

Series Criticism Article

A brief review of *the Pose* (netflix-series) and LGBT literature

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to make the LGBT individuals visible along with their love, families and experiences by examining this series narrated from the perspective of the eighties and nineties. The Pose is a true story exposing the social exclusion of LGBT people living in New York of the late eighties and early nineties, and their struggle to hold on to life. In this study, the social exclusion practices that LGBT individuals encounters in daily life, their struggle to survive, what type of a family they become while trying to exist, the ballrooms and the ball culture which are the only places they are accepted in social life have been analyzed from the view of sociological and psychological literature referring to the plotline of the series. Based on the stories of the characters presented, such concepts as social norms, exclusions, gender identities, sexual orientations and homophobia are addressed. At the end of the study, in order for LGBT individuals to cope with homophobia – social exclusion, to hold on to life and to realize themselves, an effective, open to communication and balanced family structure where the gender identity, sexual orientation and social development of the family members are supported is necessary as Virginia Satir states in her theory.

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Genre: Drama

Created by: Ryan Murphy, Brad Falchuk, Steven Canals

Starring: Evan Peters, Kate Mara, James Van Der Beek, Mj Rodriguez, Dominique Jackson, Billy Porter, Indya Moore, Ryan Jamaal Swain, Charlayne Woodard, Hailie Sahar, Angelica Ross, Angel Bismark Curiel, Dyllón Burnside, Sandra Bernhard, Jason A. Rodriguez

Composer: Mac Quayle

Country of origin: United States

Original language: English

No. of seasons: 3

No. of episodes: 23

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Introduction

This story setting in the streets of New York in the late 1980s and 1990 describes the trans people, who try to exist in societies where they are excluded, through fancy ballrooms and outstanding visual images. The series reveals the life struggle of transgender people who try to hold on to life against hate speeches and social exclusions. It emphasizes the fact that being a family is not only through blood ties. The invisibility that trans individuals always encounter in daily life has an end in *the Pose*. Trans individuals receive the applause they deserve and enjoy being accepted as they are when they show up and pose at balls by performing their shows. *The Pose* is also a series that reveals the ignored facts about trans people. It expresses how their families and society exclude transgender individuals and how those people are deprived of their citizenship rights such as housing, education and healthcare. It also shows how trans individuals look after one another to survive, not in pain, but with hope regardless. We can actually observe the deep wound and homophobia left by the society on those people under the struggle for existence, which becomes a feast with the visual shows in the series. In the series, the rebellions against the concept of women, men and family determined by the society, pains, and experiences or not experienced are observed together with all other emotional details. For demographic information: Table 1.

While explaining this series, which presents realistic sides of the trans individuals, some information will be provided regarding the concepts of biological sex, social gender and transgender to mention the gender identities in general, and then the subject of the series will be expressed and the scenes will be analyzed within theories of “Transformational Systemic Therapy” by Virginia Satir, “Self-Actualization” by Abraham H. Maslow and “the Dramaturgical Model” by Goffman.

Biological sex is a biologically relevant concept starting from the moment of unification of sperm and egg in the human mother’s womb (KaosGL, 2013). In the story beginning with the fertilization of the egg from the mother and the father, the gene sequences to which parents are transferred and the sexual organs determine the double biological sex. While men are born with XY chromosome structure with penis and testicles, women are born with XX chromosome sequence with vagina, uterus and ovaries. Social norms, cultural spouses, femininity and masculinity and roles on these concepts get involved in the concept of the social gender, while genetic heritage determines the biological sex.

Social gender classifies our existing bodies referring to cultural norms and statuses called femininity and masculinity, attributing more traditional meanings determined by the society to our existing bodies generated by our genes biologically (Bingöl, 2014).

Perhaps, the best expression of the connection between biological sex and social gender is the fate of the person’s anatomy, as Butler states. The innate biological sex is the most fundamental factor that determines the social gender of that person. If you are born with male reproductive organs, you will be a man, and if you are born with female reproductive organs, you will be a woman (Durudoğan, 2019). Your genetic heritage decides on your social destiny. Well, is this always the case? Is the person with the XX chromosome structure always a female, and the person with the XY chromosome structure is always a male? Right at this point, it is necessary to look at the concepts of transsexuality and gender identity. While transsexuality shows that the answer to this question cannot always be explained with the concept of social gender, which is appeared by gene sequencing or social roles assigned to the sexual limbs; the gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals draws attention to the differences that reveal the complex form of the human soul, that people may feel sexual attraction to their same-sexes or both sexes at the same time.

Gender identity refers to the gender that a person feels spiritually belong contrary to her/his biological body. While gender identity is generally compatible with bodily gender, it can also be seen in situations, the reverse can also be seen. In cases where bodily gender and gender identity do not compatible with one another, it is called trans and these individuals are called transsexuals - transgenders (Koray & Yüksel, 2018).

Sexual orientation, on the other hand, reveals people’s sexual desires, passions, and which gender they are emotionally and physically attracted to. This attraction is called heterosexuality if it towards the opposite sex, and homosexuality if it is towards the same sex. While men who are attracted to their own sex are called as gay, and woman as lesbians; people who are attracted to both sexes are called bisexual (CETAD, 2020). Sexual orientation is an emotional attraction that is independent of people’s preferences and it appears against their will. Since this attraction comes into being itself, it is not a changeable or treatable condition. In recent studies, the science of psychiatry has stated the fact that homosexuality is not a disease or a mental disorder, and that the mental functions of homosexual

individuals are the same as those of heterosexual individuals (CETAD, 2020). Individuals whose sexual orientation is gay, lesbian or bisexual are satisfied with their existing bodies, and right at this point, they are differentiated from transgender individuals (CISED, 2020). Gender dysphoria seen in transgender individuals is not seen in homosexual individuals. Gender dysphoria is defined as the incompatibility experienced between the individual's biological identity and gender identity. Individuals with gender dysphoria are not satisfied with their existing body integrities and desire to make changes in their bodies in order to orient themselves towards the gender they feel. They may turn to medical surgical operations on this issue (Yıldızhan, Yüksel, Avayu, & Yıldızhan, 2018). In the series, gender dysphoria is pretty intense in the characters of Elektra and Angel. The basis of all the vital decisions that these characters make for their life stems from the desire to get rid of their sexual limbs, which they feel a redundancy in their bodies, and to look more feminine. The group most affected by the homophobic behaviors and exclusions developed by the society against LGBT individuals is trans people due to their appearance. While gays, lesbians or bisexuals can hide their identities as to their preferences, transgenders cannot hide theirs' visually. This situation causes them to be deprived of many social rights from finding a job to getting education, to being treated in hospitals. Trans people are stigmatized by society due to their physical appearances.

According to Foucault, sexuality is a concept far from being just a destiny. In fact, sexuality is a form of behavior that a person has revealed while reflecting her/his desires (Buse, 2012). Heteronormative type of social structure imposes the fact that sexual practices and orientations can only be experienced by men and women. It categorizes people's relationships according to their being male and female, and accepts homosexual relationships that are outside of those as abnormal (KaosGL, 2020). Michel Foucault, in *the History of Sexuality*, mentions that throughout the history of humanity, sexuality has been only based on heterosexual relationships and reproductions, and all other sexual tendencies are believed as perverted, marginal and abnormal (Foucault, 2010). As Foucault points out, nothing that is not intended to reproduce or formed within the idea of this logic has neither a place, nor a statute, nor a voice in society. Those people are discriminated, rejected and sentenced to silence (İnceoğlu & Çoban, LGBTI Individuals and Media, 2019). In this regard, one of the biggest problems faced by LGBT individuals who are excluded from heteronormative societies that practices homophobic behaviors is their closure process. The individual experiences this mentioned process in two different stages: First, she/he accepts this situation experiencing awareness, and then bares it to her/his family and social environment (Çelik, Sanberk, & Şahin, 2017). These people usually face the most painful alienation for first time in their family.

Virginia Satir, the first female theorist in the field of family therapy, considers the family as a system consisting of parents, siblings and other family members. While creating her theory, Satir has been affected by familial system problems as well as the ideas of humanism, existentialism and developmental model (Durak & Fırsıloğlu, 2007). According to her, communication and its process are quite significant. Individuals have to communicate with each other to survive. Be approved by other people is the most important reason for people to communicate. Productive communication should be clear and coherent. The parties can express themselves as they are, and verbal and non – verbal messages between individuals should be compatible with each other. (Murdock, 2018). Satir, who scrutinizes family problems, emphasizes the significance of communication within the family and gathers these communication forms in four basic categories (Durak & Fırsıloğlu, 2007).

The Placater: The ones who always try to get the approval of others. They try to please other people and frequently apologize.

The Blamer: The ones, who are nervous, angry, though, using high-pitched voice. They have dictatorial and accusatory attitudes.

The Computer: They are the cold and distant ones, who analyze everything and show no signs of emotion.

The Distractor: They are the ones who cannot focus on one topic and have no meaning in what they say (Murdock, 2018).

Emotional experiences are as important as communication for Satir, who touches on the importance of communication for a healthy family structure. In families with emotional deprivation, children tend to run away from their parents and other family members. In a healthy family, individuals can openly share their love and feelings. Satir states that mothers and fathers with low self-esteem try to implement their self-confidence through their children and therefore make excessive demands on their children, which negatively affects the development of the child. It is

observed that children not being supported by their families about their abilities and gender identities reject one or both of their parents.

According to Abraham H. Maslow, the innate tendencies of people mostly include kindness, respect and generosity. He states that these inner beauties that we are born with do not turn into evil unless it is necessary. He says that there is no inherently hatred, cruelty and sadism in people; violent tendencies are only developed against the limitation of needs, feelings and abilities. Maslow states five main categories of human needs. These are physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging needs, esteem needs and self-actualization needs respectively. (İnanç & Yerlikaya, 2016). The need at a lower step must be fulfilled, in order for a need to arise. While there are basic physical needs at the bottom of the pyramid, towards the upper steps of it, it is seen that the needs to be met are sprung from sociological and psychological needs.

Physiological needs: Needs such as hunger, thirst, sexuality, breathing, sleep and going to the toilet are physiological needs. In order for people to move forward to the needs above the pyramid, first of all, physiological needs must be met (İnanç & Yerlikaya, 2016).

Safety needs: People begin to feel the need for security after meeting their physiological needs. The need for security is the desire to be protected and to stay away from anxiety, fear, turmoil and instability. In this way, people can feel safe. It is not possible to meet such needs as love, respect, self-realization without meeting the need for security. (Kula & Çakar, 2015) In order for the individual to achieve full development, her / his security needs must be fully satisfied. Otherwise, the person may show a retrospective progress and this may prevent that person from developing.

Love and belonging needs: After the physiological and security needs are fulfilled, the need for love and belonging arises. The most important need in this step is the fact that a person does not live alone. (Duyar, 2021) Thus, people start to need family, spouse, lover, child, and friend and want to establish a relationship to be in a family or group of friends.

Esteem needs: People need to be trusted, to be in control of their surroundings, to be recognized and appreciated by others. Maslow explains this need under two headings. The first one is to feel successful and competent. The second is the need to be admired and respected. (İnanç & Yerlikaya, 2016)

Self-actualization needs: The need for self-actualization, which is at the top of the needs pyramid, allows one to discover her/his potentials by her/his own. Even if the aforementioned physiological needs for safety and love are fulfilled, it feels uncomfortable when the person is not respected. According to Maslow, people should accept their nature and live as they should be. (İnanç & Yerlikaya, 2016)

Theme of *The Pose*

The character Damon, played by Ryan Jamaal Swain, is a talented young man trying to exist as a gay and dancer in a religious family structure in a small town. He is a kind of warrior who is forbidden from dancing by his father, while his mother supports his dance career for him to be creative. One day, when Damon returns from the ballet school, his father sees him dancing carelessly at home, and things change for him at that moment. After his father finds some magazines for gay men hidden under Damon's bed, Damon, whose gender identity is revealed, no longer denies himself. For the first time, he presents himself as a dancer to the World. And then, his father batters him in cold blood. (Part 1: 12'.42" – 15'.31"). Rejected by his father and thrown into the street by force, Damon hopes that his mother would come to help him. However, he takes the second major blow from her. As he takes a step towards his mother, he is shaken by a hurting slap in his face. Damon's mother says that he has betrayed her; he has brought those filthy magazines into the house recklessly and the God may punish him with AIDS for his sin, since the Bible prohibits homosexuality. Thus, he loses his only harbor in the world where he may take shelter (Part 1: 14'.30" – 15'.31"). Arriving in New York, Damon meets Blanca, played by Mj Rodriguez, while trying to earn a living by dancing in the park corners. (Part 1: 26'.03")

Blanca; when she is seventeen, she wears female clothes and flees to the ball after her family sleeps. She has not yet figured out how to deal with her gender identity, but at a thanksgiving dinner, she confesses her mother that she is not a man but a woman by saying she is not her son, but her daughter. Blanca is an adult trans individual who tries to establish her own home in the series. After being kicked out by her family, she joins the Abundance family with the help of Elektra Abundance, played by Dominique Jackson (Part 1: 22'.28" – 22'.58"). Having learned to survive as a trans and a woman in this house, Blanca decides to establish her own house in order to leave a mark on the World

and protect LGBT individuals who are excluded by their family and society at the young age, especially after having problems with Elektra. She leaves the Abundance House and establishes her own house named Evangelista. (Part 1: 21'.14"- 24'.02")

At this point, it is essential to mention the concept of the house. A LGBT individual who defines herself as a mother establishes the house mentioned in the series. The mother of the house gathers the LGBT people in need of protection under her own roof. She offers these adopted people a warm hearth to live in. (Part 1: 26'.42" - 27'.05"). The mother prepares the members of the house for real life and allows them to attend the social life without having to give up their own selves. (Part 8: 53'.08 – 53'.56"). As Pray Tell, the father of the ballroom played by Billy Porter, says the Houses become a hearth for boys and girls who cannot have a home in life. For this reason, those houses become homes in which LGBT individuals can safely survive. People living in these places define the houses as their family of choice and use their names as their surnames. Mothers' duty is to provide a safe and warm home to their children in these houses regardless of their age, and to always support them in accordance with their needs. On the other hand, the duties of the children are to support the house financially, to comply with the house rules determined by the mother, and to represent their houses at the balls in the best way possible.

Balls are important since they are a place where the houses declare their existence. In their words, the ball is a place where people who are not accepted anywhere come together. It means a celebration of a life that the rest of the world does not find it to be worth to celebrate. In these balls, the members of the houses wear clothes according to the determined categories, take stages and occasionally hold fashion shows. Winning houses return home with their trophies. However, the aim is not to earn money, but to make a name. In other words, it is a kind of acceptance in society.

(Part 1: 27'.20" – 28'.08") According to Beauvoir, being or not being in a harmony with social genders creates such a strong social pressure on the person who is not masculine or feminine or not behaving in accordance with the determined behavioral patterns, and this situation creates deep wounds in people. (Durudoğan, 2019) LGBT individuals have to accept their own existence and have their environment approved in order to avoid specific identities or role conflicts. (İnceoğlu & Çoban, 2018) For this reason, these balls are very important for the houses. The mother Blanca defines the greatest pain a person experiences throughout her\his life is as the existing inner beauties which are not visible to people. Tired of heteronormative pressures in social life and constantly excluded and unwanted LGBT individuals make a name and gain acceptance and respect in their community through balls. They shine at the balls, most importantly; they become visible on that stage. In his book of *the Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* dated 1959, Goffman explains his theory of presentation of self with dramaturgy, in other words, with a theatrical metaphor. According to him, life is a theatre stage, and people are the actors who perform their social identities in daily life. People play the roles determined by society in order to make a good impression, be accepted and become an admired identity like actors expecting to be applauded on stage and await acceptance. (Özdemir, 2015) Balls are also a theater stage, as Goffman points out, but with one difference. LGBT individuals take the stage with their real identities, not the roles expected from them by the society. In *the Pose*, LGBT individuals perform an identity performance on the ball stage. Unable to find a place for himself in the World of hetero-whites, Damon joins Blanca Rodriguez's house. Thanks to Blanca's emboldening and high efforts, he enrolls in the city's most prestigious dance school and begins his new life. After Damon, Angel joins the Evangelista House, as well. Angel, whose heart and American dream are broken by the white boy Stan, joins the house as a new face. Angel, who is played by Indya Moore in the series, is a beautiful transsexual who has become a prostitute in the port to earn a living at the age of twenty-one. Angel is the most beautiful version of a woman's soul trapped in a man's body. While trying to save money to have surgery for changing her sex, she is turned away from all the jobs that she has applied for due to her sexual identity.

(Part 1: 46'.00"- 46'.36") Angel earns her living through prostitution. Dreaming of becoming a famous model one day in the future, Angel meets Stan, played by Evan Peters, on a job at the port one day.

(Part 1: 35'.19") Stan is a complete American dream for a woman. He is a young, white – skinned, handsome, gentle, romantic man who works for Trump on a high plaza floor with a very high salary. On the other hand, he has a repressed bisexuality inside. When they first meet, he asks Angel what she expects from life and conquers the heart of that beautiful woman. Angel tells him that she wants to be treated the same way as every woman is. She wants to look after someone, to belong to someone, to be her own and to be a family.

(Part 1 : 40'.15 – 41'.33") No matter how simple the sentences may seem, they carry the deep pain of an impossible life in the eyes of a trans person. In the following scenes of the series, while Stan allocates a house to Angel in the most beautiful part of the city, his homophobia is also shown to the audience with his repressed sexual identity. Homophobia is the name given to situations such as hatred, discontent, discrimination and fear created by society against homosexuality and homosexual people. Under the heading of homophobia in addition to the fear of homosexual people, the fear that the person herself/himself may have homosexual feelings or tendencies is also examined in this direction (Çelik & Can, 2018). Other than the scenes in which Stan's sexual desire towards transgender people from his adolescence are shown (Part 4: 44'.24"), the scene of exaggerated tooth brushing to purify himself after kissing with Angel clearly shows the disgust, dilemma and homophobia that he experiences within him.

(Part 1: 42'.38" - 42'.40") After these images, the social dimension of homophobia is shown mercilessly within the dialogues of Stan and Angel where Stan discusses the differences between their social lives and genders. (Part 1: 47'.23" – 47'.26" and Part 7: 36'.53 – 38'.30") It is revealed in a shocking way that how this exclusion and marginalization inflicted on LGBT individuals isolate and injure them. And then, they start losing their faith in themselves over time. It is observed that transgender individuals are the unluckiest among LGBT individuals in terms of social exclusion, and that these people constantly encounter homophobic attitudes created by society. The scenes, in which Blanca is not accepted to a gay bar that she has gone with her trans friend to celebrate the first cup she won by competing in her own house and they have harshly been thrown out, show the level of the discrimination (Part 2: 20'.46" – 24'.05" and Part 2: 57'.15" – 58'.29"). In their words, trans people are at the bottom of the ladder. No matter how much LGBT individuals are excluded by society or their community, they are always loved and protected by their houses and chosen families. As Elektra says in one scene, although they fight with each other like stray cats, they become one against the neighborhood if necessary. No matter how much they compete for fame and name at the balls, they come together against the problems they face in real life.

Another outstanding issue mentioned in the series is AIDS, which shook the agenda in the 1980s and 1990s. AIDS has been treated as a disease with a higher possible incidence among LGBT individuals, especially among transgender individuals. The situation of the discrimination carried out by the society is mentioned this time in the health sector. It is explained that LGBT individuals are not treated because of their sexual identity or orientation and they have difficulty in finding medication.

(Part 3: 10'.12" – 12'.43" and Part 4 : 30'.48" – 32'.10") These people are shown to be mercilessly excluded by the society through religion after the church declares the LGBT individuals suffering from this disease as sinners who must be burned in hell, (Part 4: 31'.29") LGBT individuals who are declared sinful are once again excluded from the society with this label. Those who were stigmatized as deviant by the society once again are embraced by their houses and guarded by their own society during their treatment. The fact that Pray Tell and Blanca hug and promise one another forever upon learning that their HIV tests are positive and that Blanca entrusts her children and houses to Angel in case of an unexpected death, show the benefits of being a family, being one and sharing the same fate. (Part 4: 51'.32" – 53'.09" and Part 8: 20'.41" – 21'.47") Being one and being the same require to accept the ones suffering, even if there is war between the houses. The trans person Elektra, played by Dominique Jackson, who has the most outstanding and powerful house in the series, decides to complete the surgery process arising from dysphoria and to have sex reassignment surgery.

(Part 3: 24'.19 – 26'.42") Elektra has a boyfriend who offers her money, comfort and a luxurious life. Her lover, a wealthy white, elderly businessman, takes his power from Elektra's trans identity and body. For this reason, he does not let Elektra have a sex reassignment surgery during their relationship (Part 4: 16'.06" – 19'.20"). Elektra is abandoned by her lover, since she is freed from her sexual limb, which she has never felt as it belonged to her. (Part 7: 3'.40" – 6'.29"). This abandonment reveals the hypocrisy of society and the story of a women's emancipation. Having the body that her soul desires, Elektra loses all her life conditions and socioeconomic power and then, her daughter whom she was like a mother of has to join Blanca's house. (Part 8: 5'.15") Despite all her moodiness, Elektra continues to exist with her family in a life filled with love by this house. Even though life is cruel to the characters in the series, it cannot manage to take the power of being together. They go on holding on to life as a family with their love, with their dances and fancy balls despite the society and all its brutal exclusion.

Table 1.*Demographic Information about the Series*

Scenarists: Ryan Murphy, Brad Falchuk, Steven Canals
Directors: Ryan Murphy, Silas Howard, Tina Mabry, Gwyneth Horder-Payton
Producers: Ryan Murphy, Sherry Marsh
Actors: Billy Porter, Indya Moore, MJ Rodriguez, Dominique Jackson, Ryan Jamaal Swain, Dyllon Burnside, Evan Peters, Kate Mara, Angel Bismark Curiel, Haille Sahar, Angelica Ross
Original Language: English
Duration: 1st Season (8 episodes), 2nd Season (10 episodes)
Channels to watch the series: TR - Netflix

Scene Analyses of *the Pose*

In this part, the lives of LGBT people, their family relations and their fight for existing will be analyzed through Virginia Satir's theory of "Transformational Systemic Therapy" and Abraham H. Maslow's "Self-Actualization". The concept of homophobia will be discussed along with the key scenes of *the Pose*, which are about the essence of the lives of LGBT individuals and the series. For the list of analyzed scenes: Table 2.

Table 2.*The Analysis of Scenes of Pose according to Psychology Theorists*

Scenes	The Part in the Series	Scene Context
1	Part 1: 12'.42" – 15'.31"	Virginia Satir – Transformational Systemic Therapy - Family
2	Part 1: 14'.30" – 15'.31"	Virginia Satir – Transformational Systemic Therapy - Family
3	Part 1: 22'.28" – 22'.58"	Virginia Satir – Transformational Systemic Therapy - Family
4	Part 1: 21'.14" - 24'.02"	Virginia Satir – Transformational Systemic Therapy - Family
5	Part 1: 26'.42" - 27'.05"	Virginia Satir – Transformational Systemic Therapy - Family
6	Part 8: 53'.08 – 53'.56"	Virginia Satir – Transformational Systemic Therapy - Family
7	Part 4: 51'.32" – 53'.09"	Virginia Satir – Transformational Systemic Therapy - Family
8	Part 8: 20'.41" – 21'.47"	Virginia Satir – Transformational Systemic Therapy - Family
9	Part 8: 5'.15"-	Virginia Satir – Transformational Systemic Therapy - Family
10	Part 1: 27'.20" – 28'.08"	A. Maslow - Self-Actualization Theory – Love and Esteem
11	Part 1: 40'.15 – 41'.33"	A. Maslow - Self-Actualization Theory – Love and Esteem
12	Part 1: 42'.38"- 42'.40"	Homophobia
13	Part 4: 44'.24" – 44'.26"	Homophobia
14	Part 1: 47'.23" – 47'.26"	Homophobia
15	Part 7: 36'.53 – 38'.30"	Homophobia
16	Part 2: 20'.46" – 24'.05"	A. Maslow- Self-Actualization Theory - Belonging and Esteem
17	Part 2: 57'.15" – 58'.29"	A. Maslow- Self-Actualization Theory - Belonging and Esteem
18	Part 3: 10'.12" – 12'.43"	Homophobia - Social Exclusion and Healthcare
19	Part 4: 30'.48" – 32'.10"	Homophobia - Social Exclusion and Healthcare
20	Part 4: 31'.29" – 31'.32"	Homophobia - Social Exclusion and Healthcare
21	Part 3: 24'.19" – 26'.42"	A. Maslow - Self-Actualization Theory - Self-Actualization
22	Part 4: 16'.06" – 19'.20"	A. Maslow - Self-Actualization Theory - Self-Actualization
23	Part 7: 3'.40" – 6'.29"	A. Maslow - Self-Actualization Theory - Self-Actualization

Analyses of Scene 1 and 2

If we consider the relationship between Damon and his family shown in these scenes according to Satir, we see a model of despotic father and a mother who always remains silent in the shadow of this father. In the family where a problematic communication is in question, the father is included in the accusing model, while the mother and Damon are included in the placating model. A despotic, repressive father and a child who is constantly expected to apologize and only do what is asked of him are pictured. In terms of functionality, Satir considers family as open and closed system. She states that the families in the open system structure are more sensitive to each other, have flexible rules,

and their developments and changes are supported. On the contrary, Damon's family has a closed system structure including stricter rules that his parents show preventive attitude rather than supporting their child's improvement and change. While Satir explains her family approach, she also emphasizes the fact that each individual is unique and valuable with an existentialist point of view. She states that regardless of the others' opinions, one decides her/his own worth. It is mentioned that Damon, who has high self-worth despite anything, lives in a closed system family where communication within the family is quite problematic and the consequences are not functional.

Analysis of Scene 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8

In order to examine the scenes (3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 - 8) in Chart 2 under the theory of Virginia Satir, first of all, the definition of the family should be mentioned. Satir defines family as a structure consisting of parents, siblings and other family members. According to her, family members should have open conversations in an effective and healthy family model that people can be clear during their conversations and they should be supported for the social development of the family members with more flexible family rules including gender identity issues enough to suit individual's freedoms and lives. Virginia Satir also highlights the individuality, equality and freedom of people as well as evaluating them within the culture and family structure to which they belong. Both humanistic and existential structures of Satir's theory support individuals' own subjective preferences. At Scene 4, the concepts of the house, mother of the house and chosen family are encountered for the first time when Blanca declares to establish her own house. Then at the Scenes of 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, the lives of LGBT individuals who have not a functional family life with their own families because of their gender identities or sexual orientations and who have been left and thrown into the streets by their families are shown along with their lives with their chosen families. In these scenes, the mother's embracing of her children, her support for the development of their sexual identities and social lives, the communication of family members, their duties to each other and to the house, briefly; the meaning of being a family is explained. As Maslow also points out, people tend to be loved and to be in a family after basic needs are met. In the scenes mentioned, it is observed that they form a healthy family structure, which they could not create with their own families before, but with their chosen families now. Here, it is underlined that LGBT individuals have attained an effective and balanced family structure. As Satir frequently states in her theory, the significance of the family concept is emphasized in the lives of LGBT individuals.

Analysis of Scene 10

In scene 10 indicated in Chart 2, the meaning of the balls is depicted. As Blanca states in the aforementioned scene, balls are the places for the ones who are not accepted anywhere come together. It means a celebration of a life that the rest of the World does not find worth to celebrate. As Abraham H. Maslow emphasizes, after eating, drinking, sheltering and security needs are met, people's needs for belonging, being loved, accepted and respected appear. Satisfying these needs is as important as meeting the psychological needs. LGBT individuals expelled from their homes by their families and excluded by the society present themselves, are accepted, loved and respected by their community in the balls. In short, they exist with their selves. At these balls, LGBT people are recognized by their own community and earn the respect they need with their performances. Thus, according to Maslow, they meet the most basic needs of belonging, being loved and respected in this way.

Analysis of Scene 11

In scene 11 indicated in Chart 2, when Stan asks Angel what she wants from this life, Angel's answer of looking after someone, belonging to someone, having someone to belong her and being a family reveals the value of being accepted for a young trans woman. The 11th scene, which is one of the scenes where the social exclusion of LGBT people is felt most deeply throughout the series, shows the sadness of a person when the need for belonging and love is not met as Maslow points out in his theory. It describes of a young trans woman's longing for the desire to be accepted by the society as a complete woman, as well as the need for self-actualization, which Maslow refer to in his theory. According to Maslow, it is crucial to meet the basic physiological needs as well as the psychological needs for a healthy self-development. These needs are belonging, love, esteem and self-actualization. In this context, Angel realizes herself by establishing her own family, meeting the need to belong and to be loved as well as being accepted as a real woman by society. Thus, she attains the love and esteem she longs for.

Analysis of Scene 12 – 13 -14 – 15

Personal and social homophobia are discussed in the scenes of 12, 13, 14 and 15 stated in Chart 2. It is essential to briefly describe the concept of homophobia prior to analyzing the scenes. Homophobia is defined as the prejudice

and discriminatory attitudes that people show against homosexual individuals including such emotions as hatred and fear. Homophobia includes not only the fear felt by the society but also the fear by the person herself / himself, who may have homosexual feelings. After Stan and Angel kissed in scene 12, homophobia concept starts to be referred with the feeling of disgust in Stan's brushing his teeth. In scene 13, Stan's bisexual tendencies and his concern are shown. In the scenes of 14 and 15 indicated in Chart 2, the relation of a transgender woman and a heterosexual man is socially and emotionally handled, and the homophonic attitude of society towards LGBT individuals is clearly shown through the mutual relations of the series characters.

Analysis of Scenes 16 and 17

The exclusion faced by LGBT individuals is clearly visible in the 16th scene that when Blanca is thrown out of the gay bay, where she goes to celebrate with her friend and with the trophy she has received from the first competition that she participated with her house. In scenes 16 and 17, it is seen that transgender individuals are the group that is exposed to the most exclusion among LGBT individuals. The fact that Blanca is excluded by the heteronormative society as well as by gay individuals whom she considers from the same community as hers prevents the meeting of Maslow's most basic needs of belonging and esteem. With or without being aware of it, Blanca insists that this need to be met in order to satisfy her spirit.

Analyses of Scene 18-19-20

In the scene of 18 stated in Chart 2, which starts with Pray Tell's visit to the hospital with his girlfriend having AIDS, the difficulties that LGBT individuals face in healthcare are revealed. It is seen that the hospital is isolated from the society, the inside of the hospital is not hygienic enough, the nutritional needs of patients are ignored and these people have difficulty in finding an appropriate treatment and medicine for AIDS. The 20th scene in Chart 2, where Pray Tell says the society wants them to die, is one of the scenes in which the homophobic attitude against the LGBT people is felt most. Throughout these scenes examined, the homophobic structure of the society and its effect of social exclusion against LGBT people on the healthcare sector and its reflections on LGBT individuals are clearly observed.

Analyses of Scenes 21-22-23

The self-actualization process of Elektra having dysphoria, which starts when she decides to have a sex reassignment operation in the 21st scene indicated in Table 2, is seen with its effect on her emotional and social life. In the conversation between Elektra and her lover, she tells that she wants to see herself as a complete woman, that the sexual limb, which she sees as an abundance in her body, prevents this and that she wants to have this operation. In scene 22, the need for self-actualization, which Maslow mentions in his theory, is clearly observed. Ignoring all the objections and threats of her boyfriend, Elektra performs the sex reassignment operation. Elektra, who shares this fact with her boyfriend in scene 23, states that she feels completed as a woman for the first time before being left by him. Even if she is abandoned by her lover as a result of her decision, the meeting of her body and soul at a certain point reaches her spiritual satisfaction. As Maslow states in his "Self-actualization" theory, a person should be whatever she / he is. She / he should live in peace with herself / himself. The need for self-actualization is as important as basic needs for a healthy mood and personal development. Elektra reaches spiritual satisfaction and of self-actualization, even if she has lost the luxurious life that her lover had offered with the reassignment operation.

Conclusion

The Pose reveals all the homophobic aspects of heteronormative society and the wounds that these exclusions have inflicted on the human soul through real lives. The series shows us the hypocrisy of society and the most painful experiences of LGBT individuals continuing their struggle to survive despite everything. *The Pose*, which carries many elements in terms of sociological and psychological literature to evaluate the lives of ignored and looked aside LGBT individuals, who are even asked to be died out, gives the audience a lesson of humanity. In the stories of the characters of the series, the importance of communication with the family is highlighted and social exclusion issue is emphasized. It is revealed that being a woman or a man do not depend solely on chromosomes and biological characteristics. Sexual orientations are not a preference, since they are in the nature of human and they cannot be altered. It is shown in detail that there is no need for blood ties to become a family, people can choose their safe families and make sacrifices for them. The importance of being accepted, respected and loved by the society are strongly mentioned. It has been stated that the lack of these concepts, which are in the nature of every human being to be seen by people, causes wound in the human psyche that are pretty difficult to reverse. The idea that it is not essential to have female

genetics in order to become a mother and a soul hidden in a male body can be a mother much more than many women is immortalized with the character of Blanca. Relationships between the characters are exemplified that love does not only belong to hetero couples and every aspect of this feeling can be experienced for and between all genders. The most outstanding messages of the series are that people are born free and should live freely, and gender identities or sexual orientations can never be changed.

The Pose is among the striking production showing the exclusion and neglect of LGBT people by the society. With this series, LGBT individuals assert that they will continue to take their place in the life scene and make themselves visible with the poses they give. All the characters of this series are a rainbow for the life.

In this study, literary information about the concepts of biological sex, gender identity and social gender is provided and the real meaning of family, social exclusion and homophobia is analyzed through the life stories of LGBT individuals by benefitting from the theories of “Transformational Systematic Therapy” by Virginia Satir and “Self-actualization” by Abraham H. Maslow. As Maslow state in his theory, for a healthy personality development and a healthy spiritual life, meeting the basic needs such as eating, drinking, housing and security as well as satisfying the social and psychological needs of belonging, being loved, esteemed and self-actualization are of vital importance.

At the end of the study, in order for LGBT individuals to cope with homophobia – social exclusion, to hold on to life and to realize themselves, an effective, open to communication and balanced family structure where the gender identity, sexual orientation and social development of the family members are supported is necessary as Virginia Satir states in her theory.

It is assumed that in the education of the therapists, using films and TV series as a tool will help reinforce the theoretical knowledge (Durak & Fıfılođlu, 2007). In this context, the analysis of the series made in order to understand the social and emotional problems that LGBT individuals have encountered can be resource for those who are educated or studying in the field of mental health.

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