

**QUEER MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS:  
THE ROLE OF QUEER KINSHIP IN THE EVERYDAY LIVES  
OF TRANS SEX WORKER WOMEN IN ISTANBUL**

by

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**QUEER MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS:  
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WORKER WOMEN IN ISTANBUL**

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**ABSTRACT**

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Dilara Çalışkan

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Keywords: Queer, trans, kinship, sex work, postmemory

This thesis focuses on the queer kinship experiences of trans sex worker women in Istanbul, Turkey. Based on semi-structured, in-depth interviews and participant-observation with individuals who have been part of a queer mother/daughter kinship relation, the research explores the role of queer kinship in everyday practice of trans lives, in exploring its connections to transphobia and heteronormativity. What is queer kinship? How has it developed? What are some of the meanings attached to it? In what ways is it destructive of heteronormativity and/or hegemonic family structures? What gets transmitted from mothers to daughters? Can we speak of a queer inter-generational transmission of memory and a queer postmemory as M. Hirsch conceptualizes? Departing from these questions, this research investigates the alternative forms of motherhood and daughterhood through J. Halberstam's conceptualization of queer time and space and argues that queer kinship forms its own time zone in which normative understandings of terms such as "birth", "generation" and "growing up" are deconstructed, and reconstructed. At the same time, this research points out the dynamics and practices in queer kinship that reproduce the binary structure of gender roles through gender reassignment process. The thesis argues that we can speak of a queer inter-generational transmission of knowledge and memory that constructs a collective identity, empowerment, and resistance against transphobic violence coming from state institutions and customers. The thesis aims to contribute to the existing literature on queer kinship and memory by exploring the everyday life practices of queer mothers and daughters among trans sex workers in Istanbul.

## ÖZET

### KUİR ANNELER VE KIZLAR:

### KUİR AKRABALIĞIN İSTANBUL'DAKİ TRANS SEKS İŞÇİSİ KADINLARIN GÜNDELİK YAŞAMINDAKİ ROLÜ

Dilara Çalışkan

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Tez Danışmanı: Ayşe Gül Altınay

Anahtar sözcükler: Kuir, trans, akrabalık, seks işçiliği, post hafiza

Bu tez İstanbul'daki trans seks işçi kadınların kuir akrabalık deneyimlerine odaklanmaktadır. Çalışma, yarı-yapilandırılmış, derinlemesine mülakat ve katılımcı gözlem tekniğine dayanarak kuir akrabalığın kuir anne/kız ilişkisinin bir parçası olan trans bireylerin gündelik yaşamlarındaki rolünü ve bu akrabalığın transfobi ve heteronormativite ile olan ilişkisini incelemektedir. Kuir akrabalık nedir? Nasıl gelişmiştir? Kuir akrabalığa yüklenen anlamlar nelerdir? Bu akrabalık biçimini hangi açılarından heteronormatif ve/veya egemen aile yapılarını yapı-bozuma uğratmaktadır? Annelerden kızlara neler aktarılmaktadır? Nesiller arası kuir bir hafiza geçişinden, M. Hirsch'ün deyimiyle post hafızadan, bahsedilebilir mi? Bu sorulardan yola çıkarak, bu çalışma, alternatif anne-kızlık ilişkisini J. Halberstam'ın kuir zaman ve yer kavramı üzerinden inceler ve “doğum”, “nesil”, “büyümek” gibi ifadelerin kuir akrabalık içerisinde yapı-bozuma uğramış ve yeniden yapılandırılmış olduğunu iddia eder. Aynı zamanda, bu çalışma cinsiyet değiştirme süreci özelinde kuir akrabalık içerisindeki dinamik ve pratiklerin ikili cinsiyet sistemini yeniden ürettiğini de göstermektedir. Tezin temel iddiası, trans bireyler arasındaki kuir akrabalığın, ortak kimlik, güçlendirme, devlet kurumları ve müşteriler tarafından uygulanan transfobik şiddete karşı direnç inşa ettiğinden, nesiller arası kuir bilgi ve hafiza geçişini mümkün kıldığından bahsedilebileceğidir. Bu tez çalışması, İstanbul'daki trans seks işçi kadınlar arasındaki kuir anne/kızlık ilişkisinin gündelik yaşam pratiklerine odaklanarak kuir akrabalık ve hafiza literatürüne katkıda bulunmayı hedeflemektedir.

*To my Lollipop and to those who have been disturbed by gender norms*

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“If we try to think about queerness as an outcome of strange temporalities, imaginative life schedules, and eccentric economic practices, we detach queerness from sexual identity and come closer to the understanding Foucault’s comment in *Friendship as a Way of Life* that (1997) “homosexuality threatens people as a way of life rather than as a way of having sex ” (310) says Jack Halberstam in his groundbreaking *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (2005). As Halberstam suggests, Foucault stresses queer networks and the dynamics of the relationships that make them up as a “way of life”. Following up on this line of thinking on queer lives and networks, this thesistries to trace a queer “way of life” through kinship practices among trans sex worker women in Istanbul. According to Butler (2000), the life of an individual contains a web of relationships. When the state and/or society do not recognize or understand those established webs, the unique life becomes marginalized. To Butler, not to be understood and recognized is a difficult and dangerous experience because, in this state, the individual finds him/herself out of the legal system and pushed to a site of abnormality. On so, this site is more open and vulnerable to violence. The “misunderstood” one is isolated from the rights of citizenship, gets neglected, discriminated, ignored, destroyed, and even murdered. In addition, she encourages us to investigate new schemas that bring new representations of understandability that could provide a site in which we could live our legitimate and understandable loves, attachments. For her, to expand the boundaries of kinship is to expand the boundaries of understandability. Departing from Butler’s questions and insights, in this research I

explore the mother/daughter relationship among trans women sex workers in Istanbul as a form of queer kinship in the context of heteronormative and transphobic family, legal, health-care and education systems. I would like to clarify that the mother/daughter relationship among trans sex worker women is not the only form of queer kinship that exists among members of the LGBTI community in Istanbul. During my fieldwork, I observed myriad forms of queer kinship among individuals who identify themselves as LGBTI, each kinship practice differing significantly from one another. The diversity of the various forms of queer kinship that exist in Istanbul (and beyond) lay beyond the limitations of this research. For the purposes of this research, I focus on the mother/daughter relationship among trans sex worker women<sup>1</sup> because this relationship has a significant role in coping with systematic state violence and transphobic attitudes and hate crimes that shape the everyday lives of this community. Based on semi-structured interviews with 14 participants and participant observation in the trans community since 2008, I argue that queer kinship among trans sex worker women creates an ambivalent relationship form that brings experienced and inexperienced trans women together through mutual consent and forms a collective identity against the structures that discriminate and marginalize these individuals through transphobia, a heteropatriarchal family system, and a heteronormative social system.

What is queer kinship? Why does it exist? What is queer about this mother and daughter relationship? How do you become a mother/daughter? Is it really an

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<sup>1</sup> Needless to say, not all trans people are sex workers and queer kinship is not only observed among trans sex workers. I observed different forms of queer kinships among individuals who do (not) define themselves as trans and/or are not sex workers. However, the particular form of queer kinship I focus on, the mother-daughter relationship, is particularly prevalent among trans sex workers in response to state violence and hate crimes. In addition, my interest in opening up a discussion on inter-generational knowledge/memory transmission on collective traumatic events, led me to focus on the history of trans sex worker women who have been exposed (and are still being exposed) to violence by the state and society.

alternative? Reproduction? Or both at the same time? To what extent is this kinship non-heteronormative? In what ways is it destructive of heteronormativity and/or hegemonic family structures? Where does desire stand? What gets transmitted from mothers to daughters? Can we speak of an inter-queer generational transmission of memory? Departing from these questions, this research investigates the alternative forms of motherhood and daughterhood through Halberstam's conceptualization of queer time and space. In light of his ideas, I argue that queer kinship forms its own time zone in which normative understandings of terms such as "birth", "generation" and "growing up" are deconstructed, and reconstructed. On the other hand, I point out the dynamics and practices in queer kinship that reproduce binary structure of gender roles through gender reassignment process. In what follows, in the light of the discussion on queer time in queer kinship, I argue that we can speak of an inter-generational transmission of knowledge and memory that constructs a collective identity and empowerment, resistance against transphobic violence from state and customers. Furthermore, I aim to open up a new discussion by building a bridge between Marianne Hirsch's term postmemory and Jack Halberstam's discussion on queer time through an investigation of "queer postmemory."

This queer kinship that you will read more about in the following pages deconstructs, destabilizes and plays with the hegemonic meaning of the family, structure of family ties and normative family values, meanwhile changing the hegemonic dynamics of public space through the construction of alternative sites. But is remaking and/or parodying hegemonic gender norms enough to deconstruct them? While searching for answers to this question, I will discuss whether "the denaturalization of gender cannot be the very vehicle for a reconsolidation of hegemonic norms" (Winter, 2013 125). I take the mother/daughter relationship among trans women sex workers as a

“site of a certain ambivalence, one which reflects the more general situation of being implicated in the regimes of power by which one is constituted and, hence, of being implicated in the very regimes of power that one opposes” (*ibid.*) and problematize the centrality of binary gender roles in its construction.

### **1.1. Brief Information on Trans Lives in Turkey**

The narratives of both mothers and daughters suggest the continuum of violence being a “normal” part of the experience of daily life. As Pelin puts it, most of the time, the source of violence cannot be predicted. Thus, this situation causes a state of permanent anxiety in which individuals have to be alert against any type of harassment that could be received from myriad of sources. In addition, there is a lack of resources and reports displaying this continuum of violence and daily practices and strategies of coping. In this section, I will discuss some of the existing reports and try to set a dialogue between these reports and narratives of my participants.

Even though the literature on trans lives focuses on different sub-cultural dynamics of trans individuals, I believe that the present research encourages us to ask more questions on this permanent state of anxiety, while revealing the lack of knowledge on trans sex worker women’s unique experiences of living and coping with that violence. What do we know about the experiences of trans women? What is the relationship between being a trans women and sex worker? What do we really mean by ‘continuum of violence’ when we talk about the experience of trans women? What makes that violence continuous? These are some of the questions that guide my analysis here.

Lambdaİstanbul LGBTT Solidarity Association published a survey-based report titled *Dog Does Not Bite Dog - A Case Study: Problems of Trans Women in Istanbul*<sup>2</sup> in

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<sup>2</sup> For more information, Lambdaİstanbul LGBTT Dayanışma Derneği, (2010), “*İt İti Isırmaz!*” Bir Alan Araştırması: İstanbul’da Yaşayan Trans Kadınların Sorunları

2010, four years after they released their first survey-based report on LGB individuals in Istanbul<sup>3</sup>. In 2005, after a pilot study on LGBT individuals, they concluded that the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans individuals could not be brought together in the same report, as the experiences of trans individuals were categorically different. . Hence, they conducted a separate study on trans lives, which was finalized five years after the first study on LGB experiences. As LGBTI activist Mehmet Tarhan discusses in a recent talk<sup>4</sup>, trans individuals are more disadvantaged in terms of their access to social capital and their vulnerability in the face of both structural and physical violence. According to him, due to the inevitable visibility of gender identity; discrimination and isolation of trans individuals starts much earlier in comparison to lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals. This means that trans individuals, unless their families recognize them, are not able to build any social capital (including education), which increases their vulnerability in the face of structural violence. Similarly, LambdaIstanbul's report reveals trans individuals are blamed and isolated from their family environment, if their family members know their gender identity. This leads many of them to hide their gender identity from family members. Accordingly, questions and reactions ("How do you make love?" "Did your family raise you like a girl?" "Are you sure that you are a trans woman?", "You should go and see a psychiatrist.") that they receive from their families and society reveals the lack of knowledge and bias regarding trans lives and

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<sup>3</sup> *Bir Alan Araştırması: Eşcinsel ve Biseksüellerin Sorunları* (A Case Study: Issues of Gays and Bisexuals), (LambdaIstanbul, 2006).  
<http://www.lambdistanbul.org/s/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/ne-yanlis-ne-de-yalniziz.pdf> (date accessed August 25, 2014).

<sup>4</sup> This talk was delivered on the conference titled "Is another family concept possible?" organized by Heinrich Böll Foundation in November 2013. Tarhan presented a talk under the title *Aile Temelli Sosyal Politikalar ve LGBT* (Social Policies Based on The Family and LGBTs).  
[http://tr.boell.org/sites/default/files/baska\\_bir\\_aile\\_anlayisi\\_mumkun\\_mu.pdf](http://tr.boell.org/sites/default/files/baska_bir_aile_anlayisi_mumkun_mu.pdf). (date accessed August 20, 2014)

experience in the society. Moreover, a similar lack of knowledge reveals itself through taken for granted relations between trans women and sex work. As reports of Lambdaİstanbul (2010) and Kırmızı Şemsiye Cinsel Sağlık ve İnsan Hakları Derneği (Red Umbrella Sexual Health and Human Rights Association) (2013)<sup>5</sup> suggest, the majority of trans women end up doing sex work to earn money. For instance, according to statistical results of Lambdaİstanbul's report, 83% of participants (N=112) were involved in the sex work industry (2010 10). However, I believe that due to the lack of knowledge on the dynamics and practices of trans lives, being trans woman becomes synonymous with sex worker. But why? Why particularly these people are doing sex work? Do they willingly choose to be a sex worker or are they forced to do sex work? If yes, what are these reasons that force trans women to do sex work?

The narratives of my participants and reports of Red Umbrella and Lambdaİstanbul point out similar dynamics that force especially trans women to do sex work. According to Lambdaİstanbul's report, 58% of trans women who attended to the research stated at least one rejection for employment due to their gender identity (15). Moreover, 90% of the participants stated that they renounced applying for a job because they knew that they were not going to be accepted due to their gender identity (14). Finally, 96% of the participants stated that sex work is the only option for them to earn money (17). This relation between trans women identities and sex work brings us to another obstacle that occupies a big part in the daily life experience of almost all trans women who do sex work, namely the experience of a continuum of violence.

Narratives of both mothers and daughters that I interviewed together with recent reports published by the Lambdaİstanbul, Red Umbrella Sexual Health and Human Rights Association and Siyah Pembe Üçgen LGBT Solidarity Association reveal that

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<sup>5</sup> Ördek, Kemal. *Seks İşçiliği: Mitler ve Gerçekler* (Sex Work: Mits and Truths). Red Umbrella Sexual Health and Human Rights Association publication. 2013.

physical and psychological violence occupies a significant part in the daily life experience of trans women. If we go back to statistical results of Lambdaİstanbul, 91% of trans women who took the survey reported that they were at least once exposed to physical violence by security forces (25). In addition, 92,2% of the participants stated being exposed to contempt and humiliation during custody (26). As my research participants would agree, reports reveal that there are four main sources of physical and psychological violence: Security forces, especially the police; strangers, i.e. people that they do not know personally; drivers that work in public transportation; and finally, customers for trans women who do sex work (28). During my fieldwork, almost all of my participants stressed the difficulties that emerge from the unpredictability of violence in their daily lives. The reports from different NGOs that work on LGBTI rights together with the narratives of my participants reveal that, transphobic violent attitudes that trans women are exposed to from a myriad of sources first of all blocks their access to basic human needs such as right to transport, accommodate and work. Secondly, they are discriminated and isolated from public space. Their stress on strangers as the second source of physical violence reveals that it is almost impossible for them to feel safe in public and private sphere.

## **1.2. Naming is Political – Revisiting Collective Identities and Pronouns**

Since the beginning of my research process, I was very busy with the issues on collectively naming my informants and on the pronouns that I was going to use for them. In the beginning of my fieldwork, I decided not to add a specific question regarding their gender identity. Because I always believed that questions regarding gender identity might force individuals to construct an identity, as if such an act were necessary.

Initially, I was planning to separately analyze my interviewees' self-identifications in response to my question, "Could you please tell me about yourself?"

According to my plan, it was going to be easy. I was just going to read the transcription from this perspective and see how my participants were positioning their gender identity. However, this plan did not work as I expected. Instead, I found myself in the middle of a multitude of cases that intensified my concerns regarding collective naming and forced me to avoid the binary pronouns in English. In this section, I would like to focus on this process, which put a little smile on my face when I look back now, and share my humble attempts to deal with the troubles of naming.

My first obstacle with naming emerged whilst I was writing my proposal for the present research. Instead of the term “trans” I preferred “trans\*” which is an umbrella term containing all identities within the gender identity spectrum. According to my point of view, the term ‘trans’ only referred to “trans men” and “trans women” and, as such, was not inclusive of those who identified themselves as genderqueer, genderfluid, transgender, genderblender, and so on. In contrast, ‘trans\*’ was more an umbrella term and was delimiting the binaries in the gender identity spectrum. Using trans\* proved effective for a while but brought more questions immediately after I started my fieldwork. Meeting with the diversity on gender identity in the narratives of my participants together with the dynamic structure of LGBTI politics in terms of naming gender identities revealed that naming my participants as ‘trans\*’ was not going to solve my concerns, instead was going to engender new problems regarding my authority as a researcher.

Meanwhile, with the start of my writing process, I had another difficulty in using pronouns to represent my informants. First, I decided to use “O”, a Turkish pronoun that can be used instead of she, he and it without any gender identification. After five hours of work, the result of my effort to adapt a Turkish pronoun into an English text proved disappointing, and I had to give it up. Meanwhile I had the chance to meet Jack

Halberstam in May 2014 during a talk that he gave in İstanbul and had a limited time to talk about my concerns. His answer was very simple. He said: “Just write ‘she’ if they say they are woman”. I said “okay” and started to think about the narratives of my informants, the atmosphere of our interviews and my participant observation. Then I realized the tension between two sides of myself; the researcher side and the activist side. As an activist who is a part of LGBTI movement in İstanbul for seven years, I have become part of associations and involved in projects against binary oppositions in the gender system; however, during the fieldwork, my interviewees were not presenting themselves as “gender identity free” individuals. It was my political and maybe even utopic thought to get rid of gender identities and be able to introduce my informants as people, free of gender identification. Realizing this tension was a significant moment in terms of my research. However, as my research progressed, the tension regarding the representation of my research participants through a collective category remained, and this time I was anxious about using such frames as “trans community” or “trans sex workers” that I had used since my proposal. Similar to David Valentine’s experience (2005), I guess I was assuming that “there were such self-evident things as transgender community” (68). I was thinking that outside the LGBTI politics and organizations, identifications such as “transgender community” and/or “trans sex workers community” were not hardedge in the context of the experience of daily life. Moreover, institutionalizing the collective mode of transgender was indirectly silencing the subjectivities of my informants and automatically labeling all of them as “trans women”.

Finally, I decided to use “*lubun*” instead of “trans” which is a fluid term that most of the LGBTI individuals use to call themselves and each other. In this sense, I thought *lubun* would enable me to abandon my unconscious attempt to establish ethnographic authority and give me the opportunity to introduce my participants out of the rubric of

the category “transgender” (Kulick, 1998; Prieur, 1998 and Nanda, 1990). The second reason for choosing “*lubun*” as a framing term was that it helped me “to explore the edges of the inclusivity of transgender, the places where it fails to fully explain the experiences of some people” (Valentine, 2005 158). This framing also enabled me to deepen the discussion on queer kinship and trace different forms of queer kinships. I suggested the term “*lubun*” as an alternative category that was not curious about the binary structure of being man or woman, or to what extent an individual is a woman or a man. I believed that this approach would help me “highlight the importance of the non-fixity of gender/sex, while stressing the importance of identity politics and the understanding of power relations that incorporates gender, sexuality, class, racism and other hierarchical social categorizations” (Browne and Nash, 2010 350). But wait a second! Did my participants represent themselves as *lubun*? Yes, according to my observations during previous years of activism and fieldwork. Many individuals who position themselves opposed to hegemonic gender identities and sexual orientations typically called each other *lubun/lubunya*; however, during my fieldwork, nobody answered my question, “Could you please tell me about yourself?” with the response, “I am a *lubun*”. It was I, as a researcher who was designating this name to them, which could silence the subjective experience of my informants.

The difficulties that I had with naming collective identities, using pronouns and subjectivities, made me revisit the history of the LGBTI movement in Turkey. Only looking at the name of the movement and its progress reveals the mobile and unstable form of gender identity politics. Throughout the years, debates on the binary gender system and emergence of new and alternative collective identities not only enhanced the movement but also changed the letter used to identify this movement. As in other parts of the world, in Turkey, too, many associations abandoned the second T in the initial

term LGBTT due to its differentiation between transsexuals and transvestites based on the experience of sexual reassignment surgery. In the year 2013, Lambda declared an apology<sup>6</sup> for neglecting the intersex movement and added ‘I’ next to ‘T’. Similarly, Istanbul LGBTT Solidarity Association dropped the second ‘T’ and added ‘I’ next to the first ‘T’ in 2014. In addition, 2014 trans pride brought a new debate through the new slogan “Not a trans woman, only a woman.” Activists, who were defining themselves as “trans woman”, brought up their demand on the issue by declaring that this differentiation brings out questions regarding “real womanhood” through the differentiation between trans women and women. Across the globe, we see the dynamic form of the LGBT movement—as it was called until recent years—evolving into LGBTQIAAP<sup>7</sup> and witness the recognition of new categories of identification. Revisiting the dynamic form of the movement locally and globally helped me to leave my attempts on inventing “safe” umbrella terms aside and focus on the narratives of my interviewees.

When I went back to the narratives of my informants, I realized that the only common thread among them was their emphasis on their “womanhood.” Thus, most of them started our interview by saying, “My name is ... and I am a trans woman.” The only participants who did not identify themselves as trans women during my fieldwork were Çimen, who identified him/herself as genderqueer, and Levent, who identified himself as a gay man. The process of fieldwork and revisiting my interviews by reading my field notes and transcriptions revealed that the queer kinship that I was investigating

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<sup>6</sup> Lambdaistanbul declared that they will struggle together with intersex individuals and will add “I” next to “LGBT”. On 03.10.2013 they announced an official apology from their Twitter account. <http://www.etha.com.tr/Haber/2013/10/03/yasam/lambda-intersekslerden-ozur-diledi/> (date accessed, July 14, 2014)

<sup>7</sup> Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transexual, Transvestite, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, Allies and Pansexual.

was actually standing at the center of “being/becoming a trans woman” and mothers were playing a significant role on their daughters’ experiences with “trans life”, which I discuss further in Chapter 2.

Finally, facing tensions between my researcher and activist positioning was surprising but it also provoked me to elaborate on my questions and reformulate the theoretical framework of my research and the terms I would use to name gender identifications.

Now let me focus on the method of my research and then the process of my fieldwork, and discuss my positionality in the field.

## **1.2. Method**

I conducted 14 face-to-face digitally recorded interviews. The average duration of the interviews was around two hours. Five of the interviews occurred at the Istanbul LGBT Solidarity Association, six took place at the residences of my interviewees, and three at cafes that were chosen by the informants. During my fieldwork, I aimed to leave the comfort zone that was established through my friendships emerging from years of activism, and meet queer mothers and/or daughters that did not identify themselves as political actors of the LGBTI movement. Yet, this was not an easy category to access. I was able to interview four individuals who explicitly identified themselves as “not being an activist”. Additionally, due to the limited time of the fieldwork, I knew that I was not going to be able to interview mothers and daughters from different cities and reflect on the diverse practices of queer kinship experiences in different sites. To be able to capture the diversity within Istanbul itself, I made a special effort not to limit my research to Beyoğlu, which is the most popular and preferable place to live among trans sex worker women. Besides Beyoğlu, I also conducted interviews with individuals who live in Fındıkzade, Kurtuluş, and Beylikdüzü. Interviews included those who were part of a

queer kinship, specifically those who are/were a mother and/or a daughter. Nine interviewees identified themselves as part of a queer kinship either as a mother or a daughter, two of the interviewees stated that they are/were “almost” a part of a queer kinship, and one said that she was never a mother and/or a daughter but sometimes calls her friends from LGBTI movement as her “aunts or sisters or cousins from a loyal English family to make fun” (New Wave). Together with New Wave, I conducted three interviews (Çimen and Muhtar) with individuals who personally witnessed to a queer kinship through their friendship relations.

During the fieldwork my initial idea was to focus on queer kinship together with the queer language called *Lubunca* and investigate the mutuality between these two unique practices of queer lives. However, the process of transcription and building the theoretical framework revealed that, to discuss both the kinship and the language was unfortunately not going to be possible due to the time and space limitations of an MA thesis. I also wanted to avoid superficiality and develop a comprehensive discussion on the process and dynamics of queer kinship, its role on the experience of daily life, its relation to every day experience of violence, and the transmission of knowledge between queer mothers and daughters, which I discuss through the concept of queer postmemory. As a result, I had to exclude one of the interviews that was only about *Lubunca*. However, I am planning to focus on *Lubunca* in the near future and write about its role in the daily routine of mothers and daughters together with its relation with queer kinship.

All interviews were conducted based on the principle of confidentiality that I discussed this with each informant before turning on the digital voice recorder. I asked each interviewee to pick a pseudonym that I could use to identify them in my research material and thesis. However, three of my interviewees were persistent on using their

names instead of pseudonyms. Nevertheless, due to my concerns about revealing their identities, I picked random pseudonyms for them.

#### **1.4. The Field**

##### **1.4.1. Meeting Mothers and Daughters**

Before the beginning of my fieldwork, I was only planning to conduct interviews with individuals who are part of a queer mother and daughter kinship. However, meeting with individuals who were not themselves a part of this particular kinship but close witnesses of queer mother and daughterhoods encouraged me to conduct interviews with them too. Interviewing New Wave, Levent, Çimen, and Muhtar not only provided the opportunity to analyze this queer kinship also through individuals who had the opportunity to observe it for a long time, but also enabled me to deepen my discussion with the examples of alternative queer mother and daughterhoods. In addition, I conducted interviews with Pelin, Burçin, Yıldız and Alev, who identify themselves as mother, and with Ateş, Rojda, and Yakut who identify themselves as daughter. Selen and Toprak were my only participants who experienced being both a mother and a daughter. For this reason throughout the chapters I will be referring to their narratives sometimes as daughters, other times as mothers.

My research suggests that this form of queer kinship has its particular temporality. The narratives of both mothers and daughters show that the most important period of this kinship is the first two to three years of their relationship. Most of the mothers stated that this period in which mothers share their knowledge on “how to be and look like a woman” and how to deal with transphobic attitudes of state institutions such as the police, legal issues, and the healthcare system. Moreover, in relation to these coping strategies, these first years also contain an extensive knowledge transfer regarding sex work through sharing of information on specific customers and customer

“types” to be safe against potential transphobic hate crimes. In addition, mothers also pinpoint transphobia-free places in neighborhoods in which daughters spend most of their times. For that matter, I argue that queer kinship also provides a cognitive map to avoid or reduce discriminative attitudes in public space.

In what follows, I would like to introduce each of my participants in the same order that I interviewed them, contextualizing our interview, as well as sharing my relationship with them and the research process at large.

### **Pelin, 53**

I first conducted an interview with Pelin. She is an activist in the LGBTI movement and a friend whom I have known for four years. I first interviewed her a year and a half ago for my project on queer postmemory, which became the inspiration for my thesis. She did sex work for 14 years and quit six years ago. During our interview, she stressed the Bayram Street events when she started her activism. She told me about her childhood and her years with her grandmother as a happy childhood period. However, she also stated that her relation with her family was demolished when her gender identity was realized after her first trip to Istanbul in 1983 when she first experienced “to look like a woman”. For her, the moment that her parents called her, saying “we do not have a child like you anymore,” was a turning point, which caused her to lose her job, home, and life in her hometown. During the interview, I observed a split between her life before and after 1983 through the difference in her voice tone and narrative. While she was focusing on her childhood in a story telling way with a soft voice and portraying the look of her grandmother, the rooms of their house; when she started to focus on her life after 1983, her voiced changed, making her narrative emotionless. When she was narrating her first experiences as a trans woman, she suddenly told me that she was born and raised in Cihangir. While I was thinking about the reasons that could make her to say so,

I realized that she was referring to “birth” as her first time to “look like a woman”, and “growing up” as the process in which she took steps in regard to her gender identity. Realizing new meanings of “birth” and “growing up” contributed to my research, particularly in terms of the discussion on queer time. As the second oldest mother among my interviewees, she also shared her experience of transphobic state violence especially between the years 1980 – 1996, an interview that deepened my analysis on the possibility of queer postmemory. After talking to Pelin, I interviewed Ateş who was Pelin’s second and most recent queer daughter.

### **Ateş, 27**

Ateş has also been an activist in LGBTI movement since 2007 whom I have known for two years. She states that before the LGBTI movement, she joined leftist organizations and studied at the university. The time when she realized nobody should work and live in an environment where “she/he is faking her/himself” was also the moment that she quit her job and joined LGBTI movement. Now she is working in an association and starting to do sex work together with her gender identity reassignment process. Similar to Pelin, she identified herself as a trans woman and several times through her narrative; she mentioned that even if she is also in the process of gender identity reassignment, to look like a woman is not as important as to feel like a woman.

Her relationship with her family was very well during the time when I started my fieldwork. Her ties with her mother and sisters were very strong and even though she lives alone, she was staying at their place once or twice a week. During my fieldwork, I witnessed the construction of queer mother and daughterhood between Pelin and Ateş. According to both of their narratives, their close friendship has evolved into kinship due to Ateş’s needs as an inexperienced trans woman. What also stands out in their narratives is the importance that they both give to their mutual ethnic and religious

identities in the construction of their kinship. During the last few months, under Pelin's guidance, Ateş started her hormone treatment and decided to do sex work to absorb her daily expenses. With time, these reforms that she was experiencing with Pelin, brought new problems to Ateş, regarding her relations with her family. As she continued her hormone treatment, her appearance started to change and her family started to question her and her involvement with the family. Witnessing this shift in her biological family revealed the similarity among narratives of daughters on their families regarding their isolation and discrimination. At this time, I realized that the change in the attitudes of her sisters and mother brought Ateş closer to Pelin and strengthened their kinship tie.

For the first six to seven months of my fieldwork, I mentioned Ateş about my research when we came together in different contexts. At some point, she herself said that she would like to be a part of this research and talk about her mother/daughter relationship with. I still remember our interview vividly as an inspiring experience especially in terms of the discussion on queer postmemory. To observe the ways in which the memories of Pelin from 34 years ago became part of Ateş's daily life experience constituted a unique turning point in my fieldwork.

### **Selen, 39**

Selen was Pelin's first daughter who is right now a mother of two girls. She has been doing sex work for more than 10 years and mentions her relationship with Pelin as a significant point in terms of her occupation and status among other sex worker women. Unlike Pelin and Ateş, Selen identified herself as a transvestite at the beginning of our interview. In the course of the interview, she left identifying herself as transvestite and identified as someone who is not different from "normal women." During my interviews, I never directly asked my interviewees' about their (biological) families and their relationship with them. I was concerned about the vulnerabilities I might cause

asking about this sensitive topic. In the next chapter, I analyze the context in which they narrate the story of their families, exploring the dynamics of this particular form of queer kinship. However, what is important in Selen's interview is that she very briefly mentioned about her family while sharing her difficulties in life regarding her gender identity and immediately closed the subject without any further discussion.

According to her, to be a daughter of Pelin who did sex work for a long time made her more recognized in the community and was an opportunity in terms of her financial well being. Selen was my first interviewee who elaborated on the “growing up” period of trans daughters, which takes place during the first two or three years after the establishment of the mother/daughter relationship. She said that eight years after they first met, they are now like friends with Pelin. However, according to her, Pelin will always remain a mentor for her especially on legal issues that she is struggling with due to the urban transformation occurring in TarlabAŞı.

The time we had the interview with her, she was dealing with a court case against her in which she was accused of providing space for sex work. Before the interview, I spoke with her about the current situation of the case and her daily life. She was comfortable and open about sharing her problems on increasing police violence towards trans women, particularly trans sex worker women. However, as soon as I turned the voice recorder on, she started to answer my questions without going into details. Therefore, when we started to talk about her daughters that she knew for a year; even though she did not decline to answer my questions, I observed some tension and discomfort when I asked specific questions on her mother/daughter relation. I believe that due to her constant exposure to police violence together with the court cases in which she has to deal with transphobic attitudes of attorneys and judges, she did not want to leave a “trace” which could put her daughters in a vulnerable position. Selen’s

attitude contributed to my understanding of queer kinship as a site of security in which mothers strive to protect their daughters against transphobic police violence.

### **Toprak, 23**

In this research, I initially had aimed to explore the experience of queer motherhood and daughterhood, exploring the practices and desires that make this kinship a part of queer lives. On so, as a person who is trying to problematize the binary sex/gender system and establish an openness towards all possibilities of sexual and gender identity, I actually found out that this was not always easy. One morning at the association, as I was starting to work, a short man with glasses and a hat entered and sat on a chair. We met and ‘he’ said ‘his’ name was Toprak and was waiting for Pelin. I said okay and continued on with my work. After Pelin came, they started to talk about Toprak’s problems with “some transvestites” who were not letting him to do sex work at their location. Then, suddenly, Pelin asked if Toprak ever had a mother, at the same time she was calling me saying, “Look, maybe you can interview Toprak.” I am still thinking about the reason of this reaction of mine, but without letting Toprak answer Pelin’s question, I said, “well, I don’t know, I’m not sure if he has such experience.” Did I say it because of his look? What was I thinking? If you do not ‘look like a woman’, does it mean that you wouldn’t have a mother or a daughter? Toprak replied; “of course, I had a mother like me and now I have 3 daughters.” I still remember my surprise and how I was disappointed with myself after hearing Toprak’s answer.

It was at this point that I realized I needed to ask more questions about the queer aspect of the kinship I was exploring as part of my research: more questions on the heteronormative family system, on hegemonic sex/gender roles and norms, on issues that made me automatically disregard Toprak’s possibility of being a queer mother or a daughter. I was, after all, fortunate to have come across Toprak at the beginning stage of

my fieldwork. My inability to leave the boundaries around the connections between womanhood, motherhood, and daughterhood was not only a failure but also an opportunity to realize once more the extent of the “heterosexual matrix” (Butler, 1990). Butler defines the heterosexual matrix as “a hegemonic discursive/epistemic model of gender intelligibility that assumes that for bodies to cohere and make sense there must be a stable sex expressed through a stable gender (masculine expresses male, feminine expresses female) that is oppositionally and hierarchically defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality” (Butler, 1990 151).

Similar to Selen, Toprak was my second interviewee who had experienced being both a mother and a daughter in queer kinship. During our interview, she identified herself as a woman who cannot experience her motherhood because of her current family, wife, and the baby girl from her wife. She mentioned sex work as the only site where she can perform and experience her womanhood. During our interview, Toprak did not identify her gender identity, however while we were talking about the difficulties experienced by trans women and other LGBTI individuals, she used sentences starting with “we trans women.” At the time of our interview, she had three trans daughters who are at the same age as Toprak. In this regard, her example of mother/daughter relation contributed to my analysis in terms of the discussion on queer time (see Chapter 3). Whilst she was talking about her strong relation with her daughters, she mentioned her baby girl as “a kid who will never have a real father.” Toprak’s different parental identifications that have to shift between heteronormative and non-heteronormative contexts have raised new questions regarding queer motherhood.

### **Burçin, 45**

When I asked her if she ever had a daughter, Burçin told me that she does not remember the number of girls who called her mother. Burçin was an old friend of Pelin’s and I

went to her home for our interview. She was living in a street where most of the houses are used for sex work by a myriad of sex workers. After the question, she invited me to the balcony and drew an invisible circle with her hand whilst saying all these girls that you see in this street call me mother. She was comfortable to share her history during our three-and-a-half hour interview. She told me that her family insisted that she leave their village when they found out her gender identity after she came back from compulsory military service. She did sex work for more than 15 years and said that the only reason that she continues to do sex work is to “live her womanhood.” Similar to Toprak, Burçin also stated that there is no other place and/or job opportunity where she can live as she is. During our interview, she stressed the times where she was fighting against the woman inside of her. And she said even if she “knows” that “this is a sin,” she couldn’t stand against the woman inside her and “transformed.” When I asked about her daughters, immediately she objected, and told me that although they can call her mother, she doesn’t call anyone her daughter. According to her, to be a mother was to give birth to a kid from the man you love. She told me that she would never have this chance; therefore, she will never call anyone her daughter.

Approximately an hour and a half she said this, she turned her computer on and opened Facebook. She told me, there were only two girls in the *alem*<sup>8</sup> that she accepted as her real daughters. Whilst she was showing me their pictures, she mentioned their beauty and was trying to get my approval by constantly saying, “They are very beautiful, aren’t they?” “This one is really sexy, yes?” To observe the ambivalent form of Burçin’s narrative in terms of womanhood and motherhood was significant especially for my analysis regarding the relation between queer kinship, womanhood, and practices of beauty.

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<sup>8</sup> The word *Alem* was used by many of the participants interchangably to refer to social environment of trans women and sex workers.

### **Yıldız, 56**

Yıldız was the oldest mother among the participants that I interviewed. She said that after all those years, she is still working as a sex worker but she is only picking the customers that she likes. Whilst she was talking about her childhood, she mentioned that she was aware of her gender identity since she was 5 years old. To exemplify, she said that even then, her only friends were girls and she was only playing games with girls. According to her, her relationship with her family was never perfect. Her father was so dominant and trying to plan her life without asking her. According to her, around age 20, they realized her “weirdness.” She said she couldn’t stand her parents’ attitudes and finally left her home in 1978 and came to Istanbul where she started her transformation and engage in sex work to earn money.

During our interview, her strong emphasis on womanhood captured my attention. Her fixed definitions regarding how a woman should look like, how to behave like a woman, and how to be a proper daughter, helped me extend my analysis on norms that emerge through queer motherhood and daughterhood. She had had three daughters till then and she was just getting to know her new daughter Nil. I had the opportunity to meet Nil right before she left for Diyarbakır for two months and unfortunately I could not conduct an interview with her. However, during our interview, Yıldız talked about Nil extensively, comparing her with her previous daughters. Her narrative on the reasons that made her leave her previous daughters, helped deepen my analysis of the dynamics that can cause mother and daughter to discontinue their relationship and question the power of mothers over their daughters. I will discuss this notion in a broader context in the next chapter.

### **Alev, 33**

I know Alev for 3 years through the LGBTI association of which I am a part. She told me that the Gezi resistance played a very important role on her activist identity and, during the fall of 2013, she established another LGBTI organization. During my fieldwork, I called her to ask if she would like to talk to me about the mother/daughter relationship among trans women and she accepted to meet by saying she has much to say on this relationship. Before we hung up, she told me that; she could arrange an interview with one of her daughters, as well. She underscored that this daughter recently had a sexual reassignment surgery and outgrew her. When we met for the interview, I had questions in my mind regarding her comment on “outgrowing.” Similar to Yıldız, her strictly fixed rules on the process of “transformation” that I observed during the interview answered my questions and added more to my discussion on the relation between queer kinship and womanhood.

When we started our interview, she identified herself as a trans woman. She told me she has been aware of her gender identity since she was 16. She also mentioned her discomfort with her identity during these years, as she was a believer. In 2000, she left home because of a fight that she had with her family and built a new life in Istanbul. She told me that this year helped her face and accept her identity. She exemplified the difficulties that she had to deal with when she was all alone in Istanbul and she placed them as the center of her motivation to be a mother. The bridge that she established between her experience and motherhood helped me extend my discussion on the construction of queer kinship in the following chapter.

### **Yeliz, 32**

During our interview, Yeliz told me that she wouldn't identify herself as a mother, rather she preferred to be identified as “almost a mother” since she had been a mother of a 14 year old only for few months who was taken back by her family. Yeliz identified

herself as a trans woman and stressed the significant role of the mother/daughter relationship in the life of trans women. Her comments on the relation between safety issues and knowledge transfer from mothers to their daughters extended the discussion especially on queer kinship and the daughter's relation with customers and the state. Her example of not being able to find a non-transphobic hairdresser for a year encouraged me to deepen my analysis on the relation between queer kinship and the mapping of the city through the pinpointing of transphobia-free spaces for daughters.

As a trans woman, who doesn't define herself as a sex worker and who does sex work only "if there is an emergency" (financial), she revealed the other possibilities and alternatives of queer kinship. She told me that even if she was not a sex worker, she would like to be a mother one day and raise a trans daughter. During our interview, she divided her experience into two by naming them through her physical appearance in regard to the binary oppositional form of "feminine (trans)" and "masculine (gay)" which added new insights to the discussion on gender norms that emerge through queer kinship.

### **Rojda, 26**

Rojda was the youngest daughter that I interviewed. She met her mother 11 months ago through the network between trans sex worker women that we will be discussing in the following chapter. Rojda identified herself as a trans woman. Moreover, similar to Yeliz, she defined her gender identity by juxtaposing it with sexual orientation by saying "I was more like a feminine gay a year ago". The way she met her mother, her relation with her and its connection to safety and sex work enhanced my discussion in the following chapter.

Similar to other interviewees, she lost her contact with her parents when they realized her gender identity. She told me that her father brought her to the hospital and the moment that they left the hospital was the last moment that she saw him. She told me that, her doctor told her father that there is no treatment for her identity because it is not something to treat or cure. She told me that she was happy to hear this from the doctor but her father “went crazy and he shouted at the doctor and left his room.” Her specific emphasis on “loneliness” as a trans woman and being vulnerable to hate crimes, extended my analysis on the relation between safety and queer kinship that I will discuss at length in Chapter 3.

### **Levent, 41**

I have known Levent for more than six years. He is a close friend with whom I work together. As I mentioned above, for this research I did not interview only mothers and daughters but also four individuals who closely witnessed a mother/daughter relationship. He was my first interviewee in this category. He identified himself as a gay man and mentioned that he is very happy with his gender identity and sexual orientation. When we started our interview, I was sure that he was only going to talk about his experience with his trans friends who were mothers and daughters. However, when I asked about this relationship, he started with his own example from 25 years ago. He told me that he also considers himself as a daughter and his cousin – who was also a gay man – as his mother. While he was differentiating it from the mother/daughter relationship among trans women, he was telling me that his relationship with his cousin was only related with his entry into the gay community and not with safety issues. His clear differentiation between his relationship and the mother/daughter relationship among trans women, first, revealed other possibilities and alternatives of queer mother/daughterhoods regardless of gender identity and sexual orientation. Second,

together with the example of his close friend who was a daughter, he added new angles to my discussion on conflicts between mothers and daughters that I discuss in the following chapter.

### **Çimen, 33**

Similar to Levent, Çimen was not personally a part of a mother/daughter relationship. Çimen identified him/herself as trans queer and told me about her/his relationship with the family according to her/his shifts between womanhood and manhood. S/he talked about the experience of two friends of her/him who was a part of a queer kinship years ago. However, what was important in Çimen's narrative was his/her idea of new and alternative motherhoods. S/he told me that, s/he also wants to be a mother one day and provide a free space for his/her daughter in which she would not face any discrimination due to her gender identity. Çimen's comment on the relation between mother/daughter relationship and the reproduction of gender norms through her discussion on "transnormativity" extended my discussion on the relation between queer kinship and womanhood.

### **Muhtar, 48**

She was a “*muhtar*” (lowest elected representative) of a neighborhood during the 1990s, a landmark moment in the history of trans women. She was never part of a queer mother/daughter relationship. However, her office, which was very close to the residential areas of trans women, provided a place where she could meet myriad of trans mothers and daughters who do sex work. In addition, through her career, she also met a lot of trans women. Her narrative based on her observations that she has done during her service as *muhtar* extended the discussion on the relation between queer kinship and

empowerment. According to her, she was able to observe the changes especially in daughters together with their involvement in mother/daughter relationships.

### **New Wave, 27**

New Wave was the last participant who was not personally a part of a queer kinship but who had witnessed it through her friends. She identified herself as a trans woman. She told me that she is one of the few trans women who have a good relationship with their families. Due to this reason, she told me that she did not need a trans mother. Her important emphasis on the relations between being a trans woman, sex work and mother/daughter relationship that I will discuss in following chapter provoked me to go beyond and discover new angles of queer kinship.

#### **1.4.2. My Positionality As a Researcher**

For the present research, I reached my informants through personal contacts that I gained during my involvement in the LGBTI movement. On the other hand, the idea of leaving the comfort zone and getting to know new individuals who do not define themselves as political subjects of the movement, showed me how my position was “situated” in the LGBTI movement. For this reason, Pelin and Ateş were my gatekeepers whilst I was trying to reach “other” queer mothers and daughters. With the help of their effort, I was able to meet five queer mother and daughters whom I had not met before. The remaining nine interviewees were with people that I knew, three of them being my co-workers and close friends.

Its advantage in terms of the interview atmosphere’s openness to new questions and spontaneity, interviewing the people I know was relatively easier. On the other hand, shifting from a ‘friend’ to a ‘researcher’ sometimes affected their narrative and they were skipping some stories or information by saying “you know it already.” More complicatedly, with time, the question of positionality became more and more

significant, because I was going to the office almost every day to work on a project and three of my co-workers were at the same time my interviewees. Two of them were mother and daughter. I witnessed the construction of their kinship. And yes, it was a great opportunity. However, even if they were informed about my project from the beginning of the fieldwork, note taking about the dynamics of their relationship while working with them at the same time, made me feel uncomfortable about my positionality. Whilst trying to find a way to get over this feeling, I decided to remind them about my shifting identities and told them I am their co-worker and friend but also a participant observer in the field. Their comforting response and my re-reading of Donna Haraway's discussion of "situated knowledges" (1988 575) helped me a lot during the rest of my fieldwork. As Matthew Bernius (2011) puts it in his article "Haraway's Situated Knowledge is an Argument for Politics and Epistemologies"<sup>9</sup>, "for Haraway, the "contradictory and necessary" unification of these seemingly opposing camps is the embodied gaze of "situated knowledge" through which we "attach the objective to our theoretical and political scanners in order to name where we are and are not, in dimensions of mental and physical space we hardly know how to name" (par. 4). And he continues, "the vision use in the creation of situated knowledge is always mediated; it is that understanding that allows it to escape relativistic traps". The idea of "situated knowledge" creates a harmonic web that also contains tensions and resonances. In this light, I was neither an outsider nor an insider.

I was doing my best to be a part of the movement for years and trying to be active in the LGBTI politics and movement. However, I was not defining myself as a "trans women", "gay man" or "cross-dresser"; I was not earning money through sex work and I was never a part of queer kinship apart from *gullüm* moments in which anybody could

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<sup>9</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.zotero.org/mattbernius/items/2988F2KQ> date accessed: March 25, 2014.

become a daughter, mother or aunt of anyone. Thus, even if I would not call myself an outsider, as I witnessed the everyday experience of sex work and/or being a trans women/men; as an LGBTI rights activist, because of the reasons that I stated above, I also would not position myself as an insider in my fieldwork process. Based on my experience during the research, I regard my positionality as flexible, not neat enough to name it as “insider” or “outsider” but rather a mobile one depending on how the inside and the outside are defined.

### **1.5. Situating The Literature**

As Sema Merve İş (2013) states in her significant research on queer approaches to parenthood and family through narratives of queer parents and their parental identifications, “there has been a paradigm shift in family research which has involved a change in focus from the family as a monolithic entity to family pluralism (Cheal 1991; Scanzoni, Polonko, Teachman and Thompson, 1989; Sprey, 1990; Thomas and Wilcox, 1987), and at the same time feminist scholars have made notable progress in deconstructing assumptions about women’s location within the family structure (Ferree 1990; Glenn 1987; Thompson and Walker 1989; Thorne 1982)” (35). However, it is possible to argue that sexual orientation and gender identity were, for a long time, silenced in the family and kinship literature. Starting with the second half of the 1990s, we see a rising interest in ethnographic studies on gay/lesbian communities and different practices of socializations. Additionally, studies that focus on same-sex couples and children, gay marriage, legalization of adoption for same-sex couples begin to flourish (Clunis and Green 1995; Safron 1998).

Correspondingly, queer theory has entered the fray and positioned itself against the essentialist and hegemonic structure of the binary gender system that also emerges in gay/lesbian studies. Kath Weston (2007) has supplied ethnographic descriptions of

lesbian and gay non-marital kinship ties, which established outside of the heterosexually based family system and “that only partially approximate the family form in some instances” (Butler, 2002 15). According to her, gay and lesbian families are different from them; however their family dynamics still cannot be regarded as independent from biological families. In addition, research on polymaternal families in which non-normative forms of mothering are discussed has presented new challenges to the nuclear family structure (Park 2013). Based on the statement of Bernstein and Reimann (2001), these examples of queer families challenge hegemonic forms of not only gender but also sexuality because “while confounding heteronormativity, they contest the hegemonic family ideal, and complicating gay and lesbian politics” (İş, 2013 36). Today, in the United States (with 19 states and District of Colombia), Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom and Uruguay have legal recognition of same-sex marriage.

In Turkey, legal rights for LGBT individuals, same-sex relationship, marriage and adoption rights of these individuals is not recognized by the state. Correspondingly, “reproductive technology is reserved solely for married couples. Sperm banks are forbidden, and it is illegal for Turkish nationals to employ the service of sperm banks outside the country. Sex reassignment surgery is legal but individuals who opt for the procedure must undergo mandatory sterilization” (İş, 2013 39).

In terms of academic research, we are witnessing a growing body of literature on LGBTI issues since the early 2000s (Selek, 2001; Hocaoğlu, 2002; Özbay and Soydan, 2003; Berghan, 2007; *Cogito Cinsel Yönelimler ve Queer Kuram*, 2011, Çakırlar and Delice, 2012; Güçlü and Yardımcı, 2013). However, discussions on family, parenting and kinship have been largely absent from this literature. In 2012, we see two articles

that discuss parenting: Bülent Somay's (2012) "Bozuk Aile" (Rotten Family), and Mehmet Tarhan's article on LGBT Individuals' Family Group called LİSTAG (Tarhan 2012). Finally, in 2013, Sema Merve İş, investigated different articulations of queer parenthood, questioning parental identifications within the heterosexual matrix.

I believe that it is significant to see how the field on same-sex relationships has flourished. However, I also argue that the studies and legislations regarding these issues might bring a certain normative crisis. According to Butler (2002), "it is important to mark how the field of intelligible and speakable sexuality is circumscribed so that we can see how options outside of marriage are becoming foreclosed as unthinkable, and how the terms of thinkability are enforced by the narrow debates over who and what will be included in the norm" (18). In light of Butler's analysis, I argue that the limiting the study of queer kinship and family to same-sex relationships and/or adoption takes away from the critical edge of queer studies. I agree that "criticality is thus not a position per se, not a site or a place that might be located within an already delimitable field, although one must, in an obligatory catachresis, speak of sites, of fields, of domains. One critical function is to scrutinize the action of delimitation itself" (Butler, 2002 19). In this manner, I certainly do not mean to trivialize the significance of the literature on same-sex marriage or affiliative legal alliances. However, I believe that we need more research in the field to question the taken for granted conditions such as "marriage", "having a child", "raising a child", and "mothering" and experience "the dehiscence, the breakup of the ground itself" (Butler, 2002 19)

The aim of this research is to focus on subcultural ambivalent practices of queer kinship through the example of trans sex worker mothers and daughters who encourages us to go further and ask such questions as: What does 'having a child' mean? How does someone 'raise a child'? Is 'mothering' always already a fixed definition for both

heterosexual and non-heterosexual individuals? In the same fashion, with Foucault's arguments on queer intimacies, in this research I discuss queer kinship as a "way of life" which is constructed by anti-normative gender identities and family structure that comprise relationships that emerge as a form of fluid desires.

Additionally, throughout the chapters that follow, I aim to show how this particular queer kinship draws our attention to practices that reconstructs the reproduction of time and space. Positioning queer mother/daughter kinship against the hegemonic form of the heterosexual (and sometimes non-heterosexual) family mechanism and heteronormativity that silences and discriminates diversities, I argue that we can see queer kinship as 'a way of being' that contains life, diversity, resistance, love, care, understanding, home, solidarity, compassion and recognition. Of course, whilst discussing these sites of queer kinship, I also focus on the norms that emerge through queer kinship. As Duggan would agree, I will argue that queer mother and daughterhoods can also create transnormativities in which normalizing practices of gender emerge through private acts of consumptions that sets hierarchies of significance based on the idea of "real womanness" which will help me to show the ambivalent form of queer kinship. Thus, this research does not approach queer kinship as a specific example of non-heterosexual practices. I argue that, whilst reconstructing the form and construction of the heterosexual family system, the present example of queer kinship cannot challenge the binary structure of gender roles through its intolerance to be in-betweenness. Instead this particular form of mother/daughter relationship partially reproduces the heteronormative family codes. Hence, I believe that, throughout the thesis, while discussing different angles of queer kinship, it is important to remind ourselves about following questions: Why is this queer kinship specific to mothers and daughters? Why not sisterhood or another bond? And what does it take to be a daughter

and a mother?

### **1.6. Outline of The Thesis**

The following chapter a discussion on terms such as queer, queer sociality, and queer kinship. While clarifying the relation between trans identities, sex work and queer kinship that encouraged me to initiate this research, through the narratives of my participants, I try to discuss the dynamics of queer kinship in a sequence. I first try to answer the question of how mothers and daughters find each other. Furthermore, I discuss the significant relation between queer kinship and empowerment through the narratives of both mothers and daughters in the context of “being accepted and recognized.” While problematizing the construction of fixed “womanhood” forms that determine the future of queer kinship, I analyze the knowledge transfer from mothers to daughters through Deniz Kandiyoti’s question “What does it take to be a woman?”

In the third chapter, I aim to approach queer mother/daughterhood as a coping mechanism against discriminative and ignorant attitudes of heteronormative and transphobic hegemony. In this chapter, I draw attention to the significant relation between queer kinship and safety. After focusing on hate crime reports that were published by LGBTI NGOs, I attempt to set a dialogue between these reports and the subjective experience of my interviewees. I discuss how queer kinship provides a coping mechanism against the ignorant attitude of the legal system and a preventive mechanism against hate crimes, especially through a focus on the transmission of detailed information on customers from mothers to daughters. I discuss this transmission as a survival kit against transphobic hate crimes. Lastly, to extend the discussion, I specifically focus on queer kinship’s role on mothers’ and daughters’ relation with state apparatuses that affect their daily life experience with regard to police violence and transphobic attitudes in the health system and legal system.

As a part of the transmission of knowledge and history between queer mothers and daughters, in the last chapter, I attempt to open up a new theoretical debate through Marianne Hirsch's concept of "postmemory" by asking, "Can we speak of a queer postmemory?" In this last chapter, I focus on two traumatic events that happened within the years of 1980 – 1996 in Istanbul; which have had collective impact and left marks on trans women. In light of Hirsch's theoretical framework, I open a new discussion on the impact of this trans history on the contemporary daily life experiences of trans women who have never been through these events.

## **CHAPTER 2: WHAT KIND OF KINSHIP IS THIS WE SPEAK OF?**

In this chapter, I situate my research on queer kinship in Istanbul in the nexus of sex work, gender, queer family, and motherhood practices. While doing so, I try to construct a dialogue between theoretical debates and the narratives of my interviewees through a discussion of queer socialites. The chapter begins with a discussion of the terms queer, queer kinship, queer intimacy, and motherhood. Then, departing from the narratives of my research participants, I analyze the process through which queer kinship becomes established and articulated between trans sex worker women in Istanbul, focusing on what motherhood and daughterhood mean to my research participants and how they impact the experience of daily life through a discussion of notions such as belonging, acceptance and forming a community. This discussion also includes a critical gender analysis of the emphasis on “real womanhood” among queer mothers and daughters.

Before focusing on the significant relation between safety and queer kinship through mothers’ and daughters’ relation with state and customers, this chapter concludes with a series of critical questions regarding inclusion and exclusion. Can we speak of negative aspects of queer kinship? Who gets to be included (or excluded) from queer kinship ties? How, furthermore, can we understand the reasons behind the

exclusion of certain members of the trans community from the institution of motherhood/daughterhood?

In what follows, I first discuss the terms queer and queer kinship and then focus on how narratives of queer mothers and daughters reveal a connection between empowerment and the binary oppositions based on gender.

### **2.1. “Kuiriz Ayol” – What is Queer?**

Pelin shouts “Kuiriz ayol!” during our interview right after comparing her mother/daughter relationship to those relationships in “normal families.” According to Halperin (1997), queer positions itself through its oppositional perspectives to norms. Along the same lines, queer mother/daughterhood as it is practiced among the trans sex worker women that I interviewed, is positioned in opposition to the heteropatriarchal family system. As I discuss at length in the following sections, most of my interviewees identified the mother/daughter relation of which they are a part, as an alternative family tie against heteropatriarchal and feudal family relations that discriminate and isolate them. When I asked why there is such a kinship, most of my participants positioned the mother/daughter relation as opposed to the “normal family ties.” Departing from the narratives of both mothers and daughters, after the discussion on terms such as queer, queer kinship and sociality, I focus on how we can situate its oppositional positioning vis-à-vis the normative family form.

According to Seidman (1997), queer theory responds to the insufficiency of feminist theory and gay/lesbian studies of its time. Queer theory challenges the binary oppositions of the sex/gender system and questions the perception of “identity” while naming all gender and/or sexual identities as socially constructed. Moreover, as Halperin (1997) would agree, ‘queer’ cannot be identified as an identity because queer, “does not designate a class of already objectified pathologies or perversions, rather, it describes a

horizon of possibility whose precise extent and heterogeneous scope cannot in principle be delimited in advance.” (62). In parallel with Halperin’s discussion, it is important to mention that my eagerness in naming this kinship as ‘queer’ derives from the positionality of mother/daughter kinship against the heterosexual matrix and its “reordering [of] the relations among sexual behaviors, erotic identities, constructions of gender, forms of knowledge, regimes of enunciation, logics of representation, modes of self-constitution, and practices of community with the aim of restricting the relationships between power, truth and desire” (Halperin, 1997 62). Hence, I discuss the practices and identifications of my research participations vis-à-vis the normative practices of the family.

Let us first focus on the term queer. The Website of Oxford Dictionaries, provides three definitions for ‘queer.’ One is an adjective, meaning, “strange, odd,” and exemplified in the sentence "she had a queer feeling that they were being watched." The second definition appears as a verb, meaning “to spoil or ruin (an agreement, event, or situation)” and is exemplified as follows: "Reg didn't want someone meddling and queering the deal at the last minute". Lastly, the word appears as a noun, which means “a homosexual man” without an example that uses queer as a noun in a sentence. After reading these three definitions of ‘queer’ in the Oxford Dictionary, I had a ‘queer’ feeling ‘to queer’ those definitions with the literature on queer theory and the narratives of my participants, focusing on the experience of “ruining and/or spoiling” the symbolic family order.

Apart from Oxford Dictionary definitions, it is important to trace the shifts in the meaning of the word “queer” through the years, as does Sema Merve İş (2013) in her significant work on queer parenthood. “Queer” was initially used to insult LGBT individuals through the assumption that HIV was a “gay disease”; however the

movement embraced the word and claimed that they were proud of being “queer.” Starting with the 1990s, when the term came to be embraced by the LGBT communities worldwide, the term “queer” took on a new life. Queer theory itself has its roots in Foucault’s *History of Sexuality*, followed by the groundbreaking works of Judith Butler (1990), Eve Sedgwick (1991), and Lauren Berlant (1997). As it evolved, queer theory challenged both the binary opposition and the essentialist point of view of gender prevalent in much of feminist theory, as well as the assumptions regarding “nature” and sexual identity adopted by most gay/lesbian scholarship and activism. Therefore, queer theory developed out of a critique of the limitations of identity politics (Warner, 1993; Seidman, 1997). Halberstam and Esteban Munoz offer one of its latest incarnations in the aptly "What is Queer about Queer studies now?"<sup>1</sup> Using Butler's critique of sexual identity categories as a starting point, they work around a "queer epistemology" that explicitly opposes the sexual categories of Lesbian and Gay studies, as well as lesbian and gay identity politics. As Green (2007) states, the evolution of the queer theory begins with the problematization of sexual identity categories and extends dramatically to a more general deconstruction of social ontology that shapes contemporary debates. In this manner, as Halperin (1997) states, “queer” is not an umbrella term “because ‘queer’ need not be grounded in any positive truth or in any stable reality. As the word implies, ‘queer’ does not name some natural phenomenon or refer to some determinate object; it acquires its meaning from its oppositional relation to the norm” (62) which creates normative forms of sex and gender in which a female becomes a woman whose ‘desire’ must be for man, which can only make her a mother (Butler 1999).

As we will discuss through this chapter, my interviews reveal that queer mother/daughter relationships among trans sex worker women are not free of norm, yet these norms do not conform with the heterosexual matrix that defines women as mothers

and men as fathers. What is more, the experience of queer kinship reveals that for the construction of mother/daughter relationship, the existing heterosexual matrix is not a prerequisite.

Herein, I would like to clarify that, departing from Halperin's statements, my use of the term "queer" for the relationship of mother/daughterhood that is established between the trans sex workers in Istanbul is not based on their sexual orientation and gender identity, but is more about their oppositional positionality vis-à-vis the heterosexist kinship norms.

## **2.2. From Fictive to Queer Kinship**

In her piece, "Is Kinship Always Already Heterosexual?" (2002), Judith Butler encourages us to understand kinship as "a set of practices that institutes relationships of various kinds which negotiate the reproduction of life and the demands of death" (14). Butler asserts that kinship "has lost the capacity to be formalized and tracked in the conventional ways that ethnologists in the past have attempted to do" (15). On the other hand, when we look at the studies on kinship that occurred on the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we see that the idea of 'kinship' was largely related to biological relationality and followed the blood-lines between individuals. Thus, the Levi-Straussian idea that "there must be a father and a mother as a double point of reference for the child's origin" (Butler, 2002 30) was prevalent in studies of kinship and family. However, by 1975 a new shift emerged through Gayle Rubin's fresh theorizing of the sex/gender system in the "The Traffic in Women." In her critical reading of Levi-Strauss' kinship theory, Rubin stated that, "gender is a socially imposed division of the sexes and a product of the social relations of sexuality. The kinship system is based upon marriage. They therefore transform males and females into "men" and "women," who can only identify herself as mother when united with a man who is the father and vice versa.

In parallel with Freeman's work on kinship, according to Rubin, "the idea that men and women are two mutually exclusive categories must arise out of something other than a nonexistent 'natural' opposition" (Rubin, 1975 179), which brings us to Butler's questioning of the heterosexual matrix in which she claims that this matrix "creates normative ideals of sex and gender which are constructed through the naturalization of certain bodies, desires and practices" (Butler 1999 86). According to Butler, it is not surprising to see the impact of this matrix in parenting. The heterosexual matrix shapes our perception that only women can become mothers and only men can become fathers. In this thesis, while looking at queer kinship and its practices, I also raise questions regarding the heterosexual matrix in which my interviewees' lives were and still are shaped, albeit in specific, and sometimes violent, ways.

If we go back to our kinship discussion, we see that a year after Rubin's work, in 1976, Guttman introduces the idea of "fictive kinship". Accordingly, 'family' can also represent different groups of people even if they are not cohabiting, related by blood, law or adoption. Guttman (1976) provides one of the most in depth historical examinations of "fictive" kinship. According to him, individuals from various West African cultures viewed kinship as the normal idiom of social relations. During transport to United States (Patterson 1967) and later on in plantations (Guttman 1976), enslaved Africans taught children to address older persons who were unrelated to them by either blood or marriage with the title "aunt or uncle" (226). Guttman (1976) argues that the practice of instructing children to address all adult blacks as "aunt" or "uncle" served two important effects. It helped to socialize children into the slave community and acted to bind unrelated individuals to each other through "reciprocal fictive kinship relations" (228). Here, it is very important to look into the dynamics that constitute a fictive kin relation and delineate it from other associations such as close friendships. Moreover, the

individual's interpretation of the meaning of the fictive kin designations is of great consequence for the definition, duration, and form of these relationships. In this sense, according to Chatters, Taylor and Jayakody (1994) the meaning of fictive kin relationships likely differs for various demographic groups (e.g., gender, race, ethnicity, age, and socioeconomic status) and whether the association is peer-based or family-based. Additionally, among certain groups of individuals, fictive kin relations have characteristic attributes. It may be the case that there exists a typology of fictive kin relations that varies with regard to the community in question and the social context; and it might change over time reveal changes according to time (Lincoln and Mamiya, 1999). Accordingly, Freeman (1997) suggests that kinship should be seen as a social phenomenon and not as biological and it is a matter of culture and not nature. But what about naming it as "fictive"? Can we break the biological connotations of kinship by calling the alternative forms fictive? Or how could or should we define non-fictive kinship ties?

My experience of research and fieldwork in this thesis identified the problematics of naming the kinship among trans sex worker women as "fictive". This research aims to suggest new formulations of kinship ties that could encourage us to delimit the strict definitions of being a mother, daughter, father and/or son and refrain from reducing the discussion to the question of "Is it fictive? Or real? " As Elisabeth Freeman (1997) suggests in her piece *Queer Belongings*, in this research I would like to focus on the "possibility that queer bodies make something that might at least theoretically extend and endure" (5) the kinship rather than totally abandoning it. Because in some cases it can be "a set of representational and practical strategies for accommodating all the possible ways one human being's body can be vulnerable and hence dependent upon that of another, and for mobilizing all the possible resources one body has for taking care of

another” (6). Defining a kinship tie as “fictive” entails positioning it in relation to biological kinship. Therefore kinships, which are not established through blood relation, become unreal and fictive. On the contrary, the term “queer kinship” is used to deconstruct kinship’s relation to biology and the heterosexual matrix. In this thesis, I name mother/daughter relationship among trans sex worker women as queer, and build my theoretical framework around the concept of queer kinship.

### **2.3. Is it Social or Antisocial? – A Short Discussion on Queer Sociality**

As Rodriguez (2011) points out, an intense discussion on sociality has emerged in the context of queer theory, where we can see two trajectories. On one side there is an “antisocial” position, especially brought up by Leo Bersani who defines queerness as a thing that is “outside of any formulation of collectivity.” (1995 76). On the other side, we see Jose Esteban Munoz (2006) who positions queer sociality through the “understanding of queerness as collectivity.” According to Rodriguez “recognition and the social bonds it creates, remains another site of affective vulnerability... yet through our real and imagined sexual encounters, queers, enact the possibility of disentangling bodies and acts from preassigned meanings, of creating meaning and pleasure anew from the recycled scraps of dominant cultures.” (2011 338). While agreeing with Rodriguez and Munoz on “queerness as collectivity,” I focus on the existing queer bonds between mothers and daughters as a kinship, which provides a terrain to practice a critical positionality against the existing social norms. Additionally, focusing on queer bonds as an enactment to create alternative collective possibilities while revealing its attachment “to deploying failure as an opportunity for new critical interventions” (Rodriguez, 2011 332) helps me extend my discussion on ambivalent form of queer kinship. In other words, while focusing on the chronological sequence of this particular queer kinship between mothers and daughters, I try to lay out roles and identity

dynamics in relation to the idea of “becoming a woman”. Moreover, I focus on different layers of this queer kinship as an opportunity for new imaginings of the family through a discussion on its relation with empowerment.

#### **2.4. Why there is a Kinship As Such?**

Veena Das in her book Life and Words (2006) provokes us to think about language and body through transactions in the construction of pain. She states that pain is not something inexpressible and destroys communication, or "marks an exit from one's existence in language" (40). In contrast, according to her, pain makes a claim and knowledge on the other. This knowledge of other pains and experiences opens the door for possibilities of new resilience and solidarity dynamics. The mutual characteristic of my interviewees who are mothers and/or daughters is their rejection from their “biological” families because of their “misfit” positionality within the binary sex/gender system. Especially from the side of mothers, the reason of being part of this queer kinship – even if mothers were not part of it when they were inexperienced and at the stage of being a daughter- emerges primarily from the motive narrated by Burçin Anne: “why does anyone else who is like me have to experience exactly the same difficulties that I had to go through?” As mentioned above, all of my interviewees who came out on their gender identity, lost their contact with their families when they were very young. In the cases of Alev, Toprak, and Rojda, they also had to leave their hometowns and move to Istanbul for new job opportunities and start their gender identity reassignment process. However, as most of my participants stressed, parallel to the visibility of their gender identity<sup>10</sup>, job opportunities dramatically decrease and sex work becomes the

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<sup>10</sup> The fieldwork process revealed that this visibility is regardless of sexual reassignment surgery. According to narratives of my participants, “to look like a trans woman” regardless of sexual reassignment is enough to receive rejections from job applications.

only possibility for work. Ateş, Yeliz and Pelin call this situation “forced sex work”. In a similar fashion, Ateş emphasizes the “feudal family structure, normative state system, and the prevalence of transphobia in society” as the dynamics that are behind sex work becoming “forced”:

When it comes to sex workers, people assume that there is this pimp who forces us to work. But this is not the case. You see, the forces that make us sex workers are feudal family, normative state order and the transphobia that has penetrated into the society. It is as though we do not choose any of the alternative jobs in this hell of unemployment. I have my own profession, but I cannot perform it. Either I was going to be myself or I was going to carry on doing my job. I was stuck between these two options, I had to make a choice and I quit my job.<sup>11</sup>

According to Pelin, too, there is no other alternative than sex work for trans women in Turkey, unless the family is supportive of their trans child:

Well, nowadays we gradually see different examples, those who study or work very well. But this so much depends on the family. I mean if you look at such examples, you see that they got the family support. We know most of those examples, why sex worker? Because there is nothing else to do. If you do not want to starve, if you want a home and if you want to change your sexual identity, you need money for all this, right?<sup>12</sup>

Through her own experience, Yeliz told me that if you cannot create your own opportunity through self-employment, there is no choice other than sex work for trans women due to the transphobia in the society:

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<sup>11</sup> Zorunlu seks işçiliği denince insanlar hep sanki bi pezevenk var da o bizi zorla çalıştırıyor gibi anlıyo. Öyle değil ama işin aslı. Yani baktığında bizi buna zorlayanlar, feudal aile yapısı, normative devlet düzeni ve toplumun içine işleyen transfobi. Bu kadar işsizliğin arasında başka alternatifler var da biz mi seçmiyoruz? Benim kendi mesleğim var, ama yapamıyorum, kendim gibi davranışmak ya da işe devam etmek gibi bi seçim yapmak durumunda kaldım ve işi bıraktım.

<sup>12</sup> Yani şimdilerde yavaş yavaş görüyoruz farklı örnekler çıkıyor, okuyan güzel güzel çalışan. Ama bu da aileye o kadar bağımlı ki. Yani ailesi destek verenler oluyo bakarsan bu örnekler. Çoğu bildiğimiz örnek, seks işçisi, neden? Çünkü başka bir alternatif yok. Açılmak istemiyosan, ev istiyosan, cinsiyet kimliğini değiştirmek istiyosan hepsi için para lazım di mi?

If you are not self-employed, I don't know, like a writer or an artist etc. you do not have many options. I mean when other people are there, because of excessive transphobia.<sup>13</sup>

Whilst Pelin, Ateş and Yeliz were focusing on how transphobia excludes them from job opportunities and leaves sex work as the only option, Burçın and Toprak defined sex work as the singular space in which they can experience their womanhood. Rojda once told me how her life of and the lives of other trans women were similar to that of owls'. She told me that to avoid "transphobic attitudes and weird looks from people on streets", she only goes out and lives her life when it is dark, as owls do. Parallel to Rojda's example, Burçın and Toprak, in stressing transphobia in society, defined sex work as the only terrain where they can experience their womanhood:

You never get hired. I am self-employed, I work with no one, so I do not have to, that is why I am lucky actually. I am over the hill now, I have earned enough money. People ask why she keeps working? I do because I do this job to experience my womanhood. I do not care about the money anymore, I live my womanhood here, I show my womanhood. I cannot go to my family, it is too late for that and work, I cannot work either. (Burçın)<sup>14</sup>

Similarly, Toprak who is married to a woman, has a baby daughter from this marriage, as well as four trans daughters through queer kinship, says that her reasons for sex work are not financial at all. Like Burçın, sex work is the only site that provides Toprak a space to perform her womanhood:

I actually have a job to which I go like a man. But inside, I am a woman. But what happens if show that side of me at work? First, I will get fired and second I will get beaten. I also have a baby, I need to take care of that baby, but I also have my womanhood, which I need to live. That is why, we work as

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<sup>13</sup> Eğer tek başına yapabileceğin bi iş durumun yoksa. Ne biliyim, yazarlık, sanat vs. vs. gibi, başka bi seçenek kalmıyo. Yani başka insanlar girdiğinde devreye transfobi çok fazla olduğu için hiçbir zaman alınmıyosun. Benim işimde ben tek başımayım, kimseyle çalışmıyorum, yani çalışmaya gerek yok çünkü, o yüzden şanslıyım aslında.

<sup>14</sup> Benim artık yaşam geçti, yapacağım kadar paramı da yaptım. Diyolar neden hala devam ediyokine? Ediyorum çünkü ben zaten bu işi kadınlığımı yaşamak için yapıyorum. Artık parasında falan da değilim, ben burada kadınlığımı yaşıyorum, kadınlığımı gösteriyorum ... Aileme gitsem gidemem bu saatten sonra, e iş desen o da olmaz. (Burçın)

sex workers, and because there is no other place we can experience our womanhood.<sup>15</sup>

In this context, reasons that “force” my participants into sex work can be discussed through two angles. Whilst Pelin, Ateş and Yeliz were focusing on the financial dynamics that emerge in relation to transphobia that leave sex work as the only possibility for a job; Burçin and Yeliz mentioned the state of “being forced to do sex work” by defining it as the only space in which they can experience and perform their womanhood. What is more, the commonality between both narratives was the significant emphasis on the experience of transphobia in the experience of ever day life.

## **2.5. Queer Kinship As a Demand For Collective Identity**

Within this framework, both mothers and daughters that I interviewed positioned their relationship, against the continuum of extensive isolation in the society. According to Rojda and Yeliz, trans women who are isolated from the society, create their own communities. Similarly, according to Pelin, these communities exist for many years and trans women struggle against their marginalization in the society together. Additionally, she suggests that the mother/daughter relationship is a part of these communities and remind her how powerful they can be if they stand together and struggle against the continuum of violence towards trans women.

As described by Raymond Williams in his discussion of “structures of feeling” (1977), bonds describe relations that stretch from the strongest forms of human subjection to the experienced mutuality. Correspondingly, within the scope of the relation between queer kinship and empowerment, mutuality on the issue of the need for

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<sup>15</sup> Şimdi ben normalde işim var. Böyle erkekisi gittiğim, falan. Ama içim kadın benim. Ama bunu iş yerinde göstersem nolur? Kovulurum bir, dayak yer dövülürüm bu da iki. E benim bi de bebeğim var, baksam gerekiyo ama bi de kadınlığım var onu da yaşamam gerekiyo. O yüzden seks işçiliği yapıyoruz, bunu yaşayabileceğimiz başka bir yer yok çünkü.

solidarity and recognition emerged in the narratives of both mothers and daughters during my fieldwork. Most of my interviewees, especially New Wave, Yeliz, Ateş, Toprak and Hakan, defined their mother/daughter relationship as a “cover” for their need to be recognized and accepted in the society. Moreover, most of the mothers and daughters, defined their relationship as a companionship against the discriminative and isolating structures of heteronormative society and family forms that make them vulnerable to transphobic hate incidents. In this context, as Pelin puts it, mother/daughter relationship forms a solidarity among its parties:

This is forbidden, that is forbidden. Don’t do this, don’t do that. Although she has abandoned her family and things like that, a mother she finds here becomes a companion to her within this normative society. While she is exposed to exclusion, swearing and to other stuff, the mother embraces her and shows her the right way to do things.<sup>16</sup>

Çimen who had started her sex reassignment process three times, in which s/he discovered the “stupidity” of the binary sex/gender system and started to define him/herself as trans queer, argued that mother/daughter relationship comes from basic needs. Çimen said:

It’s a need, totally a need. First of all you need trust. All that discrimination, distance with the family. And emotionally, for years you have wanted to be someone’s daughter. You want to be under someone’s arms, you want to be their daughter. And if we speak of sex work, there is also a security-related trust . You need it there too, to know the system, to survive. You need it for a lot of things. Also for the steps you need to take for transformation.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> O yasak bu yasak. Onu yapma bunu yapma. En azından ailesinden kopmuş, yalnız falan filan olmuş olsa da, burada bulduğu anne ona bir destek bir yoldaş oluyo bu normatif toplum içinde. O kadar dışlanma, küfür, o bu olurken, anne ona kucak açıyo, ona yol yordam gösteriyo.

<sup>17</sup> İhtiyaç yani tamamen ihtiyaç. Bi kere güvene ihtiyacın var. O kadar dışlanma, aileden uzaklık. Bi de duygusal olarak yıllar boyu birinin kızı olmak istemişsin, onun ihtiyacı da var. Birinin kolları altında onun kızı olmak istiyosun. Seks işçiliği açısından bakarsak da güvenlik açısından güvenden bahsedebilirim. Orda da raconu bilmek, kurtulabilmek için buna ihtiyacı var. var da var yani. Dönüşüm için de bu geçerli.

Pelin, Peri's mother, mentions the "very basic need" when I asked about the source of this relationship.

We are talking about a very simple thing actually, love and belonging. We look like we don't care about these things but we do, we are humans too. When our families kick us out, or don't talk to us anymore or try to kill us just because we cut our dick off, we need solidarity. Its so simple actually. You want a companion next to you. This is a hard life.<sup>18</sup>

In parallel with her mother, Peri mentions the isolation of trans individuals from their families and their whole social environment that they built during their whole life.

It's so difficult a situation. I don't know how to explain. I would say the girl feels more safe. Think, let's say you are 20 years old or 15 doesn't matter. You have a lot of relationships that you have built, including your family. There is school and other things. And after your identity is visible, suddenly you have to isolate yourself from all of them. You don't have the right for shelter or any other right. Even if the girl completed her transition, where could she live? She has to get into the community. And it's the mother who provides that safety.<sup>19</sup>

Burçin, who has had around 10 daughters but identifies only 3 of them as "real daughters," is one of the oldest mothers in the trans community. According to Burçin's experience with daughters, being discriminated by the family and society plays the biggest role in the construction of mother/ daughter relationship among trans women.

Burçin said:

What can she do? Without a mother, father, they start to be like a child again when they come to me. Like they are 12-13 year old girls, you see?

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<sup>18</sup> Çok basit bir şeyden bahsediyoruz aslında, sevgi ve aidiyet. Yani dışardan böyle pek takmayız gibi durur ama biz de insanız yani. Ailemiz bizi dışarı attığında, konuşmadığında sırıf sıklıkla kestirdin diye öldürmeye çalıştığında yanına destek ister insan. Çok basit aslında. Yanına yoldaş istiyosun. Zor bu hayat.

<sup>19</sup> Çok zor bi durum ya. Nasıl anlatılır bilemedim. Yani kız kendini daha güvende hissediyorum diyim. Yani düşün işte 20 yaşındasın diyelim ya da 15 farketmez. O güne kadar uğraşıp da inşa ettiğin onca ilişki var. Ailen de buna dahil. Okul var o var bu var. Ve kimliğin ortaya çıktığında bi anda bunlardan sıyrılmam gerekiyo. Barınma hakkı yok o yok bu yok. Nerde barınabilir ki mesela kız dönüşümünü tamamlasa bile, o komüniteye girmeli. Bu güvenli hali de anne sağlıyo işte.

You are all alone. What you gonna do? You need support. Otherwise you cannot survive.<sup>20</sup>

Similarly, Yıldız answers my “Why do you think there is a kinship like this?” question, echoing a similar perception of discrimination:

Now, someone is leaving the house. Mostly they do it when they are around 20s, especially before army. When a 20 year old person leaves home, the missing part is the care and love. Who is gonna accept you? Who is gonna understand? From whom can you get support? Obviously not from the man in the street or the client that pays you. To whom you gonna trust? You are dreaming about it all the time. You are wishing for a person that can fill that gap of losing your mother. You are always chasing this wish. Even if you would make a lot of money, sometimes it's just a piece of paper. Money doesn't give the warmth that is needed. The loneliness and broken heart that you feel when you leave home, bad incidents that you face in streets, makes it worse. Than this need gets bigger. Real mother is already gone and lost. And she (daughter) is looking for that, actualy we are all looking for it.<sup>21</sup>

The emphasis on the relation between mother/daughter relationship and the need for acceptance and recognition that emerge both on narratives of mothers and daughters, mostly refers to “the routine dismissals of the participants’ self-understandings that were encountered on a daily basis” (Rooke, 2010 662) through the experience of transphobia. Herein, narratives of the mothers and daughters reveal the demand for collective identity and sense of belonging against marginalization in the society. On so, this sense of

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<sup>20</sup> Naapsın be. Anasız, babasız, yani bunlar tekrar çocuk oluyolar yanına geldiklerinde. Böyle 12, 13 yaşında kız gibi anladın mı? Yapayalnızın napıcan? Bi desteği ihtiyacın var. Barınamazsınız ki öbür türlü.

<sup>21</sup> Şimdi bi insan evden ayrılıyo, genelde 20 yaş öncesi ayrıliniyo, asker öncesi. 20 yaşından once birisi evinden ayrıldığı zaman yani en büyük eksiklik maneviyat, sevgi. Kim seni kabul edecek? Kim anlayacak? Kimse dayancaksın? Sokaktaki adama olmaz, para veren müsteriye olmaz. Kime güveneceksin?... Hayalini kuruyosun diyosun birisi olsa şöyle sırtımı yaslayabileceğim. Birisi olsa, da annenin boşluğunu doldurabilicek. E zaten hep onun peşindesin. Yani dünyaları da kazansan, yeri geldiğinde dünyaların parasını da kazansan, para yeri geliyo bi kağıt parçası yani. Atar ama yapayalnız, para ona sıcaklık da vermez, hiçbir şey vermez. O evinden ayrıldığı zaman o burukluk o yalnızlık, sokaktaki yaşadığı kötü olaylar, daha çok şey yapar onu o zaman. Daha çok ihtiyaç hissettirir. Gerçek annesi zaten kaybetmiş kopmuş, onu arıyo işte, arıyoruz yani.

belonging starts at a basic level, the construction of a site of recognition through the exchange of consents between mothers and daughters.

Firstly when they use the names by which they preferred to be addressed, they are thus establishing the important rules of their kinship. For instance Burçin exemplifies her approach to her daughters as follows:

"Come, my girl," I say, "Come and let's live together." Look, my girl, the rent for this apartment 200 liras. You'll out 100 and I'll put 100. We have everything, we can go to market, do some shopping. Whatever the cost is, we split it. We'll have our meal every day. We clean here, sweep, eat, drink and bring in stuff here just like two sisters. You'll go to your work, eh, this room is mine and that one is yours, and here is our living-room. It is her own room. If you get sick or uneasy, just tell me. Otherwise, lock your door and go to your bed. This is also your place as much as it is mine.<sup>22</sup>

Within the scope of mutual recognition that starts at the very beginning of the kinship plays a significant role in the construction process of queer kinship. "To ask someone which name and pronoun they would like to be addressed by" and to compromise on rules of their kinship, "opens up the possibility of 'linguistic agency'" (Rooke, 2010 665). Butler states that, "to be addressed is not merely to be recognized for what one already is, but to have the very term conferred by which the recognition of existence become possible. One comes to 'exist' by virtue of this fundamental dependence on the address of the other. One 'exists' not only by virtue of being recognized, but, in a prior sense by being recognizable." (1996 5). Similarly Toprak mentions the issue of being recognized by the mother and by the community as follows:

Imagine you don't have anyone. You family wouldn't say even a word to you, you are all alone. Inside, your heart tears apart. Then, you meet this woman, she accepts you as you are. She asks your name, and she calls you

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<sup>22</sup> Gel kızım diyorum, gel annem oturalım. Kızım diyorum bu evin kirası 200 lira. 100 lira sen ver bana, 100 lira da ben veriyim. Her şeyimiz var, pazara gideriz, alışveriş yaparız. Ne masraf ettik, bölüşürüz, her gün yemeğimiz olur. Burda kardeş kardeş sileriz, süpürüruz, yeriz, içeriz taşıraz. Sen git işine, müşterine ha bu oda benim, bu oda senin bura salonumuz. Kendi odasıdır, hasta misin, rahatsız misin, söyle bana. Ama hani öbür türlüsünde kitle kapını yat, burası senin evin benim evim olduğu kadar.

whatever you say, sometimes even she names you. She treats you however you want to be accepted. That creates a great bond between you two.<sup>23</sup>

Parallel with Toprak, Ateş also puts it:

My relationship with my mom still goes on because they don't know actually. For most of the girls, to have a mother is to be acknowledged in terms of sexual identity, which you don't see anywhere in the ordinary world. There is no way. You don't have right to shelter, right to health or right to work. No rights at all. You don't have any identity, either so you don't exist. But when you enter that community with the mother, when you have an intimate relationship, you just need her. This is very important affection. You are really seen as a woman, if you know what I mean?<sup>24</sup>

Ateş's experience that is narrated through "real womanness" can be interpreted as someone's "embodied gendered presence being hailed forth and recognised" (Rooke, 2010 663). Pelin's behavior and comments appear to be in agreement with those of her daughter. Pelin further delineates terms of address in positing the belief that the issue of recognition is more important from the daughter's side:

All in all, you put a long fight against people to make them acknowledge you, you struggle with them. There is the family, the state, the friends etc. Then you find yourself among dames. That is the meaning of having a daughter. Your daughter is the one who empowers it. You enjoy the cream at the top of a dessert. You start feeling more comfortable in time.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Yani kimsen yok düşün. Ailen seninle konuşmuyo etmiyo, yapayalnız kalmışsin. İçin de ayrı bi yanın var falan. Sonra bu kadınla tanışyosun, o seni olduğun gibi kabul ediyo. Adın ne diye soruyo, sen ne diyosan seni öyle çağrıyo, bazen isim bile koyuyo. Kabul görmek istediğin gibi davranışlıyo sana. O da çok büyük bi bağ yaratiyo işte.

<sup>24</sup> Benim annemle ilişkim devam ediyor çünkü bilmiyorlar aslında. Çoğu kızı baktığında annesi olması demek özellikle cinsiyet kimliği açısından kabul görmesi demek ki bu gündelik hayatı hiçbir yerde olmayan bir şey. İmkani yok barınma hakkın yok, sağlık hakkın yok, çalışma hakkın yok. Yok yani. Kimliğin de yok bu yüzden, yoksun yani. Ama işte anneyle o komüniteye girince falan bi de birebir ilişki olunca ona ihtiyaç duyuyosun işte bi şekilde. Çok önemli bi duyguya bu. Gerçekten kadın olarak algılanıyosun yani anlatabiliyo muyum?

<sup>25</sup> Sonuçta yıllar boyunca birileri seni kabul etsin diye savaş veriyosun, mücadele ediyosun. Yani aile var, devlet var, arkadaşların var vs. vs. Sonrasında gacıların arasında kendini buluyosun işte, yani kızının olması da öyle birsey demek oluyo. Kızın da onu daha da güçlendiren bi şey. Yani kaymaklı ekmek kadayıfı gibi birsey oluyosun artık... Zaman da geçtikçe bir de daha da rahat hissediyosun.

Similar to Pelin's narrative, Ahmed (2004) states that "comfort is characterised by a kind of ontological osmosis between the unambiguously gendered heterosexual body and the space it occupies; discomfort on the other hand is characterised by a feeling of disorientation, whereby one's body feels out of place, awkward or unsettled" (cited from Rook, 2010 665).

Muhtar explains that it was literally possible to observe new daughters' behaviors from her office which was in Ülker Street. She says that when daughters were newly arrived, they were quiet, shy and silently and softly speaking with their mothers and/or friends; however, as time passed, it was possible to observe them "as caterpillars turning into butterflies":

At the beginning – look, I am just picturing it now - at the beginning, you should see, the daughter grabs very tightly the mother's arm or whoever she is. She walks by grabbing mother's arm. She speaks as if she was humming, you almost cannot tell whether she exists or not. Then you see she gains her self-confidence in time, nice things start to happen. She releases the mother's arm in time. When she first leaves her hometown, she is frightened. Imagine she is all alone, she doesn't know what's going to happen to her, vulnerable. Then she finds people like her and hangs around with them, this gives her comfort. The mother gives her trust. After a while, you see that girl who leaves home grabbing tightly her mother's arm goes out like a nymph. It is just like a caterpillar turning into a butterfly.<sup>26</sup>

In this sense, this site of recognition could be also maintained through the mutuality between the processes that mothers and daughters have to go through. Questions that were also raised by Butler (2004) "... Who can I become in such a world where the limits and the meanings of the subject are set out in advance for me? By what norms am I

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<sup>26</sup> İlk zamanlar tabi bak şimdî gözümde canlandı birden, ilk zamanlar görmem lazımlı deli gibi koluna yapışır annesinin kız. İşte kimse artık. Bu yapışak yürür böyle. Böyle tıskonusur var mı yok mu anlamazsan nerdeyse. Sonra zamanla böyle görürsün kendine güveni geliiir, ondan sonra güzel güzel şey olur. Yani annenin kolunu bırakır zamanla. İlk geliyo memleketten korkuyo mesela düşünse yapayalnız falan, başıma ne gelcek bilmiyo savunmasız. Sonra böyle kendisi gibilerle oluyo o da onu rahatlatıyo. Anne güven veriyo. Sonra mesela biraz zaman geçeri bi bakarsın evden hep annesinin kolunda çıkan kız, afet gibi iner evden. Tırtıl kelebek olur ya onun gibi tam.

constrained as I begin to ask what I may become? And what happens when I become that for which there is no place within the given regime of truth?" (58) are in the centre of both mothers and daughters together with other LGBI individuals. In this manner, looking answers to similar questions, facing with similar obstacles or dreaming similar lives brings mothers and daughters together. Yeliz emphasizes the commonality among trans women through the impossibility of sharing everything with a non-trans individual as follows:

Well, I can never share everything with a woman or with a gay. I just can't. I tried a little bit at the college but you see I had a couple of female friends, I used to go their places and talk to them but it did not work. You cannot full express yourself, she looks at you but you know that she cannot understand you. After all, she isn't like you. It is totally different to be with someone you go through the same things. My best friends is a transgender person, one gets along with them best because they are just like you.<sup>27</sup>

Additionally, Yeşim explains the important role of being "similar" and its impact on feeling belonged as follows:

How can I tell? The mother has gone through everything and she knows everything. She knows what is going to happen to you, what you should use and what you should do, she knows everything. When that's the case, you feel that bond. You not only feel connected to mother, but to that home, that environment, those people, as well.<sup>28</sup>

The importance of shared experience and its effects on belonging was often described by my interviewees. For some interviewees the feelings of belonging were hand in hand with the feeling of recognition, a state of mind which provides the site of comfort

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<sup>27</sup> Yani ben hayatı mesela bi geyle ya da kadınla fahn böyle her şeyimi paylaşamıyorum. Olmuyo yani. Üniversitede biraz denemiştim ama görüşüsün yabi bikaç kadın arkadaşım vardı onlara gidiyodum, onlarla konuşuyodum ama olmuyo yani. Ya tam anlatamıyosun, böyle bakıyo sana ama anlamıyo yani biliyosun. Sonuçta senin gibi değil yani, aynı şeyleri yaşadığın biriyle olmak çok ayrı. Benim en iyi arkadaşım trans, en çok onlarla anlaşırsın çünkü senin gibilerdir.

<sup>28</sup> Nasıl anlatayım ki şimdi? Her açıdan anne her şeyi yaşamış biliyo oluyo. Senin başına gelecekleri, neyi kullanman gerektiğini, ne yapman gerektiğini falan her şeyi biliyo. Böyle olunca zaten bi bağ hissediyosun. O eve, ortama, insanlara da hani sadece anneye değil, bağlı hissediyosun.

discussed above. As Çimen comments, what is important is to have a "mutually understandable language" and "not having to explain yourself" (Ellis, 2007 Knocker, 2010).

Throughout my fieldwork, almost all of my participants framed four inter-related factors that play a significant role in the construction of their mother/daughter relationship. In this context, as Ateş puts it, the most important reason behind their exclusion from their own families, is the “heteronormative and feudal family.” In this context, the mother/daughter relationship becomes a support network that empowers its parties through the mutualities that they share due to their gender identity. Secondly, they stressed the connection between their gender identity, sex work and transphobic society structure through the discussion of “forced” sex work. According to the narratives of both mothers and daughters, mother/daughter relationship brings experienced and inexperienced trans sex worker women together to let the inexperienced “survive” (Rojda, Yıldız and Ateş). Before focusing on the relation between survivability and queer kinship in the following chapter, I focus on the construction of queer kinship asking such questions as: How do mothers and daughters find each other? Is it the mother who finds the daughter or vice-versa? Who accepts whom? How do they establish the kinship? Now let's focus on the narratives of mothers and daughters and see how this form of queer kinship gets to be established and maintained.

## **2.6. Construction of Queer Kinship**

Most of the interviews that I made with mothers and daughters helped me realize a common characteristic especially on the question of “Who finds whom?” Whilst Alev, Burçin, Pelin, Rojda, and Levent agree that it is mostly daughters who find the mothers, Yeşim’s experience reveals that this dynamic is not always the case. Secondly, the

narratives and experiences of both mothers and daughters show that there is not a fixed process or a place where mothers and daughters find one another. In this context, through the narratives of my participants, I will exemplify/ the Internet, streets, clubs, friendship and hometown networks (being a fellow-countrywoman) as the places that bring together mothers and daughters.

Levent defines himself as gay man and identifies himself as “almost a daughter” of his gay cousin. Additionally, his close friendships with trans women enabled him to observe two mother/daughter relationships. Levent stated as follows when I asked ‘who finds whom?’

I think daughter decides who's gonna be her mother, actually it's like children choosing the mother. And mothers are not accepting everyone. I think they decide on it according to some parameters.<sup>29</sup>

According to Burçin, it is also daughters who choose the mother; however, to her, mother has the ultimate authority to accept or decline the daughter's request. Similarly, Yıldız added that, if mother cannot find anything in common with the daughter, after a short while she has the power to end the kinship:

Of course, usually the daughter finds because she needs help, she is inexperienced and she doesn't know anywhere.

### **Well, is there a possibility for the mother not to accept?**

Sure, it depends on the person but usually you give it a try for a while. If it doesn't work, you let her go. The mother does let her go because the daughter is a little weak. (Burçin)  
The daughter comes and finds the mother in one way or another. I also hear mothers looking for daughters. But most of the time I can say it is the daughter who finds the mother.

### **Have you ever rejected a daughter?**

Of course, I have. Why not?

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<sup>29</sup>Sanırım kızlar seçiyo kimin anası olacağını, kimin şey olacağını yani çocuklar seçiyo biraz anayı. Analar böyle gel sen benle otur gibi değil de hani onlar da sonra bışeylere göre karar veriyolar sanırım.

## **Why?**

Sometimes you cannot get along with everyone. If you do not find anything in common, how will days pass? Or, I don't know, if the girl is messy, there was one like this, she wouldn't do anything, the apartment was such a mess. At the end of the first month, I said to her, "You should leave, honey."<sup>30</sup>

On the other hand while talking about her memory of meeting with her second mother, Yeşim says that actually it was the mother who chose her and convinced Yeşim to be her daughter. This experience demonstrates that there is not a fixed and essential process on how mothers and daughters find one other. Yeşim said:

Something has happened, I don't remember was it in a club or not. I came to this side and she saw me in the club. With the help of another lubunya mother Kübra, she saw me again and she said that you should come and stay with me, be my daughter. And after that I became trans while I was living with her<sup>31</sup>.

The narratives of mothers and daughters reveal that both parties play an important role in the construction and sustainability of queer kinship. In this context, instead of assigning

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<sup>30</sup> Tabi kız bulur genelde. Yani yardıma ihtiyacı olduğundan, deneyimsiz ve bir yer bilmediğinden anneyi bulur.

**Peki annenin kabul etmeye bi olasılığı oluyor mu?**

Yani bu insandan insane değişir tabi ama genek olarak, bi zaman denersin. Bakarsın olmazsa yol verirsin. Yani bunu da tabi anne yapıyor. Kız çünkü biraz aciz olan o durumda. (Burçin)

Kız gelir, bi şekilde bulur anneyi, annelerin aradığı da oluyomuş duyuyorum aslında ama hani çoğunuğu bakarsak genel olarak kızlar diyebilirim.

**Peki senin hiç reddettiğin bi kız oldu mu?**

Oldu tabi olmaz mı?

**Neden peki?**

Şimdi bazen uyuşmuyosun her insanla, yani ortak noktalar bulamazsan, nasi geççek günler? Ya da ne biliyim pisse mesela, böyle pis vardi bi tane hiçbişi yapmıyorum evi bok götürüyodu, ona dedim yani canım sen git hadi dedim 1 ay sonunda. (Yıldız)

<sup>31</sup> Bir şey oldu kulüpten mulüpten miydi tam hatırlamıyorum şimdi. Ben bu tarafa geldim, beni kulüpte miydi bi yerde görmüş. Bi lubunya aracılığıyla Kübra anne beni gördü sen gel benim yanında kal dedi bana, sen benim kızım ol dedi. Ondan sonra öyle öyle onun yanında trans oldum.

mothers and/or daughters as the authority in the construction and sustainability of kinship, I believe that to see this process, as a collaboration in which decisions of both mothers and daughters matter and play a significant role in finding and choosing each other is more appropriate. Now let's focus how and where mothers and daughters find each other and start to build the queer kinship.

### **2.6.1. Streets and Clubs**

Streets were and still are the places where daughters can approach their potential mothers. Even though most of my interviewees mentioned that the role of streets on this queer bond grows weaker with the emergence of the Internet, it still provides the main medium of connection. Levent puts it as follows:

Let's say you are saying that you want to be trans and you come all the way here from Adana. You know that they are around Taksim and you see some of them on square, you are going and talking to them, you learn where they live, you tell them you want to be with them, you tell them you are like them and you need help. And you go on and on like this and you find someone who could take you and you start living together. But it is not going like this anymore I think, it's changing.<sup>32</sup>

Pelin who is a former sex worker and familiar with the queer bond for more than 20 years comments as follows on the shift to “online mother search” among young individuals who are looking for a mother:

There was nothing as such before. Now its like they are searching on a catalogue. There are some of girls that they are searching on Facebook and texting to mothers by saying that they are coming as their daughters. I mean it didn't happen to me but I heard it from people. Okay it didn't disappear

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<sup>32</sup> Evet trans olmak istiyorum diyosun diyelim ki Adana'dan kalkıp buraya geldin. E Taksim civarında olduklarını biliyosun işte bikaç tanesini meydanda görüyosun soruyosun onlara, nerde yaşadıklarını öğreniyosun. Onlarla birlikte olmak istedığını söylüyosun, onlar gibi olduğunu, yardıma ihtiyacın olduğunu söylüyosun işte belki de ilk söylediğin kişi seni evine Kabul ediyo ve, onla birlikte yaşamaya başlıyosun. Ama bu pek böyle değil işte artık değişiyो sanırım.

but before first you were meeting and girl would come, or your friends would make you meet. It's a little weird when it is through the Internet.<sup>33</sup>

### 2.6.2. Networks – Friendship and *Hemşehrilik*<sup>34</sup>

The role of friendship networks and *hemşehrilik* plays a very significant role on the construction of mother/daughter bonds. Even if the experience of both mothers and daughters imply that the role of the streets is decreasing in the process while the role of social media and internet is increasing, all of my interviewees agree that the role of friendship and *hemşehri* networks have never lost their significance. Yeliz, who is originally from a town that is famous among the trans community by the solidarity of its people, explains the significance of hometown solidarity as follows:

Trans people are most of the time in contact with each other. For example if I would be a part of that community I would say that I'm living alone and I need someone that could live with me and help me, who could be my daughter and companion, to whom I can also teach this life. Than this wish starts to spread. I don't know, a friend of some of them from high school, university or someone from the street or their town hears this and the daughter finds the mother. Additionally there is also the "hometown" thing among trans people. Especially people from X take care of each other a lot. If a woman from X wants to transform and if she let someone from here who is also from X, they protect that woman. This hometown thing happens a lot. Especially for people from X. They act with solidarity and X has a big trans community. For this reason they protect and look after each other a lot.

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<sup>33</sup> Yani eskiden böyle bir şey yoktu. Şimdi böyle katalogtan bakar gibiler, Facebook o bu üzerinden bakıp hatta mesaj atıp ben geliyorum diye gelmeden ayarlayanları varmış. Yani ben yaşamadım ama duydum etraftan. Hani tamam yokolmadı ama eskiden tanışılırdı, kız gelirdi, ya da senin arkadaşlarını kızla tanışır sana getirirdi falan. Böyle bi garip oluyo internetten.

<sup>34</sup> Compatriotism

<sup>35</sup> Translar genel olarak birbirleriyle sürekli iletişim halindedirler, mesela ben onlardan biri olsam tek yaşıyorum diyorum, işte artık yapamıyorum hem yardımcı olabilecek hem benimle olabilecek birine ihtiyacım var diyorum. Yanımda dursa kızım olsa hem bana yoldaş olur hem de ben ona bu yolu öğretirim. Sonra bu istek ordan ne biliyim atıyorum, liseden arkadaşı, üniversiteden arkadaşı ya da ne biliyim sokağından biri, memleketinden birine ulaşuyo ve kız gelip onu buluyo. Bi de memleket olayı çok fazla bu translarda X'liler birbirlerini çok tutarlar yani. X'li gacı dönüşmek istiyosa burdaki gacılар haber verdiğinde bi şekilde tanışmışsa biriyle bi haber salındığında bi bilmemne

Similarly, according to Hakan, trans women who live in the same neighborhoods know each other and sometimes work “as agencies to find mothers for daughters or vice versa”:

The girls living in the same neighborhood or street know each other. If someone new is about to come there, everyone knows it. We know that. In the meantime, if I say that I want to take someone to my home, my friends are of my intention and they tell me about it. They ask me if I want the girl who is related to somebody’s somebody is coming to neighborhood. In case I want, I say okay; I meet the girl, we give it a try for a while. Now I just realized that it is like partner agencies, you know.<sup>36</sup>

Despite the diversity in the ways that bring mothers and daughters together, after accepting each other as mother/daughter, queer kinship evolves into an intense period in which daughters’ relation with womanhood practices starts under the guidance of their mothers. As mentioned in Chapter 1, this process lasts between two to four years and in most cases the mothers accept and see their daughter as a ‘woman’ – even if they would not fit to the normative woman image - and “teach” their daughters “how to be a woman.” More than that, in this context, mother/daughter relationship turns into a site where daughters are recognized as “a woman,” as Ateş stated above.

During our interview, Yıldız stated the “importance” of those years and explained the various steps of this process as follows:

You need to teach her everything within two-three years. Imagine she is coming to you with beards, with this or that. You teach her everything from

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olduğunda o gacayı korurlar hemen. Memleket şeyi çok fazla yani. Hele ki X'liler. Onlar çok dayanışırlar ve X'in çok büyük bi trans kitlesi vardır. O yüzden birbirlerini çok korurlar, birbirlerine sahip çıkarlar.

<sup>36</sup> Yani aynı mahallenin ya da sokağın kızları birbirini bilir. Ona göre eğer oraya yeni biri gelecekse bu önceden bilinir. Biliriz yani. O sırada diyelim ben dersem ki ben birini almak istiyorum evime, bunu arkadaşım biliyo oluyo ve bana söyleyo mesela. İşte falanca yerden falancanın falancası kız gelmiş ister misin diye. Ben de ona göre işte istiyosam evet diyorum, bi tanışıyorum, deniyoruz birbirimizi falan. Böyle partner ajanslar vardır ya, onlar gibi aslında şimdilik söyleyince.

the very beginning. You tell her about the drill, you teach her how to be like a woman and how to behave like a woman. So, he learns by observing but as a mother you have got to tell her.<sup>37</sup>

Throughout my research process, I realized that the emphasis on “real” womanness occupies a significant place in the narratives of my participants in relation to their mother/daughter relationship. However, more than its significant role in recognition and acceptance as a woman as discussed above, through establishing a hierarchy based on normative codes of beauty, queer kinship reveals the risks of the reproduction of binary oppositional gender norms. Parallel to this argument, the following section focuses on this period in which mothers transfer their knowledge and experience on womanhood and guide their daughters’ gender identity reassignment process.

## 2.7. Queer Kinship and Womanhood

In most of my interviews, terms such as “the system” and “racon” were used first in relation to womanhood. According to most of the mothers’ narratives, daughters become experienced by learning “how to be a woman” and “how to act like a woman” during these first years of their kinship. According to Asya:

Throughout your stay-over, you are responsible for her eyebrow shaping, waxing, hair growing, extending hair, for the clothes she wears, shoes, bag, eehh... the circles she is goes in and out, the people you are going to introduce her, preparing her for work, you are responsible for all these processes. You take care of her, you teach her the right way to do things, as folks say, you teach her the way.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Bu iki üç yılda her şeyi öğretmen gerekiyor... Düşün işte eline bazen bi geliyo, sakalları var, osu var busu var. Sen ona en baştan her şeyi öğretiyosun. Raconu anlatryosun, bi de tabi nası kadın gibi olunur, kadın gibi davranışlır bunu öğretiyosun. Yani o da görerek öğreniyo zaten ama tabi senin de anlatman gerekiyor bir anne olarak.

<sup>38</sup> Kaldığın süre boyunca da artık onun kaşını almasından, ağda yapmasından, saçını uzatmasından, kaynak yapmasından, giyeceği kılık kıyafet, ayakkabı, çanta, iih girip çıkacağı ortamlar, tanıştırman gereken insanlar, işe çıkartman, onu işe alıştırman, bu süreçlerin hepsi senden sorumlu. onunla ilgileniyosun, ona yol yordam öğretiyosun, öyle deniyo halk dilinde, yol yordam öğretiyosun işte.

According to Hakan, “a good daughter listens to her mother and follows the advice of her mother”:

Since we know this world, we already have a mental scheme. First, we start with the hair, bring her to a wax salon. Then start laser hair removal, then you teach her how to dress up. At the beginning we usually dress very lamely. Then there is make and other stuff, so it takes quite time. There come the hormones, the breasts, this or that. But actually at the beginning the breasts grow with the hormones but we need to enlarge them, don’t we (laugh).<sup>39</sup>

Similar to Hakan, Rojda who is a daughter for 11 months, explains how her mother “guided” her:

Back then, my hair was pretty long, I made it like Rihanna’s hair. It was still sissylike. That’s how I began. I am not giving the name, but I had a mother. She did no harm to me. I had more gayish clothes, not womanish clothes. Because I didn’t live with my parents, my dancer friends here and there gave me most of the clothes I had. My mother bought me clothes and she even put allowance into my pocket every day, when necessary. She helped me out with the surgery. She always supported me morally and materially. She is the first reason bringing me to these days from the past. Well, the cosmetics, the surgery, the breasts, the nose, the hair, then the trans life...<sup>40</sup>

Accordingly, narratives of daughters who start their transformation parallel with their becoming a daughter provide another important answer to our question that we raised in the beginning of this section. As Rojda points out, mothers’ extensive and unique experiences on “how to become a woman” include very valuable information for

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<sup>39</sup> Şimdi biz bu alemi bildiğimizden, bi plan oluyo zaten kafamızda. Yani önce işte saçla başla uğraşıyoruz, biraz ağdaya götürüyoruz. Sonra tabi lazere başlıyo, sonra giyinmesini öğretiyosun, genelde ilk başlarda pek bi paçavra giyiniriz biz. E işte makyajı osu busu darken biraz zaman alıyo tabi. E sonra hormonu, memesi, osu busu da geliyo. Ama tabi ilk meme, hormonal birlikte çıkar zaten ama büyütmek de lazım di mi ama (gülüşme).

<sup>40</sup> Hani o zamanlar zaten yarı saçlıydım ben Rihanna modeli yapmıştım. Hani gacivariye kaçıyor yine de. Orda başladım. Yine isim vermicem işte orda bi anne oldu. Bana bi zararı olmadı hiç. Çok gacivari kıyafetlerim yoktu daha çok geyimsi kıyafetlerim vardı zaten ailemle bulunmadığım için sağdan soldan dansçı arkadaşlarım filan vermişti birçok kıyafeti o bana gitti kıyafetler aldı, yeri geldi cebime her gün harçlığını koydu, ameliyat olurken yine yardımcı oldu. Maddi manevi yardımcı oldu hep. Hani eski halimden şu halime gelmemin birinci sebebi odur. İşte estetik , operasyon , göğüs, burun saç sonra trans yaşam hayatı...

“inexperienced” daughters. Peri who is at the beginning of hormone treatment under guidance of the mother said:

First you don’t know what to do. It is not the kind of information you could get at the time. Although it is much easier to get information on the hormones from Internet, I still rely on more Pelin’s knowledge. Apart from this, most of the girls still cannot think to go online and search for which hormone to take. They ask the mother, they learn from the mother, go to a drug-store, but them and use them. The mother does that, she brings the information that is hard to obtain right to you.<sup>41</sup>

Very similar to Peri, Yeliz said:

Because that mother always, just like I said, gets her hair done, provides her with the hormones, tells her where to buy them and communicates the experience to her. Once in a month, you’ll swallow, only one you’ll take. Because the other, the girl, doesn’t know, she knows nothing, how could she? Not all of them are political, not all of them are educated, they are not Internet users.<sup>42</sup>

Additionally, from the mothers’ side, the narratives are very parallel to those of the daughters’. They mostly mention the “big data” they have on “how to look like a woman.” According to them, these tricks and information that they teach are very important, indeed priceless, for “new” daughters who still look “laçovari”<sup>43</sup>. Alev who had three daughters till now, explained how and what she teaches to the daughters:

I’ve said it before; you totally learn how to be a woman. For example, hormones are a very complicated issue, if you go to a doctor, you’ve got to deal with lots of stuff. But we know, each of us tries them separately. Which

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<sup>41</sup> Ya birincisi ne yapacağını bilemem var. aslında hani bu sırada ulaşabileceğin bi bilgi değil. Yani hormonlarla ilgili bilgi almak artık internetle daha kolay olsa da ben mesela hala Pelin’in bilgisine daha çok güveniyorum. Ama bunun dışında kızların birçoğu da internete girip hangi hormone alıyım bilmem neyi şunu bunu bilmez. Sorar anneye ondan öğrenir, gidip alır, kullanır, o şey yapar, ulaşılması zor olan bilgileriayağına getirir.

<sup>42</sup> Çünkü yani o anne ona hep işte az önce de dediğim gibi işte işte saçını yaptırıcaktır, hormonunu sağlıcaktır hormonunu nerden alması gerektiğini, deneyimi aktarıcaktır, ayda bi tane yiceksin bi tane alcaksın. Çünkü bilmeyi ki diğeri yani, hiç bilmeyi, e nerden bilsinler hepsi politik değil, hepsi okumuş yazmış değil, internet kullanan insanlar değiller.

<sup>43</sup> Laçovari is a Lubunca word in the meaning of “manlike”, “manly”, “masculine”.

medicine do what? Which ones makes you on fire and which one puts that fire? We know all of this. Which one has what kinds of side effects? I tell all of this to her. Which doctor does what? What is the cost, etc.?<sup>44</sup>

According to Yıldız, throughout the sexual reassignment process, daughters should "suit" their mothers. For instance, what she expected from her daughters was to "get dressed as classy as her" and "behave as elegant as she does."

Throughout my fieldwork, I realized a second angle that gives another authority to mothers over their daughters in terms of their appearance regarding both their "beauty" and "dressing style". Yıldız found my question "What would you do if you would have a daughter who would like to keep her moustache?" almost unintelligible and answered me as follows:

Why does she go into such trouble then? I don't want that. If you disguise as a woman, you will do it completely. Do you see any woman with moustache or beard around? No, I don't get it, how will she become my daughter? She both has handlebar moustache and wears a mini skirt?

**Well, it doesn't have to be handlebar. How should I put it? Let's say, she says I am a woman but I don't want laser hair removal. What would you say then?**

What can I say? I'd ask, "Are you an idiot?" A proper daughter should comport you. I have been living here for almost thirty years. Everyone knows me. Is that appropriate for me to hang around with a shabby girl? No. She will pay attention to what she wears and how she looks.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Dedim ya tamamen nasıl kadın olunuru öğretiyosun. Yani hormone mesela çok karmaşık bi durum, doktora gitsen onca şey, ama biz biliyoruz, hani ayrı ayrı deneyenlerimiz var, hangi ilaç ne yapar, hangisi azdırır, hangisi söndürür biliyoruz. Hangisinin ne yan etkisi olur falan filan işte. Bunların hepsini anlatıyorum. Hangi doktorda ne yaptırmak lazım, kaça yaptırmak lazım falan filan işte.

<sup>45</sup> E o zaman niye bu kadar zahmete giriyo ki anlamadım. İstemem ben öyle. Kadın kılığına giriyosan, tam giriceksin. Sen büyükli, sakallı kadın göruyo musun etrafta? Hayır anlamadım yani, nası kızım olacak ki o zaman? Hem pala büyükli olacak hem mini etek giyecek mesela öyle mi?

**Yani pala olması gerekmek tabi de. Hani ne biliyim mesela dese ben kadınım ama lazere gitmek istemiyorum. Ne dersin o zaman?**

In contrast, there were few participants that kindly reminded me about the dangerous relation between mother/daughter relationship and normative gender norms. During our interviews, Çimen and New Wave critically stressed the importance of this period and discussed the authoritative attitudes of mothers over their daughters during the gender identity reassignment process. They both explicitly named this situation as “transnormativity” and accused the mother/daughter relationship by reproducing “fixed womanhood images” (Çimen). According to them, the sex work business requires “certain beauty codes” and queer kinship can reproduce these codes, and end up by limiting other alternatives of “being”:

When you look from that perspective, it is a relationship you enter as a man but go out and continue as a woman. If you say I want to put on lipstick and keep the beard, you will have no mother around because this is the system, and that system makes up the transnormativity.<sup>46</sup>

Similarly, Simpson (2012) focuses on the implicit dress codes that are experienced as "pressures to conform, for those who want to access particular communities" (42) in his discussion on different gay communities and the codes and norms that they develop. Research on this issue reveals the pressure on particular images such as "very hyper-masculine young men" among gay men and its potential risk of carrying physical barriers on access to communities (Simpson, 2012; Taylor, 2007; Valentine, 1993). Accordingly, the emphasis on womanhood and the pressure on daughters by the mothers through norms of gender roles reveal that this example of queer kinship does not aim to position itself against binary gender roles. In this regard, in the following section, I will

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Salak mısın? derim ne dicem?... Kızın dediğinin yanına yaklaşması lazım. Ben burada 30 senedir yaşıyorum neredeyse. Beni herkes bilir tanır. Yanımda çapulcu gibi bi kız gezdirirsem uygun kaçar mı? Olmaz. Dikkat edicek ne giydiğine, nasıl göründüğüne.

<sup>46</sup> O taraftan bakınca, erkek olarak girip, kadın olarak çıkış devam ettiğin bi ilişki bu. Ruj süriyim ama sakalım kalsın dersen anne manne kalmaz etrafında. Sistem bu çünkü, transnormativiteyi oluşturuyo o da

focus on the conflicts between mothers and daughters in relation to binary gender norms and reveal how the “beauty” of the daughters can impact mothers’ attitudes towards them. Meanwhile, through the example of ‘*domez*’<sup>47</sup> daughters, I will extend the discussion on sources of conflict in queer kinship.

## **2.8. "Don't be such a romantic"— Conflicts Between Mothers and Daughters**

In the case of queer kinship, barriers that were mentioned by Simpson (2012) could cause rejection by the mother and/or loss of companionship. Burçin explains that if you are starting a mother/daughter relationship, you as a daughter should accept the responsibilities and difficulties associated with it. As I mentioned before, a couple of hours after saying that "people keep calling her mother, but she does not really call anyone her daughter," Burçin opened her Facebook account and started to show me the "real daughter" among her trans daughters and to talk about how she is "proud of her". This pride derives from "her [the girl's] beauty":

Look, this is my real daughter. The only transwoman whom I can call my DAUGHTER. You know what, when she first came to me she looked like Mesut Yılmaz. You know how many times this chin was broken? How many surgeries, how many operations, how much silicone? I call her my silicon valley.

**That's really nice.**

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<sup>47</sup> *Domez* is a Lubunca word that means a daughter who works for you as your slave. She cleans the house, takes care of everything related with the house. In *domez*-mother relation, mother has a lot of rights on *domez* and most of the time she behaves very badly to her *domez*. According to Yeliz, *domez* daughters stay with their mothers because even if they are treated in a bad way, mothers still help them for the gender identity reassignment process and sex work. Mothers such as Burçin and Yıldız told me that, especially mothers of *domez* girls ask for money for every single night that she stay at her place together with every single customer that she has. According to most of my interviewees, having a *domez* is like having a slave and it is purely an exploitation of labor.

Eh, well. If you say I am gonna be a woman, you will be like this. You cannot be a woman with a little make-up and putting a skirt on.<sup>48</sup>

In this context, what makes a daughter “real” for Burçin strongly relates to her daughters’ physical appearance and “beauty.” Similarly, while we were talking about the future of my fieldwork, Alev’s enthusiasm to arrange an interview for me with the only one of her one of her daughters, who has been through sexual reassignment surgery, reveals the hierarchy established between daughters in relation to their gender identity formation process. Similarly, Yıldız described the conflict that took place between her and one of her previous daughters that ended their mother/daughter relationship as follows:

You cannot make some of them listen to you. Well, we are doing it for them, we are showing the way to make their wishes come true. But if you say I do not want to make the boobs now and be busy with irrelevant stuff. Sorry honey but they dismiss you.<sup>49</sup>

In most of the cases, the source of conflict emerged during the first two to four years of the queer kinship. Levent remembered, for example, how one of his closest friends was struggling with her mother’s rules during the first year of her mother/daughter relation:

She told me at the beginning. In the first year you are going to do this, at the end you’ll get your surgery. But throughout this first year she forbade her

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<sup>48</sup> Bak işte bu benim gerçek kızım. KIZIM diye seslenebildiğim tek trans. Var ya bu Mesut Yılmaz gibiymi bana ilk geldiğinde. Bu çene kaç kere kırıldı biliyo musun? Kaç kere ameliyat, kaç kere operasyon, kaç kere silikon. Ben silikon vadim diyorum ona.

### **Gerçekten çok hoşmuş.**

Eee işte. Kadın olucam diyosan böyle olucaksın. Öyle iki makyaj, bi etek çekmekle olmuvo kadınlık.

<sup>49</sup> Bazılarına söz geçiremezsin. Yani sonuçta onların iyiliği için yapıyoruz, yapmak istedikleri şeyler için yol gösteriyoruz. Ama sen gelir de yok ben onu şimdi istemiyorum, yok memeyi sonra yaptırıyorum diyip başka şeylerle uğraşırsan kusura bakma gülüm ama bırakırlar yani.

daughter to copulate or to have a relationship with someone. When we met she told me this and she told me how she secretly saw people.<sup>50</sup>

Similarly, Yıldız states that she mostly had conflicts with her daughters because of their relationship with men:

You cannot confuse the work with love. If you do, you are done. You've just come here, you are new, right? There is a lot to do, the operation, the surgery etc. You say I am gonna be a sex worker but this is not something you can do abruptly. You need to learn. But when the girls come first, they are hickies you know, they dedicate their lives to the first one who flirts with them. When this is the case, I get angry and this becomes a problem. If you say something, then you are gonna do it. You can make love later, but I cannot tell this.<sup>51</sup>

The narratives of my interviewees also revealed another source of conflict between mothers through the identification of "real motherhood". Whilst talking about the relationship with their mothers/daughters, all of my interviewees clearly differentiated themselves from being a mother of or being a "*domez*". Additionally, most of them rejected identifying their relationship as that of mother/daughter relationship and rather preferred to call it a form of "exploitation". Yıldız makes a clarification and calls herself and mothers like her as "real mothers" and the other ones as "the ones who call themselves as mothers." She says:

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<sup>50</sup> Baştan söylemişti işte yani ilk şunu şunu yapıcaksın, en sonunda da ameliyat olursun diye. Ama bu ilk sene boyunca biriyle ilişkiye girmesini ya da ilişki kurmasını yasaklamıştı. Görüşüğümüz zamanlarda bunu söyleyip nası gizli gizli birileriyle görüşüğünü anlatıyordu.

<sup>51</sup> Aşka işi karıştırımcaksın. Karıştırırsan yanarsın. Yani gelmişsin, yenisin di mi? Yapılacak onca iş var, operasyon, ameliyat vs. e seks işçiliği yapıcam diyosun ama bu öyle rastgele yapılacak bişey değil. Öğrenmen gerek. Ama kızlar işte böyle gelince, bi de kezbanlar tabi, ilk mavi boncuk verene hayatlarını veriyolar. E öyle olunca da ben kızıyorum sorun çıkıyor, bişey diyosan, yapıcaksın, sonra yap canım aşkı yani ama işte anlatamıyorum.

This is not motherhood, but total exploitation. You cannot be a mother by exploitation, saying come my daughter and stay with me and by exploiting. But there are a lot of those types in this world.<sup>52</sup>

Burçin also very clearly diversifies herself from mothers of "*domez*" and mentions that she would never do "such things" to an inexperienced girl. Similarly Pelin and Alev emphasize their differences from mothers of "*domez*" girls and continue as follows:

They make money out of their situation. Transwomen with not many customers can do things like that. Or sometimes they just do it as a demonstration of power. I never did that, I think it is torture to constantly treat someone this way. (Pelin)<sup>53</sup>

They are human. I have faith and there is something called rightful due. No one should take anyone else's rightful due. It is shame and sin. I know people who shits on the floor and make their subordinates clean it just to torture. This woman taught you how to dress and helped you. So what? (Alev)<sup>54</sup>

On the other hand, as a researcher and an activist, not meeting with any "*domez*" or a mother of a "*domez*" encouraged me to talk more about it. In other words, both "*domez*" girls and other girls are considered as daughters, and as Toprak states, nobody really looks for a daughter by saying "I want a *domez*, I want a slave". Sometimes at the beginning, sometimes as the relationship evolves, some mothers starts to "use" their daughters as "their maids". Yeliz states that this situation also creates a conflict between mothers and daughters due to "unfair" attitudes of mothers. According to her, most of

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<sup>52</sup> Bu annelik falan değil yani, sömürü tamamen. Gel kızım kızım, kal benle canım diyip kızı sömürerek anne olunmaz. Ama işte bizden çok onlar var bu alemdede.

<sup>53</sup> Bulundukları durumu paraya çeviriyolar işte. Yani pek müşterisi olmayan translar böyle şeyler yapabiliyo. Ya da bazen sadece güç gösterisi için yapıyolar işte. Ben hiç yapmadım yani sürekli olarak birine böyle davranışmak işkence bence (Pelin)

<sup>54</sup> Allah inancı olmayan insanlar bunlar. Ben inanıyorum ve kul hakkı denen bi şey var yani. Kimsenin hakkı kimseye geçmemeli. Yazık günah yani. Ben sırf işkence olsun diye yere sıçıp bokunu *domezine* temizleten insanlar biliyorum yani. Bu kararı sana nasıl giyinmesini öğretmiş, sana yardım etmiş nolacak yani (Alev).

the daughters endure and do not discuss this conflict. She explains some of the reasons that silence daughters during times of conflict as follows:

Look, the mother grabs a big carrot in her hands. It is worse if the mother is beautiful. The daughters thinks, sees the mother and says, "I will endure no matter how bad it is gonna be because I can end up like this woman in the end. I will have bazooms and twat. I am gonna be who I want to be, I am gonna be free. So she grits her teeth and sits. Meanwhile she learns the job. Of course it is a very bad period but you take that road for the carrot.<sup>55</sup>

According to New Wave, the emergence of these conflicts is not surprising. She defines this kinship similar to a "master/apprentice relationship" in which the master, i.e. the mothers in our case, "train" their daughters on gender identity reassignment and sex work which gives the power to the mothers and create a hierarchy which makes mother/daughter relationship vulnerable to conflicts. According to her, motherhood is "a level to achieve" for many trans sex worker women:

It is no doubt that the relationship is not a one-way straight road in any economy. The mother also benefits from this. The daughter helps the mother with cleaning the apartment. The mother establishes a kind of power, she jumps ahead, as can be seen in every profession. This is like being a boss and forming up your own staff. Then your daughter becomes a mother, and then the conflicts between mother start to occur. Where there is money, hierarchy inevitably and spontaneously emerges. You call it mother/daughter or employer-employee. This mother/daughter thing, I think, is all about the economy. There is no need to be romantic at all.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Şimdi anne büyük bi havuç tutuyo elinde. Hele de anne güzelse falan daha da fena. Kız şimdi düşünüyo, görüyo anneyi de, diyo ki "ne kadar kötü olsa da dayanıcam, çünkü sonuçta sonunda bu kadın gibi olabilicem. Titam, putkam olcak. İstediğim gibi olucam, daha özgür olucam falan. Öyle olunca da dişini sıkıp oturuyo işte. O sırada işi öğreniyo falan. Hani kötü bi dönem kesinlikle tabi ama işte havuç için gidiyosun o yolda.

<sup>56</sup> Tabi hiçbir ekonomide ilişki tek yönlü ilerlemez, onun bi de tersi bi yönde anneye getirileri var, evini temizlemesine yardım ediyio. En azından bi iktidar oluşturmuş oluyo, bi aşama atlamiş oluyo, yani bütün mesleklerde olan şeyler. Patron olup, kendi kadronu kurmak gibi bişey bu aslında. Sonra senin kızın anne oluyo, anneler arası çatışma oluyo falanlar filanlar. Biraz paranın döndüğü yerlerde, hiyerarşi kaçınılmaz ister istemez kendi kendine oluşuyor. Ona anne kız dersin, patron işçi dersin, onunla ilgili bi kavram ekonomiyle ilgili bi kavram olduğunu düşünüyorum bu anne kızlığın. Öyle çok romantik olmaya gerek yok bence.

Similarly, according to Çimen, there is a hierarchy at the center of the mother/daughter relationship. She states that from experience to appearance, mothers are most of the time "superior" to their daughters; furthermore, some of the mothers choose to reveal it in a "very hierarchical way" which creates conflicts while some do not:

Sometimes this relationship turns into a power demonstration. It sets the ground where the mother can feel better, more powerful and more complete. Even if her relationship with the daughter is good, I mean even if she does not exploit the daughter like her subordinate, some mothers feel more experiences just because of their daughters' existence. Because their daughters remind them the fact that how experienced they are. But when the mother is too tough they start to have problems with their daughters. Either the daughter or the mother leaves.

...

Sure, there is the monetary aspect. After all, this daughter pays the half of the rent, the bills and the shopping after a while, in case she lives with the mother. Sometimes she gets admission to the home under these conditions. Well, it is not possible to say that all of the mothers are like this. There are mothers who behave their daughters very differently, mothers who don't get even a penny from their daughters but I guess when we look at the majority, we need to see the monetary side of this relationship.<sup>57</sup>

Parallel to Çimen, Levent once again gives his friends' example and draws attention to another aspect of the financial angle of queer kinship that forms conflicts between the parties:

If the mother meets her daughter, let's say, when she is 45 or if she accepts her second or third daughter around those ages, she keeps her home lively.

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<sup>57</sup> Bazen güç gösterisi oluyo bu ilişki. Annenin daha iyi, daha güçlü, daha tamamlanmış hissetmesi için bir yer oluşturuyo. Kızıyla ilişkisi iyi de olsa, yani kızı domez gibi kullanmijo da olsa, bazı anneler, kızlarının varlığından dolayı daha pişmiş hissediyio. Çünkü kızları onlara aslında ne kadar deneyimli olduğunu hatırlatmış oluyo. Ama annenin sertliği fazla olduğunda da işte kızla arasında sorunlar çıkmaya başlıyo. Ya kız ya o bırakıp gidiyo.

...  
Parasal yönü de var tabii. Sonuçta en basitinden bu kız bi zaman sonra beraber yaşanılan durumlarda kiraya, faturalara, alışverişe ortak da oluyo. Bazen zaten bu şartla eve giriyo. Yani hepsi böyledir demek imkansız, çok farklı sekillerde davranışan, hiç para almayan anneler de var ama işte çoğunuğa bakınca biraz sanıyorum parasal yanını da görmek gerekiyo.

There is this example which I closely witnessed. The mother made her daughter not work for a whole year but she told her daughter to stay at the window. So she keeps her home alive, the daughter seems young and enthusiastic. Men get impressed by this and come to home. But in the meantime, the mother induces men or she directs them to other girls working, if there is any. So the daughter forbidden to work accelerates the money circulation. But she cannot do anything, she cannot sleep with men or anything else. She cannot earn money as she wishes, which makes troubles naturally.<sup>58</sup>

Focusing on terms such as queer and queer kinship, in this chapter, I tried to discuss the construction of queer kinship among trans sex worker women. At the same time, through the narratives of both mothers and daughters, I tried to establish a parallelism between the role of queer kinship on empowerment and my participants' constant encounter with transphobic attitudes through their experience with their families and society within the scope of their gender identity and sex work. Lastly, after discussing the significant relation between queer kinship and womanhood, based on the narratives of both mothers and daughters I focused on the sources of conflicts in queer kinship. I argue that the emerging queer intimacies explored here reflect a sense of resistance against normative forms of intimacy and contain ambiguous, variable, conflictual and changing dynamics, while at the same time providing solidarity and companionship (Plummer, 2003).

After framing the construction of queer kinship and the importance of the first two to four years in terms of gender identity reassignment, in the following chapter, I discuss how queer kinship affects daughters' relations with customers and the state apparatuses.

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<sup>58</sup> Eğer anne kızıyla ne biliyim işte 45 yaşında falan tanıştıysa, ya da işte 2. ya da 3. kızını bu yaşlardayken kabul ettiyse, bi yandan da evi canlı tutmuş oluyo. Mesela benim çok yakından şahit olduğum bi örnekte. Anne kızı 1 yıl çalışılmamıştı, ama kızı camda durmasını söylüyodu mesela. Hani evi canlı tutuyo o, genç, istekli falan. Adamlar da ondan etkilenip geliyo mesela, ama o arada da anne kafalayıveriyo ya da işte o anda başka kızlar varsa çalışan onlara yönlendiriyio falan. Böylece para akışının hızlanmasıne yardımcı oluyo kız. Ama hiçbirşey yapamıyo, yatamıyo, kalkamıyo, istediği gibi para kazanamıyo falan. O da doğal olarak sıkıntı yaratıyo.

Whilst focusing on the content of the knowledge that gets transferred from mothers to their daughters, I reveal the life-sustaining importance of queer kinship through examples of my participants.

## **CHAPTER 3: QUEER KINSHIP & INTRODUCTION TO ALEM**

“For an experienced event”, wrote Walter Benjamin, “is infinite at any rate, confined to one sphere of experience; a remembered event is infinite, because it is only a key to everything that happened before and after it” (1929 34). Investigating the routines and dynamics of queer kinship, during the process of my fieldwork, encouraged me to chase after the remembered events and the ‘knowledge’ transmitted from mothers to their daughters. Butler, in her talk titled “Queer Bonds” (2011), states that to understand queer relationships, first we need to understand the condition of precariousness as something that binds us to those whom we may not know, but share the condition of precariousness in which certain populations’ lives are regarded as livable, and others’ as unlivable and/or unmournable.

During my interviews I was preoccupied by some of the questions asked by Butler in *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*: “Who counts as human? Whose lives count as lives? And, finally, what makes for a grievable life?” (2006 20). In the last week of April, we were shaken by yet another hate crime. Çağla was murdered at her house and all of her friends complained about the “ignorance” of the police handling the murder case. According to their testimonies, the police did not want to touch Çağla’s body and hindered the health officers’ access to her by saying, “ölmüş gitmiş zaten, ellemeyin bunların ölülerini”<sup>59</sup>. While I was listening the story of Çağla and trying to

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<sup>59</sup> “She is dead anyways, do not touch their bodies.”

find an Imam who would “accept” to lead the funeral prayers, I was occupied by the same questions that were raised by Butler. When Çağla’s friends called her family after the incident, their answer was “we don’t have a kid called as such”, they also refused the responsibilities of taking her body from the hospital and organizing her funeral. As her friends and activists from Istanbul LGBT and SPOD, we started to plan the funeral and take action for a legal case. At the same time, one of us was calling forensics every 10 minutes to ask if her autopsy report was ready or not. Afterwards, we found out that during the 10 minutes between our calls, Çağla’s body had disappeared. The officer told us that it was her brother who came and took her body from the Forensics Department. Then, I was occupied with more questions: Was the brother thinking differently than her parents? Was he sad for his loss of a sibling? Was he mourning? Could he find an imam who would lead the funeral? While I was wondering about these questions and remembering Butler’s discussion of precariousness, Ateş came to me and said:

They say that she took two men into her room. This is one of the most important rules actually. I don’t understand why she did that.<sup>60</sup>

Ateş was looking surprised and looking for an answer on the reason that made Çağla to disregard the most important rule of sex work and accept two men at the same time. Ateş’s confusion made me more curious and encouraged me to chase these rules and knowledge passed from mothers to their daughters and see the extent of the knowledge transfer together with its role on the experience of daily life.

“Türkiye’de kadın olmak zaten zor. Bir de trans kadın olmayı düşünsene”<sup>61</sup> said Pelin once during our interview. She was right, at least 34 trans women were murdered

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<sup>60</sup> İki kişi almış diyolar odaya. Bu en önemli kurallardan biridir aslında. Neden yaptığı böyle hiç anlamadım.

in the past six years, Çağla was the 35<sup>th</sup> known and reported victim. According to Transgender Europe, around the globe, there were 238 reported cases of murdered trans individuals in 2013. Unfortunately, most of the cases stay unreported and silenced. Transphobic attitudes of police officers and legal system that I discussed in the first chapter plays a significant role especially in terms of trans women's withdrawal from the right to legal remedies. Deniz Kandiyoti's significant work "Pink Card Blues: Trouble and Strife at the Crossroads of Gender," (2002) similarly comments on feelings such as loneliness, depression and hopelessness as the mutual reactions of both mothers and daughters that I interviewed. These responses emerged when, borrowing Kandiyoti's question, I asked "What does it take to be a woman?" (278). Rojda puts it as follows:

You don't have any insurance, you don't have any health insurance, you don't get protection by the state, you have none of this. I got robbed, I got beaten up and I also pressed charges. I got no result in the end. When you go out to street for work, you get threatened by people to be stabbed, to be bladed or to be chopped off with a knife or something like that. You press charges and nothing happens because those who threaten you cooperate with the police. You don't get any positive result so you start fighting on your own. I carry a pepper spray in my bag, a pocket-knife or something else of that sort, I have to. You cannot blatantly say to those men come and kill me. You cannot say come and rob me, take my money and cell phone because you don't earn them easily.<sup>62</sup>

Rojda's twice postponing our interview and rejecting our meeting outside her house explains what it means to be a trans woman in the context of Turkey. Finally, she agreed to meet me in the office of Istanbul LGBTI Solidarity Association:

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<sup>61</sup> It is already difficult to be a woman in Turkey. Can you imagine to be a trans woman?"

<sup>62</sup> Bi güvencen yok, sağlık güvencen yok, devlet tarafından güvencen yok bunların hiçbirini yok. bugün ben gaspa da uğradım, hastanelik de oldum şikayetçi de oldum. Hiçbir şekilde sonuç alamadım. Sokakta çarka çıktığınızda birileri tarafından tehdit ediliyosunuz, keserim, jiletlerim, doğrarım, gidiyosunuz şikayet ediyosunuz hiçbirşey olmuyo. Çünkü hepsi polisle işbirliği içinde, o yüzden olumlu cevap alamadığın için artık kendin savaşmaya başlıyosun. Çantamda biber gazı taşıyorum, çakı taşıyorum bilmemne taşıyorum, mecbursun. E göz gore gore de gel beni öldür diyemezsin adama. Gel beni eşyamı telefonumu paramı gasp et de diyemezsin. Çünkü kolay kazanmıyosun..

For example, I don't go out. We don't have right to life here, so we live here like this. I don't go out, most of us already live in the night. I try not go out as much as possible. You don't what they can do. There is also the problem with the police. They grab your arm and try to take you because those bastards get bonuses. It is like hunting. You are sometimes like a little deer in the wild forests. That's why I don't wanna go out frequently.<sup>63</sup>

Similar to Rojda, Ateş, stresses on the situation as follows:

You don't have any rights basically, as a citizen you cannot benefit from any rights. Generally these are the problems. The health, the law, the shelter, they are all hindered.<sup>64</sup>

As Nancy Duncan posits, “the materiality of our bodies is seen to exclude us from participating in an ideal of reason which “knows no sex”, no embodied differences” (1996 2). Therefore, this “spatially structuring binary” that Rojda’s narrative underscores, “is employed to exclude, control, confine and suppress gender and sexual difference preserving traditional patriarchal and heterosexist power structures” (Duncan, 1996 13). During my fieldwork, the binary structure that Duncan states was obvious in the narratives of both mothers and daughters. Rojda calls her house and street in which she lives and works as a sex worker as “our (trans women) universe”, and defines İstiklal Street and most of the bars, restaurants, cafes and stores in Taksim as “their universe.”

When I asked, “Who is ‘they’?” she replied as follows:

Well, men, heterosexuals, women. Those who lean a normal life. Sometimes even gays and lesbians. You cannot feel comfortable even with them.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Bak mesela ben dışarı falan çıkmam. Bizim burda yaşamaya hakkımız yok ki, yani burda böyle yaşıyoruz işte. Sokağa falan çıkmam ben geceleri yaşarız zaten doğumuz. Gündüzleri de hani alışverişe falan tabii çıkmıyorum. Ama elimden geldiğince çıkmamaya çalışıyorum. Yani adamların ne yapacağını bilmiyosun. Bi de polis derdi var. Kolundan tutup götürmeye çalışıyorlar. Puan alıyo ya şerefsizler. Öyle av gibi yani. Hani küçük geyik vahşi ormanda gibi oluyosun bazen. O yüzden de ben çok çıkmak istemiyorum dışarı.

<sup>64</sup> Yani aslında hiçbirinin yok kısacası vatandaş olarak hiçbirin haktan yararlanamıyorsun. Genel olarak olan sorunların hepsi bunlar. Sağlığa, hukuka, barınmaya bunların hepsinin önlerinde engel var.

Rojda's statement corroborates Nash's (2010) argument that many trans individuals "experience unsettling combinations of reification and/or exclusion and rejection in LGBTQ spaces" (Halberstam 2005; Stryker 2006; Browne and Lim 2010). Yeliz explains this situation from her point of view as follows:

We lead a very cheap life. No matter how qualified a transperson, they are cheap in the eyes of some gay people. The language transpeople use is cheap; ehh... their conversation is cheap. But a gay cannot seem like them, he always lives in a better and more beautiful home, he is more sophisticated or whatever.

### **Why do you belong in different worlds?**

No matter what happens, a transgender person and a gay one cannot be the same. Of course you can see them very close, they can be really close friends. But there are some moments you cannot be with a lesbian, with a gay or with anyone else. They don't understand you or they can mock you, we have seen that. You cannot help getting uncomfortable.<sup>66</sup>

Many narratives of trans women during my fieldwork mirror the isolation discourse when it comes to talking about their position in the society. In the first chapter, I hope to have shown the process of the establishment of queer kinship starting from the moment of encounter until the moment that daughters leave the house of their mothers. Similarly, in this chapter, I aim to follow the same path and follow the everyday practice

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<sup>65</sup> Ya işte erkekler, heterolar, kadınlar. Normal hayatı olanlar. Bazen hatta geyler, lezbiyenler. Onlarlayken bile bazen tam iyi hissedemiyosun yani.

<sup>66</sup> Ya bi ucuz yaşıyoruz, bi trans ne kadar kaliteli olursa olsun ucuz olur özellikle de bazı geylerin gözünde. Kullandığı dil ucuzdur, üh sohbetleri ucuzdur... Bi gey ama, onlar gibi görünmez, her zaman daha kaliteli daha güzel bi evde yaşıyo işte daha kültürlü daha bilmemne...

### **Neden ayrı dünyaların insanlarısınız peki?**

Ne olursa olsun bi translə bi gey bir olamazlar. Yani çok yakın görürsün, mutlaka da yakın arkadaşırlar, tabii ki. Ama bazı anlar vardır ne lezbiyenler, ne gayle ne başka biriyle olmaz yani. Anlamazlar, ya da dalga da gecebilirler bazen öyle durumlar da gördük yani. Rahatsız oluyosun ister istemez.

of queer kinship by revisiting the different steps of the transmission of knowledge from mothers to daughters through a focus on their relation with customers and state apparatuses. As discussed in the first chapter, the term queer kinship emerges as a heterogeneous relationship encompassing a wide range of sites that help daughters to arrange their interactions with other trans women, state apparatuses, public sphere and customers. In this chapter, my argument unfolds on three different levels. The first level aims to trace the role of kinship in sex work through the discussion of kinship as a survival kit. During this section, I discuss the context of the knowledge transmission from mothers to their daughters, a knowledge that protects daughters against potential hate crimes that erupt from a number of unpredictable sources. In connection to my first argument, the second describes the making of a queer geography (through the pointing of transphobia-free spaces in the public sphere) among mothers and daughters and discusses it as a product of urban subculture. Thirdly, I focus on the interactions of trans daughters with state apparatuses (such as applications for new identity papers, the avoidance of military service and interactions with police forces) as routine, yet challenging, everyday experience.

According to the narratives of mothers and daughters, kinship plays a vital role in sex work. While focusing on this role of kinship, almost all of my interviewees defined the mother/daughter relationship as one in which they feel safe; often mentioning the word “danger” in contrast. For instance, Burçin stresses on the relationship between safety, kinship, and sex work with the following anecdote:

I have had daughters for years. Of course, it is more important for them to have a mother because we tell them, we teach them how to do this job or anything else. Shortly, we teach them the rules of this world. But you have to think, though. Let's say, I work more comfortably when I have my daughter in my apartment because when the customer knows someone is inside, he treats you in a more different way. Also, you teach your daughter

everything. It only takes a cry from you, she immediately comes and knows what to do because you talk to her beforehand.<sup>67</sup>

Ateş who is not living with her mother and at the early stages of her career as a sex worker and in the building her trans woman identity, comments on the issue as follows:

For example I don't live together but I am not a much active sex worker now. For the girls who solely work as a sex worker, it is okay to live with a friend but it is really important to live with a mother at the beginning. Imagine she is the most scarlet of all scarlet girls, she knows everything, she knows what to do in a case of danger. She knows how to get rid of danger, she knows what to do to get around the man. She teaches her daughter all of this so that her daughter could protect her in case anything happens to the mother. The mother feeds the daughter and the daughter feeds the mother, it is completely mutual, in this sense.<sup>68</sup>

Yeliz agrees with Ateş and puts it:

You have your daughter in the apartment, let's say I let a pervert in, he does something to me inside the room and I screamed, the daughter very well knows what to do there. They are all coordinated, the daughter knows what's happening inside and what she should do, everything. I mean it is necessary in every respect, the daughter also needs this, she needs it for her future, for the life she wants. She really needs that relationship with the mother.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Benim yillardır kızlarım oldu. Tabi onlar açısından daha önemli anneye sahip olmak çünkü biz anlatıyoruz da. Öğretiyoruz yani. Bu işin nasıl yapılacağını, falan filan. Kısacası alemin kurallarını öğretiyoruz. Ama öbür taraftan da düşünmek lazım. Yani ben mesela şimdî evde kızım varkene daha rahat çalışırım mesela, çünkü içeride birinin olduğunu bilince müşteri daha farklı davranışır sana. Bi de kîza öğretirsin her şeyi. Bi bağırmâna bakar, hemen gelir, ne yapacağını da bilir. Çünkü konuşursun onla daha önceden.

<sup>68</sup> Ben beraber yaşamıyorum mesela o kadar aktif bi seks işçiliği de yapmıyorum şu anda. Ama sadece seks işçiliği yapan kızlar açısından hani bi arkadaşla da olur tabi ama anneyle yaşamak ilk başlarda çok önemli. Kelvalar kelavî bi kadın yani düşün her şeyi biliyo, bi tehlike anında ne yapılması gerekiyo, ya da tehlike anının geçiştirmek, adamı kafalamak için ne yapılması gerektiğini biliyo. Bunu hem kızına öğretiyo ki onun başına gelirse kızı onu koruyabsın, hem de aynı bilgileri olası bi tehlike anında kızını korumak için kullanıyo. Tamamen karşılıklı yani, anne kızı, kız da anneyi besliyo bu açıdan.

<sup>69</sup> Kızın var evde yani ben atıyorum bi sapiğı aldım diyelim içeriye yani, adam bana içerde bişey yaptı bi çığlık attım, kız orda ne yapması gerektiğini çok iyi bilir yani, onlar hep paslaşmışlardır, orda ne olduğu onun ne yapması gerektiğini falan her şeyi

Most mothers and daughters I interviewed agreed that, in general, mothers and daughters live together and do sex work together. According to them, this situation has been changing in time: mothers and daughters are starting to establish their kinship while living in different houses (as in the cases of Ateş and Pelin or Toprak and her daughters). However, as Alev would also agree, for some of my interviewees, living together is one of the first conditions in mother/daughter kinship.

They live together. But like you said, nowadays there are those who don't live together. It is not an obligation of course but it is a must to live in the same home. I feel like you don't do justice to this relationship.<sup>70</sup>

Regarding the ones who live together, sex work and the need for safety occupies a significant place in their kinship relations. As I mentioned above, most of the mothers and daughters focus on the issue of taking "strangers" at home because of their work as well as the lack of security in working outside the home to define their vulnerability in the face of possible hate crimes from customers. Levent explains the safety benefits of living together:

Because you are taking your clients home, men you don't know are coming to your home from streets or from Internet now a days. So what you know about them is just what they say. So this kinship reduces the risk of getting in trouble if you are living or working together. So both mothers and daughters provide safety for each other.<sup>71</sup>

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bilir yani. Yani diyorum ya her şekilde ihtiyaç bu o onun ona ihtiyacı var geleceği için istediği hayatı için, onun da ona çok ihtiyacı var aslında.

<sup>70</sup> Beraber yaşarlar. Yani dediğin gibi şimdilerde aynı evde yaşamayanlar da var. Hani zorunluluk da değil tabi ama aynı evde olmazsa olmaz gibime geliyo. Yani hakkı verilmeymiş gibi geliyo.

<sup>71</sup> Ben güvenlik olduğunu düşünüyorum. Çünkü eve müşteri alıyosun hiç tanımadığın adamlar geliyo, sokaktan ya da şimdi internetten. Yani sadece onun söylediğlerini biliyosun. Eğer aynı evde çalışiyosan ya da yaşıyosan başına bişey gelmesi ihtimalini azaltmış oluyosun. Yani hem kızlar anneleri için hem de anneleri kızları için güvenlik oluşturmuş oluyo.

According to Rojda, in order to survive as trans women who do sex work, daughters need experienced protectors:

You are coming to a life that you cannot make it all alone. You cannot accommodate; you cannot survive. For sure you need someone who is experienced... Think! I just came to this life, can you do it alone? Because you do not know the environment, you do not know how dangerous, how bad it is. You have to encounter with a lot of people, a person (customer) can say lets just be together and we will talk about the money later and then can harm me, you need to trust someone. I did, and I never faced with difficulty in terms of that.<sup>72</sup>

Moreover, according to most of the mothers and daughters that I interviewed, being a daughter of a trans woman who is known by the community provides advantages and even acceptance. As Toprak, Yeşim, Yeliz and Yıldız put it, sex work is very competitive among trans women and newcomers are not welcomed if they are not “under the wings of a mother” (Yeşim). According to Yeliz, “to be a daughter of someone” plays a very important role in the community because it protects the daughters from possible dangers that could come not only from customers but also from other trans and/or sex worker women:

This is a very competitive place. It is the bread money after all and if you don’t know no one wants you in their territory. I even saw when it got ugly, people hired men and made them beat the daughter to dismiss her. So, let’s say, when you say I am Ebru’s daughter or when your mother comes to the street and says Ayşe will work here from nowon, no one can do anything because mother are powerful. The others get afraid of doing anything to you because they know that your mother will make their life miserable.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Hayata yeni geliyosun bi kere, tek başına yapamazsun. Bi yerde barınamazsun kurtulamazsun. Muhakkak daha bilgili, yaşamış görmüş insandan örnek almalısın... Düşün şimdi ben bu hayata hop diye atladım diyelim tek başına ne yapabilirsin?... Çünkü ortamı bilmiyosun, ortamın ne kadar tehlikeli, ne kadar kötü olduğunu bilmiyosun, karşına çeşit çeşit insan çıktıyo, beni alır gel parayı hallederiz birlikte olalım diyip, sana zarar da verebilir, güven lazım. Ben güvendim, hiç de zorluk çekmedim bu açıdan.

<sup>73</sup> Şimdi bu çok çekişmeli bi yer. Ekmek parası sonuçta. Ve bilinmiyosan, kimse seni alanine sokmak istemez. Hatta çirkinleştiği noktalar da gördüm ben hani kızı atmak için adam tutmalar, dövdürmeler falan. O yüzden atıyorum ben Ebru'nun kızıym dediğinde, ya da işte annen sokağa gelip, Ayşe artık burada çalışacak dedikten sonra sana kimse

Yeşim remembers her early times in sex work and explains how her relationships changed with other trans women who worked in the same night club with her after she met with her mother:

I was very hicky back then. I was working in a club, but of course you ask people around and learn stuff but... Later, you should have seen how people treated me after I told everyone that I was Kübra's daughter. Those who were being bitch to me before got cowered.<sup>74</sup>

For Rojda, when she was introduced by her mother to the other residents of the house where they work together, the mother advised her how to “survive” in the community:

You need to be careful around the circle, you have to survive. In our world, it seems that everyone loves each other, but that is not the case (laugh) that is why when I first came, my mother told me to whom I could talk or could not talk about anything and to whom I should pay attention. I mean it is very insecure. Well, in the street you cannot say oh well, I am safe. You always keep your eyes open and if you are lucky your mother tells you for whom you should keep your eyes wide open.<sup>75</sup>

During my fieldwork, I realized a commonality in the narratives of mothers in terms of the period in which their daughters “grow up”. They often identified two to four years as the time that was needed to learn how to be a sex worker and be safe, whilst starting their gender identity reassignment process. According to the narratives of both mothers and daughters, the first one or two years is when the daughters spend most of their time

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bışey yapamaz. Çünkü annelerin gücü var. Tırsar diğerleri sana bışey yapmaktan çünkü annenin onlara hayatı zehir edebileceğini bilir.

<sup>74</sup> Ben o zamanlar çok kezbandım. Öyle girdim çalışıyorum bi kulüpte tabi o zaman da soruyosun ediyosun ama... Sonra görmen lazımdı, yani ben Kübra annenin kızıym dedikten sonra milletin bana olan tavrını. Onun öncesinde madilik yapanlar birden tıss oldular.

<sup>75</sup> Ortamda da dikkatli olman lazım, hayatı kalman lazım. yani bizim alemde de herkes böyle birbirine bayılıyo gibi bi durum da yok hani (gülüşme) o yüzden ortama ilk girdiğimde annem bana kiminle nelerin konuşulup konuşulmayacağı, kime dikkat etmem gerektiğini falan anlattı hep. Yani çok güvensiz işte, hani sokakta da her zaman oh güvendeyim diyemiyosun. Hep gözün açık olmak zorunda, kime daha çok açman gerektiğini de anneden öğreniyosun şanslısan.

with their mothers and learn the “tricks” of sex work, as Pelin puts it. During this learning phase, as I observed, mothers follow a particularly structured approach in raising their daughters, step by step.

According to Yıldız, mothers should teach everything during the time that they live with their daughters. She says as a mother she first did the following:

First, you should teach her that you won’t always be around for her. You will be with her at the beginning but then you will teach her to create a safe place for herself in the worst circumstances. Because a daughter moves out after three years at most or she can go out to work on her own even when she is living with you. Anything can happen to her, she can meet a bad customer.<sup>76</sup>

While I was listening to Yıldız, I remembered what Rojda had told me when I asked her about how her mother treats her when it comes to security and sex work:

When I first came, she was always with me. We used to go together everywhere. After four months, she start to distance herself from me. She started saying, “I won’t always be around for you.” Then I realized she did this so that I could stand by myself.

### **What did she do?**

Well, I don’t know, once she made me sleep with a customer who paid 10 liras. She said to me, “Take him.” “The mom gives 10 liras, you will take it.” She said to me, can you believe it? Then in that evening, she came to me and said, “Look, you can fall like this, see the man who pays 10 liras and understand the situation, open your eyes.” Later I realized, she was actually preparing me. She showed me what kinds of men I can encounter in any circumstances. It was like training.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Öncelikle ona hep yanına olmayacağını öğretmen lazım. Önce onunla olucaksın ama sonra en kötü şartta bile nasıl kendine güvenlikli bir yer yaratmasını öğreticeksin. Çünkü kız dediğin maksimum 3 sene sonra ayrı eve çıkar, ya da senleyken de ayrı başına çarka çıkabilir. Başına bişey gelebilir, kötü müsteriye denk gelebilir.

<sup>77</sup> İlk geldiğimde çok benimleydi. Her yere beraber giderdik falan. Bi 4 ay sonra uzaklaşmaya başladı. “Ben hep senin yanında olmıcım” demeye başladı. Anladım sonradan, ayaklarımın üzerinde duruyım diye yaptı.

### **Neler yaptı peki?**

Ya ne diyim mesela, bi kere 10 lira veren müsteriyle yatırıldı. “Kabul et” dedi bana, “anne 10 lira veriyo”. “Kabul ediceksin” dedi bana inanabiliyo musun? Sonra akşamına geldi, “bak bu durumlara da düşebilirsın, 10 liralık adamı da gör ki anla, gözün açılsın”

While talking about how mothers were “training” their daughters to avoid any risk of hate crimes that they can face especially from their customers and or police, I found myself thinking about how the idea of violence can become a normalized part of daily life. During these “trainings” as Rojda calls them, mothers ensure their daughters face various difficult situations in which they suffer both physically and emotionally so that their chance of “being murdered by a customer would decrease.” Hines, (2007) highlights the important role of "trans support groups in enabling information sharing and mutual support" (Formby, 2012 31). Also, she adds that the need of support increases especially at times of transition and "particularly in context where desired care may be lacking in broader medical, social and welfare provision." (32) Herein, I believe that we can extend this argument to theorize that enabling information and support also greatly matters in the context where the risk of injury or death exists.

In relation to living under the stress embodied in the high risk of encountering hate crimes from customers, mothers transfer their personal experiences with customers by bringing their histories together with the collective history of the trans community who do sex work at the same neighbourhood.

### **3.1. Transmission of The “Giant Database” of Customers**

During the fieldwork, I observed significant diversity in the naming of this transmission among mothers and daughters. While Yeliz and Ateş called this transmission period “an experience sharing”, Muhtar identified it as “the transmission of a giant database.” According to Toprak, for Burçin and Pelin, it was “knowledge” that was transmitted from mothers to daughters. Occasionally, interviews with participants contained personal, sometimes collective experiences and information that is related to

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dedi. Sonradan anladım beni hazırlıyormuş aslında. Her şartta nasıl tiplerle karşılaşabileceğimi gösteriyo. Antreman gibi yani.

sex work and/or gender identity reassignment surgery; sometimes memories of police or customer violence; sometimes memories of military coup or tips about how to get a “Rotten Report”.<sup>78</sup>

Muhtar who was a head woman of Ülker Street during the 1990s and who shared her observations with me on queer kinship, calls this knowledge as a “giant database”:

Well, that is a huge information source, a huge information pool. There is the information each and every customer. The experience of years or the experience collectively gaines. Let's assume, you have just come and I am your mother. First I fill in you with details, the right way to do things or etc. Then we got to park or I don't know we go to a nightclub. I tell you each and every one of them. Here is Osman, he is no use but he feeds you with money very well or this is Haydar. Things like that. So, the daughter get access to the database and she starts getting the information about the potential customers. But if she goes out to work in the street, there is also information communicate between generations, general information about the things you need to understand from how the guy looks like.<sup>79</sup>

This “database” that is transmitted from mothers to daughters consists of both personal and collective experiences of mothers. According to Yeliz, and most of my interviewees, not only to earn money but also “to survive” is a part of their job and an inexperienced sex worker needs to learn a lot especially from their mothers:

Sometimes you need to sleep with twenty or thirty man. In festivals, it is like crazy. That is why you need to know. It is difficult to bear this both

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<sup>78</sup> A health report that is issued by Turkish military doctors as a proof for someone's ineligibility to perform military service referred to as *Çürüklü Raporu* in Turkish. For more information on military service and Rotten Report see Biricik, Alp. "The Rotten Report and the Reproduction of Masculinity, Nation and Security in Turkey." *Making Gender, Making War: Violence, Military, and Peacekeeping Practices* (2011): 76-89.

<sup>79</sup> Ya kocaman bi bilgi kaynağı bu, kocaman bi havuz. Müşterilerle ilgili teker teker bilgiler mevcut. Yılların getirdiği, ya da kolektif olarak öğrenilen deneyimler işte. Mesela bak diyelim ki sen geldin ben de annenim, sana önce anlatıyorum işte incelikler, raconlar onlar bunlar. Sonra mesela parka çıkıyoruz ya da ne biliyim kulübe gidiyoruz vs. ben sana teker teker anlatıyorum, işte diyorum bu Osman bundan bi bok olmaz ama iyi para yedirir, bu haydar falan filan. Böylece kız bu veri tabanına ulaşıyor ve olası müşteriler hakkında bilgiler edinmeye başlıyo. Bi yandan da diğer taraftan çarka çıkışlıyosa eğer orda da işte nesilden nesile geçen tipik bilgiler var adamin tipinden, tutumundan anlaşılması gerekenler gibi.

physically and spiritually. You have to be a good judge of characters so that you can pick up the good ones and can stay alive.<sup>80</sup>

Similarly, Rojda mentions on reasons of this need as follows:

Since you meet a wide variety of men, when you enter your room they could ask anything and they behave like they have every right to do anything to you. That's why you need to be prepared for anything.<sup>81</sup>

As Yeliz and Rojda mention, the large number of daily customers, the unsafe conditions of sex work, and unjust applications of police and the legal system against hate crimes towards trans women lead mothers to share their comprehensive information about their customers with their daughters. Additionally, this information is offered in the form of, as Ateş puts it, “tips” to understand the “type”<sup>82</sup> of customer in a “few minutes” and as Yeliz states, “the ability to pick the safe one” is transmitted from mothers to their daughters. According to Ateş, this ability comes with the time spent with the mother during the first years of the relationship.

According to the narratives of my participants, during this period, to teach the tips to “pick the right customer”, mothers also bring their daughters to the places that they know such as bars and clubs to “give information about their potential customers.” When I asked about how they do it, Burçin found me “too naïve” and answered me, but only after teasing me for a while:

Most of these types are regular. Some customers of certain pubs are such that even their time is definite. Anyway, I also have places I frequent regularly, I am very well known there as Burçin Mother. At the time, I brought some of my daughters to those pubs.

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<sup>80</sup> 20, 30 adamlı olman gerekiyo bazen. Bayramlarda falan hele deli gibi oluyo. O yüzden bilmen lazım. Hem ruhen hem fiziken kaldırıbmek çok zor. İnsan sarrafi olucan ki, sağlam olanları seçebilesin. Ha tabi bi de hayatı kalabilesin.

<sup>81</sup> Çeşit çeşit insanla karşılaşığın için odana girdiğinizde sizden her şeyi isteyebiliyo ve sanki sana her şeyi yapma hakkına sahipmiş gibi davranışyo. O yüzden hazırlıklı olman lazım her şeye karşı.

<sup>82</sup> “Customer type” refers to categories that are constituted by most of sex workers regarding safety and sometimes economical well being.

### **What would you do when you brought them?**

I used to take them with me, before we sat down I made them take a look around so that they could understand whom I would be talking about once we sat. We used to say hello to the tables and then sit down. Hüseyin sitting at the first table is such and such. This Osman is such and such. He has money. Don't get involved with that one because he is such and such.<sup>83</sup>

As I mentioned in the first chapter, my fieldwork period coincided with the beginning of the queer kinship between Pelin and Ateş. I hoped that to witness their relationship and observe the dynamics would help my ethnography. However, since we are friends and working together, I experienced difficulties in observing them from a researcher's perspective. I was feeling guilty and even sometimes deceitful. One day, Pelin told Ateş that they might go to the park so that Pelin can show her how to arrange a customer. Pelin also invited me so that they wouldn't look so "suspicious" to the police. I accepted but due to my concerns stated above, I decided to remind them of my researcher role. Afterwards, we went to the park together and I was very surprised by the speed of knowledge transmission especially in terms of "customer types". While we were walking, Pelin constantly commented on male passers by in the park. "This one is looking for someone," "this one looks unsafe," or "this one looks like a criminal type..." After leaving the park, I was so curious that I called Ateş in the evening to ask about her experience. She said:

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<sup>83</sup> Bu tiplerin çoğu müdavim olur. Belirli birahanelerin belirli müşterileri öylekine bazlarının belirli saati de olur. Neyse, benim de gittiklerim var, tanınırım, bilinirim Burçın Anne olarak. Kızlarımın bazlarını da oralara götürdüm zamanında.

### **Peki ne yapıyordun götürdüğünde mesela?**

Yani aslında alıp götürüyorum, sonra oturmadan bi baktırıyordumkine sonra oturursak kimden bahsettiğimi anlasın diye. Sonra masalara meraba dedikten sonra oturtturup. İşte ilk masadaki Hüseyin şöyledir böyledir. Bu Osman işte şu şöyledir böyledir. Parası vardır. Şuna bulaşma o böyledir gibisine.

You should have seen. Every man she talked about came to us after five minutes. Whatever she told came true. I went with the every guy she told me to go with, no problem come up.<sup>84</sup>

Having the opportunity to be with Pelin and Ateş in the park helped me to more extensively analyze my previous interviews. Then I understood, what Alev meant when she told me that she first teaches “the theory and then the practice”:

First you tell everything like attitudes or faces. For example, I don’t ever go with those who came and talk very nicely. There is always some shit with those guys. But there are men like bears, you can never get with them, either. It has to be the middle way. You tell her this stuff.

### **And then?**

Then I go out to work with her. At the beginning I stand beside her while she is bargaining with the customer. Let’s assume, if she cannot deal with him or there is some other shit going on I warn her. I tell her not to go with this guy or that guy.<sup>85</sup>

Additionally, interviewing mothers from different neighbourhoods in Istanbul revealed that the collective experience of trans women diversifies locally according to the dynamics of the neighbourhood, most particularly in terms of the customers and applications of police officers. For instance Yeşim who had two different mothers in different areas of Istanbul exemplified it as follows:

Before my first mother got killed, I lived on the other side (Anatolian side) then I came here to live with Banu Mother.

### **Did your both mothers teach you the same or similar things?**

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<sup>84</sup> Görmen lazımdı. Her dediği adam, 5 dakika sonra yanımızdaydı. Ne dediyse çıktı. Kimle git dediyse gittim, hiç bi sorun olmadı.

<sup>85</sup> Yani önce anlatıyosun. Tavırlar, haller var mesela. Ben mesela böyle gelip de çok kibar konuşanlarla hiç gitmem. Hep bi bokluk çıkar onlardan mesela. Hani böyle ayı gibiler de var hani onlarla da olmaz tabi. Ortasını bulacak. Onları anlatıyorum mesela.

#### **Sonra?**

Sonra işte, çarka çıkıyorum onunla, hani ilk zamanlarda yanında falan duruyorum müşteriyle anlaşırken. Diyelim anlaşamıysa, ya da başka bir madilik varsa uyarıyorum. Ya da diyorum bak buna git şuna gitme.

Well, there were similar things. But let's say, what you need to do in Fenerbahçe and in Taksim is different of course. There things only the girls hanging around those areas can know. Things such as where the police patrols, what kinds of customers come to what kinds of places. Also the certain areas of certain people, you cannot hang around in certain places to avoid bitches. I learned these things from my first mother, those who go out to work alone usually get in trouble.<sup>86</sup>

On the other hand, I also noticed general collective knowledge that transmits from all mothers that I interviewed. Alev calls them as “general rules” which are applied to every trans worker:

There are also general rules. You have got to know them. They never change anywhere. I don't know, let's say, even if you got to Thailand, they are the same rules, I think.<sup>87</sup>

Let us remember Ateş's reaction two Çağla's murder, and her confusion when it was found out that Çağla had accepted two customers at the same time. During my fieldwork, I realized that not to accept two customers at a time was the number one rule that every mother taught her daughter. Regardless of their age and location, they invariably answered that no matter what happens, the first rule that they teach is “to be with only one customer at a time.” Now let us focus on the narratives of mothers and daughters in terms of general rules and also pay attention to the fixed sequence of these “general rules” as Alev puts it. For instance, Toprak (23) who is the youngest mother that I interviewed states:

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<sup>86</sup> İlk annem öldürülmeden önce ben karşıdaydım (Anadolu Yakası) sonra Banu Anne'nin yanına bu tarafa geçtim.

**İkisinden öğrendiklerin aynı mıydı peki yoksa benzer miydi?**

Yani benzer kısımlar da vardı. Ama mesela atıyorum Fenerbahçe'de yapman gerekenlerle, Taksim'de yapman gerekenler farklı tabi. Hani sadece oranın kızlarının bildiği şeyler var. İşte polisin nerede durduğu, hangi tip müşterilerin nereklere geldiği gibi. Bi de insanların bölgeleri var tabii, bazı yerlerde durmaman gerekiyo madilik olmaması için mesela. Hani onları önceden anneden öğrendim, kendi başına öylesine çıkanların başı derde giriyo genelde.

<sup>87</sup> Bir de genel kurallar vardır. Bilmek zorundasın. Onlar hiçbir yerde değişmez. Hani bence hatta ne biliyim Tayland'a gitse de aynıdır.

You had better not get in the car where there are two people, you'd better take a look at the car you are about to get in. Okay, of course if he is gonna do something bad to you, he won't put the thing with which he is going to hurt you right in front of your eyes, but there is no choice for him, he will put in the front or in the back or just under his hand. When you go out in streets with me or without me, you'd better do not wear a shawl, scarf or something like that around your neck or a necklace with wide chains.<sup>88</sup>

Yıldız who is 56 years old comments on general rules in terms of getting in and out of a customer's automobile:

Don't get into the car if there are two people, if the back part of the car is dark, do not get in there before you the back. Do not hang around in very desolate areas. If you see a crowd coming towards you, you either walk across the road or walk in the opposite direction. I always advised stuff like this, of course. When you get in a car and when they are going to kidnap you, first wait, there is certainly be red traffic light. You will get out of the car, when the light turns red, do not switch the wheel immediately. I advised them on every issue.

<sup>89</sup>

Furthermore, narratives of daughters reveal the transmission of collective experience and how the content and sequence of the “general rules” can stay permanent. Pelin’s daughter Ateş comments on “general rules” as follows:

She told me not to get in a car if there are two people. No matter what. When you realize that the man is on drugs, do not accept him. Carry a pepper spray with you.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Sen sen ol birden fazla kişinin olduğu arabaya binme, sen sen ol gireceğin arabanın içine once bi göz at. Hani tamam eğer ki kötü niyetli bi insansa zaten sana zarar vericek maddeyi senin gözünün önüne koymaz ama eli mahkumdur ya ön tarafa koyar ya arka tarafa koyar ya elinin altına koyar. Sen sen ol işte caddeye çıktığında, benle veya benim yokluğumda, boynunda poların, atkısı veya ona benzer, kalın zincirli kolyeler falan takma derim.

<sup>89</sup> 2 kişinin arabasına binme, arabanın arkası karanlıksa içeriyi görmeden tekrar binme. Çok tenha bir yerde durma, kalabalık bir grup tarafından gelirse ya karşısından karşıya geç ya ters yönde yürü, o tip akıllar hep verdim tabii ki. Bi arabaya bindiğin zaman seni kaçırıcıları zaman ilk once bi bekle kırmızı ışık mutlaka vardır. Orda inersin giden arabanın direksiyonunu hemen çevirme, her konuda akıl verdim onlara.

<sup>90</sup> İki kişinin arabasına sakın binme dedi. Ne olursa olsun. Uyuşturucu madde aldığıni farkettiğin birini kabul etme. İşte biber gazı bulundur gibi şeyler.

According to Rojda, those rules become so automatic with time that her “radar” slowly becomes sensitized:

Well, of course it is really hard at the beginning, you check out everything with the man but you also have little time. It is really difficult.

### **What do you check out?**

Whether he is alone, if he has any friends, if he is on drugs, how he is talking, how he behaves, how much he pays. You need to be able to read this kind of stuff like radar.<sup>91</sup>

In addition, she stated that her mother not only explained the rules but also forced her to experience many different customers during her first months to show her the diversity among customers. According to Rojda, the rationale was to prepare her against unexpected risky behaviors that result from customers departing from personal survival stories. She explained her experience as follows:

Or I don't know, once she made me sleep with a customer who paid 10 liras. She said to me, “Take him.” “The mom gives 10 liras, you will take it.” She said to me, can you believe it? Then in that evening, she came to me and said, “Look, you can fall like this, see the man who pays 10 liras and understand the situation, open your eyes.” Later, I learned, when she was very poor at the beginning, she came to the edge of that many times. That is why, she showed me what kinds of men I can encounter in any circumstances. It was like training.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Ya ilk başlarda çok zor tabi her şeyi control edip ona gore kabul ediyosun mesela ama işte zamanında az. O çok zor oluyo.

#### **Sen neleri kontrol ediyosun mesela?**

İşte tek mi? arkadaşları var mı? Madde almış mı? Nasıl konuşuyo? Tavırları nasıl? Ücrette nasıl? Gibi böyle şeyleri tık tık anlayabilmen gerekiyo biraz radar gibi.

<sup>92</sup> Ya ne diyim mesela, bi kere 10 lira veren müsteriyle yatırıldı. “Kabul et” dedi bana, “anne 10 lira veriyo”. “Kabul ediceksin” dedi bana inanabiliyo musun? Sonra akşamına geldi, “bak bu durumlara da düşebilirsin, 10 liralık adamı da gör ki anla, gözün açılsın” dedi. Sonradan öğrendim, o çok fakirken ilk zamanlarında, ölümlerden dönmüş kaç kere. O yüzden her şartta nasıl tiplerle karşılaşabileceğimi gösteriyo. Antreman gibi yani.

During what Rojda calls “trainings,” mothers make their daughters face many difficult situations in which they suffer both physically and emotionally with the logic that the daughters’ chance of “being murdered by a customer would decrease.”

On the other hand, as Hakan puts it, hate crimes or assaults “do not end when you follow the rules of the mothers”:

You know, everyone tells that they teach this or that, they tell their daughters this or that. So what? We are constantly being killed. I don’t believe this works anymore.<sup>93</sup>

Similarly, according to Yeliz, trans sex worker women, are doubly victimized both because they are sex workers and trans individuals. For this reason, following the rules in terms of customers become important in avoiding some of the most dangerous outcomes of transphobia. However, during my fieldwork, apart from the transmission of the knowledge on customers, I also realized another dynamic that directs daughters to relatively safer areas in the public sphere. In the following section, I will discuss this transfer as an alternative mapping of the city through the marking of transphobia-free spaces.

### **3.2. Map of Transphobia-Free Spaces**

Narratives of almost all of my interviewees reveal the important role of the transmission of a cognitive map of transphobia-free spaces from mothers to daughters. In addition, it is also important to mention that this knowledge on spaces travels not only between individuals through kinship but also through friendship. According to most of my interviewees, identifying non-transphobic places is extremely important. Yeliz who could not go to a hairdresser for a year when she moved to Istanbul, due to her fear of

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<sup>93</sup> Hani anlatıiyoruz böyle onu anlatıyorum bunu öğretiyorum diye de, noluyo ki. Yine çatır çatır öldürülüyorum. Ben çok inanmıyorum artık bunların işe yaradığına.

humiliation, extensively delineated the transmission of the information on Istanbul's non-transphobic points:

This passes down from one generation to another. I am gonna talk on the basis of mother/daughter relationship as it is out topic but people who are not mothers and daughters share this information because it is extremely important. It becomes much more important especially when you are a newcomer. Let's take me as an example, when I came here after college, I did not go to any hair salon until someone showed me hair salon where transpeople get their hair done. This is only one example, but there is dentist, the grocery store, the liquor store, the doctor, the laser epilation place, and so on. Mothers have all this information. When daughters come first, they learn these things so they won't encounter any pointless phobic treatments. This is how you act in solidarity. The mother or her friends or somebody else already went through that trouble that is why she says, "go to this place but do not ever go to that place," because she knows. Well, we have a kind of little map for this area, a map we draw through advices on where to go and where not to go.<sup>94</sup>

Similarly, Alev who had similar experience with her daughters explains that the process of mapping non-transphobic spaces goes as follows:

To be honest, I told everything, from the grocery store to the laser epilation place. For this, this is the place and for that, that is the place. For example, we have a dentist here, and we trannies generally go to that dentist, we know and we trust that one. Or our pharmacy is certain one, or if we go to a place for hormone injection, that is also a known place.

### **Well, do you expose phobic places to them?**

Sure, sure. Not only to the girls, but we talk about those phobic places to the people we are together in the movement as well. We tell them this place is

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<sup>94</sup> Bak nesilden nesile geçer bu, hani konumuz o diye anne kız üzerinden anlaticam ama ana kız olmayan insanlar da paylaşır bu bilgiyi. çok önemlidir çünkü. bi de hele yeni geldiysen yani iyice önem kazanır. bak ben kendimden örnek veriyim, buraya gelince üniversiteden sonra ben 1 sene gitmedim kuaföre, ta ki biri bana travestilerin saçlarını yaptırdığı kuaföre gösterene kadar. Bak bu sadece bi örneki bunun dışçısı var, bakkalı var, tekeli var, doktoru var, lazercisi var, var da var yani. Bütün bunlar annelerde var. Kızlar da ilk geldiklerinde yavaş yavaş bunları öğrenirler ki boşu boşuna başka bir yere gidip fobik fobik hareketlerle karşılaşmasınlar. böyle böyle dayanışyosun işte. hani anne ya da onun arkadaşı ya da bilmemne zaten yaşamıştır o sıkıntıyı o yüzden der mesela "buraya git ama buraya sakın gitme" bilir çünkü. Hani mesela burası için öyle minik bi haritamız var gibi. buraya git buraya gitme lafları üzerinden oluşan.

such and such. For example, we went up there and protested against them.  
We also do the other way.<sup>95</sup>

As Formby (2012) suggests "the comfort and/or safety that spaces could bring are clearly important to notions of community" (25). Dilys who was one of her informants comments on this issue in terms of the LGBT community in England as follows:

"You need a safe space. If you go down the local pub and sit there holding your girlfriend's hand and kissing her you aren't going to stay there for very long... you need to know that you can be safe there" (26).

Additionally, it is important to remember the flexibility and mobility of these maps according to time and place. This interactive cognitive map revises itself through the information that comes from the community and continues to be transmitted to people. Burçin compares her youth with contemporary youth through the discussion of transphobia free spaces and their transmission:

These issues were also there in our days, to which hair salon we should go, to which night club we should go, where to go for surgery, of course most of the places for surgery were unlicensed at the time. Or we knew where to go for wax, we learned these from our elderly or from the girls that came before us. This information is transmitted to others. While we are living, we see the new ones, let's say, a new hair salon opens and somebody gives it a try and says, "no, useless," then you say, "I won't go there," then you share this info with your daughter. This is how it goes.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Valla ben bakkalından, lazercisine kadar hepsini söylediğim. şunun için şuraya bunun için buraya gibi. Mesela bizim burda bi dişçimiz var biz gacılarsa ona gideriz genelde yani biliriz işte güveniriz falan. Ya da işte eczanemiz bellidir, ya da hormon vurulmak için bir yere gideceksek o da bellidir.

#### **Peki fobik yerleri de teşhir ediyorum onlara?**

Tabi tabi yani sadece kızlara değil hareketten içinde bulunduğu gruplarda da paylaşıyoruz. burası böyle böyle diye. gittik eylemimizi yaptık mesela falan. hani öbür türüsünü de yapıyoruz.

<sup>96</sup> Bizim zamanımızda da vardı hani kuaföre nereye gidilir, kulübe nereye gidilir, işte ameliyat için nereye gidilir, tabi o zaman merdiven altı çoğu ameliyat yeri. Ya da ağdaya nereye gidilir bilirdik ya büyüklerimizden ya bizden biraz daha eski kızlardan. Bu da böyle böyle diğerlerine geçiyorum, hani biz yaşarken yenilerini görüyoruz, atıyorum yeni bi kuaför açılıyo biri denemiş oluyo diyo ki "yok yaramaz" o zaman diyosun ki "buraya gitmeyeceğim" bunu kızımla da paylaşmışsun mesela. Ya da tam tersiyse "buraya gidelim" diyosun böyle ilerliyo yani.

In this sense, the identification of transphobia free places travels from person to person. This interactive and mobile feature of the knowledge enables relocation to new areas and sites.

Now let us return to the opening paragraphs of this chapter to remind ourselves of Ateş's and Rojda's comments on the lack of basic human rights in trans women's lives and discuss the role of queer kinship on its parties' relation with state.

### **3.3. Kinship's Role on Daughters' Relations with the State Apparatuses**

As Partog (2011) states, the trans women community in Turkey had to face and is still facing transphobic attitudes from the police, who have silenced and oppressed them for more than 30 years. As Rojda states above, in most of the legal cases, police and court authorities are ignorant towards trans individuals even if they are victims of particular crimes, a situation that pushes them to create their own solutions. As Pelin says, "it is a very hard job to try to deal with customers, perpetrators and police at the same time" and I believe that, in some cases, kinship plays a significant role in coping with systematic police violence. Mothers have not only unsilenced their pasts by raising the community's and their daughters' awareness on what happened in the 1990s and how they were oppressed by the Istanbul Police Department then but also in transmitting the names of those responsible and the conditions of those years. Toprak explains that one of the important duties of the mother is to share this information if she had experienced those years. According to her, the situation is slowly changing because the current mothers' generation is shifting: the mothers' of today did not experience those times. She mentions this situation through her own experience as follows:

I cannot tell how young mothers are nowadays. Look at me, I was born in 1991. We did not live in those times when people's hair was cut or when they were put in trains and exiled. But I still keep narrating. My two daughters were born in 1995 and I tell them. You know of what I am scared most? What if people forget about this after a while, of course there are

associations, most of the things are written now but I don't know, one still gets afraid of it because it is the history of our people. Our relative comfort today is the result of the labor of our mothers who struggled at the time. I believe it really is. That is why, I tell myself, my daughters and every person I meet what shit the police did. Okay, we don't like the police and they don't like us, but it is the opposite with the customers.... they are a different kind of shit.<sup>97</sup>

More than transmitting the collective history of the trans community that I will discuss at length through the concept of postmemory in the following chapter, mothers are also transmitting their ways of dealing with the police that they gained through years of experience. According to Yeşim, the years in which she had problems with alcohol consumption, passed without severe problems only due to the help of her mother. She states that:

I was terrible, you know being young, I drank a lot and I thought too highly of myself. The police used to beat me up. You cannot say they were right but I don't know sometimes I drank so much that even though very bad things happened to me, I wasn't conscious. That was one of the things my mother got angry about me. She said to me no alcohol, it is okay when you are partying but when you are working, you have got to be sober. She used to tell me what the police or customers did to them. Look, the police already doesn't care about us, if something happens to you, imagine you are drunk, then you cannot seek justice for you or do anything else. They will also kick you. But I did not pay attention to her words at the time and what she told me happened. They took me to X Forest and beat me up there; I was very drunk. One of them said to the other, "Let's throw this out to the sea." And the other one replied, "It will cause us trouble, never mind." Imagine, in a case like this, would you say, "Haha, don't you have the guts?" I said. It is very important because the police have this power, sometimes you need to know that you need to stay sober and put up your fight. The reason why I have not been any big trouble is because I listened to my mother. She told me to keep the good side

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<sup>97</sup> Artık anneler nasıl genç anlatamam. Bak bana ben 91liyim, o dönemleri yaşamadık biz, saç kesilmeler, trenlerle sürülmeler falan. Ama işte ben yine de sürdürüyorum anlatmayı. Benim 2 kızım da 95li onlara anlatıyorum. Ben en çok neyden korkuyorum biliyo musun? Ya diyorum bi zamandan sonra insanlar bunu unutursa, yani dernekler var, yazılı artık birçok şey ama ne biliyim insan korkuyo yine de. Bizim insanların tarihi bu çunkü, şimdiki biraz daha iyi olan rahatlığımız o dönemde mücadele eden annelerimizin emeği yani. Bence gerçekten öyle. O yüzden ben hem kendi kızlarımı hem de gördüğüm her genç lubunyaya anlatıyorum polisin ne boklar yaptığını. hani polisle pek sevişmiyoruz, müşterilerle de tam tersi ama... onlar da ayrı bok işte.

on them. She always used to say of course seek for your justice but keep calm.<sup>98</sup>

Yıldız who defines herself as one of the oldest mothers in the community almost confirms Yeşim's words through her narrative where she focuses on the times in which she talks with her daughters on "what not to do when you are with police":

It is very important what not to do when you are with a policeman. You cannot be casual with a policeman, no gum for example. I believe this. No one can beat the language. We have been down that road. I uttered sentences like, "Of course, sir; just now sir; I will immediately leave Istanbul, sir," Look, I am still here (laugh). It is like a game, you have got to know the rules. There are details such as which police is where and whether the commander has changed or not. We also know these things, familiar faces, so and so forth. Together with these, I also recommend my daughters sweet talk. If you talk as if you are scolding them, of course they will take you down, sometimes you have got to shut up and say "of course, sir," then you'll see how soft they get.<sup>99</sup>

According to New Wave, there are certain tips about police officers that only would be known by mothers, which is constantly transferred to daughters. She states that this is

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<sup>98</sup> Ben çok fenaydım ya, bi de gençlik falan işte, çok içerdim, kendimi de bi bok sanırdım sonra. Sonra da polis döverdi hep. Yani hak da verilmez ama ne biliyim bazen o kadar içiyodum ki başıma çok korkunç şeyler gelmiş olmasına rağmen kendimde olmuyodum. Annemin de en çok kızlığı şeylerden biriydi o. Alkol yok derdi, eğlenirken tamam ama çalışırken ayık ol derdi. Polisin onlara yaptıklarını anlatırdı ya da müsterilerin, hani derdi bak başına bişey gelse, normalde zaten polis bizimle ilgilenmiyo, bi de sarhoş olduğunu düşün. O zaman ne hakkını arayabilirsən ne bişey yapabilirsın. Bi tekme de onlardan yersin. Ama işte dinlemedim ben o zamanlar onu. Ve aynısı başıma geldi, beni X ormanına götürüp dövdüler, çok da sarhoştum, bi tanesi diğerine dedi ki "hadi atalım bunu denize nolucak" dedi. Diğerisi de "başımıza bela açılır falan boşver" gibi bişeyler dedi. Düşün bak böyle bi durumda "hahaayıt nooldu, yemedi di miii?" der misin? Ben dedim. Yani çok önemli polis bu güce sahip cünkü, senin ayık kalıp, nasıl mücadele etmen gerektiğini bilmen gerekiyo bazen. Benim başıma böyle çok fena bi problem çıkmamasının sebebi de annemi dinlememdir. Suyuna git, haksızsan ara tabi hakkını ama sakin ol derdi hep.

<sup>99</sup> Polisleyken neler yapılmaması gerektiği çok önemlidir. Lakayıt olmayacaksın mesela, sakız falan olmaz. Ben inanıyorum bunlara. Dili kimse yenemez. Biz de geçtiğ yani o dönemlerden, "Tabi efendim, derhal efendim, hemen terkediyorum İstanbul'u efendim" gibi cümleleri 20 sene söyledim bak hala burdayım (gülüşme). Oyun gibi yani kuralları biliceksin. Nerede hangi polis var, amir değişti mi değişmedi mi yani böyle detayları da var işin. Bunları da biliriz biz, tanıdıklar onlar bunlar işte. Ben bunlarla birlikte tatlı dili tavsiye ediyorum kızlara. Böyle azarlar gibi konuşursan alır tabi yani, bazen susmasını bilip "tabi efendim" dicen bak gör o zaman nasıl yivisiyolar.

a significantly fast process in which knowledge is transmitted between individuals in a very short time:

Look, who is appointed, which policeman is stationed to where, why is he appointed, how did he treat transpeople in where he came from? Did he tolerate them? Or was he harsh towards them? In which areas does he places a squad? Which points are free? Mothers can have this information, these are very fundamental and important information mothers have.<sup>100</sup>

In addition to knowledge on police commissioners and their attitudes towards trans women, mothers' knowledge on court cases regarding crimes such as "promoting and providing space for sex work" or "blocking the traffic"<sup>101</sup> and how to deal with these accusations also constitute a part of the relation between queer kinship and practicing citizenship rights in the face of state apparatuses. According to Hakan and Pelin, these factors are all a part of system that tries to suppress trans women:

My dear, these are all arranged. The police have a point chart, catching a transvestite is 20 points. Every day I get a fine, 86 liras. If I line them up, it would make a road to the square. No one tells us but you can object to these fines within fifteen days but the police don't tell us because it is good for them. Or how are you gonna behave once you get caught? If you piss them off, they raise the fine, you know it. Or they get their claws into you. I teach the girls this kind of stuff.<sup>102</sup>

As Hakan states, all the mothers I interviewed stressed the importance of sharing the information on how to deal with legal issues regarding trans women and/or sex work. Pelin on this issue as follows:

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<sup>100</sup> Bak şimdi kimin atandığı, hangi polisin nereye atandığı, neden atandığı, geldiği yerde translara olan tavrı nasıldı? Göz yumuyor muydu? Yoksa sert miydi? Nereelere ekip koyuyor, hangi noktalar boş? Bunlar anne bilgisi, annelerde var olan temen ve çok önemli bilgiler.

<sup>101</sup> Trafiği meşgul etmek

<sup>102</sup> Güzelim bunlar, hep anlaşmalı şeyler. Yani polisin puan cetveli var, travesti yakalamak 20 puan. E her gün trafik cezası geliyo 86 lira, cezaları yan yana koysak burdانا meydana gideriz. Şimdi kimse söylemiyo ama mesela kızlar 15 gün içinde bu cezalar aslında itiraz edebiliyo ama işte polisler bunu söylemiyo işlerine geliyo çünkü. Ya da yakalandın mı işte nası davrancaksın. Herif kızınca biliyosun ki, arttıriyolar. Ya da takıyorlar. Ben de bunları öğretiyorum işte.

We need to show how to deal with this state both to ourselves and to society. We are powerful. They cannot discourage us with those fines of 86 liras. I always used to tell Ateş or other girls living with me at the time. I told them to object, not to pay. If necessary, let's collect some money and bring a counter suit. We need to teach those stuff, this is what we live by, it is our life at some point.<sup>103</sup>

Moreover, the legalities of sex work are not the only issues encountered in the discussion of queer kinship and the legal system. The process of avoiding military service and of changing identity papers comprise the other issues in which daughters take mothers' advice. While we were discussing the process of avoiding military service, Pelin stated the following:

I did my military service; I did not have a chance to avoid it. But now people are coming without doing military service. I tell them what to do or what not to do. And there are our gay friends who are very knowledgeable about this issue, sometime I direct them to those friends.<sup>104</sup>

According to Levent, this problem regards all individuals attempting to avoid this service. The excerpt below indicates how he is also sharing all his knowledge with individuals who are trying to avoid this service, those who define themselves as conscientious objectors:

For example, one of the other legal issues is military service but this does not only concern transpeople. For example, I am gay and I am happy to be a man but I haven't done my military service. I got a report for this and I know the whole process and what to do. That's why I inform no matter who. For example, transwomen who did their military service also ask about the

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<sup>103</sup> Bu devletle nasıl başa çıkılacağını hem kendimize hem de topluma göstermemiz lazım. Güçlüyüz biz. Öyle 86 liralık cezalarla bizi yıldıramazlar. Ben mesela Ateş'e ya da eskiden işte yanında duran kızlara falan hep anlatıyyorum. İtiraz edin, ödemeyin, gereklse para toplayalım karşı dava açalım falan diye. Bunları öğretmemiz lazım, ekmeğimiz bu bizim, hayatımız yani bi yerde.

<sup>104</sup> Şimdi ben askerliğimi yaptım, yani benim öyle bi şansım olmadı. Ama mesela şimdi askerliğini yapmadan gelenler oluyo. Onlara neler yapmaları gerektiğini ya da neler yapmamaları gerektiğini söylüyorum. Bir de bu konuyu çok iyi bilen gey arkadaşlar da var, onlara da yönlendiriyorum mesela bazen.

process so that they can inform others. So the progress moves forward in this way, it is narrated by the mother to the daughter within this scope.<sup>105</sup>

The legal process of revising identity cards is another legal issue that takes place among mothers and daughters. Filling and collecting reports, arranging a non-transphobic lawyer to open and win the case together with obtaining financial resources, are the main issues regarding this process. In this manner, one more time mothers become the source of knowledge about the legal process of identity card change. Yıldız, who is “tired of explaining the same things over and over again” expresses her frustration:

It is always the same but you still tell them. Naturally she asks what to do. And I tell her, there is a lawyer I know and I refer them to that lawyer. Then I told her to begin in advance and to save this amount of money. Fill the petitions in this way. Bring the lawsuit following this way, it will probably take this amount of time.<sup>106</sup>

Pelin states that in some cases, mothers can also be the sources of financial support for opening the cases. According to her, there is an inconveniency and transphobia in the applications of legal system. She argues that since “courts sometimes accept sometimes decline the requests” she encourages the younger trans women to start their process as soon as possible, even if they do not have enough financial resources:

What is gonna come out of courts, what is gonna happen, how long will it take? We don't know any of this. But sometimes if we know the judge, then you can guess more or less, but this is very rare. That is why, I always tell to start immediately. Even if they don't have enough money, we collect money among us and then go to courts. Later, we see if she pays or not. But after I

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<sup>105</sup> Mesela diğer yasal konulardan biri de askerlik meselesi ama bu sadece trans kadınları ilgilendirmiyor, ben geyim mesela, erkek olmaktan da çok mutluyum ama askerlik yapmadım. Bunun için de rapor aldım, ve bütün süreci neler yapılması gerektiğini biliyorum. Bu yüzden gelen kim olursa olsun bilgilendiriyorum. Mesela askerliğini yapmış trans kadınlar da soruyor ki onlar da başkalarına anlatabilsinler. Öyle öyle işte ilerliyo, hani anneden kızı da bu kapsamda geçmiş oluyor tabi.

<sup>106</sup> Hep aynı hep aynı yani ama yine de anlatıyosun tabi. Yani ne yapmak lazım diye soruyo tabi. Ben de anlatıyorum, bildiğim bi avukat var ona yönlendiriyorum, sonra işte diyorum bak şu kadar önceden başla, şu kadar para biriktir. Dilekçeleri şöyle doldur. Davayı şöyle aç, muhtemelen şu kadar zamanda biter gibi gibi işte.

refer them to a lawyer, I always tell them to start at once. Of course, I basically guide the girls with tactics.<sup>107</sup>

Ateş states that mothers become legal advisors of their daughters especially on the process of changing the identity card and avoiding military service. She adds:

She tells everything, but it is not like you can only learn from your mother and not from anywhere else. But most of the mothers know about everything and daughters directly go and ask them so the process starts. The mother says to the daughter do this or that, you will be doing this within two months, then you will go to that place and get this done. We will write your petition, then you will give that petition to that place on this day. Like a lawyer. Managing the process (laugh).<sup>108</sup>

Based on the narratives of both mothers and daughters, I have tried to show that the milieu of queer kinship contains different and subjective practices according to the need of queer daughters. Throughout these two chapters, I aimed to focus on the vital role of queer kinship especially on the daily life experience of daughters. I hope to have sufficiently focused on the process of knowledge transmission on the personal level through the interactions of trans sex worker women with womanhood, customers, public space and state apparatuses whilst discussing the role of kinship as a powerful dynamic against their stigmatization as a “deviant” minority in the society. In the following chapter, I will attempt to enlarge the discussion on knowledge transmission. Through the narratives of mothers and daughters, I will focus on queer transgenerational memory transmission by opening up a discussion on the possibility of queer postmemory.

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<sup>107</sup> Mahkemelerden ne çıkar ne olur, ne kadar surer, ertelenir mi? Bunların hiçbirini bilemiyoruz, yani bazen işte atıyorum şansa hakimi falan tanırsak, o zaman az çok tahmin edebiliyoruz ama çok çok nadir. Bu yüzden ben bir an önce başlanmasını söylüyorum hep. Yeterli paraları olmasa bile, aramızda toplayıp yapıyoruz. Sonra öder, ödemez ona bakılır. Ama ben avukata falan yönlendirdikten sonra hep diyorum hemen başlayın. Tabii takikleriyle birlikte, yönlendiriyorum kızları işte.

<sup>108</sup> Her şeyi anlatıyo, tabi sadece anneden öğreniyosun başka yerden öğrenemezin gibi değil. Ama çoğu anne de biliyo, kızlar da direk soruyo ve başlıyolar sürece, anne diyo işte şöyle yap, bi iki aya şöyle yaparsın, sonrasında şuraya gider şunu yaptırırsın. Şöyle yazarız dilekçeni, şu gün şuraya verirsin falan filan. Böyle hukuki danışman gibi yani. Süreç yönetimi valla (gülüşme).

## CHAPTER 4: MY MOTHER “BLEEDS HISTORY”<sup>109</sup> - CAN WE SPEAK OF A QUEER POSTMEMORY?

*Let's remember the thirty years before. Were we not exiled to Eskişehir on trains? Were we not raped by soldiers during the 1980 coup d'état regime? When we worked as singers, did they not forbid us to step on the stages? Did our Büлent Sister not lead a life in exile for eight years in Germany? Did not they impose curfew upon us? Were we not exiled from Cihangir, Pürteleş, Kazancı Yokuşu, Abonoz, Dernek ve Ülker Sokak to outside the city by Hortum Süleyman during Habitat period? Was our hair not cut? Were we not beaten up on the roads in insecure areas? Did the police not ask our hometown, did us doggy-style and beat us with wooden bats? Were we not exposed to a lynch attempt in Avcılar Meis building complex? Have our homes not been sealed for three-month periods on the grounds that we were prostituting. Did they not impose pecuniary penalties as a result of misdemeanor law. We went through the worst, what happened to us happened to none!*<sup>110</sup>

### 4.1. What is postmemory?

Marianne Hirsch, in her groundbreaking work *Generation of Postmemory*, describes the concept of postmemory as “the relationship of the second generation to

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<sup>109</sup> “As Art Spiegelman puts it in his subtitle to *Maus I*, “My father bleeds history”.

<sup>110</sup> 30 sene önceki zamanları hatırlayalım. Eskişehir'e trenlerle sürülmüş mi? 1980 ihtilalinde askerler tarafından tecavüze uğramadık mı? Şarkıcılık yaptığımız zamanlar sahneler yasaklanmadı mı? Büлent Ablamız 8 sene Almanya'da sürgün hayatı yaşamadı mı? Sokağa çıkma yasakları görmedik mi? Cihangir, Pürteleş, Kazancı Yokuşu, Abonoz, Dernek ve Ülker Sokak'tan Habitat döneminde Hortum Süleyman tarafından şehir dışına sürülmüş mi? Saçlarımız kesilmedi mi? Yollarda güvensiz alanlarda dövülmüş mi? Polisler tarafından memleketin neresi diyip domalıtlı tahta sopalarla dövülmüş mi? Avcılar Meis Sitesi'nde linç saldırısına maruz kalmadık mı? Evlerimiz senelerden beri fuhuş yapıldığı gereği ile 3 ay gibi sürelerle mühirlenmedi mi? Kabahatler Kanunu'ndan para cezaları bize kesilmedi mi? Bizim bu başımıza gelenler pişmiş tavuğu bile başına gelmedi! (From the opening page of BUT Trans El Kitabı, İstanbul LGBTI Solidarity Association Publication, 2014)<sup>110</sup>

powerful, often traumatic, experiences that preceded their births but that were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right” (2008 103). According to her, postmemory is an inter-generational transfer of traumatic knowledge and experience and “it is a consequence of traumatic recall but (unlike post-traumatic stress disorder) at a generational remove. Hirsch states that “Postmemory’s connection to the past is thus not actually mediated by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation. To grow up with such overwhelming inherited memories, to be dominated by narratives that preceded one’s birth or one’s consciousness, is to risk having one’s own stories and experiences displaced, even evacuated, by those of a previous generation. It is to be shaped, however indirectly, by traumatic events that still defy narrative reconstruction and exceed comprehension. These events happened in the past, but their effects continue into the present” (2008, 107). Hirsch focuses on the notion of postmemory through the experience of Holocaust and investigates the impact of previous generation’s remembrances of the past on second generation. She explains the reasons that have encouraged her to come up with another term<sup>111</sup>:

“Postmemory is the term I came to on the basis of my own “autobiographical readings” of works by second-generation writers and visual artists... I felt the need for a term that would describe the quality of my own relationship to my parent’s daily stories of danger and survival during the Second World War...” (2012 4)

In spite of her significant emphasis on the relation between postmemory and family, according to her, locating the experience of a trauma in the space of a family carries the risk of personalizing and individualizing too much. She asks “Does it not

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<sup>111</sup> As she also mentions in her piece, parental past was analyzed and described through myriad of terms such as “absent memory” (Ellen Fine), “inherited memory”, “belated memory”, “prosthetic memory” (Celia Lury, Alison Landsberg), “memoire trouee” (Henri Raczymow), “memoire des cendres” (Nadine Fresco), “vicarious witnessing” (Froma Zeitlen), “received history” (James Young), “haunting legacy” (Gabriele Schwab).

undergird a fundamentally Oedipal and heteronormative, reproductive form of social organization?" (11)

In spite of her significant emphasis on the relation between postmemory and family, according to her, locating the experience of a trauma in the space of a family carries the risk of personalizing and individualizing too much. She asks "Does it not undergird a fundamentally Oedipal and heteronormative, reproductive form of social organization?" (11)

After focusing on the dynamics of the queer mother/ daughterhood and knowledge that is transmitted from mothers to daughters, departing from Hirsch's significant question and based on the interviews together with my participant observation, in this chapter, I attempt to open up a new discussion on the possibility of queer postmemory. In what follows, I try to establish my discussion on the possibility of queer postmemory by focusing on two traumatic moments between the years 1980 and 1996 in Istanbul; which are regarded as landmark moments in the history of trans women in Turkey. One of these moments is the forced displacement of trans women from Istanbul by trains enacted by the army forces and the other one is the period of "Hortum Süleyman" as the commissioner of the Beyoğlu Police Department. Whilst writing this chapter, I also focused on the narratives of Levent and New Wave who do not define themselves as trans sex workers, not to reduce my discussion only to trans women who do sex work. However, after a close analysis of the transcriptions from all interviews, I realized that I could only establish the discussion of queer postmemory through the narratives of trans women who do sex work.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Two significant traumatic events that I am considering as the centre of my postmemory discussion was regarding the trans women who do sex work, work and/or sing in clubs between the years of 1980-1996.

Throughout this chapter, first, I try to focus on the question of why (or whether) there is a need for a new term such as queer postmemory. Secondly I discuss the terms of queer kinship and the queer alternatives of notions such as “(giving) birth”, “family”, “generation”, “growing up”, and “childhood” among trans mothers and daughters within the scope of postmemory. Lastly, I focus on trans history between 1980 and 1996 through the examples of displacements, forced hair cuttings and “hose torture” through the narratives of mothers and daughters who were not there to personally experience the events. More generally, I discuss the relationship between queer postmemory and sex work.

#### **4.2. Tracing Postmemory in a Queer Family**

It was one-and-a-half years ago that I started to investigate the traces of postmemory among queer mothers and daughters. Then, I only focused on the transmission of the memory of Hortum Süleyman<sup>113</sup> from mothers to their daughters who have never experienced the torture of Hortum Süleyman. Due to the limited time frame I had for this research, I could only interview two mothers and two daughters. Even then, Ayşe Gül Altınay (in whose course I was writing this paper) and I were excited to see how those two daughters were “remembering” the violent acts of Hortum Süleyman and how those memories were impacting their daily life experience. While we were talking about my MA thesis, we decided to follow up on transmission through queer kinship and see if it would still be the case if I would enlarge my sample.

In the past year, as I went back to the field and started to talk with different mothers and daughters, I witnessed more violent memories of the past, and this time it was not only limited with the experience of Hortum Süleyman but also included the 1980 military coup and its aftermath. Observing the power of the memories of those

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<sup>113</sup> For further explanation on Hortum Süleyman, please see Chapter 2

times in the narratives of most of my participants who were not even there to witness the events, encouraged me to go beyond the confines of the topic of Hortum Süleyman and talk with more mothers and daughters to see the extent of inter-generational memory transmission among trans individuals and ask; “Can we speak of a queer postmemory?”

In her book *The Generation of Postmemory*, Hirsch argues that “postmemory is not an identity position but a generational structure of transmission embedded in multiple forms of mediation. Family life, even in its most intimate moments, is entrenched in a collective imaginary shaped by public generational structures of fantasy and projection and by a shared archive of stories and images that inflect the broader transfer and availability of individual and familial remembrance” (2012 35). In her analysis, Hirsch locates the roots of the familial and affiliative practices of postmemory in feminism. On so, she encourages us to use critical strategies of feminism to connect the past and the present. Following her method of analysis, throughout this chapter, I will be looking for the ways to connect the past and the present of queer lives through the narratives of trans mothers and daughters by borrowing Hirsch’s postmemory term. As Jack Halberstam would agree, while doing this, I propose to go beyond the heteronormative systems of memory transfer and discover how queer transmissions of knowledge and memory bypass the conservative systems of heteronormativity and allow “ironic and creative representations of truth” (from Halberstam’s lecture in MIT, 2011).

### **4.3. What is Queer Postmemory?**

As I stated above, I started to focus on the relationship between postmemory and queer kinship one-and-a-half years ago. Needless to say, my participant observation among trans women both as a researcher and as an activist helped me see a myriad of kinships and gave me the opportunity to think more on Turkey’s trans history and its

impact on the contemporary daily life experience of young trans women who have never been through those times.

I always remember our first interview with Yeşim, the moment that she showed me a scar on her right arm while saying “my mother has the same wound, it happened in similar ages with me”. Yeşim’s statement expresses what Hirsch would call a “sense of her vulnerability, and her desire for mutuality and maternal recognition” (2012 80). However, as distinct from Hirsch’s example, the maternal recognition that we trace in Yeşim’s narrative is significantly different from the heteronormative family codes and is an outcome of queer kinship. As Jill Bennett would agree, the mutual scar that Yeşim and her mother have, brings the past into the present, and reveals the transfer of sense memory across subjects and generations. According to Hirsch, “the ambivalent desire to be marked, and thus to repeat the mother’s trauma, is understandable between mothers and daughters whose bodily relation and resemblance is so violated by the mark as no longer to work as a vehicle of mutual recognition at the heart of the mother/daughter bond” (2012 81). Additionally, “witnessed by those who were not there to live it but who received its effects, belatedly, through the narratives, actions, and symptoms of the previous generation, trauma both solidifies and blurs generational difference” (2012 82), and “when the mother’s experiences are communicated through the stories and images that can be narrativized, integrated – however uneasily – into a historically different present, they open up the possibility of a form of second-generation remembrance that is based on a more consciously and necessarily mediated form of identification” (2012 85).

In this sense, ‘queer postmemory’ is a term that I came to on the basis of my own participant observation on queer kinship in the LGBTI community together with readings of Marianne Hirsch’s work. Departing from the questions that Hirsch raises I started to get more curious and asked; “Why could queer daughters recall particular

moments from their queer mothers' torture experience from the period of the military coup and/or that of Hortum Süleyman? Why and how could they describe the location of former police stations that they have never been taken to? Why could they describe the structure of torture that they were never exposed to?

As Hirsch states, "postmemory" describes "the relationship that the "generation after" bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before –to experiences they "remember" only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up" (2012 5). But what if this form of "remembering" is resistant against the hegemonic definitions of "family", "parent", "child", "generation", "growing up" and "history"? "What happens if we destabilize the meaning of the 'generation after'? Can we speak of a postmemory among queer mothers and daughters? How, particularly, can the bodily memory of the mark be imagined in a continuum between Yeşim and her queer mother?

According to Hirsch, postmemory is a form of heteropathic memory in which the self and the other are more closely connected through familial or group relation – through "understanding of what it means to be Jewish or of African descent for example" (2012 86). Along the same lines, one can consider looking at knowledge transmission between queer mothers and daughters through the concept of postmemory; as memory transmitted through a shared understanding of what it means to be a trans individual in Turkey. However, thinking about postmemory in the context of trans lives raise a new set of questions: What happens if the queer daughter was born in a queer way, to a trans mother and grew up in a queer way? What if the daughter defines himself as a "gay man" and considers his cousin as his "mother"? What kind of postmemory would it be, if a queer daughter remembers her queer mother's experience of violence that she has never experienced? What if she knows her mother only for three years,

having met her at the age of 20? What if we define ‘birth’ as not “being born” but as sexual identity reassignment? What if the duration of “generation” is five to ten years? Do queer children of trans survivors have “memories” of their queer mothers’ suffering?

Departing from these questions, if we look at the history of the trans community in Istanbul, we see a myriad of traumatic events that shape the narratives of queer mothers and daughters. In the following section, I attempt to discuss the possibility of queering heteronormative practices and meanings of “family”, “(giving) birth”, “being a child” and “growing up”.

#### **4.4. Queering Family, Generation, Birth and Growing Up**

It was Halberstam’s *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (2005) that first elicited my curiosity regarding the possibility of queer postmemory. First, I realized how practices of queer kinship were destabilizing and stretching the heteronormative understanding of the family. Additionally, they were playing with the meanings of normative time and places while producing various queer places and times. According to Halberstam, “queer time” is a term that emerges through the subjective time that occurs when the individual leaves the temporal frames of family and reproduction, and heredity behind. Moreover, “queer place” refers to counter-public places that give us the opportunity to express a diversity of sexual practices, gender identity and publicness. According to Jack Halberstam “queer” refers to “nonnormative logics and organizations of community, sexual identity, embodiment, and activity in space and time” (2005 8). In this sense, “queer time” to Halberstam is a term “for those specific models of temporality that emerge within postmodernism once one leaves the temporal frames of bourgeois reproduction and family, longevity, risk/safety, and inheritance” (8). Before getting into the narratives of mothers and daughters, in this section, I try to bring into a dialogue Jack Halberstam’s and Marianne Hirsch’s

conceptualizations of gender and memory, and to open a discussion for the possibility of a term such as queer postmemory. Establishing this connection, constituted a significant moment during my fieldwork. In time, I was able to see how terms such as birth, growing up, family, generation and childhood were distinctly different from the heteronormative ideal among my interviewees and how the idea of inter-generational transmission of memory of violence was being “queered”. This opportunity to think on possible extensions of postmemory, will also help us to rethink the practices of the cultural production of family, its hegemonies and power dynamics. Now let me focus on the queer alternatives of “family” terms and practices to enhance the discussion on queer postmemory.

The narratives of mothers and daughters revealed how “being born”, “giving birth” and “growing up” can dramatically differ from the heteronormative ideal. For instance, after talking about her “biological family” and her place of birth, Pelin continued as follows (referring to her life in Istanbul that started approximately 20 years after her birth):

For example, in Kadıköy, people living in there the contacts they have with each other, trans living around Şişli and the contacts they have with each other. I can say that I was born in Cihangir and grew up there, but we did not used to see transpeople living in Tarlabası, we called them trannies of Tarlabası.<sup>114</sup>

Pelin was mentioning her “birth” distinctively from “biological birth” and was referring to the term as the moment that she started her sexual reassignment process. Moreover, in her narrative, the process of ‘growing up’ was identified with the process of her sexual reassignment together with getting ‘experienced’ in sex work. Parallel to Pelin’s use of

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<sup>114</sup> Kadıköy'de mesela ordakilerin birbirleriyle olan kontakları, Şişli tarafında olan transların birbiriyle olan kontakları, mesela ben Cihangir'de *doğdum büyüdüm diyim*, ama biz Tarlabası'ndaki translarla çok görüşmüyoduk, hıllı Tarlabası transları diyoduk.

the term, while we were talking with Toprak about her daughters and her relationship with them, she referred to the time that her daughters start to sex work as their “birth”:

I said, Oh! My girl, you are just born.<sup>115</sup>

Considering different attributions of both Pelin’s and Toprak’s narratives, it is important to stress that, in this example, queer kinship does not only change the meaning of “birth” but also destabilizes it through subjectifying it. Additionally, not only the idea of “birth” but also “giving birth” to a trans daughter by a trans mother was mentioned by Burçin and Yıldız during our interviews. While they were comparing themselves to their daughters’ “biological mothers” they both had similar statements:

If giving birth was enough, it would be very easy. There are other mothers here. Not everyone is good, most of them could be exploiters or parasites. But I literally gave birth to my daughters. I created a beautiful girl out of a hairy, muscular and ugly man. Again, I created a very beautiful girl out of someone who has just become a trans. I think it is even harder than giving birth (Yıldız).<sup>116</sup>

I am not her birth mother, this is pretty clear (laugh) but I very much supported Elif. Even her birth mother could not probably take care of her this much. I literally gave birth to her (Burçin).<sup>117</sup>

Narratives of Yıldız, Toprak, Burçin and Pelin reveal that notions of “birth” and “giving birth” are mostly related with sexual reassignment process and/or starting sex work and that they are flexible notions depending on the experience of the subject. However,

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<sup>115</sup> Ah dedim “İşte şimdi doğdunuz kızlar!”.

<sup>116</sup> Yani öyle doğurmakla olsaydı bu işler pek bi kolaydı yani. Burda hani başka anneler de var. Herkes iyi değil, sömürenler, üstünden geçenenler hatta çoğunluk bile olabilir belki. Ama ben gerçekten resmen doğurdum yani. Düşünsene kılı, kaslı çirkin adamdan, güzel bir kız yarattım yani. Ya da hani böyle yeni yeni olmuş birinden yine güzeller güzeli bi kız yarattım. Doğurmaktan daha bile zordur valla bence (Yıldız).

<sup>117</sup> Ben tabi öz anası değilim bu gayet de açık (gülüşme), ama özellikle Elif’in üzerinde çok emeğim vardır. Yani öz annesi olsa bu kadar bakmazdı heralde. Ay doğurdum yani resmen işte (Burçin).

Levent kindly reminds us not to limit the discussion of “birth” and “giving birth” to sex work and sexual reassignment process:

My cousin was gay back then she just got became a transwoman but I never forget the time she first brought me to that gay bar. Her opening that door, my discovery of that world, that music, those people were amazing. So, my new life began. Then I gradually grew up, learning. That's why I said she was my mother, even a little bit.<sup>118</sup>

In this sense, as Halberstam would agree, queer subcultures offer us an opportunity to redefine the binary of family and family time whilst destabilizing the heteronormative meanings attached to them and keeping the meaning flexible according to the subjective experience. As Pelin states below, trans conceptualizations of time and life create the opportunity to refuse and resist the heteronormative imperative of home and family:

Don't mind me, we are fucking around. (She laughs while narrating). We call her mother, she's got a cock,. You call her the girl with the cock. Well, you may get angry now because I said cock but... I don't know, you say mother and daughter; the age difference is just three or four years. No father around. That's funny when it is put this way.<sup>119</sup>

It is important to remember that Hirsch establishes the idea of postmemory through a feminist perspective and extensively questions the role of gender. According to her, the structure of postmemory is not limited to the normative space of the family and individuals who share particular group relations can share the common experiences of

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<sup>118</sup> Kuzenim işte o zamanlar geydi şimdi çok yeni trans bir kadın oldu ama o işte neyse o ilk beni gey kulübe götürdüğu anı hiç unutmuyorum. Yani o kapıyı açı, benim o dünyayı keşfedişim, o müzik, o insanlar inanılmazdı. Yani aslında yeni hayatım öyle başladı. Sonra işte yavaş yavaş öğrene öğrene büyüm. O yüzden kenarından da olsa annem oldu dedim.

<sup>119</sup> Bakma sen aslında, biz taşak geçiyoruz ha. (Gülerek anlatıyor) Yani anne diyoruz, sıkli. Kız diyosun, sıkli. Yani hani bazıları tabi, kızarsın şimdi sık dedim diye ama. Ne biliyim işte anne kız diyosun aralarında 3, 4 yaş var. Ortada baba yok. Ay çok komik oldu böyle düşününce.

history. However, according to her, “nonverbal and noncognitive acts of transfer occur most clearly within familial space, often in the form of symptoms. It is perhaps the descriptions of this symptomatology that have made it appear as though the post generation wanted to assert its own victimhood alongside that of the parents” (2012 109). In this sense, the “children” of those individuals who were directly exposed to collective trauma represent the long-term impact “of living in close proximity to the pain, depression, and dissociation of persons who witnessed and survived massive historical trauma” (2012 112).<sup>120</sup> Through the lens of queer kinship, Hirsch’s conceptualization calls for further questions: What does it mean ‘to be children of someone? Can we also include queer parenting into this statement? Can nonverbal and noncognitive acts of transfer occur within queer familial spaces?

During my six years of activism and approximately two months of fieldwork, I witnessed several kinship processes in which mothers and daughters called themselves as parts of a family. Apart from being part of a queer mother/daughter kinship, Pelin, Toprak and Yeşim, especially focused on the idea of “big family” which contains all LGBTI individuals<sup>121</sup>. For instance Yeşim states the importance of “big family” as follows:

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<sup>120</sup> Here, I would like to mention that obviously I am aware of the difference between the experience of Shoah and experience of systematic state and customer violence towards trans individuals. Additionally, I am very cautious while discussing them together through queer perspective. For this reason, I want to clarify that my aim is not to compare those significantly different experiences, but to investigate the commonalities among different families and their familiar responses to violent events that happened in (recent) history. Moreover, the history that I will be focusing on through the perspective of postmemory will basically be the most violent period of trans history (between 1981 and 1995).

<sup>121</sup> I believe it is important to go beyond the discussion of postmemory among queer mothers and daughters and see other dynamics in the LGBTI community that establish a bigger queer family and provide a space for queer postmemory. However, in this research I will specifically focus on queer mothers and their daughters in order not to lose the focus of my discussion.

We are actually a big family. Okay, what happened to transpeople happened to them but who can guarantee that nothing bad will happen to a gay person in this country?<sup>122</sup>

Similar to Yeşim's narrative, Pelin also stresses common victimizations that bring LGBTI people together and make them a "big family":

We are the people who are exposed to same danger. We are outside of the social standards and because of the same reasons we are outside of the society.<sup>123</sup>

In addition, while my research has been limited to mothers and daughters in the trans community, Toprak and New Wave surprised me with their mentioning of queer grandmothers, aunties and sisters in law. According to my participants, those kinship ties mostly emerge for *gullüm*; however, Toprak accepts that her relationship with her queer aunties<sup>124</sup> is "closer" than her other friends from the LGBTI community. Moreover, she also clarifies the relationship with her mother and aunt using a heteronormative saying:

People make a point when they say the aunt is half-mother. I see my mother but she cannot call me all the time, because she knows that I am with my wife and daughter. In my spare time, I meet my aunts. It cannot be the same way as my mother but I am with my mother but our conversations with valuable to me.<sup>125</sup>

Similarly, New Wave focuses on the existence of different kinship ties other than mothers and daughters:

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<sup>122</sup> Biz büyük bi aileyiz aslında. Yani tamam transların başına gelenler transların başına geldi ama bu ülkede bunun bi geyin başına gelmeyeceğini kim garanti edebilir?

<sup>123</sup> ... bizler aynı tehlikenin altında olan insanlarız. Toplum standartlarının dışında olan insanlarız ve benzer sebeplerden bunun dışında olan insanlarız.

<sup>124</sup> In Toprak's case, her auntie is a "cross dresser as him" and "is married to a woman and have 2 grown up sons in "his normal life".

<sup>125</sup> Boşuna dememişler, teyze anne yarısıdır diye. Şimdi annemle de görüşüyoruz gerçi o beni hep arayamıyo, karımla ve kızımla olduğumu bildiği için ama. Boş günlerimde teyzelerimle de buluşuyoruz. İşte onun yerini tutmaz tabi ama yine de sohbetimiz farklıdır onlarla yani.

Well, of course there are maternal and paternal aunts. For example, I don't have a mother, I mean a trans-mother, I never had one. Let's say, here is the mother, the paternal aunt, oh! here is my uncle, oh! here is my maternal aunt, you can mess around like this. Oh! here is my third generation cousin Henry. But I make fun of the aristocratic family. This is fun.<sup>126</sup>

On the other hand, as many of my participants mentioned, including New Wave, the *gullüm* queer kinship that includes aunties and grandmothers is different from the relationship between queer mothers and daughters:

The thing with the mother and daughter is different, it is more private and it is a two people relationship. It is totally different. There is fun, it is not like there isn't any but the conversation over there is more serious, it is more about the security and what happened in the past.<sup>127</sup>

Similar to New Wave, Rojda also stresses the "seriousness" of their relationship with her mother especially regarding the violent acts of the army and the police. When I asked about the possible reasons behind this, she put it as follows:

### **Why do you think she told you?**

Well, in fact I wonder, too. Eventually, you hear that once there was Hortum, he did this, and that he our put houses on fire, etc. I also asked about it, but sometimes she told me about what happened to her or her peers back in those times. Well, why did she told me? Because we are under constant danger, it can happen again. We need to know about our past.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Tabi yani teyzeler, halalar var. Mesela benim annem yok, yani trans annem yok, hiç de olmadı. mesela, anne manne, hala aaa dayım da geldi, aa teyzem geldi gibi takılabilirsin. Aa 3. Kuşaktan kuzenim Henry falan böyle. Ama ben şeyle de dalga geçiyorum o aristokrat aileyle de falan. Keyifli oluyo.

<sup>127</sup> Anne kız arasındaki durum daha farklı, hem daha özel yani iki kişilik bir ilişki. Bi yandan da çok daha farklı. Orada da gullüm var tabii yok değil ancak orada konuşulan durum daha ciddi, daha güvenlikle ya da geçmişte yaşananlarla ilgili.

<sup>128</sup> Sence neden anlatıyoduy peki?

Yani ben de merak ediyordum aslında. Yani sonuçta duyuyosun işte Hortum varmış öyle yapmış, evleri yakmış vs. falan diye. Soruyordum da hani hem, ama işte o da bazen anlatırıdı. Ona ya da işte onun yaşındakilere o zamanlar neler olmuş falan diye. Yani niye anlatıyodu? Çünkü bence her an tehlike altındayız biz, yani yeniden olabilir. Geçmişti bilmemiz lazım bence.

As Hirsch states, the curiosity and motivation to know “what had happened” was a mutual narrative among the “children” of the “survivors”. According to Ateş, it was always hard for her to talk about Pelin’s past and her personal memories of violence. To her, Pelin always somehow “found a way to avoid her questions and never spoke about her feelings”:

But generally, I get it. We talk a lot about those times since we are also activists. But when the two of us together and alone and when I ask her about her feelings, she doesn’t answer me or avoids me. Throughout the time I know her, I learned what happened to her piece by piece. How she struggled. Sometimes her friends told me, sometimes she did.<sup>129</sup>

To observe the vividness of memories of violent acts on daughters’<sup>130</sup> memories that were never experienced by them reveals that on some cases, queer kinship can become a place in which violent history of trans women<sup>131</sup> can be shared. In this sense, I would like to stress that we might take queer family life as an another dynamic of the queer postmemory discussion and inquire into the ways in which this family life “is entrenched in a collective imaginary shaped by public, generational structures of projection and by a shared archive of stories and images that inflect the transmission of individual and familial remembrance” (Hirsch, 2008 114).

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<sup>129</sup> Ama genel olarak anlıyorum yani, hani o zamanların üzerine çok konuşuluyo bir de activist yanımız olduğu için. Ama mesela biz ikimiz olduğumuzda ve ben sorduğumda mesela ne hissettiği hakkında falan. Cevap vermiyo ya da geçiştiriyo. Yani hani böyle parça parça onu tanıdığım sure boyunca bi şekilde öğrendim neler olduğunu ona. Nasıl mücadele ettiğini, bazen onun arkadaşları anlattı, bazen biraz o bahsetti, öyle öyle yani.

<sup>130</sup> During my fieldwork, I realized that sharing of violent experience is mostly specific to trans woman who do sex work. Especially our interview with Levent revealed that the transmission of violent memories was not the case when queer motherhood and daughterhood were established between individuals who do not define themselves as trans women. Whilst pointing to the significant need for more research on this issue, I will continue to the discussion of queer postmemory particularly focusing on the narratives of queer mothers and daughters who define themselves as woman/trans woman and who do sex work.

<sup>131</sup> I believe that there should be more research to answer questions such as: What about the violent history of the LGBI community? Can we also trace queer postmemory in other alternatives of queer kinship?

#### **4.5. Queer Children Formula: 27 years old = 11 months old**

In her analysis of postmemory, Hirsch stresses on “second generation” as “children” of the generation who witnessed and/or experienced traumatic events. In this sense, I believe that we can open a section under the discussion of queer family through discussing queer children of trans mothers, which would also juxtapose our discussions regarding notions such as “(giving) birth” and “growing up”. As we discussed in the first chapter, daughters meet their mothers mostly when they are between the ages 18 and 25. According to the legal system and the heteronormative family structure, they can no longer be considered as “children.” However, since being a mother and a daughter is connected with experience, regardless of their age, all inexperienced daughters are mostly seen as “children.” On the other hand, Yıldız goes beyond this in that she also calls her daughters as her “children” regardless of their experience:

My children they are my love. I cannot call of them my love but there are two or three of them that are like my own children I gave birth.<sup>132</sup>

Moreover, in some cases daughters were also considering themselves as “children” of their queer mothers. Rojda who is 27 years old, even goes further and defines herself as “11 months old” when we talk about her relationship with her mother:

To be honest, I am new but I have learned a lot. It's been eleven months but it is very important who your mother is. I can say that I have learned a lot within such a short period of time.<sup>133</sup>

As I discussed above, questions such as “How did you become a child of someone?”, “What does a person need to become a child?” or “What do we mean by

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<sup>132</sup> Çocuklarım canım onlar benim. Hani hepsi için demem belki ama aralarında iki-üç tane var ki, gerçekten çocuklarım gibidirler.

<sup>133</sup> Yani ben çok yeniyim aslında ama çok şey öğrendim. 11 aylığım yani ama işte kimin annen olduğu çok önemli. Bu kadar zamanda ben baya bişey öğrendim diyebilirim.

saying ‘children of the second generation’?” become vital in terms of the discussion of queer postmemory.

Additionally, during my fieldwork I realized that codes of family ties were also deconstructed as part of queer kinship among mothers and daughters. I observed that as Halbestam states, queer mothers and daughters were playing with family codes and ties through their kinship practices. In parallel to what Jack Halberstam and Lee Edelman (2005) state, the practice of queer kinship also in my example disturbs “normal”, “legitimate” and “common” practice of the family. New Wave exemplifies this as follows:

I don't know it would be right to call it an alternative family. But that has very important points. While within the normal – quote and quote – family structures, your mother's husband is your father, step father or Uncle Something, as far as transpeople are concerned, your mother's husband is your uncle-in-law. You call him that way.<sup>134</sup>

To discuss another angle of my attempt to queer postmemory, let us now turn to Hirsch's stress on the idea of generation and how mothers and daughters refer to it through their examples.

#### **4.5.1. Meet the Queer Generation**

Unlike her critical discussion on familial space, in terms of the idea of “generation”, Marianne Hirsch does not mention different alternatives and establishes the idea of “second generation” through its normative understanding. Now, I would like to go back to the narratives of mothers and daughters, and bring the idea of queer generation as the fourth angle on the discussion of queer postmemory. Hirsch defines the idea of postmemory through the autobiographical literature and art works of a “second

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<sup>134</sup> Yani direk alternatif aile demek ne kadar doğru bilmiyorum. Ama çok önemli de noktaları var bi yandan. Tırnak içerisinde normal aile yapılarında annenin kocası senin baban, üvey baban ya da işte bilmemne amcan olurken, translarda annenin kocası senin eniştendir. Eniște dersin yani.

generation” and states that all of them, including herself, “share certain qualities and symptoms that makes them a *postgeneration*” (2012:4). According to my point of view, in her writings, Hirsch takes the heteronormative understanding of the term generation for granted and indirectly closes the door for alternative meanings of “growing up”, “birth”, and “childhood” as I discussed above. During my fieldwork, being a trans mother of a trans daughter was mostly not related with the age but with the experience of being a trans woman and a sex worker. When I asked Yeşim about her and her mother’s age difference, first she made it clear that, I do not mix the idea of “generation with its “normal” meaning:

It is not the same as in the normal life. Here you have a new generation every five or six years. It was not the case before, though. In fact, my mother is not the same age as me, she is older than me but nowadays you see a lot of mothers who are three or five years older than their daughters.<sup>135</sup>

Similarly, Levent kindly reminds me “the difference” between the definitions of the term “generation” in trans community and its common use in the society:

You need to remember this by the way. What we call a generation is not something long term. We don’t use the word generation in the conventional way as used by the society. I saw people who are four years younger than their mothers, even people who are a few months older than their mothers (laugh).<sup>136</sup>

In the case of Alev, the situation was similar. She had had three daughters and the youngest among them was 6 years younger than her. Additionally, Toprak (23) who was the youngest mother among my participants had a daughter with whom they share the same year of birth. She commented on this situation as follows:

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<sup>135</sup> Normal hayatın gibi değil burda nesil beş, altı yılda bir atlıyor. Eskiden öyle değilmiş. Gerçi benim annem de hani öyle benim yaşlarım da değil daha büyük ama, şimdi çok var öyle kızıyla arasında uc, beş yıl fark olanlar.

<sup>136</sup> Şimdi şunu da unutmamak lazım bu arada. Nesil dediğimiz şey uzun bir dönem değil, yani nesil kelimesini toplumdaki genel kullanım gibi kullanmıyoruz burda. Annesiyle arasında dört yaş olanlar, hatta annesinden ay farkıyla büyük olan bile gördüm ben (gülüşme).

My dear, it not about age any more. It is about how much you are cooked and how experienced you are. Even if you are 98 years old, what you tell is full of nonsense, it doesn't do any shit and you cannot be a mother.<sup>137</sup>

As I discussed above, Toprak mentions that to her, motherhood is completely unrelated with age. Additionally, she also adds a more interesting point to our discussion by stating that ‘to have a daughter’ is related with the extent of the knowledge that a mother can provide for their daughters but not with giving birth or adopting them. Pelin and Ateş were my only mother/daughter couple participants whose age difference was similar to the examples of “regular” mothers and daughters in society. Pelin was aware that the importance of age difference between trans mothers and daughters was disappearing since the beginning of the 2000s. Similar to Alev, Hakan, Rojda, Yeliz, Ateş and Levent, she related this fact with the increase in the usage of the Internet. As Halberstam, among others, states, the notion of the time and structure of knowledge changed dramatically together with the role of Internet in our daily lives (2005). Similarly, Pelin mentions the same issue through the impact of the knowledge that Internet provides for trans women on the structure of kinship and its longevity:

It was not like this before but there are now a lot of girls who gain experience by internet. Everything used to take a lot of time, to learn, to become a transgender person. Nowadays, everything is so fast, that's why I guess, the age difference between mothers and daughters decreases. Through technology, bang! your twat, bang! your bazooms. On the internet, you get the information, you get the hormones, here is your mother (laugh).<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Yani artık böyle yaşla maşa alaklı değil be güzelim. Bu ne kadar piştiğin, ortamda ne kadar kaşarlandığınla ilgili. Yani sen şimdi istersen 98 yaşında ol, bu kızlara anlatacakların fasa fisoya hiçbi boka yaramaz ki zaten anne de olamazsınız.

<sup>138</sup> Şimdi eskiden böyle değildi yani, ama şimdi internetten deneyimlenen o kadar çok kız var ki. Eskiden zaman alındı her şey, öğrenmesi, trans olması falan. Şimdi her şey çok hızlı, o yüzden heralde kısalıyo bu ana kız arasındaki yaşlar da. Teknolojiyle pat putka, pat meme, internetle pat bilgi pat hormon, al sana anne (gülüşme).

Through my fieldwork, I realized that the idea of generation holds a very flexible meaning among trans women. For instance while Pelin and Ateş had more than 20 years of age difference, Toprak and one of her daughters were born in the same year. On the other hand, regardless of the age difference, and whether there was physical witnessing of the violent acts towards trans individuals especially during the years between 1980 and 1996, narratives of both mothers and daughters showed me how the memories of those times were still vivid and affecting the experiences of the daily lives of trans women together with their impact on the imaginings of the future.

Herein it is also important to remind that it was only Pelin, Burçin, and Yıldız who had first hand experiences of “those times.” Other mothers such as Alev, Toprak and Yeliz were not there to live through or witness the traumatic violence of the 1980s and 1990s. However, during our interviews one could clearly observe the impact of those memories in their daily lives and also on their relationships with their daughters. In this sense, I would like to stress the formulation of Jan Assmann, that was also criticized by Marianne Hirsch, in which he states that “in the normal succession of a generation” (1997 100), embodied form of memory is transmitted across three to four generations which is equal to eighty to hundred years. According Hirsch, for Assman, the family plays a crucial role in the intergenerational transmission of memory. However, when we look at the example of queer kinship, his formula becomes invalid and cannot be applied to the intergenerational transmission of memory among queer mothers and daughters. As we discussed above, the term generation among trans women in Istanbul is significantly dynamic in comparison to its heteronormative understanding and also to set a fixed definition of the term queer generation seems impossible due to its dramatically subjective form.

I have discussed the angles of queer kinship that create and “severely delimits the space of the encounter between memory and familial as well as affiliative postmemory” (97). Now let me focus firstly on the narratives of mothers who personally experienced and/or witnessed the state violence that targeted trans individuals particularly between the years 1980 and 1996. Later, I will focus on daughters and mothers from second, third or fourth generation to chase the traces of postmemory on generations who were never there to experience and/or witness those violent events.

#### **4.6. “Those were the times of witch hunt.” – What do mothers remember?**

Trans women who are now between the ages of 50 and 55 had to face the worst moment of transphobic violence in recent Turkish history. As Veysel Eşsiz (2011) mentions in his piece “Devletin Eli, Beli, Sopası,” during the martial law period in 1981, the state had the right to deport individuals out of martial law regions, if they did not have a particular place of residence or if they were found to be “suspicious” for any reason. According to him, during this period, trans individuals in particular were named as “suspects” and were taken from clubs, houses, bars and/or streets and were deported to Bolu or Eskişehir by trains.

When Pelin, who had a very close friend who had to leave Istanbul by force and lived through the violent acts of the police during the 1990s, started to mention her experience of violence, our conversation dramatically changed and became mutually vulnerable. She emotionally became unstable and was laughing and crying at the same time, sometimes with very short intervals. Additionally, long periods of silence together with moments in which I was able to observe her eagerness to share her experience, followed one another. During our talk, I witnessed her dilemma. It was as if I was talking to two Pelins. One was willing to share experiences of violent history and to unsilence the traumatic memories. On the other hand, perhaps not to remember and

bring her losses to the present, the other one was keeping her quiet. Indeed, I never insisted on any question and emphasized many times that she could end the interview at any moment she liked. Despite her difficulties, she did not end the interview and defined those times as the “times of a witch hunt” when “it was not possible to walk on the street as normal people”:

It was totally a witch hunting. They used to take everyone very easily. Then with trains to Eskişehir. It was exactly like the Nazi Germany.<sup>139</sup> (Three minutes of silence). We were slaughtered. Okay, we weren't put into gas rooms but people were kept in inhumane conditions. Oh! Dilara, couldn't you find something else to talk about for God's sake?

...  
They used to seal our arms, which was incredible. We were exiled, you know. They did not treat like humans. It was as if we were insects and they were trying to get rid of us.<sup>140</sup>

Pelin's narrative reminded me of Kardelen's experience of displacement that I had read in *80'lerde Lubunya Olmak* (Siyah Pembe Üçgen, 2012) a few days before my interview with Pelin. Kardelen mentions “those times” as:

There was a battue targeted at us, transvestites-transsexuals, gays... They used to take the people they gathered to then-famous Sansar Han in Sirkeci, namely to the police department. We stayed there for days. They put us in minibuses, we were messed up, our clothes, our hair, our beard, all messed up; fifty or sixty people, violence, oppression, torture. Then dragged into Haydar Paşa Gare. Hearing the swearing by people, we got into the train. They closed the compartment, locked the doors. We were all afraid in different ways. What was gonna happen to us? I watched that movie at the time. *The Cassandra Crossing*. That movie appeared before my eyes, almost. Then the train set off. We immediately ran to the door. It was open.

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<sup>140</sup> Cadı avı vardı resmen. Tık tık tık topluyolardı her yerden. Sonra trenlerle Eskişehir'e. Tam Nazi zamanı gibi yani. Kıyım yapıldı bize. Tamam gaz odalarına sokulmadık belki ama yani hiç insan şartlar altında tutulmuyordu insanlar. Ay Dilara, konuşacak başka bi şey bulamadın mı allah aşkına?

...

Mühürleniyoduk kollarımızdan, inanılmazdı. Sürgün edildik işte. İnsan gibi davranışlarındı bi de. Sanki biz böcektik de onlar da bizden kurtulmaya çalışıyoardı.

We opened the door and the vice squad were patrolling in the corridors. Gay friends whose arms were sealed were sitting on the floors of the corridors. The train went for a while until Kartal. When it got near Kartal, it slowed down. A few friends in the next car jumped out of the window. But it was not Hitler's Germany. We knew who we were, we were humans. Then we came to Pendik. The train stopped. We realized that the cops were gone; then we jumped out of the train, five people, ten people. Some of us got driven to right and some of us to the left. We ran and ran. Thirsty, hungry and miserable... Five or six people, we stopped by the house who was in the process of construction at the time. I knocked on the door, a lady opened it and we asked for water. While she was giving us the water, as soon as she saw other friends, she started crying, "Help! Neighbors, she-males are here!" Then, stones and sticks from here and there... We ran away. Anyhow, we hit the main street. There were forty or fifty of us, lined up on the street, like colorful clowns... Anyway, Japon Arzu, who is not alive now, and me got into a mortar truck and returned Istanbul. We came to Ümraniye Bridge. The police were searching if anyone was coming back. We immediately drooped and hide. The driver was an understanding man. We entered Istanbul just to spite them, just to spite.<sup>141</sup>

Parallel to Hirsch's analysis, the narratives of Pelin and Kardelen show us how postmemory can also examine cross-identifications and interconnections-between different memory cultures. According to Hirsch, there are interconnections between the

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<sup>141</sup> ... her yerden bir süre avı başlamıştı bizlere; travesty-transeksüel ve geylere... Topladıklarını Sirkeci'deki o zamanki meşhur Sansar Han'a, yani emniyer müdürlüğünə götürdüler... Günlerce orada kaldık. 50-60 kişi, şiddet, eziyet, işkence; üstümüz başımız, saçımız sakalımız birbirine karışmış bir halde bindirdiler bizi minibüslere, ver elini Haydar Paşa garına sürükleyerek. Halkın çırkin sözleri arasında, tekme tokat bindik trene. Kapattılar kompartımanı; kapıları kilitlediler. Hepimizde ayrı ayrı korkular vardı. Akıbetimiz ne olacaktı? Ben o zamanlar bir film izlemiştim. "Cassandra Geçidi" diye. O an o film gözümün önünden geçti. Neyse... Sonra hareket ettik. Hemen kapıya koştuk. Kapı açılmıştı. Tam kapıyı açtık, sivil ahlak polisleri koridorlarda tur atıyorlar. Gey arkadaşlar da, kollarından mühürlü olarak yerlerde oturuyorlardı. Epeyce gittik. Taa ki Kartal'a yaklaşınca tren yavaşladı. Yan vagondan birkaç arkadaş camdan atladılar. Oysa burası Hitler'in Almanya'sı değildi. Ne olduğumuzu biliyorduk; bizler insandık. Derken Pendik'e geldik. Tren durdu. Baktık polisler yok; o an beşer onar trenden atladık. Kimimiz sağa, kimimiz sola savrulduk. Koştuğumuz, berbat durumda... Beş altı kişi yol kenarında yeni yapılan bir evin önünde durduk. Kapıyı çaldım; bir bayan açtı; su istedik. Kadın tam su verirken, öteki arkadaşları görür görmez "Yetişin komşular, kadın adamlar!" diye bağırmaya başladı. O zaman, sağdan soldan taşlar sopalar... Kaçıştık. Neyse, çıktıktan sonra caddeye. Kırk elli dizildik caddeye, rengarenk palyaçolar gibi... Neyse, ben ve şu an hayatı olmayan Japon Arzu, bir harç arabasına binip döndük tekrar İstanbul'a... Geldik Ümraniye Köprüsü'ne. Polisler arama yapıyor, geri dönen var mı diye. Tabii biz hemen eğildik. Sağ olsun şoför arkadaş anlayışlı bir beydi. Onlara inat, inadına girmiştir tekrar İstanbul'a.

“memories of the Holocaust and slavery and between African American and Jewish memory cultures” (2012 23). In this sense, I believe that it is fair to go one step further and stress the “multidirectionality of memory cultures” (Rothberg, 2009 124) and rethink on the dynamics that draw cross-identifications and interconnections between memory of Holocaust and trans women’s history in Turkey. Similar to the narratives of the post-Holocaust generation, according to Yıldız, the times of the Turkish military coup and Hortum Süleyman were “shameful for the history of humanity”:

You know, there are situations when you say, “no, this is not happening to me right now,” as they happen. It seems funny to you at that moment but you also know it is horrible, you don’t wanna believe it’s happening. It is exactly this case. This was what happened to transpeople both in ‘80s and ‘90s.<sup>142</sup>

While years were passing and state was becoming more “civil”, according to Pelin at the same time the “actors of torture were changing from army to police.” She said:

Nothing has changed, my dear. Nothing. The soldiers used to do the shit before, then the police started to the same shit.<sup>143</sup>

Burçın who was not in Istanbul during this period, remembers a phone call that she made with a friend with whom she grew up together with in their home town.

I decided to come here, actually. I had a friend called Engin, he was from my village and he came here before me. We were talking and it was at the end of ‘80s, I don’t remember the exact year. Suddenly, what did I see? Our Engin became the girl Engin! “Don’t come,” he said. If he had a chance, he would have returned, he said. “We are leaving miserably here, don’t come now,” he said. I got scared then. You cannot get any news easily, it was not like nowadays, no telephone or anything. Whatever, so I listened to his word, I waited for a while and then I came here. Now, they treat us like queens! (Laugh)<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Yani olurken böyle bi yandan “yok canım bu benim başıma gelmiyo şu anda” dediğin durumlar vardır ya. Komik gelir ama bi yandan da çok fenadır inanmak istemezsin. Tam bu işte. Bunlar geldi transların başına hep hem 80lerde hem 90larda.

<sup>143</sup> Hiçbi şey değişmedi anacım. Hiç bi şey. Öncesinde askerin yaptığı boklukları sonrasında polis yapmaya başladı.

<sup>144</sup> Ben buralara gelmeyi kafaya koymuştum aslında. Engin diye bi arkadaşım vardı bizim köyden benden önce gelmişti buraya. Onunla konuşuyoruz işte 80’lerin sonu

After the 1990s, we do not observe acts such as collective displacements; however, systematic police violence, transphobic attitudes and discrimination still continue to occupy a big part in the daily experience of trans women.<sup>145</sup> However, what distinguish this period from the 1980s and from today are the specific violent events that happened only during this period such as the violent experience of Hortum Süleyman, together with forced haircuts and keeping one under custody for several days without a reason. According to Pelin, the period in which Hortum Süleyman was a commissioner of Beyoğlu Police Department was best described as “Chinese torture”:

The pressure was really too much, every police commander that came hit us. It continued until that time, Hortum Süleyman came. Hortum Süleyman started to demolish Pürletaş, he started to demolish and destroy Sormagil, Kazancı... Before Hortum Süleyman... No, I guess they were same. The homes of transpeople started to got sealed after PVSK (Law of Police Forces). They were sealed for three months. It was like a Chinese torture. I remember very clearly because my trans friends' homes were in that region, for example Aylin's apartment. We started to run off in all directions. Hortum Süleyman attacked all the houses, everyone escaped because the gut beat the crap out of people. I was in Pürletaş back then, everyone escaped but I stayed there in Canan's apartment. One day I came in the afternoon, I had to stay because there was no other place I can work, you have to live there even though you know that you will beaten up. He was coming from the front door and we were sneaking out from the back door. When we came back, even our cigarettes were not on the table because they used to throw everything we had out, our liquors etc. We went through this stuff. We made a friend in Kazancı, we used to take shelter and hide in his/her house. Or we used to go up to our neighbor. We were in good terms with the neighbors. But people can change of course. We were separately attacked by the vice unit and by Hortum Süleyman. While they were bringing us to the cars, they were acting like the anti-terror branch busted a house. They used to line us by the stairs. The police blocked all the ways in Cihangir and the

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gibiymi tam yılını hatırlıyorum. Anam bi baktım bizim Engin, kız Engin olmuş. “Gelme” dedi bana. Dönückek yolu olsa hatta dönermiş bile köye falan. “Burda kopek gibi yaşıyoruz, sakın şu an gelme” dedi. Korktum o zaman, hiç haber de alamıyosun öyle, şimdiki gibi değil yani telefon o, bu. Neyse yani sonuç olarak dinledim onu, biraz daha bekledim, sonra geldim. Şimdi artık kraliçe gibi davranıyorlar (!) (Gülüşme).

<sup>145</sup> Herein, it is important to mention depending on the narratives of daughters, some of those applications of police still continue to occur today. According to Rojda, police officers are still “trying to take trans people under custody by no reason, when they are going to shop or market to buy a bread or something”.

people applauded the police for taking us. The public automatically turned their back on us, they turned away from us when they saw the power of the police. The last time, Hortum Süleyman saw me working by the door, then I realized that he was gonna attack my house. I escaped from the back door, from Kazancı and went to Betül's father's apartment. When I returned mine the next day, they filled the inside of the door with sand. There was an iron door, but it was gone. He took the door and sold it to a junk dealer. We never went to that home any more, Pürtelaş was finished. We were all scattered around.<sup>146</sup>

Additionally, as Eşsiz (2011) mentions in his piece, Yıldız also explains the term “adventure” which stands for the excuse to keep trans individuals under custody longer than the usual time:

There was something we called adventure. Because of that, people stayed long.

### **What does adventure mean?**

It means this. He arrests you because of exhibitionism or something else right? But if he takes you to only one unit, it is finished. It is a case that can

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<sup>146</sup> Baskılar çok fazlaydı gerçekten her gelen polis amiri bize vuruyodu... O da şeye kadar devam etti, Hortum Süleyman geldii, Hortum Süleyman Pürtelaş'ı kırmaya dökmeye, Sormagil'i kırmaya dökmeye, Kazancı.. Hortum Süleyman'dan önce... yok aynındı onlar heralde, PVSK'dan transların evleri mühürlenmeye başladı, 3 ay 3 ay mühürleniyodu. Çin işkencesi gibi. Çok iyi hatırlıyorum, çünkü trans arkadaşların evi, mesela Aylin'in evi ordaydı, cil yavrusu gibi dağılmaya başladık. Şimdi Hortum Süleyman bütün evlere saldırdı, kaçtı bütün insanlar çünkü adam çok kötü dövüyodu. Ben de o zaman Pürtelaş'tayım, herkes kaçtı bi ben kaldım Canan'ın evinde. Geldimm bir gün akşam üstü, mecburum kalmaya çalışabileceğim başka bir alan yok çünkü, dövüleceğini bile bile orda yaşamak zorundasın. O önden geliyodu biz arka kapıdan kaçtıyoduk, sonra geri geldiğimizde sigaralarımız bile yoktu masanın üstünde çünkü her şeyimizi atıylardı içkilerimizi falan. Böyle şeyler yaşadık. Kazancı'da bir ahbab bulmuştu kendimize, onun yanına sığınıyoduk, saklanniyoduk. Veya bi komşunun evine çıktıyoduk. Komşularla aramız iyiydi. Ama insanlar tabi değişimeliyolar. Biz Hortum Süleyman ayrı ahlak ayrı basıyodu mesela bizi arabalara getirirken sanki terörle mücadele ev basmış gibi yapıyolardı. Merdivene diziyoardı bizi, bütün Cihangir'deki o yolları kapatmıştı polisler ve halk el şaklatıyordu polise bizi aldığı için. Halk otomatik olarak döndü polis gücünü görünce onlardan yana döndü. En son Hortum Süleyman işte yine beni gördü, kapıda ben çalışırken tam anladım gördüm beni basıçak evi ben arka kapıdan Kazancı'dan kaçtım, Kurtuluş'a Betül'ün babasının evine geldim. Ertesi gün geldiğimde, o kapının içini kum doldurmuşlardı. Demir kapı vardı yerinde yoktu onu çıkarıp eskiciye satmış, vermiş. Bi daha o eve de gitmedik, Pürtelaş da bitti. Hepimiz cil yavrusu gibi dağıldı yani.

be solved only in vice unit, but they did not do that. He takes you to there and then from there to some other place. It is basically deterrence policy.<sup>147</sup>

Moreover, more than the experience of systematic police violence in their daily lives, the specific harassment and torture that was done with “hoses” in the Beyoğlu police station (which provides the background for the nickname Hose given to Süleyman Ulusoy) appeared repeatedly in my participants’ narrative. Pelin who was personally exposed to his harassments several times puts it as follows:

My hair was never cut. I don’t know how but when they called us by name individually, somehow I got away with it. But I could not get rid of that bastard called Hortum Süleyman that easily. First he showed up himself. Once I was at the window and it was morning and I saw him coming but he was in plain clothes, then I said to myself, “Okay, this street is also done.”<sup>148</sup>

While she was talking about her experience during the 1990s, I was able to observe the vividness of her memories. For instance, whilst mentioning the moment that she realized that their street was also under danger, her body language revealed the position of their house in the street, to which way she looked and saw Hortum Süleyman and from where he was coming. Through her body language, I was able to see that she was reliving those experiences during the interview. Together with the clarity and vividness, the silences and little breaks that Pelin gave as she talked about “those times,” revealed the extent

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<sup>147</sup> Macera dediğimiz bi şey vardı. Onun yüzünden uzun kalıyordu insanlar.

### **Ne demek macera?**

Şu demek, mesela seni şimdi alıyo di mi teşhircilikten ondan bundan, sonra seni mesela diyelim sadece bi yere götürse bitiyo iş. Yani sadece Ahlak Masası’nda çözülecek bi durum ama yapmıyorum, böyle ordan oraya, ordan oraya. Yıldırma politikası işte.

<sup>148</sup> Saçım hiç kesilmedi benim. Nası oldu bilmiyorum ama böyle sırayla okuduklarında isimlerde bi şekilde yırttım. Ama işte o Hortum Süleyman pezevenginden kurtulmadım o kadar kolay. Önce kendi gelirdi, mesela bi keresinde camdan bakıyordum sabahı, baktım bu it geliyo ama sivil, “tamaaaam” dedim, “bu sokak da bitti”.

and depth of the lingering affects of this particular form of violence. At some point in the interview, after 40 seconds of silence, she continued:

Just before we left the police station, we used to go to his room one by one. There were hoses in different colors and sizes; he made us choose one of them. Then he hit us by those hoses and we were escaping from him. He crazily used to hit right our asses And the goddamn pimp used to listen to Bülent Ersoy's music before we entered his room.<sup>149</sup>

Similar to Pelin, Yıldız discussed her experience with Hortum Süleyman drawing an analogy between the 1980s and the 90s.

Curfew for us never ended actually. I did not get beaten up very badly but I know, I saw a lot of people beaten up. Someone was always beaten and got wounded. There was Hortum. What a bastard. We suffered a lot because of him. He was really obsessed with us. He wanted to annihilate all the transpeople. Because we are insects.<sup>150</sup>

According to Burçin, Hortum Süleyman “turned their lives into hell” and his acts of torture deeply affected her daily life experience:

His face was like his soul, very ugly and dirty. He ruined everything around here. He did horrible things and made people do horrible things. When people were still inside, he put their homes onto fire. He baited people to dogs. It was as if we had been the germs and they had been trying to get rid of us.<sup>151</sup>

According to Pelin, too, “the aim was obvious” and it was “destroying them”:

All those associations established is Hortum’s organizing people, all of them They only had one goal, which is to annihilate us. It did not matter how. Leaving on the street to die. Burning houses, bailing us to dogs, putting in

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<sup>149</sup> Tam çıkmamıza yakın karakoldan, odasına girerdik böyle teker teker. Sonra hortumlar vardı işte farklı renklerde, boyutlarda onlardan birini seçtiyorodu. Sonra işte öyle vura vura kaçırıyordu bizi. Götmüze götürümüze vuruyodu deli gibi. Bi de pezvenge bak, odasında biz girmeden de Bülent Ersoy dinliyodu.

<sup>150</sup> Bize sokağa çıkma yasağı hiç bitmedi gibi oldu aslında. Yani ben mesela öyle çok büyük dayaklar falan yemedim ama biliyorum çok gördüm yani. Birileri sürekli dayak yiyoðu, yaralanıyordu falan. Hortum vardı mesela. Pislik herif. Ondan çok çektiğim mesela. Resmen takmıştı. Yoketmek istedim bütün transları. Böceðiz ya biz.

<sup>151</sup> Yüzü de kendi gibiydi. Böyle çirkiiin, pis pis. Mahvetti buraları hep. Korkunç şeyler yaptı, yaptırdı. İçerde insanlar varken, aşağıdan evlerini ateþe verdi. Köpeklerle saldırttı. Sanki sanırsın, biz mikrop bunlar da bizden kurtulmaya çalışıyoð.

trains and sending away, all of them. You do what the fuck you are gonna do, just don't stay here. Once while the girls were still inside, they filled the door with sand and put the house on fire. Do you know what that means? Being left to die. Those times were horrible for us, many escaped, committed suicide, and many got killed.<sup>152</sup>

Levent who lived for a long time on Pürtelaş Street, mentions the correlation between the frequency of suicides and increasing police violence in the first half of the 90s:

For a long time, I lived with Selçuk and others in old Pürletaş, right one street behind Ülker Sokak. And almost every night some went out to commit suicide. Some suffered because of their husband or because of this or that. In those days, the violence by police vehemently increased. It is extremely difficult to constantly live with that fear.<sup>153</sup>

Pelin also mentions suicides as another tactic of the state to “destroy” them:

There were many suicides. There are still but back then there were too many. Well, this is something the police do. They cornered us so badly that they left no choice for people to make. Those who had strength leave turned back to being man with difficulty and they went back to their villages, their hometowns. Those who are strong went on struggling. Those who are not saved themselves this way. They escaped from either drugs or violence.<sup>154</sup>

According to the narratives of both mothers and daughters, those systematic tortures with hose or through cutting hair ended at the end of 1990s; however the narratives also

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<sup>152</sup> Kurulan onca dernek, Hortum'un insanları örgütlemesi, hepsi yani. Tek amaçları vardı o da bizi yok etmek. Nasıl olursa, işte sokağa bırakıp ölüme terketmek. Evleri yaktılar, köpekleri üstümüze salmak, trenlerle göndermek hani hepsi hepsi, burda olmayın da ne halt yerseniz yiycin durumuydu. Bi keresinde kızlar içerdeyken kapıları kumla doldurup, ateşe verdiler. Ne demek bu biliyo musun? Ölüme terketmek demek. O dönemler çok kötüdü bizim için, kaçanlar çok oldu, intihar edenler, öldürülenler çok oldu.

<sup>153</sup> Ben uzunca bi sure de Ülker Sokak bi sokak arkasında eski Pürtelaş'ta yaşadım Selçuklarla ve her gece intihar etmek için birileri çıkardı şeye nerdeyse. Kimisi kocasından kimisi ondan bundan ama hani polis şiddeti artıkça çok artmıştı o dönemler. Sürekli o korkuya yaşamak korkunç.

<sup>154</sup> Çok fazla intihar oldu. Hala da oluyo ama o dönem çok fazlaydı. Yani bu da polislerin yaptığı ayrı bişey. Öyle bi kıstırıldılar ki. İnsanlara yapacak bir şey bırakmadılar. Yani gidecek gücü olanlar ya erkek hallerine zorla geri dönüp köylerine, şehirlerine gitti, gidemeyenlerde burda kaldı. Güçlü olanlar mücadele etmeye çalıştı. Olamayanların bazıları da böyle kurtuldu işte. Ya uyuşturucudan ya bu şiddetten kaçtılar.

show us how the effects of those events continue to emerge in the present narratives of mothers and, surprisingly enough, daughters. Before discussing the narratives of daughters on their memories of violent transphobic events and impacts of those memories on daughters' experience of daily life, as Marianne Hirsch would agree, I would like to clarify that during this discussion, I do not argue that daughters have their mothers' memories. I do not claim that mothers' memories are transformed into daughters' memories. As Hirsch also refers to in her piece, according to Hoffman (2004), much information passes over to the second generation through a sort of fairy tale. In this sense, these "not memories" communicated in "flashes of imagery" and "broken refrains," transmitted through "the language of the body," are precisely the stuff of *postmemory*" (Hirsch, 2008 109).

Finally, let me focus on these "not memories" of queer daughters and see how their narratives "scrutinize the lines of transmission between individual and collective remembrance and to specify how the break in transmission resulting from traumatic historical events necessitates forms of remembrance that reconnect and re-embody an intergenerational memorial fabric that is severed by catastrophe" (Hirsch, 2012 32).

#### **4.7. What do daughters 'remember'?**

Talking about daughters' daily routines explained a good deal about the connection between trans history and contemporary daily life experience. During my fieldwork, all of my participants, at least once, mentioned the "relatively easier" lives of "young trans girls". Pelin comments on it as follows:

There is no police that can act in the way they used to do. There is already no soldier. See what happens if a policeman shaves a transperson's hair. Or I don't know see what happens if they put us in trains and exile us to Eskişehir. We oppose to the pecuniary fines in Şişli and put on protests in

front of the police departments. It is funny though but back in those times,<sup>155</sup> the pecuniary fine would be like a dessert for us.

Burçin seems as if to be agreeing with Pelin, when I ask her if she sees any difference between the 90s and today in terms of police violence. She responds that:

Now girls know what to say. The world has changed. They hit the right note or they ask for the legal basis. They can ask “why?” when the police say “Come here.” This could not happen before. In that regard, there is some change.<sup>156</sup>

However, talking to daughters and also mothers about the military coup and/or the time of Hortum Süleyman, showed me that having a “relatively easier” life does not mean not holding the traumatic memories of the past. During my fieldwork I traced the memories of daughters, daughters’ mothers or their grand grand mothers and intentionally did not ask any specific questions regarding Hortum Süleyman or the military coup period. Instead, I was more curious about the moments and topics that could awaken those memories.

At the end of my field work, I realized that whenever I asked about the differences between the times of mothers and daughters, both mothers and daughters started to mention these traumatic events even any of the parties –including mothers- were not there to have a firsthand experience. However, what I also realized especially in the narratives of younger mothers and their daughters was the silence on the experiences of the military coup period. While all of my participants were mentioning the memory of Hortum Süleyman, only the mothers who had faced or witnessed the violent acts of the

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<sup>155</sup> Artık eskisi davranışabilecek bir polis yok artık. Asker zaten yok da. Şu an bir polis bir transi alınsın da saçını kazısın bakıyorum noluyo. Ya da ne biliyim bizi toplasın da trenlerle Eskişehir'e sürsün bakıyorum neler oluyo. Şişli'deki para cezalarına itiraz edip, gidip emniyet müdürlüklerinin önünde eylem yapıyoruz biz. Hani biraz komik olacak ama o zamanlar para cezası tatlı gibi bişey olurdu heralde.

<sup>156</sup> Artık kızlar ne diyeceklerini biliyorlar. Değişti yani dünya. Öyle lafi oturtuveriyio. Ya da yasal dayanağını soruyo, öyle “gel bakıyorum” diyince polis, “neden?” diye sorabiliyo. Bunlar asla olamazdı, eskiden mesela. O açıdan biraz değişiklik var aslında

military regime mentioned them, along with their daughters. Now let us focus on the daughters' narratives and see how memories of their mothers and their grand mothers appear in these narratives.

Not only to see the impact of the times that they have never been through on the daughters' daily lives, but also to observe the blurriness between the past and the present, as well as "me" and "them" in their narratives was a significant point for my research. Ateş, the daughter of Pelin, who went through both of the most traumatic events of recent trans history, states as follows when we talk about today's situation in terms of trans women:

There is no security. It never was there. We are making some progress, though. The movement continues in much wider spectrum. The foundation for this movement was laid in Ülker Sokak. Before that, it was established between transpeople who were sent to Eskişehir by force. It was founded by the transpeople fighting against Hortum. Our right to life has been taken from us for years. Again, our most fundamental rights have been ignored by the state forces and by the society for years, but we are making progress.<sup>157</sup>

Ateş's narrative was one of the strongest ones among my participants in terms of blurring the difference and distance between the past and the present. Additionally, while she was explaining the contemporary situation from her point of view, she used "we" instead of "I", referring to all trans women from all generations. While she was focusing on the violent acts of the police and the army in the past, her rage was so high that she had to stop our interview to give a break. During our interview, she mentioned Pelin several

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<sup>157</sup> Yani hiçbir güvence yok. Hiçbir zaman da olmamış zaten. Ama ilerliyoruz da bi yandan yani, hareket çok daha geniş kapsamda devam ediyor artık. Bunun temelleri de Ülker Sokak'ta atıldı yani. Onun öncesinde zorla Eskişehir'e gönderilen translar arasında atıldı. Hortum'a karşı mücadele eden translar arasında kuruldu. Yaşam hakkımız senelerdir elimizden alınıyor, en temel insan haklarımız yine yillardır hem devlet güçleri hem toplum tarafından hiçe sayılıyo ama işte ilerliyoruz.

times as “her hero” and placed the experiences of the traumatic acts that trans women went through 30 years ago at the center of her activism:

Pelin always says so many bad things that did not ever befall on anyone happened to us. It is true, though. Look, I say more than thirty years, it is true. Well, no one randomly grabs us and cut our hair now but what happened in those days still affect us today.

### **Like what?**

There has been a slaughter going on for years. Previously, the state did this slaughter openly but now it continues in a more or less systemic way. Let alone that, there is slaughter on streets, which keeps going without diminishing. All this suffering, many lost friends, all those tortures, it is horrible. That's why, Pelin is my hero, to be honest, she is my closest one, most significant one.

### **Well, do you feel the impact of those times on her in your daily life.**

Well, sure. I did not grasp at the beginning as I didn't know her very well back then or I did not know the trans-history, but one learns in time.

### **How did you learn this history?**

I don't know. I think it naturally comes to you. Well, I mean from the conversations around. As I said at the beginning, I did not have many transpeople around my circle. I happened to have in the last few years. Afterwards, I begin to frequent those circles, I made friends, then Pelin came to my life. I guess I learned by what I heard in those circles and by reading. Then seeing the gravity of events, I started to question. The politics we are engaged is a movement that comprises all these, a movement born out of them. I think it gradually and spontaneously happened.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Pelin de hep diyo işte bizim başımıza gelenler pişmiş tavuğu bile başına gelmedi diye. Gerçekten de öyle, bak 30 yıldan fazla diyorum ya gerçekten öyle. Hani evet şimdı tutup da saçımızı rastgele kimse kesemiyor belki ama yine de o dönemde yaşananlar bugün bizleri hala etkiliyor.

### **Ne gibi mesela?**

Yani yillardır kiyim var, öncesinde devlet aleni yapıyomuş şimdi de öyle ama biraz daha sistematik ilerliyor artık. E onu bırak sokakta kiyim var, o hiç azalmadan devam ediyor. Yani bunca acı, onca kayıp arkadaş, onca işkence korkunç yani. Bu yüzden Pelin benim kahramanım aslında yani, en yakınım, en önemlim.

### **Peki gündelik hayatı hissediyor musun onda bu zamanların etkisini mesela?**

As Hirsch states, “to be born” in a “family” of survivors of traumatic events or “to grow up” in an environment under the shade of violent memories affect the daily routine of the “postgeneration”. Hakan who has never been through the violent applications of Hortum Süleyman and who is the first daughter of Pelin - and also a mother now - explains how water cannons remind her of Hortum Süleyman:

Nowadays, the police sprays people with water; that reminds me of Hortum Süleyman, truly. We are so much fed up with the police. Their problems never cease, the hate us. So our ordeal hasn't stop in any way. Seeing them spraying people with water, I hope they won't bring someone like Hortum Süleyman to the office, god willing.

#### **Were you here at the time of Hortum Süleyman's office?**

No, my sister. I was very young back then. I hadn't stepped into this world.<sup>159</sup>

In this manner, Hakan's narrative helps us to understand how memories of Pelin and others who witnessed the traumatic events play an important role in her daily life experience. Similar to Hirsch's explanations, through Hakan's narrative, we see that the

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E tabi. Başlarda çok anlamıyorum hani onu da çok tanımadığımından ya da trans tarihini iyi bilmemiştim ama zamanla öğreniyorum.

#### **Nasıl öğrendin bu tarihi peki?**

Bilmem. Biraz doğal olarak geliyo sanırım. Yani genel olarak ortamdaki konuşmalardan. Ben işte baştada da dediğim gibi öncesinde bu kadar trans çevrem yoktu. Son bikaç yılda olmaya başladı. Sonrasında işte çok gider gelir oldum, çok arkadaşlarım oldu, Pelin oldu falan. Sanırım oralarda duyduklarıyla, okuduklarıyla falan öğrendim. Sonra işte biraz daha sormaya başladım görünce hikayelerin vahametini. E zaten yaptığımız politika da bunların hepsini içeren, onlardan doğan bi hareket. Yani sanırım böyle kendiliğinden oldu gibi, yavaş yavaş.

<sup>159</sup> Polis su sıkıyo ya şimdilerde hani böyle insanlara. Yeminlen aklıma Hortum Süleyman geliyo. Artık çok bunaldık polisten, bitmiyo dertleri, ne nefret etmişler bizden be ablacım yani bitmedi çilemiz he. Böyle bunlar suları sıktıkça ben diyoru inşallah Hortum gibi biri gelmez yeniden.

#### **Sen Hortum Süleyman döneminde burda mıydın?**

Yok ablacım, ben daha küçüktüm o zaman. Daha bu aleme girmemiştim.

memories of past generations affect her daily life routine and awaken the memories of the generation that she was never a part of. Whilst I asked Yeşim about the comparison of the past and the present generations of trans people, similar to other daughters, she started with the experience of Hortum Süleyman:

The case is still not good, of course. Very bad things happened to me. Once the police almost killed me in Belgrad Forest. They stabbed me and many other things happened to me. But recently, it has been a lot. They stare at you everywhere. Inevitably, one is afraid that things that happened in the past may occur.<sup>160</sup>

According to Toprak, increasing police violence was the signal of new applications that will threaten trans women and isolate them from the society:

You'll see, the will happen again. All this torture, violence, upheaval, chaos, all of them signals that. We will be threatened again, shut down again and be excluded from the society. The same things that happened at the time of Hortum Süleyman will happen again, they will try to destroy us slowly.<sup>161</sup>

Herein, it is important to remind once more Toprak's age and the fact that she was a primary school student during the period of Hortum Süleyman. However, to see the impact of the times that she has never been through once more showed me that those who were not there to experience the event but absorbed its effects blurred generation and age difference.

In this chapter, I attempted to open a new discussion on Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory, borrowing Halberstam's formation of queer time and place. I tried to question the boundaries of the term postmemory and raised questions to

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<sup>160</sup> Yani yine iyi değil tabi, benim çok kötü şeyler geldi başıma, bi keresinde hatta polisler Belgrad Ormanı'nda öldürdücekti beni neredeyse. Bıçaklayan oldu o oldu bu oldu. Ama son zamanlarda çok artık bi de her yerde böyle, tip tip de bakıyolar, ister istemez o eskiden olanların tekrardan olacağından korkuyo insan.

<sup>161</sup> Bak aynısı olacak yine bak gör. Yani bu kadar işkence, şiddet, karmaşma, karışıklık, hepsi buna işaret. Yine tehdit edilecez, yine kapatılacak, toplumdan izole edilicez. Hortum Süleyman zamanında nasıl olduysa yine öyle olacak, yavaş yavaş yok etmeye çalışacaklar.

encourage us to imagine non-heteronormative forms of postmemory. Whilst doing that, I put two significantly violent events of trans women's history in Turkey at the center of my analysis and traced their journey in the practice of queer kinship, focusing on their emergence in the narratives of queer daughters and young queer mothers who were not there to experience those events.

## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION**

In this research, I had initially aimed to focus on queer kinship and a sub-cultural language called *Lubunca*. However, during the transcription process in which I realized the different angles of queer kinship, I realized that postponing my analysis regarding *Lubunca* for another article was necessary. As I discussed at length, after the fieldwork process, my research evolved into tracing knowledge and memory transfer from mothers and daughters whilst paying attention to the dynamics of queer kinship between mothers and daughters from different angles. In this research, while constructing the theoretical framework of queer kinship through its ambivalent form, I focused on a particular form of queer kinship among trans woman sex workers in Istanbul who come together as mothers and daughters. When I asked why there is such a kinship as such, the shared narrative of both mothers and daughters revealed the resisting structure of queer kinship against the transphobia in social, political and legal system together with heteropatriarchal family structure that not only discriminates trans women and leaves them without social economic capital by forcing them to depart from their families at a very early age, but also silences transphobic hate crimes. On the other hand, surprisingly, the dynamics of the same queer kinship also reveals that actually the aim of the mother/daughter relationship among trans sex worker women is not to challenge or deconstruct heteronormative gender and family practices. On the contrary, those notions play a significant role during the construction of queer kinship.

On the other hand, while queering normative family terms such as “having and raising a kid”, “being a mother”, “being a daughter” and “giving birth and growing up”, the narratives of my interviewees showed that binary oppositions based on gender identities stand at the center of mother/daughter relationships among trans women sex workers. In addition, I show that queer kinship plays a significant role in the gender reassignment process in which mothers both indirectly through modelling and directly through the teaching of “how to be a woman” reproduce hegemonic binary gender norms. This dichotomy within this form of queer kinship that cannot be explained only through terms such as heteronormativity and/or transphobia reveals the need to come up with a way of thinking and maybe a term that could enhance the discussion on heteronormativity and transphobia in the society. Based on the narratives of queer mothers and daughters, this research points to the gap in the categories that we have in literature and, hence, to the need for more research and debate on trans lives.

Moreover, my fieldwork process not only demonstrated how the binary gender system can still survive in queer kinship but also revealed how it can affect the process of fieldwork. My personal experience with Toprak that I discussed at length in the first chapter, forced me to face the heterosexual matrix that assigns motherhood only to women. Realizing my tendency to establish a relation between gender identity and parental identification encouraged me to deepen my analysis. In the discussion on ambivalent forms of queer mother/daughter relationship throughout the chapters, I attempted to show how queer kinship suggests challenging dynamics for critical gender analysis.

In the second chapter, I first focused on the term *queer* and the debates on queer kinship. I explained why the present research investigates queer kinship among trans sex worker women through the narratives of both mothers and daughter who do sex work. In

addition, in this chapter, I discussed queer kinship as a coping strategy against all the structures that discriminate and marginalize trans sex worker women in the society. Departing from the strong emphasis of my interviewees' I discussed on the connection between their relationship and empowering role of mother/daughter kinship in terms of achieving recognition and acceptance.

In the following section of the chapter, I focused on the knowledge transfer that reduces the duration of gender identity reassignment process to the minimum by avoiding the new, “in between” features of body that emerge during the first months of the reassignment process. Based on the narratives of both mothers and daughters, in this section, I argue that mothers’ knowledge transfer ‘deals with’ the in-between status of the body through guiding daughters to look like “real” women as soon as possible. Finally I focused on the conflicts that emerge between mothers and daughters by developing a critical analysis of queer kinship.

In third chapter, I discussed how queer kinship especially impacts the daughters’ experience and relation with state and customers -. As narratives of both mothers and daughters revealed, the transfer of a “giant database” (Muhtar) on customers that enables daughters to develop a mental shortcut to protect themselves against hate crimes, turns queer kinship into a survival kit. I focused on the process of this transfer and observed how mothers teach the rules on safety in theory and practice, as Alev puts it.

In the following section of Chapter 3, I discussed the significant relation between queer kinship and state apparatuses. In this section, I focused on the daughters’ experience with transphobic state violence through examples from the legal system, systematic police violence, the healthcare system, and compulsory military service. While doing that, based on the narratives of my participants, I argued that the knowledge

that is transferred from mothers to daughters is not only an outcome of personal experience but also a collective experience and history of trans sex worker women.

To challenge the existing literature on intergenerational transmission of memory, in Chapter 4, I tried to open up a new debate on the possibility of queer postmemory. By building my theoretical framework in the light of Marianne Hirsch and Jack Halberstam, I aimed to go beyond my previous discussion on personal and collective history transfer among trans women to explore queer alternatives of the notions such as “(giving) birth”, “growing up”, “being a child” and “growing up”, I first focused on the violent and silenced history of trans women. By putting two collective traumatic events between 1980 and 1996 at the center of my critical analysis, I traced the transfer of the memories of these events in the practice of queer kinship and their emergence in the narratives of trans women who were not there to experience those traumatic events.

According to Foucault, a queer way of life that comprises friendship relations can create a culture and ethic that welcomes diversities. Like Foucault, I argue that the queer kinship that I investigate in this thesis, that is, the specific queer mother and daughter relation among trans sex workers, reveals the possibility of such a culture. This kinship form positions itself against the normative gender and sexual roles and objects to the violent attitude of normative institutions. On the other hand, in this research I also aimed to focus on the risks that this culture might carry in reproducing the binary gender codes, particularly in terms of the norms that emerge among trans women with regard to the idea of “real womanness”. The overall aim of this research is to show the diverse dynamics of queer kinship in relation to violence, discrimination and marginalization whilst problematizing transnormative practices through a critical queer analysis.

In addition, this research aims to show that the flourishing feminist/LGBTI literature on parenthood and queer parenting disregards the kinships and families that

can be established through the consent of both parties. The literature to date has mostly included discussions on queer parents and their children, failing to queer the meanings of ‘having a child’ and ‘raising a child’. In this sense, through the example of queer mothers and daughters, I aim to contribute to the existing literature on queer kinship and queer parenthood. Lastly, through the discussion on queer postmemory, I hope to suggest queer ways of thinking about transgenerational memory transfer.

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