

**BALLOONS WITH CANDLES - HUNGARIAN
SAME-SEX COUPLES AND THEIR FAMILIES
OF ORIGIN RENEGOTIATING KINSHIP**

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Dissertation

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DECLARATIONS

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Rita Béres-Deák

Abstract

The focus of my dissertation is the relationship between same-sex couples and their families of origin. I argue that the nature of this relationship is strongly connected to the way the participants (heterosexual and non-heterosexual alike) interpret and enact the notion of kinship; thus, I underline individual agency in creating and evaluating family forms. I propose that the family is a prime site of intimate citizenship, as it is regulated by the state and mainstream discourses, but also because its functioning either complies with or challenges societal norms concerning the inclusion or exclusion of same-sex couples. In this sense, heterosexual family members can also stand up for or hinder the intimate citizenship of their non-heterosexual kin. At the same time, the family of origin of same-sex couples themselves have to manage a similar stigma to that of non-heterosexuals, but often without the discursive resources provided by the LGBTQ community.

My dissertation is based on qualitative ethnographic research involving participant observation, ethnographic interviews, and the analysis of online and offline written sources. It addresses scholarship in the fields of intimate citizenship, kinship and sexual orientation. While the connection of these concepts have been studied in North American and Western European contexts, I propose that postsocialism, due to the stronger role played by family in people's lives, the relative invisibility of same-sex relationships and strongly heteronormative and nationalistic discourses, produces different constraints and opportunities to the reinterpretation of kinship to include non-heterosexual intimate arrangements. By studying the discourses and practices by which same-sex couples and their families of origin claim intimate citizenship I highlight strategies that might be different from Western ones and thus expand our knowledge about individual agency in claiming recognition to alternative family forms.

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Chapter I: Introduction

A: Recently they [my gay cousin and his boyfriend] had a kind of wedding. Where they strengthened their commitment. We were out on Margaret Island,¹ there were some hundred of us. [...] They asked a friend to give a speech, kinda substitute the priest, to speak about them and their relationship as he knows them. And then I don't know, we let up these lighted balloons into the sky, we almost set fire on some trees.

BDR: Oh, so you mean there were candles lit inside these balloons?

A. Yes, kinda like that. It has some name too, but they're no longer [used], now they're banned. Besides [laughs], it was so soon after the wedding that they got banned that...

BDR: You mean perhaps this was the reason?

A: Maybe, yes, because really we sent up I don't know how many into the sky. [...] And it was really scary to see how this thing was nearing the leaves of the trees. So it was really scary. But we didn't set fire on anything. (Anikó)

This short account of a gay commitment ceremony in many ways symbolizes for me several themes that I encountered during my research. Though same-sex couples are not allowed to marry in Hungary, Anikó calls the ceremony a wedding, a foundational ritual of kinship, which is also “a major site for the installation and maintenance of the institution of heterosexuality” (Ingraham 2006: 197); by celebrating the commitment of a same-sex couple as a wedding, participants subverted dominant understandings of the ritual and carved out a space for the same-sex couple in a country which constitutionally limits the scope of marriage to heterosexual couples. While celebrating a private commitment, the ritual took place in a public space literally in the heart of the capital, an illustration of how same-sex commitment ceremonies bridge the gap between public and private (Lewin 1998). Another connection to

the public sphere is the fact that the balloons were banned soon afterwards (whether or not as a result of this ceremony), which is another way the law restricts practices related to kinship. The presence of Anikó and other heterosexuals at the ceremony connects the LGBTQ community with the family of origin, and shows that heterosexual kin actively participate in extending (as well as limiting) the possibilities of same-sex couples.

Anikó's account also introduces the main theoretical concepts of my dissertation: definitions of kinship, intimate citizenship and agency, and their specificities in the Hungarian context. Though Hungarian law does not regard this gay couple as family, by celebrating their commitment ceremony as a wedding the relatives accorded it the recognition different-sex unions enjoy: they exhibited agency by performatively acknowledging the two men as a couple. Weddings also signal belonging to a community and so function as an ultimate assertion of intimate citizenship (see Chapter II). Intimate citizenship thus does not only mean constraints levied by the state or community, but, just like kinship, is open to negotiation by individuals or groups as agents, up to certain limits.

Marriage is often discussed as a central element of sexual/intimate citizenship, and access to it as crucial for the social inclusion of non-heterosexuals (e.g. Bell and Binnie 2000, Cossman 2007). Same-sex commitment ceremonies are seen as the classic example where the family of origin is often (though sometimes reluctantly) involved in claiming equality for LGBTQ people (Glass 2014, Lewin 1998). Most of the stories discussed in this dissertation, however, describe much more mundane events: visiting relatives, catsitting, or helping with the dishes after a family dinner. Rather than being limited to discriminative laws and policies, I argue that intimate citizenship also resides in everyday practices that signal the inclusion or exclusion of same-sex couples in communities of various types, including their families of origin. These practices and the discourses legitimating them are in a dynamic interaction with

¹ An island on the river Danube in the center of Budapest, a popular public park.

notions of kinship and intimate citizenship propagated by the state and mainstream discourses. The latter, however, do not determine the practices of families towards same-sex couples; indeed, family practices can become a way to claim and assert intimate citizenship for non-heterosexuals and also their kin, who – by virtue of having a non-heterosexual family member – also fall out of mainstream notions of the ideal family.

The focus of my dissertation is the relationship between same-sex couples and their families of origin. Based on ethnographic research (semi-structured interviews, participant observation and analysis of written, especially online sources) I will argue that the nature of this relationship is strongly connected to the way the participants (heterosexual and non-heterosexual alike) interpret and enact the notion of kinship. Weston (1991) argues that coming out to the family of origin is a test of kinship ties on both parts. I would add that beyond coming out, the way the same-sex couple and the family of origin continue to interact and perceive each other also reveals what they think about kinship. The notions of kinship transmitted through mainstream discourses, which in Hungary are strongly heteronormative, need to be reinterpreted if one is to accept the possibility of same-sex couples within the kinship network. This way, the connection of family and intimate citizenship is complex and not unidirectional: the state and the wider community put constraints on what is and is not defined as kinship, but such definitions can be, to a certain extent, negotiated by individuals and families in order to have their own intimate arrangements recognized.

Discourses and practices related to kinship are thus strongly affected by the socio-political context. Few studies discuss the relationship of families of origin with same-sex couples in postsocialist countries (e.g. Švab and Kuhar 2005, Tereskinas 2008), though different opportunities and constraints arise there than in the American and Western European liberal context most ethnographic studies on the topic are based on. In order to understand the

context of my study, it is necessary to have a short overview of the relevant features of state socialist and postsocialist² Hungary.

1.1. The context: family in (post)socialist Hungary

Hungary protects the institution of marriage as a voluntarily formed union between a man and a woman, and the family as the foundation of the survival of the nation. (The Basic Law of Hungary. Magyar Közlöny 2011/43. p. 10658.)³

The explicitly heteronormative definition of marriage and implicitly heteronormative definition of family in the new Hungarian Basic Law is the most often cited example of how the Hungarian state, and especially the right-wing government party FIDESZ, excludes non-heterosexual people from the framework of kinship. Previously, the first two decades after the fall of the Iron Curtain⁴ brought considerable advances in this field: in 1996 cohabiting same-sex partners became entitled to certain rights (mostly in the field of social services and health care) under the Domestic Partnership Act; in 2004 a precedent court case granted widower's pension to surviving same-sex partners; and in 2009 the institution of registered partnership was introduced for same-sex couples, with nearly the same rights as marriage (more about the exceptions later). Though the FIDESZ government, which has been in power since 2010, has not annulled any of these advances, its nationalistic pronatalism and explicitly heteronormative rhetoric, coupled with a strong emphasis on conservative Christian values and the demonization of liberalism, have created an atmosphere strongly opposing same-sex sexuality.

² Works about this political regime alternate between using the terms 'socialism', 'state socialism' and 'communism'. The last one, however, is problematic, as it originally meant the ideal future that countries of the Soviet bloc were striving towards. The countries themselves defined their regime as socialism, but this might easily be confused with the social democratic system of some other countries. Therefore, I find 'state socialism' the most suitable term; for the sake of shortness, however, I refer to the period afterwards as 'postsocialism.'

³ „Magyarország védi a házasság intézményét mint férfi és nő között, önkéntes elhatározás alapján létrejött életközösséget, valamint a családot mint a nemzet fennmaradásának alapját.” My translation.

⁴ 1989.

In this subchapter I will discuss the specificities of the Hungarian context, some, though not all, of which are usually connected to the country's state socialist past. Contemporary approaches to Central and Eastern Europe usually fall in two groups. On the one hand, as most of its countries belong to the European Union, they are associated with Euro-American values and arrangements. At the same time their historical past, especially state socialism, sets them apart and is thought to have created conditions radically different from those in 'the West'. Both of these explanations consider the former Eastern bloc as culturally and politically monolithic, though case studies from the region show considerable variation between individual countries (e.g. Kalb and Halmai eds. 2011, Lukič, Regulska and Zaviršek eds. 2006, Offe 1996). At the same time, some of the phenomena scholars describe in non-Western contexts are present in the West as well, though usually unacknowledged (Jackson 2011). The difference is mainly that of proportions, and of the way public discourses and the state utilize everyday notions and practices of kinship (more about this in Chapter II).

Though my research is set in postsocialist Hungary, I find it necessary to first outline some characteristics of state socialism with regard to family and kinship. For this purpose, I will examine some myths about family and kinship in state socialist Central and Eastern Europe, and the ways these resonate with contemporary family arrangements and discourses. Then I will give a short overview of the family in postsocialist Hungary. The specificities of the LGBTQ community I have researched will be discussed in Chapter III.1.

Myths about the family in Central and Eastern Europe

Evolutionary theories of anthropology used to position Central and Eastern Europe somewhat behind 'the West' not only in terms of industrialization, but also (in connection with that) in terms of family structures. Wall and Laslett's famous theory relies on the Leningrad (now St. Petersburg)-Triest line as a demarcation between 'Western' type families and more traditional 'Eastern' ones (cited in Todorova 2006: 2-3). The assumption is that certain features which in

Western Europe disappeared with industrialization, such as extended family households or the universality of marriage, have been retained in the largely agricultural areas of Central and Eastern Europe. Looking at individual cases reveals that these different family types coexist in the same region, nor does their distribution correspond to the East-West divide. Multigenerational households doing productive work together can also be found in rural areas in Western Europe (Seiser 2000), while extended families living together in state socialist Hungary was more a result of housing shortages than household production or community values (H. Sas 1978). The assumed traditionality or modernity of family arrangements in a given region has in fact more to do with material circumstances than with social development or the lack of it.

These material circumstances, like housing shortages, often came from the specificities of state socialism and did produce arrangements that were perhaps less widespread in Western Europe. One such circumstance was the 'economy of lack' which made it virtually impossible to make a decent living on wages alone. The possible solutions – such as home food production alongside wage work (Pittaway 2002), family-based small businesses (Offe 1996) or asking kin help in various activities, from building houses (Somlai 2002) to obtaining scarce goods for free (Kligman 1998) – are all based on the importance of kinship ties, and have been interpreted by some commentators (e.g. Pittaway 2002) as forms of resistance against state oppression.

Family as a site of resistance also surfaces in other kinds of theories about state socialism. These claim that the family remained the only refuge free from state control (Einhorn 1993): children received a 'double education', with schools indoctrinating them in the state ideology and the family offering alternative interpretations (Neményi 2000b) and the home became a site of dissident activities in the last decades of state socialism (Einhorn 1993). It is not difficult to see in this position a resonance of the myth of the bourgeois family

as a site of honesty, free from the constraints of the public sphere (Habermas 1998; see also Chapter II). Theories of the family as ‘safe haven’, however, ignore how state discourses and policies infringe upon the private sphere. Due to housing shortages, overworking and a lack of labor-saving devices, the experience of family for many was not so much privacy but rather the lack of it (Łobodzińska 1995). ‘Double education’ was also missing in many families that adopted (or seemed to adopt) the dominant political ideology as their own (Neményi 2000b, Neumann and Vajda 2008). The infiltration of politics into the family sphere was the most pronounced in East Germany, where many reported on their own family members to the Stasi⁵ (Borneman 1992, McLennan 2011). The claim, usually mentioned in connection with LGBTQ people, that the family is a sphere of fear rather than safety (Brown et al. 2007, Weston 1991) can also apply to those with dissident ideas during state socialism, who could not even trust their next of kin.⁶

The strongest infiltration of the state into the sphere of the family was in the field of reproduction. Pronatalism was characteristic of all state ideologies in the Eastern bloc; in most cases they tried to promote reproduction with policy measures like long parental leaves and financial support (Gal and Kligman 2000) but in Romania more restrictive strategies, such as the ban on abortion, were also used (Kligman 1998). Concerns about the ‘death of the nation’ appeared in Hungary as early as the 1960s and became even more pronounced later (Goven 1992). Pronatalism also became one of the few channels for expressing national sentiment, which was otherwise silenced by the rhetoric of Communist internationalism (Verdery 1996). At the same time, the reproduction of different social groups was not seen as equally desirable. The notion that only educated people should reproduce in order to improve the quality of the nation surfaced from time to time in public debates (Goven 1992) and child

⁵ The East German secret police.

⁶ See Moss 1995 for another parallel between political dissidence and homosexuality under state socialism, to be discussed below.

support was often given only to parents who conformed to middle-class childrearing methods (Haney 1999). Ironically, while state socialism in principle celebrated the working-class, in practice middle-class values were the standard. A similar contradiction can be observed with regard to race: whereas the integration of the Roma into society was voiced as a desirable goal, in practice midwives discouraged Roma women from giving birth (Stewart 1997) and Roma children were frequently taken into state care with the claim that their parents exhibited ‘antisocial’ behavior (Varsa 2014). Thus the image of ‘nation’ created by these policies was strongly raced and classed, as well as gendered (Verdery 1996).

Another policy supporting pronatalism was extending maternal leaves (in Hungary up to three years); this also made it possible for the state to manage surplus workforce without creating official unemployment, which was supposedly absent in socialism (Haney 1999). While in principle state socialism created gender equality by incorporating women into the workforce, in practice lengthy maternal leaves, as well as the fact that housework was still mostly left to women (Goven 1993) led to a model not much different from the breadwinner-homemaker model of the West, except for the (not-to-be neglected) fact that the woman also had an income. As childcare facilities for working women were scarce (Varsa 2014), often elderly relatives, especially grandparents, looked after the children while their parents worked (Gradszkova 2012). In fact, a number of life narratives from state socialist times mention children living for several years with their grandparents and not their parents (e.g. Neményi 2000b, Somlai 2002). The state socialist pattern of grandparents as babysitters came handy for policy-makers after the transition, who attempted to reduce the welfare provisions of state socialism (just like Western European states reduced their welfare provisions by putting more responsibility on the family; see Chapter II.2): referring to such arrangements as ‘tradition’ legitimized the closing down of public childcare facilities (Gradszkova 2012, Kravchenko 2012). In this sense, the transition represented a change in ideals and discourses rather than

family practices; these discourses and ideals, however, meant deep changes in how families were perceived.

The family after the transition

Kulpa and Mizielińska (2011) claim that whereas development in the West occurred in a linear way, with the fall of the Iron Curtain being just one event among many ('straight time'), in Central and Eastern Europe the changes of 1989-1990 created a complete break with the past, with all elements of Western capitalism and democracy arriving at once ('queer time'). A radical break with the past is certainly what many political leaders wish for or claim to have achieved; however, scholarly analyses point out continuities across political systems (e.g. Buchowski 2006, Hann 2001) – partly because the changes were not as radical as they seemed (Verdery 1996) and partly because people adapted the old language and symbols to solve new situations (Burawoy and Verdery 1999). The phenomena I discuss here related to family and to LGBTQ people all have their roots in state socialism or before, though have been strongly influenced by developments afterwards, including changes in other parts of Europe.

Though the process of transition – just like state socialism itself – has had its country-specific features (Offe 1996), a common experience all over the region is the social and economic insecurity after the fall of the Iron Curtain. Having lost taken-for-granted certainties, some Hungarians feel nostalgia for the 'predictable' and relatively wealthy last period of state socialism (Bartha 2011, Hann 2001), but it is more common in all the former Eastern Bloc countries to look to the glorious, pre-socialist past (Offe 1996, Rofel 2007, Verdery 1996). This call for a return to tradition includes gender roles; the (limited) gender equality of state socialism is framed as 'unnatural' and instead women are urged to take on more traditional roles (Verdery 1996). State policies reinforce traditional gender roles by further reducing childcare opportunities outside the home (Gradszkova 2012); this parallels the

reduction of welfare spending in some Western European countries (Finch 1989) and results in kin continuing to be an important resource for childcare (Gradskova 2012). In some countries, especially Poland, new abortion laws limit women's reproductive freedom (Einhorn 1993, Zielińska 2000).⁷ The latter move is strongly connected to fears of the 'death of the nation' (Rivkin-Fish 2005), which, as we have seen, have been present since the 1960s but became stronger with the rise of ethnic nationalism from the 1990s.

The strengthening of nationalism is a general European trend from the 1990s onward, fueled, according to Kalb (2011), by working-class disappointment in neoliberal regimes. This restriction of nationalism by class and regime is problematic, however, if we consider Central and Eastern Europe, where nationalism rose as an opposition to state socialism, and is supported by many from the former political elite and intelligentsia (Verdery 1996). Offe (1996) claims that ethnic nationalism in this region is not a new phenomenon, it was just kept at bay by state socialist emphasis on communist internationalism; Verdery (1996), on the other hand, points out elements of state socialism that, while ostensibly denying, in fact reinforced nationalist feelings, especially those based on ethnicity. Ethnic nationalism provides people with group belonging and a feeling of superiority, and the elite with a rhetoric legitimizing its power (Offe 1996, Smith 1991). Feminists also call attention to the gendered nature of nationalism, whereby women have different (and inferior) ways of 'serving the nation' than men (Yuval-Davis 1997). Postsocialist nationalism operates with explicitly gendered images and has played a strong part in pushing women back into the sphere of the family (Verdery 1996). Whereas ethnic nationalism has become central to political discourses in the whole region, Offe claims that they are especially important in Hungary and Poland, as

⁷ The only postsocialist country where abortion regulations became more liberal after the transition is Romania, as there abortion restrictions are associated with pronatalist state socialism (Magyari-Vincze 2009, Verdery 1996). This example illustrates that practices and policies are embraced or rejected on the basis of whether they evoke the memory of state socialism rather than as parts of a coherent postsocialist policy.

these two countries are integrated predominantly through ethnic identity (Offe 1996). Thus it is not surprising that kinship discourses are also permeated by nationalism.

Nationalism pays special attention to the family, which is considered the foundation of the nation (see the quote from the Hungarian Basic Law at the beginning of this subchapter). Real families, however, profit but little from this reification. For one thing, the family ideal of many postsocialist states – a two-parent nuclear middle-class family with traditional gender role divisions – is far from the lived reality of the majority of the population, as most families cannot afford the breadwinner-homemaker ideal (Gradszkova 2012). Some states, like Bulgaria, explicitly acknowledge that their constitution's description of family is based on an ideal and not the reality (Roseneil and Stoilova 2011); others, like Hungary, ignore the gap between the two. As a result partly of this gap and partly of the breakdown of the state socialist welfare system, welfare provisions do not fulfill the needs of families. Pronatalist state propaganda ignores the economic hardships resulting from having more children (Rothkirch and Kesseli 2012) and the small amount of state child support compels Hungarian women to take on (usually underpaid) jobs beside it to make a living (Glass and Fodor 2007), so the often emphasized maternal care for young children cannot be fully realized.

A frequently cited antidote for conservative and nationalistic measures in Central and Eastern Europe is pressure from the European Union (O'Dwyer 2010). Indeed, many reforms have been introduced in the pre-accession stage in order to fulfill EU requirements (Roseneil and Stoilova 2011), but the effect of these on kinship and intimate citizenship is rather limited. First, the EU has no authority over family law (Roseneil and Stoilova 2011). Second, even in fields that the EU can influence (such as anti-discrimination measures concerning women and sexual minorities), the adoption of reforms before accession sometimes leads to retrenchment afterwards (O'Dwyer 2010). Finally, legal measures do not necessarily correspond to actual policies and societal attitudes. Especially right-wing nationalists are

frequently critical of the European Union's liberal attitudes (Buchowski 2006) and political rhetoric often emphasizes the need to protect 'the nation's interest' against 'Western' intruders (Tismaneanu 1994).

The family has thus become an ideological battleground in this region. The following chapters will show how Hungarian families, especially those where same-sex couples are present, try to negotiate notions of family to gain legitimacy. This task is complicated by the hegemony of nationalistic discourses which posit only one, heteronormative, family form as the ideal. Those excluded from the definition of 'family', however, are not passive victims of state discourses: they claim acknowledgement for their intimate choices (that is, intimate citizenship) through their discourses and practices.

1.2. Why same-sex couples and families of origin?

Studies abound on the connection of family and intimate citizenship. Some discuss how mainstream discourses influence the way people imagine family (Powell et. al. 2012), others focus on the institution of marriage as a means for the state and other power structures to regulate intimate relationships (Ferrante 1996, Ingraham 2006) or the way social policies reinforce inequalities between 'deserving' and 'non-deserving' citizens (Haney 1999, Modell 1998). There are also several authors specifically focusing on the intimate/sexual citizenship of non-heterosexuals (Bell and Binnie 2000, Kuhar 2011, Phelan 2001). The question might arise: why yet another study on family and intimate citizenship, and why focus on same-sex relationships within the family?

I consider my research an important addition to this field for several reasons. One is the postsocialist context discussed above. I believe that in a strongly pronatalist, nationalistic state where heteronormative discourses are much more predominant than in most of Western Europe, same-sex couples have different access to intimate citizenship and different

opportunities to negotiate it. A constitutional ban on same-sex marriage and the impossibility of a child to have two legal parents of the same gender (see Chapter IV.1) obscure the existence of non-heterosexual family arrangements: same-sex couples have to fight not simply to have equal rights but to be visible at all. Their agency is thus limited by the nature of public discourses; at the same time, these discourses themselves are not unified, and this gives same-sex couples and their kin the possibility for reinterpreting notions of family and belonging. Their strategies can highlight how agency and intimate citizenship are intertwined and mutually enabling but also subject to constraints by dominant discourses.

Another specificity, to my knowledge unprecedented, is to focus on both same-sex couples and their families of origin. Though there are some studies which show the perspectives of family members (usually parents) of non-heterosexuals on same-sex relationships and kinship (e.g. Broad 2011, Cappellato and Manganella 2014, Gross 2011, Herdt and Koff 2000), none of these combines their perspective with that of non-heterosexuals. I think this double focus is important for several reasons. On the one hand, in a culture where communication about sexuality (especially in its nontraditional forms) is a strong taboo within many families, it is often only through talking to the family members that one can uncover their true reactions and attitudes (see examples in Chapters VI.2 and VII.1). The perspective of family members is often the best illustration of how heteronormative mainstream discourses influence ideas and practices in the private sphere. At the same time, it is not frequently acknowledged that having a non-heterosexual family member also endangers the intimate citizenship of others in the family. Herdt and Koff (2000) introduce the concept ‘Heterosexual Family Myth’ to describe the notion that only heterosexual unions with children count as family; this myth turns non-heterosexuals into ‘exiles from kinship’ (Weston 1991) but also leads to the stigmatization of anyone who includes a same-sex relationship in her/his kinship network. Merely acknowledging that one has a non-

heterosexual child or sibling may attach the ‘sticky’ stigma of homosexuality onto a person (Goffman 1974), so the coming out of a non-heterosexual within the family creates dilemmas about visibility for her/his family members (Kuhar 2007). Family members of same-sex couples thus need to exhibit agency in making decisions about visibility, support and family practices regarding their non-heterosexual kin; they negotiate their family member’s and their own intimate citizenship within various wider communities. They do so through linguistic and other practices, which also highlights the performative nature of kinship, agency and intimate citizenship.

A third unusual feature of my study, also leading to a wider range of perspectives represented, is the combination of offline and online methods. Though the importance of online communities for disenfranchised groups has long been recognized (Wellman and Gulia 1999) and some research has attempted to map LGBTQ community discourses online (e.g. Woodcock 2011) as well as online discussions on LGBTQ topics among a non-subcultural audience (Borgos 2011), I know of no comprehensive ethnography that would have used online sources en par with offline research. As I will highlight in Chapter III, I consider the forums and stories on LGBTQ websites an important source for studying discourses within the community. I claim that many members of the Hungarian LGBTQ community I studied have some form of online existence and this shapes their attitudes and practices. At the same time there are phenomena, such as actual family practices, which are rarely observable online. The combination of online and offline methods has enabled me to gain insight into how mainstream discourses, LGBTQ community discourses and people’s everyday practices are intertwined. I also claim that the internet is an important site for exhibiting agency both in terms of putting forward one’s opinions on forums and blogs as well as in other ways (see examples in Chapter V.1 concerning coming out). This insight might open the way for exploring the relevance of online environments for claiming intimate citizenship.

Studies of intimate citizenship all too often see it as the constraints the state puts on its citizens in the form of laws and discourses (e.g. Bell and Binnie 2000, Berlant 1997); if resistance is mentioned at all, it is limited to LGBTQ activism (e.g. Nicolae 2009). I propose that intimate citizenship goes beyond membership in the nation-state – which in the times of cosmopolitanism is a problematic category in itself (Richardson and Monro 2012) – and includes membership in other communities (Roseneil and Stoilova 2011), such as the family. Moreover, claiming intimate citizenship is not only possible on the level of political activism, but through counterdiscourses and everyday practices. These may be produced by family members of non-heterosexuals as well, partly because their own family arrangements may not fit the dominant ideal either. My approach to intimate citizenship emphasizes the agency individuals and families hold in claiming it as well as its performative nature, and also challenges the opposition between heterosexual families as normative versus same-sex couples as explicitly challenging the norm; we will see that the normative model of the heterosexual nuclear family excludes a number of heterosexuals as well, whose responses may be even more radical than those of some non-heterosexuals.

Edwards (2000) claims that ‘unusual’ kinship forms (in her study, assisted reproduction) can make explicit interpretations of ‘family’ which otherwise would remain unsaid. Families which include a same-sex couple are thus an ideal group for examining how people make sense of the notion of family when it deviates from the norm propagated by the state and other dominant discourses. They can reveal processes of negotiating intimate citizenship within the family and beyond through both discourses and practices. Studying the interaction of heterosexual and non-heterosexual kinship can also shed light on how the geopolitical context and various mainstream and subcultural discourses influence people’s notions of family and the resulting kinship practices.

1.3. The structure of the dissertation

In Chapter II I will discuss the ways family can be a site of intimate citizenship. Scholarship related to this topic is often limited to the ways the state enables or bans various family forms, especially those of non-heterosexual people, and how those concerned navigate these constraints to claim recognition for their living arrangements. While this is certainly an important aspect of intimate citizenship and I bring several examples from the Hungarian context in Chapter II (and later in Chapter IV), I argue that the concept of intimate citizenship should not be limited to the relationship between the individual or family and the state. Inclusion and exclusion takes place on various levels within the public as well as the private sphere, including the family itself, which may become a vehicle for transmitting dominant understandings of kinship, but also a site of resistance against those. Family practices as well as discourses can performatively create or annul kinship, in line with or against mainstream definitions. By overviewing relevant literature with examples from Hungary and elsewhere, I situate my work within a broader scholarship of sexual/intimate citizenship. At the same time, I enrich perspectives on intimate citizenship by calling attention to the geopolitical situatedness influencing discourses and practices that enable or disable people's kinship structures.

Chapter III describes the site and methods of my research. I chose to do fieldwork in the part of the Hungarian LGBTQ community that is the most publicly visible: these are the people who frequent LGBTQ events and internet (including Facebook) pages, subscribe to LGBTQ mailing lists or contribute to forums on LGBTQ websites. Such public activities make them more easily accessible for research, and at the same time suggest their need to belong to an LGBTQ community and/or to be aware of and possibly influence discourses and even policies directed at non-heterosexuals. This way, they are in a privileged position to see the limited applicability of the dominant family model propagated by the state and other

mainstream discourses, and their subculture provides them with alternative models to define their own relationship forms as family and actively stand up for intimate citizenship. Through a combination of methods (both offline and online) I tried to reach as wide a segment of this community as possible; the different methods used also made it possible to observe both discourses and practices. At the same time I also interviewed and observed family members of same-sex couples to explore how their own approaches to family change when they are faced with models not fitting into the heteronormative framework.

Chapter IV discusses various interpretations of kinship within the Hungarian LGBTQ community. The discourses examined here are specific to this community but are shaped by broader socio-political circumstances, including Hungary's state socialist past and nationalistic present, but also by international trends influenced by the European Union, the human rights framework and transnational LGBTQ activism. They are often framed as a critique of mainstream definitions and policies, and serve as means to claim intimate citizenship. Nevertheless, the community I studied is far from being unified over which non-heterosexual family forms count as legitimate. As various degrees of sexual/intimate citizenship exist within mainstream society (Phelan 2001), so too within the LGBTQ community some kinship forms are more highly prized than others, creating a hierarchy of family arrangements. In a homophobic context, mainstream laws, discourses and policies also limit individuals' ability to create certain types of families, and influence practices, which often verge on or even cross the border of official legitimacy. The result is a counterculture where rules governing acceptability are somewhat different from mainstream ones; at the same time, it is continuously in dialogue with wider communities, demanding recognition in ways that often (strategically or out of conviction) use the very same tenets of kinship that permeate Hungarian society. This chapter thus explores how family models and practices of LGBTQ people are created in an ambiguous relationship to mainstream ones, both using the

same tenets and modifying them to suit their needs. It is these subcultural models and interpretations that are introduced into families of origin when non-heterosexuals come out and claim recognition for their intimate choices.

Visibility is a precondition and a key element of claiming intimate citizenship within the family and beyond: same-sex couples can only expect recognition from people or communities that recognize them as couples. However, this recognition may take place on different levels and neither becoming visible nor reactions to it need happen in the way described by the narrative of coming out dominant in most activist (and scholarly) discourses. Interpretations of kinship influence whether and how people disclose their relationships to their environment and their motives for doing so – thus they might enable or limit intimate citizenship. In Chapter V I explore various discourses and practices within the LGBTQ community concerning the visibility of sexual orientation and relationships towards the family of origin. Another sensitive issue, discussed in Chapter V.3, is the visibility of family members as being related to a non-heterosexual person. In Hungary, they lack both an activist rhetoric of coming out and a supportive community of people in a similar situation, so their means of claiming recognition for their family form is extremely limited. Nevertheless, similarly to their non-heterosexual kin, they exhibit resourcefulness and agency in countering the silences around them. This chapter thus focuses on practices related to visibility of both the same-sex couple and their families of origin, and critically engages with literature that obscures the many nuances of visibility, the conflicting approaches to it within the LGBTQ community and beyond, and the various practices non-heterosexuals and their family members use in order to balance claiming recognition and avoiding stigmatization.

Chapter VI takes us beyond the question of visibility and examines family practices that might signal exclusion or inclusion of the same-sex couple. Here, as in Chapter V, the focus is on family as a community that can become a site of intimate citizenship claims. This

very community also regulates same-sex sexuality, enabling certain practices and family forms and hindering others; the discourses that form the basis of such practices are derived from mainstream culture, this way the family becomes a vehicle for the state to police its members' intimate choices (Borneman 1992). Rather than being passive objects of regulation however, I argue that these family members exercise agency in claiming intimate citizenship, which often leads to conflict within the family or the same-sex couple. The family thus becomes a site for a struggle over meaning and control, and this dynamic interaction shapes family members' understandings of kinship.

In Chapter VII I examine same-sex relationships from heterosexual kin's point of view. I argue that by virtue of having a non-heterosexual family member, these people also fall outside heteronormative models of kinship and need to negotiate this position either by putting constraints on the same-sex couple to make them as similar to the heterosexual ideal as possible, or by standing up for the acceptance of same-sex relationships. Through these practices, they claim intimate citizenship not only for the same-sex couples in their families but for themselves as well. Another way of claiming intimate citizenship, strongly connected to the former, is reinterpreting the meaning of 'family', a process somewhat similar to the one described in Chapter IV for members of the LGBTQ community. The chapter focuses on how being family members and allies to non-heterosexuals changes people's approaches to same-sex sexuality and the family in general.

My research addresses scholarship in the fields of intimate citizenship, kinship and sexual orientation. This is also the first ethnographic study in Hungary and the Central Eastern European region focusing specifically on the family connections of LGBTQ people, and thus can provide insight into how the postsocialist economic, political and cultural context shapes the intimate citizenship of non-heterosexuals within both formal and informal communities.

1.4. A note on terminology

I speak about my field as the Hungarian LGBTQ⁸ community; as I will discuss in Chapter III, this community might include people outside these five categories, but is nevertheless defined by the perspectives of people who are not heterosexual and/or cisgender. Some of my interviewees, though they live in a same-sex relationship, do not identify with any of the terms in the acronym (more about this in Chapter III.3). Therefore, with reference to my interlocutors as a group, I use the terms ‘same-sex oriented people’ or ‘non-heterosexuals’; while the latter term is sometimes criticized for its negativity, it encompasses all the people within my research without necessarily linking them to a specific identity category, and also emphasizes the distinctiveness of this group from the heteronormative mainstream. When referring to individual interviewees, though, I use the term they use for themselves; I do the same when discussing other studies in the field.

A similar terminological issue concerns the term ‘sexual orientation’. Richardson and Monro (2012) claim that it suggests a fixed and essential direction of sexual desire and therefore is to be avoided. Their alternative, ‘sexuality’, is problematic however, as it covers many more fields besides sexual object choice. I believe that, similarly to ‘identity’, ‘sexual orientation’ can also be resignified to include fluidity and constructedness; it is in this latter sense that I use it in this work.

The widespread anthropological approach that Euro-Americans have family and ‘traditional’ societies have kinship is, in my opinion, strongly ethnocentric, nor does it do justice to extended networks of relatives that do exist also in Euro-American contexts (see e.g.

⁸ The acronym LGBTQ means ‘lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer’. Though recently many activist organizations add the letters A (asexual) and I (intersex), this is often more an empty gesture than the incorporation of the specific needs and experiences of these groups (Butterfield 2013). During my fieldwork, asexual and intersex people were practically invisible in Hungary, including in the LGBTQ scene, therefore I decided against adding their letters to the acronym I use.

Edwards 2000, Stacey 1990). Therefore I use the two terms rather interchangeably, though denoting distant relatives more often by ‘kinship’ rather than ‘family’. The emic term is ‘family’, and indeed Hungarian does not have a corresponding term for ‘kinship’ as a concept;⁹ for people outside the nuclear family, my interviewees used both ‘family’ and ‘relatives’. Adopting their usage is another way I wish to represent their point of view.

⁹ Its common translation, *rokonság*, means the sum of relatives but is rarely if ever used as an abstract noun. Kinship systems are translated as “*rokonsági rendszer*” or sometimes “*vérségi és leszármazási rendszer*” (system of blood and descent) (e.g. A. Gergely 2005).

Chapter II. Family as a site of intimate citizenship

Kinship has been one of the foci of anthropology since its very conception, from Morgan's theory on the evolution of kinship forms (Morgan 1877) through the debate on kin terms (Parkin 2004, Rivers 2004 [1907]) to more recent claims that kinship is an artificial and analytically useless category (Needham 1971, Schneider 1984). Scholarly debates on kinship and family are not isolated from everyday discourses and practices or state laws and policies. On the one hand, at least some researchers try to take into account people's own definitions of kinship and family as a basis of their research (e.g. Stack 1971, Weston 1991) and set out to map folk theories of kinship (Powell et al. 2010, Schneider 1968) or everyday practices related to it (DeVault 1991, Finch 1989, Stack 1971). On the other hand, scientific discourses influence the way people think about kinship (Finkler 2000) and inform state laws and policies targeting families (Finch 1989). As competing theories of family and kinship coexist even within the same culture (Powell et al. 2010), frequently there is a clash between the different conceptions of family of two individuals, or an individual or group of people and the state; this is especially poignant in the case of 'alternative' kinship forms like same-sex couplehood and parenting, which fit certain interpretations of kinship but not others. One's ideas and practices related to kinship influence one's relationship to the state and other communities, that is, one's intimate citizenship.

In this chapter I will outline a theoretical approach to family as an enacted site of intimate citizenship. My key interest is the way individuals and families exercise agency with relation to intimate citizenship, including through their practices. Therefore, first I will focus on the concept of agency and its relation to performativity. In the second subchapter I will define intimate citizenship and discuss its relation to agency. Then I will examine how the most widespread contemporary definitions of kinship are manifest in practices connected to

intimate citizenship. I will pay special attention to the challenge posed by ‘nontraditional’ family forms, especially same-sex relationships; this will include the questions of intimate citizenship and agency concerning coming out. Though much of the theory I review is based on Western, especially American scholarship, I will include scholarly work on Central and Eastern Europe. As I suggested in Chapter I.1, I do not see ‘East’ and ‘West’ as monolithic entities exhibiting different characteristics, rather I will try to focus on varieties of family forms and strategies within each, created by, among other things, differences in class, race and sexual orientation, as well as social and political histories.

II.1. Agency

When discussing family discourses and practices that deviate from the state-propagated norm, the notion of agency is central. Feminism and other emancipatory movements find the concept useful for theorizing the basis for collective action and social change (e.g. Marques-Periera and Siim 2002). The queer focus on transgression and subversion also relies on agency (Dahl 2011). In this subchapter I will explore theorizations of agency that can be utilized to understand the way family discourses and practices stand up for intimate citizenship.

Definitions of agency

Agency is usually defined as a form of power of either individuals or collectivities to act, or to influence other people or the political structure itself. It is frequently associated with people making others act against their interest, though, as Giddens points out, this presupposes that all other things being equal, people would always act in their own interest, which is not necessarily the case (Giddens 1979). Giddens also questions the voluntaristic approach to power and agency (Giddens 1979); this challenge to the element of intentionality in agency is also present in Bourdieu (1977), de Certeau (1988) and Dahl (2011). Thus actions carried out

without strategic intention may challenge the system by creating alternative discourses or even social change (Bourdieu 1977).

Certain theorists limit the notion of agency to political participation (e.g. Marques-Periera and Siim 2002, Rose 1996). However, many classic theorizations of agency focus on the social rather than on the field of (narrowly understood) politics. Connell, for instance, suggests that gay identity itself is the result of agency through self-reflection and acting on one's formerly unacknowledged desires (Connell 1995). Friedman's notion of agency includes the ability to evaluate one's social relationships and sever the ones that interfere with one's autonomy (Friedman 2000). De Certeau (1988) describes how people challenge social structures through everyday practices. Butler emphasizes drag artists' agency in exposing the constructed nature of gender through imperfect imitation (Butler 1990). In other words, agency enables the questioning mainstream discourses and coming up with alternative ones. This approach to agency also makes it possible to examine how individuals exhibit agency through their kinship practices in non-traditional family forms, often in a performative way.

Agency as performative

The performative approach rests on a series of lectures delivered by J. L. Austin at Harvard University in 1955. Austin (1962) claims that all speech acts are performative, that is, they perform some action beyond the mere act of saying them: at the very least they produce some effect in the listener (perlocutionary force), but so-called 'pure' performatives accomplish actions themselves, like naming a ship or betting a sum of money. Austin encourages linguists to study not merely the utterances but the speech situations in which they are produced; in other words, he approaches speech as linguistic practice.

Judith Butler builds on Austin to deconstruct the modernist approach which presupposed an already existing, bounded subject producing the performative utterance. She demonstrates how, in fact, it is the performative action that constructs the subject (Butler

1990). In contrast to many theorists of performativity (Austin 1962, Derrida 1982) she focuses not only on speech acts but also bodily practices. With regard to gender, it is norms regulating such practices that constrain individuals into given gender categories; at the same time, they also offer the possibility of resistance (Butler 1988). While she has often been criticized for limiting the scope of this resistance (Loxley 2007), her emphasis on it is important for connecting agency with performative speech and nonverbal acts.

Though focus on practices has in the late 20th century been renewed in anthropology (Bourdieu 1977) and more specifically in kinship studies (e.g. Morgan 1996, Finch 1989), the term ‘performativity’ and the notion that practices constitute subjects or categories rarely arise. One exception is Sahlins (2013), who claims that kinship is performatively constituted through culturally appropriate action. Family rituals are a common example; in fact Austin himself makes a ritual statement related to family, the ‘I do’ uttered at weddings, one of his prime examples of performativity (Austin 1962). Morgan (1999) claims that talking about family rituals in fact constitutes them as a set of linked and repeated acts. These two facets of performing kinship are combined by Butler, who in *Antigone’s Claim* describes both Antigone’s ritual (burying her brother) and speech acts (explaining her behavior) as performances of kinship (Butler 2000). This work also explores the connection between kinship and the state, underlines how both of these rely on similar performative actions, and poses the question of achieving social change through agency.

Agency and social change

While most theorists of agency agree that it can result in social change, there is disagreement as to what extent such change is possible. Lawson says that agency resides in the awareness of social structures, which leads to the ability to change them (Lawson 2007). Others, however, point out that social structures severely constrain individuals’ and groups’ ability to achieve change. For one thing, ideology might limit the ability of subjects to see the reality of

social structures, a position taken by Parsons and Althusser among others (Giddens 1979). Some authors emphasize the unequal power relations between society and individuals: according to de Certeau, the agency of individuals and groups is limited to isolated actions constrained by the dominant structure's discourses. At the same time, he acknowledges that such tactics can subvert dominant meanings (de Certeau 1988), similarly to Finch, who claims that individual strategies challenging dominant discourses on the long run transform the discourse itself (Finch 1989). Such statements implicitly measure agency by the social change it creates – as if it was somehow measurable. I find this approach problematic, not only because present actions and discourses might bring about change only in the far future – like early coming out stories did in the 1970s, when the discourse about revealing one's sexual orientation had changed (Plummer 1997) – but also because it ignores the different ability of different actors to exercise power.

There are various approaches as to how one's position in the power hierarchy influences one's ability to act. Some, like Giddens (1997) or feminist standpoint theorists (Hartsock 1998) claim that those in subordinate positions are more aware of the workings of the system and thus less trapped in dominant ideologies that constrain their action. Others, however, point out that the disadvantaged have more difficulty in making their voices heard, and might even lack access to discourses that challenge the dominant one. For instance, dominant understandings of agency do not take into account women's different socialization and opportunities, which result in limitations on their agency (Friedman 2000). In our digital age the internet is important to access discourses and express one's thoughts, but those without internet access or computer literacy are excluded from this possibility; thus class and age determine the amount of agency one has (Dobó 2006). Similarly, in a case of strong oppression, members of a group or even a whole society might not have faith in the possibility of changing the system, and instead of challenging it as a whole try to find

individual ways to get around its constraints (Kapitány and Kapitány 2007) or rely on escapism to dreams or religion (Skidmore 2008). We must also be aware of how power works not only through external constraints but also through internalized values and self-policing (Foucault 1978).

This also leads to the question whether only transgressive actions and utterances carry agency. Some of the authors mentioned above seem to discuss only cases of agency that subvert or transgress dominant discourses (e.g. Giddens 1979, Lawson 2007, Rose 1996). The issue of conformity or subversion is not always obvious, though. Bourdieu (1977) mentions the category of the 'well-meaning rule-breaker', who breaks social rules with the appearance or intent of conformity, and thus in fact strengthens their power. For de Certeau (1988) agency lies in seemingly adapting to dominant structures but in fact transforming them from inside. In later chapters I will discuss several issues connected to LGBTQ rights which can be interpreted either as subversion or as adaptation to dominant social norms.

One of the impacts of queer theory is the recent academic focus on subversive practices. Dahl (2011), however, finds the focus on individual acts of transgression problematic, as such acts may not be inherently or consciously transgressive. Examining the practices of femme (feminine-looking) lesbians, she demonstrates that seemingly assimilationist practices might have subversive intent behind them. At the same time, Mahmood (2005) warns that agency may not only reside in transgressive but also in normative behaviors. As Fee (2006) points out in discussing covenant marriage, the very possibility of choosing 'traditional' behavior breaks with the taken-for-granted, unreflexive following of tradition. The practices I will discuss in this dissertation are not always meant or seen to be as subversive or transgressive; sometimes they even appear hetero- or homonormative; but being produced in kinship formations different from the heteronormative family, they cannot help but question heteronormative assumptions about family and exhibit

the agency of individuals and families in making sense of their relationship forms. It is important to acknowledge that in a heteronormative society, all family practices of non-heterosexuals are necessarily – even if not always intentionally – transgressive, as they create an alternative to hegemonic interpretations, and this itself constitutes a challenge to the system.

II.2. The intimate citizenship perspective

The concept of citizenship has seen fast expansion over the past decades. In ancient Greece it referred to the rights and duties of full members of the polity (that is, free men) (Lister 2002). T. H. Marshall separated these rights into civil and political rights, and added social rights as an essential element of full membership (Marshall 1965 [1949]). As the rights discourse became central to the emancipation of underprivileged groups, new sets of rights have been described as essential for citizenship, and accordingly new forms of citizenship have been theorized: sexual citizenship (e.g. Berlant 1997, Cossman 2007, Weeks 1999), cultural citizenship (Richardson 2001), intimate citizenship (Plummer 2003), as well as the citizenship of animals (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2011). Common features of all these include the connection between the individual and the (state or other) community, as well as a strong emphasis on people's potential to stand up for their inclusion in this community.

Regarding non-heterosexual orientations, the concepts of sexual and intimate citizenship are used the most frequently. They both challenge the public/private binary, which feminist theorists consider central to the exclusion from citizenship not only of women, who are traditionally relegated to the private sphere, but also of non-heterosexuals (Lister 2002). Theories of intimate/sexual citizenship expose the constructedness of this binary through discussing the way the 'private' sphere is influenced by 'public' policies and discourses (Phelan 2001, Yuval-Davis 1997). In this subchapter I will outline major theories of both and explaining why I consider intimate citizenship a better framework for my topic. Then I will

examine ways the family is connected to intimate citizenship. Lastly I will dwell on the issue of full citizenship. While the term ‘second-class citizenship’ has recently gained currency in academic literature, especially with reference to LGBTQ people and other underprivileged groups (e.g. Bell and Binnie 2000, Švab and Kuhar 2005), I will argue that not all these groups are equally disadvantaged, and classing all of them as ‘second-class citizens’ obscures important differences between their positions. Throughout I will pay special attention to how individuals and groups have agency within an intimate citizenship framework.

Sexual vs. intimate citizenship

The term ‘sexual citizenship’ has been widely used since the 1990s in human rights literature. There are two main approaches to it: one focuses on the sexual rights of particular marginal groups (mostly sexual minorities), while the second explores how the concept of citizenship in general privileges certain sexual practices and discourages others (Richardson 2001). The former approach seems to be more widespread: authors following this discuss the way LGBTQ people are excluded from full citizenship because they are deprived of certain legal rights (Bell and Binnie 2000, Phelan 2001) and/or because of biases against them on the level of attitudes and representation (Kuhar 2011, Richardson 2001, Tereskinas 2008). Few of these authors extend the scope of sexual citizenship to include not only sexual minorities but also women (Berlant 1997, Evans 1993) or African Americans (Chateauvert 2008); even Bell and Binnie, who claim that “all citizenship is sexual citizenship” (Bell and Binnie 2000: 10) limit their discussion to issues affecting LGBTQ people, as if their sexual citizenship was more pronounced or problematic than that of others. While this approach highlights the sexually normative nature of citizenship (Duggan 1992), it makes it appear as if non-heterosexuals were the only ones breaking this norm.

Authors following the second approach, on the other hand, single out practices that are frequently used to mark people as good or bad citizens, such as family structure (Cossman

2007), marital behavior (Kipnis 2000) or reproduction (Berlant 1997). As Cossman points out, it is rather these practices than group belonging¹⁰ which determine social inclusion or exclusion: some gays and lesbians might become recognized subjects if they adapt to the requirements of citizenship (Cossman 2007), though other authors claim that this equality is severely limited (Evans 1995).

Intimate citizenship, though some authors (e.g. Bell and Binnie 2000, Chateauvert 2008) use it interchangeably with sexual citizenship, is a later and broader concept; its scope is less contested but more complex. Plummer, who first used this term, concentrates on the possibility of decisions, access and choices related to the body and intimacy (Plummer 2003). Thus the individual choices of a sovereign, bounded subject are emphasized rather than the constraints put on individuals by the various social spaces they inhabit. Some later theorists, on the other hand, focus on these constraints rather than individual agency (e.g. Chateauvert 2008). Most authors take a middle way, using intimate citizenship to describe how intimate decisions and practices are intertwined with state and public policies (Lind 2010, Oleksy 2009). For these authors, like for some using the framework of sexual citizenship (e.g. Bell and Binnie 2000, Phelan 2001), the issue is basically the relationship between the individual and the state. However, if citizenship is about belonging, the state is not the only community that may become its site, neither is it the only force that can curtail it. A more encompassing definition of intimate citizenship by Roseneil acknowledges both agency and limitation as well as different sorts of communities that might be involved. In her view, full intimate citizenship is "the freedom and ability to construct and live selfhood and a wide range of close relationships – sexual/love relationships, friendships, parental and kin relations – safely, securely and according to personal choice, in their dynamic and changing forms, with respect,

¹⁰ Naturally, these practices are often critical determinants of group belonging, but do not necessarily apply to all members of the group; see for instance the debates within the LGBTQ community over same-sex marriage (detailed later).

recognition and support from state and civil society” (cited in Roseneil and Stoilova 2011: 168).

Roseneil’s definition explains why I consider intimate citizenship a better framework for my study than sexual citizenship. First, it may include a wide range of relationships beyond sexuality – like the recognition of nontraditional kin relations, such as that between a person and her/his same-sex partner’s family of origin or offspring. This scope also extends to people who themselves do not belong to marginal groups but have nontraditional kin ties due to their relatedness to someone who does, such as ‘social grandparents’¹¹ of a child raised by a same-sex couple.¹² Naturally, heterosexuals might also have nontraditional kinship forms like families of choice, as I will discuss in Chapter VII; the recognition of such ties also falls within the scope of intimate citizenship. Second, Roseneil’s notion of intimate citizenship emphasizes agency and choice, which are becoming central to discussions on kinship as well (see below). Finally, the dynamic interaction of the person making intimate choices and her/his environment is framed as ‘respect, recognition and support’, which goes beyond the formal recognition of marginal groups that much academic literature is limited to. At the same time, the definition presupposes an autonomous subject able to make individual choices (Friedman 2000). As I suggested in the discussion of agency above, we must be aware how the discourses and possibilities of given socio-historical contexts shape subjectivities (Skidmore 2008), which may limit the range of intimate practices available even without explicit outer constraints, as the diffuse, internalized forms of power (Foucault 1978) might instill in people notions of kinship and belonging that will lead to the self-policing of intimate practices.

¹¹ The term ‘social parent’ is usually applied to a primary caregiver who is not a biological or legal parent to the child (more about this in Chapter IV); ‘social grandparents’ are this person’s parents (Gross 2011).

¹² I am grateful to Roman Kuhar for this insight.

Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge the individual's and group's agency in sexual/intimate citizenship. This might occur on the individual level, such as when homosexual aliens manage to find loopholes in the US immigration legislation (Canaday 2009), or on the level of groups claiming recognition as members of the symbolic community (Renkin 2007a). Due to the diversity of intimate choices, there are no blueprints for claiming intimate citizenship (Weeks et al. 1999), but I will argue that this can be done both through discourses and practices.

The family under control

Discourses on the state level and beyond have significant impact on the general perception of family as well as on individual families. The clearest form is when 'family' is explicitly defined in laws, like in the Hungarian Basic Law (see Chapter I). Other laws, however, implicitly also define or control the family. Inheritance law (Finch 1989, Seiser 2000), laws on adoption and assisted reproduction (Melhuus and Howell 2009) and laws governing the acknowledgement of parenthood (Dolgin 1995, Hill 1991) rely just as much on definitions of family as the frequently raised issue of same-sex marriage (see Chapter II.4). These state definitions also shape (though they do not determine) how people themselves think about family and kinship.

It is not only the written legal framework that promotes the state's view of family, however. In the absence of explicit legal definitions, case law becomes a central element in regulating the family; such is the case in the US with regard to surrogacy (Hill 1991). Policies also convey messages about the ideal family, such as when certain families are denied benefits based on their racial (Chateauvert 2008) or class-based characteristics (Haney 1999), or even when racial characteristics determine the possibility of foster care (Modell 1998) or state care (Varsa 2014). The promotion of 'family care' rather than institutionalization of the disabled and the elderly describes the ideal family as a network of support based on kinship

obligations (Finch 1989, Gubrium and Holstein 1990). As Finch points out, this definition in fact serves the state's interest, as it delegates to (mostly female) family members services that should be provided by the welfare state (Finch 1989); a similar tendency can be observed in postsocialist Central and Eastern Europe, where the state, lacking resources to fund communal childcare, began to emphasize the importance of motherhood (Haney 1999, Verdery 1996). This calls our attention to the fact that the celebration of 'family values' observable also in postsocialist Hungary (see Chapter I.1) in fact serves the state's interest by promoting definitions and functions of family that best suit its own (political, national, demographic or financial) interests.

Communities other than the state also exercise surveillance over families. Kelly (2003) develops a triangular model to explain how both the state and other communities practice control over the family, though this control is balanced by notions of privacy central to Western culture. In rural Central and Eastern Europe, where community is valued over individuality and privacy (Fél and Hofer 1969), traditional village communities enforce their preferred model of family by expecting families to exhibit certain types of behavior (Creed 2001, Fél and Hofer 1969) and marginalizing people whose behavior conflicts with community norms (Bakó 2008, Stewart 1997).

Families and individuals are not passive victims to these regulations but make the best use of them to promote their own interests. They might do so through discourses: LGBTQ activists are especially gifted in using the state's family rhetoric to argue for same-sex marriage or parenting rights (Nicolae 2009; see also Chapter IV.1). Finch (1989) also lists a number of practices through which people try to get the most profit out of family policies. During state socialism, finding 'back doors' to trick the system was a frequent form of resistance (Kapitány and Kapitány 2007, Pittaway 2002), and this included family practices like cover marriages (Tóth and Murai 2014). At the same time, the state socialist welfare

system created a sense of entitlement to state help (Haney 1999), so then and afterwards people have often adjusted their family practices to have access to benefits, e.g. widowed people choose cohabitation rather than marriage so as not to lose their widow's pensions (Somlai 2013). Such 'avoidance strategies' (Finch 1989) are the active use of people's intimate citizenship potential. Intimate citizenship, however, is not only regulated or asserted in the broader community or in relation to the state; the family itself also regulates and at the same time enables people's intimate choices.

Family as a site of regulating intimacy

Janoski and Gran (2002) claim that the family is the site where children learn the notions of rights and obligations, and thus are prepared for participation in broader communities. This idea is one of the few that focuses on how the family enables citizenship; most others approach the family as a site of control and thus the extension of state regulation.

Each family has a specific 'family culture' (Somlai 1986) or 'public morality' (Finch 1989), a set of moral guidelines for conduct. Douglas claims that people choose their actions and justifications for them in a way that they comply the best they can with these moral guidelines, because if they lose their reputation, they might fall out of the family support network (cited in Finch 1989). Similarly, families as groups also guard their own reputation towards others, especially in small settlements where gossip can maim their social relations and access to resources (Finch 1989). In practice this means that fear of losing the respect, affection and/or practical help of family members, or of discrediting the family in front of others, might discourage people from certain courses of action, including intimate choices (Rofel 1999). Family narratives about 'heroes' and 'black sheep' transmit messages about appropriate and inappropriate behavior and expected punishment for the latter, creating a 'symbolic family' of ancestors as representatives of values (Boreczky 2004). As state regulations and discourses, as well as community values, strongly influence the actual content

of these public moralities (Finch 1989), the family becomes an instrument of the state in conveying its ideals of kinship (Borneman 1992, Donzelot 1977). Stack and Burton (1994) emphasize that family ideologies, norms, and behaviors, which are culturally constructed and shaped by economic, social, physical and psychological needs, constrain individuals' behavior over the life course. Their framework of such 'kinscripts' exposes how family and/or individual family members influence the life course of kin, but also allows for agency; at the same time, it places less emphasis on the fact that the constraints family puts on its members are strongly influenced by public discourses.

In Central and Eastern Europe two factors contribute to the importance of the controlling function of the family. One is the prevalence of traditional small communities in rural areas, mentioned above, where one 'deviant' family member could bring shame to all her/his kin; therefore, the common strategy is hiding uncomfortable facts from others (Fél and Hofer 1969). Also, during state socialism relatives with the 'wrong' political views or past occupation endangered the careers of all their kin, which led to family taboos, extreme vigilance and 'double education' (Neményi 2000b); dissidence was something people did not speak about openly but read between the lines (Moss 1995). This vigilance remained common in postsocialism, especially regarding topics that still create controversies in public discourses, e.g. many families of Jewish origin put constraints on the ethnic/religious self-expression of their members (Neumann and Vajda 2008). Such control on the expression of identity for fear of stigmatizing the whole family also appears in relation to non-traditional sexualities (Kuhar 2007); this will be discussed in detail in Chapter V.3.

One of the areas families' 'public morality' usually regulates is members' intimate choices. Sanctions for this include casting the person out of the kinship network (Sinfield 1998, Somlai 2002), but are by no means limited to it. People making intimate choices not acknowledged by the given family's guidelines might be ritually shamed (Kipnis 2000) or

treated as failures (Vaughan 1990). Frequently, especially in the case of non-heterosexual orientations, the intimate choice is tacitly acknowledged but not talked about (Kuhar 2007, Manalansan 1997). This way the image of the family remains unharmed in spite of practices to the contrary.

The regulation of intimate citizenship can also be challenged on the family level. In fact, de Certeau claims that in our fragmented society, transgressive narratives and practices are confined to small units like the family (de Certeau 1984). In state socialism, family was the main site of developing strategies for everyday resistance (Slavova 2006), though not all families were complicit in this (Borneman 1992). In postsocialism certain intimate choices, like adoption (Neményi and Takács 2015) or same-sex sexuality (Kuhar 2011) remain taboo in the public sphere and can only be discussed, if at all, in the private sphere. For instance, Kuhar claims that in Slovenia, while creating visibility for LGBTQ people (an important way of asserting intimate citizenship, see below) has been relatively successful within the family, it has not yet spread to the public sphere (Kuhar 2011).

We can see that people making nontraditional intimate choices can face rejection both by the state (in the form of losing benefits or even being criminalized) and within their own families as well. Some authors thus claim that these people, from an intimate citizenship perspective, count as ‘second-class citizens’.

Classes of intimate citizens

The term ‘second-class citizenship’ is usually applied when a certain group of citizens has less access to rights or privileges within a state than others. Several authors claim that the legal discrimination of LGBTQ people, including with regard to their kinship practices, places them in a category of second-class citizens (Bell and Binnie 2000, Canaday 2009), and civil rights activism is a step to eliminate this disadvantage (Khanani and Robinson 2010). In fact,

activists themselves have used the term as a powerful argument for e.g. marriage equality (Nicolae 2009).

Shane Phelan (2001), however, disagrees with the idea of LGBTQ people as 'second-class citizens'. She claims that the term 'second-class citizen' implies some recognition in spite of subordination, so it is applicable to groups like women but not to gays and lesbians¹³, who are actively stigmatized through laws and social practices. In her view, they are 'non-citizens' or strangers, outside recognition by the (American) state (Phelan 2001). This approach is important for acknowledging degrees of inclusion and exclusion within the state and mainstream discourses: e.g. Carol Smart has demonstrated how mothers, by virtue of their withdrawal from the labor market (in the UK) have a lower class of citizenship than childless women, who do not have full citizenship either (Smart 1999). At the same time, treating gays and lesbians as a homogeneous group of non-citizens ignores minority groups within the LGBTQ community who may be less acknowledged and/or visible within both their ethnic or other minority communities and the white middle-class LGBTQ community, for instance gays and lesbians of Asian origin (Manalansan 2009, Weston 1996). Also, gays and lesbians do enjoy certain legal protections and a relatively high level of visibility within American culture and those conforming to the expectations of broader society are even symbolically included within the nation (Puar 2007), so calling them 'non-citizens' is slightly anachronistic and unfair towards groups who are mostly ignored both by laws and public discourses (such as genderqueer or polyamorous people) – the latter are the ones more appropriately classed as non-citizens.

While in the US same-sex parenthood is highly visible and in fact contributes to the normalization of LGBTQ people (Lewin 2009), in Hungary it provides an example for non-citizenship. The anti-discrimination law protects LGBTQ people as individuals and even their

¹³ Phelan focuses on these two groups of LGBTQ.

partnerships are recognized to some extent, but legal definitions and regulations of 'family' exclude same-sex couples with children (in more detail see Chapter IV.1). Though the media sometimes reports about Western research findings on the ability of gays and lesbians to parent, apart from a few tabloid articles about (invariably female-headed) reconstructed rainbow families,¹⁴ the general public has no awareness that same-sex couples are actually raising children (some of them in planned rainbow families) in contemporary Hungary (Borgos 2011).¹⁵ Same-sex couples with children do not come out publicly so as not to expose their children to stigma (Béres-Deák 2012). So whereas LGBTQ individuals may be considered second-class citizens, the existence of rainbow families is ignored; LGBTQ parents are invisible 'non-citizens'. Maintaining a difference between 'second-class citizens' and 'non-citizens' thus exposes the intersectional nature of exclusion, and also the fact that visibility is a central feature of intimate citizenship (Richardson 2001),

We have seen that intimate choices are enabled or constrained by various communities the individual belongs to, and at the same time may lead to acceptance or rejection by these very communities. One prominent way of controlling intimate behavior is whether or not given relationships are considered 'family'. In the next subchapter I will discuss definitions of family and kinship as they inform, and in turn are informed by, notions of intimate citizenship.

¹⁴ Rainbow families are defined as 'families with children where parents are lesbian, gay, non-heterosexual or transgender' (Kuosmanen and Jämsä, 2007:13, my translation). I will use this term when referring to families composed of same-sex couples with children. Other terms are problematic (Stacey 1996), especially as most of them automatically define the members of the same-sex couple as gay or lesbian, even though this might conflict with their self-definition. In reconstructed rainbow families, children come from a previous (usually heterosexual) relationship, while in planned rainbow families the formation of the same-sex relationship preceded the arrival of children.

¹⁵ On the invisibility of rainbow families in education see Béres-Deák 2012, Sándor 2010.

II.3. Definitions of kinship and family

David Schneider, in his book *American Kinship* (1968) claims that in Euro-American culture¹⁶ the notion of kinship is based on the tenet ‘blood is thicker than water’: it is believed that biogenetic relatedness creates a special bond like no other form of human relationship. Even though kinship is also reckoned through affinal ties (in which case it is defined by the law), ‘blood’ relationships are considered stronger. ‘Blood’ should be taken here as a symbol rather than the essence of biogenetic relatedness: “[i]f science discovers new facts about biogenetic relationship, then that is what kinship is and was all along, although it may not have been known at the time” (Schneider 1968: 23). This statement is truer than ever nowadays, when paternity tests (Strathern 1996, Stone 2004), adoptees looking for their ‘birth parents’ (Finkler 2000), DNA-based ancestor research (Nash 2004) or court decisions about surrogacy (Hill 1991) all attest to the primacy of biological relatedness in reckoning kinship.

Biogenetic relatedness cannot be annulled; according to Finch, this is what makes kin relationships different from all others (Finch 1989). The importance of this is connected to another central characteristic of kinship according to Schneider: ‘diffuse, enduring solidarity’ (Schneider 1968). Friendships can be terminated at will, but kinship always remains, and with it the obligation of mutual help and support (Finch 1989, Schneider 1968).

The importance of biogenetic ties and ‘diffuse, enduring solidarity’ are taken for granted not only by public discourses, but also by researchers dealing with kinship. Schneider exposes the way many anthropological theories implicitly define kinship as biogenetic (Schneider 1984). Several debates in anthropology also rely on biogenetic definitions of kinship (Franklin 1997). People towards whom someone performs kinship behavior without any biogenetic or affinal ties are commonly termed ‘fictive kin’ even in recent studies (e.g. White 2000). The very distinction of such connections from blood ties, and the category

'fictive kinship' itself are ethnocentric: 'genes' and 'blood' are symbols rather than the essence of connectedness (Bodenhorn 2000, Sahlins 2013) and thus all kinship is fictional (Weston 1991). Taking blood relatedness as the basis of 'real' kinship, however, creates hierarchies between types of kin, which especially disprivileges groups that do not necessarily stick to the biogenetic definition, such as certain non-white (Modell 1998), working-class (Stack 1974) and LGBTQ (Weston 1991) communities; anthropologists themselves might thus collaborate with mainstream discourses that regulate kinship forms according to an assumed Western, white, heteronormative, middle-class model.

The hierarchies anthropologists create between different forms of kinship are reflections of state and other mainstream discourses that do the same. In this subchapter I will discuss the implications of Schneider's tenets for intimate citizenship. I will pay special attention to 'alternative' forms of kinship, as these are the ones that expose the most clearly the usually unexamined foundations of our kinship system.

'Blood' as the basis of kinship

A number of laws and public discourses implicitly subscribe to the notion that 'blood is thicker than water', such as inheritance law (Finch 1989) or regulations about the right of children who were adopted or conceived via assisted reproduction to seek out their 'birth parents' (Melhuus and Howell 2009). The importance of knowing one's biological origins is related to the 'hegemony of the gene' (Finkler 2000): it is not only various health conditions that are thought to reside in one's genes (Finkler 2000), but also some elements of culture, best demonstrated by controversies over international adoption (Howell 2004, Yngvesson 2004). Experts and public discourses alike tend to describe adoption as "second best", claiming that by not experiencing pregnancy and childbirth or a sense of continuity and history through genetic connectedness, adoptive parents have more difficulty relating to their

¹⁶ Though he only writes about the USA, I believe his findings are applicable to Euro-American culture in

offspring (Berg 1995). Even when the model of cohabiting biological parents and their children is not viable, laws and policies tend to favor the alternative closest to it: relatives are preferred as foster parents with the intention to preserve families (Mallon 2004) and in some countries the law obliges divorced non-custodial parents to keep in touch with their offspring (Moxnes 1985) with the argument that losing touch with a biological parent is harmful for the child's development (Ahrons and Sørensen 1985). Psychological discourse is thus mobilized to reaffirm the notion of family as based on biogenetic relatedness, a phenomenon Nash (2004) calls 'genetic kinship'.

Biological parenthood itself, however, has been complicated recently by various assisted reproduction techniques. Ragoné claims there have been three profound shifts in the Western conceptualization of reproduction and parenthood: birth control separated intercourse from reproduction, the possibility of pregnancy without intercourse fragmented the unity of reproduction, and surrogacy fragmented motherhood into biological, gestational¹⁷ and social (Ragoné 2004). Therefore heterosexual intercourse, which Schneider claims to be the central symbol of kinship in (Euro-)American culture (Schneider 1968) is no longer the sole base of reproduction. At the same time, many people choosing such alternative options still try to mobilize biogenetic notions of connectedness, e.g. by choosing sperm or egg donors from the non-biological parent's kinship network or racial or ethnic community (Thompson 2001); this shows how the public discourse of genetic relatedness influences even practices that seemingly contradict it.

'Genetic kinship' is highly visible in Hungarian laws, policies and public discourses. In inheritance law, some close blood relatives of the deceased are automatically entitled to a given percent of the inheritance even if the will specifies otherwise ("reserved portions").

general; this is confirmed by the work of Edwards (2000) and Melhuus and Howell (2009), among others.

¹⁷ Counterposing 'gestational' and 'biological' is itself problematic, of course, and exposes how 'biology' in contemporary Euro-American thinking is increasingly reduced to genetics (Franklin 2000).

Both traditional and gestational surrogacy are banned, and a parent giving up her/his child for adoption can claim visitation or custody rights even after years of no contact. Public opinion is extremely ambivalent towards adoption: though it is legitimized by public discourses claiming that even infertile people should have the possibility of living a ‘full life’ (which necessarily includes children), both adopted children and adoptive parents face institutional discrimination and stigmatization (Neményi and Takács 2015). Attitudes towards foster parents are even worse: it is frequently assumed that they do not really care for the fostered child, being only interested in the money (Demény 2009). This is also connected to the fact that fostering breaks the taboo of involving money in kinship¹⁸ (Modell 1998, Demény 2009), which in public discourses often leads to the the exclusion of foster parents from the category of kin (Demény 2009). On the other hand, biogenetic reproduction is highly valued: in the European Values Study, over 80% agreed with the statement that children are a prerequisite for happiness, especially for women (this is among the highest in Europe) (Neményi and Takács 2015), and infertility is stigmatized (Solymár 2005,¹⁹ Szalma and Takács 2015).

The strong emphasis on biological reproduction is also connected to the nationalist discourses discussed in Chapter I.1, especially strengthened in the 2010s under the right-wing governance of FIDESZ, as the Hungarian form of nationalism conceives of the nation as based on belonging to the dominant ethnies and thereby on genetic connection (Smith 1991). Indeed, the kinship metaphor is frequently used for the nation, as it creates the possibility of excluding others (Hobsbawm 1990). Therefore, drops in the fertility rate lead to moral panics about the ‘death of the nation’ (Goven 1993, Rivkin-Fish 2006); the resulting pronatalism frames biological reproduction as a citizenship duty, especially for women (Verdery 1996). At

¹⁸ Although material services, including possible loans, are not seen as incompatible with kinship in our culture (see later), the idea that someone might get paid for kin services upsets the separation of the altruistic sphere of the home and the materialistic public sphere (Schneider 1968).

the same time, the reproduction of minority ethnic groups (in Hungary especially the Roma) is seen as non-desirable and efforts are made to reduce it through public discourses (Goven 1993) and policies (Stewart 1996).

The law as the basis of kinship

Schneider claims that legal connection is also an important basis of Western kinship, though considered less strong than biogenetic relatedness (Schneider 1968). It is frequently assumed that affinal relatives can be less relied upon for various forms of support (Finch 1989). Biologically unrelated kin, such as stepparents and their family, are less likely to be given e.g. visitation rights to a child (Gross 2011); I will come back to this problem when discussing rainbow families.

The notion of law as defining kinship is most obvious in the regulation of intimate partnerships. Whereas in the 18th-19th centuries marriage gained importance in Europe as a legalized form of cohabitation, divorce was increasingly made possible as a legal procedure as well (Somlai 2013), thus state surveillance increased both over relationships and their termination. The importance of legalization is easily detected in discourses that blame family forms without legal ties, such as divorced families or unwed motherhood, for various social ills (Coontz 1997). State laws and policies also emphasize the importance of legal ties by giving certain rights and benefits to married couples only. Registered partnership, though in many countries (including Hungary, see later) it does not provide all the benefits of marriage, is an example that the emphasis on legal ties might override the otherwise prevalent heteronormativity of state policies.

Such attitudes suggest that state regulation has a strong influence on people's interpretation of kinship: in a US survey taken in 2003 (n=712) and 2006 (n=815) 20% of

¹⁹ One of the psychologists Solymár interviewed explicitly called transsexuals after gender reassignment 'second-class' men or women because they are unable to bear or beget children, an example of how the requirement of biogenetic reproduction can justify the stigmatization of certain groups.

respondents did not consider cohabiting heterosexual couples with a child as family (Powell et al. 2010). In the American context, unmarried cohabitation has been traditionally associated with the working class (Stacey 1996) and racial and ethnic minorities (Stack 1974), which might influence this result; it is also sometimes seen as a sign of moral weakness or weak commitment (Powell et al. 2010), even though attitudes towards it have undergone great change since the mid-20th century (Laumann et al. 2007). In Central and Eastern Europe the picture is somewhat different: though the socialist state supported marriage with a number of benefits (Somlai 2013), it also gave certain benefits to unmarried cohabiting partners. The gendered expectation towards husbands to be able to support their wife and children or the fear of losing their widower's pensions leads many people to choose cohabitation rather than marriage (Tóth and Somlai 2005). Children born in such relationships appear in polls as living with one parent only, which contributes to the moral panic about lone-parent families (Rowlingson and McKay 2002). Though 'illegitimate' children now have the same rights as those born inside marriage (Melhuus and Howell 2009), in Central and Eastern Europe it is common for cohabiting couples to marry when their first child is born in order to confer legitimacy to her/him (Čepaitienė 2009); this shows the still prevailing stigmatization of children born out of wedlock (Tóth 2008). The psychological discourses mobilized to support the two-parent family model also direct public opinion towards a stance which idealizes the heterosexual nuclear family confirmed by legal ties.

Kinship ties created by law can also be dissolved by it, which exposes the diachronic nature of kinship and renders problematic the question of 'diffuse, enduring solidarity'. Researchers frequently assume that the breach of legal ties brings an end to the kin relationship, but Stacey has shown that emotional attachment and kin services often (though not always) persist between former spouses and in-laws (Stacey 1990), although British studies have found that such 'divorce-extended families' are limited in scope and survive only

as a result of the effort of the women involved (Bornat et al. 1999). This leads us to consider kinship from the performative and emotional aspect.

Diffuse, enduring solidarity

In terms of ‘diffuse, enduring solidarity’, the state is often prescriptive: its laws oblige parents to look after their children, and in some cases extend such caring responsibilities to other kin: Hungarian family law requires people to care for any relatives who cannot look after themselves (Civil Law Book IV, Title XIII, Chapter XX). This tendency has strengthened since the 1980s (or, in postsocialist countries, since the transition), as states hoping to cut their welfare budgets try to delegate much of the carework onto families (which in practice means women) (Finch 1989). Public discourses promoting family care of children, elderly and the disabled serve this purpose (Gubrium and Holstein 1990). As mentioned in Chapter I.1, postsocialist states rely on discourses reifying family care to get rid of the caring responsibilities formerly (though often inadequately) performed by the state socialist welfare state (Gradskova 2012). This is not to say that state welfare and kin support are necessary opposites: in certain contexts, families demand state care for their elderly or children, claiming it is ‘diffuse, enduring solidarity’ that makes them give up family care in the elderly person’s or child’s interest (Gubrium and Holstein 1990, Varsa 2014).

State prescriptions and expectations of ‘diffuse, enduring solidarity’ strongly depend on the state’s definition of kinship. For instance, state regulations on child support in stepfamilies reveal notions of whether fatherhood is seen as primarily biological or social (Rowlingson and McKay 2002). In turn, people considered as family on the basis of mainstream definitions are expected to perform tasks that non-kin are not: a stepfather might be admired for treating his children the way expected of their genitor. Social and state norms underlying expectations of ‘diffuse, enduring solidarity’ are predicated upon the practices of white middle-class heterosexuals, and this has consequences for other groups. The assumed

culture of a minority (such as extended kin networks among African Americans) can be an excuse for not providing welfare services, with the claim that they do not need these (Solinger 1994); in this case, minority cultures are idealized for retaining the strong family ties that the majority has lost. More frequently, however, the kin practices of a given group are considered inadequate; this might result in not granting adoption or fostering to members of the minority group (Modell 1998). In state socialist Hungary the norm of white middle-class childrearing practices was expected of poor Roma families, and if they could not perform them properly, their children were often taken into state care (Varsa 2014); this practice still continues (Neményi and Takács 2015). The forced sterilization of disabled people is also sometimes justified with the argument that they cannot look after their offspring (Bock 1983). In other words, the state regulates who is allowed to perform ‘diffuse, enduring solidarity’.

‘Diffuse, enduring solidarity’ might also come into conflict with blood ties, like in the case of surrogacy or adoption. While some individual or court decisions in such cases rest on the primacy of blood ties, often another argument comes up about intention as the basis of kinship (Hill 1991). The latter discourse privileges the social over the biological or legal definition of kinship, and also creates the possibility of viewing kinship as choice.

Kinship as choice

Far from being a contemporary development, choice indeed has been a central element of Western kinship for centuries. Godparenthood is a classic example, whereby chosen individuals (often, but not always, biologically related to the child) become kin through a performative ritual. This is not the only example of mainstream Christianity endorsing the notion of kinship as choice: Ferrante (1996) describes how, in 16th century Bologna, the church supported free partner choice rather than marriages based on a contract between families. It is thus important to acknowledge that some influential mainstream discourses also acknowledge the element of choice in kinship, which in turn enables groups and individuals

to argue for the acceptance of their family arrangements. Indeed, the free choice of marriage partners has since become an important value of Euro-American mainstream culture, sometimes even codified in law, and can be used to stigmatize groups with arranged marriages, like some Roma communities in Central and Eastern Europe (Zaviršek 2004). At the same time, restricting marriage to different-sex couples excludes non-heterosexual attractions from this discourse and thus perpetuates the Heterosexual Family Myth (see below).

Though it is frequently assumed that designating friends as family is specific to lower classes (Stack 1974) or the LGBTQ community (Weston 1991) and thus motivated by economic or emotional necessity (Weston 1991, White 2000), studies on white middle-class heterosexuals (including Schneider 1968) also mention instances of this phenomenon. Two American surveys conducted by Powell and his colleagues in 2003 and 2006 show an increase of respondents who define family as “Whatever It Means to Them” (the people involved) (Powell et al. 2010). Literature, especially on new reproductive techniques, documents numerous cases when choice is used to legitimize non-biological kinship (Hill 1991, Ragoné 1998) or even manipulate it (Stone 2004). Some of these families are lobbying for legal recognition, including not only same-sex parents (see next subchapter) but also family units composed of friends (Weston 1991, Butler 2000) – in other words, they are fighting for the extension of intimate citizenship.

In postsocialist Hungary, the possibility of choosing one’s family does not enter explicitly into mainstream discourses. Still, it lurks in the background of the disdain for arranged marriages or the possibility of adopters to choose not only the age and gender, but also the racial background of the child they wish to adopt (Neményi and Takács 2015).²⁰ The

²⁰ Race is not explicitly mentioned on the form but usually put in the rubric of ‘other wishes’. However, based on the experience of a lesbian adoptive mother I spoke to, to-be adopters are expected to make explicit their requirements regarding the race of the child. More about interracial adoption in Chapter IV.

inclusion of godparents in one's kinship network is still widespread in rural areas. Nevertheless, the only visible discourses explicitly claiming the right to base one's family on choice come from the LGBTQ community.

II.4. Non-heterosexual kinship

As discussed in Chapter II.2, people living in family arrangements outside the heteronorm are frequent protagonists of literature on intimate/sexual citizenship. In fact, they are well-positioned to expose the ways mainstream discourses construct kinship, as the Heterosexual Family Myth (Herdt and Koff 2000), a dominant discourse excluding non-heterosexual relationships from the domain of family, posits them as 'exiles from kinship' (Weston 1991). At the same time they are also relatively well organized (compared to some other groups stigmatized by mainstream discourses like foster parents or divorcees), and some of their activism loudly and visibly claims legal and social acknowledgement. Much intimate citizenship literature limits its discussion of LGBTQ agency to such activist responses and ignores how individual non-heterosexuals strive to produce forms of inclusion through everyday practices. It is also frequently overlooked that the heteronormative definition of kinship does not only affect non-heterosexuals themselves but also people in their environment, who in turn also have their own strategies of claiming intimate citizenship.

In this subchapter I will consider four topics related to non-heterosexual family forms from an intimate citizenship perspective: visibility and coming out, same-sex relationships, parenthood, and other legally non-acknowledged relationships. These are prevalent in discourses about the LGBTQ community (both in mainstream and alternative ones) and inform practices of surveillance on various levels, but also practices of resistance. All through this discussion I will pay attention to the family as both being controlled by mainstream discourses and influencing its members in turn. This way, I aim to extend the theorization of intimate citizenship of non-heterosexuals to their families of origin as well.

Visibility

Gay rights organizations since the mid-20th century have advocated coming out as a tool for claiming inclusion (D’Emilio 1998 [1983]). Various structural factors created a situation where it was no longer, as before, the expert (of whatever sexual orientation) but the individual who was in control of telling her/his story (Plummer 1997) and possibly framing it in a way that it would support human rights claims. In fact, D’Emilio argues that the gay liberation movement would have disappeared (similarly to some other social movements of the time), had it not been for the cathartic impact of coming out on lesbians and gays and the visibility it produced (D’Emilio 1998 [1983]).

Coming out as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or queer is often seen as an assertion of intimate citizenship (Tereskinas 2008) because it implies that the person has made or plans to make intimate choices not in line with mainstream family ideology. At the same time, a family member’s coming out faces other members with intimate decisions: if they reject the person, they fail the expectation of ‘diffuse, enduring solidarity’, while accepting her/him amounts to questioning the heteronormative model of family (Weston 1991). Coming out might also start a chain reaction, freeing other family members from constrictive kinship expectations and roles (Herdt and Koff 2000). Thus the intimate citizenship of family members of LGBTQ people is asserted not only through their support for an unconventional life choice, but also through their heightened consciousness of the problematic nature of (hetero)normative definitions of the family – the Heterosexual Family Myth (Herdt and Koff 2000) – , which in turn might influence their own intimate choices.

Coming out stands as a more or less unquestioned value in the center of Western LGBTQ activism. Though originally a counterdiscourse against the mainstream approach that the only person qualified to speak about ‘perverts’ is the expert, it has gained so much

currency that even many academics studying LGBTQ issues take it for granted.²¹ Several authors celebrate the beneficial effects of coming out on the individual (e.g. Dank 2000) or on her/his environment (e.g. Herdt and Koff 2000), and even allegedly neutral descriptions contain ‘slips of the tongue’, like when Davies (1992) speaks of closeted gay men as ‘living a lie’. Activist rhetoric has also influenced what researchers view as coming out: the subcultural expectation that coming out should be direct, verbal and explicit (Weston 1991) is reflected in theories like Sedgwick’s (1990), who associates non-explicit forms of expressing sexual orientation with the ‘open secret’, which she regards as a form of the closet (though without making a value judgment about it).

Academic criticisms of the idealization of coming out are twofold. One set of critiques calls attention to the risks embedded in the practice. As Sedgwick points out, there is a potential for harm on both sides when non-normative sexual orientation is revealed (Sedgwick 1993). Visibility as non-heterosexual may expose the person to the loss of family (members) or other social networks, and even to public violence. The risk is even greater if there is no supportive LGBTQ community behind the individual (Esterberg 1997) or in highly homophobic contexts like some Christian denominations (Levy and Reeves 2012). Thus for certain social groups coming out is not a structural possibility (Butler 1997).²² This point leads back to how one’s social position and other circumstances influence one’s agency, an issue discussed in Chapter II.1, and questions the notion that intimate citizenship necessarily resides in one’s personal choices only. At the same time, nonverbal expressions of sexual orientation might work in contexts where verbal coming out is not structurally possible. Studies of non-European cultures have shown that although most people do not verbally

²¹ The fact that many of these scholars are members of sexual minorities themselves explains, but does not excuse this.

²² These groups are not necessarily the ones usually seen as disadvantaged. For instance, in Hungary and other postsocialist countries, university students often depend financially on their parents, so losing them due to coming out affects their subsistence more seriously than working-class youth who have their own income.

express their sexual orientation, they find a way through practices to make it known to their families of origin (Boellstorff 2005, Babb 2009); in these contexts, the outness/closet dichotomy does not hold (Manalansan 1997). Boellstorff adds that the dichotomous model does not necessarily work in the West either (Boellstorff 2005); the different forms of partial coming out Davies (1992) found among British gay men, or the phenomenon of the transparent closet (Kuhar 2007, see Chapter V) support this claim.

The other set of critiques targets coming out as a political tool in the fight for gay/lesbian equality. Butler and Bersani both emphasize that identity categories are the result of regulatory regimes, and thus coming out enables the policing of sexual dissenters (Butler 1993, Bersani 1995). Consequently, rejecting the confessional discourse may be read as resisting structures of power (Boellstorff 2005). This agency in resisting the imperative to come out is also emphasized by Plummer: “*The power to tell a story, or indeed to not tell a story, under the conditions of one’s own choosing, is part of the political process.*” (Plummer 1997: 16, italics original), and shows how accommodation and subversion are not always easy to determine (Dahl 2011; see also Chapter II.1.)

Some authors claim that though coming out is supposed to lead to visibility, it does not necessarily threaten heterosexual privilege (Seidman 2004); indeed, as gays and lesbians who are willing to assimilate to heterosexual norms are becoming relatively accepted, even coming out sustains invisibility (Bersani 1995). This is especially so as the meaning of categories like gay or lesbian (and even more, bisexual or queer) is not obvious, so coming out might not provide the other person with any information: “before you did not know whether I ‘am’, but now you do not know what that means” (Butler 1993: 16). While the latter point is important in calling attention to the relational nature of coming out and its interpretations, the applicability of these claims is limited to societies where the visibility and

tolerance²³ of LGBTQ people are on a relatively high level. In Hungary non-heterosexuals are much less visible (in a 2012 European Commission survey only 8% of the population claimed to know a gay or lesbian in person – the EU27 average is 55%²⁴), so the mere declaration of a non-heterosexual identity breaks the overall heteronormativity of the public sphere. This leads us to consider visibility in general from an intimate citizenship perspective.

Though linked to coming out in one's immediate environment, public visibility of LGBTQ people adds new dimensions to the citizenship aspect of visibility. Bringing an ostensibly private issue like sexuality into the public sphere challenges the public/private binary and exposes its artificiality (Kuhar 2011). Consequently it is often less tolerated than expressing one's sexual orientation in the private sphere (Kuhar 2011, Tereskinas 2008): Cappellato and Manganella's (2014) research subjects unanimously supported their gay or lesbian children within the family, but many of them expressed reservations regarding pride marches. Although some (invariably Western) authors speak about contemporary LGBTQ people living 'beyond the closet' (Seidman 2004), Kuhar warns that in Central and Eastern Europe this is not applicable to the public space, where the 'heteronormative panopticon' polices and immediately removes any traces of same-sex sexuality (Kuhar 2011). In this region such policing is strongly connected to the idea of the nation, which, though founded on male homosociality, rigidly excludes homosexuality (Mosse 1985).²⁵ Therefore the state tries to exclude non-heterosexual visibility like pride parades from the public sphere with the reasoning that they contaminate national space (Renkin 2009). As a counter-move, LGBTQ people might argue for inclusion by demonstrating that they are also part of the nation (Renkin 2007b). Though some authors consider this anachronistic (e.g. Imre 2008) or even

²³ I consciously use 'tolerance' and not 'acceptance', as I believe that the situation described by Bersani is not a true acceptance of non-heterosexual lifestyles.

²⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_393_en.pdf

²⁵ This original heteronormativity of the nation is not retained everywhere: certain European countries base their national identity on accommodating sexual diversity (Bech 1992).

exclusionary and accommodating (e.g. Puar 2007), it can also be seen as a subversion of heteronormative nationalistic discourses (Renkin 2009) and in these contexts possibly one of the most fruitful methods for claiming intimate citizenship.

Visibility is also strongly connected to claiming rights to the formation and/or acknowledgement of one's own family. As Heaphy et al.(2015) argue, one needs to be at least to some extent publicly out in order to register one's partnership or marry a same-sex partner; this is true for using several other legal means like adopting a child or initiating a discrimination lawsuit. In Hungary, the lack of public discourses on rainbow families is often connected to the fact that such families are extremely closeted and thus the general public is not aware of their existence (Sándor 2010). Thus the closet deprives some LGBTQ people of exercising existing rights and others of inducing legal and social change. Some might even choose not to enter same-sex partnerships or raise children for fear of making their sexual orientation visible. This is one way that visibility connects to forms of LGBTQ kinship.

Same-sex relationships

Visibility enables claiming rights but also exposes the person to homophobia; a same-sex couple is more visible than a single non-heterosexual person, and thus in many cases more likely to encounter prejudice, discrimination or even violence (Sinfield 1998). Relationships are considered less private than mere sexual orientation (Takács and Szalma 2013), so potentially more subjected to social control. When addressing the intimate citizenship of non-heterosexuals, it is thus important to consider the implications of coupledness for both visibility and claiming rights.

Some researchers claim that same-sex couples challenge mainstream notions of kinship through their more egalitarian relationship practices (Kukučková 2007, Sullivan 2004), consciously creating 'social experiments' (Heaphy et al. 2002). Such assertions ignore examples of hierarchical same-sex relationships, and are also problematic for attributing

conscious subversion to people with possibly different motivations (see Chapter II.1). While the lack of formal recognition might indeed give same-sex couples more leeway in exploring new relationship forms (Adam 2007), norms within LGBTQ communities strongly police relationship forms not considered desirable (Kennedy and Davis 1993); in the Hungarian lesbian community these include promiscuity and bisexuality (Béres-Deák 2007). Thus same-sex couples have to negotiate belonging in both mainstream and LGBTQ communities, and the norms of each might influence their intimate choices.

Acknowledgement of one's relationship by the environment is an important aspect of intimate citizenship. Lewin (1998) discusses how (unofficial) commitment ceremonies of same-sex couples claim inclusion in their communities, including their families of origin, who are often present on these occasions. In countries that lack the recognition of same-sex unions, same-sex couples might gain legal recognition by creating other types of kin connection, e.g. through the adoption of their partner or a marriage of convenience to a blood relative of his/hers (Borneman 2001); these are examples of the 'avoidance strategies' discussed in Chapter II.2.

In these cases, the struggle for the recognition of same-sex relationships is located in practices, and suggests a wider scope of intimate citizenship than the majority of scholarship in this field, which limit the discussion of relationships to the struggle for state-recognized forms of union, whether they are for it or against (e.g. Bell and Binnie 2000, Hunter 2006, Warner 1999). This is obviously connected to LGBT activism's strong focus on marriage equality and queer critiques of such activism, as well as the moral panics around the issue generated by right-wing forces that portray marriage and traditional family as under threat (Duggan and Kim 2006). The nationalistic and pronatalist Hungarian state explicitly restricts marriage to heterosexual couples in its Basic Law (see chapter IV.1) and even compels married couples where one partner changes her/his legal gender to divorce, willing to commit

what counts as an extreme infringement on privacy just to make sure none of its citizens could live in a same-sex or same-gender marriage (Solymár 2005).

The arguments about same-sex marriage run along the axis of accommodation vs. subversion, which are seen as central to theories of agency and citizenship (see Chapter II.1). Ironically, in this case both these concepts can be used for either supporting or opposing same-sex marriage (Lewin 1998), and the actual framing of arguments often depends on context and strategy (Nicolae 2007). Some supporters of same-sex marriage claim that marriage equality would improve the acceptance of non-heterosexuals in wider society and thus is an important step towards full intimate citizenship, often referring to the symbolic value of marriage (Lewin 1998). Comparative European studies indeed claim that countries which have legal recognition for same-sex couples show lower levels of homophobia (Takács and Szalma 2010), though the authors admit that the cause-effect relationship is not obvious here. In fact, sociological surveys have found that the number of people who accept or reject family forms on the basis of their legal recognition is diminishing (Powell et al. 2010). Other supporters celebrate same-sex relationships as a way of radically restructuring family relations, especially from a gender perspective (Calhoun 2000, Hunter 2006). What is not clear is why such a change needs the legalization of same-sex marriage. Already in 1992 Bech reported that Danish heterosexuals increasingly adopted the values of the gay community, including those about relationships (Bech 1992), though at the time Denmark had no same-sex marriage, only registered partnership. Arguably it is the visibility of same-sex relationships, and not necessarily their inclusion in the institution of marriage, that helps spread their values and practices among heterosexuals as well and thus realizes their potential for subverting family patterns.

The queer critique of marriage accuses pro-marriage activists of assimilation: these authors suggest that same-sex marriage would keep in place various values (such as

monogamy) that stigmatize a large part of the LGBTQ community (Bell and Binnie 2000), would thus further reinforce the good gay/bad queer contrast (Phelan 2001) and lead to increased marginalization of the unmarried (Duggan 2006). Thus same-sex marriage would indeed make non-heterosexuals a part of the polity, but at the expense of their possibility for transgression (Cossman 2007); such critics forget that heterosexual marriage is not monolithic either, with non-traditional practices like commuter marriages (Weeks 1995 [1991]) or polyamory (Pallotta-Chiarolli et al. 2013) becoming increasingly common. Others question even this limited inclusion, pointing out that LGBTQ people would still lack a number of social rights, which are more central especially to poor and non-white LGBTQ than the legal right to marriage (Butterfield 2014, Warner 1999). This argument ignores the number of social rights tied to marriage; due to these, far from being a white middle-class privilege, the legal recognition of relationships may be vital for economically disadvantaged LGBTQ as the least expensive and most accessible means to secure e.g. social services and inheritance (Hunter 2006).²⁶ Davis warns that it is the most disadvantaged whose lives are the most exposed to surveillance due to their financial dependence on the state (cited in Sanford 2008). As discussed in Chapter I.1, in Central and Eastern Europe even average middle-class people have difficulties getting by without help from the state and/or kin, therefore recognition of their lifestyle (including their partnership) may be a vital means of survival; marriage, given its central importance to nationalist ideologies, may provide a means for that. The queer critique of marriage equality, far from representing the interest of lower classes, in fact takes for granted a financially and emotionally independent LGBTQ person, ignoring that this is often a privilege of white middle-class Western subjects.

²⁶ A possible counterargument is that e.g. will presuppose some material wealth and thus do not apply to the poorest (Butterfield 2014); however, even access to basic services like a shared room in a homeless shelter might be contingent upon the couple being legally recognized.

The debate outlined above raises several questions from the intimate citizenship perspective. One side argues that same-sex marriage will improve the inclusion of LGBTQ people as a whole (through their access to an institution of high symbolic value), the other suggests that such inclusion will only extend to same-sex couples who conform to the normative middle-class family model. Similarly, registered partnership can be framed as virtually equivalent to marriage, or as a sign of second-class citizenship as it does not include all the rights marriage does (Bech 1992). If we view intimate citizenship as existing to various degrees, as I suggested in Chapter II.2, we can include both perspectives and see the legal recognition of same-sex relationships as a step towards, but not the complete fulfillment of, intimate citizenship.

The subversion/accommodation aspect is also problematic because of its monolithic view of heterosexual relationships; if we take into account their diversity, we no longer have a stable model with which to compare same-sex ones (Phelan 2001). Several authors underline that same-sex relationships inherently contain both subversive and assimilationist elements (e.g. Lewin 1998, Weston 1991). Individuals need not frame their relationships as subversive, even if those eventually challenge mainstream definitions of kinship; at the same time, they might have a subversive ideology behind their seemingly assimilationist practices (Dahl 2011). This is perhaps even more true for couples with children.

Rainbow families

If same-sex relationships challenge public opinion and legal structures, those raising children do so even more. Parenting increases the visibility of the same-sex couple (Sullivan 2004) and in many countries (including Hungary) parenting rights of non-heterosexuals cause stronger controversies than the legalization of their relationships (Takács and Szalma 2013). The mere fact that two parents of the same gender are raising a child automatically challenges the gender structures of heterosexual families (Hayden 2004, Sullivan 2004) as well as the notion

that gays and lesbians are ‘exiles from kinship’ (Weston 1991). As only one of them can be a parent to the child in the conventional ‘biological’ sense,²⁷ they question a notion of family as based on blood connections, and the very fact of them calling themselves family is an assertion of intimate citizenship.

It is thus not surprising that same-sex couples with children are often framed as the ultimate challenge to heteronormative notions of kinship. Du Chesne and Bradley claim that “lesbian co-mothers are the front-runners of a new form of 21st century family” (Du Chesne and Bradley 2007: 25), while Sullivan suggests that ‘lesbian families’ are potentially capable of destabilizing the foundations of gender (Sullivan 2004). This focus on subversion certainly acknowledges the variety of family forms and emphasizes agency, but there are problems with it too. One is that researchers tend to ignore counterexamples to their claims, even within their own sample (e.g. Sullivan 2004). Another example of imposing a subversive framework on one’s subjects is automatically calling the biological mother’s female partner second or social ‘mother’ (e.g. Borgos 2011, Ryan-Flood 2010), even though she might not identify with this term (see Chapter IV). These discourses (which are not limited to the academia but are also present in LGBTQ activist publications, e.g. Sándor 2010) make invisible the types of rainbow families considered less subversive, such as reconstructed ones; though they make up the majority of rainbow families in the US (Mallon 2004) as well as Hungary (Dombos et al. 2011), the presence of two biological parents apparently makes them less worthy of academic and activist attention.²⁸

Rainbow family arrangements automatically present issues for intimate citizenship. In many countries (including Hungary), same-sex couples lack access to some or all means of reproduction (e.g. artificial insemination, in vitro fertilization, adoption, fostering) available

²⁷ Except if one woman acts as her partner’s gestational surrogate; however, in the case of gestational surrogacy, most legal systems only consider one of the women as a ‘biological mother’ (Dolgin 1995, Hill 1991)

for heterosexual couples. Members of the LGBTQ community claim access to these rights through NGOs but also as individuals, e.g. in surveys (an example is Dombos et al. 2011). At the same time, they also find their way around legal regulations: they hide their sexual orientation or become parents through illegal or semi-legal means (more about this in Chapter IV). Though respecting laws is an important citizenship obligation (Janoski and Gran 2002), in these cases it stands in contrast with reproductive rights, a central aspect of intimate citizenship (Berlant 1997), thus breaking the law can be framed as civil disobedience and an assertion of intimate citizenship.

Another problematic issue is the recognition of the social parent: if a country does not allow second-parent adoption, the legal and social aspect of parenthood are uncoupled, with often serious practical consequences in case the biological parent dies (Laird 1998). Consequently, second-parent adoption is one of the central goals of contemporary LGBTQ activism (Short 2007). At the same time, same-sex couples themselves make use of legal opportunities such as guardianship to ensure the recognition of ties between child and social parent. On the level of communities, social parents need to legitimate their relationship to the child in various social situations where the legal parent's position is taken for granted (Sullivan 2004) and their environment – including their family of origin – might not consider them parents (Du Chesne and Bradley 2007, Gross 2011). This attitude, which again stems from the definition of kinship based on biology or legal ties, is extended to the social parent's family of origin, and influences not only their rights (such as visitation rights after separation) but also their self-perception: Gross argues that social grandparents are often less willing to bond with the child due to the precariousness of their ties to her/him (Gross 2011).

The flip side of the coin is the question of paternal rights in the case of known donor insemination, which can also be evaded by practices: Ryan-Flood discusses several strategies

²⁸ Although second-parent adoption is an important focus of Hungarian LGBTQ activism (see Chapter IV), even

of Irish lesbians to make the genitor harder to identify (Ryan-Flood 2010). The decision to use an anonymous donor might also be influenced by discourses within the LGBTQ community as well as in broader society (Ryan-Flood 2010). As mentioned above, a rainbow family can never adapt completely to the ideal of the heteronormative conjugal family of two biological parents, but which aspect they choose to adapt to depends partly on what the given society (including the state) considers important: Ryan-Flood suggests that Swedish lesbians' preference for co-parenting with gay men might result from a strong emphasis on involved fatherhood in Swedish state policies and social discourses (Ryan-Flood 2010). In other cases, the family of origin may have a preference for or prejudice against certain reproductive methods (Čepaitienė 2009; see also the prejudice against adoption in Hungarian society discussed in Chapter II.3), and might put pressure on the couple in this regard. Decisions concerning a given couple's chosen path to parenthood thus depend on legal possibilities and protections as well as discourses within a given culture about the nature of family. These discourses also influence whether their notion of family includes people who are not biogenetically or affinally related.

Friends as family

Kath Weston's groundbreaking book, *Families We Choose* (1991) discusses how gays and lesbians create 'families of choice' from lovers, ex-lovers and friends. Other studies on the special meaning of friendship within the gay community (Nardi 1999) or the chosen families of gay and trans people of color (Bailey 2013) have reinforced the notion that in LGBTQ communities it is choice, rather than blood, which underlies the notion of family. Weston claims that it is the possibility of rejection by the family of origin that makes non-heterosexuals aware of the fragility of blood ties (Weston 1991); in other words, the conflict between 'blood is thicker than water' and 'diffuse, enduring solidarity' is resolved by

discourses about that often mention only planned rainbow families (e.g. Sándor 2010).

embracing the second rather than the first as the foundation of kinship. Although some authors claim that ‘families of choice’ are created as substitutes for rejective families of origin (Mizielińska et al. 2015), Weston emphasizes that such families are not ‘second best’, and may be important points of reference also for individuals accepted within their biological family (Weston 1991).

As contemporary family law mostly takes genetic or legal ties as the foundation of kinship (see Chapter II.3), the citizenship status of families of choice (whether LGBTQ or heterosexual) is even more precarious than that of rainbow families. There have been some attempts to claim rights based on non-biological family connections, for instance by AIDS buddies (Butler 2000). Most LGBT activism both in the West and in Central and Eastern Europe, however, seems to concentrate on the acknowledgement of rainbow families at the expense of other forms of LGBTQ kinship. This trend is reinforced by certain researchers who understand ‘families of choice’ to mean only same-sex couples with children (e.g. Mizielińska et al. 2015). Though Weston (1991) warns that such a selective campaigning for recognition creates a hierarchy between LGBTQ family forms and should be avoided, it seems that activists, as well as some researchers, limit the definition of non-heterosexual family to those most resembling the heterosexual nuclear family model.

Though LGBTQ chosen families are taken for granted in many American studies (e.g. Bailey 2013, Glass 2014), there is not much evidence of their existence in Central and Eastern Europe: the only example I know is Kalocsai (1999), who in her study of Hungarian lesbians does describe a group of friends who address each other by kin terms, though she does not explore whether this extends to practices. Neither do families of choice appear on the activist or social scene in Hungary (see Chapter IV.4). One possible reason for their absence is that the lack of ‘gay villages’ even in cities (Pitonák 2013) makes it harder for groups of LGBTQ people to create the closeness necessary for such intensive relationships; one’s social network

is less likely to contain only LGBTQ people (see Chapter IV). Mainstream discourses emphasize the importance of (biological) family (see above). Questioning traditionally given kinship forms and creating new ones is much more difficult in a society where individual autonomy is not a core value (Friedman 2000). Also, the idea of chosen families is often tied to the definition of family as having emotional rather than economic functions (Mizielnińska et al. 2015), while in the precarious economic situation of Hungary practical help from the family is often crucial for survival (Boreczky 2004). In other words, economic necessity and mainstream discourses constrain people's choices with regard to kinship; the idea of freely 'chosen kin' presupposes a liberal subject with unlimited agency and is not a structural possibility for many LGBTQ in postsocialist Hungary (or possibly elsewhere either).

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the intertwined nature of intimate citizenship, kinship and agency. Agency is a central constituent of intimate citizenship, inasmuch as it enables people to critically evaluate and possibly challenge, change or evade regulations placed on their kinship practices. We should be wary, however, of endowing subjects with free, unlimited agency that is independent of their social characteristics. Besides feminist and poststructuralist challenges to the notion of the free agent, various factors affect the individual's ability to influence their circumstances. Sexual orientation is one of these characteristics: heteronormative laws and the silencing of alternative discourses that value same-sex relationships make it harder for non-heterosexuals to practice and claim recognition for their own choices, including their family forms. Even within this group, different subgroups face different levels of silencing and oppression, so rather than distinguishing first-class and second-class citizens, we must take into account multiple intersecting factors that affect people's recognition, practices and agency.

Kinship is an important area for intimate citizenship and its agency aspect. First, many of the private choices implied in the concept of intimate citizenship are related to the family. Second, the state places stronger regulations on kinship than other types of intimate choices; this partly results from its symbolic function, especially heightened in nationalistic discourses that claim to police families in the interest of the nation's survival. Mainstream discourses, as well as state laws and policies, shape people's interpretations of kinship and their family practices. At the same time, these discourses, laws and policies are also shaped by certain interpretations of kinship and at times by the claims of various social groups for the recognition of their kinship forms. One of the most vocal such group is the LGBTQ community.

Same-sex relationships and attitudes to them in wider society can yield important results in the study of intimate citizenship. The Heterosexual Family Myth, still predominant in Euro-American culture and virtually uncontested in mainstream discourses in Hungary, excludes all same-sex oriented people from the realm of kinship. In the postsocialist region not only the family but also the nation is defined heteronormatively, so non-heterosexuals need to fight for inclusion simultaneously in their families of origin, the wider community and the nation. The LGBTQ community constitutes a relatively well-organized group among those commonly denied intimate citizenship, having worked out activist and academic challenges to mainstream notions of kinship. These challenges are manifest not only on the level of discourses but also practices, the study of which can broaden the scope of studies on intimate citizenship.

Researchers of the LGBTQ community often take for granted some cultural tropes prevalent in this community, like the definition and importance of coming out, or the myth that the family of origin is invariably hostile to LGBTQ people. Some of them uncritically repeat various queer challenges to identity politics, like the uncoupling of political and social

rights (e.g. Butterfield 2014). These are all activist discourses originating from, though not limited to, the US and some Western European countries, taking for granted a liberal, independent subject with a broad range of lifestyle choices (which, also in the Western context, probably characterizes only the most privileged members of the community). In Central and Eastern Europe, socio-historical background, family forms, economic circumstances and mainstream discourses severely limit these choices, so non-heterosexuals need to develop different discourses and practices to assert their intimate citizenship. It is these that can give us a more realistic view of same-sex kinship forms.

Chapter III: Methodology

In this chapter I will introduce the research that forms the basis of the following chapters. Besides outlining my research methods, I will pay special attention to describing the community where I conducted my fieldwork. Such a description is necessary to highlight the context which the practices, discourses and people I write about come from. As later chapters will reveal, however, notions of kinship and the way they are contested and reinterpreted are influenced not only by the subculture itself, but also by the setting of my interlocutors; subcultural ideas exist in dynamic interaction with mainstream ones, which also vary according to class, age, type of settlement, religion, race and other factors. Therefore I will devote a separate subchapter to the characteristics of my interviewees. I also wish to highlight how and why, in spite of my large and relatively varied sample, certain groups are barely represented in it or not at all. I will also describe the way my topic, as well as the situatedness of both interlocutors and researcher justify my particular research methods and ethical decisions.

III.1. The community

Notions of ‘LGBTQ community’

There is a variety of approaches as to how researchers define the term ‘community’ with reference to same-sex oriented or gender-variant people and their subcultures. Some authors (e.g. Weston 1991) include in it all gay and lesbian²⁹ people within a given geographical area; others (e.g. Krieger 1983) limit it to a group of people who know each other personally. Neither of these definitions fit my purpose of studying subcultural discourses and practices. Subcultures transmit values through other means than personal contact, in the 21st century more than ever before: word of mouth, mainstream media,

community publications and especially the internet create links between people who have never met but can still engage in one-way or two-way communication with each other. Some of my sources – books published by LGBTQ organizations, internet forums of community websites or the coming out stories on *melegvagyok.hu* – were indeed created with such purposes. In this sense, the LGBTQ community is a kind of ‘imagined community’ (Anderson 1983), enabled by modern communicative technologies that reflect as well as create a sense of belonging. At the same time it would be a mistake to think that all same-sex oriented or gender-variant people belong to it. As Edwards and Strathern (2000) warn, taking it for granted that people ‘naturally’ want to belong is an ethnocentric notion based on Western discourses idealizing community. Some non-heterosexual people may not feel the need to have contact with others who have the same sexual orientation. Others might not associate with the LGBTQ community for fear of getting stigmatized, not an unfounded worry in a society with widespread homophobic discourses like Hungary; in some cases, not belonging can be seen as a virtue (Edwards and Strathern 2000). Others fall outside the limits of this community due to their race, class, locality or other characteristics.

Some literature on LGBTQ communities tries to idealize them as coherent wholes where – in contrast to the people’s heterosexual environment, including their families – members can express their ‘true selves’ without repercussions or restraint (e.g. Johnson 2004). This description is similar to the ideal of the bourgeois family (see Chapter II) and evokes Turner’s (1991 [1969]) notion of *communitas*, a liminal space where people are accepted unconditionally.³⁰ Real communities, however, are power-laden, their meanings, structures and frontiers continually produced, reworked and contested in relation to socio-

²⁹ Weston’s work is limited to these two groups.

³⁰ *Communitas*, as Turner describes it, is not a permanent phenomenon but is connected to temporary situations like initiation rites, while the rest of the time people are expected to act out given societal roles. Narratives of LGBTQ people, however, often describe the LGBTQ community as a place where

political attachments and antagonisms (Gregory cited in Valentine 2007: 102). The LGBTQ community is no exception: gay and lesbian communities have often been criticized for excluding people on the basis of race or age (Casey 2007, Weston 1998), and the queer subculture produces similar exclusions as well (Brown 2007). In the following I will dwell upon the exclusions produced in the Hungarian LGBTQ community to account for the invisibility of certain groups and ideas within community discourses as well as my research.

In short, when I speak about ‘the LGBTQ community’, I do not want to make claims for all same-sex oriented people in Hungary. The community I have researched is the most publicly visible in Hungary, with spaces and events advertized on the Internet, as well as in some written media; other groups of LGBTQ people are organized more in private and one needs personal contacts to get in touch with them. Choosing the most ‘public’ LGBTQ community in Hungary was partly a question of accessibility for the researcher as well, but partly a conscious choice: I wanted to explore how different discourses and practices are discussed and adopted by people of diverse backgrounds, in dialogue with mainstream discourses, and I assumed that a publicly visible subculture is more heterogeneous than those created by groups of friends in private spaces. I also assumed that many people connect to publicly visible LGBTQ communities because they feel an affinity to the values those represent, and/or feel the need to participate in discourses that challenge heteronormative mainstream ones. At the same time I am aware that some people, whether they wish or not, cannot connect to this community due to their demographic characteristics.

The included and the excluded

Literature certainly documents cases when particular groups encounter explicit discrimination or prejudice within LGBTQ communities based on certain (racial, sexual etc.) characteristics

they can ‘be themselves’ all the time, as opposed to the hostile heterosexual world (e.g. Bailey 2013, Weston 1991).

(e.g. Esterberg 1997, Kennedy and Davis 1993, Valentine 2007, Weston 1996). We should be wary of restricting the notion of exclusion to such instances, however. When I claim that in the Hungarian LGBTQ subculture white, educated men and women predominate who live in the city, I do not wish to suggest that others are underrepresented because of the overt racism, classism etc. of their companions. Sometimes it is the characteristics of subcultural sites (some, but not all, of which may be attributed to neglecting specific needs) and their own values and life situation which make it hard for them to access the LGBTQ community.

One encounters very few ageing LGBTQ people at community events; in the Lesbian Herstory Project interview volume, meant to document the life stories of ‘older generations’ (Borgos 2011b, discussed later), only 10 out of the 17 interviewees are over 50. Those who came out during state socialism either created small informal circles (like many women in Borgos 2011b) and possibly feel no need to expand them, or resigned to a life of (possibly coupled) loneliness. They might not be flexible enough to adapt to a new lifestyle, which was created by those who were young in the formative years of a more open subculture (in the 1990s): though some older people frequent discotheques and sports training sessions, many others feel too old for such activities. Also, elderly people are less likely to be able to use the internet and visit places (such as night clubs) where LGBTQ program magazines are available, so they often lack information about the possibilities. In some cases, elderly same-sex oriented people are deterred from participating in the community because they disagree with its standards of identity and political participation (Renkin 2007b) or the overt ageism of bar staff and clientele (Casey 2007).

Besides the elderly, teenagers are also strikingly absent from subcultural events and venues, though they do participate in internet discourses (if they have the opportunity to do so without parental surveillance) and recently a group of LGBTQ high school students has been formed. The offline subcultural infrastructure does not favor teenagers: not only bars but also

some events set an age limit of 18 (though IDs are rarely checked apart from night clubs) and prohibitive prices might also keep teenagers away. Consequently, the majority of people actively participating in the subculture are between 20 and 40; in the 2010 discrimination study, 75% of respondents were of this age span (Dombos et al 2011).

Women have much fewer partying opportunities than men: due to the gender gap in wages (Fodor and Nagy 2014) they cannot afford the prices of most gay bars, and many also feel uncomfortable with openly sexual self-expression (e.g. cruising) by MSM.³¹ Every month several parties are organized where patrons are exclusively or predominantly women, but these do not have a regular place or time, and there are no women's cafés either.³² Much more men than women seem to be comfortable with visiting mixed spaces in Budapest, while many women prefer the infrequent exclusively women-only programs. In rural towns the few partying opportunities are mixed and the women frequenting them seem comfortable with this; at the same time, this might mean that women who are disturbed by the presence of men get excluded from rural LGBTQ communities. Organizations, too, tend to be male-dominated (with the exception of Labrisz Lesbian Association, of course), but to a lesser extent than events, with several women in leadership positions in some of them.

While age and gender may limit a person's participation in the subculture, women, teenagers and the elderly can still find sites that are welcoming or even specifically targeted at them. There are three characteristics, however, which may severely restrict a person's potential to access LGBTQ spaces and which are strongly intertwined in Hungary: class, geographical location and race.

³¹ MSM (men who have sex with men) is a term originating from HIV/AIDS activism to refer to men who engage in same-sex activities but do not necessarily adopt a sexual identity reflecting this practice. Here I denote with this term all men who are completely or partly same-sex oriented, in order to avoid assigning to them identities they may not claim.

³² There was a short-lived attempt to create a women-only bar in the mid-2000s, but it closed down soon; one reason was financial difficulties, the other harassment by heterosexual men, who repeatedly tried to get in and conflicts with them drove away many of the patrons. This example shows that in Hungarian society, permeated

Problems defining and deriving from class

Representing or even theorizing class distinctions is extremely difficult in contemporary Hungary due to the problematic definition of ‘class’ in a postsocialist context. Class is difficult to theorize in Euro-American cultures in general, as class discourses are often merged into discourses of ethnicity and cultural diversity, which then overshadow differences based on socio-economic status (Kalb 2011). The vague nature of class is even more pronounced in Central and Eastern Europe, where state socialism supposedly created a classless society. The state socialist identification of social class and Communist consciousness has led to a discrediting of the class discourse after 1989 (Bartha 2011), so class language is even more delegitimized than in the West (Kalb 2011). The reluctance to use class as a category is pervasive both in academic literature (Bartha 2011) and in political and public discourses. This makes it difficult for a researcher to use reliable markers of class, also because during state socialism class mobility was the norm, and (as I will discuss in Chapter III.3) it is hard to attach a class label even to individuals, let alone families.

Class, race and geographical location strongly intersect in Hungary. The Western parts of the country and the capital are considerably wealthier and have much more employment opportunities than the East and the North. Poverty is also strongly racialized, with Roma people suffering from it more than the white population. The origins of Roma economic deprivation can be traced back to the disappearance of many of their traditional trades, but also to overt racism among potential employers and in state policies (Stewart 1996), as well as, in recent decades, educational segregation, which makes it almost impossible for Roma children to get post-secondary education (Havas and Liskó 2005).

These general tendencies have consequences for the structure of the LGBTQ community as well. At the time of my fieldwork, only one of the 13 registered LGBTQ

with sexism and the advocacy of traditional gender roles (including by nationalist politics, see Chapter I.1),

organizations was based outside Budapest,³³ and the capital offered a far wider range of facilities and programs for LGBTQ people. This naturally means that people living in and near Budapest have more access to the community. As the countryside is perceived as more homophobic than the city (Weston 1998), most rural LGBTQ people either seek to move to Budapest³⁴ or stay closeted in their home environment, which also means not frequenting LGBTQ events or even checking LGBTQ websites from netcafés or libraries, which are often their only access to the internet. This way, they might get cut away even from those subcultural sites which would otherwise be available to them. Visiting LGBTQ events is too expensive for many working-class people, especially if it also involves travel; the owner of a gay bar in a poverty-stricken region complained to Budapest activists that, though entry is free, few people visit his club because they cannot afford to pay 100 HUF³⁵ for a soft drink (László Mocsonaki, personal communication), though gay bars in Budapest are much more expensive. In the commercial scene, consumption becomes a prerequisite for sexual/intimate citizenship (Evans 1993) and this leads to exclusions within the LGBTQ community on the basis of income (Casey 2007).

Events organized by LGBTQ organizations also tend to be dominated by white middle-class people (Renkin 2007b). They are the ones who have had access to Western ideas of LGBTQ subcultures through their travels or language skills, and the ones who have enough money and free time to participate in such activities. It is also possible that in poor working-class environments, social and financial pressures to get heterosexually married are stronger; according to a fellow researcher, the low number of visible working-class lesbians

allegedly 'safe spaces' for women may not be safe at all.

³³ A community-building project (headed by a Budapest-based organization), which resulted in the formation of some rural LGBTQ organizations, started towards the end of my fieldwork.

³⁴ There is a hierarchy of places seen as desirable in terms of employment or work opportunities. Sipi, a gay man from a small village in the south of Hungary, spoke enthusiastically about moving to the nearby large town. People living in large rural towns like Tekla plan to move to Budapest, while those already living in Budapest often hope to move abroad, preferably to a country that offers more recognition to same-sex couples.

might be due to the fact that in their class position a woman or female couple cannot make a living on women's wages only (Dorottya Rédai, personal communication). Even when there are working-class people in a group, class privilege leads to middle-class activists setting the agenda.³⁶ This is well reflected in the nature of the activities organized by activist groups, which often appeal to educated audiences, such as lesbian pilgrimages (Renkin 2007a) to sites associated with early 20th century female literary figures an average high-school educated person has never heard of. I have seen several cases when working-class participants, elated at having found the only publicly advertized LGBTQ events, turned away disappointed when the discussion focused on history and literature rather than the everyday difficulties of LGBTQ people.³⁷ Internet forums are more inclusive in this respect, though – as mentioned above – looking at LGBTQ websites safe from curious glances is not available for everyone. While Boellstorff warns that, in spite of stereotypes, working-class users are by no means absent from the virtual sphere (Boellstorff 2008), they have less opportunity to contribute to forum discussions during work, like some middle-class posters do. Also, on labriz.hu forums middle-class discourses of legitimization are sometimes mobilized to criticize people who have notions different than the ones propagated by the organization: for instance, when someone mentioned that a child will suffer from having no father, Smithee cited a renowned psychologist contradicting this and added: “Surprisingly, this is no problem for experts, only for people who have no knowledge or experience in this field.” I have not seen this happen on pride.hu, where class hierarchy is less overtly manifested.

In spite of all this, there is a considerable number of working-class people in the community, partly because it provides the only publicly visible site of LGBTQ activities. The

³⁵ 1 Euro=about 300 HUF. This price is less than 1/3 of what a soft drink would cost in an average bar in Budapest.

³⁶ A poignant example for this took place in a reading group, where some university educated queer women persisted in using expert language and eventually drove some working-class participants away – ironically after they (the women) had declared that women can never be oppressors due to the prevailing gender order.

regular working-class participants, however, often appropriate the values and rhetoric of the middle-class majority in terms of work and study aspirations, and also in terms of class prejudice. A rural working-class interviewee talked to me with disdain about a young man who tried to organize LGBTQ activities in her town but “cannot even spell properly” (more examples in Chapter III.3). While this adoption of middle-class values is not necessarily uncritical (e.g. some of my interviewees with a rural working-class background, like Jocó or József, criticize stereotypes of rural homophobia) and some organizations have been trying to attract a wider range of audience, there is no visible counterdiscourse to this predominantly middle-class position within the subculture.³⁸

III.2. Research methods

Ethnography, with its focus on everyday life, is ideal for mapping out people’s practices. From the wide range of possible research methods, ethnographers need to choose the ones most viable and most suited for their topic and expected results. In this section I will dwell upon the methods I used to collect research data, their specific strengths and weaknesses and the way they contribute to my account of the kin relations of non-heterosexuals. I used multi-sited ethnography (Gatson 2011) in offline and online environments to access a wider variety of interlocutors, discourses and subcultural sites than would have been possible with a more limited ethnographic research.

Ethnographic interviews

The bulk of my research data comes from semi-structured ethnographic interviews with 68 people who were living or had lived in a same-sex relationship and 13 people who had a same-sex couple in their family (mostly mothers and sisters, but also one father, one

³⁷ Of course, middle-class participants who wish to discuss their personal issues may feel the same disappointment, but at least understand the presentation.

cousin and one sister-in-law). Semi-structured ethnographic interviews are especially suitable for learning not only about practices but also people's interior experiences, their interpretations of events that happened (Weiss 1994) and cultural meanings they have learnt (Spradley 1980), so they elicit people's everyday awareness of their culture (Boellstorff 2008). As most non-heterosexuals were originally socialized in heteronormative environments, they are possibly more reflexive about their practices than those who have never had to face different ones; members of a minority must become well-versed in both their culture and that of the majority (Schulman cited in Sinfield 1998: 42). Interviews also give people the opportunity to discuss issues that occupy them (Boellstorff 2008) and possibly gain new insights into their own culture (Spradley 1980). They provide oppressed groups with an opportunity for self-expression, and sometimes may even have a therapeutic function, with the ethnographer's active listening (Rogers 1951) facilitating self-understanding or self-acceptance in the interviewee (Heckert 2010). For instance one of my interviewees, Ildi, was at the beginning of our talk extremely bitter about her ex-girlfriend's parents, claiming they had not accepted their relationship. Later on, however, she got to the conclusion (which I shared but had not expressed) that they were continuously trying to involve her and it was she who could not consider herself equal to them due to strong class differences. In this and some other cases, tensions in the person with regard to (former or current) kin were eased by talking about them openly; this may indeed have been part of their agenda for being interviewed (see below).

I recruited most of my non-heterosexual interviewees from within the segment of the LGBTQ community described above: via Internet community sites (including Facebook, where LGBTQ groups and the profiles of community events – including rural ones – gave me

³⁸ A short-lived initiative, called Faggot New Wave (Buzi Új Hullám) did try to address issues of class, but from an explicitly middle-class position: all its members were university educated, and their ideas of addressing class were charity-based, like distributing food for the homeless; also, none of these plans were put into practice.

access to people who are less visible within the community), mailing lists of LGBTQ groups, flyers I distributed during the pride festival, through personal connections and via the snowball method. Thus my interlocutors are all connected to the community (physically and/or virtually) and aware of its discourses, though to various degrees.

Research on the relationship between non-heterosexuals and their families of origin has mostly concentrated on the point of view of the non-heterosexual family member (e.g. Kuhar 2007, Sullivan 2004, Weston 1991), though coming out and subsequent efforts to integrate or exclude the same-sex couple involve the whole family as a system (Grafsky 2014). Weston warns that families created by non-heterosexual people cannot be studied in isolation from the families they grew up in (Weston 1991). As family relations often depend on how individual members interpret events (sometimes the same event differently), interviewing several members of the same family, or both non-heterosexuals and family members of same-sex couples can help integrate multiple perspectives and lead to a holistic picture of family relations (Weiss 1994). Therefore I also interviewed people who had a same-sex oriented family member; they were partly accessed via the snowball method (through their non-heterosexual family member or, in one case, through a friend) or through their participation at LGBTQ events or in a short-lived group for parents of gays and lesbians. Consequently, my sample is distorted: the relatives I interviewed were mostly people who supported their family member's same-sex orientation and were often aware of the problems of LGBTQ people. At the same time, it would have been extremely difficult to get access to family members who completely reject this issue, especially for someone known as an LGBTQ activist. As it will transpire later, acceptance and support do not mean the same thing for all relatives; also, the accounts of my non-heterosexual interviewees, as well as internet sources, provide many stories of rejective family members.

When I only met one interlocutor from a family, I could only rely on her/his account. Though I did not use interviews with several family members to verify the ‘truth’, they did often provide other perspectives (see an example in Chapter VI.3); this opportunity was missing when I only interviewed one person from a family. Distortions in interviews may result from the difficulty of remembering, but also from the interactive nature of the process. In face-to-face interviews people are more concerned about self-presentation and political correctness than during informal conversations (Erel et al. 2011), partly due to the inevitable power imbalance between researcher and researched, though that depends on the researcher’s person and the approach used (Boellstorff 2008). Some ways in which my person may have affected my interviewees’ self-presentation will be discussed in Chapter III.4.

Boellstorff (2008) warns that isolated interviews are not suited to anthropology’s holistic approach; he recommends complementing them with participant observation, but (for reasons discussed below) I found it important not to limit that to offline situations. First I will describe the ‘traditional’ offline participant observation and textual analysis I used, then turn to the online sources and discuss their specificity and importance for my study.

Participant observation

Participant observation is one of the key methods of cultural anthropology, considered one of the discipline’s trademarks since the early 20th century. It shows how discourses and practices emerge in interaction and reveals which cultural domains are connected and how (Boellstorff 2008). It is especially suitable for research settings which are relatively obscured from outsiders or where outsiders and insiders might have different views on the same phenomenon (Jorgensen 1989). Both family events and interactions within LGBTQ communities belong to this category. Participant observation also helps provide a holistic picture, and facilitate access to the interior, seemingly subjective aspects of human existence (Jorgensen 1989).

Before, after and during my interviews, observing the interactions between my interviewee and her/his family members often complemented the verbal information (in Chapter VI.2 I describe such a situation). I also observed such interactions at various LGBTQ events where a family member was present, I spent Christmas with one of the families studied and I participated in a registered partnership ceremony in a small town near Budapest. I had informal conversations with members of the LGBTQ community. Many of these, of course, occurred with my friends, acquaintances and former interviewees (with whom it was frequently a follow-up on the interview), but I also engaged in spontaneous exchanges with strangers, especially at rural events: before and after the workshops mentioned below, during the annual 3-day hike of VándorMások LGBTQ-friendly hiking group, and at a visit to a gay discotheque in a large rural town.³⁹ These made it possible to gather information and opinions from rural interlocutors who would have been hard to reach through other methods.

Observing interaction between members of a group can expose their approaches, beliefs and values (Gibbs 1997, Vicsek 2006). Though for practical reasons I gave up the idea to conduct focus group interviews, various workshops and discussions provided ample opportunity to observe such interactions. The most rewarding events were the “LGBTQ Parenting Workshops”, seven of which I visited in 2012 and 2013. Organized by the Foundation for Rainbow Families and led by two family therapists, this workshop series was aimed to help couples who wish to start a planned rainbow family. The events usually consisted of small-group discussions and activities as well as the story of a guest who has her/himself had a child through the method the occasion was focused on. The number of participants ranged from 20 to 50 and many of them were non-activists, the gender proportion depending on the topic but on average equal. These workshops also provided more

³⁹ I went to this event as a volunteer for Háttér Society in order to help with a survey, and after doing that I engaged in conversations with the patrons. The fact that I represented an LGBTQ organization (which had a

opportunity than any other organized discussion for participants to interact freely⁴⁰ (a young woman actually confessed to me that this was the reason she attended, not any wish to start a family). Though the time and place (Budapest on weekday evenings) as well as the availability of information about the workshops (via an online newsletter) produced their own exclusions, a wider range of discourses were represented than at any other event than I attended.

I attended several other workshops and discussions in Budapest, some of them during the Pride Festival and LIFT Lesbian Identities' Festival, dealing with same-sex parenting, bisexuality, coming out, the Kinsey scale, the possible translations of the word 'queer' into Hungarian, parental reactions to coming out, the life of gays and lesbians in Hungary during state socialism, and the state's role in policing citizens' bodies. By far the most popular topic was same-sex parenting, with several discussions focusing on it. I myself conducted a workshop on family reactions to same-sex relationships, in which people shared and acted out personal difficulties and discussed possible solutions. While I kept the stories themselves confidential, I did take notes of discourses that came up during the discussion. I also participated in three rural workshops: two organized by rural LGBTQ organizations, and one at the LGBTQ camp in summer 2012; these had more interaction among participants than most Budapest workshops did. Altogether I attended 26 workshops relevant to identity, kinship or coming out during my fieldwork (including the parenting workshops). The topics and interactions of these workshops complemented my interview material by highlighting the most important discourses within the community. The silences also exposed which are the opinions that are not discussed within the community (Vicsek 1997); an example for this was

positive image in this environment) probably helped build up people's trust, although I was also told that in this disco people are more easy-going and more willing to interact with strangers than in Budapest.

⁴⁰ Two regular community events, Szimpozion Club and Labrisz Evenings, usually consist entirely of a presenter giving a lecture or a moderator talking to guests, without much opportunity for informal conversations among the audience (it was after my fieldwork that Labrisz Evenings became more interactive).

the ethical difficulties with surrogacy (Katz Rothman 2004). Though sometimes workshop leaders acted as authority figures in policing certain opinions, these still covered a wider range of perspectives than some interview volumes published with explicit activist intent, which nevertheless also provided useful additions to my fieldwork.

Interview volumes

Three volumes of interviews were published shortly before or during my research which also provided useful material. The first one was published in 2005 with the title *És ha a te gyereked lenne homoszexuális?* (What if your child was homosexual?) (Szenteh 2005). A book containing 11 interviews with lesbian and gay parents, *Mi vagyunk a család, a biztonság, az otthona* (We are the family, the safety, her home) (Sándor 2010) was published by Inter Alia, a foundation fighting for the rights of same-sex parents, which through this volume tried to create visibility for rainbow families. In the case of both interview volumes, the activist purpose is clearly visible: the interviewer (presumably the editor) also expresses her opinion, at times tries to convince the interviewees about it and Szenteh consciously chose interviewees who accepted their lesbian or gay⁴¹ family member in order to set a positive example (Szenteh 2005). The third volume, *Eltitkolt évek* (Secret Years) contains interviews with women who lived as lesbians during or shortly after state socialism, and was one of the outputs of a lesbian herstory project conducted by Labrisz Lesbian Association (Borgos 2011b).⁴² Coming out to, and relationship with families of origin feature in many of the interviews, as do families of choice. Using the oral history method, these interviews are much less biased; at the same time, the choice of interviewees – mostly women the activists themselves had known before (Borgos 2011b) – and the interviewees' knowledge that the project was conducted by a feminist lesbian organization might have influenced the content.

⁴¹ Bisexual, transgender and queer people are not even mentioned in either volume.

Thus I used these interview volumes less as primary sources than as ways to get insight into community discourses, especially those propagated by NGOs (Labrisz, Inter Alia) and activist-minded individuals (Szenteh); at the same time I am aware that alternative discourses within the community or among family members are silenced in them. Such alternative discourses do appear, however, in less strongly policed online contexts.

Online sources

Boellstorff (2008) warns that if anthropologists are to keep up with the realities of technological change, they need to take account of forms of social interaction and meaning-making in virtual worlds. This is especially relevant for the study of disempowered groups, for whom the internet may offer empowerment (Wellman and Gulia 1999) as well as an opportunity to hide their real-life identity and thus avoid possible negative consequences in offline society (Boellstorff 2008). At the same time, online communities offer the chance of participation in the subculture also for those who are otherwise isolated due to their residence, closetedness or other factors (e.g. disability); LGBTQ people in Hungary benefit from the potential of online communities to enhance community diversity (Wellman and Gulia 1999).

My initial motivation for complementing my offline research with the analysis of online sources was to widen the range of interlocutors, but I soon discovered that researching forums has additional benefits beyond this. The most important one was pointing out the most controversial issues within the community – these were the ones generating the fiercest debates. Similarly to the offline discussions I observed, these debates gave me access to the coexisting models and discourses within the community, but to an even wider extent, as there were no time limits, and the anonymity of the Internet may have encouraged people to express

⁴² The oral history project continued with gay men and yielded the book and film *Hot men, cold dictatorships* (Hanzli et al eds. 2015); however, as it was published years after my fieldwork, I had no opportunity to analyze it in detail and will only make sporadic references to it.

opinions they would not have in an offline community.⁴³ The possibility of citing texts – the comments of other posters or any material published on the Internet – is a characteristic of online forums (Gatson 2011) and makes it possible for posters to give more nuanced reactions to mainstream or community discourses; for instance, Ironman copied the call for coming out stories from the website melegvagyok.hu (see below) and gave detailed reflections, criticizing the coming out discourse promoted by the organization:

[']What we would like to achieve is provide examples, help and information for those who decide to be openly out['].⁴⁴ So only out-and-proud queers get help who show themselves in the zoo of an internet portal to 'dear heterosexual readers', turning their personal histories into a political strategic tool.
(Ironman)

Writing on the Internet, as opposed to offline conversations or interviews, thus allows people access to a wider range of supportive arguments and discourses for their position. At the same time, online and offline sites of the subculture are in a dynamic interaction. For instance, in a coming out story on melegvagyok.hu (see about these later), a gay man relates that he came out to his mother by downloading an interview with a renowned gay writer and asking her to read it; during the subsequent discussion the mother grew suspicious seeing how well-informed her son was about the topic, and eventually asked: “Isn’t it the issue that you’re gay, too?” Here the online environment facilitated a coming out offline, which was channeled back into the online community by being published on a website. Online and offline sites naturally also overlap in terms of participants: most of my interviewees (including the ones not

⁴³ Which is not to say that there are no rules and taboos in online communities (Csáji 2005, Gatson 2011, Wellman and Gulia 1999).

⁴⁴ “Emelt fővel”, lit. “with their heads raised”. Ironman is directly quoting from the site melegvagyok.hu, though he does not use quotation marks.

recruited online) have some connection to online LGBTQ communities in the form of websites, forums or Facebook groups.

I analyzed forum threads on three websites: pride.hu (originally an LGBTQ news website, but mostly visited for its forum and personal ad sections),⁴⁵ labrisz.hu (the website of Labrisz Lesbian Association) and melegvagyok.hu (the website of Szimpozion, an LGBTQ youth association).⁴⁶ The topics of the forum threads I analyzed focused on sexual identity, parenting, coming out and the situation of LGBTQ people in the countryside. The pride.hu forum had the highest number of visitors (and also of trolls) and the fiercest debates. Also, some of these threads started much before my research (on the parenting forum, the first posts date from 2005), so they also offer a historical overview of how changing legal possibilities (e.g. the introduction of registered partnership) have altered discourses and family models within the LGBTQ community. Unlike pride.hu, the other two websites were operated by LGBTQ organizations, and this left its mark on the forum threads as well: they were more strongly moderated against trolling and flaming, and sometimes people associated with the organization spoke from an authority position (see an example in Chapter III.1). They exemplify that forums are not devoid of hierarchy either: the word of influential community members or public gay/lesbian figures carries more weight, especially on websites operated by an organization with clear political goals. The editors of such sites are acutely aware of possible outsiders reading the material and thus often police contents that might shock outsiders or put the community in a negative light (Csáji 2005).

The same is true for other online material I analyzed: the blog of Inter Alia Association, jointly written by members of the organization and taking an explicit stand for

⁴⁵ Since the end of my fieldwork, the pride.hu website disappeared, then restarted under a different name (pridekozosseghu.hu), but the old forum threads can no longer be retrieved.

⁴⁶ Unfortunately, shortly after I started my research, the melegvagyok.hu website was hacked; the organization started a new website, but without the forums. Therefore, I only had access to one forum thread, focusing on coming out, that I had managed to copy into a file.

same-sex parenting, and coming out stories on the website *melegvagyok.hu* ('iamgay.hu'), the official website of the LGBT (but mostly gay) NGO Szimpozion. The stories are written by readers of the website and are classified into two categories: by "those who came out" and by "those who have been come out to", mostly friends and family members. Many, though not all, of these stories deal with coming out to the family of origin, so they provided useful material for my chapter on coming out. At the same time, an activist organization's website is unlikely to be used by people who disagree with the goals of the LGBTQ movement.⁴⁷ Though Szimpozion has now ceased to be a strictly youth organization, it mostly addresses younger generations (in their 20s and 30s); its emphasis on homosexuality being immutable and possibly inborn might be a reason why bisexual, queer and trans* narratives are virtually absent. Not surprisingly, writings by 'those come out to' are likely to support LGBTQ causes. Many (though not all!) of their and also the gay and lesbian contributors' stories were produced with the educational purpose of encouraging people to come out. Thus, they might distort reality even more than other stories, either in order to fit the narrative traditions of coming out (Weston 1991, Plummer 1997) or to make an activist point.

Gatson (2011) argues that in contrast to offline research, where the ethnographer has to convert sensory experiences into text, no such work is necessary in online sites, which are already text. Besides ignoring non-textual online sites like virtual worlds (Boellstorff 2008), this approach does not consider that interpretation is indispensable for ethnography (Asad 1986, Geertz 1993 [1973]) whether online or offline, and also the fact that participant observation also includes verbal interactions. As discussed above, the bulk of my offline research focused on verbal communication, and in this sense was similar to studying forums or online coming out stories. The main difference lies in the topics covered: the online and offline communication of small communities often differ, partly (though not solely) due to the

⁴⁷ Though this does not mean they agree with the whole of Szimpozion's agenda, see Ironman's forum post

public nature of the Internet (Csáji 2005).⁴⁸ As already mentioned, forums were an excellent site for mapping discourses within the LGBTQ community, but much less suited for finding out about everyday practices and interactions of people with their families of origin; these came across much better in ethnographic interviews, which in turn were less efficient in marking out community discourses. This influences the distribution of the types of data I use in the following chapters: Chapter IV, focusing on discourses, relies heavily on online data, while Chapters VI and VII mostly on interview material and offline participant observation: VI due to its interest in practices rather than discourses and VII because – apart from the “those who have been come out to” section of the coming out stories – there are no online locations specifically for the use of family members of non-heterosexuals. Chapter V is the most balanced in this respect, using data from personal stories and opinions published online alongside those from interviews and offline participant observation.

Relying on the insiders’ perspective

Above I have already hinted that the narratives I heard in interviews, workshops or private conversations or read on the internet or in interview volumes cannot be considered objective. People’s wish to create a coherent life story often makes them forget or consciously omit elements that do not fit into it (Weston 1996). Indeed, people’s motivation for agreeing to an interview or for writing on an internet forum might be to create a certain impression of themselves (e.g. how tolerant or how ‘out’ they are) or to give proof to their opinion on an issue (e.g. to illustrate with their story that Hungarian families accept/reject LGBTQ members). In this sense, the value of these life narratives does not lie in their ‘truthfulness’ but in the discourses they reveal (see an example in the next subchapter).

above.

⁴⁸ Naturally, there are less public sites of communication on the internet, like closed Facebook groups or Skype calls between group members (Csáji 2005), but I did not examine these.

Duneier (1999) warns anthropologists against the ‘ethnographic fallacy’, the trend to see the world only through their interlocutors’ eyes, who may not be aware of broader social processes shaping their situation. In the following chapters it will transpire that many of my interlocutors do see the constraints laws and social discourses put on their intimate choices and recognition. Nevertheless, some of them are mistaken about the actual content of the law (e.g. some claim that the law bans gay men and lesbians from adopting in Hungary) and often unaware of constraining discourses within their own subcultural community or family. I was constantly watching public discourses, including informal conversations among heterosexuals related to the topic of family, and tried to question taken-for-granted assumptions. To have a more accurate view of legal regulations concerning same-sex relationships and parenting I also conducted an expert interview with Tamás Dombos, the head of Háttér Legal Aid.⁴⁹

III.3. The background of interlocutors

Hill Collins (1998) claims that family is a privileged site for intersectional analysis, and she demonstrates it focusing on gender and class. While the primary factor I am analyzing is sexual orientation, I am aware of its intersections with other identities or characteristics. Therefore, in the choice of my interviewees, I have tried to represent various groups with regard to gender, age, type of settlement and class background.

Gender

Though my study is not meant to be representative, in selecting interviewees, I tried to involve a similar number of women and men living in same-sex couples (31 and 37, respectively). However, I did not include trans* people in my sample. One reason is that the term ‘same-sex couple’ is more problematic in the case of people with non-binary gender or

⁴⁹ Háttér Legal Aid is a project of Háttér Society, the biggest and oldest LGBTQ organization in Hungary. The Legal Aid focuses on discrimination against LGBTQ people through representing them in lawsuits, giving legal advice and doing advocacy work. They also hold trainings and workshops to raise the legal awareness of the LGBTQ community; I participated in such workshops and Tamás Dombos also provided me with training materials.

in the midst of transition. Also, based on informal conversations with trans* people, I found that gender transition or non-binary gender are extra complicating factors influencing the family's reaction, and would merit a study of its own.⁵⁰

The choice of family members to be interviewed depended partly on their willingness and partly on the decision of my non-heterosexual interviewee related to them. Eventually only 1 of the 12 family members I interviewed was male. Research both in Hungary and elsewhere suggests a higher level of homophobia in men than women (Kite and Whitley 1998, Takács 2011); this may be one explanation why often male family members declined to be interviewed or the non-heterosexual person did not feel comfortable with me talking to them. At the same time, many (e.g. Bobby, Krisztián, Zsuzsanna) reported that the taboo on discussing sexuality was stronger with heterosexual men than with women in their family. It is also possible that, as family affairs are assumed to be women's realm (Di Leonardo 1992), fathers and brothers did not think they should deal with the topic.⁵¹ I know of no heterosexual men involved in Hungarian LGBTQ activism or the parents' group, so informants recruited from there were all female as well; apparently, the reasons discussed above or the fear of becoming stigmatized as homosexual keeps straight men from getting involved in the LGBTQ subculture. I did have informal conversations with some male family members, though.

Type of settlement

I consciously tried to involve rural interlocutors as well, because attitudes to sexual orientation (Takács 2011) as well kinship ideologies and practices might vary according to type of settlement (more about this in Chapters V and VI). This was, however, complicated by the Budapest-centered nature of LGBTQ life in Hungary. I tried to recruit rural interviewees at LGBTQ events in Budapest as well as other towns, via the snowball method, on the mailing

⁵⁰ I do discuss a case where the partner was not cisgender in Béres-Deák 2016.

⁵¹ In her book, Szenteh does interview a father and a brother, but she also emphasizes that it was difficult to find male interviewees.

lists and Facebook pages of rural events and organizations, and on internet forums. Still, only 21 members of same-sex couples and three relatives interviewed lived outside the borders of Budapest at the time of my fieldwork. Moreover, their geographical distribution was also unequal: only two couples (4 interviewees) lived in the Western third of Hungary (Transdanubia). The main reason is that in Western Hungary there are no LGBTQ organizations or events (the only discotheque was being renovated during most of my fieldwork) and no publicly visible LGBTQ communities; from this region, I could only recruit interviewees on the internet and via snowball sampling.

While the proportion of rural interviewees seems rather small, it is worth problematizing the urban/rural divide. First, during my fieldwork several interlocutors changed their residence: during our first interview Vándor was living in Budapest, by the second one she had moved to the countryside. Second, taking ‘Budapest’ and ‘countryside’ as monolithic categories ignores local specificities. The experience of Lóránt, who lives in a large rural town, differs considerably from that of other non-heterosexual men living in small towns (Krisz) or villages (Edmund). Some of the Budapest families – such as that of Zsóka and Kornélia – live in suburban environments which resemble villages in their arrangements, lifestyle and connections to the city center. Studies about the form of settlement influencing attitudes to same-sex sexuality also suggest such distinctions: Takács found that suburban inhabitants are considerably more accepting towards homosexuality than either rural people or residents of the city center (Takács 2011). Finally, regional and other characteristics of the settlement might also count; Endre emphasizes that in his modern industrial town it is easier to be out than in his partner’s smaller, agricultural community.

Also, a considerable number of my interviewees (about half of those who currently live in Budapest) were born and raised in the countryside, and moved to Budapest as adults. In most cases the main motivation (like with many young heterosexuals) was to study or find

work, but for some a quest for an LGBTQ community or an anonymous space to lead a non-heterosexual lifestyle (Weston 1998) also played a part. Nevertheless, the families of these interlocutors remain in the countryside and specific patterns of interaction emerge between them and their city-dwelling kin. In some other cases, my interviewee comes from a Budapest family, but his/her partner has rural origins. Given that my study focuses on the whole family and not just on the same-sex couple, such arrangements offer, in more ways than one, a way to study “the rural through the urban” (Weston 1998: 32). At the same time, the rarely acknowledged suburbanization of LGBTQ subcultures (Holman and Oswald 2011) is also present, with some originally city-dwelling couples moving to the countryside, especially those who plan or have already started to raise children. As these people have families and often jobs in Budapest, they also problematize the urban/rural divide.

Age

The age of my same-sex oriented interviewees ranges from 19 to 60, that of family members from 17 to 70. The majority of the same-sex couples is, however, between 20 and 40 years of age. This again partly mirrors the characteristics of the Hungarian LGBTQ community (see Chapter III.1). Also, there were practical considerations for not trying to collect a sample with equal representation of all age groups. I needed interviewees who have had same-sex relationships and have told about these to at least some people in their family;⁵² this may not be true for many teenagers, but also some elderly people, who knew of no opportunities of meeting people like themselves at a young age and now have a difficulty establishing lasting partnerships in an ageist subculture.⁵³ Another problem with the older generation is that sometimes they have no members of their family of origin alive any more,

⁵² Though in the preliminary round I did interview people who turned out to be completely closeted from their families, like András and Géza.

⁵³ A middle-aged gay friend's email sums up the situation in a funny way: “I'd participate in your study, but by the time I wake up in the morning, my same-sex relationships always disappear! ;-)”

so the family practices they could recall are located in an earlier and very different social context.

Among family members, it was also younger generations (under 50) who were more willing to be interviewed formally. At the same time, some others were willing to talk to me informally. The fact that mostly younger kin were interviewed also depends on my same-sex oriented interviewees, who are often not out to elderly family members (see Chapter V.4) or do not think those would be willing to give an interview. Also, it was more often siblings than parents who were recommended to me as interviewees.

Class

In Chapter III.1 I have discussed the difficulty of defining class in contemporary Hungary. Also, the classic markers of defining class – financial background, education, work or (in the case of women) marriage (Lawler 2000) – often do not coincide with each other (one of my college-educated interviewees is a telephone operator at a call center) or with emic definitions of class or social status. Many of my interviewees consider financial background as the defining feature of class: Sára calls her parents-in-law “upper-upper-middle-class”, though they only have secondary education, and positions herself on a lower level, in spite of her university degree. There are other approaches to social stratifications, however: when I asked Péter, a university-educated gay man, about the kind of job his parents did before they retired,⁵⁴ he replied: „Intellectual or not, you mean? My dad is absolutely an intellectual, my mom isn't.” Later on it transpired that both his parents have only secondary education and used to have manual jobs; Péter considers his father an ‘intellectual’ because he has more than one trade and speaks a foreign language. In this case, it is presumably the father’s difference from his environment (coupled with filial respect) which makes him seem an ‘intellectual’, even from the point of view of a son who is much more highly educated.

Class becomes especially complicated when the whole family is studied. State socialism encouraged the education of youth from working-class families (McLennan 2011), and the resulting class mobility pertained after the transition as well. Among the working-class families I studied, there were very few which did not have at least one family member with a university or college degree (frequently this was the non-heterosexual person). Havana is a case in point: she is the only one among my adult interviewees who has not finished secondary school. Her parents are farmers and also have a low level of education, but her sister is a doctor. Moreover, Havana's partner Ribera is a middle-class woman, and as a result of her influence Havana has changed her lifestyle, her appearance and her aspirations: at the time of our interview, she was studying for her school-leaving exam and considering going to college. At the same time, she keeps a close contact with her parents and occasionally helps them on the farm, along with Ribera; she has also retained her love for rock music (a class marker in her opinion), which she tries to instill in Ribera's daughter. While a form of social mobility can be observed in this family through education and 'marriage', the working-class roots are still present, and result in a mixture of class markers in Havana's life and that of her family.

While upward mobility characterizes several families and might even be a kinship expectation, downward mobility also appeared in a few cases. Hella consciously chose not to go to college in order to become financially independent of her parents; in some other, originally middle-class families, children with poorer intellectual abilities or psychological problems have taken manual jobs or, in one case, become unemployed and homeless.

In spite of these difficulties, I tried to recruit interviewees from different socio-economic backgrounds, because I believe that kinship practices, expectations and discourses are shaped by class. Due to the variation in emic definitions of class described above, I relied

⁵⁴ Due to the ideologically loaded nature of 'class' described above, I never used this term in the interview, but

on the etic categories of work and education as primary class markers. Though the majority of my same-sex oriented interviewees have had some form of higher education, the fact that many come from working-class families allows a glimpse into class differences with regard to family practices and ideologies.

Race and ethnicity

Incorporating race into my analysis was even more difficult than doing so with class. The visible LGBTQ community in Hungary is predominantly white; the few non-white (mostly Roma) participants would have been hard to write about without making them identifiable. Indeed, while I did interview two Roma women, one of them made me promise that I would not mention her racial/ethnic background in the text. Naturally, it would have been nearly impossible to refer to race as an influencing factor without identifying her, and I could not have drawn conclusions based on two interviews anyway. As a result, I refer to race only in terms of public discourses and not in connection with the personal experiences of interviewees.⁵⁵

As for other ethnic identity, seven of my interviewees identify as Jewish and one as Romanian. However, in each of these cases I found that the ethnic identity characterized the younger generation (usually the LGBTQ person) only and was not a part of family tradition. State socialism tried to break down identity-based communities; this or the fear of persecution based on ethnicity or religion was often the reason for downplaying these characteristics until the ethnic and religious revival of the 1990s, which mostly affected the younger generations (Neumann and Vajda 2008). Though this does not necessarily mean that ethnicity played no part in these families, it is harder to attribute various kinship ideologies and practices to ethnic background.

Online interlocutors: identity and authenticity

rather asked about job and education.

The abovementioned variables are much harder to trace in the case of forum posters and the authors of the coming out stories on *melegvagyok.hu*. The question of authenticity on the Internet is a strongly debated issue among both scholars and internet users (see e.g., Boellstorff 2008, O'Brien 1999). I will address two types of authenticity here: the truthfulness of personal data, and that of the stories one shares about oneself.

The scarceness of identity clues on the Internet means that it is easy to put on a fake identity; this might happen with the purpose of deceiving other users (like when straight men pretend to be lesbian with the hope of attracting lesbian or bisexual women) or for other reasons (e.g. changing personal data in order not to be identifiable as an LGBTQ person) (Donath 1999). Only registered users may write forum posts on the websites I studied, but it is not uncommon to falsify personal data in the registration (especially on *pride.hu*, which many people use for finding partners). Nevertheless, when necessary, I refer to forum posters with the gender they assume on the website (based on their profiles or the clues they give in their posts), and also accept other characteristics they claim about themselves (e.g. sexual orientation, type of settlement), while being aware that these might not coincide with their offline characteristics. Through this I respect the online personalities they have created for themselves (Boellstorff 2008), which are also the product of community discourses (e.g. a man who created an online personality as a middle-aged rural lesbian claims to have done so partly because this perspective is largely absent on the *pride.hu* forum).

The other issue of authenticity concerns the content of stories. In Chapter III.2 I have addressed this issue with regard to personal communication, but the Internet poses special challenges in this respect. Indeed, some of the stories I read – especially some coming out stories on *melegvagyok.hu* – seemed too melodramatic or contradictory to be true. One also

⁵⁵ Except one person's experience with adopting a Roma child, see Chapter IV.2.

needs to be aware of trolls, who might express opinions other than their own just to challenge or attack others.⁵⁶

At the same time, stories and opinions that do not reflect reality may offer a glimpse into community discourses. For instance, on a pride.hu forum thread a poster (GotOne) wrote that as a mother, she cannot help relating differently to her son since she found out he is gay. She was immediately attacked by one of the frequent posters on the forum: “[o]n mothers who suddenly start relating differently to their children [after coming out] its not worth wasting words,coz they cant be regarded as real mothers”⁵⁷ (Quasimodo). Quasimodo is famous for trolling and flaming,⁵⁸ so his true opinion might not be as harsh as he makes it sound. However, it is still useful in terms of mapping discourses. First, a challenge posted by a troll can only be effective if it plays on cultural tropes within the community: here, he reproduces one community discourse (on the expectation that parents accept their children’s sexual orientation) while going against another (that a mother-child relationship is inalienable). Second, other posters on the same forum expressed similar, though less aggressive opinions: “No GotOne, there are parents who really love their kids unconditionally and can accept them for who they are. If you can’t, that’s embarrassing, I’d be ashamed too” (Travellerprick). This shows how even falsified stories and opinions reveal discourses pertaining to a given community. As it is discourses I am most interested in when analyzing online sources, I do not pose questions regarding the authenticity of the content.

A note on sexual identity

Imre (2008) claims that as opposed to linear development in the West, postsocialism saw the arrival of several sexual identity and theoretical models at once and individuals as

⁵⁶ Trolls are people who attempt to pass as legitimate participants of a forum or other internet group but cause disruption by disseminating bad advice or attacking other posters (Donath 1999). While Donath suggests that trolls only assume the identity on which the group is based, on pride.hu I witnessed trolling by self-proclaimed LGBTQ people, especially concerning arguments they strongly disagree with.

well as activist groups can choose the ones most suited for their purposes. This approach, just like Kulpa and Mizielińska's rather similar 'queer time theory' (see Chapter I.1), homogenizes the West and ignores that there was temporal discontinuity in the arrival of certain concepts into Hungary: in the early 2000s, Renkin found virtually no mention of sexual fluidity among non-heterosexuals (Renkin 2007b), but by the time I started systematic research a handful but visible group of people began to identify as queer. Some interlocutors I kept in touch with also reported changes in their self-identification. The following short account of community approaches to sexual identity is necessary, however, to frame the identities, discourses and self-presentation of non-heterosexuals and to avoid homogenizing my interlocutors.

In the early stage of my research (before 2010) most people I interviewed identified as gay or lesbian, so I believed that fixed identity categories had prevalence in the Hungarian LGBTQ community. However, when I started the second round of interviews in 2011, I was surprised to see much more variation in terms of sexual identity. There might be several reasons for this. In the preliminary round, most interviewees were at least marginally involved in gay/lesbian organizations or discussion groups in Budapest, so their identity might have been more influenced by identity politics, the still prevalent form of Hungarian LGBT activism; my later interlocutors came from a more varied background. Also, it was around that time that queer as an approach and subjectivity began to gain visibility in Hungary, along with a limited but visible critique of fixed sexual identities. Finally, it is possible that my own studies and changes in my life situation (see next subchapter) made me more sensitive to variations in sexual identity by this stage.

⁵⁷ On internet forums, incorrect spelling is often intentional, sometimes a 'trademark' of a given poster; when I felt it to be that way, I tried to convey it by adopting incorrect spelling in my English translation.

⁵⁸ Flaming is aggressively attacking another user (Donath 1999).

Due to these changes, I have decided to abandon 'gay' and 'lesbian' as generic terms, and use more complicated but more precise phrases like 'same-sex oriented person', 'non-heterosexual' etc. (see Chapter I.4). When talking about individual people, I refer to them with the identity category they use for themselves. It might be worth mentioning, though, that different people might interpret the same term differently. While both activist and scholarly terminology tends to use 'gay' for men and 'lesbian' for women, several of my female interviewees have more negative feelings towards 'lesbian' than 'gay' as a term, and either use 'gay' for themselves (or sometimes 'gay' and 'lesbian' interchangeably) or avoid labels altogether. Queer is even more open to interpretations. Dani sees it as a political category (describing people who give equal value to all sexual orientations) rather than a kind of sexual identity, while Ildi identifies it with bisexuality and the negative stereotypes connected to it (such as promiscuity). Tekla and Kornélia think 'queer' only means fluidity or in-betweenness in gender identity (i.e. genderqueer) and not in sexual orientation. 'Bisexual' also has different understandings. A few women as well as one man, Krisz, apply the term for themselves because at an earlier stage of their lives they had heterosexual relationships: "I say I'm bisexual. I think. Because otherwise I wouldn't have been with a guy" (Ribera), though some others with a heterosexual past (e.g. Róbert, Andrea, Shane) identify as gay or lesbian. Tekla thinks that a 'true' lesbian is someone who does not enjoy sex with men; as she used to do, and sometimes still has sexual fantasies with men, she cannot be a lesbian. The most interesting approach to bisexuality is that of Félix, who claims that he is "between bisexual and gay, 90% gay perhaps" because he can imagine a sexual act with a woman, but not a relationship; he seems to take refuge in this category from what he views as the finality or rigidity of the term 'gay'. At the same time others – especially people living in Budapest, who seem to be more aware of the biphobia within the LGBTQ community (see Béres-Deák 2007) – might think the term fits their practices but still avoid applying it for themselves: "I say I'm

a lesbian because it's easier because you have to explain 'bisexual'" (Eszter). Though I make a point of using emic identity categories, it is important to remember that the meaning of these varies from one interlocutor to the other.

III.5. The researcher's position

Feminist research and contemporary anthropology have done away with the myth of the ethnographer as a neutral outside observer, who does not influence the culture or subculture s/he is observing, and whose personal characteristics and beliefs do not affect the analysis in any way (Kulick 1995, Pratt 1986). Contemporary researchers are strongly aware of how their characteristics – including their gender, age, social status etc. – might influence the way interlocutors relate to them (Jorgensen 1989). Positionality has become a key term in addressing the power differences between ethnographer and interlocutor, but also in exploring difficulties arising from ethnographers researching their own (sub)culture. It is now widely acknowledged that the ethnographer cannot remove herself completely from the stories of her interlocutors that she is telling (Muñoz 2010). This influence of the anthropologist's subjectivity on both data collection and analysis is not necessarily a drawback but might also become an asset, as "[o]ur subjectivities form the core of anthropological theory and method" (Blackwood 95: 55). In this subchapter I will try to explore how my own position influenced the research process.

I have been involved in the Hungarian LGBTQ scene since the mid-1990s; in this sense, I have been researching my own community. My insider position often helped in building trust. Although LGBTQ people have recently become a 'fashionable' topic among Hungarian (mostly MA) students of sociology and psychology,⁵⁹ these researchers frequently know little about the subculture. The fact that I am relatively well-known within the LGBTQ community often made interviewees at ease that I would be familiar with their life situation.

In some cases, I could get access to people by virtue of being associated with certain groups or prominent persons within the community. The fact that I had conducted a similar study (on a different topic) within the lesbian community for my MA thesis (Béres-Deák 2002) also helped; indeed, some of my former interviewees contacted me again, and some others did because their friends had told them about how much they had enjoyed the interview. Those of my heterosexual interviewees who are involved in the LGBTQ subculture knew about my membership in this community, but the others might or might not have.

Being a well-known LGBTQ activist, however, may have had its drawbacks. In a community characterized by different fractions, the researcher's association with one of these may make those in other fractions distrust her/him (Jorgensen 1989). It is possible that people dissatisfied with LGBTQ activism or the organizations I am associated with did not respond to my call for interviews for this reason. For others, it might have shaped their agenda: Goran agreed to be interviewed in order to prove to me that there is no homophobia in Hungary, and declined to go into any details of his personal life that would have suggested otherwise. At the same time, the fact that he did contact me shows that disassociation with the researcher or her/his (assumed) agenda need not mean a loss of potential interviewees.

Shared community membership does not necessarily mean that the two people understand or interpret events the same way (Borland 1991). Also, shared membership in the LGBTQ community was but one aspect of our position, and my other characteristics might have affected individual interviews in different ways. The most complicated one of these was my sexual identity. Although I had identified as a lesbian for over 15 years (which included the time of the preliminary interviews), around the beginning of my official research I began a relationship with a genderqueer person and consequently I began to identify as queer. Some of my interviewees who had known me previously were aware of this, others were probably

⁵⁹ Apparently, these are the disciplines that allow for such topics to be discussed, and also where it is easy to

not. The same-sex couples who had not known me before usually assumed I was a lesbian, while heterosexual family members may have thought I was straight. I did not clarify my sexual identity in the interviews, though to members of same-sex couples I did mention I participated in the community (if the interlocutor did not already know). Nevertheless, it is possible that some people who knew about my change of identity modified their behavior accordingly, e.g. refrained from expressing criticism towards the notion of ‘queer’.⁶⁰ In other cases, it might have been my own queerness that encouraged my interviewee to speak about sexual identity categories more flexibly than they usually appear in community discourses.

Though I got on equally well with male and female members of same-sex couples, I felt that my being a woman definitely helped to build trust with their female family members. Balázs, the only male family member I interviewed, felt rather distant and superior during the interview, but this might be due as much to differences in social status as gender. Interestingly, though some of my LGBTQ interviewees also held a higher class status than me, they did not make it felt during the interview. Possibly our shared stigma and ‘sensitive’ identity (Goffman 1974) overshadowed many other differences. One difference it did not overshadow was the urban/rural one. Some of my rural interviewees suggested at some points that as a city person, I cannot understand their circumstances. Others regarded me with awe: Ribera and Havana, a rural female couple who are rather detached from the LGBTQ community, kept asking me about lesbian life in Budapest, and clearly felt honored that someone from the capital would travel several hundred kilometers to make an interview with them. For them, as for some other rural interviewees, I was a connection to the LGBTQ world in Budapest.

research them without actually having to meet LGBTQ people in person (e.g. through online questionnaires).

⁶⁰ Though some people knew and did not refrain from criticism, e.g. Eszter; we should not overestimate the extent to which interviewees might say things to please the interviewer.

Naturally, my analysis also bears marks of my positionality. Being a feminist, I was likely to detect gender and other inequalities at work where my interlocutors did not, and my interpretation in some cases might differ considerably from theirs. Moreover, some of the terms I am operating with – discourse, intimate citizenship, subversion – are not present in Hungarian public speech and most of my interlocutors are not familiar with them.⁶¹ The result is that my analysis is considerably different from how the interviewees or forum posters would interpret their own words and actions. Such differences, however, do not invalidate either interpretation (Borland 1991).

III.6. Ethical questions

Anonymity is a contested issue within anthropology. While the traditional practice is assigning pseudonyms to interviewees (Spradley 1980) or even whole tribes (e.g. Herdt 1994), recently some ethnographers contested this notion, claiming that the use of pseudonyms makes people unrecognizable even for themselves and thus enhances their invisibility (Myerhoff cited in Newton 1993). Others suggest that by using pseudonyms, ethnographers wish to protect themselves rather than their interviewees (Duneier 1999). Recently some informants explicitly give permission to ethnographers to use their full names. Still, there are valid arguments for not doing so. In a sensitive area like non-heterosexual orientation, being identified on the basis of a study might carry serious risks,⁶² especially in a country with widespread homophobia like Hungary. Moreover, using real names in a study about kinship would out not only one's interlocutors but also family members who might not be comfortable with this (Boellstorff et al 2012, Lewin 1998). Lewin also suggests that using real names gives the impression that the study is about specific people and not a social

⁶¹ Indeed, in the interviews I had to paraphrase the question about discourses, because even university educated interlocutors were unfamiliar with the term.

⁶² Though Newton (1993) used the real names of her gay and lesbian interlocutors, it must be remembered that these were openly out people in high class positions, who had less to lose by being identified.

phenomenon (Lewin 1998). Considering all these factors, I decided to use pseudonyms for my interviewees as well as the forum posters.

I will refer to interviewees by pseudonyms they have chosen themselves, thus handing over some of the power an anthropologist has over those researched, as well as giving an opportunity for their self-expression (e.g. Goran intentionally chose a foreign name to disassociate himself from Hungarian society, which he is highly critical of). My interviewees were also asked to invent pseudonyms for people who play an important part in their story (partner or ex-partner, close kin etc.). For other characters who might come up in the excerpts, I invented the pseudonyms, just like for forum posters: identifying and contacting each individual poster in order to ask them for a pseudonym would have been near impossible as well as unethical. The necessity of assigning pseudonyms in online research is sometimes debated, given that in these environments people rarely use their real names; however, their offline identity can sometimes be deduced from their screen names or nicks, and/or they might not want to identify with things they wrote earlier (Garcia et al. 2009). Thus currently ethical practice in online research also requires the use of pseudonyms (Boellstorff et al. 2012). I did not assign pseudonyms to the authors of coming out stories on melegvagyok.hu, most of which are anonymous on the website as well, and to workshop participants, unless they were former interviewees. I did not change the names of some public figures or the names of politicians and political groups that were mentioned in interviews or on forums. In this work I quote online contributions in direct translation, as the language difference would make it harder to identify them (and two of the three forums I researched are no longer accessible anyway), but I do not indicate the exact forum thread.

In some cases not only their names but also other characteristics could identify my interviewees. For settlements – except for Budapest – I use names invented by myself or in some cases by my interviewees,⁶³ and I omitted any other identifying information.

Participant observation raises the ethical question whether the people observed know the ethnographer's motivation for being present (Jorgensen 1989). This is especially complicated in the case of ethnographers who are members of the community themselves, as they might be perceived as having other legitimate reasons for their presence. I did not announce my research motifs at roundtable discussions, where the audience did not have much opportunity to contribute anyway, but I usually did reveal it at workshops and other discussions.

The same problem arises differently with regard to research on the Internet. Ethnographers can choose between the strategy of 'lurking' (that is, reading the posts without contributing, and therefore without announcing their motivation), or participating with or without revealing their identity (Garcia et al 2009). Lurking is not necessarily unethical, as it is common practice on many internet forums (Gatson 2011), including those on the websites I researched. As some forum threads had in fact died down by the time I conducted my research, there would not have been much point in identifying myself there. In cases when I contributed to forum discussions – usually in the form of questions or sometimes information, e.g. about parenting possibilities – I did identify myself as an ethnographer.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the framework and limits of my research. It shows that certain perspectives are necessarily missing, partly due to the nature of the researched community and its discourses, partly because of the ways of recruitment, and possibly even the researcher's own position may have excluded some potential viewpoints. Nevertheless,

⁶³ The only exception is discussed in Chapter IV.4.

the variety of methods and the range of interlocutors has provided me with considerable insight into both practices and discourses related to a situation that is mostly taboo in Hungarian mainstream discourses: families that fall outside the Heterosexual Family Myth.

Anthropologists often assume the position of speaking for groups that cannot speak for themselves. While in the case of remote cultures this can be criticized as a colonialist stance ignoring the literacy and agency of Third World peoples (Asad 1986), the situation is different if the researched community keeps silent because of the stigma attached to them. Elsewhere I have argued (Béres-Deák 2010) that in the case of extremely closeted groups (in that instance, parents in rainbow families) social scientists have a crucial responsibility for making them visible in public discourses while preserving their anonymity. For similar, though not exactly the same reasons, heterosexual family members of same-sex oriented people are in a similar position. Ethnography is an especially suitable method for mapping out the everyday realities of a group that is mostly hidden in contemporary Hungarian society, and possibly make readers aware of their concerns and perspectives. Thus the following chapters, besides providing new insights into the connection of family, intimate citizenship and agency, also give voice to oppressed groups and thus comply with the call for engaged anthropology (Sanford 2006).

Chapter IV. Interpretations of kinship in Hungarian mainstream and LGBTQ discourses

An important – though not the only – factor in intimate citizenship is the way the state defines the family; this affects not only policies and legal opportunities but also public discourses that in turn influence people’s self-perception. Though with the increasing influence of transnational organizations, the nation-state has diminishing role in defining the terms of intimate citizenship (Richardson and Monro 2012), it is still national law that enables or hinders certain family forms, at least on the legal level, and as mainstream media in Hungary is strongly controlled by the state, it also transmits the same values in terms of family. For many, alternative discourses are less accessible, even if their own family form does not fit the state model. In this sense members of the LGBTQ community are in a privileged position, as their own subculture produces counterdiscourses (or adopts them from transnational LGBTQ sources) that validate their own notions of kinship and posits their families as equally valuable as the mainstream heterosexual model. In this chapter I examine how the discourses and practices of non-heterosexuals relate to, and often challenge, the notions of kinship transmitted by the Hungarian state and mainstream discourses.

The existence of conflicting notions of kinship within mainstream society (see Chapter II.3) also affects discourses within the LGBTQ community. It is important to remember that not all members of the LGBTQ community subscribe to the interpretations presented here, and indeed there are fierce debates concerning certain ideas related to kinship. Also – as we will see in other chapters as well – some people “do not practice what they preach” with regard to kinship behavior. Yet others try to disassociate from mainstream ideas of kinship, but these still haunt their discourses and practices. We must also bear in mind that state laws and policies, as well as internalized mainstream values, severely limit individual agency and

might force people to adopt practices they otherwise would not completely agree with. At other times, however, it is through practices that people challenge mainstream norms and performatively create space for alternative interpretations of kinship.

IV.1. Official theories of kinship and their challenges

The definition of marriage in the new Hungarian Basic Law (a voluntarily formed union between a man and a woman and basis of the nation's survival) highlights several elements of the state's view of kinship. First of all it is heteronormative, which is manifest in other laws and policies as well (see later). The emphasis on mutual consent is connected to the bourgeois ideal of marriage based on voluntariness, community of love and cultivation (Habermas 1998). Finally, the emphasis on the survival of the nation implicitly defines biological (and possibly also cultural) reproduction as an important purpose of the family, which fits in both with the general nationalistic focus on children as the symbol of the future (Edelman 2004), whose interests overwrite those of already existing citizens (Berlant 1997, Edelman 2004), and with the already discussed fear of the 'death of the nation' characteristic of several postsocialist societies (Goven 1993, Kligman 1998, Rivkin-Fish 2006). The idea of the Hungarian nation is thus strongly intertwined with the image of the heterosexual, bourgeois, reproductive family, the latter being both the manifestation and the legitimation of the former.

It is easy to see that most family forms in the LGBTQ community (as well as many outside it) do not fit this definition of 'family'. In this subchapter I will explore how members of the community react to these mainstream notions of kinship, which are transmitted to them through the media, through education, as well as laws and policies. We will see that alternative discourses and individual agency can challenge state discourses or even turn them to the non-heterosexual person's own advantage.

Marriage

When in the early 1990s Hungarian gay and lesbian⁶⁴ organizations appealed to the Constitution Court⁶⁵ that the ban on same-sex marriage was discriminatory, the Court rejected their claim on the basis that one of the central functions of marriage is raising children, and this is indeed the reason why the state supports marriage as an institution. The Court's reaction stated that "[t]he ability to beget and bear children is not a conceptual element or condition of marriage, but as a result of the original and typical function of marriage the different gender of spouses is" (Constitution Court decision no. 14/1995). Implicit in this phrasing is the notion that the children raised in a family are the biogenetic offspring of both parents. Though the decision acknowledges the changes in the family model, it claims this is "no reason for the law to deviate from the legal concept of marriage that has always lived in the tradition leading to the present condition" (Constitution Court decision no. 14/1995). The Constitution Court thus reifies marriage as ahistorical and unchanging, ignoring the numerous changes it has seen in the past centuries (Somlai 2013). As Constitution Court decisions are almost impossible to challenge, since this decision no LGBTQ organization has launched a campaign for same-sex marriage.⁶⁶

At the same time this state position has caused much bitterness within the LGBTQ community. While in the USA some queer critics oppose marriage saying it would reproduce and create hierarchies within the LGBTQ community (see Chapter II.4), in Hungary I have not heard this claim (in fact, in the few cases I have mentioned it, people – including LGBT and queer activists – did not even understand what I meant). The only widespread argument within the community against extending marriage to same-sex couples is that marriage as an institution no longer serves its true function: "I think us Lesbians should be satisfied with

⁶⁴ At the time bisexuals and trans* people had even lower visibility than now, and most activist groups defined themselves as 'gay' or 'gay and lesbian'.

⁶⁵ The Constitution Court's function is to examine whether laws passed by the Parliament are consistent with the Constitution.

⁶⁶ It was after my fieldwork, in 2016, that Budapest Pride undertook a campaign for same-sex marriage.

legal partnerships, and don't need the 'institution of marriage' that has been badly degraded by hets" (Vica, labrisz.hu forum). As opposed to the mainstream discourse positing same-sex couples as a threat to the sanctity of marriage (Lewin 1998), this forum poster suggests it is heterosexuals who have 'degraded' the institution.

Many Hungarian LGBTQ people, however, are strong supporters of same-sex marriage (80% according to the 2007 discrimination study; Takács et al. 2008). LGBTQ organizations and many individuals see same-sex marriage as a prerequisite of full citizenship (see Chapter II.4). Liza makes a difference between the issue of church weddings and civil weddings,⁶⁷ arguing that a ban on the latter is illogical in the Hungarian system:

It doesn't make sense, why gays shouldn't be allowed to get married. Coz the Hungarian state accepts women screwing women, right? There's no ban on that. Then why couldn't they get married? Because the Catholic Church doesn't accept homosexual relationships, that's why gays can't get married there. But if the state accepts, why couldn't they get married? (Liza)

Liza is especially concerned with the marriage issue, perhaps because she used to live in a heterosexual marriage and has first-hand experience of its benefits (see Chapter VI). Based on the equal rights argument, she claims that the permission of homosexual activity should go together with the granting of all the rights that belong to heterosexuals: she does not allow for second-class citizenship. She also extends her rights claims to vocabulary: she thinks that 'girlfriend' suggests a less serious relationship than 'wife', so same-sex couples are linguistically denied partnerships of a value equal to those of heterosexuals.

Same-sex couples try to signal their dissatisfaction with marriage legislation through their practices as well. Informal commitment ceremonies, like the one described at the beginning of Chapter I, are not uncommon. Péter and Jócó got married in a country which

recognizes same-sex marriage, though this bond is not recognized by the Hungarian state. To counter linguistic discrimination, several (interestingly mostly female) couples among my interviewees refer to their relationship as marriage, their registered partnership ceremony as wedding, and use the term “wife” for their female partners. This way, performative linguistic acts elevate same-sex relationships to the value attributed to marriage, and make a stance for intimate citizenship.

Still, members of the community are aware that the symbolic recognition these acts bestow on their relationships is limited:

Of course, emotional bonding can be sealed with a ‘pseudo-wedding’ – that can also be important, as what I consider important in a wedding ceremony is not wining and dining and not the paper we sign, but the decision-making process that both parties consider thoroughly before they get to the altar/registrars office [...]. Still, I consider the material side of legal marriage more important, because if two people dedicate their lives to building an existence around themselves, then they should have the right to make decisions about it together. (Primrose, labrisz.hu forum)

Primrose’s post was written in 2009, before the registered partnership law entered into force. Today Hungarian registered partners have the same economic rights as married couples, but they cannot, for instance, take on their partner’s last name.⁶⁸ Apparently, while the Hungarian state is unwilling to symbolically acknowledge same-sex partnerships, it does consider the practicalities of such household arrangements. There is a practical issue, however, that carries much symbolic weight and is still deeply problematic in Hungary: the case of same-sex parenting.

Parenthood

⁶⁷ In Hungary these are held separately: a church wedding is not officially valid without a civil ceremony, though non-religious couples usually undergo only the latter.

⁶⁸ Of course anybody can request a change of her/his last name, but then the birth name is changed on all previous documents; thus there is no indication that the name signifies ties to a partner. Also, certain ‘protected’ family names (e.g. those of famous people or former aristocrats) cannot be taken on at a name change.

The Basic Law defines family as based on marriage or descent, excluding unmarried partnerships from the scope of the term. Hungarian law seriously curtails the right of same-sex couples to have children: artificial insemination is only allowed for married women or single ones who are nearing the end of their childbearing age (so lesbians, whether living in registered partnership or just cohabiting with a partner,⁶⁹ are excluded), home insemination⁷⁰ as well as all forms of surrogacy are banned, and a person living in a same-sex relationship can only adopt individually, not jointly with her/his partner. Existing rainbow families have no access to second-parent adoption, so the couple cannot both be legal parents of the child they are raising. Apparently, the Hungarian state wishes to make sure there are no (legally) visible rainbow families within its borders. At the same time, perhaps to avoid accusations of discrimination, the law never explicitly mentions sexual orientation: artificial insemination is tied to marital status (so single lesbians are eligible), and while preference is given to married couples as adopters, decisions about suitability are made on a case-to-case basis. This makes this possibility available for some gays and lesbians, usually those who are privileged financially and/or work in caring professions, so their ability to look after children cannot be challenged.⁷¹ So rainbow families do come into being, though often through illegal or semi-legal means and without legal acknowledgement: in a 2010 LGBTQ study, 10% of 2119 respondents said they had children, and a further 5% participated in raising their partner's children (Dombos et al. 2011).⁷²

⁶⁹ In Hungary, cohabitation (domestic partnership) is a separate legal status, with a limited number of rights, mostly in the field of health care and social services, so a person living with her/his partner is not considered single.

⁷⁰ About this, there is disagreement between the experts I have asked: Eszter Polgári says it is allowed, while Tamás Dombos claims it falls under the criminal offence of 'abusing the human body' (both personal communication). This ambiguity of the law could be resolved by a precedent case, but understandably nobody risks imprisonment for something that otherwise could quite easily be kept secret.

⁷¹ This is not made explicit, but it is telling that all the successful non-heterosexual adoptive parents I know (including my interviewee Benjámín) work in this field. Of course it is possible that others do not even dare to apply, fearing that their ability to parent might be doubted.

⁷² Naturally, this does not give us information about the number of rainbow families even within this limited sample, as it is possible that in a family both same-sex parents filled in the survey; the number also includes non-custodial same-sex oriented parents.

The limitations on same-sex parenthood are widely discussed within the LGBTQ community. Some people, like frequent forum poster Travellerprick, are quick to point out discrepancies within state discourses related to same-sex parenting:

There isn't a legal environment that would support artificial insemination or solutions when a gay and a lesbian couple have children together. It's present laws that prevent children from being born, and thus regulations contribute to the 'demographic problem.' [...] The state would rather press that kids should have only one parent (anonymous sperm donor insemination for single women) than God forbid a second same-sex parent should contribute (financially, etcetera) to the raising of the child. (Travellerprick, pride.hu forum)

Travellerprick picks two elements of state discourses to expose their contradictions with actual policies: the nationalistic pronatalism discussed in Chapter I and the idea that two parents are necessary to raise a child, an approach that views single parenthood as a problem (Tóth 2008). Though these state discourses are frequently used with reference to the heterosexual population, same-sex couples are excluded from them, as their family form is by definition undesirable: curtailment of intimate citizenship may also mean freedom from the pressure to produce children in couple relationships that heterosexuals are subjected to.⁷³

Arguments based on parents' and children's rights frequently figure in forum and blog posts lobbying for same-sex parenting. Claimants often emphasize the respectability of gays and lesbians, a homonormative approach strongly criticized by queer theorists (Bell and Binnie 2000). In the following forum post, Mary Jo asserts her similarity to heterosexuals by emphasizing her class and lifestyle: "Dear Mr. Semjén,⁷⁴ in 5 years' time, as an intellectual with a degree in a hopefully long-lasting relationship have I no right for a child? Stupid prick"

⁷³ Of course, non-heterosexuals who have children do feel pressures in terms of raising them 'properly', also from the LGBTQ community; this will be discussed later in the chapter.

⁷⁴ Zsolt Semjén, a Christian Democratic politician.

(Mary Jo, pride.hu forum). Her self-description (intellectual with a degree, long-lasting relationship) posits her as respectable and middle-class, and uses her class position as an argument. The underlying notion that middle-class (and not working-class) people are the ones who should raise children echoes debates already taking place in the 1970s, in which Hungarian intellectuals worried that too many children were born into the ‘wrong’ race or class (Goven 1993); this has motivated efforts to curtail the reproduction of (mostly poor) Roma people (Stewart 1996).

Some of my interviewees, like Bálint and Krisztián, plan to get around the legal restrictions by moving to a country which allows adoption for same-sex couples and becoming citizens there. Others stay and resort to illegal or semi-legal means. The right to form a family figures so strongly within the Hungarian LGBTQ community that breaking the law in order to do it is not considered wrong; indeed, workshops and discussions are frequently organized to teach those who wish to create a rainbow family how to evade existing regulations. Some NGOs, like Háttér or Inter Alia, strongly lobby⁷⁵ for the right to artificial insemination for lesbians. Their main focus, however, is second-parent adoption, the lack of which is considered a breach of the rights of children. Parents in rainbow families, like Eszter, also put a priority on second-parent adoption:

I don't give a shit about marriage – no, I don't say that coz it'd be really cool; but kids who live in families, in gay families, like my son, their rights are not clear. [...] So the law doesn't protect existing families, and I think this is very – stupid. (Eszter)

Besides the protection of ‘existing families’, second-parent adoption as a policy goal is considered more achievable, as the rights of the child is a trump card that is hard to argue against (Lawler 2000). Tamás Dombos, head of Háttér Legal Aid, told me in November 2012

that his organization strategically chose to campaign for second-parent rather than outside adoption; they hoped that they might be more successful in legalizing existing rainbow families than in getting the right to create new ones. Ironically, the opposite happened: second-parent adoption is still not legal in Hungary for same-sex couples, but just a few months after our interview, the first out gays and lesbians managed to adopt children from the state system. This result is not surprising if we consider the Hungarian state's efforts to make rainbow families invisible: unmarried people can only adopt individually, so the children acquired through outside adoption will not have two legal parents of the same sex.

Inter Alia Foundation, another NGO fighting for second-parent adoption, does not limit this activity to reconstructed rainbow families. On their blog,⁷⁶ Floya writes:

the guarantee for her/his[the child's] security would be the legal acknowledgement of her/his⁷⁷ family as a family – s/he has the right to two parents as well, with the security guaranteed by them. [...] The solution for this would be if all those who want to found a family could do it – with all the rights AND duties attached. (Floya, Inter Alia blog)

Floya suggests that parents need the force of the law to perform their duties towards the child. This contradicts the notion that 'diffuse, enduring solidarity' is inherent within the family, regardless of whether a given adult is legally and/or biologically related to the child.⁷⁸ Her basic critique towards the state is that it does not legally enforce 'diffuse, enduring solidarity' within existing family units. Others, however, complain of the opposite: that the state enforces kinship obligations based on biology where the people concerned do not find them legitimate.

⁷⁵ Inter Alia terminated its activities after the end of my fieldwork.

⁷⁶ The posters of this blog are activists of the organization themselves; thus, the notions of kinship they transmit do not only reflect but form – and are meant to form – attitudes within the LGBTQ community.

⁷⁷ Hungarian has no grammatical gender, so when people speak about a hypothetical 3rd person singular, I use the terms 's/he', 'her/his' etc, unless it is clear from the context what gender they mean.

Joyce: [...] it's fine that he's giving the sperm, but what'll happen to the legal side of fatherhood. Because I wouldn't really like the guy to legally take part in our child's life.

Pedro: and the guy wouldn't really like you to ask for child maintenance. Both parties are vulnerable if the situation is that the guy gives his sperm and then buggers off (*húzzon a francba*). (pride.hu forum)

In Hungarian law, biological parenthood cannot be irretrievably denounced: even years after abandoning the child, a biological parent can always claim rights to it. This is the problem for these two forum posters, who approach the question of donor insemination from the male and the female point of view. They both agree that donating sperm does not make one a parent (more about this in Chapter IV.2), but the state definition contradicts this and thus possibly creates kinship obligations (legal fatherhood, child maintenance) between people whom they – similarly to many others in the subculture – do not consider kin.

The basis of kinship

In Chapter II.3 we have seen how the two main tenets that Schneider (1968) identifies as the bases of Euro-American kinship – ‘blood is thicker than water’ and ‘diffuse, enduring solidarity’ – strongly shape state laws and policies. The emphasis on biology is often intertwined with ideas of the nation based on blood: for instance, Hovav demonstrates that Israeli pronatalism is specifically targeted at the Jewish population, which makes the use of non-Jewish surrogates problematic (Hovav 2011). Similarly, in Chapter I.1. I have discussed how Central and Eastern European countries try to discourage their Roma population from reproducing (Stewart 1996, Magyari-Vincze 2009). Hungarian law, by outlawing surrogacy, making it possible for a genitor or genetrix to claim parental rights even years after abandoning the child, and enabling adopted children to get in touch with their birth parents when they are 18, also implicitly privileges biological ties over other bases of kinship.

⁷⁸ More about social parents in Chapter IV.2.

The primacy of biological parenthood in Hungarian law is a serious problem for those non-heterosexual people who wish to involve a third party in conceiving their child. As we have seen from Joyce's forum post, female couples are worried that a known sperm donor – even if he formerly agreed not to participate in the child's life – might suddenly change his mind and ask for the recognition of his fatherhood. Male couples who use a surrogate are in an even more precarious position, given that the law does not recognize their arrangement. Péter, a gay father whose children were born through surrogacy, is upset because, although she never sought contact with the children and did not appear in court for the custody hearings, his surrogate in principle still maintains visitation rights. Such policies are justified with psychological theories claiming the importance of the bonding between mother and child (Somlai 2013), ignoring the possibility that in some cases the primary caregiver is a man.

Though the state sees both motherhood and fatherhood as based in biology, their nature is seen as different. Laqueur claims that in contemporary Euro-American discourses, motherhood is seen as based in biology to a higher extent than fatherhood, which is perceived as an 'idea' and therefore inferior (Laqueur 1992).⁷⁹ A sperm donor does not qualify as a father unless he takes or wishes to take on parental responsibilities because fatherhood is social as well as biological (Laqueur 1992); this is why anonymous sperm donation is permitted. In such cases, as well as in situations when the known donor or father does not wish to claim parenthood, in Hungary an 'imaginary father' is indicated on the child's birth certificate, allegedly to protect the child from the stigma of having been born out of wedlock. This practice is frequently criticized by female couples, as it makes their family form invisible

⁷⁹ At least in our time, when biology is seen as central to parenthood; Laqueur points out that in previous centuries, when biology was seen as inferior to ideas, fatherhood was more honored than motherhood (Laqueur 1992).

(Sándor 2010).⁸⁰ The following exchange at a parenting workshop highlights the gender differences of the state's approach to parenthood:

“The mother's name appears in every document. But if a single woman raises a child, she can ask not to have the real name of the father (sic) [on the documents], and then it's an imaginary father [who is indicated on the documents].”

“Is there no imaginary mother? Like when there's a surrogate.”

“No, because you can always know who's the mother.” (author's fieldnotes)

The last speaker clearly grounds both motherhood and fatherhood in biology (and ignores the case of gestational surrogacy, where two women can claim biological contribution to the child; Hayden 2004). Although members and organizations of the LGBTQ community challenge state discourses that define parenthood and kinship in ways that do not acknowledge rainbow families, they frequently reproduce the same discourses, in some cases even deploying them to argue against state definitions, like Travellerprick above. Though in some cases their motivation might be strategic (Travellerprick's ironic tone suggests he is not truly worried about the ‘demographic problem’), my interviewees often express genuine adherence to mainstream discourses of kinship. In the following parts of this chapter I will discuss theories about the basis of kinship that appear in the Hungarian LGBTQ community.

IV.2. Blood and genes

As discussed in Chapter II, with the advance of genetics, genes are seen as determining a number of human characteristics (Finkler 2000) and thus popular discourses increasingly substitute ‘genes’ for ‘blood’ as the foundation of kinship (Bestard 2009); their meaning also extends beyond the ‘blood’ discourse, creating what Nash (2004) terms ‘genetic kinship’. One of these extensions is the nation: in Central and Eastern Europe, the ‘survival of

⁸⁰ This obligation was canceled in the 2014 Civil Code (Tamás Dombos, personal communication).

the nation' is often cast in genetic terms, suggesting that only the reproduction of certain ethnic/racial groups is desirable (Goven 1993, Magyari-Vincze 2009). Thus adherence to the principle of blood relatedness (in theory and practice) may become a tool for intimate citizenship.

In this subchapter I will examine how members of the LGBTQ community relate to these assumptions, also in the light of family forms that challenge biogenetic arguments of relatedness. I will also show how believers in the 'blood argument', while seemingly buying into heteronormative notions of kinship, in fact challenge them by relying on this very same discourse, and use them to claim legitimacy for their relationships and family forms.

The child who is not (quite) 'ours'

Though adoption is hardly a new phenomenon, it is not usually viewed as disrupting the notion of kinship as based on blood,⁸¹ as theorists have traditionally considered it as a non-biological relationship modeled on biological kinship ties (Howell 2001), creating the social fiction of an actual link of kinship and "pos[ing] no fundamental challenge to either procreative interpretations of kinship or the culturally standardized image of a family" (Weston 1991: 38). In Hungary, this image is also maintained by discourses that stigmatize adoption; to-be adopters are automatically regarded infertile, as it is assumed that fertile people want biological children (Neményi and Takács 2015). A variation of this theory in the LGBTQ community is when outside adoption⁸² is only associated with gay men: "lesbians don't want to adopt, because they can give birth themselves", stated a gay man at a parenting workshop (author's fieldnotes). In this view, the ontological difference between motherhood and fatherhood is replicated, with motherhood being grounded in biogenetic connection, including gestation and giving birth. Indeed, while there are lesbians who do not connect

⁸¹ At least when it is seen as a corollary, and not an equal or even preferred equivalent, of biogenetic kinship (Bodenhorn 2004).

⁸²On second-parent adoption see the previous subchapter and the passage on social parents.

parenthood to biology (e.g. those who consider themselves full parents to their partner's biological child), many do reject the idea of adoption. When I asked a woman who mentioned wanting to have a child with her partner whether they have considered adoption, she gave a shocked answer: "God forbid! We don't want a ready-made product. [...] I want to experience motherhood"⁸³ (author's fieldnotes).

The adopted child is a 'ready-made product' in the sense that the adoptive parents have no connection to her/his genetic material. This is a serious issue in a society characterized by the "hegemony of the gene" (Finkler 2000; see Chapter II.2). Genetic considerations influence not only decisions about adoption, but frequently also the choice of sperm donor or surrogate: often the choice of sperm or egg donors is made on the basis of similarity of appearance to the parent(s) (Thompson 2001). While Péter chose his surrogate based on her looks only, Benjámín (during our first interview, when he was considering surrogacy) said he wanted someone whose personality he liked, because "genes are nastily inheritable".⁸⁴ Zsóka's friends were shocked at her choice of sperm donor, as he is not good-looking and even has health problems, but for Zsóka the important thing is that he has "an overwhelming personality and an incredible brain"; she clearly hopes the child will inherit the donor's personality traits rather than his (potentially genetic) medical condition.

The genetic arguments related to adoption, surrogacy and gamete donation are often framed in racial terms (Daniels and Heidt-Forsythe 2012, Lewin 2009). In Hungary, 66% of to-be adopters explicitly exclude the possibility of adopting a Roma child (Neményi and Takács 2015).⁸⁵ Benjámín however, when he gave up his plans for a biologically related child, adopted a Roma toddler. He was shocked to see that while his family of origin integrated the child without further ado, his gay friends came up with cautionary tales about Roma adoptees

⁸³ 'Experiencing motherhood' probably referred to pregnancy and biogenetic connection to the child. Ironically enough, this woman has since had a child – with her partner as the birth mother.

⁸⁴ „a gének csúnyán öröklődnek”, i.e. 'inherited uglily'

who became criminals or drifted aimlessly in life. One of the horror stories featured an adoptee who cheated his adoptive parents out of their money; the social trope reproduced here – apparently present in the LGBTQ community too – is that the ‘wrong’ genes (both racially and in terms of relatedness) result in the breach of ‘diffuse, enduring solidarity.’

While same-sex couples cannot produce a child from their genetic material alone, the need for at least one outsider also gives them the possibility to choose this person on the basis of her/his (imagined) biological traits; both Zsóka and Péter made this choice.⁸⁶ In other cases, genetic connection to the family of origin of the social parent is also considered in these choices. American literature documents several stories when the future mother’s family member acted as her surrogate, making the child biogenetically related to both parents, though such arrangements are considered problematic as they complicate kinship ties (Ragoné 2004). A lesbian equivalent of this practice is asking the future social mother’s male relative to donate sperm (Hayden 2004). While some of the female couples in my sample did consider this option, they all changed their minds in the end, one couple in the *Inter Alia* interview volume partly because the future birth mother’s sister opposed it (Sándor 2010); this is an example of the family of origin constraining the same-sex couple’s choices (see more examples in further chapters).

Even when a donor is not biologically related to the future social mother, he is often chosen on the basis of his resemblance to her: for both Viola and Zsóka it was important that their donor should have their partner’s hair and eye color. Behind such decisions there is often a hope that the social mother’s parenthood is more readily acknowledged if the child resembles her, even enabling her to pass as the birth mother (Sullivan 2004, Sobočan 2011).

⁸⁵ See Chapter II.3 about the procedure for this.

⁸⁶ Benjámín also did, of course, but he did not choose his child for certain biological traits but rather in spite of social expectations and prejudices; in a sense, his choice of a Roma adoptee is a statement he made in opposition to biological essentialism. (We must also consider that given Hungarian adoption policies that favor married

The similarity might not be limited to appearance, however. Judit's description of how she and her partner Gabi chose their (anonymous) sperm donor includes both outer and inner traits as well as interests, all of which were to be similar to the social mother's:

Gabi's colors [the birth mother was to be Judit], but of course we added to the height to get an "average" guy (175-190), and we wanted a university student; we preferred those who do mechanical sciences or economics. Funny, otherwise we are socialization-believers, so we think bringing up matters more, but still... It was important not to have someone in humanities but a more mathematical person, as Gabi's like that, too, and so we'd reproduce the mixture. And we emphasized university. This would also reproduce "reality". After all, there's virtually no chance I would have a skilled worker as a partner, whatever gender they are. (Judit)

The last part of the argument is not only strongly classist (Judit, an out-and-proud lesbian, virtually says that she would rather have a male partner than an uneducated one) but also suggests that education – both in terms of level and specialization – is somehow coded in genes. Reproducing the 'mixture' of the two parents does not, in this view, come from Gabi's participation in raising the child but from the genetic material, which is supposed to be as similar to Gabi's as possible.

Choosing a donor who could even be imagined as the birth mother's partner is a strategy that tries to ground a conscious choice in 'natural' attraction (Lewin 2009).⁸⁷ This is another way that biology surfaces as an argument in a family form usually regarded as artificial.

Genitors, genetrices and kinship

couples, he might not have got a child if he had insisted on a white baby; Neményi and Takács 2015.) On the adoption of non-white children as a strategy to counter racism see Lewin 2009.

⁸⁷ Interestingly, this is the very reason why a couple interviewed by Lewin shunned egg donors who were 'too perfect' in looks or intelligence (Lewin 2009). Péter, my interviewee who became a father through (traditional) surrogacy, had no such worries: in fact, he chose a surrogate he considered much better-looking than himself, hoping the child would inherit his intelligence and her looks.

Does blood connection automatically produce kinship? This question has triggered fierce debates on the pride.hu forum. Adherents to this theory insist on a known donor or co-parenting arrangements between a male and a female couple, because they consider it important that „the child, if possible, should be in touch with her/his biological parents, her/his roots, if you wish” (Eskimo, pride.hu forum). The case is sometimes argued for with medical necessities – “if you had a child who had a vital need for a kidney or else s/he’d die, and there was no donor who could give it, would you like to find the biological father to give her/him a chance to live?” (Magellan, pride.hu forum) – but more frequently with the argument that blood connection automatically creates ‘diffuse, enduring solidarity’. “[T]he thought would drive me crazy that I have one or more “kids” and I’m not with them, it would be unbearable!”, exclaims Kukori on the pride.hu forum, suggesting that by donating his sperm he would automatically become a parent not only biologically, but emotionally and socially as well.

These arguments are deeply rooted in public discourses, which call families with only one biological parent “broken homes”⁸⁸ and consider it problematic if after divorce the child has less contact with some biological kin than with stepkin (Emery 1999). In Central and Eastern Europe too, single parents are demonized as having negative effects on children (e.g. Lux 2008) and worries about the divorce rate trigger moral panics (McLennan 2011). Legal regulations allowing adopted children to search for their birth parents after the age of 18 also reinforce the notion that contact with one’s biological parents is desirable. Many non-heterosexual women who opt for anonymous donor insemination do not challenge this discourse either, but claim that only legal constraints (the possibility of the donor to claim parental rights and even custody⁸⁹) force them to make this choice:

⁸⁸ The Hungarian term is „csónka család”, lit. „crippled family”.

⁸⁹ An anonymous donor can also request a genetic test and claim visitation rights, but in the LGBTQ community it is considered less likely that the court would give him full custody of the child.

A couple of years ago, when giving birth was further away, I definitely found it important to know the father, because he gives a big part of the child's genes, and he should be nice, in every respect⁹⁰ etc. But now that the thing is closer this is getting less important than knowing my child is safe [i.e. will not be taken away from me], and then I'll rather not know him. (Jeans, pride.hu forum)

Jeans considers anonymous donor insemination a compromise resulting from Hungarian laws, which she enters for her future child's sake. Others, however, do not consider biological ties with the donor sufficient to make him kin. A lesbian couple, who originally wanted to involve the social mother's brother as donor but was turned down, chose an anonymous donor instead because "if the donor can't be a family member, then we don't need another adult in our family" (Sándor 2010: 10). The brother's relationship to the child was ensured by his being kin to the social parent; mere genetic connection with an outside donor is not enough to create kinship. In the *Inter Alia* publications, the model rainbow family is two women raising a child conceived from an anonymous or known but uninvolved donor;⁹¹ one of their frequently cited 'horror stories' is a case when the known donor visited the child and showed him pictures of his (the donor's) mother, saying 'this is your grandma' (Sándor 2010). Anna, who has a child from a heterosexual relationship but maintains close ties to the community of lesbian mothers interviewed in this volume, has experienced fierce criticisms from them for keeping in touch with her child's father. In this group, the biogenetic interpretation of kinship is seen as a threat to the integrity of rainbow families, and consequently they police possible members who advocate a notion of parenthood based on biogenetic connections.

⁹⁰ "legyen jó feje, minden értelemben". Though the expression is unclear, it might refer to intellectual capacities, to being a friendly person ("jó fej") or even to being good-looking.

⁹¹ This also means that they chose their interviewees to represent this form.

In the examples above, the parenthood of the sperm donor was debated. As we have seen, motherhood is seen as ontologically different from fatherhood; therefore, a surrogate's connectedness to the child is harder to ignore than that of a sperm donor. Surrogates are usually referred to as 'mothers' (this is complicated by the fact that the Hungarian term, "béranya", contains the word "mother"). Péter, when talking about his surrogate, once said "she was not a responsible mother-to-be⁹² – pardon me, pregnant woman". Given the lack of appropriate vocabulary, he automatically uses the conventional term before he realizes and corrects himself.

Apart from lack of vocabulary, the phenomenon of surrogacy itself is inconceivable to many. In the following forum post, Ali argues that the biological connection between mother and child is not limited to genetics but also involves the changes in the woman's body during gestation; these together supposedly produce a bond 'normal' women would not denounce:

I just can't imagine that a woman who carried a fetus for 9 months and thus went through a serious change herself would not want to know about the child after the birth, unless she's mentally deficient. (Ali, pride.hu forum)

Social parents

Rainbow families - similarly to other forms of reconstructed families – do not only have to struggle with the notion of an "outsider" contributing genetic material, but also with the fact that one of the parents is not biologically related to the child. Literature on female-headed rainbow families⁹³ usually terms these people "social mother" without taking into account whether the biological mother's partner considers herself (or is considered by others) a mother or indeed a parent. While I also use the term 'social parent' for simplicity's sake, I would like to problematize the approach that automatically regards these families as "two-

⁹² „*Kismama*” (lit. „little mummy”) is the Hungarian term for women during pregnancy and for a short time after it.

mother families”, which is present both in scholarship (e.g. Borgos 2011) and in activist discourses (e.g. Sándor 2010). I believe that allowing people to define their families and their own roles within them according to their own convictions is an important aspect of intimate citizenship; while scholarship often shows a preference to definitions of family that radically challenge heteronormative ones (see Chapter II.3), we must be sensitive to the various interpretations of kinship within the LGBTQ community.

The position of the mother’s partner is especially problematic in reconstructed rainbow families, that is, in families where the children come from a previous relationship. This problem is not limited to rainbow families: a Hungarian study on reconstructed heterosexual families unearthed deep ambivalences over whether the stepparent is asked to, or allowed to, act as a parent (Neményi 2000a). In only one of the nine female-headed reconstructed rainbow families that I have interviewed is the mother’s female partner considered a mother. In others, the social ‘parent’ assigns other roles to herself, such as parent but not mother (Éva), playmate and chocolate dealer (Havana) or a simple member of the household: “Réka is just a 10-year-old that I live with” (Rebeka). In these families, the father is usually considered the other parent, even if he is dead or has little contact with his child. “Zita’s [my daughter’s] family is me and her father”, Anna explains her partner Éva’s exclusion from the category “mother”, but then adds that in the future Zita might think otherwise: “ultimately it’s the child’s decision: maybe she will say she has three parents”. While she introduces choice with regard to including Éva, Anna does not consider the possibility that the biological father will ever be excluded from kinship, in spite of pressures from her lesbian friends to make her family model more similar to their two-mother version (see previous section). This couple also exemplifies that the two partners may have different

⁹³ I know virtually no literature on male-headed rainbow families investigating this issue.

interpretations of the social parent's role: Anna does not think of Éva as a parent to Zita, but Éva considers herself one.

The only male-headed reconstructed rainbow family in my sample shows an interesting variation on this theme. Róbert's wife died when his youngest child was just a baby. His older children have never considered his male partner Tamás a parent because "they have a lot of memories of their mother [...] their mother is the other parent to this day." The youngest child, who has no such memories, readily accepted Tamás as a father: "for a while, [we] used to be Papa One and Papa Two". Here the mother's biological relatedness becomes meaningful only when combined with (albeit past) social parenthood. Tamás's 'rise' to the position of fatherhood might have been facilitated by views that regard fatherhood less grounded in biology than motherhood (Laqueur 1992).

Neither is the category 'mother' or 'father' automatically extended to the biological parent's partner in planned rainbow families. Rafael and his partner Gusztáv have a co-parenting arrangement with a lesbian couple, for whom they begot one child each. Rafael is careful to distinguish between "your son" and "my daughter" when talking to Gusztáv and corrects the little girl whenever she calls Gusztáv "daddy". Several factors might have contributed to this arrangement: the presence of the other biological parent in the children's life; the fact that both men hold the position of (biological) father towards one of the children; and Rafael's strong emphasis on biological relatedness, which kept coming up in our correspondence⁹⁴ and conversations. In the other Hungarian male-headed rainbow families I have met, both men consider themselves fathers, regardless of whether or not they are biologically related to the child. Indeed, Péter and Jocó tend not to tell strangers which of them is their children's biological father, possibly because they anticipate that the other one will not be treated as a full parent. In this instance – just like in the case of lesbians who

⁹⁴ Rafael was one of the two people with whom I conducted an email interview.

“forget” to mention their cohabiting partner when applying for anonymous donor insemination – hiding the truth (or blatant lying) is the only way to establish full acknowledgement of or access to one’s chosen family form, an issue ignored in most intimate citizenship literature.

As we have seen, motherhood is frequently seen as rooted in giving birth, and thus is often not extended to the social parent. A Czech study (Polášková 2007) found that in some lesbian-headed rainbow families the birth mother’s partner was called “aunt”, denoting another important female figure who is nevertheless not a ‘mother’. Another practice of reserving the term “mother” for the woman who gave birth is when the child calls her other parent by her first name or a nickname, something I have also encountered in Hungary. In an interesting study of a Florida self-help group for lesbian social parents, Padavic and Butterfield (2011) found that some women considered themselves fathers or ‘mathers’ (a combination of mother and father). These were usually butch women who could not identify with the female role required by motherhood. In the Hungarian lesbian community, however, butches are regarded with suspicion (Béres-Deák 2007), and public discourses reinforcing traditional gender roles (Takács and Szalma 2010) would probably make it harder for a woman to claim a male family role based on her gender expression. It is exactly these traditional gender roles that are mobilized by the following forum poster, who clearly differentiates between motherhood as grounded in giving birth and fatherhood as social:

When me and my Darling have a baby, I’ll be ‘Daddy’. I’d never give birth, but once s/he’s there, I’ll look after him/her any time, feed him/her, change his/her nappy etc like a daddy ☺ (Crazy, pride.hu forum)

Kinship terms or the lack of them, however, do not necessarily reflect actual relationships (Lévi-Strauss 2004 [1949]). The social parent might experience a hierarchy

which favors the birth mother over her or him; this is reinforced by the fact that, having no option to adopt the child, s/he has no custody or visitation rights in case of a breakup. One of the guests at a parenting workshop was worried that if her partner gave birth to their second child as well, “there would be three on the other side and me alone” (author’s fieldnotes). Research also shows that social mothers sometimes feel disadvantaged due to cultural notions that link motherhood to giving birth (Sullivan 2004, Du Chesne and Bradley 2007). So even when the couple themselves do not consider biology the basis of parenthood, mainstream discourses supporting this notion (including the law, as discussed above) make it harder for social parents to feel equal to their partner in this respect.

Biology as an argument for acceptance

Just because someone has one eye or one arm or is queer or has Down syndrome, doesn’t matter. They still love that child and he or she is still their own blood. [pause] And in the case of adoption, they still love him or her. (Angol)

In this quote, Angol cites biogenetic relatedness as an argument why parents should accept their queer⁹⁵ offspring (adding adoption as an afterthought, thus including it in the ‘social fiction’ of blood-based kinship). The expectation of ‘diffuse, enduring solidarity’ is grounded here in biology; though queers – just like people with physical or intellectual disabilities⁹⁶ – are a liability to their family, ‘shared blood’ ensures that their family will not reject them. Such notions, widespread in the Hungarian LGBTQ community, are strongly connected to the myth of the family as based on unconditional acceptance (Habermas 1998). However, they lead to cognitive dissonance in people who believe in the power of biogenetic connection but are rejected by one of their blood kin. Several of my interviewees – such as

⁹⁵ Angol uses ‘queer’ in the sense LGBTQ.

⁹⁶ Angol’s inclusion of Down’s syndrome in the list contrasts with Rapp’s findings, according to which parents of children with Down’s syndrome often think of them as removed from their kinship network and belonging to a ‘separate tribe’, because their biogenetic connection to their parents is not apparent (Rapp 1995).

Andrea, Alexander or Tünde – attribute such reactions to the negative influence of the family member’s spouse:

T: He [my brother] took it [my coming out] real well. It was only later that his opinion changed.

BDR: Ouch! And what do you think caused that?

T. Well, my brother is the kind of person [...] when he starts a relationship, his personality completely melts in the other person’s. And at the time [of my coming out] he didn’t have anyone. Did he? But then his girl, especially his latest girlfriend, with whom it’s almost two years they’ve been together, she’s deeply Catholic.⁹⁷ And – well, not a little weird. And so due to her influence his opinion has changed completely. (Tünde)

In such cases, the cause of rejection is someone who is not a blood relative and therefore is considered less a family member.⁹⁸ However, even among blood relatives there might be hierarchies based on the closeness of the connection (Schneider 1968): people who take for granted acceptance from their parents might be more ambiguous about aunts or grandparents. Furthermore, as motherhood is considered more biologically based than fatherhood (and also because of different role expectations, see later), acceptance by mothers is seen more automatic and ‘natural’ than by fathers, as exemplified by a mother writing on melevagyok.hu: “a mother is coded differently, nature wisely created us in a way that we accept our children unconditionally” (melevagyok.hu coming out story; see also the exchange between GotOne, Quasimodo and Travellerprick in Chapter III.3). This mother keeps her son’s homosexuality a secret from her husband because she anticipates a negative reaction; apparently, she does not think unconditional acceptance extends to fathers.

We have seen that biogenetic notions of kinship, while depriving same-sex couples of certain possibilities (including equal parental links to their child), also open up opportunities

⁹⁷ The role of religion in relating to non-heterosexual orientations will be discussed in Chapter VI.1.

for ‘planning’ their child’s characteristics or arguing for acceptance in their natal families. In most of the examples above, the ‘blood is thicker than water’ argument is complemented with that of ‘diffuse, enduring solidarity’ (Schneider 1968): the proof of motherhood is unconditional acceptance, and sperm donors or surrogates are not regarded as family members unless they participate in the child’s life. The next subchapter will explore how this ‘diffuse, enduring solidarity’ – or its absence – is manifested in the discourses and practices of same-sex couples.

IV.3. Kinship as responsibility

Care and other services provided for kin are important functions of the family (Finch 1989), even more in state socialist and postsocialist countries, where the paid versions of such services are either unavailable or unaffordable for many. For instance, with most women being in the workforce and the supply of childcare facilities not meeting the demand (Varsa 2014), grandparents have played an important role in looking after children (Gradskova 2012). It is to this norm that Alexander measures his divorced grandparents and evaluates their fulfillment of the ‘grandparent role’:

I don’t really feel I’m his grandchild any more. Because there’s nothing, it’s sometimes strange when I tell people when I talk about my grandfather that I think respect should be earned, not expected. And a grandfather earns respect by behaving as a grandfather. [...] But I’ve always missed what I saw with other kids, taken to the zoo or the beach by their grandparents. And with my grandma I used to meet every week even and talk. And she really knows about almost all events in my life. While my grandfather, I’m not even sure he knows I study at university. So this is how little information flow there is. And when he left [grandma and her children], this family a bit ceased to exist for him. And that’s why it’s hard for me to think of him as a family member. (Alexander)

⁹⁸ Which is not to doubt that this might indeed be the case; what is conspicuous in all such cases is the same-sex attracted person’s emphasis that their sibling or son is ‘not really like that’.

Alexander's account suggests that for many, blood relatedness only means kinship if it is coupled with the appropriate behavior: the contrast between the two grandparents is not based on a degree of relatedness, but on the physical and emotional closeness. He is not the only one who thinks this way: in two cases I only learnt in the middle of the interview that the person my interviewee was referring to as 'father' was indeed his stepfather.⁹⁹ One of these men, Krisztián, clearly subscribes to the notion promoted by Alexander that respect (or kinship) must be earned, not expected:

It's not worth communicating with my paternal grandmother or my biological father,¹⁰⁰ because they're the type of people, people based on interests, who exploit others – even within the family, siblings exploit each other real badly. And I don't think I need such people. I'd rather invest my energy into the other half of the family, my friends or Bálint's [my partner's] family, from whom I know I'll get back the energy I invest in the relationship. (Krisztián)

Krisztián denounces his biological father because he and his kin do not fulfill the expectation of 'diffuse, enduring solidarity'. As Stone has observed based on contemporary American soap operas, biology is still considered the general basis of kinship, but in some cases it is subordinated to choice (Stone 2004). This is perhaps even more true for LGBTQ people, in whose case coming out and the reaction to it demonstrates the fragility of kin ties (Weston 1991), whereas keeping their sexual orientation secret also questions basic Euro-American values connected to family (see next chapter).

Cases like Krisztián's or Alexander's, when a person falls out of someone's kinship network because of not fulfilling family obligations, abound in the stories of my LGBTQ and

⁹⁹ I usually started the interviews by asking 'who is in your family?'; still, some family members were mentioned only later in the interview.

¹⁰⁰ „Vér szerinti apámmal”, lit. 'father according to blood'.

heterosexual interlocutors alike. In this subchapter I will focus on cases when kinship as responsibility is directly connected to non-traditional sexuality. In the first type, the rejection of someone's non-heterosexual orientation results in questioning the validity of the kinship tie; here the responsibility of the family of origin towards the LGBTQ person comes to the forefront. In community discourses, however, kinship duty is not restricted to heterosexuals. In Chapter VI we will see several examples where kinship is defined or claimed on the basis of performing 'diffuse, enduring solidarity'; in this chapter, the discussion of non-heterosexuals' family duties will be restricted to those towards their (existing or future) children.

Family duty towards non-heterosexuals

Krisztián has denounced all his paternal relatives, including his biological father, for exploiting each other and not behaving like a family should, and he is not the only one in my sample who has broken ties with relatives who do not fulfill kinship obligations. As we have seen in Chapter IV.2, however, motherhood is seen as more rooted in biology, so even when a mother does not exhibit 'diffuse, enduring solidarity' towards her child, biologically based notions of kinship make it difficult to completely erase the tie with her. One illustration is the story of József, who was deeply disappointed when his mother took sides against him in a family conflict.

J: And then I thought OK, then from now on I have no mother. I had been traumatized for so long, and this was the last drop.

BDR: And how did the situation get solved?

J: It got better when I was called to the army.¹⁰¹ And then she said good-bye to me, and I decided I couldn't do it to my mother, go to the army and not even communicate with her.(József)

¹⁰¹ The story took place at the time when military service was still compulsory for all young men in Hungary (this duty was abolished in 2004).

Even though first József declares he ‘had no mother’, he later says ‘I couldn’t do it to my mother’ and acts according to kinship expectations. His return to filial behavior (and terminology) suggests that he did not really exclude the mother from his kinship network; the pronouncement ‘I have no mother’ meant a disappointment in her behavior rather than a real breach of the kinship tie (Gubrium and Holstein 1990), which seems to be unbreakable. At the same time, at times of conflict mothers are expected to stand by their children to a greater extent than other family members, and therefore the disappointment is also greater if they do not. Not accepting their child’s sexual orientation is one of these. People rejected by their mothers because of their sexual orientation, like the writer of the following post, are deeply disappointed in the mainstream discourse of unconditional motherly love.

don’t come saying I should take the first step by forgiving her – if she didn’t stand by me in that moment and even threw me out from home, I don’t want to deal with her. I’m fine, I don’t miss her.
(D’Artagnan, pride.hu forum)

The moment D’Artagnan refers to is his coming out; he fell out with his mother when she behaved in an ‘unmotherly’ way by rejecting her own son because he is gay. While D’Artagnan anticipates the argument that he should forgive his mother, he insists that her failure in ‘diffuse, enduring solidarity’ is unforgiveable. Though Weston (1991) claims that it is always the family and not the gay/lesbian child who stops all communication in case of a conflict over coming out, this story shows that this issue is more complex, with both parties having the agency to terminate kin ties. A coming out story on melegvagyok.hu illustrates dramatically the consequences of rejection after coming out. The author, similarly to D’Artagnan, was thrown out by his parents and lived with his boyfriend for five years without hearing from them.

One day I was making dinner for my boyfriend when the doorbell rang. I opened it and there stood a woman with tears in her eyes. My parents had caused me so much pain that I had deleted them from my memory, so I didn't recognize my own mother. She suddenly fell to her knees and begged for forgiveness. She said my father had wanted it all, he hadn't let her visit me, because I didn't belong to the family any more. But he had died since (I was a late child unfortunately, both my parents were old.) I took her hand, raised her and looked into her eyes. I said, I'm not angry with you madam, as you're not part of my life any more.¹⁰² And I closed the door.

That was the worst decision of my life. I threw away the last hope to get my mother back. Because she had a heart attack the same night and she died of it. Since then, I go to bed every night feeling that I killed my mother. (melegvagyok.hu coming out story)

Similarly to József's story, the mother's kinship status is originally seen as dependent on 'diffuse, enduring solidarity', so by breaking this expectation she is eliminated from kinship in the eyes of her son, even on the cognitive level (he does not recognize her). The performative act of calling her 'madam'¹⁰³ linguistically emphasizes the lack of kinship connection. Still, in retrospect the man considers his behavior the worst decision of his life, and also returns to the use of the kinship term. The story is overly melodramatic and might not be true (especially as the beginning, not cited here, contains several contradictions), but posted on melegvagyok.hu it serves as a fable for all those like D'Artagnan who consider excluding their mothers from kinship.

In both this case and József's, though apparently one or both of the parties sever the blood tie completely, kin terms are still used and there is a moment of (attempted) reconciliation. József, in the face of leaving home for an extended period of time, suddenly becomes aware of possible maternal feelings in his mother. The same maternal feeling is

¹⁰² „én nem haragszom a nénire, mert ő már nem az életem része.” The sentence is said in the third person singular, which is also a formal way of address; nevertheless, one way of understanding it is that the man is not speaking directly to the woman but about her. This interpretation is reinforced by the use of the pronoun „ő” (she) in the second half of the sentence. This double meaning cannot be conveyed in English.

invoked the coming out story, though from the other side: the father is relegated to the role of the villain, while the mother claims that her feelings had been the same throughout, again reinforcing the idea that a mother's unbreakable bond to her child is stronger than a father's. The two stories suggest that of all the forms of blood kinship, the mother-child bond is the one that lasts even in the absence of 'diffuse, enduring solidarity' on one part.

With other relatives, members of the community are more likely to break ties if they lack in 'diffuse, enduring solidarity'. This is often measured with how they react to non-heterosexual orientations; coming out is seen as a litmus test showing a family member's true dedication. In Chapter VI. we will see several cases when kinship ties were loosened or broken with family members who could not tolerate the person's same-sex relationship. The opposite also happens: coming out and a favorable reaction to it might improve the non-heterosexual person's judgment of a given relative. Milán used to think his grandmother was "evil to the bone" until it turned out that she accepts his homosexuality and even supports his parenting plans. This was a marked contrast to some of his other family members and brought Milán closer to his grandmother; now he seems more willing to forgive some of her other flaws, like her racism. Kornélia similarly overlooks her uncle's machismo and gay jokes because he accepts her sexual orientation, though he makes it clear that it is only out of family responsibility:

All he said, when I told him I was more lesbian than straight if we want to define it, he said 'so what?' I said, what do you mean, so what? He said, 'but you're my niece!' I said, but, and then he, 'Nelli, where do you belong? To a family? To a family.' And the family is a protected thing for him. So it doesn't matter, you can rape sheep even, you're still family. (Kornélia)

¹⁰³ 'Néni' literally means aunt, but this is the common way of address by children and young people towards (often unrelated and unknown) elderly women.

The uncle continues telling gay jokes, claiming he cannot change, but Kornélia – though the jokes hurt her – does not reject him, as he fulfills the expectation of ‘diffuse, enduring solidarity’ by accepting her bisexuality. In a sense, she might think it is her duty in turn to put up with his style. The question of duty, however, comes up most often in community discourses with reference to non-heterosexual parenthood.

The best interest of the child

In the previous subchapter several people, like Floya, Eszter, Magellan or Jeans, have argued with the best interest of the child for certain family arrangements (second-parent adoption or anonymous vs. known donor insemination). In contemporary Western culture, where fewer children are born but they are more prized in turn (Somlai 2013) the ‘best interest of the child’ is a trump card hard to neglect (Lawler 2000). In Hungary, debates over who is a suitable parent, often framed in racial and class terms, abound in public discourses (Goven 1993, Haney 1999) and influence policies like taking children into state care (Varsa 2014). The LGBTQ community also uses this argument to justify certain family forms and discredit others, and to decide whom they consider a suitable parent.

Though rare, there are some members of the community who think that the child’s best interest is to grow up in a heterosexual family, and are therefore against same-sex parenting altogether.

Basically I disagree with same-sex couples raising a child. A child needs a real loving family where there’s a Daddy and a Mummy. Through this the child will have a real image of male and female ideals. If there are two mummies or two daddies, this picture won’t be able to form or will get distorted. I am convinced that the child will be harmed psychologically. We mustn’t have a child¹⁰⁴ only to keep our partner or feel our lives more ‘complete’. We must accept that we’re different, and having a child is incompatible with this lifestyle. (Doktorszösz, labrisz.hu forum)

¹⁰⁴ “Gyereket vállalni”, lit. ‘to undertake a child’.

Doktorszösi is a self-identified lesbian who nevertheless raises conservative arguments about the child's need to be raised by a different-sex couple, voicing mainstream psychological discourses about the need for role models of both genders (e.g. Lux 2008). While in the Hungarian pronatalist context voluntarily childless women are often considered selfish (Szalma and Takács 2015) and associated with the undesirable abandonment of their 'natural' gender role (Goven 1993), Doktorszösi's heteronormative argument suggests that for lesbians (and by extension, all LGBTQ people), it is having a child that is selfish. Gays and lesbians wanting to have children are often accused of putting their own interest before the child's (Lewin 2009); like the discrepancies pointed out by Travellerprick in Chapter IV.1, this discourse also automatically places non-heterosexuals into a separate category, where full intimate citizenship (through being a parent, and a suitable one) is unattainable.

Not surprisingly, Doktorszösi's post created an outrage on the forum. Most answers use the same trope of the best interest of the child to challenge her notions.

It would have been much better if I'd been raised by two lesbians who honestly love each other, than by the allegedly ideal male-female couple, as here the man almost beat me and my mum to death, and turned the latter into a prostitute and a junkie living on tranquilizers. We're not gonna thank him for that. (Mary, labrisz.hu forum)

The argument that same-sex parents are still better for a child than abusive heterosexuals or state care is frequently raised in mainstream discourses as well to support same-sex parenting (Borgos 2011). As Borgos points out, such arguments suggest a hierarchy between (functional) heterosexual and same-sex couples to the advantage of the former (Borgos 2011): the possibility that same-sex parenting is inherently valuable does not arise.

This focus on the interest of the child should be examined in context of discourses that emphasize the harm same-sex parenting might cause to the children (for a detailed discussion of these see Biblarz and Stacey 2010). While LGBTQ people usually criticize claims to psychological or genetic harm, many of them hold that due to secondary stigmatization, the child of same-sex parents will suffer discrimination later in life, for example at school (Béres-Deák 2012). Norbi is devoted to children, but has denounced the possibility of raising one with his boyfriend:

Quite simply this is not realistic, I think, because we might put such a burden on the child if, so this can't be done in good conscience.¹⁰⁵I can't decide what that future child would need in her/his childhood, so no, I can't [do it]. Not in this framework [i.e. as a same-sex couple]. (Norbi)

Besides this rather monolithic view of same-sex parenting being either beneficial or harmful for the child, there are also discourses that consider only certain types of LGBTQ people as suitable parents. These notions often reflect mainstream discourses, for instance about single parenting, which in the state socialist and postsocialist context is often blamed for negative social and psychological outcomes in children (Tóth 2008). The interviewees of the *Inter Alia* interview volume (all of them couples, with the exception of a gay man co-parenting with two lesbians)¹⁰⁶ contrast two-parent families with cases where “a single mother struggles with the child” (Virág; Sándor 2010: 24). Such discourses may have a painfully strong influence on practices: one of my lesbian friends has recently decided to give up the shared custody arrangement she used to have with her child's father and let him have full custody, because as a single mother she did not think she could provide for her son enough,

¹⁰⁵ “*ezt nem lehet vállalni*”; “vállal” means undertake, but also to come out with something (“*vállalja a melegségét*”) or to do something in good conscience.

¹⁰⁶ As I have mentioned, the interviewees of this volume were purposefully selected to support the organization's attitudes; this way, the rejection of single parenting in it both reflects and reinforces existing community attitudes.

both financially and in terms of attention, whereas her ex-husband has since remarried, so “there he [the child] will have a family” (author’s fieldnotes). She has decided to give up her own needs for the sake of the perceived interest of her child, framing parental duty both in terms of providing financially (a common trope also in mainstream discourses – Szalma and Takács 2015) and of making him part of a “whole” family.

Though there are people in the community who support or even undertake single parenting, the dominant discourse suggests that parenting should be shared. Rather than reproducing the heteronormative two-parent model, however, in some cases this leads to a celebration of co-parenting arrangements with three or four involved parents. When at a parenting workshop participants were asked to list the pros and cons of co-parenting, most of the advantages they listed are supposed to benefit the child (two legal parents,¹⁰⁷ more open thinking, more grandparents, more possible candidates to ask money from...) (author’s fieldnotes). Obviously, some people – like Rafael and Gusztáv – admittedly chose co-parenting partly because they are too busy to look after the children full-time, and in such cases the ‘best interest of the child’ may just be a more socially acceptable argument than reference to one’s career. Still, this example shows that while the rejection of single parenting coincides with mainstream discourses, some people in the LGBTQ community carry it further and use the same argument to support their own non-traditional family form.

There are also other factors that make someone an unsuitable parent in the eyes of the community. Financial constraints were already mentioned above; some couples I interviewed, like Berta and Hella, gave up the idea of having a child due to the financial requirements they did not feel they could fulfill. One’s personality, behavior and background might also disqualify one from being a suitable parent, as attested by Mici82’s posts referring to a lesbian she knows:

Not unimportantly, the future mother lives a lifestyle that wouldn't show a good example for a child. [...] No, I haven't seen her with a whore, only with 8 girls the same night :D [...] She was adopted, I can imagine what she went through. [...] She has a good heart, but a damaged woman shouldn't pass on her damaged genes. (Mici82, pride.hu forum)

Mici82's description is an interesting mix of genetic and socialization arguments, attributing being adopted and promiscuity to 'damaged genes'.¹⁰⁸ She brings up classic cultural tropes to suggest that only certain types of LGBTQ people are suitable to be parents - those who are closest to the heteronormative model of monogamous, biologically based nuclear family. Such arguments, similarly to the rejection of single parenthood, might influence people's choices and thus create a limiting model of intimate citizenship within the community.

IV.4. Kinship as choice

In Chapter II.4 I have examined the notion of 'families of choice' as typical and unique to LGBTQ communities. My own research, however, suggests that such statements (based mostly on studies carried on in the US) do not take into account geographic specificity (the effect of which was discussed in Chapter II.4). While the notion of kinship as choice is not absent from LGBTQ community, its manifestation is rather different from what Weston (1991) found in the San Francisco Bay Area, and closer to (rarely examined) heterosexual imaginations of 'chosen kin' (discussed in Chapter VII). This shows a convergence of heterosexual and LGBTQ kinship that is not based on the appropriation of mainstream notions of family by non-heterosexuals but rather the recognition of different heterosexual kinship models, some of which are adaptable to non-heterosexual life situations.

Choosing from among heterosexual kin

¹⁰⁷ Given that second-parent adoption is not possible in same-sex couples, the most common practice in Hungary for co-parenting arrangements is that the child's biological parents get registered in the birth certificate.

¹⁰⁸ This conflation recalls early 20th century eugenicist arguments, which considered all traits coming from one's parents (whether through biogenetic connection or upbringing) as 'inherited' and inheritable (Pernick 1997).

In the previous subchapter we have seen that the expectation of ‘diffuse, enduring solidarity’ already implies choice from among relatives. Moreover, the criteria for what counts as ‘deserving’ kinship and kin support may vary from one family or even one person to the other. A good example is Ildi’s family, who fell out with the grandmother when the contents of her will became known (still in her lifetime).

And as grandma really used to help us for a long time and we lived at their place, her [my mother’s] sister got almost everything. So they decided, my family, except for me [smile] that they’re not gonna help grandma, because this [not leaving them any money] is a real fuck-up (*mekkora kibaszás*). [...] And my mother’s sister should go and help her, because they’re fucking not gonna do it (*kurvára nem fognak*). (Ildi)

In rural families, conflicts over inheritance often cause serious ruptures between kin due to the centrality of land and other property for survival (Seiser 2000); in contemporary Hungary they may lead to alienation between family members (Somlai 2002). Ildi, having moved to the city, may no longer attach so much importance to wills as her village-dwelling kin. She emphasizes that she had no part in ending contact with her grandmother, and indeed she regularly goes and helps her around the house. Her comment on this story is that her family is ‘screwed up’ (*gáz*). She thinks that her grandmother had indeed exhibited ‘diffuse, enduring solidarity’ by providing a home for the family earlier; her parents seem to take this for granted and see the will as unfair. In this case, it was the heterosexual relatives who chose not to engage with a blood relative, but Ildi was not simply obeying the expectations of ‘blood is thicker than water’: her decision to continue helping her grandmother was based on calculations about whether she deserved it.

While heterosexual kin are not usually seen as part of one’s ‘chosen family’, stories like Ildi’s, Alexander’s or Krisztián’s (the last two in Chapter IV.3) suggest that the perceived

breach of ‘diffuse, enduring solidarity’ automatically leads to a need to choose. A similar choice needs to be made when deciding whether one’s ex-partner will stay part of one’s chosen kinship network.

Exes as kin

The question of ex-partners as kin arises on a theoretical level on a forum thread on pride.hu. The female posters maintain that divorce or separation does not end family ties: “Couples families with many kids where parents divorced after x years aren’t they a family???” “Course they are. They just live separately”; “if two people love each other very much, they are family for life” (Magdalena). For Magdalena, love and having children in common create ties that cannot be broken by divorce. A gay man, Craig, contradicts this approach: “If I change my partner every two years (which is pretty much a long-term relationship), do I get a new family every two years?” “then will I have 5 families in 10 years?” The gender difference is notable here: corresponding to the stereotype of gay male promiscuity, Craig considers the issue from the perspective of serial monogamy, while Magdalena and her female friends expect relationships to last longer, again in line with a stereotype about lesbian couples.¹⁰⁹ Craig’s question, however, is relevant to whether, and whether all, exes are included in a person’s subjective kinship network. Fekete Gyöngy, a middle-aged lesbian, is close to all her “ex-wives” and indeed says they constitute her friendship network and ‘chosen family’, but she seems to be the exception; my other respondents did not list their exes as family except immediately after breakup. While Weston (1991) claims that among Bay Area gays and lesbians, exes often remain part of the ‘chosen family’ and even establish kin ties with their exes’ new partners, such close contact between former partners seems to be rare in Hungary.

¹⁰⁹ This is not to say that female same-sex relationships are factually longer than male ones. Nevertheless, long-term partnerships seem an expectation in the Hungarian lesbian community, even if practices deviate from this ideal (Béres-Deák 2007)

Having a child in common changes the arrangement somewhat, especially if the couple had planned parenthood together: the ex-partners might continue to consider each other family resulting from their shared connection to the child. After Zsófi and Emma separated and Zsófi found a new partner, I told her I was glad her daughter had two mothers again.¹¹⁰ “Two? She has four even!”, Zsófi exclaimed, also including Emma’s new partner in the family. Though studies on divorced heterosexual parents emphasize their need to continue communication and cooperation for the children’s sake (Smart 1999), the four-parent arrangement Zsófi speaks about seems to be unusual among heterosexuals, even after remarriage, and might partly result from the rather small size of the Hungarian lesbian community.

This is not to say that all separated same-sex parents stay in close connection: especially in reconstructed rainbow families and when the separation was less than peaceful, the social parent might find herself separated from the child s/he had raised for years. A middle-aged lesbian I spoke to had participated in raising her partner’s child for ten years, but when she broke up, the partner took revenge by not allowing her to see the child any more. Not having any visitation rights by law (as there was no second-parent adoption available for her), she tried to make peace with her ex in order to continue having contact with the child (author’s fieldnotes). In this case, the legal insecurity gave a weapon to the ex-partner to emotionally blackmail the social mother, who did not want to end ties to a child she had chosen to include in her kinship network.

Ex-partners and their children, however, are still not the quintessential ‘chosen kin’ seen as unique to non-heterosexuals. Nardi (1999) and Weston (1991) claim that it is non-sexual friendships that create the most radical kinship formulations in LGBTQ communities.

Friends as kin

¹¹⁰ With this comment I tried to elicit a response as to whether her new partner is considered a mother to the

Weston's (1991) and Nardi's (1999) work suggests that in the American LGBTQ community, gay and lesbian friends take up the functions usually performed by blood kin in the heterosexual world. Though an earlier Hungarian study did discuss a lesbian 'chosen family' (Kalocsai 1999), I did not find the phenomenon at all common in the Hungarian community: nobody spoke of their LGBTQ friends as family in terms of terminology or function, with the exception of Fekete Gyöngy (see previous section) and a middle-aged gay couple, Laci and Gábor, who consider family their German gay friends. Possibly, the creation of LGBTQ 'chosen families' requires a geographically more concentrated community, which is not present in either Budapest or other towns in Hungary. It is notable that Laci and Gábor have a kin tie to a gay couple living in a German city, where such practices might be more common in the gay subculture. Fekete Gyöngy lived some time in Szatina,¹¹¹ a village that at the time had a visible, close-knit lesbian community, and this might have facilitated the building of ties strong enough to be considered kinship. Besides these geographical factors, discourses also contribute to the strict separation of friends and family. During state socialism, there was a widespread belief that nobody could be trusted (in terms of help or not reporting dissident views and activities) except one's biological family (Kapitány and Kapitány 2007, Pittaway 2002), even though the latter also sometimes betrayed one's trust (McLennan 2011). The pronatalist discourses strongly grounding kinship and nation in biogenetic connections (see Chapter II.3), as we have seen in Chapter IV.2, also influence notions of non-heterosexuals. As Gay Liberation, with its ideas of global gay brotherhood and lesbian/feminist sisterhood, did not cross the Iron Curtain, Hungarian LGBTQ people do not have a model of considering LGBTQ friends as family.

child.

¹¹¹ Though I usually use invented names for settlements, I feel this should be an exception due to its symbolic value. On the symbolic importance of Szatina for the Hungarian lesbian community, see Renkin (2007a) and Borgos ed. (2011).

Another two interviewees do talk about friends as kin, but in their case, some or all of these friends are heterosexual. Lóránt is an example for the phenomenon, also described by Weston (1991), when friends are ‘chosen’ as kin to substitute for a ‘biological’ family who have problems accepting a person’s non-traditional sexual orientation.

Basically I would need to [inaudible] to speak about this [my homosexuality] seriously with my father or my brother, but about this I can’t. And that’s one reason I also consider my friends part of my family, because one can’t be a complete person without being able to talk about such things. (Lóránt)

Lóránt’s family practices the ‘transparent closet’ (see Chapter V.1), which for him contrasts with the notion of family as a site of unconditional acceptance (see Chapters IV.2 and IV.3). Friends who accept him become a substitute family where he can experience being fully acknowledged – regardless of their sexual orientation.

Vándor was my only non-heterosexual interviewee who, when asked at the beginning of the interview to list the members of her family, included her ‘chosen kin’, two heterosexual friends. Her practices also place these friends above her ‘blood’ kin: she spends Christmas Eve, the quintessential family holiday (see Chapter VI) with her chosen kin rather than her mother:

I’ve told you I consider family a friend who is not my flesh and blood.¹¹² [...] And on the 24th [of December]¹¹³ we are at [inaudible] church service. And then the three of us [with my girlfriend] celebrate Christmas together, because she [my friend] doesn’t have a family yet. And that’s the 24th. And this is the really Christmas part of Christmas, which is religious and dunno [pause] celebratory, free atmosphere. (Vándor)

¹¹² Indeed, Vándor has two such friends, but the other one is married with children, and that is probably why she does not celebrate with them.

¹¹³ In Hungary, the center of Christmas celebrations (including gift-giving) is Christmas Eve: traditionally, people spend this evening at home with their family, then (if they are Catholic) go to the Midnight Mass together.

Vándor's family of origin is not religious, so Christianity is a bond between her and her chosen kin that she lacks in her family of origin. Her experience in the Catholic Church might also have instilled in her a definition of sisterhood not tied to biological kinship (at a point in her life she wanted to be a nun). Still, it is not only faith but also the 'free atmosphere' which makes the evening spent with her chosen kin the 'really Christmas part of Christmas': free of the formalities, she can really 'be herself' then, as opposed to the family rituals of Christmas. This connects to the notion of the bourgeois family as a space to 'be one's true self' (Habermas 1998); for Vándor, her partner and friend provide a space for this more than her biological kin do.

Conclusion

Mainstream discourses of kinship are in a dynamic relationship with actual families. On the one hand, laws sometimes change to accommodate the needs of families: one example is the registered partnership law in Hungary, which acknowledged same-sex unions as similar (though not equal) to marriage. On the other hand, people respond to the legal definitions and constraints coming from the state. Members of the LGBTQ community are quick to criticize laws that they perceive as heteronormative or otherwise contradicting their own personal experiences. At the same time, they find it harder to escape notions of biogenetic connectedness or 'diffuse, enduring solidarity' as the basis of kinship; these discourses have a strong influence on their kinship behavior or even chosen family form, as forum debates about the pros and cons of given types of rainbow families attest. Mainstream notions of kinship are also suitable to argue for the inclusion of same-sex couples in the family of origin. Thus, seemingly conservative notions of blood relatedness can become tools to subvert heteronormative notions of kinship. At the same time, such arguments might create a

hierarchy between different individuals and family types, something that might have a strong influence on the norms of the community and on people's choices concerning family forms.

An overview of the discourses and stories in this chapter shows that the several conflicting notions of kinship circulating in Hungarian society in general, and within the LGBTQ community in particular, sometimes cause contradictions in individuals' notions and behavior. Péter, who loudly proclaims his family form as one with two male parents, slips into calling his surrogate 'mother', as the lack of mainstream discourses on the topic deprives him of suitable vocabulary.¹¹⁴ Gabi and Judit, allegedly 'socialization-believers', carefully choose a sperm donor with the 'right' genetic traits, just in case. Jeans would prefer a known donor, but as this would make her parenthood more precarious, finally opts for an unknown one. These stories show that agency is limited by the power of some notions of kinship (especially biogenetically based arguments), by state laws and policies, as well as by individual families and activist organizations, which transmit interpretations of kinship from positions of relative power. Couples might experience explicit pressure towards given family forms from their own family of origin (e.g. the lesbian couple whose donor choice was vetoed by the birth mother's sister) or from the LGBTQ community or segments of it (like Anna). Agency is both enabled and constrained by particular social circumstances (Jackson 2007) and by discourses on the state, society, community and family level.

As discussed in Chapter II.4, research concerning non-heterosexual kinship often focuses on subversion, as a result of influences from queer activism. This approach might consider adherence to mainstream expectations of kinship homonormative and assimilationist. We have seen, however, that the same solution (like choosing one's partner's brother as sperm donor) may seem subversive from one side and accommodating from the other. Where dominant discourses within the LGBTQ community deviate strongly from those of

mainstream society, claiming adherence to more traditional imaginings of family, like Anna and Doktorszösi do, takes considerable courage. As Mahmood (2005) warns, even choices in line with mainstream discourses require agency. Instead of making (implicit or explicit) value judgments about people's decisions concerning their chosen or natal family, we should focus on the factors that enable or constrain these choices. In the next chapter, I will examine coming out to the family of origin from this perspective.

¹¹⁴ On a similar connection of social silences and lack of vocabulary concerning female same-sex relationships, see Tóth and Murai 2014.

Chapter V: Visibility

The next morning [after sleeping at my boyfriend] I got home and there was the suitcase. [My] clothes were all packed. And then she [my mother] said I must either change [into heterosexual] or leave. There was nothing I could do. I thought, I'd leave then. To the boyfriend I had at the time. And I was on the bus to his place when I got an sms [from my mother]: 'I love you, come back!' And whatever. And I didn't go home that weekend, only on Monday. And then a kind of balance set in: we didn't talk about it, and this went on for a while. And it still does. We don't talk about it. She always wants to talk, but honestly I don't want to talk about this with her any more. (Edmund)

Edmund's story shows several dilemmas related to visibility. His mother is torn between the Heterosexual Family Myth, which sees homosexuality as incompatible with family (Herdt and Koff 2000) and the expectation of diffuse, enduring solidarity, which requires unconditional acceptance of her son (see Chapter IV.3). The option of 'changing' she offers her son would create a way out of this dilemma, but not a viable one for Edmund, who chooses the family (his partner's) where he can be his 'true self'. He does finally return to his mother (and so follows the expectation of 'diffuse, enduring solidarity'), but the topic of homosexuality remains taboo between them, creating a 'demilitarized zone' (Koff cited in Herdt and Koff 2000) where the conflict is ignored so that the Heterosexual Family Myth could be maintained.

Edmund thinks that his mother's negative reaction is due to her fear of becoming stigmatized herself because of her gay son: "what the neighbors think, this is what she's hooked up on. What will grandparents and relatives say" (Edmund) A family member's coming out creates another closet for those come out to, who now have to negotiate the question of becoming visible to others the same way (Kuhar 2007). Their closet is different, though: they often do not have the resources and supportive community that members of the LGBTQ community have access to (Herdt and Koff 2000) and frequently the only discourses

related to family that they hear are heteronormative ones. This makes it even more difficult for them to manage their visibility and the (perceived) stigma attached. Sometimes, management strategies involve trying to control the non-heterosexual person's visibility, which might lead to conflicts.

In Chapter II.4 I have discussed the various ways visibility is connected to intimate citizenship. Though a non-heterosexual individual's inclusion in a kinship network may be possible if s/he is closeted (or may even depend on it), in a culture where family is supposed to be a site of openness and self-expression (Habermas 1998) having to hide some of one's intimate choices makes one a 'half-member' of the family (Herdt and Koff 2000). A same-sex couple can only be integrated into the family of origin if those are aware of the special connection between the two people (even if it is not spelt out explicitly). Thus visibility as a couple may be a prerequisite of intimate citizenship; at the same time, it affects the intimate citizenship of the couple and of family members, who risk exclusion from broader communities if they talk openly about having a same-sex couple amongst their kin. In turn, the various strategies of non-heterosexuals and their family members connected to visibility are means of claiming intimate citizenship; as we shall see, these often rely on notions of kinship.

In Hungary, these controversies are heightened by several factors. The high dependence of most people on kin help (see Chapter I.1) makes the possibility of being cast out of the family a possible jeopardy for survival; there is very low visibility of LGBTQ people in society in general (see Chapter II.4); nationalistic mainstream discourses place strong emphasis on heteronormative family practices, with alternatives to these being practically invisible; conformity is valued over difference, a legacy of both traditional peasant culture (Fél and Hofer 1969) and of state socialism's attempt at uniformization (Neumann and Vajda 2008). At the same time, values connected to openness in the private sphere and the

‘pure relationship’ (Giddens 1992) are widespread, and most LGBTQ activism encourages coming out as a tool for political equality and integration in one’s immediate environment. In this chapter I discuss how in this context non-heterosexuals and their family members negotiate the question of visibility, often resorting to intermediate solutions or compromises. The various and often contradicting notions of kinship discussed in the previous chapters are mobilized in these choices and thus have immediate effect on whether and how people claim intimate citizenship in given situations.

V.1. Problematizing the outness/closet dichotomy

A. Sexual orientation is gay, without question. Who knows – officially nobody. [...]

V. Eer, what was the question?

BDR. The first question is, what’s your sexual orientation.

V. Gay. And the answer for the second question is also very simple, because everyone knows. (Arnold and Vencel)

At first sight, this cheerful couple seems to represent the two sides of the closet/outness binary. Going deeper into their stories, however, one discovers that the situation is more complicated. Arnold says “officially” nobody in his family knows he is gay, but he thinks some of them suspect it, partly because he frequently puts gay-themed posts on his Facebook page, which many of his relatives follow. On the other hand, in Vencel’s case explicit coming out only happened towards his parents, his sister and his brother-in-law; “[to] the rest of the family nobody told this, they just all knew”, and they “never speak about gayness, but – but this is somehow evident.” As we will see in Chapter VI, Vencel does not think his rural working-class family can fully imagine or understand his gay lifestyle; they might be an illustration to Butler’s claim that coming out might not deliver any meaningful information (Butler 1991). In this sense, there is not much difference between Arnold’s kin and Vencel’s more distant relatives; the two men’s self-perception as out or closeted depends

on their subjective interpretation of these terms, and their expectations towards themselves.¹¹⁵ Their cases also indicate the different shades and intermediate forms between outness and the closet, which are the focus of this subchapter.

Unlatched closet doors

The closet is often thought to be synonymous with a life built on deception and duplicity (Seidman 2004), the creation of which drains the person's energies from productive activities or self-fulfillment (Dank 2000). Mainstream public discourses, however, are controversial with regard to whether non-heterosexual orientations should be revealed (Sedgwick 1990). In Hungary attacks on pride marches are linked to an expectation to hide same-sex orientations, at least in the public sphere (Renkin 2009). LGBTQ organizations counter this by emphasizing the drawbacks of the closet, both in terms of dishonesty (see later) and of the emotional costs and energies it involves.

Some people do make considerable efforts to hide their sexual orientation from kin. This usually occurs in the form of performative speech acts and/or actions. For several years, Félix pretended to his family that he was dating a girl instead of a man. Fekete Gyöngy's kin knew she was living with a woman, but "this is the old lesbian trick, that two women live together because it's easier to maintain an apartment this way or an economic unit, whatever" (Fekete Gyöngy). Her cover combines the invisibility of female sexuality and the economic fact of lower wages for women; the same excuse would sound suspicious if applied by two men (Mead 1949). Eventually, though, both of these people had to give up their pretenses: Fekete Gyöngy was outed by her sister, and Félix was forced to tell the truth when his parents insisted on meeting his "girlfriend" at a family event. In one case, collusion and outing (see Chapter V.4), in the other, expected kinship behavior eventually dissolved the pretense.

¹¹⁵ Vencel sums up their respective life strategies as follows: "Arnold's slogan is 'let there be peace and calm', and mine is 'let the truth win'. Even at the price that there is no peace and calm." Thus Arnold can more readily find excuses for not being out, as we will see in Chapter V.2

Hiding the truth from kin might impact on the everyday lives of the couple. Géza's parents are not aware that their son is living with someone, so every time they visit, Géza's boyfriend András has to disappear from home for several days, and his personal belongings are hidden. Hella's parents also think their daughter lives alone, thus her partner Berta is not allowed to answer the landline in their apartment. In such situations the closeted partner hinders the other from becoming included in her/his family and also curtails her/his possibilities in the very same space where s/he lives. The closet can thus seriously limit the intimate citizenship of both partners, and arguably also of the family of origin, who are not even aware of the existence of a possible family member.

Though rainbow families are thought to make the same-sex parents more visible as a couple (Sullivan 2004), they might still manage to maintain the closet. Piper, a poster on the pride.hu forum, decided to enter a marriage of convenience, then divorce and pretend to be a single mother; her parents were not to know that her child would not come from her marriage but from an anonymous donor she and her girlfriend had chosen.¹¹⁶ Piper's reasoning for getting married – “it's better to be divorced than to be abandoned while pregnant” (Piper, pride.hu forum) reflects the norms of Hungarian society, where divorce is no longer considered deviant (Cseh-Szombathy 1985), but unwed motherhood is still stigmatized (see Chapter V.3). Similarly to several parents-to-be we have met in Chapter IV, she also chose the family form which she hoped would ensure her acceptance within her family and wider society, though at the price of hiding her sexual orientation; if her plan had worked out, her inclusion in the family of origin would indeed have been enabled by the closet.

The closet is frequently a temporary stage, and the person might decide to end it when it becomes too emotionally or practically difficult to maintain, like Félix eventually did. In

¹¹⁶ From her later postings it turned out that she had miscarried, so there was no way to test if her plan was going to work out.

other cases, what appears to be a closet is in fact a much more complicated arrangement. Nine years before our interview Géza was in fact forced to come out to his parents, because they unexpectedly visited him when he was entertaining a lover.

G: they didn't see the boy,¹¹⁷ but it was obvious – I came to answer the door in a towel, saying it's the wrong time.

BDR: And was it obvious for them that it was a boy? [...]

G: Yes. Well, they saw the shoes – boots, as it was winter. And my mum asked: 'Tell me straight to my face: was it a boy?' And she cried and all. Because she's a bit more fragile, or I don't know, sensitive. And since then this topic has been taboo. (Géza)

Kuhar (2007) calls this phenomenon 'transparent closet': though the person discloses her/his sexual orientation, the family does not acknowledge this information and pretend they do not know; the act of disclosure is erased and the closet is rebuilt. During state socialism, sexuality – just like dissidence – was taboo in public discourses (Moss 1995, Tóth and Murai 2014), but while dissidence was to some extent discussed in (some) families (Neményi 2000b), my older interviewees recall a complete silence on sexual matters. For people raised in this period (which includes some of my non-heterosexual interviewees and all their parents), the transparent closet is a common strategy to avoid a topic that might be hard to process or simply uncomfortable to talk about.

Davies (1994) describes two strategies he found among British gay men, which also challenge a clear closet/outness binary: compartmentalization and collusion. Compartmentalization means that a person comes out to part of her/his environment but not to another, and makes sure that members of the two groups never meet. Collusion occurs when the family agrees not to let certain people know about their family member's sexual

orientation. In Chapter V.2 we will see that the latter is a frequent strategy in Hungary, and the arguments for staying closeted from some family members in fact reveal interpretations of and values associated with kinship. In all these cases, coming out is partial (though in different ways) and we cannot speak of the same-sex oriented person as either being completely out or completely closeted.

Some people might be committed to staying in the closet but at the same time engage in practices that challenge it. We have seen that Fekete Gyöngy used a gender-based argument of practical necessity to hide the nature of her relationships with her female partners. At the same time, she regularly took these women home to her family, “for family celebrations, Christmas, Easter, all these impossible times”. While she did not want to come out explicitly, neither did she allow the closet to constrain her kinship behavior; unlike Hella or Géza, she created a possibility for her family to involve her partner. As in her view such involvement is unusual with people who are just friends, she was convinced that her parents suspected her sexual orientation. Without knowing, she uses Sedgwick’s (1993) groundbreaking concept to describe this situation: “it was an open secret.”

The performativity of the open secret

Sedgwick claims that the open secret (which she also calls ‘the glass closet’) encompasses all but the most openly acknowledged forms of gay identity (Sedgwick 1990). Apart from ignoring cases when a person’s sexual orientation is really not known by anyone else (Brown 2000), this statement is problematic because it does not define what counts as ‘open acknowledgement’. Is Géza’s homosexuality openly acknowledged by his family if it has been taboo for nine years? Was Fekete Gyöngy’s practice of taking her partners home for family celebrations a form of coming out or a way to establish the open secret? This also

¹¹⁷ In Hungarian, the word boy (‘fiú’) is used for young adult men, especially within the gay community.

depends on how the other parties interpret the situation. In spite of Fekete Gyöngy's expectations, her mother was surprised to learn about her sexual orientation; what the daughter saw as a clear indication of her lesbianism was apparently not understood so by some others.¹¹⁸ On the other hand, there are many relatives, such as Benő's brother, whose response to the coming out was "Uh-huh, little bro, I knew it, I just waited for you to tell."¹¹⁹ In both cases, one party interprets the situation as an open secret and another as a closet; this reveals the relationality not only of coming out (Butler 1991, Kuhar 2011, Sedgwick 1993) but also of the closet and of intermediary forms.

As discussed in Chapter II, the definition of coming out both in theories and activist discourses depends on the performative speech act of claiming a gay/lesbian/etc. identity (Sedgwick),¹²⁰ so practices like Arnold's sharing links to gay websites on his Facebook page or Fekete Gyöngy's inclusion of her partners in family events could be understood as ways to maintain the open secret. True, these are less obvious than spelling out the word, as Fekete Gyöngy was to discover. At the same time, some families clearly understand the situation without explicit coming out ever to have taken place. Gyula does not make efforts to hide his relationship with Károly from his mother: he tells her about their holidays together, and shows her their pictures exhibited on the cupboard. "My mum [...] sure gets it. She wasn't born yesterday", Gyula asserts, supporting this claim with family practices that clearly include

¹¹⁸ Lewin (2009) describes a similar story, in which the man's parents thought their son's 'roommate' came over with him to family events because he was interested in their daughter – their heteronormative thinking hindered them from seeing the relationship for what it is. This might have happened in Fekete Gyöngy's family, too.

¹¹⁹ There is a gender difference to explanations how they knew it: the kin of non-heterosexual men (Benő's brothers, Milán's grandfather, Tulipán) tend to base their suspicion on the feminine self-presentation or interests of their family member, while female masculinity is not interpreted as a sign of lesbianism. If a woman's family member claims to have known about her sexual orientation before coming out, it is usually explained with a strong emotional connection, which might verge on the transcendental: "*she [my mother] is into reiki and brain control and stuff, so she knows a lot more things in advance*" (Ribera). Apparently lesbianism, besides (or possibly due to) being less visible, is not associated with specific character or behavioral traits in Hungary.

¹²⁰ As I have discussed in Chapter II.1, the performativity of nonverbal acts is acknowledged e.g. by Butler (1990), but I do not know any author who discusses this issue with regard to coming out.

Károly in his kinship network (such as his mother sending food for him¹²¹). Nevertheless, his coming out has never been verbalized: “I didn’t stand up, I didn’t make a tragedy out of this”. Gyula’s words, as well as the assertions of several authors of coming out stories on pride.hu, suggest that explicit utterance of the words gay/bisexual/lesbian etc. is more threatening than being aware of the same-sex relationship without naming it. Moss claims that in state socialist times homosexuality, like dissidence, was something people could not talk about openly, but were used to discovering ‘between the lines’ (Moss 1995); similar strategies have been described in immigrant communities in the US, where the cultural taboo on discussing sexuality hinders explicit coming out but non-heterosexual orientation is tacitly acknowledged and often accepted (Manalansan 1997, Decena 2008). This might be one reason why some non-heterosexual people prefer clues to explicitness, and also why their kin sometimes prove very adept at reading these clues.

Nonverbal performative acts of coming out are not necessarily less obvious than verbal ones. The Facebook profile picture of Anikó’s gay cousin Iván is himself kissing with his boyfriend; this, just like Arnold’s Facebook postings, sends a clear message without a verbal declaration of sexual orientation. In spite of queer theory’s strong focus on performativity, in this field it seems to ignore the performative effect of nonverbal actions.

Geographical and class aspects of partial coming out and the closet

The narrow definition of coming out described above is also observable in scholarly writings on LGBTQ communities. For instance, when Strongman claims that Latin American alternative genders and sexualities do not rely on the closet/disclosure discourse but on the performance of desire (Strongman 2002), he relies on the same expectation of verbal coming out that I criticized in the previous section. The fact that he – and several other researchers (e.g. Babb 2009) – associate such practices with non-Western subjects creates a dichotomy

¹²¹ I will discuss the practice of sending food in Chapter VI.

within which Western/Northern subjects follow the coming out/closet discourse (along with clearly defined gay and lesbian identities), while those from the global South/East are more likely to remain closeted or follow practices like the open secret, whether they live in their home country or in a diaspora (see Manalansan 1997). This juxtaposition ignores the fact that both the open secret (Sedgwick 1990) and the strategies of compartmentalization and collusion (Davies 1992) were theorized on the basis of Western examples, and several ethnographic descriptions of Western non-heterosexuals (e.g. Lewin 1998, Weston 1991) bring examples for such practices. Also overlooked is the fact that Western-type sexual identities and coming out practices are spreading to non-Western areas (Boellstorff 2009, Essig 1999). While geopolitical and class location might influence practices related to visibility, this influence is not reducible to the East/West binary.

The size of the settlement is an obvious factor: staying in the closet is much more difficult in a small settlement, especially if the couple and their kin live in the same one. Félix could only keep up the pretense of a girlfriend because his parents live in a different town, otherwise not introducing “her” earlier would have been an infringement on kinship expectations. Kinship behavior also depends on geographical distance and mobility, the latter also being a class factor: András can stay closeted from his family because they are elderly, poor village-dwellers who cannot afford to pay visits to Budapest, whereas his boyfriend Géza, as we have seen, had to experience that the same is not true for middle-class parents living in a rural town. Partly due to high real estate prices, adult unmarried children frequently live with or near their parents in Hungary, especially in rural areas, and in such cases it is living arrangements that make the closet unfeasible.

Compartmentalization, even more than collusion, requires the separation of different aspects of one’s life, which is difficult in small settlements, but might even cause problems within the Hungarian intelligentsia, which is geographically concentrated in Budapest, and

consists of a small-sized cultural elite that has stayed relatively stable since state socialism (Kristóf 2012). Hella, an amateur artist, was outed to her sister when she invited both her family and her friends to her première, not knowing that one of her lesbian friends knew her sister from college. “My sister asked her, ‘How do you know my sis?’, and then Zsu said – real relaxed, thank God – ‘From gay circles.’”. This story is an indication that Budapest, with its 2 million inhabitants, is still not large and impersonal enough to enable full compartmentalization, especially if one keeps within one’s social circles.

Brown (2000) claims that gay bars in fact enable the closet by offering an opportunity to express an identity hidden from the outside world; this suggests that the more LGBTQ-specific facilities an area has, the easier it is to compartmentalize one’s gay and straight lives. Géza, after having lived in a Western city famous for its LGBTQ subculture, “formed this Pest life of mine so that I would be surrounded almost 100% by gay people”, including his choice of a gay-friendly workplace (though he has not come out there for fear of the occasional homophobic colleague) and actively maintaining the closet towards his family. Apparently, his experience of a protected environment abroad led him to try and recreate it in Budapest, and after having succeeded, he has felt less need to come out to heterosexuals. This choice, however, was only open to him due to geographical and class factors (he living in Budapest and his parents in a faraway town, having the professional skills necessary for employment at a gay-friendly company). Also, as we have seen, he has not been as successful in keeping his parents away as he might be if they were poorer or living in a larger country. Still, while class and geographical factors might affect the feasibility of certain arrangements connected to visibility, agency (the non-heterosexual person’s and sometimes the family’s) is a much more determining factor.

In, out and in-between

Coming out to others must not be seen as a monolithic phenomenon. In this subchapter I have outlined several situations – compartmentalization, collusion, the open secret and the transparent closet – which complicate the outness/closet binary: compartmentalization and collusion through the repetitive and forever incomplete nature of coming out (Butler 1993), the open secret and the transparent closet through its relationality, whereby the performer and the addressee interpret the same performative acts differently. These forms of partial coming out (or, depending on the perspective, partial closet) are not always clearly distinguishable. When someone in the family does not know about the same-sex relationship (because of collusion) the others cannot talk about it openly in her/his presence (transparent closet). At the same time, if the person does not put much effort into collusion or compartmentalization, it might end up as an open secret.

Partial coming out has important implications for the inclusion or exclusion of the person and her/his partner in the family of origin. Obviously, compartmentalization or being in the closet excludes the partner from the possibility of being involved in the family of origin, but so does the transparent closet, as we will see in the following subchapters. At the same time, the open secret does not rule out symbolic gestures of including the partner. Though Fekete Gyöngy's parents were unaware of her lesbianism, they nevertheless welcomed her 'friends' for holidays specifically reserved for the family. This indicates that the boundaries between kinship and friendship, even among heterosexuals, are less rigid than Fekete Gyöngy (and many anthropologists) seem to think (Stack 1974).

Forms of incomplete coming out can also function as strategies for people who cannot or do not wish to perform the kind of explicit coming out required by activist rhetoric. While theorists suggest that the open secret or the transparent closet is something the individual is forced into (Sedgwick 1990 and Kuhar 2007 respectively), Gyula and Fekete Gyöngy made a conscious choice not to verbalize their sexual orientation, Gyula explicitly against activist

expectations, which he considers overwrought. Before the agency implications of these forms are discussed in Chapter V.4, I would like to discuss some other coming out strategies applied in the Hungarian LGBTQ community that are strongly intertwined with notions of kinship and agency.

V.2. Coming out in the Hungarian LGBTQ community: discourses and strategies

Coming out to others is a central topic within the community; virtually every workshop and discussion group I attended during my fieldwork, as well as a number of informal conversations, touched upon it in some context or other. LGBTQ organizations actively promote visibility; one of them, Szimpozion, actually changed its website's name to melegvagyok.hu ('iamgay.hu') to promote the verbalization of same-sex orientations. Whereas some authors suggest that such emphasis on proclaiming LGBTQ identities is alien to postsocialist society and an imposition of Western activism (Essig 1999, Tuller 1996), I argue that in the context of the family, coming out has less to do with political activism and more with notions of family and belonging.

Naturally, people raise a variety of reasons for coming out or staying in the closet, and also deploy a variety of strategies to ensure that their coming out is taken favorably. In this subchapter I will specifically focus on strategies and arguments that are related to kinship. I will argue that this factor, frequently overlooked in studies on coming out, in fact adds extra insight into the importance of family for non-heterosexual people, and also complicates activist discourses which posit coming out as invariably beneficial for the individual and her/his environment (see Chapter II.4). At the same time, it also exposes the various ways that visibility within the family is intertwined with intimate citizenship.

Kinship-based arguments for coming out

G: All gay people have a mother and a father, a brother or a sister, so on such a cellular level if everyone [who is gay] makes people accept or at least know gayness, that it's valuable when two people

are together, I mean two of the same sex, just like two of different sexes – then sooner or later these little cells will touch. So you can't expect a politician swaggering in parliament to understand that two women can love each other and want a child. But if there was a lesbian in his family, he would understand. [...]

A. So this is the point, *come out*.¹²² Everyone in his or her little environment should tell, admit and live as gay.¹²³ And that's when society can change. (András and Géza)

András and Géza replicate the activist rhetoric that visibility is the key to the emancipation of LGBT people in society (see also Russo 1987, Garber 2000); in the example of the politician, the personal literally becomes political and family coming out enables citizenship. What is specific to their (especially Géza's) position is the emphasis on family, framing it as a site of unconditional acceptance (Habermas 1998). Ironically, this praise of coming out to kin as a source of political advancement is voiced by two men who actively maintain the closet towards both families, Géza (as we have seen) because he fears his coming out would cause too much pain to his mother; apparently, the mitigating effect of family love and belonging is not infinite when it comes to specific people. This difference between practice and discourse shows on the one hand how compelling the rhetoric of coming out is within the Hungarian LGBTQ community, on the other hand how people negotiate community values and adapt them to their own situation and possibilities.

Public coming out as a tool for LGBTQ equality only appeals to politically conscious LGBTQ people and not to all of those either: we might recall Ironman's critique of publicizing coming out stories in Chapter III.2. At the same time, the personal benefits of visibility within the family are often emphasized. Several interviewees, authors of coming out stories and forum posters report that keeping their sexual orientation a secret created a

¹²² He said the term in English.

¹²³ “*mesélje el, vallja meg, élje meg azt, hogy meleg*”. “*Vallja meg*” might mean admit (to oneself or others) or confess.

distance between themselves and their family members. Jocó looks back on the time before he came out to his mother:

J. Mum didn't know yet, and Mum and I kinda drifted apart from each other. But it was because of this, because I didn't tell her the truth.

BDR: So you think it caused a distance between you that you didn't speak about...

J. Obviously. It's obvious. And it was obviously my fault. (Jocó)

For Jocó, the ideal family is one where nobody has secrets from the other and all can show their "true selves" (Habermas 1998); secrecy inhibits full belonging. Naturally, few families live up to this ideal, but the discourse is stronger than examples in one's own environment. The discourse also translates back into lived experience: Jocó claims that his coming out restored the closeness between him and his mother.

Staying closeted from the family might also cause practical problems for those living with parents. A man at a rural roundtable discussion even claimed that not coming out to the family of origin is the reason for the (perceived) lack of long-term relationships within the LGBTQ community: "they say that gay people don't have lasting relationships. But how could we, if I can't take my partner home and introduce him, if we always have to meet elsewhere?". This man cherishes the heterosexual ideal of normalcy in the form of long-term partnerships, but thinks that this can only be achieved if the traditional kinship practices connected to relationships are followed, including the integration of the partner in the family of origin. In this sense, gay kinship is impossible without the support of straight kinship, and intimate citizenship within broader society (in the form of free partner and lifestyle choice) depends on standing up for one's intimate choices in the family setting.

While in the previous examples it was the non-heterosexual person's or the whole LGBTQ community's interest that motivated coming out, sometimes it is also seen as kinship

duty. “How can I do it to my mother that she should know a different person than what I really am? After all, she gave me my life!”, 5min exclaims on the melegvagyok.hu forum. The notion of duty, frequently invoked with regard to expected behavior between parents and children (Finch 1989) is extended here to the emotional level: only a child who fully shares her/his emotional life with her/his mother deserves to be granted full membership in the family.

Another kind of family duty is evoked by parents in rainbow families, who claim that hiding their family form (and encouraging their child to do the same) is contrary to the values of honesty and openness parents are supposed to instill in their children (Lewin 2009). The range of situations one needs to come out in, however, is gender-dependent. While a woman can pretend to be a single mother (though this is not unproblematic either, see Chapter V.3), Benjámín has realized that a father out with his children will invariably be asked where the mother is, as childcare responsibility in Hungary still primarily falls on women (Zimmermann 2010). “And then what do I do? Tell a lie in front of my child?”, Benjámín asks the rhetorical question, suggesting that providing such a model for the child is unacceptable. Republican approaches to citizenship see the family as a key site for instilling in children the values necessary for functioning in the community, including honesty (Janoski and Gran 2002); teaching one’s child to lie about her/his family form is a breach of citizenship obligation.

In the instances above, coming out is understood as something that improves kin relations and helps create an ideal family based on openness and honesty. Others, however, argue that the interest of the family, or certain family members (including the non-heterosexual person) are better served by staying in the closet.

Kinship-based arguments for not coming out

According to Weston (1991), when people choose who to come out to, they virtually identify the people they consider ‘true’ kin, with whom the requirement of honesty and

openness applies. A number of my interviewees have decided not to come out to certain relatives because they do not feel close enough to them. Lilla cites the looseness of her relationship with her brothers as the reason for not telling them about her same-sex relationship of eight years.

It's literally alienation. [...] We're not in the kind of relationship that our lives would influence each other, you know? That I'd feel the need [to come out], that it [coming out] would improve something or hinder something or mean anything at all. (Lilla)

Besides the emotional and geographical distance, Lilla's relationship with her brothers is also fraught with tensions: when she decided to break out of her working-class environment and get an education, they did not support her either morally or financially, but now that she has a well-paid job they expect her to give them endless loans (that they tend not to pay back). This behavior is incompatible with "diffuse, enduring solidarity", as is their lack of interest in Lilla's life. In this account, the kinship tie has already been broken by the brothers, so Lilla is under no obligation to come out to them. Kinship expectations are class-dependent (Young and Wilmott 1958, Stack 1971, Morgan 1996), which might create ruptures within working-class families that have upwardly mobile members (Stewart 1997); a person's intimate citizenship within the family depends upon following the strongly gendered¹²⁴ class norms of that family, and by refusing those s/he may also renounce family belonging.

In some other cases, however, people choose not to come out to their family for their family's sake. Arnold thinks that his coming out would upset the whole family's functioning.

They've basically survived by keeping together, the whole family, and this is because they very strongly stick to the view that family means to them. Now, if an anomaly appears in this, they get

¹²⁴ The fact that Lilla is a woman figures strongly in the reactions of her family, as well as in her assertion of her own value in contrast to their attitude (see Chapter VI).

scared. And when they get scared, they usually do stupid things. [...] At present there is a state of balance at home that seems really stable, they cooperate and that's how they survive. So they – how can I say it? If this balance broke up even a little bit, it would mean that for example they would move apart very soon, and they couldn't get on separately as well as they do now. So in this respect I don't think I should upset this now. (Arnold)

Traditional filial obligations to make life choices that serve the interest of the family reappear in new forms in contemporary post-socialist society (Boreczky 2004, Rofel 2007). Arnold emphasizes that in the midst of an economic crisis, his rural family's survival depends on cooperation. Coming out would challenge their heteronormative view of family, and in case they related differently to Arnold's homosexuality, this might cause serious conflicts and even disintegration. Therefore, a limitation on his own self-expression within a community is deemed necessary to preserve the very existence of that community; the family is not a force surviving through all difficulties, like in András and Géza's account, but a fragile group in need of protection.

In other cases it is not the family as a whole but a given family member whom the person wishes to protect by staying in the closet. Such explanations often assume that only certain kinds of people can bear the burden of stigma or even grasp the concept of non-heterosexual relationships. "My mother would not even understand what I'm talking about", András thinks, explaining that his parents are rural and old-fashioned. In the public imagination, rural communities are seen as conservative and homophobic (Edwards 2000), even more so in Central and Eastern Europe, where the silence about same-sex sexualities during state socialism convinced many that such sexual practices are new to this region (Graff 2006) and so those who are not 'up-to-date' are unfamiliar with and suspicious about them. The same argument is often used to justify collusion towards elderly family members, especially grandparents. Vándor, however, does not assume that her grandparents should be

ignorant of same-sex relationships (those of my interviewees who came out to grandparents justify her), but she thinks they might have a harder time processing the information than members of younger generations.

They would understand, but they would suffer. And I can't make myself watch their suffering. Because they'll suffer for sure. And usually, when I get to this point, I get angry with the world and society. So why does it have to be so? It's one thing that I have a certain lifestyle – it's me who's living it. But why should it cause any kind of suffering to my loved ones? (Vándor)

Coming out has a potential to cause suffering on both sides (Sedgwick 1990): to the grandparents, and to Vándor, who would have to come to terms with the knowledge that she has caused them pain, even though it was not her fault but that of homophobic society. Two kinship duties are contrasted here: that of honesty and that of protecting the other from unnecessary suffering. Vándor's painful rhetorical questions reflect a will to come out, which she sacrifices for the sake of her grandparents' interest.¹²⁵ While activist rhetoric, especially in the West, tends to suggest that a responsible gay or lesbian should come out of the closet (Whisman 2000), from Vándor's and Arnold's point of view it is coming out that seems selfish, and the sign that one truly loves one's family is not exposing them to the shock and stigma related to same-sex sexuality. Dávid also emphasizes this when explaining why he has not come out to his ailing father.

I really had good reasons, so not simply fear, like fear of coming out or fear of confrontation. He's had health problems and stuff, so I didn't want to top it with this. I know it would be a big struggle for him; I don't want him to die of it. I'm serious. (Dávid)

¹²⁵ This passage is from our first interview. By the time of the second one, Vándor had come out to her grandmother: she decided the grandmother was open-minded enough to take it well, and was not disappointed.

Dávid used to be a member of an LGBTQ organization, so he has probably internalized the coming out rhetoric of the LGBTQ movement. The suggestion that the news of his homosexuality might kill his father possibly appears to him the only legitimate excuse for collusion, which again illustrates the power of the coming out discourse. This discourse, however, is contrasted with the discourse of duty to one's parents in societies strongly structured by kinship obligations (Rofel 2007). While Rofel suggests that subjects arguing against the obligation to come out do not see sexual orientation as a constitutive principle of the self (Rofel 2007), some of my interviewees practicing collusion towards parents and grandparents – like Dávid and Arnold – in fact consider their gayness a central element of their lives; the 'Western' model of identity need not be coupled with subscription to all the politics related to it, including that of coming out.

Besides the sick and the elderly, children and teenagers are also frequent targets of collusion. Again, one common argument is that they would not understand same-sex (or any kind of) sexuality; Dávid argues that his teenage sister is too young to come out to, because "she is just beginning to look at boys [...] she's only starting to become aware of her femininity now, at the age of 16." Others are worried that teenagers might be too easily influenced by the example of a same-sex oriented person in their environment. Csaba thinks this is why his parents asked him not to come out to his teenage sister until she had a relationship of her own.

What was behind it, in technical terms, is that this might influence her psychosexual development somehow, so the fact that her brother, who is close to her, is gay, might make her a lesbian too. This is put crudely now, but I think this must have been the fear behind it. (Csaba)¹²⁶

The parents, perhaps unconsciously, might have subscribed to a model of homosexuality as learnt on the basis of examples. Though they were the parents who, from their children's young age, had always emphasized that they would love them even if they turned out to be gay, apparently they still preferred the heterosexual version; there was a discrepancy between their rhetoric and practices as to what constitutes proper behavior in their family in terms of intimate choices.

Children's interests in Euro-American culture are often considered primary to those of adults (Berlant 1997), and Hungary, where mainstream discourses underline the importance of children more than in most other European countries (Neményi and Takács 2015), is no exception. Thus the non-heterosexual person is expected to delay coming out if it is seen as threatening to a child in her/his family. Edelman's claim about discourses – “[t]he sacralization of the Child thus necessitates the sacrifice of the queer” (Edelman 2004: 28) – is realized on the practical level within Hungarian families.

Kinship as a coming out strategy

I had relatives I had last seen when I was a kid of 6 or 8. [...] 25 years had passed! And they came, and they were like coming in, and I said ‘this [my partner] is Kristóf, we’ve met at the funeral,¹²⁶ but now I’ll introduce him, he’s Zsombor’s [my son’s] daddy.’ And they were all like [...], ‘your mum has already sent us pictures, geez this child is so cute!’ (Benjámín)

Benjámín was fully aware that these relatives knew about his adopted son Zsombor. Introducing his partner as Zsombor's father was thus a clear coming out, the success of which depended on the notions of kinship he mobilized. Introducing Kristóf as a parent to his son rather than a partner emphasized family over sexuality; this added to the normalizing effect of parenthood (Lewin 2009) in making their relationship acceptable. It is also notable that

¹²⁶ Csaba's parents, Zsuzsi and Balázs confirm this interpretation.

¹²⁷ The occasion for the family reunion was a funeral feast.

Benjámín introduced Kristóf as “Zsombor’s daddy” not as co-parent or “other father”, as if he tried to balance the fact that Kristóf has no legal ties to the child.¹²⁸ At the same time, he sent a strong message about their family form. As the equal parental status of adults in rainbow families cannot be taken for granted (see Chapter IV), outsiders often have problems with how to address and/or regard the biological or legal parent’s partner (Sobočan 2011); Benjámín’s introduction anticipated and solved this problem. His strategy makes their rainbow family intelligible within the relatives’ existing model of kinship, at the same time stretching this model’s boundaries to include a same-sex relationship and a family form with two equal fathers.

In arguments for and against coming out, the interest of the family is often invoked as an explanation for the person’s choice of action or rhetoric. Adherents to LGBTQ politics consider coming out in the family beneficial not only for the non-heterosexual person her/himself but also her/his kin, as they would now see the person’s “true” self and open, honest communication can develop. The image of family transmitted by this approach is an organic whole, with people working for the same goal. This model is challenged by feminists (Bergeron 2010, Rapp 1992 [1978]) who see different individual interests clashing within the family. Such clashes of interest can cause internal ruptures, like in Lilla’s case, the subordination of individual interest to the family’s, like Vándor or Dávid did, or the avoidance certain topics, such as homosexuality; this way, Arnold’s family maintains the illusion of unity, but at the price of sacrificing the image of family as a site of trust and openness. A fourth strategy, illustrated here by Benjámín, is to consolidate the different kinship expectations by extending the meaning of ‘family’ to include rainbow families. All these illustrate that the issue of visibility within the family has complex relations to intimate citizenship, as inclusion (or even the existence of the family as community) may depend on

¹²⁸ Given that joint or second-parent adoption is not available for same-sex couples, see Chapter IV.1.

concealing one's sexual orientation while in other cases depends on it. Members of the LGBTQ community thus have to negotiate different expectations connected to kinship and intimate citizenship – but they are not the only ones to do so.

V.3. The family closet

Homosexuality is a 'sticky' stigma, that is, people in the stigmatized person's environment often become affected by it too (Goffman 1974), especially as some theories locate the source of homosexuality in the genetic or educational influence of the family; thus parents might be 'blamed' for their child's non-heterosexual orientation, and other family members might be suspected of being homosexual themselves (Herdt and Koff 2000). Whereas coming out to the family of origin releases the non-heterosexual person from the closet, her/his family get locked into it (Kuhar 2007). Their closet is different, though: they often do not have the resources and supportive community that members of the LGBTQ community have access to (Herdt and Koff 2000). Through the family closet, an LGBTQ person's coming out affects not only the internal relations of the family but also its actions towards the outside world (Švab and Kuhar 2014), and its inclusion in wider communities, that is, the intimate citizenship of family members.

Warner claims that while commonality with the stigmatized may make the person value the stigmatized element, it might also lead to conformism in order to avoid association with the stigma (Warner 2009). Families have different strategies to hide or reveal the sexual orientation of their non-heterosexual member. As we have seen in the opening vignette of this chapter, fear of the sticky stigma may even drive some parents to expel their child from home (though in Edmund's case only for a short time). Other families choose various forms of partial coming out or the closet as a strategy for saving their own reputation.

Locked in the closet from outside

Considering that they [my girlfriend's parents] live in a small town where they, especially the dad, are known by everybody. [...] And it would clearly be uncomfortable for them, if – at least so they think – if this [our lesbian relationship] came to light there. So I was told kinda indirectly that there I shouldn't wear these [rainbow colored] earrings. Or I shouldn't wear say my rainbow bracelet. [...] We usually say, if they [neighbors] ask, so we don't say I live there. But we say I spend a lot of time there. [...] It's kind of a weird thing, that I'm both out with this relationship and not out. But I understand, because after all it's not my – I understand that you can't be out as openly as we could, say, here in Pest.¹²⁹ But – because it doesn't concern others, besides. (Andrea)

Andrea, who used to live an out-and-proud lesbian lifestyle in Budapest, was forced back into the closet when she and her girlfriend Zorka moved to the small town where Zorka's parents live: she is not allowed to wear lesbian symbols and passes as a babysitter for her own (social) child. Andrea thinks her in-laws' main motivation is to preserve their respect in the town. Reputation in small communities may be attached to families rather than individuals (Morgan 1996) and is frequently based upon whether they conform to the image of family expected (Finch 1989). Traditional Hungarian culture contains several elements that emphasize the façade as more important than the content, such as using a 'clean room' to entertain visitors and exhibit wealth or spending more money on a wedding than the family can actually afford (Fél and Hofer 1969). Thinking of villages and small towns as necessarily traditional (Edwards 2000), some people think that deviation from the Heterosexual Family Myth there will necessarily ruin a family's reputation and affect their inclusion in the community; Andrea herself accepts this argument and is willing to set up a complex web of pretenses to protect her in-laws. When the same-sex couple lives in a different settlement than the family of origin, compartmentalization often seems an easier strategy – except for non-heterosexuals who wish to integrate their partner in their family of origin.

¹²⁹ Pest is the name of the eastern part of Budapest, but is frequently used in colloquial speech for the whole city. The interview took place on the occasion of one of Andrea's visits to Budapest.

Leaving one's Pest life in Pest

Vándor originally comes from a small town where she knew the doctors, so when she needed an operation, she decided to return there and take her girlfriend Rozi for support. Vándor's mother however, who otherwise seemed to have accepted her daughter's lesbian relationship, became upset about this and made a scene at the dinner table the day before the operation.

The sum of it was that she wouldn't be able to go through with this, and that Rozi should go home. (...) And on top of all that, she came to the hospital [the next day] in the afternoon – the operation was at 8 AM – and she made another scene just for me, that I can't expect her to accept the way I live. And that I should leave my Pest life in Pest. (Vándor)

Leaving Vándor's 'Pest life in Pest' meant that her same-sex relationship was not to be referred to in her home town either verbally or by taking Rozi there. Vándor's mother wished to create the 'transparent closet' (see Chapter V.1) by making her daughter compartmentalize her family of origin and family of choice. Her motivation was her fear of the secondary stigma: she was worried that people would see Rozi visiting Vándor in the hospital and realize the nature of their relationship, which would stigmatize her (the mother) in turn. Vándor, however, was not willing to deny her girlfriend for her mother's sake: as soon as she left the hospital, she returned to Budapest with Rozi and did not visit her mother again until the invitation included Rozi as well. By that time the mother had come out to some friends and colleagues, who all reacted positively and did not 'blame' her for her daughter's same-sex attraction. This story shows the interrelatedness of forms of visibility and of intimate citizenship for the non-heterosexual person and for the family of origin (more about the agency aspect in the next subchapter).

Vándor refused to compartmentalize, while Andrea, though she feels uneasy about being "both out with this relationship and not out", complies with her in-laws' request. The

difference might be due to several factors. First of all, belonging to affinal kin is not as automatic as belonging to blood kin (Schneider 1968), so the possibility of rejection might be more real in Andrea's case. Also, she might not want to cause problems for her girlfriend. Having been raised in Budapest, she thinks that in a small town "you can't be out as openly as we could, say, here in Pest", the stereotypical contrast of the city as accepting and the country as homophobic (Weston 1998), while Vándor, herself a small-town girl, has a more nuanced view of the phenomenon. Vándor is also my only non-heterosexual interlocutor who explicitly puts her chosen family above her biological one (see Chapter IV.4). Thus for her it was probably easier to break ties, even temporarily, with her mother, than for other non-heterosexuals who are more embedded in their families of origin.

Sometimes the idea of compartmentalization comes from the same-sex couple, who wish to protect their family of origin from secondary stigmatization. Félix did not take his boyfriend Krisz home until a month before our interview, though the two men had been together for six years.

I was afraid what the neighbors would say. And then my mum reinforced me that they don't care. And then neither do I. I didn't want to force this onto them, you know. (Félix)

In Chapter VI.2. we will see other examples of the same-sex couple constraining their own behavior based on the assumed need of their family of origin; the Heterosexual Family Myth operates not only on the level of concrete requests but as an overarching discourse within Hungarian society, which constrains the intimate citizenship of both same-sex couples and their kin.

Félix's mother was not worried about what the villagers would say, but neither did she explicitly come out to them. The 'open secret' as a strategy is perhaps even more frequent among family members than among LGBTQ people.

Verbal and nonverbal coming out

At Christmas, there were photos taken in the kindergarten, this is a tradition, cute smiling pictures saying “Merry Christmas.” And we had such a picture made for each relative, including Havana’s [my partner’s] relatives. Her mother put it out at her workplace next to Havana’s picture. Her grandma on the glory wall. [...] Her father put it on the kitchen cupboard, so everyone can see when they enter the house. So everyone has my daughter’s picture put out. (Ribera)

Susan Sontag (1977) claims that family photographs establish belonging and continuity within the family; whether the family of origin displays photographs of their child’s same-sex partner and their children in their home can indicate if these people are considered kin (Sullivan 2004). We have seen in Chapter V.1 how putting photos with one’s partner in visible places (including Facebook) can be a nonverbal form of coming out. Displaying Ribera’s daughter’s picture in places usually reserved for family photos (office desk, “glory wall”) thus does not only bestow kinship but makes it visible to visitors; the family comes out through practices that are traditional in Hungary.

Many families like Havana’s, who do not wish to conceal the same-sex relationship, very rarely talk about it explicitly. The reason could be the rural tradition of not airing problematic family issues in front of other villagers (Fél and Hofer 1969), the taboo on talking about sexuality in traditional communities (Decena 2008) but also the fact that the activist rhetoric of coming out is unfamiliar and even strange to many parents (see Chapter VII.1). Those family members who keep silent about the same-sex couple might thus do so not out of fear of stigmatization but because they consider it an affair to be restricted to the private sphere.

Given the general taboo on the topic of same-sex sexuality in Hungary and the lack of suspicion towards friends of the same gender who come to visit with one’s child for family holidays (see Fekete Gyöngy’s story in Chapter V.1), the open secret seems a viable strategy for many families. Often the only thing that can prompt them to come out explicitly is the

possibility that the town may bestow an even stronger stigma on them, like in the case of Judit, who has had a child with her lesbian partner through donor insemination.

There were two funerals during my pregnancy unfortunately. (...) It would have been an insult not to go, but if I did, they would find out. And they rarely see me, but then there was no keeping it secret. And then my mum somehow brought herself to tell them what's up. Maybe she thought it's better if they know the truth than if they think I'm some fallen girl with no husband and a big belly, what a shame! (Judit)

Unwed pregnancies are still stigmatized in traditional rural communities in Hungary (Tóth 2008); indeed, a case study described by Somlai tells the story of an unwed mother (in the same region where Judit's parents live) who became marginalized in her family and the whole town, her own father not speaking to her for 20 years (Somlai 2002). Judit's mother thus had good reason to fear the judgment of her environment, and this prompted her to come out; she assessed that the sticky stigma of unwed pregnancy would affect her intimate citizenship more than that of having a lesbian daughter.

Stigma management, kinship and intimate citizenship

The examples above show that it is not only the family that exercises surveillance over its members' intimate choices, but the broader community of kin and non-kin also watches over family forms, forcing those who do not fit the heteronormative model to try and maintain the community's respect. Family members of non-heterosexuals have an even lower level of visibility in Hungarian society than LGBTQ people, which makes it hard for them to stand up for their intimate citizenship.

The choice of stigma management strategy strongly depends on interpretations of kinship. Those who think that all family members should control their behavior in order to preserve the family's reputation may constrain the self-expression of the non-heterosexual

family member or abandon their own kinship obligations, like Edmund's mother did when she threw her son out. Those who prioritize 'diffuse, enduring solidarity', like Félix's mother, would rather face a taint on their reputation than do such a thing.

All the parents mentioned in this subchapter live in rural areas, so the variety of their reactions complicates associations of the countryside with homophobia and the closet (Weston 1991). In fact, it seems that the most secretive families (like Zorka's) live not in villages but in small towns. One possible reason is that in a village people all know each other personally and base their judgments on more information, whereas in small towns statuses are more important, as Zorka's parents emphasize. The boundaries between types of settlement are not rigid, though. When Imre came out to his wife and divorced her, he asked his mother to put him up until he found a place of his own. The mother refused, saying that people in her apartment building would then find out about the divorce and possibly also its cause. Though the mother now lives in Budapest, she comes from a small village; Imre thinks this is the reason she is still worried about the neighbors' reaction.

It must be added that in none of the interviews, coming out stories and forum posts did I find a single case where a rural family was openly stigmatized in the community because of their child's non-heterosexual orientation.¹³⁰ The small-town mothers (Vándor's and Judit's) who eventually came out in the community about their daughters also had positive experiences. The reason could be that rural areas are less homophobic than public opinion claims (this is suggested by sociological surveys, which have indeed found a higher level of homophobia in big European cities than small towns; Takács 2011) and/or that same-sex attraction is viewed as something the family cannot influence and so do not deserve blame for it. It seems that neither in villages nor in rural towns is the sticky stigma associated with

¹³⁰ Some siblings do recall that other children mocked them for having a gay sibling; these stories all took place in cities.

same-sex sexuality as strongly as families might expect. The only difference is that small-town parents can more easily stay in the closet, so they choose this option more often and have no opportunity to test whether their stereotypes are valid or not.

We can see that the LGBTQ person's and her/his family's level of and approach to visibility are strongly interconnected. This also raises the question of who makes these decisions and whether anybody's free choice is curtailed by other family members; this is the issue I discuss in the last part of this chapter.

V.4. Visibility, kinship and agency

In much activist and theoretical discourse, for LGBTQ people coming out is the ultimate act of taking agency and asserting intimate citizenship within and beyond their family of origin (Herdt and Boxer 1993, Herdt and Koff 2000, Tereskinas 2008). In such accounts, family members are either passive recipients of coming out or exercise their agency against it, e.g. by "pushing" the person who has just come out back into the (now transparent) closet (see Kuhar 2007). This approach suggests that all LGBTQ people wish to be out, while most heterosexuals would prefer to silence non-normative sexuality. In Chapter V.2 we have seen counterexamples for the first statement; at the same time, supportive, careless or ill-wishing heterosexuals might out a person or facilitate her/his coming out. The coming out dilemma of family members is rarely mentioned and hardly ever theorized in terms of agency. In this subchapter I argue that agency with regard to coming out is a complex matter, and intricately interwoven with interpretations of kinship.

The act of disclosure

In Chapter V.2 I have critiqued the discourse which only considers explicit, unsolicited, verbal acts of disclosure as 'true' coming out. In practice, frequently it is not the same-sex oriented person who initiates coming out; in cases that Herdt and Boxer (1993) call 'semi-openness', the person readily discloses her/his sexual orientation when asked but not

otherwise. This was the strategy followed by Fekete Gyöngy (see Chapter V.1) and also by Alexander, who in an emotionally laden moment admitted to his mother that he had been lying to her, but nothing more.

And Mum started asking like 'is Szandi pregnant?' Because I'd had a relationship with a girl back when I was between 14 and 15. And I said no. Her second question was, strangely, whether I had AIDS. [...] And then I said no. And eer her third question was whether I liked boys. So presently, I mean then, I didn't come out but gave her an opportunity to ask. (Alexander)

Alexander emphasizes that this was not 'proper' coming out, though he did set the stage for it by admitting his lying. Others make elaborate preparations to entice the other person to ask the question; we might remember the man who gave his mother an interview with a gay writer to discuss (Chapter III.2). In this case, part of the careful preparation for coming out was ensuring that it was the mother, not the son, who would actually say the word.

Such strategies assume that the family member takes agency, but this does not always happen. Balázs had suspected his son Csaba's homosexuality years before he came out to him, because he once mentioned the name of the place where he was going out, and through an internet search Balázs found out it was a gay bar. It is not clear whether Csaba meant to give a clue or was simply careless, but in any case, Balázs did not act, because "I thought I would wait until he wanted it [i.e. to come out]". In this upper-middle-class family with a strong respect for privacy,¹³¹ the parent declined to take agency in coming out, and thus became complicit in creating the open secret. In other families, family members do not

¹³¹ Zsuzsi (Csaba's mother) recalls how, when they were young, she and Balázs had to go to public parks to stay away from the prying eyes of their parents (an interesting complication of the private/public distinction in state socialist Hungary, where people in their 20s usually still lived with their parents) and how she then determined to ensure for her children the privacy she did not have in her youth.

consider coming out to be the non-heterosexual person's decision only, and take matters into their own hands.

Outing

In spite of debates, especially within queer circles, about the usefulness of outing public personalities (Bunzl 2005), revealing another person's sexual orientation is usually considered unacceptable in LGBTQ communities (Weston 1991), following the liberal principles of privacy, respect and self-determination (Brown 2000). In Hungary, where queer activism is all but non-existent, the umbrella organization LGBT Alliance has included in its guidelines that outing is unacceptable (Karsay and Virág 2015), and this opinion is widespread in the community as well, especially when it regards outing a person to her/his kin. Though Milán had often urged his boyfriend Erik to come out, he was upset when Erik was outed to his parents by his sister-in-law Rózsa, and immediately texted Rózsa telling her that "it was very much not her business". Later in this subchapter we will see other examples where, though someone suffers from her/his partner's closetedness, nevertheless keeps the taboo on outing.

Still, there are cases when someone would gladly decline the agency put on her/him by the expectation to come out in person. In such cases being outed might come as a relief. Hella was indeed grateful to Zsu for outing her (see Chapter V.1), because she herself had been planning to come out to her sister, but the family culture of non-communication had hindered this. Neither was Fekete Gyöngy upset when her sister spelled out what had hitherto been an open secret (see Chapter V.1). Similarly to the cases in the previous section, these people would like to end secrecy but without having to make the transgressive utterance.

The family might also serve as an exception to the taboo on outing, inasmuch as it is considered acceptable for family members rather than the LGBTQ person her/himself to break the news to distant kin, especially if they are the ones who are in closer contact with them. Most of my non-heterosexual interviewees only came out in person (if at all) to parents,

siblings, grandparents, aunts and uncles and first cousins, but e.g. not to affinal relatives, which was seen as the relative's partner's duty. The following story about Zsóka and her sister Zira illustrates this tacit expectation. With the parents away, Zsóka invited her gay friends and Zira her boyfriend Miki, who did not know Zsóka was gay.

And there's a younger couple in our group where the older girl is 19, the younger is 16, and you can't get them out of each other's mouth [smile]. And they sat down at the table and started their usual show, and I saw the guy [Miki] making a face like 'what the hell?' I called my sister aside like 'Hey, have you told Miki I'm gay and he's going to meet gay people here?' 'Geez, I forgot!' 'What do you mean you forgot?!' 'Well, it's so natural for me, it didn't even occur to me to tell him!' (Zsóka)

Neither Zira nor Zsóka questions the notion that Zira should have outed her sister; indeed, Zsóka thinks the party guests had not outed her to Miki earlier because "that should be Zira's task, shouldn't it?" Similarly to people who are expected to come out but hope the other party will say the word, Zira was here endowed with an agency she did not ask for; Zsóka was still the person deciding over her coming out, though it was not explicitly discussed with Zira.

Considering coming out the non-heterosexual person's decision, family members frequently do not come out to distant kin until they get permission from her/him. Kornélia, like several other non-heterosexual children, initially asked her parents not to spread the news of her sexual orientation. She claims that her mother's negative attitude to her bisexuality changed radically when she allowed her to talk about it to anyone she wished; once the burden of secrecy was lifted, the mother began to support her daughter's lifestyle and outness. This story shows that partial coming out arrangements are not always something devised by parents and forced upon children, but instead have much more complex dynamics of agency.

Agency in partial coming out

While collusion certainly requires an agreement between the parties, the power relations are by no means equal. Csaba did not share his parents' fear that his example might make his sister a lesbian (see Chapter V.3) and in fact would have preferred to come out to her, but his parents objected. Kornélia's story in the previous section is the opposite: the mother was suffering from not being able to tell others about her daughter's sexual orientation, but granted Kornélia's wish. Different dynamics operate in the two cases. Kornélia's mother adhered to the notion of self-determination inherent in the prohibition of outing, while Csaba conceded before parental power. It is worth mentioning, though, that he did not consider coming out to his sister particularly important; if he had, he would have found a way to break the arrangement, like the people I will discuss in the next section.

Kuhar himself presents two different views of agency with regard to the transparent closet. In the original 2007 article, the homosexual child is 'pushed back into the closet' by kin who do not want to acknowledge her/his sexual orientation (Kuhar 2007); in a later paper, however, he describes it as stepping back into the closet in order to ease the discomfort of others (Kuhar 2011). In the first version, the non-heterosexual person is a passive victim of heterosexual kin, while in the second, s/he complies with kinship expectations to maintain family peace by not coming out. Boxer complicates the picture somewhat by talking about a 'demilitarized zone', where both the same-sex oriented person and her/his parents shun the topic of sexual orientation in order to avoid conflict (Boxer cited in Herdt and Koff 2000). In all of these cases the non-heterosexual person is presented as someone who would like to be out if it was possible. However, two stories discussed earlier in this chapter complicate the picture. In the opening vignette we have seen that in Edmund's case the mother would like to talk about her son's homosexuality, but the son refuses. Besides fearing that his mother might get upset again, he also tries to protect his boyfriend Sipi; he is afraid his mother might go to

Sipi's parents and out him (as she did with Edmund's first boyfriend). Although he first came out, he has retreated into the (transparent) closet, partly as an act of solidarity to his partner.

Géza's case is even more complicated. Though he was caught in flagranti nine years ago (see Chapter V.1), he claims his parents do not know about his sexual orientation and takes great pains to hide it from them. At times his mother asks questions which suggest that she suspects her son does not live alone – “How big this palm tree has grown! Could you bring it in all by yourself? Or did you have help?” – , but Géza does not speak about his relationship.

I don't bring it up, because it's uncomfortable. What's uncomfortable is that I'm afraid of the reaction, I don't want her to get upset again. (...) And I think she notices small signs. (...) But she should ask! Or maybe she doesn't want to attack like 'Is anybody living here?', because she's afraid I'd panic. So we're just circling each other. (Géza)

Géza seems to be as keen or even keener to keep up the taboo around his sexual orientation than his parents. Similarly to Edmund, he is afraid that an open acknowledgement of his homosexuality would upset his mother again, though the active enquiry of both mothers might suggest that they have recovered from the initial shock. Both men seem unaware that kin's attitude to non-heterosexual orientation might change over time (see Herdt and Koff 2000) and so they construct the transparent closet to protect themselves (and in Géza's case the mother) from a family conflict that might no longer be a realistic threat.

The examples above also illustrate the difficulty of challenging already existing agreements concerning partial coming out, though the two mothers in the last two stories make feeble attempts at doing so. Others are much more assertive and sometimes successfully break down the barriers of the partial closet.

Challenging partial coming out

As we have seen, partial coming out arrangements often cause dilemmas or practical difficulties for some of the parties (not necessarily the non-heterosexual person), but are often maintained nevertheless. The reasons for agreeing to collusion, compartmentalization, the transparent closet or the open secret can be manifold: the person might consider it her/his duty to subordinate her/his needs to that of the family (Andrea), might be afraid of practical consequences like getting thrown out of the family home or causing harm to their partner (Edmund) or, in the case of the family member, subscribe to the notion of self-determination and privacy (Balázs). Those who wish to challenge partial coming out arrangements thus have to rely on discourses that are even stronger than the ones maintaining the partial closet.

In Chapter V.2 we have seen that the bourgeois ideal of open, honest communication in the family (Habermas 1998) can serve as a reason for breaking the closet; this is applicable to partial coming out as well. Though Erzsébet originally suggested it herself that her daughter Zsóka should not come out to her (Erzsébet's) husband, later she regretted her decision, as it affected her marital communication. "It was very difficult. Also because we've always discussed and always discuss everything", she admits; hiding the truth from her spouse was incompatible with the ideal of the 'pure relationship' (Giddens 1992). Though she did not out her daughter, after a while she began to encourage her to come out to her father. In this case, Erzsébet's notion of family contributed to her decision to end the collusion arrangement.

A more individualistic approach suggests that family members should take responsibility for their own actions and not force others to modify their behavior in order to comply with their requests. It was this approach that gave Dani the incentive to break the collusion arrangement initiated by his mother.

When it really got on my nerves that my aunt and uncles entertained me on the umpteenth family dinner with questions about what's up with my girlfriend, I told them [my parents] that the next such time I'd tell them what's up with my girlfriend. And then the reaction was that they didn't think I should. Because it's such an intimate family thing or family affair that they don't think we should share with the broader family. And when, as expected, at the next family occasion they asked what's up with my girlfriend, I told them that it's Mum who'd answer this question. And she'd tell what's up. And with the same breath I stood up and left. (Dani)

In cases like this, it is in fact the parent who is closeted, but the actual burden of maintaining the closet falls onto the child (Kuhar 2007). Dani put this burden back onto his mother, who had initiated the collusion in the first place. His challenge of collusion rested on the liberal notions of self-determination and of sexual orientation as public rather than private. The latter idea, prevalent within LGBTQ activism, can form a solid ground for turning against the family's demands. In a coming out story on melegvagyok.hu, the mother asked her son to hide his homosexuality from his relatives; he initially complied, but a pilgrimage made him realize his mission as an activist and he came out in the media. Here the cause of LGBTQ equality trumped obedience to one's mother; the man gave up claims for acceptance and intimate citizenship within the family for the more important and far-reaching claim for intimate citizenship for all LGBTQ people within wider society.

While this man chose to challenge LGBTQ inequality on the societal level, others stand up for the intimate citizenship of non-heterosexuals within the family, even when partial coming out arrangements restrain their ability for doing so. In the following story, Sára could not tolerate the fact that on Christmas Eve she should be treated differently than her gay brother-in-law Gergő's boyfriend Amadé simply because Gergő was in the closet from his parents. She and Amadé took a taxi to her in-laws' place to collect Gergő and her husband.

And so that they wouldn't find out that Amadé was there, we were told that he should get out of the taxi at the end of the street and wait for me to go in and whatever. And then I said that if Amadé couldn't come in, I wouldn't get out of the car. And in the end we both stayed in the car and waited for them at the end of the street. (Sára)

Not dropping in to say hello to one's parents-in-law when one is in their street, especially on Christmas Eve, is a serious breach of kinship etiquette (it might even have raised suspicion, were Sára not continuously breaking the very traditional kinship and gender norms of her in-laws). In this case, the challenge to the unequal treatment of same-sex couples came from a member of the different-sex couple, who would have been in the more privileged position, but renounced this privilege. The story illustrates that the (partial) closet may have effects on the intimate citizenship not only of the closeted party, but anyone who needs to play a part in maintaining it.

In a few cases, the interest of such 'other parties', including one's partner, may stimulate the non-heterosexual person to challenge the constraining arrangement, like Vándor did in Chapter V.3: rather than send her girlfriend home, she broke ties with her mother who demanded compartmentalization. Such a decision, however, is predicated upon the primacy of 'chosen kin' over blood relatedness, and as we have seen, few are willing to risk losing their family for their partner's sake, especially if they are emotionally and/or financially dependent upon them. Such is the case with Arnold, who, as we have seen in Chapter V.2, stays closeted in order to preserve family unity. Though his boyfriend Vencel would prefer to be open about the relationship towards both families and forge ties to Arnold's kin, his strong belief in self-determination limits his possibilities to subtle hints, like in the following conversation:

A. And little kittens were born just when I was home last, and I haven't seen them ever since! [...] Of course it would be different if I were allowed to bring them here [but Vencel doesn't let me].

V. There is a compromise solution that the cats can come if I can go to fetch them. [laughs] (Vencel and Arnold)

As Arnold is in the closet, Vencel is not allowed to visit his parents, however much he would like to; in his joking suggestion, he makes a parallel between Arnold's strong desire to have a cat and his own wish to have a connection with Arnold's kin. Notably, there is a strong hierarchy within this couple: Vencel is the breadwinner, who is older, wealthier, owns the apartment where they live and, as it transpires from the dialogue, makes the decisions about issues concerning their household, such as pets. Nevertheless, outing Arnold or insisting on visiting his family is inconceivable even in this position of power; in this one area, community discourses on self-determination undermine his control and agency, as arrangements and values within his partner's family constrain his own as well as Arnold's intimate citizenship.

A British study claims that within a couple, the person who is out to his/her heterosexual environment has more resources and thus more power (Heaphy et al 2002). While this might be true in general, being closeted from the family seems to work the opposite way: the ethics of respect for the other's choice compels the less closeted partner to adapt her/his practices to her/his partner's closet, and thus to concede some agency for the family's perceived interest.

Conclusion

We can see from these examples that visibility and the closet are strongly connected to intimate citizenship on several levels: the close family (collusion from fathers like in Dávid's or Zsóka's case), the wider kinship network (Dani's uncles and aunts), the local community (Zorka's parents) and the wider public (the activist who came out on the media after the pilgrimage). Moreover, they affect the intimate citizenship not only of the non-heterosexual family member, but that of her/his partner and family members. Nor is it automatic that only

openly claiming an LGBTQ identity can lead to inclusion and the acknowledgement of one's intimate choices. Edmund, in fact, had to choose between changing (or denying) his sexual orientation or getting cast out of the family; his inclusion, in the original scenario, depended upon staying closeted. At the same time, the open secret is a common strategy for people who disagree with the activist rhetoric of explicit coming out, like Gyula, or who think that uttering the words gay/lesbian etc. would cause a bigger shock than performing their relationship nonverbally, or relying on kinship vocabulary instead of identity categories, like Benjámín did.

There is thus a variety of ways for non-heterosexuals and their family members to claim intimate citizenship within their families and wider community. Besides verbal coming out, nonverbal acts of indicating one's sexual orientation (Iván) or involving one's partner in the life of the family (Fekete Gyöngy) are frequently successful in this regard. Others stand up for their inclusion by refusing to constrain their behavior for the family's sake, like Vándor. At the same time, there are many others who are open to compromises for the sake of remaining in the family; they might do so on the pressure of their kin or on their own initiative, like Félix, because they are willing to subordinate their self-expression to the family's needs. This approach shows that mainstream discourses concerning the importance of the family have a strong influence within the LGBTQ community as well. The fact that the family's well-being is an argument that is accepted as an explanation for constraining one's visibility clearly shows the value placed on kinship in this community. We can conclude that the family of origin is more important to non-heterosexuals – at least in Hungary – than relevant scholarship suggests. While Weston claims that mainstream heteronormative notions of 'family' make gays and lesbians 'exiles from kinship' (Weston 1991), with regard to the family of origin scholarly discourses seem to do the same.

Chapter VI. Same-sex couples in the family of origin

My parents, when I had a husband, supported me very much financially, or at least there was always – even if they didn't give much money, always they asked what I needed, and somehow there was always a little. Even if only food, or a fridge, or loans. Now there's nothing like that, so it's completely gone. I only get money from my mother if I beg. [...] So she doesn't say a word about me being with a woman, but it's as if it wasn't worth supporting it financially. The way I see it, if there's a heterosexual relationship, it's not like bringing water into a barrel with a hole, but it has some continuation of tradition, she can somehow live on in it, transcend herself in her daughter's straight relationship. It's as if she re-lived her own straight relationship. And it gives a sense of continuity too, that's why parents support it. And this [lesbianism] is a bit like the end of how much she can help. So this is like I live my own life that she has nothing to do with. She doesn't oppose it, but won't support it financially. (Liza)

Most studies dealing with family reactions to same-sex sexuality stop after discussing the reactions to coming out, apparently assuming that if and when the family member's same-sex sexuality is accepted, s/he will be unproblematically integrated into the family, together with her/his partner and potential children. Liza's experience contradicts these assumptions: though her mother seems to have accepted her lesbianism on the verbal level, her kinship practices suggest that she does make a difference between a same-sex and a different-sex relationship. Liza's explanation connects her mother's behavior with notions of kinship: family means continuity both on the physical level (biological reproduction) and on the psychological one (the new generation mirroring their own relationship); as lesbian relationships cannot provide this, supporting them would be like "bringing water into a barrel with a hole". It is also clear that Liza resents this differential treatment, and attributes it completely to her sexual orientation, though other explanations are also possible: at the time of her marriage, she was much younger and at home with a baby, so possibly her parents

considered her to be more in need of help than now. The assumption of homophobia is so strong, however, that any differential treatment of same-sex couples is attributed to that.

In Chapter I.1 we have seen that in contemporary Hungary, kin relations are central for many people for economic and/or ideological reasons (Liza gives examples for both). Active involvement in one's kinship network in the form of services, support or just keeping in touch is a basic expectation and for many, also a need. The Heterosexual Family Myth complicates this in several ways, including the rift that non-heterosexual orientations can cause within families due to homophobia and/or gendered or classed standards and expectations. Mainstream discourses on family forms and expectations often influence these reactions. The result might be a partial or complete exclusion of the same-sex couple from the family, or constraints put upon their self-expression, all these curtailing their intimate citizenship. Luckier couples get included on the same terms as heterosexual ones – this, however, entails duties as well as benefits. Thus, to whatever extent the family includes or excludes a same-sex couple, they retain some control over them, though the couple can challenge the extent and form of this control through their own discourses and practices.

In this chapter I explore the reaction of families of origin to same-sex couples and the ideologies and practices through which they include or exclude them. Within my sample this hardly ever took the form of a complete lack of contact between the non-heterosexual person and her/his whole natal family. The ideology of 'blood is thicker than water' makes the termination of kin ties problematic, so families rarely resort to this option. At the same time, communication and kin services do not always signal inclusion; performative verbal and nonverbal acts can convey negative attitudes even when on the surface kinship expectations are not broken. These families try to reconcile the Heterosexual Family Myth with the expectation of 'diffuse, enduring solidarity' by treating the non-heterosexual person as a second-class family member or trying to ignore manifestations of her/his non-heterosexual

orientation, including her/his partner; this way, they do not have to perceive of their experience as conflicting with the heteronormative mainstream discourses on family in Hungary.

The couple can also claim recognition and inclusion through the strategic use of performative acts: they might try to downplay the sexual nature of their relationship, or demonstrate that LGBTQ people can measure up to heterosexuals in various fields of life, including fulfilling the expectations of their kin. Both strategies are endorsed by prominent discourses in the LGBTQ community. The former is exemplified by discussions about acceptable behavior at pride marches, which often stress adherence to mainstream gender and sexual norms (Renkin 2015). An example for the second is Péter Radics, a TV journalist and the first Hungarian public figure to come out on the national media in 2002; in his coming out interview he said he was glad to be gay, because this way he had to work twice as hard to be considered of equal value. Such discourses suggest that integration into society in general, and families in particular, is both a goal for the LGBTQ community and a basis for their full intimate citizenship.

In this chapter I argue that full intimate citizenship of non-heterosexuals requires the recognition of their relationships by their family of origin. At the same time, inclusion is not necessarily a goal of every couple: some prefer to retain their independence or be spared some of the burdensome kinship expectations. Others might think that a homophobic or non-understanding kinsperson is not worth the effort or concessions they would need to make in order to gain complete acceptance. Thus family belonging is a matter of constant negotiation between the couple and their kin, and also between the members of the couple.

VI.1. Factors influencing family attitudes towards same-sex couples

The way the family react to eventual coming out is thought to have crucial importance both for the non-heterosexual person and her/his future relationship with them. Quantitative studies have shown that parental acceptance influences gay and lesbian youth's self-esteem and comfort with their sexual orientation (Savin-Williams 1989) while rejection is thought to diminish their ability to function in life (Herdt and Koff 2000). In Central and Eastern Europe, the relative invisibility of non-heterosexuals in the public sphere (Kuhar 2011) may make the reaction of the immediate environment even more crucial to an LGBTQ person's self-image. As a result to negative reactions to coming out, the non-heterosexual family member can no longer be totally open or spontaneous with her/his kin, and this, according to Herdt and Koff, makes her/him a half-member of the family (Herdt and Koff 2000). The designation of friends and other 'chosen family' as kin is also frequently the result of negative familial reaction to coming out (Weston 1991, see also Lóránt's argument in Chapter IV.4); thus on a societal scale, responses to coming out have created new interpretations of kinship. In short, the acceptance or rejection of a person's sexual orientation and/or relationship by members of her/his natal family has important consequences with regard both to interpretations of kinship and to intimate citizenship.

Theorizing acceptance as a process

According to Herdt and Koff, most families faced with coming out travel the same path from disintegration through ambivalence to integration. Disintegrated families are characterized by guilt, lack of communication and/or denial. Ambivalent families take some steps towards integration, including coming out to some more distant kin, while integrated families do not only accept the child's sexual orientation but welcome her/his partner and challenge the culture that stigmatizes non-heterosexuality (Herdt and Koff 2000). Of course, families might get stuck in one of the earlier phases and never achieve integration.

This model is based on a normative assumption of development, starting from an ‘integrated’ family which disintegrates at the news of non-heterosexual orientation (the same thing Arnold fears concerning his own family, see Chapter V.2). The kind of ‘integration’ they assume is open, honest communication and unconditional acceptance in line with the bourgeois family ideal described by Habermas (1998). This, however, is an expectation few families can live up to: the ideal of kinship necessarily includes its own failure (Stasch cited in Sahlins 2013). Many families are characterized by lack of communication in general and taboos on talking about sexuality in particular; in Hungary the latter may be a joint effect of traditional peasant culture (Fél and Hofer 1969) and the ‘prudishness’ of state socialism, where only certain types of sexuality were discussed and only to a certain extent (McLennan 2011) and it may result in the open secret or the transparent closet (see Chapter V.1). In several other cases, mothers, siblings and the occasional father seem to accept non-heterosexuality quite easily. In these families there is no ‘development’, either because coming out does not cause a rupture or because their usual way of functioning by ignoring problems can incorporate such information. Literature also downplays the non-heterosexual person’s agency in influencing reactions to her/his sexual orientation: s/he is shown as a passive target of family reactions, which are influenced by factors beyond her/his control (see next section). In contrast, I claim that non-heterosexuals often carefully plan their strategies for claiming acceptance within their families, as we have seen with regard to coming out and we will see in this chapter.

Another problem with Herdt and Koff’s model is an oversimplified understanding of ‘acceptance’. For them the ultimate stage of acceptance (and self-acceptance) is the political act of standing up against the stigmatization of homosexuality, which is in line with certain theories of homosexual identity development with the final stage marked (among other things) by a wish to come out openly and fight to eliminate oppression (e.g. Troiden 1989);

these theories demarcate the public sphere as the ultimate area of claiming intimate citizenship. As we have seen, this is a limited view: the family of origin creates a space for, but also constraints on, integration; also, acceptance in the private sphere may not go hand in hand with formal rights achieved on the state level (Takács and Szalma 2010). In Hungary non-heterosexual identities are less politicized than in the US, partly due to the lower visibility of LGBTQ activism, which is coupled by widespread societal homophobia, so not only most family members but also many non-heterosexuals feel no necessity to stand up openly for LGBTQ rights in social situations.

Academic studies and LGBTQ community discourses on reactions to coming out or to homosexuality in general often cite certain characteristics of the person receiving the declaration (age, gender, religion etc.) as an explanation of their positive or negative reactions (e.g. Herdt and Koff 2000, Takács 2011, Weston 1991). While some of these variables might be statistically significant, the explanations these studies give are not adequate. In the following, I argue that reactions to same-sex relationships within the family strongly depend on how they fit in or clash with family expectations, which also opens up the possibility of agency for the non-heterosexual couple and their family alike.

Structural factors influencing kin reactions

It is commonly assumed within the LGBTQ community that older people have more difficulty accepting homosexuality than younger ones, which is confirmed by both European and Hungarian surveys (Takács 2011). One common explanation of age differences in reactions to homosexuality is that the older generation grew up in a more homophobic society and internalized its values (Herdt and Koff 2000). However, based on the memories of my older interviewees (as well as those of women interviewed by the Lesbian Herstory Project, see Borgos ed. 2011), Hungarian society during state socialism was characterized less by open homophobia than by a lack of discourses on the topic (in contrast to some other state

socialist countries like the GDR; McLennan 2011), to the extent that there was not even a vocabulary to talk about it (Tóth and Murai 2014). My oldest interlocutor Zsuzsanna was shocked when her son came out to her in the 1990s and was sure he would be imprisoned; due to a lack of public discourses on homosexuality, she was not aware it had been decriminalized in 1961. Naturally, I do not deny the existence of societal homophobia during state socialism, but its more hidden nature probably made it less accessible as a discourse.

The perceived intolerance of older people is sometimes seen as the reason why siblings tend to be more accepting of same-sex sexuality than parents (Weston 1991). Such explanations ignore family roles and the way different family members are affected by coming out. Due to psychological theories that search for the causes of homosexuality at least partially in parental behavior, in contemporary Hungary exemplified by prominent psychologist Béla Buda (Buda 2002), many parents believe that they are responsible for their child's nontraditional orientation (Herdt and Koff 2000). This parental approach is detectable in Zsóka's story about her father's reaction.

And then he also told me all this, that it's all his fault, because he didn't spend enough time with me, he wasn't a good enough male role [model] in my life, and that's why, I never saw the ideal man in my family that my husband is supposed to mean for me. And that's why he thought this whole thing was, and that he – the same things, like he hadn't played with me, he told me all this. And I tried to tell him it has damn nothing to do with it, and he'd raised two other children and those two are straight; he'd raised my sister and so far it looks like she is [heterosexual] too. (Zsóka)

Zsóka's father's explanation is based on gender roles, and evokes an expectation to be an engaged father. Zsóka is otherwise critical of how much energy her parents used to put into their work and how little into their family, but strategically she did not raise her dissatisfaction at this point; rather, she challenged the psychologizing discourse, and through

this implicitly suggested that her father had fulfilled his role properly. With this framing, she was not only asserting her worthiness to be accepted, but her father's value as a parent; she claimed intimate citizenship for both of them.

Family members other than parents, regardless of age, are less likely to be blamed for their kin's non-heterosexual orientation; this partly explains why people who dare to come out to their grandparents almost invariably report positive reactions. In Central and Eastern Europe, grandparents often look after children when parents work and develop a close emotional relationship to them (Gradszkova 2012); this and not being blamed for their grandchild's sexual orientation might make it easier for them to accept it.

Research also testifies that mothers are more likely to accept their non-heterosexual child than fathers (Dombos et al 2011). Several theories of homophobia are founded on gender differences: they claim that women tolerate deviations from gender roles more because their own gender role is more flexible (Kite and Whitley 1998), whereas for heterosexual men, homosexuality is a threatening form of inappropriate masculinity, which they feel entitled to police (Franklin 1998), especially in adolescent communities (Pascoe 2007). Besides these factors, however, the different societal expectations towards fathers and mothers that I have discussed in Chapter IV.2 might also contribute to the gender difference in parental reactions. In popular imagination, fathers are connected more to discipline and less to unconditional acceptance, so they are more likely to turn against their child than mothers, whose tasks include keeping the family together (Herdt and Koff 2000). Postsocialist rhetoric often emphasizes the ideal motherly qualities of self-sacrifice and forgiveness (Dunn 2004, Verdery 1996), which again makes it more difficult for a mother to reject her child on whatever grounds.

Brothers and sisters appear in studies as more accepting than parents (e.g. Dombos et al. 2011): just like grandparents, they are rarely blamed for their sibling's sexual orientation,

though they might fear secondary stigmatization (see Chapter V.3). At the same time, they might even profit from a non-heterosexual brother or sister. Benó's brothers deploy the widespread belief that men are more homophobic than women.

They [my brothers] use me as some secret pick-up weapon. Coz apparently with girls it's some extra cool thing [when they say things] like 'yeah, I have a gay brother' [he imitates the girls], 'Wow, really, and it's not, and you can say it just like this??' 'Sure, I have no problem with it.' (Benó)

Benó's brothers make use of both sides of the stereotype: on the one hand, they expect girls to be accepting of homosexuality,¹³² on the other, they believe their own open-mindedness makes them unique and special as men. Apparently, they move in an environment where at least women are relatively tolerant towards non-heterosexual orientations. The communities one belongs to play an important part in shaping reactions to coming out. Melinda's sister-in-law Hilary works for a human rights organization where she is the only white middle-class married heterosexual. The following anecdote exemplifies how for her, having a lesbian sister-in-law is an asset helping her inclusion among her colleagues.

K: Oh yeah, the other day when we were coming home and Hilary was here, she was just talking to a colleague in the street and we were coming too, we met, and she introduced Melinda as 'this is my sister-in-law and her wife.'¹³³ So it was like

M: And that woman was happy, like 'oh, really?'

K: And that's when it seemed like finally she [Hilary] had something to be proud of, like yes, that's my connection [to the human rights cause]! (Kati and Melinda)

¹³² Of course, their strategy might also serve the function to rule out homophobic women as potential partners; more about such forms of support in Chapter VII.

¹³³ The use of the term 'wife' is symbolic here, see Chapter IV.1.

In Hilary's environment, it is those belonging to the mainstream who are a minority; having a lesbian family member in fact justifies her being there, a fact that has probably influenced her attitudes towards Melinda.¹³⁴ Based on my interviews, however, in Hungary there are far more environments that act against rather than for the acceptance of non-heterosexual family members (and even more that people assume to be homophobic, though they cannot be sure because same-sex sexuality is never discussed there; see Chapter V.3). The most commonly mentioned such environments are religious congregations.

Mainstream Western religions are central in perpetuating the Heterosexual Family Myth (Levy and Reeves 2011). In Hungary, there is no Christian or Jewish denomination that officially accepts same-sex couples or sexual practices.¹³⁵ Surveys show that both on the European and the Hungarian level, people who belong to religious denominations are less likely to accept homosexuality, and this is even more emphatic in the case of frequent churchgoers (Takács 2011). American ethnographic studies describe how difficult it is for gays and lesbians to come out in a deeply religious environment or family (Levy and Reeves 2011); interviews with Hungarian LGBTQ Christians also attest to the homophobic reactions of religious communities (Sándor ed. 2015).¹³⁶ My interviewees often claim that a given family member rejects them because s/he is religious; sometimes this argument also acquits the family member of the blame and leaves the same-sex oriented person in the faith of 'diffuse, enduring solidarity'. One example is the following excerpt from the interview with Rebeka and Liza; Rebeka is the only one among my interviewees whose mother has completely broken off all contact.

¹³⁴ Naturally, had Hilary been homophobic originally, she probably would not have gone to work for a human rights organization. Still, this environment provides reinforcement for her decision to accept her lesbian sister-in-law.

¹³⁵ There are one or two individual congregations and communities which informally welcome non-heterosexual members, as well as a Christian LGBTQ group.

¹³⁶ While in the GDR in the last decade of state socialism protestant churches, also marginalized by the system, took up the cause of gays and lesbians (McLennan 2011), this did not happen in other state socialist countries.

R: So I can only guess what's in the background [of her rejection]. But obviously it's a tangible thing that homosexuality itself is a sin against God, and that's why she doesn't accept.

L: At the price that you disown your child on a religious basis.

BDR: Yeah, and then you start thinking.

L: Like what's the point of a religion the first tenet of which is supposedly love. (Liza and Rebeka)

Liza criticizes Christianity, but at the same time suggests that Rebeka's mother is a helpless victim of an ideology that makes her do things she otherwise would not. This way, she can maintain the myth of 'diffuse, enduring solidarity' and put all the blame on the church. In Hungary mainstream Catholic and Protestant Churches have since the transition been actively involved in promoting 'traditional' family values, speaking up against abortion, assisted reproduction techniques and homosexuality (e.g. dr Kék 2012). Indeed, there is at least one case in my sample where the church exercised institutional pressure on the parent to disassociate from her gay child. Benő's deeply religious mother, though had serious difficulties accepting her son's sexual orientation, nevertheless kept a close relationship with him, until one day she was visited by the leaders of her congregation.

They asked, what's up with your sons? [...] And she said we [me and her] had a superb relationship, we spoke every day and sometimes we met, she came to Budapest or we [my partner and I] would go to her, so there was intensive contact. And then they said, 'aha, this might not be so good.' That now I was independent and lived in my own household, and there shouldn't be such a strong relationship between us. And I guess they brought up some quotes from the Bible to support this. (Benő)

Notably, the religious leaders did not mention homosexuality at all, they rather supported their advice with notions concerning the nature of family. Considering the family-centrism of most Christian denominations in Hungary, the argument sounds surprising, but of

course what these churches support is the Christian family; those who do not conform to the lifestyle prescribed by their church are not seen as worth keeping in touch with.¹³⁷ This is how religion becomes a structural factor influencing the family's reaction to same-sex relationships, limiting the intimate citizenship of both non-heterosexuals and their kin.

This is not to say, however, that religious family members are always hostile to same-sex sexuality. Kati has managed to convince her deeply religious mother that she must not judge her on the basis of something that is not her decision:

I tell her: look, Mummy, I couldn't choose which gender I'd be attracted to, but beyond that everything, the way I live, the way I think, the way I try to do things, nothing has changed. The way you brought me up, my Christian value system demands this. And this helps her a lot, because I feel she thinks, and this comes up in family conversations, she acquits me of all this, saying: 'if [you] can't help something, God won't judge you, so I can't either.' (Kati)

Emphasizing that homosexuality is not a choice often helps foster acceptance (Powell et al. 2000, Whisman 1996). Kati, herself being a devout Christian, speaks the language (including a connection between family and values) that can help her mother get beyond the intolerant discourses of her church. Though her argument sounds conservative, coupling Christian values with a positive view of lesbianism is a radical claim for intimate citizenship that challenges heteronormative approaches to kinship.

Kinship expectations shaping reactions to coming out

Studies as well as popular discourses claim that one of parents' greatest grievances when their child comes out is the prospect that they will not have grandchildren (Herdt and Koff 2000, Szenteh 2005). Grandparenthood is seen as a measure of their effectiveness as parents (Herdt and Koff 2000) as well as a socially accepted role for their old age (Young and Wilmott 1957), especially in Central and Eastern Europe, where grandparents are traditionally valued for their contribution in childcare (Kravchenko 2012), and childlessness, usually seen in a

¹³⁷ The religious leaders did not criticize the mother for keeping in touch with her heterosexual children, even

negative light (Neményi and Takács 2015), might become a ‘sticky’ stigma extended to one’s parents. The exclamation ‘I won’t have grandchildren’ is a common reaction to coming out even when there are other children who might provide them, like in the case of Erzsébet’s husband: “And then this despair, that he would never in his life have grandchildren of his own. Which felt as if he was turning a knife in my heart, because I used to think we had four children.” (Erzsébet) The older children come from Erzsébet’s first marriage; thus the father’s despair over their daughter Zsóka’s lesbianism faced Erzsébet with the possibility that in spite of appearances, her second husband does not consider them ‘his own’. In this case coming out not only triggered but revealed interpretations of kinship. At the same time, similar parental reactions have been reported by people who had ‘full’ siblings. Possibly, the grandchildren argument is less an expression of a fear of uselessness in old age than founded on the kinship expectation towards each individual child to continue the lineage.

Naturally, same-sex couples do not always fail the kinship expectation of having children, but their parents might not be aware of this, as rainbow families are barely present in public discourses in Hungary (see Chapter II.4). Other common perceptions of same-sex couples might also shape family reactions. When Tünde came out, her paternal kin accused her – among other things – of being an irresponsible mother. Besides the cultural expectation that a mother must not have interests of her own beyond those of her children (Lawler 2000), this stereotype was also based on their personal experiences.

It’s become clear what I think the root of this terrible resistance and rejection is. That my great-grandmother, my grandma’s mum, left my grandma when she was 3, and my grandma was raised by her grandma in the country. And my great, my great-grandma lived in digs in Budapest and got together with her landlady. And when my grandma, dad, uncle and grandpa moved to her place, it became clear

though they are older.

to them and it was a big shame. Added that the creep left mummy [my grandmother], who was just a child. So I think for them this is what lesbianism means. (Tünde)

The family seems to associate lesbianism with abandoning one's duties as a mother. Ironically, the practice they condemn – leaving young children with the grandparents in the countryside – was not unusual in pre-industrial Europe (Ariès 1986, Tilly and Scott 1987) and to some extent survived in Central and Eastern Europe during state socialism (Kligman 1998, Kravchenko 2012). This example shows the same monolithic and ahistorical approach to family and motherhood that often surfaces in mainstream discourses in Hungary: pre-socialist and state socialist practices are judged on the basis of the family ideal propagated by postsocialist mainstream discourses.¹³⁸

The kinship expectations broken by same-sex oriented people might be specific to class and/or the urban/rural division. Ethnographic studies on rural Hungary claim that in peasant culture, the continuity of kinship is based on the transmission of the family name and descent line (Fél and Hofer 1969). A male child who does not produce offspring breaks this continuity; the breach of this kinship duty prompted the reaction of József's father.

My mother said that nothing had changed for her, she loved me like before. My father, however, said that something had changed for him, because he had cherished a dream like every father: he'd organize a big wedding for his son; I'd give him grandchildren; I'd carry on the lineage. This was really important for him, that [I] wouldn't continue the name and the lineage. (József)

The ending of the lineage seemed to vex the father more, given that it was his family name that should have been carried on. Another kinship expectation József failed was the

¹³⁸ As Kapitány and Kapitány (2007) point out, the practice of leaving the child with grandparents was not revived in the economic crises after the transition, so it was not only determined by economic circumstances but also by expectations towards parents.

possibility for the family to show off its wealth at his wedding, an important function of family celebrations in rural Central and Eastern Europe (Creed 2002). Thus the son's homosexuality damaged the family's reputation (Finch 1989, Morgan 1996), and in Chapter V.3 we have seen how crucial that is for many rural families. As we have also seen in Chapter V.3, non-heterosexuals who move away from small settlements are less exposed to the judgments of the inhabitants there than their family members who stay behind; their intimate choices might have effects on their family to a different extent than on themselves.

Though they cannot fulfill the obligation of producing a heterosexual family, most of my interviewees emphasize that they try to meet other kinship expectations, sometimes even more than their heterosexual siblings. This effort is not lost on their kin; when I asked Péter why he thought both his and his partner's parents support their relationship, he answered: "because we are good sons." In an intriguing story, Miklós contrasts his past as a monk to his present as a gay man, claiming that he failed kinship expectations with the first stage more than the second:

M: Before that, I worked the summer in Germany [...] And they were calculating that if I went again the next year and worked again, and even took my stepfather with me, we'd be able to clear our debt. But I didn't. Instead, I became a monk. And they wouldn't have grandchildren, that was their other big heartache.

BDR: Oh, so they had that already when you were a monk, and they didn't have to [struggle with it after your coming out].

M: Sure. And of course, by the time I came out as gay, my sister already had two kids. (Miklós)

In rural areas of Hungary with high rates of unemployment, working-class men often take up seasonal work abroad to support their family. By becoming a monk, Miklós failed this kinship expectation as well as the one to produce grandchildren. After his coming out he

could fulfill the first kinship obligation again, so the family took this turn positively.¹³⁹ His story illustrates that same-sex relationships are not the only and possibly not even the most serious infringements on ideal perceptions of ‘family’.

The same-sex relationship itself might upset the kinship or gender expectations of kin. When Tiggris got together with her girlfriend, she started spending several days a week at her place and being at home less. This upset her mother, who had depended on her daughter to help sustain their household: “I think my mother doesn’t want to accept that I’m totally away from home and don’t help and whatever.” In spite of the higher level of female employment than in most of Western Europe (partly due to state socialist policies, see Chapter I.1), in Hungary women still disproportionately do the housework (Zimmermann 2010) – now supported by mainstream discourses idealizing the breadwinner-homemaker model – but in the large suburban home where Tiggris lived it required more than one person. The other source of the mother’s dissatisfaction with the relationship was the girlfriend’s gender presentation, because she “wasn’t the Claudia Schiffer-type. My mother didn’t like her from first sight. She’s not the type you’d say is such a pretty girl.” Both Tiggris and her girlfriend failed the traditional gender expectations of her mother, as well as the kinship expectation towards unmarried women living with parents to do at least part of the housework (see Chapter VI.3) – the mother’s rejection was possibly rooted more in this than in general homophobia.

We have seen that multiple factors interact in shaping kin’s reaction to coming out, from their own position in the family to kinship expectations, which are mediated by class and other contexts. The various attitudes towards the same-sex relationship are manifested in different practices towards the same-sex couple. However, it is not always easy to deduce the family’s real attitudes from their behavior, for various reasons.

¹³⁹ Miklós’s sister Emese told me the same story, and confirmed that the parents had reacted much more

VI.2. Kinship practices performing inclusion/exclusion

R: There's a big farm, so not only brandy, but from eggs to vegetables, even most of the meat and cold cuts, so [inaudible], sausages, we get everything [from my partner Havana's mother]. [...] Her sister makes jam, or now she made deep-frozen things. And then she gives us without asking. And grandma makes fantastic fruit juices, from her we get that. [...]

BDR: Yeah, but you also help, don't you? You said you help on the farm and in the garden.

R. Of course, yes. Well, to grandma; not so much to her mum, because going to Viperavár on a daily basis, it doesn't work. But to grandma, especially now she still has a backache.

BDR: And do you help your mum in anything?

R. In fact hardly at all.

BDR: You said you arrange things for her.

R. Oh yes, dealing with offices, because she lives at a housing estate. So there's not much need in this sense, because...

BDR: Yeah, you don't have to hoe.

R: You don't have to hoe. Well, it's rather mum who helps me, when I need someone to look after Bori [my daughter], usually she's the first one I ask. (Ribera)

Reciprocal support and services are among the main functions of kinship networks (Finch 1989), and in fact may performatively constitute kinship (Sahlins 2013). In state socialism and after, such kinship services have been central to survival for a large part of the population (Kligman 1998, Pittaway 2002). Somlai (2002) lists money, advice, building, works around and in the home, and looking after the elderly as the most common forms of kinship help in contemporary Hungary. The conversation above reveals differences between rural and urban families in this respect. Those working the land, like Havana's grandparents, need considerable help with agricultural works. Town or city people do not require such services, this is why Ribera sounds slightly guilty that they help her mother less than they do Havana's parents. In return, kin working in agriculture fulfill their kinship obligations through

negatively to his joining the order than to his coming out as gay.

giving some of their produce, while urban ones are more likely to help with carework and money. It is taken for granted that rural relatives coming to Budapest sleep over at their city-dwelling kin (see later). Some of the couples with rural families also reported kinship behavior or expectations that ethnographers (e.g. Fél and Hofer 1969) describe as typical for 19th and early 20th century peasant culture in Hungary: putting pictures of family members on the ‘glory wall’ (see Chapter V.3), pig-slaying or the whole village harvesting grapes together.

Class also influences the kinds of help people can provide. People with better education can deal more easily with bureaucracy (and are more likely to be taken seriously; Haney 1999), this is why Ribera performs administrative tasks for her mother. The upwardly mobile family member may also have better access to resources like the internet: Miklós’s father regularly calls his son and asks him to find information online. József, the first person in his family to get a higher education, helps his relatives’ children with their studies. At the same time, working-class people with a trade can come handy when renovating a flat: Viola proudly showed me the cupboards her father had made for her apartment, and Miklós’s brother Jenci exhibited similar pride when he told me that the painting and decorating in Miklós and Bence’s apartment was his work. The lines of class and geographical location cutting across kinship networks thus enable people to access a variety of services without pay.

It seems, then, that same-sex couples are just as entangled in the web of kinship obligations and mutual help as different-sex couples are. For many of them – including Ribera and Havana – this is a symbolic acknowledgement of their relationship. In this subchapter I will challenge this common perception: I will argue that inclusion and exclusion are not monolithic concepts, and kin services do not necessarily mean complete acceptance. For one thing, families might fulfill kinship obligations towards the same-sex partner out of mere civility: the performative act takes place but without real intentions behind it (Austin 1962).

At other times, kinship services are performed in a way to signal not inclusion but exclusion. In both these cases, performing the kin service might be a result of outside expectations, possibly a cover to hide family tensions from the outside world, which is a kinship duty in traditional Hungarian culture (Fél and Hofer 1969). Also, the interpretation of the same act as inclusion or exclusion depends strongly on the person's expectations about kinship.

Problematizing inclusion and exclusion

He [my father] called Miklós [my partner] to wish him happy birthday, and Miklós told me he [the father] said to him, "thank you for being there for Bence." And I think this sentence nicely fits in with his attitude. So it's not 'I tolerate it' or 'oh well, others have queer kids too', but he's genuinely happy that there's someone next to me I'm happy with. (Bence)

Bence makes a difference between parents who tolerate their child's same-sex partner and include her/him in the kinship network because it is an expectation, and those who truly support the relationship and like the person. He thinks that congratulating Miklós might be a mere fulfillment of kinship expectations, but by thanking him 'for being there for Bence' the father exceeded such expectations and thus revealed his true feelings. In this view, what demonstrates full inclusion of the couple in the family is not the rituals of kinship behavior but spontaneous reactions.

Bence is not the only one who suggests that kinship behavior might in some cases be empty ritual and not the expression of true belonging; indeed, Vándor in Chapter IV.4 expressed a similar critique towards Christmas, contrasting the formalities in her natal family with the spontaneous feeling of community with her chosen kin. Defying notions of the family as a space of spontaneity in contrast to the formalized public sphere (Habermas 1998), in these interpretations family life is highly ritualized, and it is only outside or beyond such rituals that true emotions can be expressed or discovered.

In the case of ritualized behavior, the inclusion/exclusion dichotomy is problematic because the family's real attitude might not be known to the same-sex couple. Also, whether an act is interpreted as rejection or inclusion might depend on the nature of the relationship between family members. When Micuka's mother decided to buy an apartment for her daughter, she consciously chose one that would suit Micuka's girlfriend as well, thus symbolically including her in the family. Buying apartments for one's children, especially considering housing shortages and high real estate prices in Hungarian cities, is a source of pride for middle-class families. Milán's parents also provided all their children with apartments of their own, but Milán thinks in his case the motivation was that they could not accept his homosexuality and wanted to get rid of him in order to create a transparent closet (see Chapter V.1). The same behavior that signals the utmost acceptance for Micuka is a sign of rejection for Milán. The interpretation depends on the parents' reaction to the same-sex relationship: though Micuka's mother had a hard time processing her coming out, she now likes her daughter's girlfriend and treats her as a full family member, whereas Milán at the time of this story felt that his parents rejected his sexual orientation.

Tulipán, another parent who made sure her gay son had his own apartment, revealed her motivation: she could not tolerate her son Alexander being intimate with another man in her home, but did not want to restrict him either. This story also raises questions about acceptance or rejection. Many of my interviewees report that their family accept their same-sex relationship but would like to ignore the physical part of it and ask them not to express affection towards each other in their presence, an act that would make them visible as a couple (Glass 2014). While Alexander, similarly to many other same-sex oriented people, takes this arrangement for granted, Milán interprets such expectations as exclusion, especially in comparison with heterosexual couples in the family: "I would not kiss him [my boyfriend] in front of my parents [...] my brother has kissed his wife several times in front of them."

One reason for the difference might be that Milán, living in Budapest and being deeply involved in gay life there, is more aware than Alexander of activist discourses that consider self-expression a basic right of LGBTQ people and any constraints on that by kin a reinforcement of heteronormativity within the family (Švab and Kuhar 2005) and an infringement on their intimate citizenship.

Milán has in fact never tested whether his family would really not tolerate a gay kiss; he acts on the basis of assumed, rather than explicitly stated, expectations. However, assumptions might be wrong, as this conversation between Bence and Miklós illustrates:

B. It was really interesting, because at Christmas, when we were at home [at Miklós's parents], what I saw was I caressed him [Miklós] or kissed¹⁴⁰ him, and he was like [shows how Miklós pulled away].

M. Because my previous partner didn't do it at home, only in secret.

B. And he didn't know what they [his parents] would say, because afterwards I asked him, and he said 'this is not done here!'.¹⁴¹ And what did your mother say then?

M. Well, yes, my mum said this was what showed her how much he, and then she stopped worrying, because she could see how much he [Bence] loves me. (Miklós and Bence)

Miklós refrained from open displays of affection in order to spare his parents' feelings; he, just like Milán, constrained himself in the name of a perceived family expectation, which in his case proved to be misunderstood. As I have discussed in Chapter V.1, many families are characterized by lack of communication, especially with regard to sexuality, so such misunderstandings are rather common. In other words, it is the perceived and not necessarily the real attitude of the family member that a person interprets as rejection or acceptance (Savin-Williams 1989). At the same time, actions seen by some as signaling kinship might not be meant that way. For instance, several of my interviewees emphasize that their parents

¹⁴⁰ Hungarian makes a difference between French kissing (csók) and light kisses on the cheek or lips (puszi); it is the latter Bence is talking about.

send food for their partner, and interpret this as inclusion in the family. However, when I visited Miklós's family over Christmas, they also packed a box of cookies for me as a farewell present; it was not a sign of inclusion in the family but merely a conventional act of hospitality.¹⁴² Similarly, not performing a kinship service towards a family member might have reasons other than her/his sexual orientation, as I mentioned with regard to the opening vignette of this chapter.

As we have seen, Liza interprets the way her mother treats her as rejection based on comparison with her heterosexual past. Others compare their treatment with that of heterosexual couples in their family, and perceive differences as rejection, though the same practice might be considered inclusion by people who do not have such comparison. Lilla was delighted when her partner's mother asked her to look after her apartment and water her flowers while she and her daughter went on holiday: "She absolutely accepted me. Immediately as a family member. She involved me". Norbi got a similar task from his boyfriend István's parents but was much less happy about it.

They were really in favor of Dorina's, István's sister's boyfriend. But really, to the extent that they took him with them on a trip to Italy. Meanwhile I stayed here and looked after their cat in their apartment. Just so you know where the roles are. (Norbi)

Norbi admits that in István's family "pets are sacred", so he could as well feel privileged for being allowed to catsit. In comparison with Dorina's boyfriend, however, he could see that he was only conferred the duties and not the privileges resulting from kinship, which in his view made him a second-class family member.

¹⁴¹ *'Ez itt nem szokás'* could translate as 'this is not a custom here' or as 'this is not supposed to be done here'.

¹⁴² Sahlins (2013) might argue that such acts create kinship between unrelated but friendly people, but I doubt that Miklós's parents would have interpreted it that way.

Finally, the same behavior can be considered as inclusion by some family members and as exclusion by others. When Csaba's boyfriend Ákos was looking for a place to stay, Csaba offered him to move in with himself and his natal family. Csaba says that during the several months he lived there, Ákos was "treated quasi as a third, oldest child". Csaba's father Balázs views the arrangement rather differently:

We weren't behaving naturally, the way we otherwise behave naturally. After all, there was a, I'm not saying not a family member, but not like someone's partner who's been there for a long time and already behaves like a family member. [...] There was someone who's not family, in situations that exceed the [inaudible]. Normal daily, morning getting-up whatever situations, when a person behaves absolutely as s/he would, and in the family s/he grew up in and they're together from the beginning, a person behaves completely the same way when s/he's alone at home and when the others are at home, too. I think. But here we couldn't. (Balázs)

Balázs contradicts himself, first denying that Ákos was excluded from the definition of family, then says he was 'not family'. He bases this distinction not on the same-sex nature of the relationship but on the length, which is an important legitimizing force of relationships within the LGBTQ community as well (Weston 1995) – this is another instance where the non-inclusion of a same-sex couple is not due to homophobia. Balázs's description of family as a site for self-expression and openness resonates with the myth of the bourgeois family (Habermas 1998), and ignores practices in their own family, such as keeping Csaba's homosexuality secret from their daughter Tánya (see Chapter IV.4). He only agreed to Ákos staying with them in order to avoid family conflict; while research often focuses on the compromises non-heterosexual family members need to make to maintain family peace (Kuhar 2011), this example shows that sometimes heterosexuals get into the same situation.

We have seen that whether a certain practice is interpreted as inclusion or exclusion might depend on a person's perspective and/or social characteristics; this shows that intimate

citizenship is not always a tangible, objective thing but up to a person's interpretation of whether given discourses or practices include or exclude her/his intimate choices. The examples I give below of exclusion and inclusion are thus ones that are perceived as such by my interlocutors, which does not necessarily reflect the intentions or interpretations of others involved.

Practices of inclusion

Both his [my boyfriend's] sister and her future husband take it completely for granted that we must be there [at their wedding]. And by the way, I was just crying before you came, I was so moved in the bathtub about how beautiful it is that I'm part of his close family. Because this is for the close family only. (Bence)

Miklós's sister scheduled her wedding in a way that her brother and his boyfriend Bence can attend. Their inclusion in the 'close family' is a linguistically explicit incorporation of the couple in the kinship network. Similar performative acts of inclusion are the introduction of Kati and Melinda's 'wedding' (i.e. partnership registration) date in the family Bible,¹⁴³ Havana's grandmother putting Ribera's daughter's picture on the 'glory wall' (see Chapter V.3) or the invitation of same-sex partners for Christmas, the ultimate family holiday. Bence is not the only person who is deeply moved by such gestures. Lóránt's Christmas experience at his (now ex-)boyfriend's family is remarkable not for the actual events but for his own reaction to them:

I think it was Christmas 2010, it's been the best Christmas of my life, or the last 5 years. They invited me to Templomvár to spend Christmas Eve there. And it was good to see, there are small kids in the family. And they invited me for Christmas, and to see all those preparations, gifts and all, the kids singing, so that was a very good Christmas. I really felt I had a family that – though my dad and my

¹⁴³ The family Bible is a book (usually the Bible) in which, on a blank front or back page, the dates of important family events (births, weddings, deaths) are recorded. If a kinsperson's life events are not recorded in the family Bible, it suggests exclusion from, or very low prestige within, the family (Somlai 2002).

brother weren't there! And they really included me, it was really a good feeling. [...] His father stepped to me at Christmas and gave me a bottle of wine and two kisses on the cheek. (Lóránt)

At his partner's family, Lóránt experienced a 'true' Christmas, which he had been missing since his mother's death. As his own family does not fit his ideal of kinship (partly because his mother died, and partly because of their homophobic opinions, see later), he tries to find substitutes among his 'chosen kin' (see his quote in Chapter IV.4), which includes his partner's family. This also influences whom he will choose for his next partner: "now I would like a relationship in which I could possibly experience another Christmas like this." Inclusion, then, is not something non-heterosexuals wait to be passively bestowed upon them; as we will see later, they take agency in having their relationships acknowledged. In Lóránt's case this goes as far as determining partner choice – it seems that for him, inclusion in the partner's family is as important, or even more important, than the relationship itself.

Several people claim that a touchstone of true acceptance is the use of kin terms towards one's partner and children. Milán was extremely moved when his grandmother called his partner 'grandson', and Lilla is similarly happy when her girlfriend's mother addresses her as 'my child' or 'my daughter'.¹⁴⁴ The use of kin terms is welcome even when the person does not identify with the term itself. Tekla was flabbergasted when her partner Edina's father addressed her as 'son-in-law', especially as she is the femme in their butch-femme relationship.¹⁴⁵ Her explanation is that in the father's heteronormative framework, the role and kin term of his daughter's partner must be masculine. In this case, contrary to Herdt and Koff's (2000) claim, acceptance of the same-sex relationship has not led to going past the Heterosexual Family Myth.

¹⁴⁴ Such addresses towards one's child's spouse are common in traditional Hungarian culture (Fél and Hofer 1969), so their purpose is not necessarily the desexualization of the relationship, though it might be one result.

The use of kin terminology is only one of the everyday practices that is interpreted as a sign of inclusion in the family. As we have seen, same-sex couples often compare their treatment with that of heterosexual couples, either their own former such relationships or heterosexual siblings; if the two receive similar treatment, they feel included in the family on equal terms. Goran emphasizes: “he [my boyfriend] gets a gift at Christmas. Naturally not like a child of their own, but, so kinda like say my brother’s wife.” In contrast to the attitudes manifest in kinship terms in Milán’s or Johanna’s family, this family makes a clear distinction between blood and affinal kin, but Goran does not mind that, as long as they treat different-sex and same-sex couples equally.

Most couples interpret such kinship behavior as a sign of their inclusion in the family (as Lóránt above, and many other interlocutors, expressed in their choice of words) and by implication, of the acceptance of their sexual orientation. Occasionally, however, a family member might express open homophobia but still provide kin services for the same-sex couple in his/her family. Lóránt has had fierce arguments with his brother, who – in line with pronatalist mainstream discourses – thinks that homosexuals are ‘superfluous for society’ because they do not have children (although the brother himself is also childless). Still, whenever Lóránt visits him in Budapest together with his gay friends, the brother readily offers them accommodation and board. Bence’s brother Norbert considers all Bence’s partners (though surprisingly not Bence himself) ‘faggots’ and criticizes Bence for associating with them; nevertheless, at the end of my interview with Bence and Miklós (which took place in their home), Norbert arrived and immediately helped Miklós fix a problem with his computer. Just like some utterances (such as congratulating or saying sorry) might be performed without the required emotional content behind them (Austin 1962), so

¹⁴⁵ In butch-femme lesbian relationships the butch partner usually has a masculine self-presentation and often identity, while the femme follows the gender norms prescribed for women in the given society. For more on this, see Kennedy and Davis 1986, Halberstam 1998.

performative acts of kinship might just be routine behavior in line with kinship expectations and not coincide with actual feelings of inclusion.

In the last case, one might claim that it is the rule of reciprocity, central in kinship (Finch 1989), that requires Norbert to help Miklós; after all, Miklós is also doing him a favor by letting him stay in their apartment (this in fact happens every week for a couple of days when Norbert comes to Budapest). There are families, however, for whom disdain for a same-sex couple overwrites both blood relatedness and reciprocity; for them, being in a same-sex relationship deletes any possible claim of the person to be treated as kin.

Practices of exclusion

T: Two years ago my grandmother developed a cancerous tumor, and everyone was very frightened. And Dóri [my partner] said let's go help them [my father, aunt and grandmother]. And let's move in with them for some time, and they wanted it too. And then we moved there, lived there for 9 months with the kids. And we came away in quite a nasty way. Because they accused us of having stolen my grandma's pension. [...]

D. We moved in there and then for a while everything was all right. At least we thought everything was all right. But then it became clear to us that all this was done only so that when we're near them, it would be easier for them to separate...

T. To separate us. (Tünde and Dóri)

The initial reaction of Tünde's paternal kin to the two women's relationship was extremely negative (see Chapter VI.1), so when they accepted the idea that the couple and their children move in with them and help look after the ailing grandmother, Tünde and Dóri interpreted this as the first step towards inclusion. However, as it happened to Norbi (see above), kinship duties were transferred to the couple but not kinship privileges. In retrospect, Dóri thinks that the family's real purpose was to generate conflict between the two women, e.g. by trying to convince Tünde that Dóri was a bad parent to her children (this strategy relies on the mother's duty to sacrifice everything for her children; Lawler 2000), hoping that Dóri's disappearance

from the family would make it once again compatible with the Heterosexual Family Myth. In this case, seemingly appropriate kinship behavior was a disguise for feelings of rejection towards the same-sex partner.

Tünde's family seems especially creative in keeping the conventions of kinship behavior while at the same time expressing their rejection through them. Describing her Christmas gifts from them, Tünde mentions that her aunt gave her an opened bottle of perfume, and her grandmother returned the same book she (Tünde) had given her a year before. They followed the formalities of the gift-giving ritual, but at the same time broke its etiquette; this signaled that while they do not completely exclude Tünde from their kinship network, they take every opportunity to show her that she is not completely included either. Similarly, when Kornélia's mother received a bunch of flowers from her daughter's first girlfriend, she accepted it but took it to the cemetery the next day. Gifts function to enhance solidarity (Mauss 1990), but only if both parties acknowledge them as such. The mother acted according to kinship etiquette in front of the girlfriend; the performative act of getting rid of the flowers was directed at her daughter, signaling her that her relationship was not accepted in the family.

Not surprisingly, Dóri does not get any Christmas presents from Tünde's family; they do not feel the need to keep up even the pretence of kin ties towards someone who is not related to them by blood. The most common experience of exclusion my non-heterosexual interviewees mentioned is the lack of acknowledgement of their same-sex partner. In Vencel's case, the food gift is accompanied by a performative utterance that excludes Vencel's partner Arnold from its recipients:

Like they [my parents] send some food, and then [they say], ‘you son¹⁴⁶ will cook this’. And then [I say], ‘**Arnold** will cook it, because I don’t cook.’ So I keep correcting it, and then they continue saying so regardless. (Vencel)

By intending the food for him alone, Vencel’s parents ignore both their son’s cohabiting partner and their breadwinner-homemaker arrangement (see Chapter V.4). Vencel, however, continues to remind them and thus challenges the open secret. He is not the only one who, faced with exclusionary practices from his family of origin, exhibits agency in trying to counter them. Many others choose not to do this verbally but through their own kinship practices.

Fighting exclusion through kin practices

It would be a mistake to think that same-sex couples passively wait for their kin to accept them; they exhibit agency and often considerable creativity in securing their family’s goodwill. Recall the pictures of Ribera’s daughter that Havana’s family members displayed in visible places in their homes and workplaces (Chapter V.3): it was the same-sex couple that distributed the pictures in the first place, so they made the first move in symbolically including Havana’s kin in their family.

Havana and Ribera’s story is an example of an already accepting family, with which the ties became even stronger after the couple’s gesture. As we have seen above, Kornélia’s girlfriend was faced with a parent who rejected their relationship; she tried to appease her with a symbolic gesture but failed. However, even originally rejecting family members might ‘turn around’ as a result of kinship behavior. When Anna came out, her mother “said she’d rather I was an alcoholic or a drug addict” and did not speak to her for years. Anna got in touch with her again when she already had a child (from a brief heterosexual love affair), but

¹⁴⁶Hungarian, like most other languages, distinguishes between the singular you (‘thou’) and the plural one. Vencel’s parents use the singular here.

was in a lesbian relationship again. The mother now fully accepts Anna's family form; Anna thinks that having grandchildren had been "the meaning of her existence", and now that Anna has fulfilled her kinship duty of procreation, their relationship is once again "perfect".

Having a child does not always in itself do the trick, however. Rafael's father originally opposed homosexuality and same-sex parenting, and did not like it when his son brought his children to his home, especially the boy, for whom Rafael is the social parent. His attitude improved when the little boy started calling him 'grandpa'. As discussed in Chapter IV.2, Rafael is adamant about the children not calling their social parent 'father', but does not make such restrictions with regard to kin terms for grandparents; this might in part be strategic, with the purpose of facilitating acceptance.

Others need to work much harder for their inclusion. Dani exhibits admirable perseverance in trying to establish contact with his boyfriend's family.

I tend to appear there with my boyfriend around Christmas at his family, and they don't specifically invite me, and there're times when they don't really talk to me, but we still go there and act as if the situation was normal. [...] A year ago there was a dinner where his father, from the point I arrived and he said hello until the time I said good-bye and he too, didn't say a single word. (Dani)

Dani and his boyfriend insist on appearing at the boyfriend's family as a couple and demonstrate their belonging to the kinship network, even though the family of origin ignores this attempt. Dani also uses other strategies to improve his position with his boyfriend's father:

Last time snow fell when I went, and then his father started to clear off the snow, his parents live at the edge of the forest, and there was a whole lot of snow there. And I went down like now the ice is gonna break. And I tried to take part in this, and he was glad I helped clear the snow. Because it didn't occur to his three kids [to help]. (Dani)

In this case, rendering a kin service was a strategic move, as Dani hoped it would (both literally and figuratively) break the ice with the father. He emphasizes that the father's three children did not offer to help: they take their inclusion in the family for granted and so need not make efforts. At the same time their inactivity supported Dani's claim for inclusion, as it proved that blood relatives are not necessarily the ones to be counted on; if 'diffuse, enduring solidarity' is the basis of kinship, Dani belongs to the family more than the three children.

While Dani offered his help as a conscious strategy, most of my interviewees perform kin services towards their own and their partner's family as a matter of fact, without consciously using this as a means toward inclusion. Tünde and Dóri claim their motivation was altruistic when they moved in with Tünde's family. In fact, Tünde says she "must be a masochist" for still keeping in touch with her father's kin in spite of all the abuse and humiliation she has suffered from them. Though the unwritten rule of reciprocity (as well as her own emotional well-being) would require that she break with kin who fail to exhibit 'diffuse, enduring solidarity' (see also d'Artagnan's opinion in Chapter IV.1), the presumed interminability of kin ties compels her to continue calling and helping them.

The family of origin similarly tends to take for granted the help they receive from the same-sex couple, as illustrated by the following anecdote by Zsóka:

Just today there was this funny scene at home, that I'd cooked the weekend lunch as usual, and after lunch my father was beginning to pack into the dishwasher and he opened it and the dishwasher was full of clean dishes. And then Maja [my girlfriend] sighed 'dammit (*basszus*), I forgot to unpack!' And this was quite a funny scene, given that she doesn't live there in principle. She's there because if we sleep at home [at my parents], then she's there afterwards. She helps me with the housework the next day and stuff. And still the whole thing was as if she lived there and God, she forgot to do something that was her duty! (Zsóka)

The unspoken expectation towards Maja that she had internalized was possibly the extension of the one towards Zsóka, who is in fact responsible for doing most of the housework in the family, a common duty for unmarried women still living with their parents (Fél and Hofer 1969). The fact that Maja was supposed to do housework in spite of not living there shows how the borders of the home are not fixed: activities expressing and strengthening family belonging cut across households (Di Leonardo 1992).

Of course, the kind of housework expected of Maja is strongly gendered, especially in Hungary, where housework is still mainly considered to be the task of women (Zimmermann 2010). Though a man might wish to create a good impression by helping in household chores, he should stick to ‘masculine’ ones (such as shoveling the snow), otherwise it might cause confusion, like in the following story. Sára recalls that when Amadé, her brother-in-law Gergő’s boyfriend, was first invited for a family dinner at her in-laws, “I felt that I was very, a little [laughs] supported, especially her mother tried to [show] that I was in status, so she tried to move the focus to me because Amadé was there.” This differential treatment of the same-sex and the opposite-sex couple clearly showed which partner the parents considered family. However, neither Sára nor Amadé behaved according to the gender norms expected by the parents.

And he [Amadé] was extremely helpful. In this respect he was better, so for instance I’m not so good at, I don’t have this classic woman’s role. And also I’m not the kind who notices where I need to help in the kitchen, or remember to take away the plates. Well, Amadé is. And it was kinda funny that I could see his [Gergő’s] mother kinda expected this from me and kinda called on me to help her, and she took it weird that Amadé went and did it on his own initiative. (Sára)

Throughout the interview, Sára frequently emphasized the very traditional gender norms of her in-laws. On this occasion, the differences between both the gender norms and the interpretations of kinship by the two generations came to light. The fact that Sára remarked (and noticed) the differential treatment of herself and Amadé suggests that she did not take it for granted: in her opinion, both of them should be included in the family to the same extent (she in fact actively tries to establish this, see Chapters V.4 and VII.1). At the same time, Amadé's helping out with the dinner was not only inappropriate because he was not considered 'fully' family but also (and in Sára's opinion even more) because he was a man, who is not supposed to do such things. Though Amadé's helpfulness might or might not have been strategic, this example shows that kin services on the part of the same-sex couple, whether or not with the purpose of generating acceptance, might lead to confusion rather than welcome if they conflict with the norms of the family of origin.

Practice, discourse and meaning

When asked about how their family relates to their sexual orientation, members of same-sex couples usually cite their family's kin services towards them as proof of inclusion. However, many of the stories above complicate the assumption that interpretations of kinship are manifest in kinship practices. In several cases families perform 'kin services' towards people they do not include in their family. This might have several reasons. The 'kin service' might be one that is extended to people other than kin (packing cookies for the guest); it might be performed in order to avoid conflict (Balázs) or in order to improve one's position with the family (Dani). Sometimes kin practices seem inclusionary, but the discourses people cite about family prove that the same-sex partner is not really included (Balázs). At other times, the family members express their rejection on the level of words but still perform inclusionary practices; this confuses people like Lóránt, who is no longer sure whether his brother is really homophobic or not.

Rather than automatically identifying certain kinship practices with inclusion or exclusion, we need to take into account people's discourses and motivations behind various actions, as well as variations according to gender, class or locality. We must also be aware of individual agency in claiming inclusion: appropriate physical or verbal behavior can performatively create kinship (Sahlins 2013), as the story of Rafael's father suggests, even by a two-year-old. At the same time, the family of origin also exhibits agency, whether towards or against inclusion. The same-sex couple and their family of origin thus actively negotiate different interpretations of family and the terms of intimate citizenship.

The performance and meaning of kin practices often derive from the specific traditions of the given family. According to family sociologists it is indeed such different family cultures that are the most common cause of conflict between partners (Somlai 1986). In the last part of this chapter I will examine conflicts and tensions resulting from the interplay of different expectations of kinship behavior between the members of the couple, or between the couple and their kin.

VI.3. Conflicts resulting from kinship behavior

Family conflicts are often seen as reflecting wider social tendencies; feminist scholarship has especially focused on those arising from the different interests of men and women within the family (Collier and Yanagisako 1987) and the different expectations towards them by other family members (Hochschild 2003 [1989]). Gender, however, is not the only fault line along which conflicts can arise in a family (Bryceson and Vuorela 2002). The theory of kinscripts outlined in Chapter II examines family conflicts as resulting from the different roles family members are supposed to fulfill, which are shaped by age, gender, position in the family and other social factors (Stack and Burton 1994). From this perspective, conflicts between non-heterosexuals and their family members arise from the fact that the non-heterosexual person, by virtue of not fitting in with the Heterosexual Family Myth, cannot fulfill certain family

expectations. He/she may also have expectations towards her/his kin that those do not fulfill. Such conflicts over roles and expectations often reflect different interpretations of kinship, and may become a means to fight for intimate citizenship.

At the same time, the couple may also fall out over issues connected to their families of origin. In a set of 17 Hungarian case studies by Péter Somlai it transpired that one of the major causes of conflict within the nuclear families studied was the interference of the families of origin in the couple's life (Somlai 1986). As one of my interviewees, Liza, puts it: "When I get married, I'm not only marrying my husband but his environment too." Though she emphatically says this only about different-sex couples (consonant with her theory that parents distance themselves more from same-sex couples, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter), in fact many same-sex couples say that their family's expectations conflict with those of their relationship.

Exclusion paid back in kind

In Vándor's story (see Chapter V.3) the mother made a requirement that symbolically excluded the same-sex partner from the family. Unlike Tünde or Dani, who make efforts to be included in a hostile family, Vándor decided to break contact with her mother as a response. Though she thinks that her mother's change of attitude is mostly due to a supporting non-homophobic environment, she also concedes that her long disappearance played a part:

She pondered that there are two possibilities: either, though the way I am [i.e. non-heterosexual], I still stay in touch and we meet and whatever, or she had a daughter but no longer has. And she rather chose the former one. (Vándor)

We have seen that for Vándor, her chosen family (including her partner) enjoys priority over her blood kin, and this is clear for her mother as well. Thus her mother's fear of

losing her daughter was realistic, and eventually won over the worries she had about the sticky stigma.

Apparently, cutting family ties permanently is such a threat that kin are often willing to give up their exclusionary practices when facing it, just like same-sex oriented people are often willing to put aside their personal convictions (such as the activist emphasis on outness, see Andrea above) or even dignity (Tünde) in order to maintain family unity. The person less committed to keeping the family intact thus holds a trump card, and can manipulate the other party. Similarly to Vándor, Zsóka also responded with distance to the unequal treatment of her relationship, although she was still living with her parents:

A sentence was uttered by my mother like ‘let’s face it, your relationship will never be as normal as those of your brother and sisters.’ And this was a huge blow for me. So I didn’t go home for 3 weeks. Luckily it was summer vacation, so it wasn’t so difficult, or when I went home, it was for 5 minutes to pack my clothes and went on. And after three months¹⁴⁷ she asked me what the bloody hell I was doing. Well, I said, if I can’t – she knows I spend school year in Citromvár [at college]. The summer is what I can spend with Maja. If she doesn’t want to see me being with her, I won’t be home! But then I’ll also make my choice: at 20 I don’t want to sit at home but be with my partner. If I can’t do it at home, I won’t do it at home. (Zsóka)

Zsóka claims that after this, her mother’s attitude to them changed: Maja was more included in family activities and treated as Zsóka’s partner rather than just a friend. Exercising control over her children is an important priority for Erzsébet, Zsóka’s mother, but this would not have been possible if Zsóka had moved away from home. Though Weston claims that parents sometimes react negatively to coming out because they see it as an expression of independence from their control (Weston 1991), in my sample several parents

manage to keep considerable control over their non-heterosexual child's life – if they are willing to make the compromise of including the same-sex partner in the family.

In the two stories above, the family was willing to change its practices rather than alienate their non-heterosexual member. Not all such stories end so happily, though. Andrea has had several serious conflicts with family members due to their treatment of her relationship; the first time was when they decided to visit Andrea's son and his newborn baby.

When there was the fresh grandchild, and I would have liked to visit him with my girlfriend, and then there were all kinds of excuses, like I should come when her kids [the wife's from her first marriage] are not at home, because a kid of 14-15-16 doesn't know, does she, has no idea about gayness of course. As we know. Has never heard the word. And I don't know what they thought we would, coz it was like OK, we're coming, but shouldn't speak about this. Well, then we didn't go. (Andrea)

Andrea was asked to practice collusion (see Chapter IV.1) towards her son's stepchildren. Refusing to believe in the ignorance of modern teenagers concerning homosexuality, Andrea interpreted the request as an expression of homophobia, and chose to loosen the family tie rather than comply. Though the common stereotype within the LGBTQ community (and also in academic literature, see Sinfield 1998) is the family of origin casting out its non-heterosexual member, it is frequently the non-heterosexual person who loosens or breaks ties with the family because of their (perceived) homophobia.

In spite of the conflicts, Andrea still has contact with her children, though much less than before. Exclusion from the family of origin rarely takes the form of no contact at all, but rather the denial of kin services or too little contact with the same-sex couple.

Too little family

¹⁴⁷ Zsóka first says three weeks, then three months – these might refer to different events (did not go home for three weeks, and then only for five minutes) or she is just using these terms to indicate a very long time. The latter is more likely, especially as summer break in colleges is shorter than three months.

When I mentioned that I would like to move to Pest, he [my brother, who lives in Budapest] didn't give any sign of wanting to help, though he could. [...] Strangers help; he gives neither financial nor human [emotional] support. But I know he's like that, so I wouldn't even ask him. I'd appreciate and need help, but no. [...] It would be nice, more brother-like and acceptable for him to help and support me, I would do it in his place, but I don't judge him for not doing it. (Tekla)

Tekla's brother lives in Budapest, has a middle-class job and a lifestyle that Tekla, uneducated and unemployed in a rural town, cannot even dream about. Not only the working-class ethics of mutual help (Stewart 1997) but also general kinship expectations would have demanded that he support his sister when she wanted to find a job in the capital. Though Tekla acknowledges these social expectations through her use of the words 'brother-like' and 'acceptable', she does not blame her brother. One reason is that the brother is disabled, and thus starts out from a much worse position than his able-bodied relatives ("I can always go and hoe potatoes, he can't", Tekla explains), so apparently he is freed from kinship obligations. The other reason is Tekla's admiration for his middle-class career, which is something she herself would wish to have. Unlike working-class families which hinder upward social mobility through demands of kin services and sharing (Stewart 1997; see also Lilla's story in Chapter V.2), she stands by her brother in this endeavor, even if she is the one to suffer the consequences.

Not all same-sex couples are this tolerant if they feel their kin do not perform their duties towards them. We have seen how Liza resents that her parents help her less now than during her heterosexual marriage, or how Vencel insists on the inclusion of his boyfriend among the recipients of his parents' food gifts. Berta senses unwillingness on her relatives' part to discuss topics related to her lesbianism: "a bunch of people knew I was doing something in the gay movement, nobody ever asked what exactly. In fact, not even my own brother did." She interprets this as either disinterest or a kind of transparent closet (see

Chapter V.1) resulting from the family's discomfort with homosexuality. Berta is also disappointed that her brother and cousins do not ask about the dynamics of her relationship, though she admits they do not usually talk about emotional things in general, so "the relationship itself [with these relatives] is not so deep". Being in touch with Western lesbian communities, she has internalized their emphasis on open communication about emotions¹⁴⁸ (Krieger 1983), and does not consider that in her lower middle-class background this might not be a general norm.

Not talking or asking about the same-sex relationship is more likely to be the result of rejection in families where this is different with regard to heterosexual relationships. Benő's mother, in spite of the visit of the religious leaders (see the story in Chapter VI.1) agreed to still talk to Benő on the phone, but on the condition that he would not speak about his homosexuality and his relationship, putting him into the transparent closet. In contrast, she seems interested in the relationships of her heterosexual sons. Ironically, the heterosexual sons tell her as little as possible, because she used to interfere too much with their relationships in the past. A similar situation occurs in Vencel's family, where the heterosexual daughter suffers from the constant intrusion of the parents into her relationship, but the gay son is left mercifully alone. Vencel explains this with the fact that they have too little information about his lifestyle, including but not limited to his sexual orientation.

I think for them this is a very distorted picture or an unimaginable world. They can imagine a gay couple's life to the extent I can imagine life in an African tribe. In spite of the fact that I have been to Africa, in a big city, but I can't imagine how tribespeople live, in spite of the fact that I must have seen tribespeople in the street, I guess. [...] They rather put me into the category of liberal SZDSZ-voter,¹⁴⁹ who likes traveling, an alien world, an intellectual and has his own ways. (Vencel)

¹⁴⁸ In the Hungarian lesbian community this is less of an expectation and even less a practice. (I am grateful to Dorottya Rédei for calling my attention to this point.)

¹⁴⁹ The Association of Free Democrats, a liberal party (dissolved in the early 2010s).

Vencel's lifestyle is alien for his family not only because of sexual, but also class and urban-rural difference. His simile about the tribespeople underlines that even if someone has had a superficial view of a culture or subculture and has met people from it, they will not automatically understand it.¹⁵⁰ As opposed to many LGBTQ people who emphasize that they are 'not different' from heterosexuals, Vencel acknowledges the gap between his lifestyle (some, though not all, of which can be attributed to his gayness) and that of his parents.

Unlike Benő and Berta, who would like to share more of their private life with their close family, Vencel is in fact happy to be left alone. He is not the only one who thinks that family inclusion might sometimes be more a curse than a blessing.

Too much family

We don't normally celebrate each other, at best we call or text. And in Tina's [my partner's] family it's all birthdays, all namedays, Christmas, what not. So it's two celebrations for every family member. (...) So they have these loads of food and stuff. And then it goes like, as we've been invited so many times, let's start the habit of us doing the same on our birthdays and namedays. But the problem is that I have to raise 4 kids on my own, so for me to spend 10-15 thousand forints on a dinner to invite five others is quite a bastard (*elég húzós*). (Shane)

When entering a marriage or cohabitation, the individual must adapt to his/her changed position in the family of origin and must create a place for his/her partner in it, while at the same time adapting to his/her partner's family of origin as well (Somlai 1984). This often leads to conflicts if the two families are very different. The habit of family celebrations in Tina's family is problematic for Shane not only because she comes from a less close-knit family, but because of her financial situation. It is remarkable that she claims she raises the children (from her previous heterosexual marriage) "on her own", although she and Tina live

together (in Tina's apartment); this indicates not only that she does not consider Tina a parent, but also that she does not accept financial help from her or from her family. Indeed, not relying on kin help is an important value for Shane,¹⁵¹ and this causes further tensions with Tina's family, as illustrated by the following example:

The other day it was like they [Tina's sister and her family] were down in the village where they're building a house, and their little kid, 3 years old, turned on the lights in the car and it stayed like that. And the battery ran out by the evening, when they wanted to come home. Well, that evening I had a thousand things to do, and then I get the call like please go down to them, which is 40 kilometers from here or dunno, to start up the car or take a new battery or something. (Shane)

What outraged Shane was that her in-laws could have asked help from their neighbors, but on principle they do not accept help from strangers, only from kin. This emphasis on kinship ties in Tina's family means that the couple is more involved with kin than Shane would want it; she thinks "this could be done much more healthily", attaching the value of normalcy to her own approach, which does not privilege kin over non-kin. In her case, true acceptance would include respecting her wish not to get too involved in the family.

Shane would like to be exempt from kin services towards her in-laws, but neither does she expect services from them in return. Couples who do wish to benefit from kin help are continually torn between independence and family involvement. Judit admits that she would appreciate it if her relatives could babysit for her – one of the most common kin services in state socialist and postsocialist countries, given the inadequate number and quality of childcare institutions (Gradszkova 2012) – , and "it's a disadvantage for us that we don't have

¹⁵⁰ Of course, Vencel's parents could make efforts to understand the gay subculture more, like some family members we will meet in Chapter VII.

¹⁵¹ It might not be accidental that for a pseudonym she chose the name of a character from the lesbian TV series *The L Word*, who is an independent person with (initially) no family attachments.

a single relative in Pest [where we live].” At the same time, she does see the advantages of her family living so far:

I know my mum is the kind that [if she lived here] she would be here every day with cakes and stuff she cooked and baked. Which is really good, but if I’ve decided to get back to my earlier [pre-pregnancy] weight, it’s depressing if she turns up with a plate of cakes, which are very good and she baked them. And then I just can’t not eat them. So it’s good I don’t have to stop her. (Judit)

In this imaginary situation, the mother’s traditional approach to looking after her daughter conflicts with Judit’s observance of the beauty myth, which during state socialism was associated with Western decadence (Stitiel 2005); Judit assumes that her mother, due to her age, her class background and her being rural, would not understand the modern, middle-class values she (Judit) adheres to.

Class background and class values often lie at the root of tensions related to kinship involvement. Vencel despairs over the financial situation of his partner Arnold’s family, which results from their way of handling their money. Although Vencel is much better off financially, he is in a dilemma over whether to help them.

Formerly my attitude was that I got involved and it made me feel like I was going crazy. And now, it was this story last night¹⁵² when I said OK, for me this doesn’t exist. But it does exist, because I’m in this relationship. And it keeps frustrating me that I relatively constantly and purposefully follow my economic and business line, and I don’t dare to look the other way [at Arnold’s family], because there’s such a big disaster that if I tried to solve it, it would cripple me. (Vencel)

This monologue attests to the notion that a person cannot make her/himself completely independent of his/her own and his/her partner’s kin, as kinship processes influence their

material well-being and the functioning of their relationship. Vencel's story also includes a class element: he is the upwardly mobile working-class man who has organized his whole life with a view of getting forward in life, while Arnold's family are downwardly mobile village workers and intellectuals, who clearly have not adapted to a capitalist economy.

In spite of such conflicts, I have not spoken to any same-sex couples who want to be completely rid of kin connections. Even Shane, who would gladly erase her in-laws from her life, expects her own mother to help with the children. Lilla hardly keeps in touch with her siblings (see Chapter V.2), but does sometimes meet up with her nieces; she would like to be for them a role model and an illustration that a working-class woman can also make a career. Though often selectively and within limits, all the subjects of my formal and informal interviews want some inclusion in their family of origin – on their own terms.

Priority as an indicator of kinship ideologies

This was just the difficulty, that Rozi's parents are not alive, like for example what'd happen at Christmas? Because I think in most relationships the first Christmas – especially if they didn't get together in January but in October like us – is spent by everyone at their parents, probably. Or there's no conflict about it. [...] But here there wasn't this possibility. So there was either the possibility that I go home [to my mother] and Rozi sits at home alone, or something else. And then at the first Christmas, it was really not then I decided but before, that I didn't want to spend Christmas without Rozi. So for me a love relationship¹⁵³ is not about leaving her alone on a holiday so important in Hungarian, European culture, telling her I'm going and then [go]. [...] And then I told my mother [laughs] that I wouldn't be home for Christmas Eve. So we'd decided [with Rozi] that we'd be together then, and in the morning of the 25th I'd go home to mum. And then it seemed it'd be all right. And then my mother as usual – now it seems this is usual – freaked out a week before Christmas. [...] She made a scene and wrote a horrible letter and cried on the phone and dunno. But by that time, so I'm quite experienced

¹⁵² A letter from the tax office to Arnold's family was left unopened for two months; Vencel was worried that it might include some payment demand, and if they have missed the deadline they would be fined.

¹⁵³ 'Szeretetkapcsolat', a Christian term, is not limited to sexual relationships but any type of love.

with my mother, like what I should fall for and what not. So of course I felt a bit guilty and tortured, but I stuck [to my decision], so I said ‘no’, the 24th is ours and full stop, I’d go on the 25th. (Vándor)

Family celebrations are rituals reaffirming belonging (Etzioni 2004). Christmas is a central one among these in Hungarian culture (Fél and Hofer 1969), emphasized even more by the Christian revival since the transition. Vándor is also aware of its importance, and this was the cause of her dilemma when she was forced to make a choice between her mother and her girlfriend (just like later at her operation, see Chapter V.3), and she chose the latter. This was also a symbolic choice: by staying with Rozi she expressed that her chosen family is closer to her than her family of origin (see also Chapter IV.4). At the same time, she emphasizes that she did this because Rozi has no other family; she does not completely subvert the family tradition, only adapts it to the circumstances.

Vándor’s choice of partner over mother is also an expression of her independence, as in fact all same-sex relationships are, as they go against the scripts established by the family of origin (Weston 1991). At the same time, the family of origin might still retain some control over the individual if they accept the same-sex relationship (see previous section). Some non-heterosexuals would not necessarily choose their partner over their family of origin, or they cannot be sure their partner would. Shane is frustrated by her partner Tina’s strong attachment to her mother. “I don’t feel she comes home to me. I much rather feel she goes home to her mother”, she complains. As a test of Tina’s loyalties, she once raised the possibility of moving to a small town in southeast Hungary (about 300 kilometers from Budapest); Tina said she could not leave her mother alone in Budapest. For Shane, this is proof that “for her, her family will always be more important than me”, given that Tina’s mother is healthy and “could perfectly survive alone”; this suggests that she would be more understanding if Tina had an ailing relative to look after. Though Vándor and Shane assert the primacy of the same-

sex relationship over the family of origin, they both do so without challenging mainstream kinship expectations.

Occasionally, the priority of the family of origin might rise on the influence of the same-sex partner. Zsófi had a rather loose relationship with her family, which her girlfriend Emma, coming from a close-knit Jewish family, found strange and started pressuring her partner to retain a closer contact with them.

Emma urged me like ‘yes, call them, and sure we’re going there at the weekend’, so I was ready to explode, and Emma was staring at me like I should pull myself together and not make faces at Sunday lunch. Yes, I think she’s influenced me a lot in this sense. And I think my relationship with my parents is much better than three years ago. [...] And like I have contact with my brother! And that’s all thanks to Emma. (Zsófi)¹⁵⁴

Unlike Shane, who thinks too strong attachment to the family of origin is ‘unhealthy’, Zsófi is grateful to Emma for introducing a new family culture in her kinship network. Although it is generally assumed that family as a value is more important for heterosexuals than for LGBTQ people, who are often excluded from it – this is confirmed by value studies in Hungary (Takács 2008) – in Zsófi’s case we see a movement towards the heterosexual model, but this is contingent upon the acceptance of her same-sex relationship.

Kinship practices and intimate citizenship

This chapter has demonstrated that family practices are strongly influenced by discourses of kinship: sometimes these are evoked explicitly (e.g. by Balázs or Lóránt), with attention to their gender (Sára) or urban/rural (Andrea, see Chapter V.3) dimensions, sometimes only lurk in the background, like when practices are used to symbolically convey understandings of family (e.g. by Havana’s kin). In turn, practices might create personal understandings of

¹⁵⁴ Emma and Zsófi broke up during the course of my fieldwork, see Chapter IV.

kinship: it was her parents' different behavior during her two relationships that induced Liza's theory on questions of continuity in heterosexual and lesbian relationships. Such discourses are naturally influenced by those in wider society, e.g. the nationalistic emphasis on pronatalism and parenthood (see Erzsébet's husband or Tünde's paternal kin), which often make it harder for same-sex couples to fit into existing models of family.

Family discourses and practices show a wide variety depending on class, gender or geographical position, so it is not always easy to deduce whether given practices are meant to perform inclusion/exclusion of the same-sex couple or not. Nevertheless, there are some cases when this is clearly their purpose (like Bence's invitation to the wedding or Tünde's Christmas presents). Similarly, non-heterosexuals often use kinship practices purposefully to claim inclusion in their or their partner's family of origin (Dani shoveling the snow). What is at stake in these cases is the individual family members' interpretation of family, which (if these differ) they often try to force on other members. Family thus becomes a site for struggle over meaning, control and intimate citizenship, claimed through performative agency.

There are further intimate citizenship relevances to the practices described above. Sometimes the family does not exclude the same-sex couple but puts constraints on their intimate behavior, at least in their presence (Tulipán or Andrea's son) or only tolerates them as long as they perform the gendered family functions assigned to them (Tiggris, Maja). At the same time, the families themselves are scrutinized by their environment: a same-sex couple may harm the family's reputation by making visible their deviation from the Heterosexual Family Myth (see examples in Chapter V.3) or by making them unable to fulfill certain expectations, like organizing a big wedding for their child (József). In the last analytical chapter I will focus on how the intimate citizenship of family members is affected by a same-sex relationship, and how they can claim intimate citizenship within the wider community.

Chapter VII. The family's perspective

Research that deals with the reaction of parents¹⁵⁵ to same-sex relationships usually creates a contrast between them and their non-heterosexual child. Mothers and fathers are seen as struggling with acceptance (Herdt and Koff 2000), as turning away from their non-heterosexual child (Weston 1991), as not supporting same-sex parenting (Du Chesne and Bradley 2007), or as making their child pretend heterosexuality before the wider community (Glass 2014, Kuhar 2007). Even when parents are depicted as giving support to their child, studies emphasize that they do so from a heteronormative point of view: they are elated at the idea of being grandparents (Gross 2011) or claim sexual citizenship rights based on the need to protect (their) heterosexual families (Cappellato and Manganella 2014). In short, all studies suggest that family members of non-heterosexuals are hopelessly trapped within the Heterosexual Family Myth and might support but will never fully accept relationships that differ from that. Their reactions are only studied as affecting the intimate citizenship of the same-sex couple; their own intimate citizenship is not questioned, as if there was an exclusive correlation between heterosexuality and inclusion vs. other sexualities and exclusion (see Chapter II.2).

In previous chapters however, we have seen that family members, just like same-sex couples themselves, face marginalization within Hungarian society. The sticky stigma, theories that find the source of homosexuality in parental behavior and the general silence around same-sex sexuality make it hard for them to be open about their family, even if they wish to do so. In a society where conformism and community pressure are important factors, fear of stigmatization is a highly effective way of policing individual and family practices, even though – as we have seen in Chapter V.3 – the disdain of the community is often more an internalized myth than reality. While non-heterosexuals have a subculture that supports

same-sex intimate practices (as long as they fall in line with community norms, see Chapter IV), family members often have no access to such resources. As we will see, some of them try to integrate into the LGBTQ community, but that does not fully represent their perspective either. Public discourses, if they mention families of non-heterosexuals at all, abound with horror stories about rejective fathers and (less often) mothers, or suggest that having a non-heterosexual child is a tragedy that parents are to be pitied for. Not only same-sex couples but also their family members are out of place within a society that perpetuates the Heterosexual Family Myth, and as we have seen, in contemporary Hungary mainstream discourses offer no alternatives to it. Under these circumstances, it is even harder for them to stand up for the social inclusion of their non-heterosexual family members and themselves.

This chapter focuses on the experiences, discourses and practices of family members of non-heterosexuals. Though some of them try to limit the same-sex couple's intimate citizenship (as we have seen in the previous chapters), others enthusiastically support them and become allies to the LGBTQ cause. The fact of having a non-heterosexual family member might also change how they think about family: they might 'come around' to accept same-sex relationships or rainbow families, or they might extend their support to non-heterosexuals whose families are less accepting than themselves. Importantly, many of them are critical towards mainstream family discourses not only because of the heteronormativity perpetuated by those but because their own, heterosexual family practices are not compatible with them either. This way, it is not only the same-sex couple's intimate citizenship that is at stake: family members need to create legitimacy for their own family form, which might deviate from the state-perpetuated norm in several ways, not all of them the result of the same-sex relationship.

¹⁵⁵ As discussed above, other members of the couples' natal families are virtually absent from such research.

Naturally, such changes are strongly influenced by the same-sex couples themselves: their mere visibility, interpretations of family or practices often bring about changes in family members' attitudes, as discussed in the previous chapter. Getting in touch with the LGBTQ community might also give ammunition for family members to question mainstream models of family; at the same time their own heteronormative environment might counteract this, like with Benő's mother (see Chapter VI.1). We must acknowledge the agency of family members, however: they also actively interpret their environment and come to their own conclusions, which might even be more radical than their non-heterosexual family member's.

VII.1. Allies

The term 'ally' is sometimes used in the LGBTQ community to denote those heterosexuals (often friends and family members of LGBTQ people) who actively stand up against heteronormativity and homophobia; sometimes they are designated by the letter A added to the acronym (after another A referring to asexuals). Although adding their letter to the acronym LGBTQ acknowledges the fact that they too may be targeted by homophobia or transphobia (Richards 1999), grouping them under one term obscures the differences in their situation (as in fact all letters of the acronym do; Richardson and Monro 2012). Allies who stand up for LGBTQ rights as an extension of their human rights activism are in a very different position with regard to intimate citizenship and stigmatization than people who have a non-heterosexual (or non-cisgender) family member; the former are less affected by the secondary stigma and may come from a context that promotes diversity and acceptance (see Hilary's example in Chapter VI.1), whereas family members of LGBTQ people often have to turn against their immediate environment in support of the non-heterosexual person. We must also note that in Hungary the term 'ally' is rarely used in this context, though several

heterosexuals participate in LGBTQ activism¹⁵⁶ and events. Nevertheless, for simplicity's sake I use the term here to emphasize the role heterosexual family members (and friends) can play in the struggle for LGBTQ intimate citizenship.

In the US and some other countries, the organization PFLAG (or its local variant) gives space for the activities of friends and family members of LGBTQ people. In Hungary, as mentioned in Chapter III.3, there is no such organization,¹⁵⁷ and the formerly operating parents' group focused more on improving parental attitudes towards non-heterosexual offspring than on finding ways to support the LGBTQ cause in wider society (Natália Szente, personal communication). This does not mean, however, that no heterosexual family members give active support to non-heterosexuals. They might do so in order to protect themselves or their own family member (Cappellato and Manganella 2014) but also to fight for a just society. Their support might take various forms, some linked to the private and some to the public sphere. In this subchapter I will discuss activities and discourses through which family members of non-heterosexuals stand up for their own and LGBTQ people's intimate citizenship. Their strategies, however, do not necessarily converge with those of LGBTQ activism.

Who is an ally?

ZS: He [my ex-husband] said he didn't really know what to do about this [that our son is gay]. Like what do we have to do now? And I said I didn't think we had to do anything. Accept the child, support him in everything. Possibly, I said, warn him if he's a bit too – I don't know. If the signs are too visible on him? Or I don't know how to say this?

BDR: You mean if he looks the way that others might see he's gay?

¹⁵⁶ Indeed, activists from Western Europe are sometimes surprised at how many self-identified heterosexuals take up important positions in LGBTQ organizations in Hungary. This is probably partly due to the fact that there is no activist group specifically for allies, as will be discussed below.

¹⁵⁷ As mentioned above, the formerly existing organization PFLAG was a group of LGBT activists with no effort to involve parents and friends.

ZS: Yes, yes. [...] Out of protection. So we know the kind of people out there. So he wouldn't get into some, so into a physical conflict. (Zsuzsi)

Zsuzsi considers herself and is considered by her son Csaba a supportive parent. Nevertheless, she tries to normalize her gay son in his appearance and otherwise as well (she warns him against coming out to people he hardly knows), all the while claiming it is in his interest.

Zsuzsi's example complicates our understanding of 'support'. She is convinced that her normalizing efforts will increase Csaba's quality of life and so they fit in with her role as a good mother. At the same time, her approach to coming out as unnecessary does not coincide with LGBTQ community norms that put a high value on it (see Chapter V.2). In a similar vein, Erzsébet interprets her daughter's public outness as a phase in the process of coming out to herself (rather like some coming out models e.g. Cass's – cited in Trolden 2004), which will pass when she has integrated her sexual orientation into her identity. Actually, at a point she asked her daughter not to put posts on community websites that would make her lesbianism obvious. Possibly unaware of community discourses about the importance of coming out as a public act, these two mothers are puzzled that their children would want to discuss their ostensibly private affairs in the public sphere, and in fact actively constrain such activities.

Tulipán's attitude to expressing same-sex affection is another example of a well-meaning mother influenced by heteronormativity. As we might remember from Chapter VI.2, she provided her son with his own apartment so she would not have to see him being intimate with another man. She herself admits that she would have no problem with heterosexual intimacies, but nevertheless considers herself an accepting parent; it does not even occur to her that full acceptance of homosexuality would mean the same attitudes and level of policing (if any) towards same-sex and different-sex sexuality.

One might think that the examples cited above confirm Cappellato and Manganello's (2014) claim that even when heterosexual parents support their gay or lesbian child, they confirm heteronormative values and assumptions. We must remember, however, that some of these values are also shared by many non-heterosexuals; as discussed in Chapter V.2, several of my interviewees disagree with activist rhetoric on the importance of coming out, and in Chapter VI we have seen that some same-sex couples are themselves uncomfortable with expressing their feelings publicly. Decena's (2008) Dominican research subjects share with their relatives a wish to keep their homosexuality an open secret, and indeed make efforts that it remains so. Also, family members may not even be aware of LGBTQ community discourses that would show an alternative to their heteronormative ones, as in many Hungarian families there is little communication about these, especially between parents and children, neither does mainstream media give insight into LGBTQ subcultural values.

In analyzing discourses within PFLAG, Broad (2011) shows how the discourse of love dominant there enables certain types of support but not others: it motivates parents to accept their children but not necessarily to fight discrimination towards LGBTQ people in general. This suggests that even in the US, the LGBTQ activist rhetoric emphasizing homophobia as a form of social oppression (Murray 2009) does not necessarily reach beyond the confines of the LGBTQ community. At the same time, love might lead to policing the non-heterosexual person's practices, like in some cases discussed above. Also, it is harder to protest against constraints that come from parental love (coupled with parental authority); emotions may be used to justify exclusions and thus attach people to subordination (Ahmed 2009).

Just like apparent constraints on the non-heterosexual family member might originate in love and concern, supportive actions might also have other causes. Cappellato and Manganello (2014) suggest that even parents who stand up for LGBT rights only do so because they want to improve their child's life, and not because they identify with the cause

of LGBT equality itself. László Lánér, an interviewee in the volume *Hot men, cold dictatorships* says about his sister's participation in the pride march: "in fact she didn't want to stand up for gay people¹⁵⁸ but against fascism,¹⁵⁹ but ended up in fact standing up for gay people too" (Hanzli et al. 2015: 19). Whatever the original motivation, any action in support of LGBTQ rights is interpreted by members of the community as a sign of acceptance and the person performing it as an ally in the struggle for intimate citizenship. This is not to deny, however, that some family members actively stand up for either their non-heterosexual kin or LGBTQ people in general. In order to do so, they need some knowledge about the concerns and lifestyle of LGBTQ people.

Exploring an alien world

As mentioned in the previous section, the coming out discourse is something that may not be familiar for heterosexuals, especially in Hungary where LGBTQ activism gets minimal coverage in mainstream media. This is just one instance of the subculture that might be unfamiliar for family members. One solution, exemplified by Vencel's family (see Chapter VI.3) is to conclude that non-heterosexuals live in an alien world and not bother to find out more about it. There are family members, however, who have a wish to understand non-heterosexual lifestyles – to a certain extent.

A typical place for familiarizing heterosexual relatives with the LGBTQ subculture seems to be subcultural venues, like workshops, discussions and bars. Though the presence of heterosexuals in gay bars is sometimes contested on various grounds (Johnston and Longhurst 2010, Matejskova 2007), my non-heterosexual interviewees were happy to take their family members there and often suggested the idea themselves. They often report that the experience brought the person closer to understanding LGBTQ lifestyles and, as we will see in the next

¹⁵⁸ Like many non-heterosexuals (especially of the older generation), Lánér uses 'gay people' to mean LGBTQ.

subchapter, at least in one case became the basis for friendships that led to a reinterpretation of the notion of family. Sometimes, however, the non-heterosexual person is less comfortable with the situation. Dóri feels that her mother ‘enjoyed herself too much’ in the gay bar, getting drunk and flirting with a man much younger than herself. Norbi was similarly embarrassed about his mother, when she went with him to an LGBTQ discussion group and made a stereotypical comment about all stylists being gay. In the latter case, the mother was unable to step outside mainstream discourses, which sounded out of place at an LGBTQ event. Dóri’s mother was quite the opposite: having exited heteronormative space, she also shed the types of behavior expected of middle-aged women there. She is an example for how the shattering of the Heterosexual Family Myth might enable heterosexual family members as well to make untraditional intimate choices (Herdt and Koff 2000). The space where they do so, however, is not devoid of norms but has its own, which heterosexual family members may not be aware of (or may not care about, being outsiders anyway), so they might end up embarrassing their non-heterosexual kin. Also, LGBTQ space is not necessarily friendly towards heterosexuals who do not completely agree with its norms. GotOne, the mother of a gay son, wrote to a forum on pride.hu, which shows her willingness to engage in dialogue with LGBTQ people. However, as we have seen in Chapter III.2, she was rudely rebuked when she admitted difficulties relating to her child the same way as before. It seems that members of the LGBTQ subculture are welcoming towards supportive heterosexuals, but only as long as their views do not diverge from community norms; otherwise they are policed and just as constrained in their self-expression as in their mainstream heterosexual communities.

The openness of family members to the subculture is not unlimited either. Many relatives draw the line of support at participating in pride marches, often based on

¹⁵⁹ He probably hints at the extreme right-wing counterdemonstrators and the municipality’s attempts to ban the pride march, both of which events were interpreted by many as an attack on cultural diversity and the right to self-expression; in more detail see Renkin 2014.

stereotypical views of what happens there (Cappellato and Manganella 2014), their fears of being visible to their heterosexual community as kin of LGBTQ (see Chapter V.3) or because they don't extend their support for their non-heterosexual family member to all of her/his community: when Eszter asked her sister to come to the march, she answered that "it was not her struggle". A gay athlete told me that his parents had once given him and a fellow athlete a ride to an LGBT sports contest in a foreign city, but would not themselves go to see them compete; they clearly did not feel ready to face a large group of LGBTQ people.

As communication about sexual orientation and sexuality in general is taboo in many families, sometimes family members rather gather information from the media and public discourses than ask their non-heterosexual kin. However, nationalism-inspired Hungarian media mostly transmits stereotypical images of LGBTQ people (Imre 2013) and thus might deliver a distorted picture: Dénes was surprised when his mother asked him if he and his friends ever dressed up in drag. Here the misunderstanding was cleared through communication, but this is not always possible in family cultures that are built around the silencing of sexuality and related matters. Though Dénes thinks his mother should rather ask questions than remain misinformed, he is reluctant to speak about sexual issues with her; in this family, it is the gay person who draws the line around how much of gay lifestyle can be discussed. The full participation of heterosexual allies in the LGBTQ subcultures is thus limited both by their own attitudes and those of non-heterosexuals, and these are influenced by mainstream and LGBTQ community discourses.

Speaking up for non-heterosexual kin

As we have seen in Chapter VI.2, 'acceptance' of sexual orientation can mean different things for different (heterosexual and other) people; the same is true for support. Eszter thinks that her sister ought to participate in the pride march to "stand up for her gay sis", and sees her reluctance to do so as a sign that "she hates gays"; this is in line with Herdt and Koff's (2000)

model, in which the final stage of family development is openly standing up for LGBTQ equality. This, however, can be done in many other ways than marching at the pride. In fact, several of my heterosexual interviewees have been willing to stand up for LGBTQ equality in the private sphere. Ivett raises the topic of same-sex sexuality relatively early on in a dating relationship, and invariably breaks up with the man if he expresses homophobic opinions. Others voice pro-LGBTQ opinions even in settings where they risk exclusion or repercussions for doing so.

[On a PE class] the topic of gay marriage came up.¹⁶⁰ And I stood up for it completely, that it'd be a completely normal thing and I don't understand why it's not allowed in Hungary yet [...] And my PE teacher was a lady in her 60s. Who came up with the very narrow-minded and old-fashioned opinion that this is how God created the world, and this [heterosexuality] is what's normal. And I got really upset and argued with her for 45 minutes about this. [...] Because she said that marriage is a contract with the state that you'll have children in order to maintain the state. And that this is not about love. Because our [her friend had joined in to support her] argument was that if two people love each other, why couldn't they get married and have kids? And this was her reaction, to which I could only react, quite passionately, that I'm sorry to hear that Miss doesn't love her husband. (Zira)

School is often perceived as one of the most homophobic institutions in Hungary (Béres-Deák 2012, Dombos et al. 2011, Rédai 2015). Disregarding this, as well as the teacher-student hierarchy, Zira stood up for same-sex marriage and in her rather cheeky way countered the teacher's homophobic opinions. Her argument with her teacher is based upon approaches to the concept of citizenship. For the teacher it means the citizen's obligation to the state, including in the private sphere; Zira, on the other hand, argues that the state has to enable citizens' intimate choices on the legal level. This recalls the debate whether rights or duties are more fundamental to citizenship (Lister 1997); in the liberal approach represented

¹⁶⁰ An excellent example of how school education, allegedly devoid of sexuality, is in fact highly sexualized (Pascoe 2007).

by Zira and many other advocates of LGBTQ equality, the importance of the former outweighs the latter (Schuck 2002).

This is not the only difference in the approach of the two sides, as demonstrated by another instance of the argument: “[the teacher claimed] that gay people are not human. And I started thinking that my sister is definitely human. And most of my gay friends are much more human than Miss!”(Zira). In contrast to the generalized homophobia of the teacher, Zira personalizes her response and considers gay people as individuals. Nevertheless, contrary to the claim of Cappellato and Manganella (2014) cited above – and to people like Eszter’s sister – she does not only focus on her sister and her friends, but extends her support to all “gay people”.

An interesting aspect of this conflict is that Zira did not come out as the sister of a lesbian. This approach is not rare: Tulipán, Zsuzsi, as well as Róbert’s daughter have all stood up for LGBTQ people without mentioning that they have one (or more) in their immediate family. This way they can avoid the secondary stigma but still follow their conscience, which demands protecting their family member and her/his community. It is also possible that some of them wish to argue for LGBTQ rights as outsiders, fearing that they would be taken less seriously if their personal involvement with the cause was obvious (for an example in the Central Eastern European context see Tímár 2013). Other heterosexual family members are out about their status and stand up fiercely for same-sex relationships even against their most beloved kin, like Ivett against her godfather.

My godfather, Jani, has also often said that two girls are sweet and beautiful together, but two guys are disgusting and repellent. And I tell him, this is often a cause for debate at breakfast, when sometimes they come and we have breakfast together on Sundays, we have 2-3 hour arguments about this. [...] So I told him that this is not because you have it [disgust at male homosexuality] genetically coded in you, but probably because of society. (Ivett)

Ivett has a bisexual sister, Kornélia; if Cappellato and Mangarella's (2014) claim was true about family members only supporting their loved ones and not LGBTQ people in general, she would not bother defending gay men. However, she identifies with the wider cause of LGBTQ rights, and her arguments suggest that she has read extensively about the topic. In fact, she reports more fierce confrontations with her family members over LGBTQ issues than Kornélia herself. This might be partly because, not wanting to offend the non-heterosexual family member (or upset family peace), people might not voice their rejective attitudes in her/his presence; having a non-heterosexual family member might limit not only her/his but other family members' self-expression (see also Balázs in Chapter VI.2). Norbi's parents did not show him any negative reactions upon his coming out, but his sister Krisztina says they were secretly really upset. In such situations it is often the heterosexual allies who are confronted with homophobic attitudes in the family, and they are the ones who need to handle these – sometimes at the expense of breaking kin ties.

Divided families

Above we have seen cases when the intimate citizenship of the LGBTQ person and the heterosexual ally came into conflict. In families where some members are homophobic or just unaware of the same-sex relationship, their intimate citizenship might be just as constrained as that of the same-sex couple. One example is Christmas in Norbi's family, where the grandmother did not know¹⁶¹ about Norbi's relationship with István. Norbi's sister Krisztina recalls that the grandmother used to visit them at Christmas, but then their (Krisztina's and Norbi's) parents took her home, so that István could come over and celebrate with them. Christmas is the symbol of family unity; the practice of collusion led in this case to a breach

¹⁶¹ At the time of my interview with Krisztina, Norbi and István had broken up.

of this unity and fragmented the family, leaving both István and the grandmother partially excluded.¹⁶²

Another Christmas story shows how women, who have a central role in maintaining kin ties (Di Leonardo 1992), face a dilemma when having both non-heterosexual and homophobic kin, but also the agency they hold in deciding whose intimate citizenship they should constrain.

In our family, ever since I got married, [inaudible] Christmas has always been like the whole family getting together. My sisters, my sisters' children, my mother. We get together. And as I've said there are some kids in the family who don't tolerate gayness at all, [so] unfortunately Alexander's [my son's] relationship will never become public. I don't want to expose either Alexander or his partner to slurs. So I really want to finish with this 'we all fall into each other's arms on Christmas Eve' thing. But it's very difficult [to end] something that's been a tradition with us for 20 years; I keep saying that the family's getting bigger, new grandchildren are born and soon we won't fit into the apartment, but I haven't yet got to the point [of not making a family gathering]. (Tulipán)

Tulipán is torn between two kinship duties: that of a woman keeping up family traditions, and that of a mother to protect her son. The latter would mean breaking contact with homophobic family members, but she dares not take such a radical step (partly because that would need an explanation and she does not want to out Alexander to them). The other option would be to terminate the Christmas family gatherings altogether, but that would also amount to breaking kinship obligations. The excuse she uses (the size of her home) keeps her in the role of a 'good relative' and blames her decision on outer constraints (which, given Hungarian housing problems, is not out of touch with reality), but apparently her relatives do not accept it. Sooner or later, Tulipán will have to make a choice between her son and her wider family. In this story, being an ally directly affects the mother's intimate citizenship

¹⁶² I am grateful to Roman Kuhar and Hadley Z. Renkin for this insight.

within her wider family circle, as it would force her to engage in practices that break the expectation of ‘diffuse, enduring solidarity’ in the eyes of her kinship network.

Though above I have mentioned several cases when the non-heterosexual person broke contact with a family member because of her/his homophobia, Tulipán’s story might become a case when a heterosexual ally does the same. Tünde’s children are an example for this option. As we have seen in Chapter VI, Tünde’s parents reacted very negatively to her lesbian relationship. They often voiced their discontent in front of her children as well, who after some time – in spite of their mother’s attempts to maintain contact – declined to visit them any more. Tünde thinks “this is a lesson to [all] parents: if they don’t accept their gay child, they might lose their grandchildren.” This opinion is in concert with the activist claim that it is not homosexuality but homophobia that disrupts families (Smith cited in Weston 1991), and also takes for granted the importance of the grandparent role for the older generation. We must acknowledge, though, that such radical ruptures seem to be unusual. Most accepting heterosexual family members – like Ivett above – try to convince homophobic ones through arguments rather than the termination of kinship.

Political activism

The supportive practices discussed so far occur in the private sphere, but some family members go further and try to change things in broader society. This is even harder for them than for non-heterosexuals: as mentioned above, there are no activist organizations specifically for allies. In case of a family closet (see Chapter V.3), the activist-minded family member might refrain from claiming intimate citizenship in the public sphere for fear of outing her/his family members. Also, in postsocialist countries civil activism has less tradition and fewer opportunities than in Western Europe (McLennan 2011), which might also deter family members from engaging in it.

Some family members and other allies join LGBTQ organizations to fight for intimate citizenship for non-heterosexuals, hoping this would also contribute to their own inclusion. Though some of them find a new community there and become prominent activists, not all experience a warm welcome. Sometimes, like in the case of Norbi's mother above, unfamiliarity with subcultural norms and expectations may lead to their exclusion. At other times the person's motives are doubted: a mother told me that though she had wanted to engage in activism, her bisexual son forbade her to join the same organization where he was volunteering, interpreting her dedication to fight alongside with him as a wish to control all aspects of his life. Here the son felt that his intimate citizenship depended on independence from the family of origin, and did not consider the possibility that his mother had her own intimate citizenship to claim. Given the low number of LGBTQ organizations in Hungary, especially outside Budapest, the mother was left with very few opportunities to stand up for intimate citizenship. One of these opportunities could be the annual pride march, where violent attacks by protesters against participants of all sexual orientations and gender identities are perhaps the clearest indication of how the stigma of non-heterosexual orientation infringes upon the inclusion and even physical safety of allies as well.

Protection goes both ways

Emma went and Emma's mother went too [to the pride march]. And Emma's mother is kinda big and moves a bit slowly, and there were some 5 eggs all over her.¹⁶³ [...] You understand, on a mother, a mother – why the fuck throw eggs at them (*a fenének kell őket tojással dobálni*)?! Well, why throw eggs at anyone in general?! But there are these supportive parents. And they're the ones to get the eggs. (Zsófi)

¹⁶³ Counterdemonstrators at the Budapest Pride March used to throw eggs filled with paint at the marchers. The paint cannot be removed from fabric, so it helps to identify marchers on their way home, where they can be rounded up and attacked without the security provisions of the march protecting them.

It is not only LGBTQ people who suffer from homophobia, but often their heterosexual allies as well (Richards 1999); pride marches are perhaps the most visible example for this. Though her partner also went to the march, Zsófi is more outraged by the attack on Emma's mother Böske, partly because she is an 'innocent' heterosexual supporter, and partly because Zsófi (a mother herself) finds it unforgivable to make someone suffer from what she sees as an expression of motherly love. Cappellato and Manganella (2014) claim that the idea of parents and their LGBT children fighting together for LGBT rights creates a model of citizenship based on individuals' relationships with their family of origin; Zsófi uses the same argument in the other direction, claiming intimate citizenship for supportive heterosexual family members.

Many of my interviewees are aware of the difficulties their sexual orientation causes for their parents¹⁶⁴ and try to make things easier for them through familiarizing them with the subculture (see above) or even constraining their own self-expression or outness to help them manage the secondary stigma (see examples in Chapter V). Often, like in Zsófi's monologue, there seems to be a perception that family members are 'innocent victims' of the stigma on same-sex sexuality and thus attacks against them are 'more unfair' than against non-heterosexuals (see also Vándor's reasoning in Chapter V.2 regarding her grandparents). This resonates with notions of deserving or undeserving groups in terms of equality (Richardson and Monro 2012) and suggests that the non-heterosexual person is responsible for the secondary stigma on her/his kin and hence also for protecting them against it as much as s/he can. Andrea, for instance, thinks that her in-laws host exaggerated fears concerning her and their daughter's visibility as a lesbian couple, but still grants their requests and stays closeted (see Chapter V.3), because "if they think this might do harm, I have no right to insist [on

¹⁶⁴ Such active support seems to be more common with parents; siblings and more distant relatives are usually left to deal with their problems themselves, at best occasionally talking over them with the non-heterosexual person.

being out], even if I don't think so, but still" (Andrea). She feels she needs to protect her girlfriend and the family which she feels has integrated her so willingly. Compliance with the family's requests to conceal sexual identity, as discussed in Chapter V, might be framed not in the sense of bending to their oppressive demands but as a favor in return for their support of one's non-heterosexual lifestyle.

Balancing the needs of both non-heterosexuals and their kin is sometimes a difficult task, which does not necessarily fall onto the non-heterosexual person. Sára, as we have seen (in Chapter V.4) knew about her brother-in-law Gergő's sexual orientation before Gergő's parents did, and this put her into a difficult position when encountering their homophobia.

Later there was quite an uncomfortable thing when in the family, at some family occasion they started some light gay slurs, when I already knew [that Gergő was gay]. But the family didn't. And then I started, I got into a small conflict with his mother over this: I expressed my completely opposing opinion that gay people having kids was perfectly all right – because I think this was it, so this was what his mother thought really shouldn't happen. And I already knew [that Gergő was gay and wanted children], so I also knew Gergő was hearing this, and how bad his mother would feel if she knew what she was saying was hurting Gergő, so it was a rather stupid situation. And I tried to argue in a way that she wouldn't get very much onto the opposing side. (Sára)

Sára had to maneuver carefully not to out Gergő, not to make his mother turn against homosexuals or not to create this impression in Gergő himself, while still standing up for the LGBTQ cause (and not get rejected by the family, which was also a possibility due to her affinal status and different value system). Her vocal support for gay parenthood may also have been motivated by her in-laws' insistence on grandchildren: foreseeing Gergő's future coming out (which eventually happened, see Chapter VI.2), she possibly hoped that the mother's acceptance of gay parenthood might alleviate the pressure put on her in this respect. She tried to respect everyone's needs and intimate citizenship, including her own, but the

opposing interests made this an almost impossible task. This example, like some others above (e.g. Tulipán's) illustrates how different intimate citizenships may conflict within the same family, and also how the conditionality of intimate citizenship within the family also affects heterosexuals who deviate from the norm of procreation (Szalma and Takács 2015).

We can see, then, that being an ally is not always easy for heterosexual kin of same-sex oriented people. They have to familiarize themselves with a new subculture, which might not welcome them with open arms. They might have to face stigmatization, homophobia and even open violence themselves, or might suffer from seeing their loved ones confronted by these. They often have to pluck up their courage if they are to defend the rights of LGBTQ people, even at the risk of creating a rift within their own family. Supporting non-heterosexual family members is thus more than mere acceptance: it is a process of learning and a series of acts standing up for non-heterosexual intimate citizenship. In the process, the ally her/himself also revises her/his notion of kinship and disattaches it from the Heterosexual Family Myth (Herdt and Koff 2000). This in turn enables her/him and also her/his non-heterosexual family members to claim intimate citizenship for heterosexuals who have non-heterosexual kin. This way, the decision to become an ally – whether out of conviction for equality or in order to protect one's own family member – is an act of intimate citizenship itself.

This process might effect changes in the non-heterosexual person (Andrea started thinking differently about being out when she considered the situation of her in-laws) and also the family member. The latter might step over the conventional constraints of heteronormative society, like Dóri's mother, experience the difficulty of managing the closet, like Sára did, or gain new knowledge about the functioning of heteronormativity, like Ivett. Also, the presence of a same-sex couple or a rainbow family amongst their kin may lead them to reconsider their former image of family.

VII.2. Reinterpretations of kinship

Herdt and Koff (2000) claim that the presence of a non-heterosexual child makes the parents reinterpret their previous notions of family. Several studies discussing parental reactions to rainbow families (e.g. Cadoret 2009, Gross 2011) take it for granted that parents start out from the normative model of the nuclear heterosexual family and transform this model (or not) to include the same-sex couple. This is an approach that views heterosexual families as monolithic, ignoring deviations from the nuclear family norm, which is more an ideal than a lived reality for the majority of the population (Coontz 1997). Most of the relatives in my sample have themselves had experience with family arrangements that do not fit mainstream representations. Erzsébet and Klári have both had to realize that their second husband has closer ties with his stepchildren than the biological father does. Both Tulipán and Erzsébet have been criticized for being ‘bad mothers’ because they broke the expectations of their environment: Erzsébet, when she asked her children’s divorced father to take custody of them for two years, and Tulipán, when she arranged separate lodgings for her 19-year-old son (see Chapter VI.2). More heterosexual interviewees than same-sex couples spoke to me about family members unrelated to them through blood or affinal ties, such as chosen sisters, ‘adopted’ children or an ‘almost-godfather’ (who would have been Ivett’s godfather had he not been late for the baptism ceremony). Such experiences can sensitize people to the trials of other families that differ from the norm: indeed Sára claims that it was her “complicated” family background that made her an ardent supporter of same-sex parenting.

This is not to say that same-sex relationships occasion no changes in the family’s perception of kinship. Rather, I argue that notions – just like practices – of kinship are themselves multiple and dynamically changing, and the presence of a same-sex couple or a rainbow family within the kinship network is one of the circumstances the family needs to adapt to. Such adaptations on the level of practices have been discussed in the previous

chapter: the performative linguistic and non-linguistic acts of inclusion elaborated upon in Chapter VI.2 all attest to the ability of families to change their notions about the heteronormativity of kinship. We have also seen that in some families this reinterpretation is made explicit through the use of kin terms (son/daughter, son-in-law, grandson), and in the previous subchapter we have seen that some people (like Tulipán) are willing to abandon kinship duties towards their natal family to stand up against homophobia. In this subchapter I will discuss cases where the family member's existing model of family is explicitly challenged by having a non-heterosexual relationship in her/his kinship network. Rainbow families are a frequently cited case in point. While accepting one's non-heterosexual offspring is in line with the notion of 'blood is thicker than water' as the basis of Euro-American kinship (Schneider 1968), the kin of the social parent (and sometimes even of the biological one) in rainbow families are confronted by a family model that undermines this as well as the gendered foundations of the traditional Euro-American family model (Sullivan 2004). Still, some family members go even further and create families of choice from their non-heterosexual acquaintances. While the family members discussed in the previous section may adhere to traditional notions of family, and indeed may find ammunition in them for their practices as allies (such as the tenet of parental love; Broad 2011), those discussed below explicitly reinterpret these to create their own model.

Rainbow families

Several theories claim that rainbow families deconstruct the bases of Western kinship, including the gendered difference between parents (Hayden 2004, Sullivan 2004) and the predominance of biogenetic relatedness (Cadoret 2009). These challenges might happen on the societal level in general, but have immediate consequences for kinship networks which include a same-sex couple with children, especially if the person related to them 'biologically' is the child's social parent. Research on this topic shows a varied picture: in an Australian

study, most social mothers experienced negative reactions from their family of origin when they announced the impending birth of their (non-biological) child (Du Chesne and Bradley 2007), while Gross's French respondents seemed more divided over the issue (Gross 2011). The discomfort with, or rejection of, same-sex parenting might come from different sources and is not necessarily connected to the family's attitude to same-sex sexuality.

The method through which a person decides to become a parent may have significance (Gross 2011), especially if it has a precedent within the family. Péter has a brother who only found out as a teenager that he had been adopted (this was a common strategy with adoption before the late 20th century – Melhuus and Howell 2009), and this alienated him from his (adoptive) family. Consequently, when Péter announced he wanted to adopt a child, his mother was worried that the same might happen to him. When Péter finally chose surrogacy instead, she was relieved – possibly not because of his genetic connection to the child (though it might have played a part) but because this method did not recall painful memories.¹⁶⁵ Another example of the family of origin protesting not against the fact of parenting but the method chosen is the story, discussed in Chapter IV, of the lesbian couple who wanted to choose the social mother's brother as a sperm donor but the future birth mother's sister vetoed this option (Sándor 2010); though a child genetically related to both parents might seem a conservative solution, in the eyes of this sister it was more subversive than the anonymous donor insemination the couple eventually chose. Gross (2011) notes that the more a rainbow family resembles a 'traditional' two-parent nuclear model, the more willing both families of origin are to consider themselves kin to them, but as other compositions had a very low representation in my sample, it is hard to draw similar conclusions in Hungary.¹⁶⁶ It seems then that the method of creating a rainbow family affects the couple's intimate citizenship not

¹⁶⁵ As well as dominant mainstream discourses on adoption (see Chapter IV.2), which resonate with her bad experience.

only within the state and mainstream society (see Chapter IV) but within their families of origin as well.

As emphasized above, the natal family of the social parent has much higher hurdles to overcome in integrating the child into the family. One of these hurdles is legal: as discussed in Chapter IV.1, in Hungary second-parent adoption is not possible for same-sex couples, so the kin of the social parent have reason to worry that they will lose contact with the child should the relationship break up. Some of Gross's (2011) interviewees hesitate to consider themselves grandparents for this very reason. Dóri's parents are also painfully aware that their daughter has no legal connection to her partner Tünde's sons and initially challenged her: "is it good for you that you're raising someone else's children?" (Tünde). With time, however, they seem to have integrated all of them into their family, once they began to trust that their daughter's connection to the children would not be severed in case of separation. Indeed, in many rainbow families where the parents have separated, the former social parent's family still has regular contact with the child. This is an example that while laws can create difficulties for intimate citizenship on the family level, individual families have agency in solving this problem through their own practices. Nevertheless, the effect of legal acknowledgement on people's interpretations of family should not be underestimated (Takács 2011).

A more commonly noted difficulty for 'social grandparents' and other social kin is the lack of biogenetic connection to the child, which might be manifested in worries about him/her not resembling them (Cadoret 2009), demonstrating the important role resemblance plays in assessing and creating kinship (Marre and Bestard 2009, Rapp 1995). Gross (2011) suggests that the social parent's parents are less willing to consider themselves grandparents, but this might be connected to their precarious legal situation (see previous paragraph) as well

¹⁶⁶ All those I spoke to who are or plan to be in co-parenting arrangements said that their families of origin fully

as other factors. Judit speculates that if her partner Gabi's parents had a biological grandchild, they might not treat him/her and Judit's (biological) child equally, but given that now the latter is their only chance to feel, act and be regarded as grandparents, they do not bother about biogenetic connectedness. The natal family's attitude may also be influenced by agency on part of the same-sex couple. In Rafael's case, discussed in Chapter VI.2, the father began to include Rafael's social child in his family when that called him 'grandpa' – here we see a development of self-understanding on the part of the parent. A similar development can be sensed in a father described by a lesbian couple who decided to have a child through donor insemination.

[My partner's father's greatest grievance is] [t]hat he'll never have a grandchild. But he's kind of a *drama queen*.¹⁶⁷ It's no use telling him that he will, he doesn't think it'll be his grandchild. The one I'll give birth to. If Linda [my partner] had given birth herself, he used to say the same for that, but now he would accept her at least. (Vera; Sándor 2010b:80)

The father first refused to acknowledge any child born into a lesbian relationship as his grandchild, but then has changed his mind and would be willing to accept his daughter's biological offspring; it is quite possible that with time, he might open up even more and welcome Vera's biological child into his family. Here too, the same-sex couple actively try to influence the way the father perceives himself and their family form, apparently with some success.

Studies which suggest that not claiming grandparenthood to one's social grandchild is an indicator of rejection forget that many rainbow families themselves do not consider the secondary caregiver a parent (see examples in Chapter IV.2). As Gross (2011) points out, this

supported their chosen family form.

¹⁶⁷ She used the English word.

obviously affects the self-perception of this person's parents (and other relatives). Rafael's story, however, points to the contrary, as do those of some female couples where a member of the same-sex couple is not considered a parent but her parents see themselves as grandparents, like Havana's or Viola's parents. Though Gross suggests that "if the same-sex couple conforms to the traditional representations according to which one cannot have two mums or two dads, grandparents will not adopt a more 'transgressive' position than that of their own children" (Gross 2011:127), it seems that some Hungarian grandparents are radical enough to take this step.

This is not to say that parents of non-heterosexuals always accept the rainbow family on its own terms or at least 'come around' in the end. In Chapter IV.2 we have seen that Zsófi and Emma, a now separated lesbian couple, consider themselves as well as their new partners as parents to their daughter Lili. However, when I asked Böske, Emma's mother, who Lili's parents were at the moment, she firmly declared: "Zsófi and Emma. It's obvious. And it'll always stay like this." When I asked about the role of the new partners she answered that "Satellites have no position. [...] And they needn't have one! After all, that can change." The models of kinship surfacing here is the one where intention rather than biogenetic connection determines parenthood (Hill 1991), the one grounding kinship in the length and presumed permanence of the relationship (Weston 1995) and the one suggesting that shared parenthood forever binds couples together even after separation (Smart 1999, Whiteside 2004). Böske is willing to deviate from the heteronormative standard to include social parents in the kinship network (especially as this ensures her own grandmother position) but not enough to question the two-parent family model. Like the sister of the lesbian couple who opposed the social mother's brother being the sperm donor, she illustrates the point that being an ally might have its limits (see Chapter VII.1), and even supportive family members may use interpretations of

kinship that exclude some of the people from the family whom the same-sex couple would wish to include.

In Chapter IV we have seen that many members of the LGBTQ community base their understanding of family on the mainstream heteronormative model, though they need to modify it to include their own family form and thus exhibit agency in claiming acknowledgement for their intimate arrangements. The natal family is in a similar position when they claim intimate citizenship as grandparents, uncles/aunts or other relatives of a child who is not related to them either by blood or by the law. Their approach to the rainbow family is strongly influenced by the same-sex couple's self-understanding, but sometimes deviates from it, though not always in the conservative direction. The same is true for the issue of chosen kin.

Families of choice

Among heterosexuals, 'fictive kin' appears in scholarship mostly in reference to working-class and/or nonwhite communities (Stack 1974, Modell 1998, White 2000), where its survival value is emphasized: 'fictive' kinship networks create additional resources in terms of family finances (White 2000) or childcare arrangements (Stack 1974, Modell 1998). In my sample, however, 'fictive' kinship is by no means limited by class or race: indeed, several of my white middle-class heterosexual interviewees listed biologically or affinally non-related people as kin. While this might be related to the different meaning of 'middle-class' in the Hungarian context, where only the wealthy can afford to pay for services like babysitting (see Chapter I.1), it would be a mistake to treat the 'families of choice' of heterosexuals as purely a material resource (while literature on non-heterosexual chosen families – Nardi 1999, Weston 1991 – puts more emphasis on their emotional functions). The following account of Christmas, strikingly similar to Vándor's in Chapter IV.4, emphasizes the affective component of belonging with friends, as opposed to the burdensome duty of visiting parents

(this is aggravated in this case by the fact that the parents are divorced). Friendship is freely chosen and less burdened by hierarchies and inequalities than family (Schneider 1968, Nardi 1999), and thus devoid of the formalities often accompanying traditional events like Christmas.

On [December] the 24th, we [my husband and I] first set up a Christmas tree in the afternoon, and then we go to our separate families [of origin]. [...] And then at 10 we collect each other [smile] and if Gergő [my gay brother-in-law] happens to have someone, then – it started like the four of us spent Christmas Eve together at our place. Then it changed a little, because when he [Gergő] no longer had Amadé [his boyfriend], then it was like Gergő was here, but we had another friend who didn't have anyone at the time, and then he came too. And somehow it became like a Christmas among friends. [...] And so that's how we spend Christmas, like there's an evening part and a night one, more party-like, but really it's quite an intimate thing. (Sára)

Though Sára's chosen family includes a gay man (and sometimes his partner), it was not inspired by her connection to the LGBTQ community; in fact, as we have seen above, it was her ardent support for rainbow families that originated in her personal experience of kinship as not necessarily grounded in biology. In her case, her reinterpretation of heterosexual kinship enabled her to claim intimate citizenship for non-heterosexual forms in her immediate environment, including her in-laws (see Chapter VII.1). In the stories that follow, a heterosexual family member's 'family of choice' was enriched or created through the non-heterosexual family member.

One possible form is when a non-heterosexual person's chosen kin also become connected to her/his heterosexual family members. In its traditional meaning, kinship links more than two people; a marriage creates a bond between two, formerly (usually) unrelated kin groups, which is indeed seen as one of its basic functions (Lévi-Strauss 1969). Chosen kin is a different matter. Although some formalized cases of 'fictive' kinship can include several

members of the same family (one's *koma*¹⁶⁸ becoming a godparent to one's children) and Weston describes cases in the San Francisco gay and lesbian community when a person included among her/his ex-partner's 'chosen kin' feels like an in-law towards the former partner's new lover (Weston 1991), it is usually assumed that 'fictive' kinship operates in much the same way as friendship, linking individuals rather than families (Stack 1974).¹⁶⁹ In most cases where the non-heterosexual person has 'chosen kin' (this is not too frequent in my sample, see Chapter IV.4), her/his family of origin does not consider these persons kin and may even be unaware of the chosen kinship tie. In only one case did the 'fictive' kinship tie of the lesbian sister extend to the heterosexual one as well: Zira already had several 'adopted'¹⁷⁰ sisters before she met her sister Zsóka's best friend, also considered a sister.¹⁷¹

Zsóka also has an 'adopted' sister, who is my 'adopted' older sister. [smile] And she is the biological sister of my 'adopted' younger sister! [...] Because Zsóka and Pamela became very-very close, and that's how she [Pamela] became Zsóka's 'adopted' younger sister. And then we met too [Pamela and I] and we too became very-very close, and that's how I became her 'adopted' younger sister.¹⁷² (Zira)

Zira's and Zsóka's 'chosen' kinship networks overlap, but this is also subject to choice: Zsóka and Pamela's fictive kinship only became extended to Zira when she also met Pamela and became close to her. 'Fictive' kinship thus leaves space for negotiation and agency to a larger extent than formally acknowledged forms of relatedness.

¹⁶⁸ In this Hungarian folk custom, teenage girls (less often boys) exchange gifts as tokens for a lifelong friendship. Though none of my interviewees mentioned this practice, the use of the word 'koma' for close friends or one's children's godparents still turns up in rural environments.

¹⁶⁹ Though in some cultures we find cases of inheritable friendship, when the parents' friends automatically become friends to their children (Mead and Heyman 1965).

¹⁷⁰ "*Fogadott*"; in contrast to legally adopted ("*örökbe fogadott*"), this means a person has become included in one's family in a given kinship position, without any legal ties. As English has no term for this, I will use 'adopted' in quotation marks when I talk about such informal 'adoption'.

¹⁷¹ Zsóka did not mention this sister in the interview.

In the case of two mothers, their ‘chosen’ children were the result of them having a gay son themselves. After her visit to a gay bar with her son, Klári got to know her son Miklós’s gay and trans friends and eventually became, in Miklós’s words, “everybody’s queer mum”.

I was sick at the beginning of this year, and then she got to use the informal address¹⁷³ with all my friends, and ever since she keeps asking ‘how’s so-and-so?’ and they call her and talk to her. So she’s become the kind of ‘mother of a gay person’ who I’m always afraid will turn up one day at the pride in a T-shirt saying ‘I’m proud of my gay son’, she would do such a thing.¹⁷⁴ (Miklós)

Looking after a sick person together strengthened the already existing ties between Klári and her son’s friends: Klári told me how they took turns looking after Miklós, the friends informing her and waiting for her at the train when she came to Budapest. Ever since, she has kept in touch with these people, to a higher extent than with some of her ‘blood’ relatives. As mentioned above, Klári already has experience with how blood relatedness does not guarantee eventual caring (her first husband abandoned his children), and now she has learnt that biologically unrelated people can provide care, the way the friends did with Miklós. The network of chosen kin originated in Miklós’s illness but is kept alive by Klári, who this way has extended her own kinship network. Miklós’s hint that she might one day come out at the pride march as the mother of a gay son links these kinship ties with an explicit claim for the intimate citizenship of LGBTQ people.

Zsuzsi’s ‘substitute son’ (*pótygyerek*) is a young gay man, a former colleague of a friend of hers, who is closeted from his own mother and abusive father. Her (biological) son’s

¹⁷² Hungarian has different terms for younger sister (‘húg’) and older sister (‘nővér’). For Zira, these are not only age differences but suggest different expectations in kinship behavior: she feels protective towards her ‘younger sisters’ and expects similar attitudes from her ‘older sister’.

¹⁷³ Hungarian, like many other languages (e.g. Spanish) has a formal and an informal way of addressing people in the second person singular, the informal address usually preserved for friends and family.

¹⁷⁴ This sentence might be ironical, or Miklós might be worried about his mother’s safety due to violent attacks on pride marches in Hungary since 2007 (see Renkin 2009).

homosexuality has made Zsuzsi realize the difficulties LGBTQ people face in society, so she is ready to act as a supportive parent for Gergely, who turns to her rather than his biological parents for advice. It has also made her think over her idealized notions of family and oppose Hungarian family law, which is based on such idealizations:

And now the government has managed to put it into words [i.e. law] that the child is obliged to look after her/his parents. I don't think s/he is! If s/he feels s/he should then yes, let him/her look after them. If they have such a relationship. But here's for example this Gergely, my substitute son. His hands tremble like this [shows], because his father used to beat him all the time; thank God the parents are divorced now. Why should he look after his father?! He doesn't have to! Considering, his father didn't look after him! (Zsuzsi)

While many family members stand up for rights specifically connected to LGBTQ people (e.g. at pride marches), Zsuzsi's horizon was broadened beyond that and she began to question some basic mainstream tenets of kinship. She suggests that the full intimate citizenship of LGBTQ people requires more than just laws specifically enabling LGBTQ kinship.

Gergely is not incorporated into Zsuzsi's kinship network and does not even know that Zsuzsi's biological son is gay; similarly to non-heterosexuals with chosen kin like Vándor (but unlike Zira), Zsuzsi does not create a connection between them and the biological family. In both her and Klári's case, the mother's experience with her own gay son has made her more sensitive towards the difficulties of non-mainstream sexualities and genders and this has led to her 'adoption' of other LGBTQ 'chosen children'. In these two cases, families of choice are connected to intimate citizenship in several ways. The 'adoption' of gay and transgender 'children' partly comes from the recognition of disadvantages that these people suffer in society. In both cases, the 'adopted' children have closer ties and more trust towards

Klári or Zsuzsi than their biological parents; the chosen families thus created become a substitute for inadequate biological ones but, unlike in similar cases described in American literature (e.g. Johnson 2004, Weston 1991), they are centered around heterosexual women. Zsuzsi and Klári do not only take agency in creating their own family form, but through this become aware of other drawbacks of the Heterosexual Family Myth and begin to question it, Zsuzsi explicitly challenging state discourses.

Family transformations

The family of origin may be transformed by a same-sex relationship in various ways. Homophobia coming from the state, from mainstream discourses, from their immediate family or their own values often conflicts with their love and loyalty for their non-heterosexual family member, and if they choose the latter, they have to stand up for LGBTQ equality in private situations or public activism. Family members may feel the incentive to find out more about a subculture they formerly had no contact with. As a result of these processes, they might get to question or defy mainstream expectations or norms related to kinship.

Discourses on kinship are not hegemonic: in a given society, there might exist several models as to which configurations are classed under the rubric of ‘family’ (Maurer 1996, Powell et al 2010). Getting in contact with discourses and practices within the LGBTQ community may provide family members of same-sex couples with additional resources to challenge the narrowly defined nuclear family model and the Heterosexual Family Myth. They might find encouragement to change their intimate practices or break with relatives they have only kept in touch with due to expectations from their environment, including the broader kinship network. They stand up for the intimate citizenship of their non-heterosexual family member (or, by extension, of all LGBTQ people) but also their own: they claim agency for defining their own family form and practices, and sometimes explicitly challenge

legal definitions of kinship that do not correspond with their experience connected to non-heterosexual people. In this sense, connection to LGBTQ discourses and practices enables a broadening of heterosexual intimate citizenship.

At the same time, heterosexual family members may also experience constraints on their self-expression. The sticky stigma often makes it difficult for them to stand up in support of LGBTQ causes. The lack of recognition for rainbow families within both law and mainstream public discourses in Hungary keeps the kin of social parents in a permanent state of insecurity. Having seen the difficulties non-heterosexuals face, some family members may be wary of publicly supporting LGBTQ equality. Constraints may also come from the non-heterosexual people themselves, some of whom (like Eszter) expect their kin to exhibit a higher involvement in activism than they are ready for, while others wish to hold them back in order to protect them (like Miklós) or do not provide them with all the information they wish to know about the LGBTQ community due to shyness in sexual matters (like Dénes). Though some family members (like Klári) find in the LGBTQ community a space that accepts them unconditionally and grants them full intimate citizenship, others (like GotOne) experience rejection because they do not fully agree with subcultural norms. Being the family member of a non-heterosexual person is thus fraught with inclusions and exclusions. Of course, family members have agency in influencing these conditions: they might try to convince their environment to be less homophobic, entice the non-heterosexual family member to be more closeted, or even have a say in his/her family practices. Thus complex family negotiations underlie the extent and the ways in which family members can become allies to the LGBTQ cause.

Literature on the relationship of non-heterosexuals and their families of origin rarely considers the effect of the inclusion or exclusion of the family of origin in wider communities and the state (there are only sporadic examples in Cadoret 2009, Cappellato and Manganella

2014, Gross 2011 and Herdt and Koff 2000). However, the intimate citizenship of the family of origin is inseparable from that of the non-heterosexual person: not only because of the sticky stigma (discussed in Chapter V.3) but also because heteronormative discourses on family, in Hungary strongly propagated by a conservative and pronatalist state, question and ignore their family form. Contrary to Cappellato and Manganella (2014) I claim that when heterosexual family members stand up in support of LGBTQ issues, it is often not to preserve the norms traditionally associated with family, but rather to claim recognition to kinship forms and behaviors silenced in mainstream discourses. Through rethinking the Heterosexual Family Myth, these family members become involved in a struggle for intimate citizenship that goes beyond the inclusion of non-heterosexuals.

VIII. Beyond the Heterosexual Family Myth

The previous chapters have outlined a set of complex relationships between notions of kinship, intimate citizenship and agency in the families of non-heterosexual couples, within the context of mainstream and LGBTQ community discourses in present-day Hungary. In this last chapter I will give a short summary of some of these relationships, and suggest ways in which the topic could be explored further.

Models of kinship

Herdt and Koff's (2000) notion of the Heterosexual Family Myth establishes, but does not expand on the heteronormativity inherent in modern Western notions of kinship. In Chapter IV I examined how this heteronormativity rests upon what Schneider (1968) describes as the main foundations of (Euro)-American kinship: biogenetic relatedness and legally acknowledged relationships. State laws and policies denying same-sex couples equal rights with different-sex ones (concerning marriage, parental rights etc.) all rest upon these foundations. In many countries, including Hungary, this biogenetic relatedness is extended to the nation, which is depicted as a very extended, but always heterosexual, family (Verdery 1996). This way, non-heterosexuality also means exclusion from the family of the nation.

Not surprisingly, some common strategies of LGBTQ individuals and organizations claim inclusion in society and/or the nation based on kinship. The legal acknowledgement of non-biological kin ties is one of the central goals of LGBTQ activists in Hungary; they suggest that legal recognition actually performatively creates a family in the eyes of the community, and thus brings social inclusion as well (Takács 2011). At the same time, most of my interviewees do not base their own notion of family on legal recognition, and see marriage or parenting rights as important in terms of equality or benefits rather than self-definition.

Blood relatedness, on the other hand, is used rather as a strategic tool by individuals and activists alike to claim acceptance from families of origin, and the families themselves

often accept this argument as well. At the same time, the importance of biogenetic relatedness may create expectations towards same-sex (and heterosexual) couples to have (non-adopted) children, or may lead to the exclusion of the social parent from the category of kin. Thus biogenetic ties, while seemingly propagating a heteronormative family model, in fact allow for the expansion of kinship, but often within limits.

Schneider (1968) also mentions ‘diffuse, enduring solidarity’ as one of the foundations of (Euro)-American kinship. This sometimes contrasts with the model of kinship based on biogenetic connections, when blood kin do not behave the way they are expected to, or when biogenetically non-related people perform kin services. The first instance is often illustrated by the rejection of non-heterosexuals by their family of origin, the latter by ‘families of choice’ (Weston 1991). My research has demonstrated, however, that these phenomena are not always related to non-traditional sexualities. Blood relatives may be excluded from one’s kinship network for other reasons than sexual orientation (like Lilla’s unsupportive siblings), and several – indeed, the majority – of the family members I interviewed have biologically unrelated people they consider kin. While there is literature on such chosen or ‘fictive’ kinship not only in traditional communities (Malinowski 1984, Nuttall 2000) but also in modern Western society (Carpenter 2001, Stack 1971, White 2000), in the latter case they are mostly associated with the disprivileged: the working-class, African Americans or LGBTQ people. My middle-class heterosexual interviewees with chosen kin (Zsuzsi, Ivett), however, demonstrate that the ostensibly blood-based kinship system of the Euro-American middle-class is in fact much more varied, and that viewing chosen families as arising merely out of necessity in a hostile environment is classist and does not do justice to their various functions.

Unorthodox reckonings of kinship like families of choice almost always rest upon the principle of ‘diffuse, enduring solidarity’, manifest in expected emotions and behaviors. Apparently, some phenomena studied mainly in LGBTQ communities are far from being

absent in mainstream society, though they avoid attention due to the dominance of the biologically based nuclear family model transmitted by mainstream discourses. These are also appropriated by the state, which – in spite of reckoning with ‘diffuse, enduring solidarity’ when trying to substitute state-subsidied carework with family-based one (Finch 1989, Gubrium and Holstein 1990) – takes the biogenetic or legal foundation of the family for granted.

The two foundations of Western kinship – ‘blood is thicker than water’ and ‘diffuse, enduring solidarity’ – thus often get into conflict with each other. Both models being available, families have some leeway to navigate their internal relationships, exhibiting agency when they choose the one most suited to their needs. This might cause conflicts within families if different members adhere to different models, and family hierarchy might be manifested in certain family members forcing their own model on others. The imperative to preserve family peace and cooperation often leads dissenting family members – including non-heterosexuals – to conform to the others’ expectations in behavior, even if their own model of kinship may be different. Agency is thus limited by the availability of alternative discourses on the one hand, and by family pressure and power relations on the other.

Herdt and Koff (2000) suggest that the full integration of non-heterosexuals into the family of origin goes hand in hand with reevaluating prevalent notions of kinship. In many families I researched, the questioning of dominant models in fact started earlier, the first time someone in the family broke the expected pattern. In some cases it was this experience that fostered the acceptance of same-sex relationships as well. There are even families where the same-sex relationship is more compatible with normative models than socially unaccepted non-homosexual versions (e.g. giving up custody of one’s children like Erzsébet did) or an asexual lifestyle (Miklós’s past as a monk). Instead of assuming that middle-class heterosexual families adhere to the norm and only same-sex and working-class relationships

break it, we should realize that in relation to the hegemonic ideal, the family in practice is always already queer, and people of all classes, races and sexualities deviate from the alleged norm, sometimes according to their own (sub)cultural patterns, sometimes in individual ways. To expand on Schneider (1984), most Euro-American researchers of kinship are not only ethnocentric but even within their own culture are often misled by the image of family mainstream discourses claim to be the norm. It is time we recognize the diversity of actual family forms and the agency of individuals and family units, whether heterosexual or not, to create new ones.

Intimate citizenship and agency

My research findings both extend the scope of intimate citizenship and emphasize the element of agency in it. Most literature on intimate/sexual citizenship focuses on state constraints on individual behavior, and agency only resting in political activism (e.g. Nicolae 2009). It is important, however, to also study the ways individuals challenge these constraints. Besides activist campaigns for same-sex marriage and parental rights, individuals also stand up for their rights in discourses (e.g. on internet forum sites like Travellerprick), performative speech acts (calling their partner husband/wife like Kati and Melinda) and performative behavior like wedding ceremonies (Iván). The mere visibility granted by these discourses and practices undermines the heteronormativity of the public sphere (Lewin 1998).

These strategies do not only target legal exclusion but also public discourses, which are sometimes more rejective of alternative kinship patterns than the law itself: Hungarian law enables the possibility of registered partnership for same-sex couples, but European surveys prove that the extent of rejection of homosexuals is about the same as in countries with no same-sex partnership legislation (Takács and Szalma 2013). Often people are not even aware of the legal possibilities, for instance of adoption by non-heterosexuals. Discourses about the family, frequently with strong overtones of procreation and the individual's duty to the nation,

stigmatize non-procreative sexuality; at the same time, rainbow families are considered abnormal, due to their abandonment of traditional gender roles (e.g. Lukács 2010).

The family often transmits these mainstream discourses, and the ones about the basis of kinship discussed above, to its members through socialization. This way, the family becomes a site of controlling intimate citizenship, but also gives the opportunity to stand up for inclusion. The two ways the family is connected to intimate citizenship (being controlled/enabled but also controlling/enabling) is well transmitted by the following monologue, in which Ribera claims acceptance for her rainbow family not primarily from the state (which denies it) but from her and her partner's family of origin (who provide it):

Personally, I'm outraged that they [the government] should state something like this [that family is based on heterosexual marriage], because I know there couldn't be a more perfect family than ours. As long as **we** think we are a family, our child thinks so, and **our** family members think we are a family, with them, FIDESZ and anyone else can say what they wish. This is not gonna make us break up and live differently. (Ribera)

Families that might include or exclude a same-sex relationship are in turn included or excluded with respect to wider society. The secondary stigmatization of kin of LGBTQ denies legitimacy to family units which include such individuals. Family members of same-sex couples might manage this stigma by hiding the shameful fact from their close environment, sometimes even the extended family; this often leads to constraints on the non-heterosexual person. Literature invariably suggests that same-sex oriented family members would like to be out and are frequently constrained in this wish by their family, which – even if accepting – transmits normative expectations. My findings complicate this picture: being out is not uniformly valued in the Hungarian LGBTQ community (despite activist efforts to make it the norm), and even non-heterosexuals who otherwise subscribe to this value may put their own

needs behind those of their family members. At the same time, some family members are loud and vocal in their support and challenge heteronormativity by incorporating non-heterosexual family units and/or by publicly defying homophobic discourses. Cappellato and Manganella (2014) suggest that the latter is merely a way of managing their own stigma, and parents in fact only support LGBT causes as long as this improves their own or their gay or lesbian child's¹⁷⁵ situation. We must not exclude the possibility, however, that some family members, seeing the plight of non-heterosexuals up close, feel genuine empathy and begin to stand up for them without themselves ever having been stigmatized, like Ivett or Zira. Thus it is not only same-sex couples who claim intimate citizenship; their families and individual family members may claim it too for their non-heterosexual kin, and also for themselves as non-traditional family units.

Practices of inclusion and exclusion, as well as ways of claiming intimate citizenship, are much more varied than academic research on the subject suggests. Instead of a binary categorization of families as accepting or rejective of same-sex sexuality (with a possible ambivalent category in the middle, like in Herdt and Koff 2000), we should be aware of the diversity of discourses and practices employed by non-heterosexuals and their family members alike. Intentions behind the same act may qualify it as accepting or rejecting. The same behavior, discourse or expectation might be interpreted as rejection by one person and acceptance by another: Gyula is quite happy with the 'open secret', while Hella suffers from it. For people who have internalized activist discourses on coming out, like Milán, constraints on their sexual self-expression are a way of being pushed back into the closet, while for Alexander they are reasonable requests. Similarly, family members familiar with the coming out discourse often endorse or encourage openness on the part of their non-heterosexual kin, like Sára, while those who are not, like Erzsébet, see it as an individual effort to strengthen

¹⁷⁵ This study only focused on parents of gay men and lesbians.

one's own identity and not as a political strategy. Some may accept their non-heterosexual family members as individuals, but do not stand up for LGBTQ rights in general. The influence of other discourses, such as Christianity, also shape not only the level of acceptance but also its terms: Kati's mother (like Kati herself) accepts a monogamous lesbian relationship but only if it conforms to Christian norms. Such different interpretations of the same act and expectations of family members may vary according to class or type of settlement, with small-town family members usually placing more emphasis on the closet and conformity in general than those living in villages or the capital.

The examples above that strategies of claiming intimate citizenship may vary within the same broader discourse, whether LGBTQ rights, Christianity or other. Rather than generalizing activist discourses as the voice of the community (like Nicolae 2009 or Padgug 1989), we must be aware of individual solutions, which might deviate from the community norm but nevertheless assert one's freedom to make intimate choices, and also of how these individual solutions are shaped by socio-historical circumstances, family traditions and practical factors.

The ways of claiming intimate citizenship are also more varied than most works on the topic suggest. Several authors acknowledge that coming out to the family of origin is a step in the process of claiming inclusion in wider society (Tereskinas 2008, Kuhar 2011). This claim for inclusion does not stop at coming out, however. Same-sex couples may demand the acknowledgement of their relationship manifested in word usage (Vencel) or kin practices (Goran), the inclusion of their children in the kinship network (Rafael), or the active support of LGBTQ causes by their family members (Eszter). Similarly, their relatives may support this endeavor or claim their own intimate citizenship through openly coming out to kin (Erzsébet), going to the pride march (Böske) or speaking up for LGBTQ people in homophobic contexts (Ivett, Zira). Often it is a relative who tries to soften the family's

negative reaction towards the non-heterosexual member, like Sára did. Some practices are rarely considered among the acts of claiming intimate citizenship, possibly because of their negative content: breaking (or wishing to break) kin ties with homophobic relatives (Tulipán), actively hiding or lying about one's nature of relatedness to a child in order to be acknowledged as a parent (Péter and Jocó) or leaving the country, often along with relinquishing Hungarian citizenship (Bálint and Krisztián). Arguably, these forms are rather 'acting out', and do nothing to improve the situation of Hungarian LGBTQ people in general; at the same time, they do improve the situation of the person concerned and send a strong message to the community. The last case is especially interesting because it raises the question of the compatibility of citizenships: while full equality would mean access to all forms of citizenship (Marshall 1965 [1949]), being a (political) citizen of certain countries automatically excludes one from various forms of intimate citizenship.

Discourses and practices

A number of the issues discussed the previous sections raise the question of discourses versus practices. Much literature on kinship or intimate citizenship focus on one or the other. After the symbolic turn in anthropology, culture became interpreted as the meanings people attach to cultural elements (Asad 1986, Borneman 1992), queer theory brought a focus on discourses, while recently there has been new interest in kinship studies on practices (Morgan 1996). Anthropology, based on empirical observation, cannot do without dealing with practices. At the same time, it is important to recognize that discourses are also cultural products, which people endow with their own interpretations, as demonstrated by different interpretations of Christianity *vis-à-vis* same-sex relationships (compare the reactions of Benő's and Kati's mother¹⁷⁶). We must also be aware of competing discourses of the family

¹⁷⁶ The two mothers even belonged to the same neo-Protestant church at the time of their child's coming out.

within contemporary Hungarian society, a more traditional view of the primacy of family over the individual and a more individualistic and egalitarian one; the coexistence of the two within the same family might lead to emotional distance, like in Vencel's case, or conflict, like with Shane, who is expected to render kin services in spite of rejecting the very notion.

This last example also shows that practices and discourses are strongly intertwined. As Lewin puts it: "Marriage, like family, is both something people do and something they think" (Lewin 2004: 1001). It is important, however, to explore the complex interrelation between practices and discourses, including mainstream discourses on kinship with strong hegemonic power. These latter are often appropriated by people, even if they do not conform to them in actual practice; others – often those excluded from the narrow scope along which these discourses define family – actively challenge them both in rhetoric and practice. Various mainstream and less mainstream (e.g. feminist) discourses about family are modified within the LGBTQ community to fit its members' needs; these in turn influence practices, for example concerning the preferred way of having children (Ryan-Flood 2010). Small elements of everyday practices, like insisting on the acknowledgement of one's relationship verbally and nonverbally (Dani, Vencel) or making explicit that one considers kin one's partner's family of origin (Ribera) all claim inclusion within the kinship network. In short, more attention should be paid to practices, including everyday kinship practices, in theorizing agency in intimate citizenship.

Specificities of Hungary

Though there is little research comparable to mine in either postsocialist or Western contexts, my findings do suggest certain elements that seem to distinguish Hungary from the United States and Western Europe (due to inadequate information, I dare not make generalizations about other postsocialist countries). One such example is the strong reliance on kinship networks, including the extended family, for various forms of services and support. While this

might give the impression of Hungary being more traditional in lifestyle and values, often the reasons seem to be more practical. Just like cohabiting extended families in the late 20th century resulted more often from acute housing shortages than from surviving traditions (H. Sas 1978), kin services are often relied on because any alternative is either absent or unaffordable. In the dire circumstances of early state socialism, the survival of Hungarians often depended on being as self-sufficient as possible (Lampland 1995, Pittaway 2002). Strong social networks also helped access to scarce resources in these ‘economies of shortage’ (Verdery 1996), but as state socialism made efforts to break down traditional communities (Neumann and Vajda 2008), one’s social network was often limited to one’s extended family. These strategies continued into the economically precarious postsocialist period, when neoliberalism cut down on previously generous state welfare provisions – a development observable in some Western European countries as well (Finch 1989) – and instead put new emphasis on the caring function of families. When people like Liza demand support from their family members, they do not only consider its symbolic value but its contribution to their survival. In this respect, the complex webs of support among kin even among the Hungarian middle-class resemble those described with respect to working-class Americans (Stacey 1990, Stack 1978).

Such economic necessity, along with the all-pervading discourse on the centrality of family, might explain why all the members of the LGBTQ community I have talked to would like to be included in their families of origin at least to some extent. Even those who complain about some of the burdens it puts on them (like Shane) take for granted the benefits of kin support. While Western research on same-sex couples abounds in family ties broken between parents and non-heterosexual offspring (Weston 1991, Lewin 1998) and at times suggests that non-heterosexuals find their ‘true family’ among their gay and lesbian friends (Weston 1991, Nardi 1999), in Hungary non-heterosexuals make efforts to maintain kin contact. They

negotiate their terms of inclusion and sometimes do feel stronger connection to their chosen families than their natal ones, but complete self-distancing from the family of origin is rare and only temporary. Neither have I found any family which punished their non-heterosexual member with long-term expulsion and disowning.¹⁷⁷ Very often those who claim rejection by their family broke the tie themselves, not willing to enter the compromise solutions the family demanded.¹⁷⁸ At the same time, public discourses claim that LGBTQ people are rejected by their parents, so those who are not, consider themselves extremely lucky and cherish the connection to the family of origin. This might go as far as agreeing to compromise solutions like collusion or the transparent closet; not all LGBTQ people experience these as constraining. Consideration for their family members, especially fragile ones, is often an acceptable reason in this community for not coming out or limiting one's self-expression (like in Andrea's case).

The horror stories about rejecting families are all the easier to believe due to the relative invisibility of LGBTQ people in Hungary. Partly the legacy of state socialism, which suppressed all publicly expressed forms of dissidence and was especially prudish in matters of sexuality (Tóth and Murai 2014), same-sex orientation is usually taboo; the media visibility of LGBTQ people is usually limited to Western examples, which – like in other postsocialist and postcolonial areas – leads some to assume that homosexuality is a foreign import and not naturally present in their own culture (Healey 2001, Gaudio 2009, Kendall 1999). Surveys show that among all the citizens of the EU, Hungarian are the least likely to personally know a gay or lesbian. Non-heterosexual people do not talk about their sexual orientation because they fear upsetting the family or its members, because of the family culture of non-

¹⁷⁷ Except for the coming out story cited in Chapter IV, which is too melodramatic and incongruent to be true. Also, the final message of the story is that the son made a mistake in not forgiving his mother.

¹⁷⁸ This might in fact be true for stories of family rejection elsewhere; in the documentary *American Vagabond*, about a gay couple who became homeless, it transpires that though they did hear homophobic remarks at home, they left on their own accord and were not literally driven away by their parents.

communication, or because they simply do not subscribe to (or are not aware of) the activist discourse that marks sexual orientation a political issue. In consequence, many families do not even suspect having a non-heterosexual member, or they might suspect but never talk about it openly due to the taboo on talking about sexuality (Vencel), or to the etiquette of coming out (Balázs). This culminates in a vicious circle, in which people do not come out because they do not see positive examples of families incorporating non-heterosexual members – such examples are lacking exactly because people are afraid to come out to their kin.

Hungary is frequently mentioned as a country with shockingly rising levels of homophobia since the 1990s (Takács and Szalma 2010). Certainly both survey results and public discourses and events (such as attacks on pride marches) suggest widespread rejection of same-sex sexuality. One should be wary about generalizing on these bases, however. Survey results vary according to the phrasing of the question (Takács and Szalma 2010), and aggressively homophobic slogans and actions are the product of a loud minority. It appears that families which have a non-heterosexual member try to live with this fact rather than break the unity of the kinship network, even if they do not begin to support LGBTQ causes in general. Often the fact that the non-heterosexual person follows the accepted model by living in a monogamous relationship (possibly with children) and continuing to render kin services (possibly with her/his partner) grants her/him a place in the family network. This might suggest a homonormative framework which normalizes same-sex relations as long as they are similar to heterosexual ones (Lewin 2010), but in practice families try to adapt their notion of kinship to the actual life situation of its members, thus incorporating even non-traditional arrangements like Rafael's four-parent rainbow family. Same-sex couples and their families of origin thus actively create arrangements which could make same-sex sexuality and family compatible.

Suggestions for further research

The relationship of same-sex couples with their families of origin is, I believe, an ideal field for examining how discourses of kinship shape and are shaped by the actual functioning of existing families. Though much research has already been done on family reactions to coming out, many areas are left mostly or wholly unexplored. One thing is the range of family members studied: we would need much more specific research, for instance, on the reaction of siblings, grandparents and other family members, who – as I discussed in Chapter V – stand in a different position to a person than her/his parents, and thus might have different approaches, interests and agenda. Studies on siblings and more distant relatives could also help go deeper into the gender aspects of inclusion/exclusion beyond the (also gendered) parental roles. Another way of gaining a more nuanced view of the importance of gender in contemporary family relationships could be to study the natal family's reaction to gender-nonnormative and trans* people.

My research, similar to many others (Weston 1991, Lewin 1998) focuses on relatively visible LGBTQ communities with mostly middle-class values and at least some awareness of activist discourses. An explicit focus on the family relations of same-sex couples from lower classes or racially disprivileged communities might yield very different results, and perhaps (based on my interviews with people of working-class origin) possibly even stronger ties to the family of origin.

As I have mentioned above, little research goes beyond attitudes to same-sex sexuality to explore actual family practices. With the popularity of queer studies, there has been strong emphasis on discourses and less on practices. While I do not think that these are necessarily the 'true' indicators of family attitudes as opposed to 'empty' words (for reasons discussed in Chapter VI.2), I think studying these practices could show us the agency families exhibit in negotiating kinship categories and behavior and challenging the Heterosexual Family Myth, and can also show us the way same-sex couples and their heterosexual kin work together or in

some cases against each other in this process. Anthropology has a crucial role in this respect. Most studies on same-sex couples are based on ethnographic interviews only, where interlocutors might adapt their responses to society's or the interviewer's (alleged) expectations (see Chapter III). I would argue for a more comprehensive methodological approach, including participant observation of family rituals (Lewin 1998) and of everyday interactions between non-heterosexuals and their kin, as well as participatory methods (Gabb 2010 [2008]). This would enable researchers themselves to examine their own biases (see above) and reevaluate their expectations based on mainstream discourses on family.

Whereas one often hears well-grounded complaints about the disproportionate amount of US research on LGBTQ people compared to Europe (especially its eastern regions, e.g. Kulpa and Mizielińska 2011), this does not seem to apply to studies on relationships with the family of origin. Indeed, recent studies on the practices of families with LGBTQ members come rather from countries where the family is acknowledged to have a stronger importance, such as Italy (Cappellato and Manganello 2014) or postsocialist countries (Mizielińska et al. 2015, Švab and Kuhar 2014, Sobočan 2011). The general assumption seems to be that the USA and Western Europe are characterized by 'rugged individualism' in which the family's importance is minimized (e.g. Williams 1998). This also affects studies on heterosexual family practices: though we have ample material on kin practices in premodern Western communities (e.g. Tilly and Scott 1987, Young and Wilmott 1957), more contemporary accounts are limited to the urban poor (Stacey 1990, Stack 1974). However, even studies on middle-class families make mention of help by more distant kin (e.g. Gubrium and Holstein 1990, Hochschild 2003 [1989]), and researchers themselves admit the family's central role in working-class and non-white communities (Glass 2014, Stack 1974). The notion of the US and the West as comprised of isolated nuclear families is thus both classist and racist, and studying the relationship of same-sex couples with their families of origin would probably

yield important results in these regions too. At the same time, it might help to narrow the discursive gap between East/South and West, which often blinds us to both the similarities between regions and the diversity (geographical, racial, class etc.) within each one. It may also show us that discourses and even practices travel across regions, thus further blurring the East/West divide.

Acknowledging the importance of kinship in contemporary Euro-American families is an important first step towards exploring how these are different in the case of non-heterosexuals. We might also find, like I have in my limited study, that certain discourses and practices usually associated with LGBTQ people and family forms – such as breaking off kin ties, keeping certain information from given family members or even families of choice – occur among heterosexuals as well. As a result, we can gain a new understanding of the diversity of family forms, both heterosexual and other, in our society. Examining the agency of people to adapt their family forms to their needs, we might discover that the Heterosexual Family Myth is not as heterosexual as we might think.

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