be performed only as being passive and it is something subordinated for their understanding. They also situate themselves in a higher position in gender hierarchy as the ones who are natural and 'normal' as heterosexuals, and non-heterosexual sexual desires are positioned as 'the subordinated other' in their gendered positionality; therefore, without thinking what they say comprehensively they could ask these private and disrespectful questions to their child, because heteropatriarchy provide this 'unquestionable' and privileged ground to them.

As the other part of this discussion, when we look at the situation from the side of masculine gays, there is a tendency in the society to not consider a 'masculine' man as gay – or so called '*homosexual*', *faggot*, '*queer*'. Instead, with the effect of hegemonic masculinity people are prone to position any masculine expression in superior places "in a hierarchical gender order in which certain masculinities are

dominant and considered more legitimate, respected, and culturally exalted" (Ural & Beşpınar, 2017: 247). Meanwhile, being gay continues to be correlated with femininity and subordination in gender hierarchy. Hakan's experience is a good example of the direct correlation of femininity and being gay, and how masculine *gayness* is invisible in societal level. In his experience, when his mother caught his phone messages written to his boyfriend, he had to be disclosed to her mother:

> I talked around forty minutes that I told it (being gay) is not only about sexuality, but it is also an emotional process. I talked like a psychologist, I was so conscious. She tried to understand, but she had difficulty. Because I am a quite masculine-type guy. Due to the fact that she knows how I am, she had this difficulty. She said: 'Look at you, son. You are like *at hırsızı*[18]. How can it be possible?'.

After that his mother has not accepted that he is gay and continued pushing him to get married in future. Although he currently identifies himself as "one-hundred percent gay", due to the fact that his mother knows his previous relationships with girls before he has realized his same-sex desires, she insists to believe that one day he would have heterosexual and 'normal' relationship with a woman again. In one hand, these reactions can be read through the norms of binary gender order and concrete understanding of defined sexual roles in the society. For this understanding, if a man looks masculine, he cannot be "one-hundred percent" gay that he is either heterosexual or active in sexual intercourse. On the other hand, his mother's reaction may also be related with their class positions, as Ural and Beşpınar (2017: 245) argue that "class differences and habitus matter in how lower- and middle-class gay men negotiate the terms of respectability and how they present themselves and perform their masculinities". Further, as Erdem (2012: 68) indicates that "being active" is sometimes used also by gay/bisexual men in their discourses to prove that they are not gay; in fact, there is a generally accepted perception in society that *active* homosexuality – to be active in gay sexual intercourse- is not actually homosexuality. In Hakan's case, his mother's reactions are all related with the

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[18] *At hırsızı* is directly translated as horse-thief or rustler. It is a phrase used to identify masculine and sometimes dangerous looking men.

cultural sexual hierarchy and defined gendered positionalities, but this can also be shown as an evidence of "invisibility of bisexuals" in society.

Sultan (33), identified herself as bisexual woman, can be given as a good example how society tend to ignore bisexuality. She came-out to her parents after she realized that she also likes women, and she even introduced her ex-girlfriend to her family. Her parents also know that she has been working for an LGBTI+ organization, but they resist not to believe that she is bisexual. Regardless of gender, these are the clear examples of how compulsory heterosexuality -as Butler indicated (1999) - of the society operates and reflects on bisexual sexual orientation. In this heterosexual domination, it does not matter that bisexual subjects have spent a huge part of their lives with same-sex desires or they have just less interest with opposite sex, heteronormative society is always prone to prioritize their hetero-desires and expect them eventually to be or get married with a person from opposite sex.

Considering the axiom that people change, Erdem (2012: 41) explains such ignorance that in hegemonic heteronormative order the only condition to be taken into serious is regarded as the continuity from cradle to grave (i.e. expectations over heterosexual marriage), and if something is changeable, it is regarded as temporary – so unimportant- just like an "enthusiasm". Although same-sex intimacies are so common during discovering the sexuality in puberty, they are regarded as "temporary enthusiasms" by the heteronormative order most of the time. Therefore, reactions given to bisexual subjects can be given as examples of compulsory heterosexuality. On the other hand, even in LGBTI+ community itself, bisexual orientation is mostly invisible, because within the community they are perceived as the subject that would fall into the 'trap' of compulsory heterosexuality one day. Apart from the impositions of heteronormative society, the invisibility of bisexuals within the community is also a great example of 'homo-hetero' binary opposition which is criticized within queer theory as a limiting definition of sexual desires.

Further, the effects of hegemonic masculinity work differently in some respects for lesbian and bisexual (LB) women in my study group. Situation for LB women in Turkish context can be divided into two: (i) Their relationships and even existence are perceived just as sexually-driven fantasies to attract heterosexual men and, accordingly, they are mostly ignored as being 'impossible' because of the lack of 'man' in the relationship; (ii) If lesbian or bisexual women have masculine gender expression, it has an effect to mitigate the level of refusal or discrimination they may face in heterosexual order due to the reflections of gender hierarchy. For example, Fadime (27) is a bisexual woman who has identified herself as lesbian until the age of 25. Currently, she identifies herself as a bisexual woman, and a few years ago she got married with a man. In her university years, her sexual orientation was revealed to her parents by one of her ex-flat-mates. Due to the fact that her family is into traditional and religious values, at first, her mother reacted to the situation with grief, and she thought that Fadime is sick. On the other hand, her father's reaction as she expressed as follow can be a clear example how the ignorance towards women to women love operates in Turkey:

> When my father learnt the situation, he did not say anything for a while. Then he said: 'Well done! Even I could not party with girls once at home. Well done if you could. At least, you did not cause any other rumor against our family, so no problem!'. My father welcomed me like that and I was shocked. Because my father has very though personality, and he is a dictator at home.

As mentioned in the related literature, women to women love is generally fantasized in heterosexist societies. At the same time, "the invisibility of lesbian and bisexual women is still an issue that needs to be read along the lines of sexism. It seems that female same sex desire is not considered a threat unless it extends to the exclusion of men" (Baba, 2010: 60). Fadime's experience can be qualified under this invisibility caused by the ignorance of women to women desires. Her further expressions about how her sexual orientation reflected in her family shows the level of ignorance that may even be considered as mocking.

> Later on, in the family, the issue (that I like women) was only used in jokes. They were saying: 'So when will you bring us a bride?'. Once when I was in a supermarket with my mother, she saw two girls. She said: 'Fadime,

your brother would not come and meet with these girls, let's show you and take them for your brother. They are actually two, so we can take one of them for you'.

Similarly, when Derya (30), identifying herself as a butch[19] lesbian, was disclosed to their parents by one of her friends in high school times, her parents totally ignored the situation that they did not give any positive or negative reaction. As she said that her parents have already been feeling, realizing and knowing the situation from her masculine gender expression, but they have not said any word about it; therefore, she is among the group who prefer to continue their life without disclosing to the family.

When I read both women's situations in a gendered perspective, I can interpret about some underlying reasons. Unlikely to the perception of being gay that is correlated with the femininity and being passive in such conservative society, from these narratives we can see that woman in lesbian relationships –if they have masculine gender expression especially - are prone to be regarded as *active* and accordingly dominant in relationship. Otherwise, being in a woman to woman relationship is faced with ignorance mainly due to the lack of "penis" in the relationship. As a radical feminist scholar, Catherine Mackinnon assumes that "socially, femaleness means femininity, which means attractiveness to men, which means sexual attractiveness, which means sexual availability on male terms. What defines women is what turns men on" (quoted in Halley 2006: 193). According to such understanding, the *relief* and ignorance, came after the families have realized about their daughters' sexual orientation, are the indicators of the embedded hegemonic masculinity, and the indicators of the fact that in the heteropatriarchal gender hierarchy how binary gender roles – and directly linked sexual practices- in people's mind tend to ignore women's sexuality and sexual pleasure without presence of a *man*. While Fadime's father was saying "at least, you didn't cause any other rumor against our family", he was implying that if such thing would happen with a man,

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[19] A term to describe lesbians whose appearance and behavior are seen as traditionally masculine

that would cause a *real* problem and an issue of honor for the family. Apart from the ignorance towards woman-to-woman sex, this relief may also be read through the active-passive division in gender hierarchy. Like the situation of gay subjects, after the disclosure Fadime's father might have assumed because of her masculine gender expression that she is *active* in that lesbian affair. Therefore, this *active* positionality in sexual intercourse -consciously or unconsciously regarded as the dominant and superior one - has also provided Fadime a superior position in gender hierarchy, in his father's mind, and, by this way, he did not react negatively as she expected.

In all of these cases, we can clearly see how families have lost their *respect* to their children's personality with the effect of heteronormative gender hierarchy. For gay and bisexual men, in particular, the effects of hegemonic masculinity are more obvious than in the lives of lesbian/ bisexual women, because the expected performances from 'a son' as the 'future leader of the family' is to fulfill his 'eventual breadwinner duties' such as having a credible job, getting married and having a child to protect his 'family name'. Yet, when parents learn about non-heterosexual identity of their son, they, firstly, become disappointed for their future expectations from their son in heteronormative social order like marriage or children. For the Turkish context in particular, they also directly associate them with being *feminine* and, consequently, subordinate within the heteropatriarchal gender hierarchy. Therefore, level of denial, rejection and discrimination exposed is considerably higher than the situation for non-trans lesbian/ bisexual women.

Contrary to the negative perception towards gay men, sexuality of lesbian/ bisexual women is mostly fantasized or just keeping invisible by heteropatriarchal rule of the society. In one hand, such ignorance has negatively affected the self-embracement and recognition demand of LB women. On the other hand, partial visibility and assigned gendered positions as the *active one* in sexual intercourse may provide some advantages and tolerance to LB women. While they are guaranteeing their "untouched (by men) status" – that may be read as "unpenetrated"- by being *only* with women, they are automatically placed in a higher and more respected position

in gender hierarchy - and in the field of honor- compared to a heterosexual woman. As seen from Fadime's case, if she would be heterosexual in her aforementioned relationship, woman as the one who need to be protected with regards to honor – and, "naturally", subordinated one in gender hierarchy, this would cause more serious problems for her father. That is, while anything women do are tried to be controlled by heteropatriarchal rules in Turkey, such case may turn a potential rumor and a potential exclusion from heteronormative society. In this respect, it is also possible to discuss that the level of ignorance or insisted "blindness" towards some LB women and bisexual man provide a kind of 'breathing space – or grey areas' for the mentioned community where they can enjoy the blind-zone of 'heterosexual eyes' by being invisible in the heteronormative social order.

Lastly, by criticizing the heteronormative perspective, attitudes of family such as refusal, silence or ignorance towards the sexual orientation of their children can be read as an attempt to reproduce and maintain heteropatriarchal order of the society. However, if we consider the situation from queer perspective, it can be said that in spite of the negative or neutral reactions of family members, coming out is still a resistance to break down the normative rules and gender hierarchy in society. It is, in fact, an attempt to display one's identity and to be recognized with one's *queerness* in a heteronormative system. Therefore, it can be read as a way of queering *the* family in some manners.

### 4.2. Family as a *Micro Field of Power* and Struggle

Heteropatriarchal profile of Turkey has been discussed so far with respect to gender, as the first variable of my research question. Reminding the personal life literature, I may interpret from the first section that heteronormative and highly patriarchal profile of Turkish society and state have enough power and authority to intervene in individuals' personal lives. Heteronormative state regulations, discriminative discourses/ hate speeches and deeply rooted cultural norms in the society can be seen as the indicators of these interventions. Relying on the findings of the first part, I

have explored that heteronormative and binary gender roles have different reflections on the personal life and family relations of the non-trans lesbian, gay and bisexual people in my study group. In this context, I would like to discuss the effects of class, as the second variable of my research question, in the intersection of gender by questioning how different class *habitus* and ownership of different kinds of *capital* reflect on the family practices of LGBs with their family of origin as well as with their chosen family and fictive kin.

I believe that combination of Pierre Bourdieu's field theory and thoughts on family 'as a realized category' would be the best way to understand the family practices of LGBs within the subjective and objective factors of each habitus in macro and micro levels. Explaining the reproduction of social order, Bourdieu (1996: 21) wrote: "the family as an objective social category (a structuring structure) is the basis of the family as a subjective category (a structured structure), a mental category which is the matrix of countless representations and actions (e.g. marriages) which helps to reproduce the objective social category". Within this circle, he argues that individuals forming family and society promoting the idea of 'the family' transform family as a taken-for-granted, 'natural' and stable social structure. In this naturalization and stabilization, "inaugural acts of creation (imposition of the family name, marriage, etc.) have their logical extension in the countless acts of reaffirmation and reinforcement that aim to produce, in a kind of continuous creation, *the obliged affection* and *affective obligations* of family feeling (conjugal love, paternal and maternal love, filial love, brotherly and sisterly love, etc.)" (Bourdieu, 1996: 22). Departing from this reversely formed structural understanding, I would like to take one step further, in this section, by arguing that family is both an actor in reproducing the social order of the society as a *macro field* in broader perspective as well as family is a *micro field* as 'a space of struggle' (Atkinson, 2013).

> The notion of the family as a 'field' – Bourdieu's term for a relatively autonomous system of relations between agents who are united by interest in a particular mode of *recognition* and a cluster of taken-for-granted assumptions about 'what one does' revolving around it (or doxa), yet

> dispersed by unequal possession of the Powers (or capitals) necessary to garner that recognition and spurred to engage in various *struggles* and *strategies* to gain them. (Atkinson, 2013: 224)

Here, I would like to read these arguments through the family lives of my respondents. As I have revealed from the first section that coming-out – demand of recognition, in other words - to the family of origin is one of the most important challenges for their self-identification in heteronormative order of the family. While family, as a social institution, is trying to reproduce and maintain the heteronormative values, norms and culture in macro level, there is a similar, but different *field of power* within *the* family consisting of the struggle among family members. Within these power relations in macro and micro level, "composed of agents from the dominant class – and, one might add, the dominant gender to different degrees – those within a field of power tend to represent the dominant interest and, as such, impose the definition of reality favourable to the perpetuation of the powers they possess" (Atkinson, 2013: 225). In the lights of the information above, I may suggest that families as individual agents try to protect their position in heteronormative social order by possessing the normative family rules (*doxa*) to the members in their own systems. "It comprises a 'community of dispositions and interests', a set of 'self-representations' and efforts to maintain itself as a united and solidary 'group', including with a specific constructed past which dominant agent within profess, but also displays internal 'power relations', 'conflicts of interest', 'tensions' and struggles over membership and boundaries" (Atkinson, 2013: 224).

Departing from the argument with the Bourdieusian perspective and considering *the* family as a micro field of power, I may build the further discussions on Atkinson's arguments (2013: 228) for the lives of LGBs in my study group that "*struggles for love, affection and care as forms of mutual recognition*" is the eventual interest of each agent (*illusio*) – "what might be called *emotional capital*" in family game. During this struggle, symbolic capitals such as gendered positions in family (i.e. different distribution of power between mother and father), age (i.e. age hierarchy between parent and child) provide certain agents authority or subordinate position in

the family, and they may also cause a 'symbolic violence' over children. According to Bourdieu (1991), symbolic power of dominant group is imposed over the dominated ones – as symbolic violence- through a process of *misrecognition*. "In the struggle for recognition", children are "the active agents and challenger in the game, repelling and attempting to subvert parental orthodoxy" (Atkinson, 2013: 229).

If I can read the struggle for recognition through the experiences of LGBs in my study group, I consider their parents as the dominant group in *the* family who have power over their children owing to the symbolic capital (i.e. being heterosexual and older) and have an economic power compared to an unemployed child. Throughout their life course, parents or any other dominant individuals in the family impose their personal values/ norms (i.e. children have to respect them) and interests (i.e. to have grandchildren) as the family doxa. When LGBTI+ children prefer not to "obey" the doxa, this may cause clashes between the interests of family members. It would be good to remind here that I have assumed, so far, what consist family is the *practices* performed by the component member and the (family) *intimacy* felt among the members. In this regard, when interests of each agents within the family clashes, dominant group may reduce or completely end providing the emotional capital, and, accordingly, 'family intimacy' might be weakened in family field. Therefore, I may interpret that LGBs, who are deprived from the emotional capital due to their sexual orientation from their family of origin in their micro field of struggle, may attempt to find or form new and alternative fields for themselves like "alternative family or fictive kinship" by prioritizing their individual interests.

Underlining the aforementioned discussion, for the following section, I have asked these questions: What are the emotional and material conditions for feeling the 'family intimacy' according to the non-trans LGB community? What are the underlying reasons of the formation of fictive kinship as a *field switch* – if happened - for the lives of my respondents? Whether formation of fictive kinship is a choice as a survival strategy in life challenges for the lives of working-class LGBs as well? How does the *family-specific doxa* – promoting the heteronormative family ideals in

macro level– impact on the family imagination of middle-class and working-class LGB individuals?

### 4.2.1. What Makes It Family?

Before starting to discuss the socio-economic dynamics affecting the family intimacy and formation of fictive kinship, it is better to give a more detailed insight about *family-specific doxa* which is the term that the aforementioned scholar Will Atkinson has built upon Bourdieu's examinations on the family as a realized category. Atkinson indicated (2013: 227) that dominant perceptions of the state and society on what does or should constitute 'family' are imposed in our daily lives through political discourses, TV programs or even through public advertisements promoting an 'ideal' family life. While such repetitions and constant promotions for family provide a "taken-for-granted, unquestioned and shared sense of 'what is done' or 'to be done' in 'this family'", "the generic patterns of living" such as sharing the household or remaining 'private' embody and enact as "generalized family doxa" (227). As Atkinson (2013: 227) continued, "binding the agents into a perceptual 'we' (i.e. '*we* do this as a family' or 'what *we* like')", the idea of a 'normal' or 'ideal' family routine embodies in certain practices and routines like "timing and nature of mealtimes and housework, specific spaces or places for specific family members ('dad's chair'), bathroom sequences and so on or, if not cohabitating, timing of visits, telephone calls, email and such like".

Heteronormativity, as a dominant social order, promotes heteronormative family doxa by means of societal norms, values and everyday practices. Trying to impose the notion of family as the 'natural' and 'a must' for individuals, dominant discourses of state and society always encourage new generations to internalize the idea of family. This naturalization is imbued by throwing individuals into a world where heteronormative vocabulary and language have been used since the beginning of our lives such as 'mummy/ daddy loves you', 'when you get married…', 'when you have kids…', 'that's what mothers are for' and 'blood is thicker than water'

(Atkinson, 2013: 226). On the contrary to these conservative *orthodox* impositions, "*radical heterodoxy,* in which non-blood, non-heterosexual and non-nuclear definitions" of family can find a place, allows *queer* lives "to recognize certain others as 'kin' of various designations, to feel towards them in certain ways (loyalty, care, obligation, affection, love, or anxiety, guilt, etc.), do certain things for them (material support, educational support, etc.)" (Atkinson, 2013: 225-226). In one hand, such heterodoxy opens up alternative ways of being family for LGBTI+ community; on the other hand, it gives apparent legitimacy to the notion that family is something natural and a must for individuals lives, and the world is divided into 'families' (Bourdieu, 1998: 67-68).

Building upon this background, here, I have attempted to support my arguments that although there are taken-for-granted definitions of, and culturally imposed norms for *the* family by orthodox approach, the notion of family, sociologically speaking, can be identified in many different forms and ways for each subjectivity. In this regard, I have discussed the diverse family practices of LGBs in my study group by exploring '*what does the concept of family mean for them'*, '*what are the emotional or material dynamics behind the notion of family'*, '*what are the dynamics behind the potential formation of fictive kinship'*, and contrary – or similarly - to the orthodox and heterodox definitions '*how do they develop their expectations and imagine their "ideals" for being a family'*. By doing so, I have examined the facts for each individual comprehensively by considering their past/ current experiences with the family of origin together with fictive kin/ chosen family, if exist. Considering Bourdieu's criticism against orthodox and heterodox definitions of family, I have also questioned my own arguments, and I discussed the possibility of a social world, not *just* divided in to 'families', but consisting of the individual persons who do not seek for emotional capital from a family.

In this framework, relying on the findings obtained from in-depth interviews, I suggest, in the following section, that the practices performed within family and expectations and interests from the notion of family differentiate for different classes.

Analyzing their life-long practices performed in their biological and fictive family relations, and intimacy felt among the individuals included, I have, firstly, revealed in this section that regardless of class there are joint conditions for LGBs in my study group to recognize a relationship 'family': (i) to be recognized as who you are, (ii) anxiety for loneliness/ concerns for the future, and (iii) shared identity politics. Although these joint conditions were listed by the respondents regardless of class, subjective similarities and sub-differences deriving from the different class habitus will be addressed in the course of the analysis. Lastly, subjective conditions of working-class habitus and differentiating reflections of family specific doxa on the family practices of working class LGBs will be examined in this section.

### 4.2.1.1. To Be Recognized as Who You Are

When looking back to the LGBTI+ related academic literature in Turkey, it has been reviewed that recognition and acceptance are generally the most common problematic issues in the lives of LGBTI+s in Turkey. In previous sections, the problems of acceptance and recognition have also been examined with regards to the coming-out experiences of the respondents of this study. Taking the aforementioned general profile of the country into consideration, we can conclude that LGBTI+s are not recognized as 'legitimate' citizens of this country by the laws; they are not accepted as 'normal' persons within the hetero-norms and values of the society; and they are not accepted mostly as a *respectable* child by their biological families. When I approach the problem from the perspective of family as the closest personal life practice of an individual, in this context, for the majority of my respondents, the first and foremost condition for calling a relationship 'family' is *to be recognized as who you are*. Considering different class habitus and gender dimensions, demand of recognition might be dependent on many different expectations and personal sub-dynamics such as *reciprocal respect, trust, acceptance, unconditional love, willingness*, *belonging* or *disclosure* for the respondents. In this regard, I would like to discuss, in this section, the recognition condition with a queer perspective by

linking them to the socio-cultural dynamics and familial relations that non-trans LGBs have experienced throughout their life course.

Regardless of class, *recognition* is the constant demand and the eventual challenge for LGBTI+s living in Turkey. While state and majority of the society refuse and ignore the non-heterosexual identities, it is easy to understand LGBs in my study group when they basically want *to be seen* as a respectable human-being and they do not want to be changed by the persons they call "family". Conveying the narratives of my respondents about their past experiences with their family of origin, I have analyzed the demand of recognition in relation to their subjective, but collectively understandable expectations. First of all, Mehmet, a 40-year-old gay, who has lived his whole life without getting any respect as an individual from his biological nuclear family. He has been disclosed to his family by his big brother in a very bad way during a family dinner when he is in primary school. After the disclosure, his family brought him to psychiatrist for a while to "correct his deviance". Later on, when the parents were warned by the psychiatrist that this is not a changeable situation, they gave up about the mental health interventions and started to implement their 'strategy of silence' which continues throughout their life. Meanwhile, his big brother has always continued his homophobic reactions and hateful discourses against him.

As Mehmet indicated that after the disclosure, his parents started to act like they have lost him, and their secondary relatives like aunts, grandmothers, etc. have been put in his position within the family. Regarding the related fictive kinship literature, this could be interpreted as the situation of "kin loss" (Allen et al, 2011); that is, after losing a family member/ kin due to death, divorce or relocation, people try to fill the gap of lost kin by promoting secondary kindred to a closer situation. Although Mehmet is not actually dead in this case, homophobic perspective of his parents reflected to their lives as if they have lost one of their sons. Eventually, due to such negative experiences lived with his family of origin, Mehmet has weakened his personal ties with *the* family on purpose, and, by the time, he has formed an alternative family network consisting of his boyfriend, three close friends and their

dog. In one hand, Mehmet still considers his biological relatives as a "last exit" family where "you can *shelter* when you cannot carry on in your life *by yourself*". On the other hand, he privileges his "alternative *nuclear* family" and emphasize the importance of acceptance for his life:

> Actually, there is an ideal norm… an assigned meaning of the family: that *accepts* you whatever happens. I have just described home as 'a door that would not be closed to you even in the worst situation'. That is, I think, the minimum standard. But, what it should be is actually, doesn't matter what, family loves you in any condition and they do not try to change who you are.

Here, it is easy to see that how 'correction therapy' attempt, homophobia and ignorance exposed for a life-time by his relatives, and *conditional* love of his family of origin have affected his feelings and intimacy towards his family. Further, Mehmet also emphasized about an important difference with the practices of his biological family and family he chose:

> On one side, I have my (biological) family who do not accept that I live in a different house, I have another life or that I *could* have another life. On the other side, there are some people who accepts me as who I am. We are happy to spend time together. And the most importantly, we feel responsibility for each other, but this feeling has never been felt like an obligation.

The most important thing, here, that may differentiate the case from a heterosexual person's family practice – or if Mehmet would be a heterosexual son of his family- is the notion of *respect* given to one's identity. We may all agree on that nobody wants to be treated by the others as if their emotions, thoughts and, the most significantly, their self are not important and respectable. Yet, in Mehmet's case, his biological family firstly tried to *change* him - his self-identity, but when they understood that it would not be possible, they simply tried to impose their *family doxa* on his personal life. In this case, Mehmet has decided to draw his own path and formed an alternative family where he is loved unconditionally, he is respected and not to be changed. He has followed his values instead of his family doxa by *queering* the notion of family for his life.

Following to Mehmet, it will be better to mention Deniz's family practices – because Deniz is one of Mehmet's fictive kindred - and personal reasons for them to form an alternative family. As mentioned above that Deniz's family of origin could not accept them after disclosure, and even one of their uncles had attempted to kill them on the grounds of honor. As they said although their mother tries to embrace with the situation and to take further steps to rehabilitate their relationship by the time, it has been a long time for Deniz since they separated themselves from *the* family and started to live an independent life. When I asked them about their immediate thoughts about 'what is family', they answered:

> Being family means two things for me: First of all, some stories of violence have come to my mind, in ridiculous way, for example. That violence exposed by my father until the eighth-grade. In one hand, it has this side… a side that you cannot be yourself. Secondly, boredom. A boredom that I cannot define.

Further, they indicated that what they call 'family' is their friends at the moment: three close friends including Mehmet, one of their best friends who they came out first in their life, some other friends including their dog who have different importance in their life. They said that after they started to live a separate - and disconnected – life from the family of origin, they started to feel a need to be included in a commune or collective. Within these different communes – families in particular, what is important for them to recognize certain relationships as family, in general, are to be *disclosed* easily in any way you want, to be sure that they *love* each other *unconditionally*, and to be able to fight straight out. Underlying the importance of recognition and acceptance, Deniz emphasized how their fictive family with Mehmet makes them feel the family intimacy:

> I am a tough person, people that I call family are also tough ones. Yet, to live without changing each other's toughness is good for me. You are actually changing during this process. But, to change *with your own will* is something different. For example, I feel that I have changed a lot; for Mehmet, Serdar and Faruk[20], I have done many things that I normally would not have done. The important thing here is that I haven't done these things

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[20] Names of three close friends (nicknames) that Deniz identifies as family

because they asked me to do, but *I wanted* – to make them happy (…) In this family that I call 'my *real* family', I can be myself.

Like Mehmet indicated in his narratives, Deniz has also revealed that the main difference between their family practices with family of origin and the chosen family are the factors of *willingness, unconditionality* and *acceptance*. While family specific doxa in the macro social field has obliged them to perform certain roles and fulfill familial expectations within biological family relations, family of origin, in micro field, has also imposed an obligatory change on their self and personal values. Otherwise, chosen families have recognized and accepted them as who they are, and given them enough space to *be* themselves. Contrary to "conditional intimacy" that their biological relatives have offered, chosen family members have fulfilled their needs *willingly* and *unconditionally*.

Further, Gaye, a 30-year-old-bisexual woman, has similar reasons while she has been differentiating herself from her family of origin and forming an alternative *family-like* network in her life. Gaye has grown up in a very conservative family habitus where a deeply patriarchal and "two-faced morality", as she indicated, has been functioning for women and men in the family. Within this 'double-standard', while men of *the* family could do whatever they want, women were strictly controlled by the men about their socialization in public life, appearance and attitudes. In such an environment, as much as Gaye has been witnessing the inequities, violence and oppression towards women in the family, she has developed a 'plan B', as she said, to escape from her biological family. Her self-identification about her sexual orientation and 'impossibility' of its realization within the family have also led her to leave *the* family behind. Lately, when she moved out from her hometown for her university education, she has cut off all material and emotional ties with her biological family – with her father in particular. In this context, transformation of the notion of family in her sense, by the time, can be clearly seen from her description:

Being family… It has actually meant very awful connotations for me for years like suffocating, sewer, crap… But, later on, I started to think that not all family experiences have to be like this. Now, I think that being a family

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with someone is to think for someone's good, to be a comrade or a fellow sufferer with someone.

Currently, Gaye identifies her flat-mate as her family and she also feels a *family-like* intimacy to the organization where she has been doing her LGBTI+ activism for years. Underlining that biological or any so-called 'constant' togetherness is kind of archaic and obligatory for the age we live, Gaye explained that she gave importance to the *mutual approval* within such togetherness – Anthony Giddens (1994) analyzed it with the concept of "active trust" that includes the *autonomous* choices of individuals in creation of *collective habitus*. Not guaranteeing her current fictive formation would be life-long, Gaye has emphasized the importance of renewal the 'unwritten social contracts' in terms of the autonomous choices of each party. In this context, her way of being a good family has also been built upon the demand of recognition as a *respectable* individual, at first-hand:

> Absolutely everyone whomever is in the family: a single mom, a single dad, two mothers or whatever… A good family can be a kind of togetherness where all of these components *respect* each other beyond love, everyone *recognizes* each other's personal space, and opportunities for self-fulfillment are supported by other members of family.

Similarly, Sultan, a 33-year-old bisexual woman, indicated in her narratives that one of the first conditions in her description of family has to include the notions of *recognition* and *mutual trust*. As mentioned before, although she has been disclosed about her sexual orientation in many different occasions within *the* family, her bisexual identity is ignored systematically by the majority of her relatives. Within such background, Sultan could not feel a certain 'family intimacy' to them, in one hand, but still recognizes their presence as a family and an eventual support mechanism with the effects of family-specific doxa in social field:

> With my family, we have mutual life experiences, blood tie or at least some expectations from each other deriving from the social norms and unwritten rules. Because of these factors, I have some feelings towards my family… You don't need to love them madly. Yet, social norms make you feel *something.* (…) We were always taught where I came from that 'the family is important, so you should not say no to them when they are in trouble'. Therefore, I cannot erase them from my life completely. Although I see them rarely, or I call them so rare, for example, I always know that if

something happens to me my family would support me. Yet, while they were supporting, they also know that I am obliged to them.

Like Mehmet, Sultan also emphasize the obligatory side of the normative family, but they both do not deny the advantages of these binding obligations the family may provide in necessary conditions (like a *shelter*). On the other hand, she indicated that except her two cats she feels that she does not have a family at the moment. According to her personal values and expectations, she may identify people as family with the presence of certain conditions related to recognition:

> Trust is so important for me. We don't need to agree on everything or our thoughts do not need to match every time (with family). But there must be *trust* in family. I also wish a bit of *recognition*. It is because maybe my family do not appreciate my successes and they always compared me with other people. Therefore, I want to be recognized and appreciated. That is actually *belonging*. Sense of belonging is important.

Further, Ela, a 33-year-old lesbian who has identified her girlfriend and her cats as a family besides her biological one, has emphasized the importance of similar sub-dynamics related to recognitions. In all of the following narratives about her perception and expectations from a family, she has also criticized the conventional definitions and ideals of *the* family:

> I think being a family is… I mean we cannot choose our family; therefore, I give such meaning to family… Even though you cannot choose them and whatever this person does, family means to *accept* each other; with all their rights and wrongs, good sides and bad sides it means to *embrace* and *love* each other. For me, family has to be built upon love and embracement. However, meaning attributed to family is different than that all over the world. Family is something promoted by the states and other power agents. It is reflected as an institution that we *must* found in order to gain recognition socially and economically.
>
> I agree with those taken-for-granted thoughts that 'family supports you financially and emotionally' or 'family cares about you'. However, family is *acceptance* for me; that is, a good family is a family accepted you as who you are. No matter what happens to me now, what kind of mistakes I made, or if I would be the worst person in the world, or a killer, whatever… I know that my family will continue to love me. This is what a good family is for me, because you cannot feel such *unconditional love* somewhere else except family and love relationship. And with animals of course. I think this

> is the most beautiful feature of a family that differentiating it from any other relationship.

> For me, personally, family is something different with respect to emotions. Without a signature, a marriage, a blood tie or a home, people can be family. My perspective towards family is completely related with *emotions* and *sharing*. Love a person unconditionally, embrace them, protect them and stand by them. Family is this for me.

As the last example given reflecting the higher-class reality, I believe Efe's expectations and understanding of family must be addressed more closely.

> Being family is not related with blood, gene or biology for me. I think there is nothing like an ideal family, so I don't have an expectation from it. Family is already a problematic mechanism and institution (…) My family description is totally performative. If you *do/ perform*, it would be family. It's something close to Butler's perspective. (…) So, we take a hammer in our hand; firstly, we break it, pull it to pieces. Then, we rasp the piece left as how we would like it to be. *Voila*! That is what a *performative* family is (…) Families that we fictionalize and form are the ones that need love and effort. There is nothing ideal here,

Defining family through practices and performances, as I also argue, Efe currently identifies only his husband as family. Here, I believe that his changing performance and intimacy towards his mother living with Alzheimer disease have to be given to clarify his perception of family:

> I have lost my mother, my dear. I mean this woman is not the same woman anymore. I miss my mother a lot. Sometimes I dream about her. But, do you know, I don't dream about my current mother. Because she is not my mother who I can talk to and *share something*. I even miss the time when she had that negative attitude towards me after my disclosure. The woman currently at home is not my mother. She is something like a flower or a pet for me. Therefore, I cannot recognize her in the first circle anymore. Now, my mother has become a *responsibility* for me, rather than a family. So, I said goodbye to my mother, in this respect. Most probably, I would sorrow in the day she died, but I have passed this period. I know that she is not her anymore.

For some, who may think that elders must be respected and cared in any condition within the family, his attitude and thoughts towards his mother may be seen as disrespectful, and an example of *conditional* love. However, relying on Efe's perspective of family as a changing, fluid and performative organization, we can read

his performances towards his mother that he has lost the mutuality and sharing with his mother; therefore, beyond fulfilling her material needs, he does not invest his emotional capital to his mother anymore.

As the working-class side of this discussion, I would like to address, as two lesbian women, Umay and Derya's narratives on the condition of recognition. Apart from her family of origin, Derya identifies her best friend Özlem "like a sister". As she indicated that she has feeling a *different* intimacy to her, and the main reason of this difference is *acceptance*. Underlining that Özlem is the *only person* who *respect* her, Derya continued that they have such relationship where they never *judge* each other whatever happens in their lives. Similarly, while defining family and talking about her family dream, Umay has emphasized the importance to trust, respect, sharing personal values and reciprocal understanding:

> A good family where weaknesses of people would not be used against them, where people trust and respect each other. (…) Love and intimacy is okay, but only with *respect* it is possible not to abuse this love and it would really mean something. Therefore, respect and *personal values* have to be protected. For me, it is a *must* when you talk about a family.

> *What is family?* is a difficult question for me. In one hand, there is the family living in Turkish traditions. For me, due to the fact that I have been exposed to it, it comes to my mind at first. That is a classic family consisting of a mother, father and children, and where people *share mutual values*. However, for me, family is to be able to live with a partner/ a woman who can *understand* me, *love* me. If possible, adopting a child. That is my dream now. (Umay, 32)

As it has been mentioned earlier that owing to her symbolic capital deriving from her educational background mainly has enabled her to differentiate herself from the family of origin. Due to the lack of aforementioned condition and intellectually moving forward from her parents, she identifies just her sister as the family whom she is disclosed. Umay also mentioned a woman, her best-friend- she has romantically loved for long time, but she cannot count her as family anymore because, the woman has got married with someone else. As it can be seen clearly from her narrative that although she shares the similar dynamics with middle-class

LGBs as a condition of being family, her perception of *being* a family is still limited with some normative practices. That means due to the fact that the woman she loved has got married and there is someone else in the center of her life now, Umay has attached the situation/ marriage some kind of privacy that she cannot intervene, and she cannot be *that intimate* anymore.

To summarize this section, as it has been revealed from the related literature, recognition and acceptance are regarded as the first priority to gain the family intimacy for the LGBs in the study group. Besides the functionalities like being a shelter at last phase when one cannot have anyone else in their life, many other emotional sub-dynamics such as *respect, unconditionality, willingness*, etc. to gain the intimacy have come out from the narratives of each classes. One important difference among classes have to be addressed here that although working-class individuals demand for recognition, respect and acceptance, they continue counting their family of origin as the *only* family in their life – even when the family do not fulfill these demands, or they cannot just imagine queer relationalities as a *real* family practice (the point will be discussed in details further sections). On the other hand, in case of depriving from these emotional conditions, middle-class LGBs are able to differentiate themselves from *the* family, and they may start to think the notion of family as *performative* that can form in many other alternative and *queer* ways.

### 4.2.1.2. Anxiety of Loneliness and Concerns for the Future

Indicating the determinants of a family, Newman (1999: 7) stated that one of the basic determinants of a family is "the longevity of the family relations that might endure for lifetime". The underlying meaning of this longevity is to *be there* life-long to take care of each member in necessary conditions when one cannot handle the problem by themselves and need a supportive hand. Times of health problems or old ages of people are the two main periods when one might need an extra support from someone else. In Turkey, as a conservative country highly bounded to its cultural

traditions, taking care of elders is culturally seen as the responsibility – or even the obligation – of younger generations. In one hand, it is because that there are not enough state policies regulating the social rights of elders and caring services provided to elders in Turkey (Dural & Con, 2011). On the other hand, even though there would be enough opportunity to be benefitted by the elders, leaving an old person to live alone or in a nursing home, for example, are seen as disrespectful and as a betrayal of their life-long efforts according to cultural norms. Therefore, it is so common to see that old people are looked after by their daughters, sons, daughter-in-law, grandchild, etc.

When we approach the situation from the side of LGBTI+ community, it can be said that potential challenges that LGBTI+ elders may face are more diverse and serious due to the multiple discrimination deriving from their sexual orientation and gender identity. Due to the fact that LGBTI+s are not recognized by constitutional and civil laws in Turkey, they cannot enjoy their fundamental rights including right to marry or reproductive rights. Therefore, it is currently impossible for lesbians, gays and bisexuals to get married with a same-sex person or have a child as a couple through adoption, reproductive technology or surrogacy in Turkey. While it is common to observe in the lives of LGBTI+s that family ties are weakened partially or broken off with the biological relatives, majority of the LGBTI+ community, in this heteronormative legal and social atmosphere, suffers from the *anxiety of loneliness* for their future ages or for potential serious life challenges such as health issues. The loneliness, here, is not only related with the lack of emotional support obtained from someone, but, for the lives of LGBTI+s in particular, it is more related to the lack of material conditions necessary for their well-being and survival.

As it has been reviewed in fictive kinship literature, alternative family forms and non-biological fictive kinship formation are actually the practical tools for the survival strategy of LGBTI+s who have weak ties with their family of origin. When I analyze the fact with the narratives of my respondents, basic functions expected from *a* family such as material and emotional support to each member, showing a long-

time commitment to each other and sharing good/ bad times are served by chosen families. Deniz, for instance, told that when they have a medical operation, their friend, Faruk, hosted them in their home during the time of recovery. Faruk's kindness and support at that time is the main reason why Deniz calls him 'family':

> At that time, with Faruk's kindness and hospitality, for example, I felt trust, an extra trust. I said okay, whatever happens to us we will be there for each other. Because family is something like that in some ways. I guess at that time I have gotten an answer for the questions that I have always worried about – actually many LGBTI+s have also worried – 'what will happen to me when I get older?' and 'who will take care of me if I would be unable to take care of myself?'

Similarly, Gaye told about some serious health problems that she experienced last year, and how they handled the situation together with her flat-mate who she currently identifies as alternative family. As previously indicated that she thinks nobody is obliged to love each other relying on a blood-tie, and nobody has to take care of each other or financially and emotionally support each other because of that they are relatives. In this regard, telling that she does not expect a certain intimacy and support from her family of origin, but she is prone to recognize her friends as a member of a *family-like* relationship:

> I think that I actually incline to identify my fellows and comrades as family. (…) Because being each other's fellows or comrades come along with the notion of being mutually tested. Being tested is something like… If you are fine and in a good mood, you can talk about everything with people. If not so, you do not feel that relax about sharing something, on the one hand; and you may also assume that in the case that you share bad things happened in your life they may not feel on the same way with you and they may not be a fellow sufferer. Yet, I don't feel something like that for people I call family. And actually, such situations of being mutually tested have strengthened my feelings towards "family" and "fellowship". Naturally, I correlate bad experiences with the idea of family… Especially last year was so meaningful for me to exemplify it, because I have had many serious health problems. During this period, the solidarity at my workplace has made me understand that it is not just a workplace for me, and performance of my flat-mate that he has taken care of me and stand by me all the time was so precious for me.

In both cases, the respondents have lost their 'family intimacy' to their biological relatives long ago, and they have embraced their sexual identity owing to their

LGBTI+ activism partially. Accordingly, both Deniz and Gaye have had a chance to experience *queer* way of living. As we can see from their narratives that while they have both weakened their familial ties with blood relatives, with the effects of concerns for their current and future well-being they have formed fictive kinship networks with their friends who respect their identity and provide emotional and material support in necessary conditions.

Different from Gaye and Deniz, Fadime's family formation story has been shaped in a more normative way with the effect of heteronormative social order. Fadime, a 27-year-old bisexual woman, has spent a big part of her life by living with her family of origin in Giresun, a rural city in the Black Sea Region. Fadime has grown up in a habitus where rural dynamics and conservatism are dominant in heteronormative social order, and her family of origin is, in this regard, a religious and conservative one. As mentioned before, her family has ignored her same-sex intimacy and relationships after the disclosure and they continue treating her as if she is heterosexual. In the following period, Fadime started to question her bisexual orientation due to the previous bad experiences with her ex-girlfriend and due to the fact that she regards same-sex intimacies as impossible and "getting nowhere" in Turkey. Eventually, she has got married with a man with whom she has felt trust and intimacy. The reasons why she has married are partially the neighbor pressure and oppressive cultural (hetero-) norms that are felt more in such rural areas, but, more importantly, her anxiety of loneliness for her future life is the main reason of this marriage.

> At that time exactly, I started to question myself: What have I done? For myself, for my life and for my happiness, what have I done so far? (…) When we think about ourselves – of course it may change for each person, people want to share their lives with someone, they want to share their loneliness, some just want kids, or some just want to get married, share their lives without children… I wanted to share my loneliness. *I did not want to die alone.* You know, in our country, because of some reasons this (same-sex relationships) goes nowhere. It gets nowhere, it's impossible or no one can live like that… So, unavoidably you are affected by these thoughts.

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Fadime told, later on, that she wanted to give a chance for this marriage, and she did not want to regret for not trying it in case of loneliness. The reason why she has that anxiety is that she has lost her intimacy towards her family of origin during their 'lesbian-phobic' ignorance, and she also do not trust them because she thinks that her family loves her "conditionally" – the condition of financial support from her side. Therefore, she, currently, identifies *just* her husband as her family, and explained the underlying reasons as follows:

> Being family is… To be loved by someone unconditionally is a very precious feeling. You feel safe… The most importantly, one day - God forbid! - if you would not have your family anymore, there must be someone next to you to lean on, a shoulder you may cry on… Someone you can trust, the most importantly… If it would be possible, I would be with a woman as well. Because, being a family is to share a life in good times and bad times, in sickness and health. For example, if I would get sick, I would like to draw attention of the person/ people I call family. If I would have a problem, I would not share it with a friend, but, with *my* family.

In sum, it can clearly be seen from all of these narratives that in cases of losing family intimacy with or receiving 'conditional' intimacy from the family of origin, LGBs – regardless of class- may form alternative family-like networks with non-relatives with the concerns of loneliness and anxiety deriving from ambiguity of the future. The main reasons for this anxiety are; (i) in macro level, the absence of recognition in laws guaranteeing fundamental rights and freedoms, and the absence or inadequacy of the existing policy regulations towards elder citizens in Turkey; (ii) the lack of emotional capital and potential loneliness in the future, in micro field. As mentioned before, in one hand, after they have differentiated their self from their biological nuclear family field, Deniz and Gaye have formed non-normative, fluid and chosen fictive kinship networks with their friends. On the other hand, with the effects of rural dynamics and lack of cultural and social capital that may derive from socialization in LGBTI+ community, Fadime could not fully embrace her bisexual identity. As I have observed from her discourses and some nuances in her narratives, she has chosen – not so willingly - to follow the heteronormative path for her 'ambiguous' future life. When I have turned my lens to the subjective factors deriving from the different socio-cultural dynamics, the differences between the

conditions of urban and rural as well as the difference between their state of minds deriving from the cultural capital can be read as the reason of this differentiation.

### 4.2.1.3. Collective Identity and Solidarity

It has been discussed so far that being family and *feeling-like* family have been dependent on certain conditions for the lives of LGBs such as recognition, unconditional love, willingness, to be cared, etc. In order to take one-step further in the discussion, I would like to discuss, in this section, the significant meaning of *collective identity,* a specific condition for the lives of LGBs which may differentiate the notion of family from the heterosexist ideal norms. From the narratives of some of my respondents, I have found out that sharing (or organizing under) a non-normative identity which is marginalized and excluded by heteronormative society lead these subjects to feel a certain kind of intimacy for each other. Driven by the similar oppression experiences and mutual interests for recognition, such intimacy felt among LGBs brings the notions of a collective struggle and acting in solidarity.

In order to elaborate on the notions of solidarity and collective struggle, I believe that Bülent Somay's article *"Bozuk" Aile ("Queer" Family, 2012*) have to be addressed here. While criticizing the 'modern nuclear family' notion that is promoted by hetero-norms and reproduction policies, Somay (2012: 123-125) has discussed the possibility of "another family" with a queer perspective. Giving the example of the *drag* imitation of *sisterhood* in the movie *Birdcage[21],* Somay has told that this sisterhood is for singing and dancing, and what bonds these *drag sisters* to each other is the "*other* place" (the stage) where they have performed their "*other* sexualities" against the confused and dichotomic world, which is an enemy for them and ready to humiliate them in their daily ("normal") life, but, at the same time, applauding them/ their performance on the stage. Further, Somay has suggested that such *sisterhood*

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[21] A musical movie (1996) telling the story of a gay couple and their night club named Birdcage. As Somay indicated, in the movie, an alternative sisterhood practice is performed by drag queens on the stage.

can be possible without a *kinship* bond (p.125) and it does not need to dependent on a social hierarchy, because it is *chosen* (p.126). In this "irregular" – or *queer,* in other saying – family, a motherly love that is not driven by hormones and a sister/ sibling love that is not caused of being thrown in the same boiler can be produced: The triangle of *Solidarity-Collaboration-Partnering in Crime* formed by the siblings/ sisters to struggle against the destruction of the old family may gain a new meaning in such family (p.127). Departing from the discussion, I may argue for my respondents that non-normative solidarity relations deriving from the struggles for similar interests and shared identities can be counted as alternative *family-like* networks as well as a 'notch' in the heteronormative family doxa.

While Deniz, first of all, was telling about their chosen family practices, they said that they have formed a kind of *sisterhood* relationship with some of the members that may sometimes operate as "partnering in crime". As Deniz indicated that once they become unemployed and due to the economic concerns, they had to go back to *the* family home. At that time, Mehmet, identified sometimes as 'mother' and sometimes as 'sister' by Deniz, support them emotionally, and, as Deniz indicated, such solidarity has transformed to an alternative family formation that has rescued Deniz from *the* family they had to turn back. Further, Derya, a 30-year-old working class lesbian, feels a family intimacy for her best-friend, Öznur, by relying on the similar concerns and interests. Identifying Öznur as a "sister" as well as "the mountain that she leans on", Derya emphasized the importance of their shared identity – "she is also a butch like me" – and solidarity/ support provided by Öznur during the hard times such as marginalization from *the* family:

> I can say that she is the closest person to me. She has never judged me. For example, if I do something wrong, Öznur warns me like: 'Please don't do it, because we will regret'. She does not say '*you* will regret', but '*WE* will regret'. Because of that she is my closest… My sister.

Departing from her narrative, it can clearly be seen that her best friend's tendency to regard Derya's problem as a *collective* problem, and support her *unconditionally* by relying on their collective identity are the determining factors for Derya to identify

this relationship as sisterhood. Similarly, Bahri, a 45-year-old working class gay man, has told about the importance of solidarity behind his 20-year-long *family-like* friendship with his transgender friends:

> At first, we share our gender identity. And, secondly, we *trust* each other. (…) Owing to this shared identity, we are also so *open* to each other, and in necessary conditions, we *support* each other. For example, if one of us would meet with someone, we *warn* each other about potential threats like 'whether we can meet with this person' or like 'this transvestite is dangerous, be careful with her'.

Here, it would be beneficial for this research to read Bahri's narrative through Dilara Çalışkan's (2013-2014) arguments of *queer kinship*. Examining the queer mother – daughter relationship for the lives of trans sex workers in Istanbul, Çalışkan has argued in her study that against the marginalization and isolation exposed by heteronormative matrix trans sex workers are formed queer kinship networks with each other in the mutual need for solidarity and recognition. Revealing "the demand for collective identity and sense of belonging against marginalization in the society" (p. 49), Çalışkan has suggested that trans sex workers in Istanbul forms these queer mother/ daughter relationships to empower themselves collectively and, the most importantly, to protect the 'inexperienced' ones from transphobic hate incidents. Getting back to Bahri's case, although he does not assign a particular kinship notion of his friends, he still indicated that their collective identity and solidarity network have a *family-like* dimension for his life beyond his conventional family. Different from the fact that the lack of any other support network in their lives and the vulnerability to transphobic life threats in Turkish context have made the queer kinship *inevitable* for trans sex workers, the situation may still be regarded as a matter of "choice" for Bahri and Derya, as a *non-trans* lesbian and gay who are not involved in sex work. Although the heteropatriarchal norms operate on their working-class habitus more seriously and impact on their family intimacy negatively, they may still enjoy the partial 'comfort' of binary gender order by being able to be disclosed - and invisible – in their family of origin and society.

Further, it would also be good to mention that Bahri had been involved in the first phases of LGBTI+ movement in Ankara, also in Kaos GL's unofficial organizational process. As he has indicated that once they had had a family-like solidarity and friendship with those LGBTI+ activists, but, by the time, as the working-class side of this relationship, he had felt discriminated in some ways within this relationship and lost his intimacy to the people and the movement as well:

> Currently, I'm longing for the past. Everything about the past.... Our relationships were like close before Kaos GL become an association. I miss those days a lot. (…) Then, it has become and association, and people become like… There was something like when you meet with a few friends, there is something like excluding the third one in Turkey. For sure, you exclude for some reasons. Whether education, class, whatever… As I have mentioned before, those who goes to Sixties[22] sees the ones going to EskiYeni[23] as sub-culture. I mean I find it absurd.

I would like to analyze this narrative after I mentioned the narratives of the people who currently have a family-like commitment to each other and the LGBTI+ solidarity. As the middle-class side of this discussion, Mehmet, Gaye and Can's family-like descriptions deriving from collective identity are more related to their long-term LGBTI+ activism. First of all, Mehmet has been working for LGBTI+ rights-based struggle for almost 20 years, and he has been working at Kaos GL Association for more than a decade. In this regard, he described how this long-term relationship with the people he has worked with, the organization where he has been working and with the LGBTI+ activism itself have transformed to a family-like belonging for him:

> Kaos is not just a workplace for me. Because, practice of being organized together itself and efforts to change life together automatically bring the notion of *standing together*. In that sense, while I am managing the work here, I try to organize/ manage it *as if* it is a *family* – not a biological one, but - consisted from the people who like working and spending time together.

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[22] A gay night club located in Tunalı, a considerably upper-class district of Ankara

[23] A bar/ club that is popular among LGBTI+s in Kızılay in Ankara

Following, Gaye and Can's narratives are reflecting a similar perspective towards the linkages between collective identity and family-like feelings:

> In one hand, I have such belonging and commitment to the persons I have lived as flat-mates. On the other hand, I also feel that my work commitment is *like a family commitment*. Therefore, I have seen the organization I work and struggle as LGBTI+ are also *a* family for me. (Gaye, 30)

> To get organized itself has a dimension for me like a family. Organizing around our diverse LGBTI+ identities has an important contribution on my social development. Therefore, I feel such *belonging* to the people, which I have attached as comrades, as if we are family; at least, I feel like they are my family. (Can, 40)

As we can see from the three consecutive narratives that organizing around a collective identity politics has made the respondents feel a sense of belonging to the community consisting of fellows and comrades. Therefore, their collectivity means more than just an activism, rather it is felt like a family that they are committed and feeling responsibility towards.

Considering the narratives of LGBs from both classes together, it can be said that sharing an identity has turned to a sense of belonging and family-like commitment for them, although underlining sub-dynamics are not exactly the same for each class. When we think over the middle-class experiences, we have already mentioned that owing to the fulfillment of their material needs in their family field, middle-class LGBs could be able to embrace their identity more easily and differentiate themselves from their family of origin. This have allowed them, so that, to feel a family-like belonging and commitment to with their comrades, with whom they are exposed to a similar kind of oppression and struggle against collectively. On the other hand, dynamics for working class LGBs are not exactly related with the activism, instead "shared identity" operates more on *sameness* and *solidarity*. In both of the cases analyzed, we can clearly see the emphasis on trust deriving from supporting and warning each other in necessary conditions. On the other hand, for middle-class LGBs collective identity means standing together and struggling against heteronormativity. LGBTI+ activism has also enabled all of them to fully embrace

their identity, and spread to big part of their life by being their workplace as well. Therefore, I can comment that a 'sense of appreciation' is underlying their commitment and belonging to their activism and the movement.

Here, I believe that we need to get back to Bahri's narrative that he has felt that he was discriminated by 'more educated' and 'middle-class' fellows after their activism started to become professionalized and institutionalized. As he indicated clearly that while they were just gay/ lesbian friends trying to organize under an identity politics, everything was fine – and intimate; however, when it has come to make a "more professional activism", their *sameness* was not that enough to keep them together anymore. I can read the situation together with the criticisms towards the "middle-class face" of LGBTI+ activism. In this context, Savcı (2012: 251) criticizes the privileged notion of *queer language* by comparing the activists and non-activists LGBTI+s in Istanbul that assuming "LGBTT politics" can be expressed through a certain language and discourse – reflecting middle/ upper class and Western features – and labeling *others* who cannot have access to this language as 'apolitical' cause an epistemic violence. Similarly, McDermott (2011: 66) said:

> Queer theories are based upon a politics of visibility, in which dominated groups unite though their sign of oppression and demand to be recognized as a group with specific identities and rights. These 'classless' sexual identity politics are compounded by cultural representations of lesbian and gay men, which are, predominantly, middle class, affluent and white.

Analyzing all narratives above together, the perception and sense of commitment towards collective identity struggle are differentiated among middle-class and working-class LGBs. While one middle-class could feel a certain intimacy, lack of working-class people in the movement as well as Bahri's narrative have shown that it is actually a *classed collectivity* and *classed intimacy*.

**4.2.1.4. No Big Deal, No Imagination… Whether a Peaceful Normative Family or Not**

Throughout this section so far, in the framework of orthodox and heterodox family definitions, I have attempted to explore what does being family *mean* for my respondents by linking them to socio-cultural norms of different class positionalities. Departing from the *family-specific-doxa* imposed on the individual persons in macro field, I have revealed how the doxa reflecting a heteronormative and standard family ideal cannot be employed for the LGBs who live non-normative and non-standard lives. In the course of the analysis conducted in the intersection of gender and class, subjective factors of different class habitus reflecting the family practices have been analyzed so far. I have attempted to explore the similarities and differences among the family practices – whether biological or chosen – of LGBs from different class.

Considering the heteropatriarchal gendered profile of Turkey, my respondents are the individuals who have encountered serious challenges within the family due to their sexual orientation, and who have weakened their familial ties in this regard. We have seen, so far, that for the lives of LGBs, fictive kinship or alternative family-like networks can be a strategy to reduce the risks and damages that may be caused by the lack of material and emotional family support. However, when I have analyzed the fictive kinship dynamics more closely, I have revealed that the ones who have differentiated themselves from the family of origin completely and have formed alternative family networks with non-relatives are generally the *middle-class* LGBs for my study group. On the other hand, working-class LGBs who are involved some family-like relationships with their friends are prone to name these relationships as "*like family*" or with particular kinship terms (i.e. like sister). As examined earlier, the effects of economic and cultural capital and socializing within LGBTI+ community or being involved in LGBTI+ activism are counted as the underlying reasons of this differentiation for middle-class people. Relying on the subjective factors of working-class habitus, I have aimed to explore, in this section, the personal life and family practices of working-class LGBs whose self-identification processes

have been experienced differently as well as whose family imaginations have been differentiated from middle-class. Asking the questions like '*how the perception and meaning of the family is changing across classes?*' and '*how is the working-class family imagination shaped?*', I have aimed to take one step further for my arguments.

Departing from the family-doxa reflecting middle-class reality at macro field, working-class LGBs are exposed to these ideals by the media (i.e. presenting happy family portraits through TV adds, movies, etc.) or just on their daily live (i.e. billboards, social media, etc.). At the same time, different than the heterosexual working-class reality, LGBs in same class may have opportunities to encounter and socialize among middle-class ones (i.e. through dating apps, limited socialization place for the community in Ankara, etc.), so this might enable them to observe the middle-class family reality more closely. In this regard, comparing to the middle-class LGBs have already lived in this reality, working-class LGBs may see the differences and missing points in their family practices. Exactly this point, I can say, causes a huge gap between their perception of the *macro field family-doxa* and between their family imagination. In one side, middle-class LGBs already experiencing this reality can realize that this is just a 'heterosexual' ideal; therefore, they can overpass the given *doxa* and seek for their own *illuso* in their family imagination (i.e. emotional capital like recognition, love, sharing, etc.). On the other side, working-class LGBs could not have chance to experience this *given*-intimacy with their family due to the lack of necessary capitals and subjective habitus-related-factors. Therefore, they generally have a longing for such 'peaceful', 'happy' and 'ordered' family life. In this regard, far from imagining for a queer life, ideals or imagination of working-class LGBs can be limited a "middle-class and normative" reality.

I would like to begin with Ersin, a 30-year-old bisexual man, who could not get a high school education due to the working-class habitus of his family and had to work since his young ages. Indicating that they were even not spending time together as a

family that they were all working, so he does not feel intimate to his family. When I asked him about what is his ideal, he said that he have not thought about it before, but he wishes:

> Family means to have somewhere you can go after work, somewhere you could really be happy in it. I mean there is no need to have children or parents inside (a family). While some people do not have mother or father, but they are family. Therefore, if you feel *happy* and *peaceful* when you entered that door, and if this person could make you feel happy when they stand by you, they are your family.

Similarly, Bahri, a 45-year-old gay who had to work since childhood, has also never had a chance to experience this 'ideal' togetherness with her parents or siblings. While describing his imagination from the family, so that, he could not go far beyond having an adopted child or supporting some youngsters financially – if he could:

> Being family classically means mother, father and children, *but I don't know where am I in that*. I also don't have an imagination to form a family. You know that everyone has some wishes like being a householder, or having a child, whatever. I mean I would not want to do something like that in this country. If I would have enough financial power one day, I would like to adopt a child - if it is possible for a single-man. In my retirement times… I have some small dreams like these, like supporting a university student financially, for example. I don't know…

Parallel to this, his imagination is just lest limited with his family expectations from his biological family; that is, just being more European (implying a more independent life):

> I see myself as a bit European. I mean in line with my thoughts and experiences. I wish my family (biological one) would have a European state of mind. I mean people in Europe, families I mean, do not intervene in each other's lives after certain age. You can choose even your religion… You know… Your sexual thing… When I think, actually, it is something good.

Further, Hakan, a 27-year-old gay, prioritizing the feeling of comfort and peace and wishes to reach these 'ideal' family practices:

> I don't like tensions; therefore, I prefer an 'ideal family' to be somewhere *relax* and *comfortable*, and where people are *modest*. I would really like to have a dog, for example. I actually want a family profile that has cultural nuances of Turkish society. Where you can spend time together in the

evening, while watching TV and drinking tea. I actually just like such basic stuff: a mother-family[24] profile.

While asking for 'traditional nuances', Hakan wishes and imagines to practice it with his potential life partner:

I really want to get married someone like Korhan[25]. Me, my love and maybe a child that we adopted, or maybe with our animals… I mean a boy with whom I turn back to home together and sleep in the same bed… I actually wish. Why not?

In the scope of their working-class habitus, we have seen in all of these cases that due to the fact that they cannot enjoy the given-family intimacy and experience the so-called comfort of *family-specific* practices, they have a longing for a peaceful and happy home. In this regard, their imagination of an ideal family cannot go further from being an effort to find a 'proper' place in this ideal family portrait for themselves. Comparing the effects of family-specific doxa in middle-class habitus, on the other hand, we can see that while they were experiencing only emotional challenges deriving from their demand of recognition, they can live and imagine for a more autonomous and queer life against the orthodox definitions.

Apart from the orthodox and heterodox definitions of the family, as discussed previously, there is another possibility for individuals' personal life practices that imagining life *without* a family. Further, I have questioned my own arguments about the diversity of family practices by realizing the potentials of the situations where there is no 'family dream'. In this regard, these 'naturalized' and 'idealized' perceptions of family which are imposed as 'what has always been that way' oblige individuals eventually to *have* a family in their life. Considering the differentiating situations of three lesbian women mentioned as follows, I have realized that *family-doxa* reflects on some as a kind of sense of missing in their life or as a feeling that

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[24] The expression "mother-family profile (*anne ailesi profili*)" has been used by Hakan to represent the aforementioned family practices that he (would love to) live with his family consisting of her mother, uncle and grandparents.

[25] Name of his best friend

they "cannot" live this life "properly", while only one is happy with her life as the leader of her life.

Departing from that background, I would like to analyze the narratives of my respondents who have not had a 'proper' family life with their family of origin. Comparing the differences of their family practices with the represented 'ideals', I have questioned how the realized feeling of 'inappropriateness' or 'emptiness' in some ways have affected their thoughts about a family and their future expectations for their personal family practices. First of all, Seyhan, a 33-year-old lesbian, has told about her experience with her family of origin that working-class habitus would not allow them, as a family, to develop a common-sense of 'family feeling':

> When I look at other people's family life, I see that they eat their meals together or go to a picnic, etc. together. For example, we have never had such habits like having breakfast together or having a 'family dinner' together. Because both of my parents had been working, while I was growing up; therefore, everyone is always doing whatever they want separately. So, this would not also affect my feelings towards my family after I have realized my sexual orientation. We were not spending time together at all. They were working and I was going to school. During the evenings, I was spending time in my room, and we were not talking too much at all.

From her story, I can clearly realize how Seyhan classify 'proper' and 'normal' family practices in her mind by comparing her experience with the middle-class ideal. While she was saying that the self-realization of her sexual orientation and the fact that she could not come out to her parents did not affect her feeling and closeness to her family of origin, she implies that they were not that close with her family as they 'normally' *have to*. Further, when I asked about *her ideals* for a family, she has told that she does not have one, because she does not believe in '*family dreams*':

> I don't have an expectation from an ideal family. Why? Because I believe parents cannot prepare their child to the world in an 'ideal' way. For me, the only thing that families can convey to their child is to be a good person. I think that my family has given this notion to me. Besides, I don't have a special expectation like 'I wish a family would be like this or like that'. Because I have never had such imagination about a family.

Relying on her own experiences and her observations of other people's families, Seyhan indicated that she does not want to form a family in the future, but just move out from her parents' home when she will have enough money. As an individual who thinks about herself as a tough person, she believes that living with someone together at home peacefully is impossible for her; therefore, she would not have a family for her own apart from the biological one. In one hand, I can read her story through the family specific doxa that she thinks families must share a household and perform certain practices to be a family, and, in this respect, she does not think that she is a 'proper' family person. On the other hand, apart from the doxa, she still prefers living on her own without the presence and support of a family. At that point, it would be good to switch Sumru's narrative, a 43-year-old lesbian, with an autonomous position in the family Sumru can be regarded as the leader of the family comparing to her working-class fellows. She has lost her father while she was a child, and she has been living together with her mother since then. In order to support her single mother, she has been working and standing on her own feet for long time. In the following quotations from Sumru, we would see that although she has such feeling of responsibility and belonging towards her mother and cousins, she has also emphasized the unimportance – or 'nothingness'- of the family for herself. Indicating that her relationship is always so close and good with her family, when I asked what is an 'ideal' family for her, she said:

> Well… I think I am lucky that my mother is my mother. That my cousins are my cousins. But, if you would ask me, I would still be a happy person even if I would not have a family *at all*. I am not a family-person. I also think that family is exaggerated by everyone.

> For example, I do not have a father, I was a '*fatherless* child'. But such descriptions have never hurt me emotionally. If I would have no family at all… Maybe we start to distinguish the difference that *being alone* is not something bad for me. In some ways, we can stand on our own feet, and we live whatever we have to live eventually. (Sumru, 43)

I may read the narratives together with her family background that while her father's lost has given her more responsibility as the only child of the family, it also provides her a kind of autonomy and freedom that she can enjoy the peace of loneliness.

Without feeling any sense of missing, Sumru actually appreciate her current family reality:

> I actually have a *peaceful* family. This is the first condition that a family must have. I mean, for example, a person going home *willingly*…Or, I don't know, maybe to have everything at home. I mean I can find anything I want at my home. I can come with my friends, if I have a girlfriend I can introduce her to my mother. I am peaceful and I'm happy at home. (…) First and foremost, there is the feeling of peace here. There is *trust*. And we are also a fun family. So, I have everything I want.

On the other hand, there is Derya's case that as a *butch* lesbian living in working class habitus, she has been longing for her father, although he is alive and living with them. Emphasizing that as the daughter of the family, she has never drawn that much attention from her parents compared to her brother – as the 'precious son'. Especially her father has not fulfilling his symbolic duties, Derya said that she could not recognize her family as a 'complete' family:

> What keeps a home together is the figure of father. For example, if the father has died, family feels like all alone, helpless. I mean it not only about material existence, effort is need to form a family – by a father. There was no effort in our family, and I really wish there would. Because father is power, you know. You even get your strength from him. My father was a live, but he was not there at all. What a sorrow!

Further, Derya has emphasized the absence of her family – regarding the absence of her father – while telling that she does not have a family ideal or expectation at all:

> Are you asking (about family) from hetero perspective or our perspective? I mean I do not have something in mind when it comes to family, because I could not experience one. Therefore, I don't know how is it.

Three of these women, in this context, have similar approaches that they do not have an 'ideal' or 'dream' family even in their imagination. For Seyhan and Dery, it can be interpreted that within the working-class habitus they live in throughout their life course, the notion of family has not developed enough for them to imagine an 'ideal' due to some sub-dynamics. On the other hand, Sumru and Derya, for example, are quite different with respect to their perception of family specific doxa, the role and positionality of father within the family in particular.

In order to summarize the section, I can conclude that according to LGBs who has a working-class background, the notion of family is the way different than the expectations and the meaning given by higher class individuals. The fact can be read from this section that economic, cultural and symbolic capital that individuals have, and, the most importantly, different habitus features developed across classes cause differentiations of family practices and meaning of *the* family. Seen from the previous sections, for middle class LGBs, family practices and the idea of 'being family' is dependent more to conditions like disclosure, recognition, and reciprocal intimacy rather than material concerns. Due to the fact that middle-class LGBs have benefitted from many opportunities provided by the capitals of their family of origin during their life course, financial/ material concerns are not the first priority for them, and accordingly dependency of the family of origin is less for middle-class than working class people. Owing to the capitals provided, middle-class LGBs generally can have good educational background, a white-collar job and the most importantly enough courage and self-esteem to accept and defend their sexual orientation. In this respect, family may become a preference or a choice to be part in, rather than a necessary network that they have be attached and dependent life-long. In fact, most of the middle class LGBs in my study group practice family as they want and with whom they want.

For the majority of working class LGBs, on the contrary, family has been experienced at its minimum level within their life. When we look at the relationalities for working class people, their habitus where they have already gotten used to live with a more limited opportunities are also limiting their personal life and family expectations. Due to the fact that working-class habitus provide them less opportunity to develop their self-identification and not enough skills for their survival in their life course, working class LGBs generally live dependent to their biological families as a survival strategy. Linking it with whether being in LGBTI+ activism and having a queer understanding, LGBs living in working-class habitus also have a narrowed identification about a family. That is, although in case when there are emotional gaps and weak ties with their biological family members, fictive

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kinship or chosen family concepts are not envisaged in their minds as an alternative to the conventional family. Even though a few of the respondents in this group have 'family-like' relations with their friends or lovers, they are prone to name their biological ties as 'the family' and classify other relationships out of the conventional definitions of family and kinship. In this regard, it can be possible to reveal that fictive kinship is not a choice of preference every time for the lives of LGBs, it may rather be regarded a "luxury" for their family reality and habitus. Instead, family is consisting of people with whom they share a household, they belong with blood-tie, cohabitation or adoption and, no matter what, functioning their familial duties/ roles basically.

# CHAPTER 5

# CONCLUSION

Considering the heteropatriarchal and gendered profile of Turkish society, in the course of this research, I have mainly problematized the taken-for -granted conventional definitions of *the* family by focusing on the diverse family practices of non-trans lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) individuals. Revealing how gender and class intersectionally affect the family practices of LGB individuals, my main aim is to bring a queer criticism towards so-called legitimacy and standardized form of the family promoted by state regulations and cultural (hetero-)norms. With respect to my criticisms, since the beginning of this research, I have argued that family cannot be recognized and regulated *as if* it is a concrete social institution only defined through blood tie, marriage or adoption. Instead, regarding family as a whole of diverse practices performed by and different forms of intimacy felt among the members involved, I suggest that family relations are fluid, unstable and contingent beyond normative roles.

> Social science research strongly suggests that families are socially, not biologically, constructed. This means that the way in which families are formed – the roles and functions families perform, their structure in terms of who occupies them, and the experiences of their members – are born out of the social, economic, cultural, political and historical context in which those families exist. There is nothing natural, or normal, or biologically inherent or mandated about any particular family type. (Mezey, 2015: 2-3)

In order to consolidate the arguments, I have attempted to make a notch on the 'naturalized' and 'unquestionable' ground of *the* family, although the notch might not deconstruct the concrete notion of *the* family constantly promoted by and reinforced with moral values and societal (hetero-) norms. However, looking at the *heterodox* 'family reality' from the perspective of LGBs with their non-normative way of living has allowed me, as a researcher, to better understand that 'family is a

realized category' (Bourdieu, 1996). In the research process, I have analyzed my findings obtained from the data of my field research by combining Queer Theory's critical perspective on the discussions of gender and sexuality, and Pierre Bourdieu's field theory with regards to class. Additionally, I have also benefitted from the notion of *family-specific-doxa* which represents a heterosexual middle-class 'family reality' in Turkish context. During this analysis, I have regarded family as a *micro field of power* and struggle where each member "struggles for love, affection and care as forms of mutual recognition" (Atkinson, 2014).

In the lights of this background, one of the most important findings of this study regarding the class dimension is that different habitus shaped around the diverse socio-cultural and economic backgrounds impact differently on person's relationality with and emotional attachment towards family. With regards to the dimension of emotional attachment, at first, as revealed from the analysis that demand of recognition, anxiety of loneliness and collective identity notion are counted as the mutual conditions for LGBs to maintain their given family relations or to form an alternative family network. On the other hand, there are subjective sub-dynamics behind these conditions such as unconditional love, reciprocal acceptance, respect, trust, sense of belonging, care, etc. of which the importance and reality change across classes. While middle-class LGBs prioritize emotional associations and *intimate feelings* within their family practices; with regards to subjective material concerns of their habitus and ambiguity of their future, working-class LGBs basically demand to *trust* their families and want to be sure that they would be cared unconditionally in necessary conditions.

Regarding the differentiation of relationality with family, secondly, I have to address the findings about coming out experiences as one of the most significant breaking points to determine the trajectory of familial relations in the lives of LGBs across classes. Interestingly, I have found out that contrary to their middle-class fellows, majority of the working-class LGBs are not/ are not planning to be disclosed to their biological relatives. Beyond the aforementioned finding that disclosure is not an

inevitable determinant for working-class intimacy, I would like to argue, here, that the main reason of keeping their identity disclosed can be read as a survival strategy for working-class that may protect them from the potential threats coming from their habitus. Reminding Deniz's "life threat" case, I may say that if one is faced with a life threat due to their sexual orientation, it may not be possible to discuss about negotiation for emotional capital. That is, emotional threats that middle-class LGBs used, such as debarring the parents from yourself or forming fictive kinship relations, may not be regarded as a choice for working-class reality.

Further in the class analysis, impacts on the existing family practices and chosen family formation would be good to address. In the case of weakened family ties with family of origin, middle-class LGBs might think about separating themselves from the oppressions or ignorance of the biological family, and might search for different micro fields - alternative family networks- compatible with their personal interests. As we have seen from the findings, on the other hand, resolving the biological family ties completely and fulfilling the needs from non-relatives cannot be a logical choice every time for working-class LGBs, because they generally believe the strength of blood tie is stronger than anything, so that besides *the* family no one can endure a relationship as *unconditional* as *the* family. Although a few of the working-class people has a kind of belonging and family-like feeling with their friends and comrades, they are prone to name these relationships like as-if family, or with specific fictive kinship terms (i.e. like a brother/ sister).

Parallel with the dimension, another important finding of this study has to be addressed, here, that there is a huge gap between the perception of family-specific-doxa and accordingly the family imaginations of working-class and middle-class LGBs. Middle-class family reality representing a *happily-ever-after family portrait* is constantly promoted by the media that anytime and anywhere in their daily lives (i.e. the banners on the streets, advertisements, movies, soup-operas, etc.). For middle-class LGBs who have already experienced this reality may realize that this is just a 'heterosexual' ideal; therefore, in their family imagination they can overpass the

given *doxa* and seek for their own *illuso*. On the other hand, besides being exposed to the middle-class family ideal by any means of heteronormative society, habitus of working-class LGBs provides them certain opportunities to socialize among middle-class ones (i.e. through dating apps, limited socialization place for the community in Ankara, etc.) and, accordingly, they have chance to observe the middle-class ideals in person. While constantly comparing their family practices with the heterosexual ideal, working-class LGBs realize about the missing points in their family practices, and this cause a longing for a 'peaceful' and 'ordered' family life. In this respect, I can say that far from imagining for a *queer* life, family imagination of working class LGBs remain limited with 'middle-class and normative reality' that they can just wish for a *peaceful household*. Such normative – sometimes even heteronormative – family understanding of working-class LGBs can be used as an evidence against the homophobic governmental[26] or religious[27] allegations that LGBTI+s are a "threat" to traditional values and Turkish family structure and they are the "enemy" of the social order with their "deviant" sexualities. In fact, it can be seen from the findings that far from demanding for 'impossible' wishes like same-sex marriage, adoption, etc., working-class LGBs may sometimes be bounded and reproduce the normative order of the society founded on the family institution.

With respect to subjective differences deriving from gender, further, I have had a chance to closely witness how strong is the imposition of heteropatriarchal social norms in familial level, and how gendered power relation operates -consciously or unconsciously – to subordinate the non-heterosexual 'others' in the family. In the analysis of coming-out experiences, it has been revealed that gender is perceived by the parents as if it is a homogenized category which is limited with male/ female binary roles. Norms deriving from hegemonic masculinity and binary gender

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[26]  http://www.kaosgl.org/page.php?id=28660

[27] http://www.kaosgl.org/page.php?id=28485

hierarchy have affected to operate power relations within the family field, and these gendered positionalities provide an unquestionable ground for the members, fulfilling the hetero-norms, to impose their values on or marginalize the non-heterosexual *other*. On the other hand, relying on the *queer* perspective, this research has given me a chance to figure out that how diverse are the sexuality practices for LGBs of this study, so they cannot be limited with binary gender roles and expressions. Therefore, I could have a ground to discuss the queer possibilities of breaking the alignment of the family by embracing one's *non-normativity*. Considering such function of *the* family that reproduces "consanguineous, heterosexual, patriarchal, monogamous, private, nuclear, male breadwinner/ female homemaker model" (Atkinson, 2013: 225), I have argued here that formation of alternative family and fictive kinship can be regarded as a way of *queering* the family, in one hand. As Bertone and Pallotta-Chiarolli suggest (2014: 6) that while *doing* family in their everyday lives, people are reproducing and challenging hierarchies of gender and sexuality, as well as other social hierarchies. Therefore, while criticizing, rejecting or not-conforming the heteronormative order of the family, non-normative subjects, like LGBs in this study, are actually challenging and shaking, I can say, the "concrete" and "unquestionable" ground of the hetero-norms and gendered hierarchies with their *queerness*. Coming-out, in this respect, can also be regarded as an attempt of queering; that is, although heteronormative eyes prefer not to see such deviance/ abnormality/ queerness in order to keep their normative social order, embracing and displaying with their queerness is a disturbance for the (hetero-) normativity and a way of struggle in the micro family field.

After all, I believe that this study would contribute to family sociology and gender literature in Turkey with its intersectional approach considering class and gender together. As it has been aimed in the beginning that this research has revealed: (i) different reflections of lesbian, gay and bisexual identities – mentioned under the same abbreviation as shared identities – on the perception of heteronormative family; (ii) the effects of the visibility of sexual orientation within the trajectory of family practices of LGBs in the intersection of gender and class; (iii) that fictive kinship is a

luxury, rather than a need or choice for the working-class LGBs, contrary to the related fictive kinship literature; and (iv) that differentiation regarding the family reality and family ideals in the framework class. These findings and analysis, I believe, would also contribute to Western literature by providing a comparison ground with the Turkish – non-Western- context. In this regard, I may suggest for further studies to extend the subject and the range of the study by involving people who prefer to /live non-normative lives with regards to many other power relations and hierarchical binaries on the critical ground of queer perspective.

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# APPENDICES

## A. APPROVAL OF METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE

Sayı: 28620816 / 456

08 AĞUSTOS 2018

Konu: Değerlendirme Sonucu

Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)

İlgi: İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu

Sayın Doç.Dr. Fatma Umut BEŞPINAR

Danışmanlığını yaptığınız; yüksek lisans öğrencisi Damla Umut UZUN'un **"LGBTİ+ Toplumundaki Farklı Sosyal Sınıflar için Aile Pratiklerinin Derinlemesine İncelemesi"** başlıklı araştırması İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülerek gerekli onay **2018-SOS-161** protokol numarası ile **08.08.2018 - 30.06.2019** tarihleri arasında geçerli olmak üzere verilmiştir.

Bilgilerinize saygılarımla sunarım.

Prof. Dr. Ş. Halil TURAN
Başkan V

Prof. Dr. Ayhan SOL
Üye

Prof. Dr. Ayhan Gürbüz DEMİR
Üye

Doç. Dr. Yaşar KONDAKÇI
Üye

Doç. Dr. Zana ÇITAK
Üye

Doç. Dr. Emre SELÇUK
Üye

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Pınar KAYGAN
Üye

## TOPLUMSAL CİNSİYET VE SINIF BAĞLAMINDA LEZBİYEN, GEY VE BİSEKSÜEL BİREYLERİN AİLE PERFORMANSLARININ AÇILMA DENEYİMLERİ ÜZERİNDEN İNCELENMESİ

*"Aile nedir?"* sorusu, sosyal bilimlerin birçok farklı alanında çok çeşitli çağrışımlar ürettiği ve hem araştırmacılar hem de konunun özneleri açısından farklı anlamlara geldiği için sosyal araştırmaların en tartışmalı konularından biri olagelmiştir. Konuyu ekonomik açıdan değerlendirenler için aile, üreten ve tüketen ekonomik bir birim olarak ele alınabilirken bazı feminist düşünürler açısından, kadınların ev içindeki sömürüsüne dayanan ataerkil bir toplumsal yapı olarak değerlendirilebilir. Öte yandan, toplumdaki her bireyin karşı cinse ilgi duyduğu ön kabulüyle heteroseksüelliği bir toplumsal norm sayan modern heteronormatif toplumsal yapıya göre aile, birbirine kan bağı veya evlilik, evlat edinme gibi yasal düzenlemelerle bağlanan, heteroseksüel ebeveynler ve çocuklardan oluşan toplumun en temel kurumudur.

Bu tez çalışmasında, Türkiye'nin git gide muhafazakarlaşan (hetero-)patriarkal devlet ve toplum düzeni içinde, geleneksel ve hetero-normlar ile tanımlanmış "meşru" ve "normal" aile anlayışı sorunsallaştırılmaktadır. Ataerkil ve heteroseksist cinsiyet rejimine sahip Türkiye'de, Anayasa'nın 41. Maddesi aileyi "eşler arasındaki eşitliğe dayanan toplumun temel birimi" olarak ele alarak heteronormatif çekirdek aileyi meşrulaştırır ve bu normu karşılamayan tüm kişi ve grupları yoksayarak ötekileştirir. Benzer şekilde, Türkiye toplumu da bu meşruiyete dayanarak geleneksel ve ahlaki değerlerle temellendirilen toplumsal normlar aracılığıyla heteronormatif aile algısını standartlaştırır, empoze eder ve yeniden üretir. Bu bağlamda, evlenmeyen çiftler, tek ebeveynli aileler, birlikte yaşayan arkadaşlar, yalnız yaşayan kişiler, vb. birçok yaşam tarzı olmasına rağmen, kamusal düzeni "bozmama"

endişesiyle toplum da normatif olmayan hayatları dışlar, yok sayar veya ötekileştirir. Newman'ın (1999) dediği gibi: "Toplumsal düzeyde ailenin ne olduğuna dair inanışlarımız, onun ne olmadığını da belirler. Hangi aile formlarının kabul edilebilir, normal, cazip ve takdire şayan olduğu konusundaki fikirlerimiz, hangilerinin anormal, problemli ve düzeltmeye veya kınamaya gerek duyduğunu belirler."

Bu çerçeve içinde aile kavramını eleştirel bir yaklaşımla incelediğim bu çalışmada, aile kavramını geleneksel normlar ile belirlenmiş tanımlar, roller ve sınırların ötesinde toplumsal cinsiyet ve sınıf gibi birçok farklı alt-faktör tarafından şekillenebilen, aynı zamanda aile içindeki kişisel pratikler ve duygular ile çeşitlenebilen bir oluşum olarak ele aldım. *"Toplumsal cinsiyet ve sınıf, na-trans lezbiyen, gey ve biseksüel kişilerin aile pratiklerini nasıl şekillendirir?"* sorusu çerçevesinde ailenin tekdüze ve sabit bir yapı olduğu anlayışını reddederek aileyi, bireysel performanslar, duygular ve ilişkilenme biçimlerinin çeşitliliğiyle dönüşen, akışkan ve sabit olmayan pratikler bütünü olduğu fikrini desteklemeye çalıştım. Bunu yaparken "aile nedir?" veya "kimdir?" sorularına tek bir doğru cevap bulmaktan kaçınarak aile kavramının altında yatan kişisel ve toplumsal dinamikleri keşfetmek ve "aileyi pratik etme/ yapma (*practicing/ doing family*)" sürecini tez çalışması boyunca yansıtmaya çalıştım. Cinsel yönelimleri dolayısıyla heteronormatif düzen tarafından dışlanma ve ayrımcılığa en çok uğrayan gruplardan eşcinsel/ biseksüel kişileri çalışma odağıma alarak, bu kişilerin biyolojik aileleriyle zayıf bağları olduğu varsayımıyla kan bağı ile sahip oldukları aileler ve kendi seçtikleri aileler ve bu aile performanslarını inceledim. Bunun için 4 lezbiyen, 4 biseksüel kadın, 6 gey ve 2 biseksüel erkek olmak üzere toplam 16 kişiyle yüz yüze derinlemesine görüşmeler yaptım. Görüşmecilere ulaşırken uzun dönemdir LGBTİ+ hareketi içine dahil olduğum için varolan kişisel bağlantılarımdan yola çıkarak kar topu yöntemini kullandım.

Aile sosyolojisi literatürünü araştırma problemim çerçevesinde incelediğimde, ailenin Marksizm, İşlevselcilik, Sembolik Etkileşimcilik ve Feminizm gibi birçok farklı teorik çerçevede ve farklı bağlamlarda ele alındığına literatür taramamda yer

verdim. Heteronormatif çekirdek aile anlayışı üzerine şekillenen teorilerin aksine, *Bireyselleşme Teorisi*nin etkisiyle geleneksellikten uzaklaşma, demokratikleşme, özerk hayatlar kavramları ve dolayısıyla heteroseksüel ve standart olmayan aile pratikleri sosyolojinin konusu olmaya başladı. Sonraları feminist teori ve post-modernizm etkisiyle, toplumsal cinsiyet ve ailenin *queer* potansiyelleri de sosyoloji literatürüne girdi. Bu bağlamda, na-trans eşcinsel ve biseksüel kişiler üzerinde yaptığım bu araştırmada toplumsal cinsiyeti ikili cinsiyet düzeninin ötesinde ele alabilmek ve aile pratiklerinin sabit olmayan ve akışkan yapısını daha kapsamlı yansıtabilmek için Queer Teoriden faydalandım. Klasik Feminist Teorinin kadın-erkek üzerinden şekillenen ikili toplumsal cinsiyet algısına karşın Queer Teorinin öncü isimlerinden Judith Butler, toplumsal cinsiyetin heteronormatif cinsiyet sistemi etkisiyle yalnızca maskülen – feminen roller üzerinden tanımlanmasını sorunsallaştırarak "toplumsal cinsiyet performatiftir" fikrini savunur. Bu bağlamda, heteronormatif toplum ve aileyi sorunsallaştırdığım bu çalışmada, toplumsal cinsiyet analizini Butler'ın düşüncelerinden faydalanarak yaptım. Çalışmanın ikinci değişkeni olan sınıfı da klasik Marksizm'in -basit haliyle- yalnızca ekonomik kapitale indirgenmiş toplumsal sınıflandırmasının ötesinde Pierre Bourdieu'nun kapsamlı sınıf teorisi kavramlarıyla inceledim. Çalışmanın analizin sırasında, Bourdieu'nun sınıfsal farkları incelerken kullandığı *ekonomik, kültürel, sosyal* ve *sembolik sermaye* kavramları, araştırma grubumdaki eşcinsel/ biseksüel kişilerin sınıfsal özelliklerini daha kapsamlı yansıtmama olanak sağladı. Aynı şekilde, Bourdieu'nun *alan teorisi* içinde kullandığı *habitus, doxa, illusio* gibi kavramlar da toplumu makro ve aileyi ise mikro bir alan olarak ele aldığım queer analiz sırasında argümanlarımı desteklememe yardımcı oldu.

Tezin analiz bölümünde, ilk olarak çalışma grubumdaki na-trans eşcinsel/ biseksüel kişilerin biyolojik aile pratiklerini toplumsal cinsiyet ve sınıf kesişimselliğinde açılma (coming out/ disclosure) deneyimleri üzerinden inceledim. Açılma deneyiminin gerçekleşmesi ve gerçekleşmemesi durumlarının altında yatan kişisel ve toplumsal dinamikleri, bir yanda eşcinsel/ biseksüel bireylerin kendilerini tanımlama, kimliklerini kucaklama ve görünürlükten kaynaklanan olumlu/ olumsuz etkilerin aile

pratiklerine yansıması üzerinden incelerken, öte yandan, ailelerin açılmaya verdiği olumlu/ olumsuz veya nötr tepkileri toplumsal cinsiyet hiyerarşisi bağlamında ele aldım. Bu bağlamda ilk olarak, 16 görüşmeci arasında biyolojik aile üyelerine açılmış 9 kişinin -biri dışında- ailelerinden aldığı reddetme, inkâr, kendini suçlama ve görmezden gelme gibi olumsuz tepkileri göz önüne aldığımda Türkiye'nin heteropatriarkal yapısının toplumsal sınıf fark etmeksizin geleneksel ailelerin çoğunluğuna ne kadar empoze olduğunu ve aileler tarafından yeniden üretildiğini görmüş oldum. Öte yandan, ailesine açılan 9 görüşmecinin LGBTİ+ hareketi ve toplumuyla doğrudan ya da dolaylı olarak bir ilgisi olduğunu keşfetmem, heteronormatif düzene karşı sistematik bir direniş oluşturan LGBTİ+ hareketinin söz konusu LGB'lerin kendi kimliklerini kucaklamaları ve heteroseksist sistemle mücadele ederken onlara yeterli özgüveni sağladığı yorumunu yapmama olanak sağladı. Açılma deneyiminin diğer tarafında kalan 7 kişi içinse durum ikiye bölünmüş durumda: bir grup ailelerinden alacakları olumsuz tepkiler ve dışlanma korkusuyla cinsel yönelimlerini saklamayı tercih ediyorken bazıları ailelerine açık olmadan da diledikleri hayatı yaşıyor olabildikleri için açılmaya gereksinim duymayanlardan oluşuyor. İlk grubu oluşturan 5 kişinin gelir düzeyi, eğitim durumu ve ailelerinin sosyo-ekonomik profili açısından işçi sınıfı özelliklerini yansıtıyor olması "açılmamanın" onlar için bir hayatla baş etme stratejisi olduğu yorumunu yapmama da olanak sağlıyor. Orta/ üst sınıf habitus ve sahip olunan ekonomik ve sembolik sermayeler açısından değerlendirildiğinde, işçi sınıfındaki sermaye yetersizliği ve görüşmecilerin içinde bulunduğu muhafazakâr habitus onların ailelerine karşı var olma biçimlerini ve *tanınma* isteklerini de etkiliyor denilebilir.

Açılma deneyimine aileler açısından baktığımızda ise heteronormatif düzen ve toplumsal cinsiyet hiyerarşisi içinde daha önce bahsedilen olumsuz tepkilerin yanı sıra ailelerin açılmayı yok sayması ve duruma karşı sessiz kalması da söz konusu olabiliyor. Bu sessizlik -literatürdeki adıyla "sessizlik stratejisi" (Poulos,2009) - ebeveynlerin kendilerinin 'sorgulanamaz' heteroseksüelliğinden kaynaklı olarak toplumsal cinsiyet hiyerarşisindeki üstün konumlarını bilinçli veya bilinçsiz olarak eşcinsel çocuklarına empoze etmesi şeklinde yorumlanabilir. İkincilleştirme ve

görünmez bir ayrımcılık olarak okunabilecek bu strateji, toplumsal cinsiyet hiyerarşisinde ötekileştirilen LGB özneleri sessizleştirerek ve zayıflatarak heteronormatif düzeni yeniden üretmek olarak da yorumlanabilir. Bu durumu tersi açıdan düşündüğümüzde, *açılma* da heteronormatif düzene bir direnme veya başkaldırış olarak okunup normatif aileyi *queerleştirme* girişimi olarak görülebilir.

Biyolojik aileye açılma deneyimi üzerinden yaptığım analizin ikinci kısmında, hegemonik erkekliğin görüşmecilerin kimliklerini tanımlama ve açılma süreçlerindeki etkileri, her bir kimliğin heteropatriarkal toplumsal yapıda ne kadar farklı yansımaları olduğunun altını çizerek anlattım. Çalışma grubumda açılma deneyimi yaşamış ebeveynlerin neredeyse hepsi, heteronormatif cinsiyet hiyerarşisi etkisiyle ikincil bir konuma attıkları çocuklarına karşı saygılarını kaybetmiş durumdaydı. Gey ve biseksüel erkekler özelinde baktığımızda, hegemonik erkekliğin olumsuz etkilerini lezbiyen/ biseksüel kadınlara nazaran daha açıkça görmek mümkün. Ailenin adını devam ettirmek için evlenip çocuk yapması ve nihai 'aile reisi' pratiklerini yerine getirmesi beklenen 'erkek çocuk' profilinin heteroseksüel olmadığı öğrenildiğinde ailenin beklentilerine dair uğradığı hayal kırıklığı yanında; erkek eşcinselliğinin direkt olarak 'feminenlik' ve 'pasiflik' ile bağdaştırılması uğradıkları ayrımcılığın boyutunu da arttırıyor. Maskülen görünüşlü gey veya biseksüel erkeklerin eşcinsel eğilimlerinin ciddiye alınmamasından farklı olarak, hegemonik erkeklik içindeki toplumsal cinsiyet hiyerarşisinde feminen geyler maskülen bir lezbiyenden daha fazla ayrımcılık ve dışlanmaya bile maruz kalıyor diyebiliriz.

Eşcinsel erkek algısındaki "olumsuz çağrışımlardan" farklı olarak, lezbiyen/ biseksüel kadınların cinselliği toplumun heteropatriarkal yapısı tarafından görünmez kılınmak veya fantazileştirilmek gibi farklı tür ayrımcılık ve şiddete maruz kalabiliyor. Bu yok sayma lezbiyen/ biseksüel kadınların görünme ve tanınma çabaları için negatif bir etki oluştursa da günlük hayatta uğradıkları ayrımcılık ve şiddet bağlamında eşcinsel/ biseksüel erkeklere nazaran avantaj sağlıyor olabilir. Genel olarak maskülen görünüşlü lezbiyen/ biseksüel kadınlara cinsiyet performansı

dolayısıyla atanan cinsel ilişkide "*aktif*" olma pozisyonu, onların "(erkekler tarafından) dokunulmamış" statülerini garantilerken toplumsal cinsiyet hiyerarşisinde -ve "namus, şeref" bağlamında- onları heteroseksüel kadınlardan daha üst bir pozisyona yerleştiriyor diyebiliriz. Bu açıdan düşündüğümüzde yalnızca heteroseksüel erkek dünyasında fantazileşme ya da cinselliğinin görünür olmaması gibi olumsuz yönleri ağır basmasına rağmen, bu kör noktaların lezbiyen/ biseksüel kadınlara bir çeşit 'hava boşluğu ve gri alan' sağladığı da söylenebilir.

Analizin ikinci bölümünde ise görüşmecilerin biyolojik aile ve seçilmiş aile pratiklerini birlikte ele alarak aile performanslarını, beklentilerini ve ailevi yakınlıklarını neye göre belirlediklerini bulmaya çalıştım. Farklı toplumsal sınıflar içinde aileye verilen anlam ve kişilerin hayatında oluşturduğu izdüşümler çerçevesinde, orta/ üst sınıf ve işçi sınıfı LGB'ler arasındaki benzerlikleri ve farklılıkları ortaya çıkardım. Analizi mikro ve makro dinamikler içinde ele alabilmek için Bourdieu'nun alan teorisi kavramları ve aileyi 'gerçekleşen bir kategori' olarak analiz eden çalışmasını (1996) birlikte ele aldım ve Will Atkinson "*aile, bir mikro iktidar alanıdır*" varsayımını benimsedim. Bu varsayıma göre, aile üyeleri aile içindeki pozisyonlarının sağladığı farklı sermayeler ile mikro bir güç alanı olan aile içinde "tanınma, sevilme" gibi duygusal sermayelere ulaşmak amacıyla mücadele eder. Mikro seviyede aile, heteronormatif aile *doxa* aracılığıyla aile içindeki dominant bireylerin normlarını ve değerlerini yansıtır ve empoze eder. Çıkarların çatıştığı durumlarda (örn., eşcinsel çocuğun kendi olma çabasına karşın ebeveynlerin torun sahibi olma isteği) çatışan LGB çocukların kendi çıkarlarına uygun alternatif alanlar bularak/ yaratarak (seçilmiş aile) *alan değişimi* (*field switch*) yaptıkları söylenebilir. Öte yandan, aileyi toplumsal (makro) alanda düşündüğümüzde, ailenin kendi başına bir aktör olarak heteronormatif düzeni yeniden ürettiği söylenebilir. Bu bağlamda, çalışmanın bu bölümünde 'heteroseksüel mutlu aile tablosu' fikrini normalleştiren, idealleştiren ve empoze eden *orthodox* anlayışın orta/ üst sınıf ve işçi sınıfı LGB'lerin hayatlarına ne şekilde yansıdığını bulmayı amaçladım. Her sınıfın kendi öznelliği içinde '*aile kavramının arkasındaki duygusal ve maddi dinamikler neler*', '*LGB'ler için kurgusal akrabalık ve seçilmiş ailenin kurulmasında etkili olan*

*kişisel dinamikler neler'*, ve *'verili tanımların aksine ideal aileden beklentilerini neye göre şekillendiriyorlar'* gibi sorulardan yola çıkarak görüşmecilerim için aile gerçekliğinin ne anlama geldiğini bulmaya çalıştım.

Bu çerçevede, derinlemesine görüşmelerimden elde ettiğim bulgulara göre, LGB'lerin biyolojik ya da seçilmiş aile pratikleri, aileye dair duyguları ve aile üyeleriyle ilişkilenmeleri sınıfsal koşullara göre değişkenlik gösteriyor. Görüşmecilerin biyolojik aileleri ve kurgusal akrabaları (fictive kinship) ile hayat boyu icra ettikleri pratiklerini incelerken ilk olarak orta sınıf ve işçi sınıfı eşcinsel/ biseksüeller kişilerin bir ilişkiye 'aile' diyebilmeleri için benzer motivasyonlara sahip olduklarını ortaya çıkardım. Bu benzerlikleri üç ayrı başlıkta inceledim: (i) saygıdeğer bir birey olarak tanınma isteği, (ii) gelecek kaygıları ve yalnızlık korkusu, (iii) kolektif kimlik politikası. Aile olma motivasyonlarını sorgularken son olarak işçi sınıfının öznel koşulları içinde aileye dair orta sınıftan farklı algıları ve beklentilerini ortaya koydum.

Sınıflar arası ortak motivasyonlardan ilki "olduğun kişi ve saygıdeğer bir birey olarak tanınmanın", ilgili literatürde de çokça karşımıza çıkan LGBTİ+'ların yasal ve toplumsal düzeyde yok sayılmaları ve dışlanmalarından kaynaklı olarak tanınma ve kabul edilme istekleri ile ilgili olduğu söylenebilir. Durumu kişinin en yakın çevresi olarak değerlendirilen aile çerçevesinde değerlendirdiğimizde de çalışma grubumdaki LGB'lerin ailevi yakınlık hissedebilmelerinin ilk koşulunun tanınma olması şaşırtıcı değildir. Ailenin son kertede sığınılacak bir yer ve "kapanmayan bir kapı" gibi işlevlerinin yanında, sınıfsal fark olmaksızın çalışma grubumdaki kişilerin çoğunluğu için ailevi yakınlığı hissetmede saygı görme, koşulsuz sevme, karşılıklı kabul, güven, bağlılık ve tüm bunları içten gelerek yapma gibi duygusal alt koşullara dikkat ediyorlar. Ancak, bu konuda sınıflar arası önemli bir farka değinmek gerekiyor. İşçi sınıfı LGB'ler de aileleri tarafından saygıdeğer bir birey olarak tanınma ve görülme arzusunda olsalar da biyolojik ailelerinin duygusal ve maddi gereksinimlerini karşılamadığı durumlarda bile aile olarak kabul ettikleri tek ilişki kan bağı ile bağlı oldukları aileleri oluyor. Normatif ailevi ilişkilere karşın queer

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ilişkilenmeler, işçi sınıfı için *gerçek* bir aile pratiği niteliği taşımıyor. Öte yandan, verilerden elde ettiğim kadarıyla, orta sınıf LGB'ler duygusal gereksinimlerinden yoksun kaldıkları durumlarda, kendilerini ailelerinden ayrıştırabiliyor ve kurgusal akrabalık/ seçilmiş aile gibi pratikleri aile performansı olarak kabul edebiliyorlar.

Her sınıfta ortak olan aile olmanın ikinci koşulu ise gelecek kaygısı ve karşılaşılabilecek ciddi sağlık sorunları gibi durumlarda yalnız hissetmemek. Derinlemesine görüşmeler çerçevesinde yaptığım analizde, biyolojik aile ile yakınlığı kaybetme veya koşullu yakınlık görmeleri durumunda na-trans eşcinsel/ biseksüel kişiler, (i) makro düzeyde kanunlar tarafından tanınmadıkları, evlilik veya çocuk evlat edinme gibi temel hak ve özgürlüklerinden yasal düzeyde yararlanamadıkları ve yaşlılık durumunda da yetersiz olan devlet politikaları yüzünden ve (ii) mikro düzeyde yakın çevrelerinden görmeyeceklerini düşündükleri duygusal sermaye dolayısıyla yalnız kalacakları korkusuyla mevcut aileleriyle ilişkilerini yakın tutuyor veya alternatif aileler kurabiliyorlar. Çalışma grubum içinde aktivizmle bağlantıları ve yeterli ekonomik kapitale sahip olma gibi durumlardan kaynaklı kendini biyolojik ailesinden bağımsız hale getirerek alternatif aile pratikleri deneyimleyen katılımcıların yanında taşra etkisi ve doğru sermayeye sahip olmama durumuyla gelecek kaygısıyla heteronormatif bir evlilik yapan bir katılımcı da mevcut.

Saha çalışmamda yaptığım görüşmeler sonucunda, na-trans eşcinsel/ biseksüel kişilerin aile olma kriterlerinden orta sınıf ve işçi sınıfı arasında ortak olan son kriter ise kolektif kimlik altında birleşme. Her iki sınıfında anlatılarını dikkate aldığımda, heteroseksüel olmayan bir cinsel yönelimi paylaşmak o kişilere karşı bir nevi bağlılık ve aile-gibi bir adanmışlığı beraberinde getirebiliyor. Buna rağmen, sınıflar arasındaki alt-faktörler ve motivasyonlar ufak farklılıklar gösterebiliyor. Daha önce bahsedildiği gibi maddi gereksinimlerini sınıfsal pozisyonları gereği çoğunlukla karşılayabilmiş orta sınıf eşcinsel/ biseksüeller, kendi kimliklerini kabul etme ve kucaklama sırasında işçi sınıfına nazaran daha fazla kaynak ve fırsata sahip olabiliyor. Bu durum, orta sınıf LGB'lerin birlikte kimlik politikası yürüttükleri

arkadaşları ve yoldaşlarına karşı bağlılık, birlikte mücadele pratiği ve ortak baskılara dayanan aile gibi bir yakınlık hissetmelerine sebep oluyor. Öte yandan, çalışma grubumdaki işçi sınıfı LGB'ler için kolektif kimlik, daha çok *aynılık* ve *dayanışma* üzerinden gelişen bir mevhum. Buna rağmen, her iki sınıfta da birbirini destekleme ve gerekli durumda birbirini uyarma üzerinden oluşan güven duygusuna bir vurgu var.

Analiz bölümümdeki son bulgu ise alt sınıf LGB'lerin öznelliklerini yansıtan ve onları orta sınıftan ayıran bir özelliği ortaya koyuyor. İşçi sınıfı habitusu içinde görüşmecim olan LGB'ler çoğunlukla maddi kaygılardan ve muhafazakarlık, vb. gibi öznel sınıfsal koşullardan ötürü orta sınıf gerçekliğini yansıtan "mutlu aile tablosu" pratiğini hayatları boyunca yeterince deneyimleyememiş durumda. Bundan dolayı, söz konusu görüşmecilerle ideal aile sorgulaması yaptığımda aile tahayyüllerinin orta sınıf gerçekliğindeki aile pratiklerini yaşayabilmek (örn.; ailece 'kaliteli' zaman geçirmek) ve "huzurlu, mutlu bir ev" ortamından öteye gitmediğini ortaya çıkardım. Bu bağlamda, hayallerinde ve beklentilerindeki aile de kendileri için bu orta sınıf ideal ve mutlu aile tablosunda 'uygun' bir yer bulma beklentisinden öteye gitmiyor. Öte yandan, biyolojik aileleri ile duygusal problemler yaşayan orta sınıf LGB'ler ise daha bağımsız, seçilebilir, dönüşebilir ve queer hayatları deneyimlemeye daha açık olabiliyor. Şimdiye kadar bahsedilen *orthodox* ve *heterodox* aile pratiklerinden farklı olarak, analiz bölümünün son bölümünde hiçbir aile tahayyülü olmadan kendi başına yaşamını sürdürme isteğinde olan alt sınıf eşcinsel/ biseksüel kişiler karşıma çıktı ve bu bulgular tez çalışması içindeki kendi varsayımlarımı ve iddialarımı sorgulamama sebep oldu. Bu kişilerin anlatılarına göre, toplum ve devlet tarafından normalleştirilen ve 'zaten hep var olan/ olması gereken' bir yapı olarak aile algısına karşın bu kişilerin gelecekleri için herhangi bir "aile kurma hayali" bulunmuyor. Aile tahayyülü veya aileye dair beklentileri olmayan kişilerin bir kısmı hayatlarını kendi ayakları üzerinde sürdürmeye alıştıkları ve kimseden maddi veya duygusal destek beklemedikleri için gelecekte bir aileye ihtiyaç duymadıklarını söylerken, bir diğer kısım ise bu orta sınıf mutlu aile tablosunu 'uygun şekilde' deneyimleyemedikleri

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için bir çeşit özlem veya yoksunluk duygusuyla daha fazla zarar görmemek adına herhangi bir beklentiye girmediğini belirtti.

Analizin son kısmında, işçi sınıfı LGB'lere göre aile kavramının orta ve üst sınıfın algıladığı şekilden daha farklı anlamlara geldiği ve farklı beklentiler üzerinden şekillendiği sonucuna vardım. Bu bulguyu kişilerin sahip olduğu ekonomik, kültürel ve sembolik sermayeler ve daha da önemlisi sınıflar arası değişen habitusun aile pratiklerinde ve aileye yüklenen anlamda farklılaşmalara sebep olması üzerinden okumak mümkün. Bir önceki bulguda görülebileceği gibi, orta sınıf LGB'ler için aile pratikleri ve 'aile olma' fikri maddi kaygılardan öte açılma, tanınma ve karşılıklı yakınlık gibi koşullara bağlı. Orta sınıf LGB'ler hayatları boyunca biyolojik ailelerinin sınıfsal pozisyonlarının sağladığı birçok fırsattan faydalanabildiği için, maddi/ finansal kaygılar genelde onların ilk önceliklerinden biri olmuyor. Bundan dolayı, orta sınıf LGB'ler biyolojik ailelerine işçi sınıfına kıyasla daha az bağımlı olabilmekte. Sınıfsal pozisyonlarının sağladığı sermayeler sayesinde, orta sınıf LGB'ler genel olarak iyi bir eğitimsel arka plan, beyaz yaka bir iş ve en önemlisi cinsel yönelimlerini kucaklayıp savunabilecek yeterli özgüven ve cesarete sahip olabiliyorlar. Bu bağlamda, aile onlar için hayatları boyunca bağ(-ım)lı kalacakları *zorunlu* bir ilişkiler ağından öte bir tercih veya seçenek haline gelebiliyor. Çalışma grubumdaki orta sınıf kişilerin deneyimlerinden de görebileceğimiz gibi, orta sınıfta aile, istedikleri kişi ile istedikleri şekilde pratik edebilecekleri, seçilebilir, dönüşebilir ve akışkan bir yapıdadır.

Çalışma grubum içindeki alt sınıf kişiler için ise aile, hayatlarında en asgari şekilde deneyimleyebildikleri ve orta sınıf gerçekliğinden oldukça uzak bir pratik olmasına rağmen aileye bağ(ım)lılık konusunda orta/ üst sınıflar ile farklı noktalarda durdukları söylenebilir. Alt sınıf kişilerin ailevi ilişkilenmelerine baktığımızda, daha sınırlı kaynaklar ve fırsatlarla yaşamaya alıştıkları habitusun kişisel yaşamları ve aile beklenti ve pratiklerini de sınırladığı yorumunu yapabiliriz. Görüşmelerden elde ettiğim verilere dayanarak şunu söylemek de mümkün; işçi sınıfı koşulları kişilere kendini tanımlama ve benimseme sürecinde daha az fırsat tanıyıp hayatta kalmak

için de yeterince beceri ve ustalık geliştirmelerine olanak vermediği için işçi sınıfı LGB'ler bir "hayatta kalma stratejisi" olarak biyolojik ailelerine daha bağlı yaşıyor. Aynı, açılmama durumunda olduğu gibi biyolojik aile ile olan bağlarının maddi olarak zayıflaması ya da kopması riskini göze alamadıkları için aileleri tarafından koşulsuz sevilme, tanınma gibi duygusal sermaye talepleri de orta sınıf kişiler kadar keskin ve olmazsa olmaz bir karar olmuyor. Orta sınıf LGBTİ+ aktivizmi ve queer anlayışı da hesaba kattığımızda, işçi sınıfı LGB'lerin normatif olmayan aileye dair daha dar bir bakış açısı vardır da denilebilir. Görüşmelerden elde edilen bulgulara göre, biyolojik aileleri ile zayıf bağları ve duygusal boşlukları olsa bile kurgusal/ seçilmiş aile kavramı işçi sınıfı için her zaman geleneksel ailenin alternatifi olabilecek bir seçenek olarak canlanmıyor. İşçi sınıfı görüşmeciler arasında birkaçının arkadaşları ve sevgilileriyle "aile gibi, akraba gibi" deneyimleri olduysa da biyolojik aileleri dışındaki tüm ilişkilerini geleneksel aile kavramı dışında tarifliyorlar. Bu bağlamda, ailenin *seçilebilir* olması farklı sınıf gerçekliklerinde farklı izdüşümler oluştururken alt sınıf için biyolojik aileden yeterli yakınlık ve desteği görememe durumunda dahi bir tercih veya gereklilik olmaktan çok bir "lüks" olduğu yorumu yapılabilir. Bunun yerine, görüşmecilerimden topladığım verilere göre, alt sınıf için aile, aynı çatı altında yaşadıkları, kan bağı, birlikte yaşama veya evlat edinme ile bağlı olunan ve ne olursa olsun ailevi sorumluluk ve rollerini yerine getiren insanlardan oluşuyor.

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