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**Parenting intentions of same-sex couples: a case study in Brasília, Brazil**

Belo Horizonte

2020

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Parenting intentions of same-sex couples: a case study in Brasília, Brazil

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ATA DE DEFESA DE TESE DE **LUÍSA CARDOSO GUEDES DE SOUZA** N°. REGISTRO 2016653404. Às quatorze horas do dia treze do mês de março de dois mil e vinte, reuniu-se na *Faculdade de Ciências Econômicas* da Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais a Comissão Examinadora de TESE, indicada “*ad referendum*” pelo Colegiado do Curso em 03/02/2020, para julgar, em exame final, o trabalho final intitulado “**Parenting intentions of same-sex couples: a case study in Brasília, Brazil**”, requisito final para a obtenção do Grau de *Doutor em Demografia*, área de concentração em Demografia. Abrindo a sessão, a Presidente da Comissão, Profa. Paula de Miranda Ribeiro, após dar a conhecer aos presentes o teor das Normas Regulamentares do Trabalho Final, passou a palavra à candidata, para apresentação de seu trabalho. Seguiu-se a arguição pelos examinadores, com a respectiva defesa da candidata. Logo após, a Comissão composta pelos professores: Paula de Miranda Ribeiro, Laura Lídia Rodríguez Wong, Andréa Branco Simão, Marlise Miriam de Matos Almeida, José Eustáquio Diniz Alves e Angelita Alves de Carvalho, participante por videoconferência, se reuniu, sem a presença da candidata e do público, para julgamento e expedição do resultado final. A Comissão APROVOU a candidata por unanimidade. O resultado final foi comunicado publicamente à candidata pela Presidente da Comissão. Nada mais havendo a tratar a Presidente encerrou a reunião e lavrou a presente ATA, que será assinada por todos os membros participantes da Comissão Examinadora. Belo Horizonte, 13 de março de 2020.

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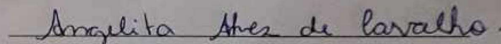
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Profa. Angelita Alves de Carvalho  
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em Demografia

Qualquer maneira de amor vale amar  
Qualquer maneira de amor vale a pena  
Qualquer maneira de amor valerá

*Caetano Veloso e Milton Nascimento*

Para o meu amor, Lucas Schirm.

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“Por seres tão inventivo/E pareceres contínuo/Tempo, Tempo, Tempo, Tempo/És um dos deuses mais lindos”. Quatro anos não são tanto tempo quando pensamos em história de vida, mas nesses quatro anos de doutorado, muito aconteceu. *Oração ao tempo* de Caetano Veloso sempre me lembra que o tempo é precioso, passa muito rápido e é preciso agradecer.

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## Table of contents

Resumo.....	12
Abstract.....	13
1. Introduction.....	14
2. Contextual background.....	18
2.1 Gender, feminism and sexual identity.....	18
2.2 Gender, families and fertility intentions.....	22
2.3 Family formation.....	31
2.4 Homosexual families and their parenting intentions.....	37
2.5 Same-sex marriage and same-sex parents in Brazil.....	43
3. The methodological path.....	49
4. Interviewees.....	53
4.1 Portraying the couples.....	54
4.1.1 Lesbian couples.....	55
4.1.2 Gay couples.....	60
4.2 Sample descriptions.....	64
5. Thematic Analysis.....	67
5.1 Tying the knot.....	68
5.1.1 Recent political context.....	70
5.1.2 Telling the parents.....	74
5.1.3 Family support.....	77
5.1.4 Plans and dreams.....	79
5.2 Children.....	81
5.2.1 Not having children.....	83
5.2.2 The ways to have children.....	85
5.2.3 Social norms about age.....	88

5.2.4 Fatherhood.....	90
5.2.5 Motherhood.....	91
5.2.6 The other mother.....	93
5.3 Workload.....	95
5.3.1 Chores.....	97
5.3.2 Care.....	99
5.4 Social stigma.....	100
5.5 Being a family.....	104
5.6 Thematic network overview.....	106
6. Conclusion.....	112
7. References.....	117
8. Annexes.....	136
Perguntas norteadoras.....	136
Questionário.....	137
TCLE.....	138

## **Illustrations**

### **List of Figures**

Figure 1: Thematic network of same-sex couples in Brasília.....67

### **List of Graphs**

Graph 1: Number of same-sex weddings registered each month in Brazil.....72

Graph 2: Number of same-sex weddings registered each month in DF.....72

### **List of Tables**

Table 1: Socio demographic characteristics of lesbians.....55

Table 2: Socio demographic characteristics of gays.....60

Table 3: Summary of participants' individual characteristics.....65

Table 4: Summary of couples' characteristics.....66

Table 5: Number of same-sex weddings registered each month in Brazil.....71

Table 6: Number of same-sex weddings registered each month in DF.....71

Table 7: Summary of thematic network.....111

## RESUMO

Os estudos sobre fecundidade desejada são majoritariamente focados no comportamento reprodutivo de casais heterossexuais e nas intenções de fecundidade das mulheres. Contudo, sabe-se que há outras formas de parentalidade e vivência familiar que não envolvem o modelo de família nuclear heterossexual no qual os estudos sobre fecundidade se baseiam. A partir de uma abordagem qualitativa, investigou-se a formação familiar e as intenções de parentalidade de casais homossexuais e quais desafios enfrentam no processo. Busca-se aqui contribuir aos estudos de arranjos familiares, além de integrar uma perspectiva de gênero ampla às análises demográficas de intenções de fecundidade, dando visibilidade a um grupo social que geralmente não é incluído nas pesquisas da área no Brasil. Para tanto, elaborou-se uma pesquisa de campo e foram realizadas entrevistas semi-estruturadas com 42 casais do mesmo sexo (20 casais femininos e 22 masculinos) em 2019. Por meio da análise de redes temáticas, os resultados mostram a complexidade da formação da família e o processo de tomada de decisão de ter filhos, revelando o estigma social que ainda persiste. Alguns participantes experimentaram evolução do apoio da família antes ou depois de se casarem, mas o casamento não trouxe maior apoio familiar para todos os participantes. A maioria dos entrevistados pretende ter filhos, mas as experiências e desejos dos casais de gays e de lésbicas são diferentes. Além das restrições biológicas e das possibilidades corporais que determinam decisões e diferenças comportamentais, as famílias estão expostas a um ideal heteronormativo que prioriza o cuidado feminino e outros estereótipos de gênero que influenciam as decisões parentais e a vida familiar nas famílias homossexuais. A rede temática sobre formação familiar mostrou os diferentes caminhos dos casais para a construção de conexão afetiva e legitimidade social. Os resultados são consistentes com a literatura internacional, embora as eleições presidenciais de 2018 no Brasil e seus impactos no casamento homossexual mereçam atenção em pesquisas futuras.

Palavras Chave: homossexualidade; gênero; família; filhos; intenções de parentalidade.

## **ABSTRACT**

Studies on desired fertility are mostly focused on the reproductive behavior of heterosexual couples and the fertility intentions of women. Nonetheless, it is known there are other forms of parenthood and family life that are not based on the heterosexual nuclear family model that fertility studies assume. Using a qualitative approach, I investigate the family formation process and parenting intentions of same-sex couples, looking at how they implement their intentions and the challenges they face. This dissertation contributes to the study of family arrangements and fertility, integrating a broader gender perspective into the demographic analyzes of fertility intentions and giving visibility to a social group that is not usually included in the area's research in Brazil. I conducted online interviews with 42 same-sex couples (20 lesbian couples and 22 gay couples) residing in Brasília in 2019. Through thematic network analysis, the results display the complexity of family formation, especially the decision-making process to have children, unveiling the management of persistent stigma. Some participants experienced an evolution of support from family before or after getting married, but marriage did not translate into greater familial support for all participants. The majority of the interviewed couples intended to have children, but the experiences and desires of gays and lesbians couples were different. Besides biological constraints and corporeal possibilities that drive decisions and behavioral differences, families are exposed to a heteronormative ideal that prioritizes feminine caregiving and other gender stereotypes that influences parental decisions and family life in same-sex households. The thematic network on family formation shows the different avenues for constructing affectionate connection and social legitimacy. The findings in this doctoral dissertation are consistent with the international literature, although the 2018 presidential election in Brazil and its impacts on same-sex marriage are a recent and unique phenomenon that deserves further attention.

Keywords: homosexuality; gender; family; children; parenting intention.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This doctoral dissertation aims to investigate the family formation of same-sex couples in Brasília, looking at how they manage their parenting intentions and what challenges they face, whether they wish to bear children or not.

The hypothesis is that, although same-sex couples are an obvious break away from the classic family model, they value child rearing, and seek for union stability and the social legitimacy it brings. In this sense, choosing to examine new demographic configurations challenges the heterosexual mainstream notion of what family is, how fertility shapes it and what counts as objects of study for Demography.

Fertility, one of the three components of demographic analysis, has been studied for decades and its decline in most countries of the world is a source of intense debate among academics. Independently from the theoretical focus of their arguments, however, there is a common assumption to them all – regardless of women’s and couple’s underlying motives, their fertility intentions have changed over time (Johnson-Hanks, 2007; Bongaarts & Casterline, 2018).

Much has been written about fertility intentions (Bongaarts, 1992; Schoen et al., 1999, Quesnel-Vallée and Morgan, 2003, Morgan, S. P., & Taylor, 2006; Ajzen, I., & Klobas, 2013; Carvalho, 2014). Philipov (2011) even argues the field of fertility intentions studies deserves its own theory so demographers better comprehend reproductive behaviors and that future demographic projections are more accurate.

Fertility intentions theories, however, do not explicitly address gender identity or sexuality. Research in the field is mostly concerned about unwanted pregnancies and failure to achieve fertility goals of presumably heterosexual women. However, non-heterosexual women most likely will never face an unwanted pregnancy and the challenges they face to achieve their desired fertility are different than those of heterosexual women. According to Tate et al. (2019), much remains to be learned about the role of sexual orientation in family formation processes.

Quantitative studies on actual fertility and desired fertility are usually focused on female reproductive behavior and women’s fertility intentions, assuming an essentialist biological perspective. It is known that there are other forms of conception, pregnancy and family life that do not involve the heterosexual nuclear family model on which fertility studies are based. To include them in academic productions that relate

gender and Demography, this dissertation offers a set of reflections on gender, same-sex couples and their family life.

The traditional family configuration, defined by the heterosexual nuclear family composed of father, mother and their children, has been increasingly changing around the world in the last fifty years (Sobotka & Toulemon, 2008; Mills & Blossfeld, 2013). In Brazil, Wajnman (2012) described the changes happening over the last decades. Analyzing the evolution of household patterns and the demographic conditions that define the availability of relatives, the author shows the proportion of people in traditional nuclear households is gradually giving way to alternative family structures, such as childless couples, single parents with children and extended family households.

The second demographic transition (Lesthague and Van de Kaa, 1986; Lesthague, 2010) contextualizes higher individual freedom and ideational change allowing for diverse family configurations. Ruggles (2015) defends that families are irrevocably more egalitarian nowadays, because patriarchy has fallen back over time. Therefore, new family forms have been increasingly accepted. In addition to factors such as increasing divorce rates and decreasing fertility, one of the many variables that shape this transformation is the process of social, legal and political acceptance of same-sex marriage.

This process also includes the experience of parenting and the formation of families from adoption processes and the use of new reproductive technologies. Thus, it is up to demographers to include such experiences in demographic studies, analyzing the intentions of same-sex couples in relation to family formation and parenthood. Besides becoming parents through previous heterosexual relationships, growing numbers of individuals are transitioning to parenthood in same-sex relationships (Patterson & Riskind, 2010).

In this sense, the present study is of great importance to broaden the horizons of the demographic analysis related to fertility and family formation, especially in relation to gender perspectives. This study gives visibility to new family arrangements, bringing inclusion to a group that still suffers stigma in their processes of conjugality and parenting.

The relation between gender and reproduction in demographic literature resembles “a demography of women” (Greenhalgh, 1995). It considers a narrow range of women’s characteristics as demographically important and ignores the structuring

analytical categories of gender. Incorporating gender, rather than merely women, into demographic analysis requires recognition and acceptance of more interpretative approaches to social science. Examining demography's work on women and gender is important for the insights it provides into the field itself and how it resists new kinds of scholarship and its potential contributions (Riley and McCarthy, 2003).

Williams (2010) points out that there is a small number of articles in the demographic literature using the concept of gender, not as sex, but as a social construction representing power relations. If gender is a social structure and we consider the role of gender only at the individual level, we lose sight of its cultural importance at the broadest and most social level (Riley, 1999; Risman, 2004).

Gender, as the central organizing concept that it is in society, cannot be reduced to simplified analysis that assume marital fertility and heteronormativity. Overlooking the fact that feminism and gender studies have come a long way, the demographic literature tends to discuss gender and fertility based on naturalized precepts, focusing on differences between men and women in the heterosexual nuclear family model of developed countries, e.g. Goldscheider et al. (2015).

For Scott (1986), the essence of the definition of gender lies in the connection between two propositions: gender is a constitutive element of social relations and means primarily relations of power. Since gender is the social organization of sexual difference, it does not reflect the first biological reality, but constructs the meaning of that reality.

Thus, the demographic work on gender restricted by a single study object of the heterosexual family perpetuates power relations and social hierarchies. That is not to say that non-heterosexual couples necessarily have a critical perception of romantic love and/or its reproduction of patriarchal structures. Nonetheless, their unions display other dynamics of individual and collective living.

Zrenchik & Craft (2016) call for a concerted shift inside the field of family studies to properly include and expand the experiences of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community. Demographers are essential for analyzing the relationship between sexual identity, family formation, reproductive behaviors, and their population consequences (D'Lane and Baumle, 2018).

This doctoral dissertation is a step in that direction, although one must keep in mind, I will be looking at a specific group of committed couples who already live



together. The results will reflect that slant. The dissertation consists of six chapters. This introduction is followed by the literature review, which outlines how the studies in gender and sexual identity relate to same-sex marriage and parenting in Brazil, including theories of fertility intentions and family formation. Then, I explain the methodology and describe the interviewed couples. Next, the interviews are analyzed according to the thematic analysis proposed by Attride-Stirling (2001). Finally, I present the conclusions.

## **2. CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND**

This chapter is divided in five sections to present the most relevant developments in international literature related to the family formation process of same-sex couples. Moreover, it outlines the progress and setbacks Brazil has faced in recent years regarding the recognition of homosexual families.

### **2.1 Gender, feminism and sexual identity**

Central to feminist theory is the recognition of gender as a social construct (Keller, 1989). Many cultural struggles and social deconstructions formed the long historical path that brought gender and sexual diversity to light in the public debate, giving visibility to same-sex marriage and same-sex parenting nowadays.

Discussing gender relations is a fundamental part of that historical path and it was initially the endeavor of the feminist movement. Feminist theory analyzes the workings of patriarchy in all its manifestations – ideological, institutional, organizational, subjective – accounting not only for continuities but also for change over time (Scott, 1988). Various feminist movements around the world, including in Brazil, had a civilizational character (Matos, 2008). They were crucial in addressing important social problems such as poverty, education, and domestic violence, targeting specific and universal battles.

Feminist history and discourse are usually explained around the notion of waves (Henry, 2004). The first wave, happening during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, fought mainly for women's right to vote. First wave feminists centered their fight on suffrage and political equality between men and women while the second wave, occurring in the 1960s and 1970s, defended women's liberation movement for human rights and against discrimination. Women were encouraged to understand how their personal lives reflected largest sexist power structures (Friedan, 2010 [1963]).

The concept of gender divides the second wave of feminism from the first. Instead of focusing on equality per se, second wavers defended diversity and difference. West Zimmerman (1987) brought up the notion of “doing gender”. Gender is then defined and sustained through daily assessments, practices, and interactions. Men and women are held accountable for the accomplishment of gender in accordance with others' expectations. At this moment, gender is seen as a powerful ideological device, which produces, reproduces, and legitimates the choices and limits that are predicted

on the sex category. Nowadays, gender identity is considered the internal sense of a person's gender and it may be different from their biological sex assigned at birth, a reflection of the third wave movement and a foundation for queer theory.

The third wave, happening during the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, is seen as a continuation of, and a reaction to, second-wave feminism. Third wave feminists argue that the second wavers focused on the experiences of upper middle-class white women. Therefore, third wave feminists argue for the importance of intersectional analysis (Crenshaw, 1989), emphasizing how race, ethnicity, class, religion, sexuality, gender, and nationality are all significant factors when discussing feminism, because they describe the different ways in which different forms of oppression intersect.

In that sense, power is at the heart of how gender organizes societies. Against the gender perspective based on dichotomy and binarism, gender has had the important role of denouncing oppressive structures that have existed for centuries and replacing them with pluralism. Gender studies reveal that what has been considered universal is actually the expression of domination of a part over the whole (Matos, 2008).

Developments in feminist theory and gender models recognize the “diverse and contested nature of gender conventions” (Ferree, 1990). Patriarchy as a system of domination of men over women goes beyond the family sphere, structuring all social dynamics. However, according to Delphy (1981), there is no consensus on the use of the concept of patriarchy among feminists, and the dissimilarities in the functions of the term reveal differences within the movement. Dilemmas of difference (Distefano, 1988) and the domestic relations of production (Saffioti, 2004) relate to the complex progression of liberty inside patriarchy as based on a sexual contract theory (Pateman, 1993).

Same-sex unions have both the potential to subvert the existing social order and/or to preserve the conservatism of marriage. It opens the question of how many social structures must be maintained for heterosexuality to be subverted. Butler's book (1990), *Gender Trouble*, is one of the representative texts of the feminist third wave. The author advocates for the breakdown of the gender binary and of the presumptively heterosexual model to think about sexuality, emphasizing the distinction between gender and sexuality. Butler (1990, p.3) states:

(...) because gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and because gender intersects with race,

class, ethnic, sexual and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities. As a result, it becomes impossible to separate out gender from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained.

Hence, gender plays an important role in shaping relationship dynamics for same-sex couples – a gender-as-relational perspective (West & Zimmerman, 2009) suggests a shift from the focus on gender to a focus on gendered relational contexts. They drive the types of emotion work that individuals do in their relationships. A gender-as-relational perspective also relates to intersectionality research (Collins, 1999) to indicate that gendered interactions portray more than one's gender; instead, gendered experiences vary depending on various possibilities of social location. Sexuality is a sociopolitical construct intrinsically related to the establishment and performativity of gender and heteronormativity (Charusheela, 2010).

Richardson et al. (2006) assert heterosexuality is a gendered institution governing everyday practices and social relationships. Heterosexuality is usually taken for granted and unquestioned, concealing its power to structure gender across race, class and sexual identity. In this sense, queer theory destabilizes the mainstream links among sex, gender and desire. It is based on post structuralist critical approaches to contest the practices and institutions of sexual and gendered social norms and categories. Therefore, one needs theory that will enable articulating the alternative ways of thinking about (and thus acting upon) gender without simply reversing old hierarchies or confirming them.

It is useful to bear in mind the concept of the heterosexual matrix (Butler, 1990), which defines gender, body and desire, normalizing them. It generates opposing identities, men and women, and the power relations between them. Butler shows that, within the dominant cultural discourse, homosexuality and homosexual family formations, in relation to marriage and parenting, re-signify the hegemonic heterosexual constructs, creating new spaces for family life.

Oswald et al. (2005) proposed a model for family scholars to unravel the gender, sexuality, and family polarities by which heteronormativity is socially constructed. The authors defined heteronormativity as a complex system of three overlapping binary composites: gender, sexuality, and family, contrasting its normative and deviant

expressions. Recently, Allen & Mendez (2018) critiqued the model and revamped it to include intersectionality.

Matos (2008) emphasizes the complexity of the gender concept, differentiating between theories that are indeed gendered and theories that simply add gender to the mix: gender theories must be critical and subversive; they must make oppression very explicit. Feminist epistemology is the attempt to deconstruct biased knowledge seen as neutral. At first, feminist theory aimed at giving visibility and empowering women. Now, gender as a feminist field of study, based on emancipatory multiculturalism, aims at challenging mainstream knowledge so that all individuals can become active actors in science.

Although strands of feminist and queer theorists diverge on how to subvert the status quo, both tend to agree that patriarchal norms on gender and sexuality are central to maintain heterosexual hegemony. In this dissertation, I do rely on the categories of man, woman, gay and lesbian to make the point that families with or without children exist out of heteronormative scenarios and cannot be neglected from demographic analysis.

Feminist scholars agree that the family cannot be analyzed as a closed unit isolated from social networks and macro structures, such as politics and the economy. Incorporating the complexities of gender into demographic analysis of the family is about integrating two tenants central to feminist work in the social sciences, the notion of gender as a social construct and recognition of the role of power in issues of gender. (Riley and McCarthy, 2003).

To understand gender as socially constructed, and what that means for sexual diversity and identity issues, implies broadening the measures that demographers often use to represent women's status and discuss gender analysis. According to OECD (2019), LGBT inclusion promotes less rigid gender norms and improves gender equality. In order to measure the LGBT population, a demographer must be careful about the definitions of sexual orientation and gender identity.

The American Psychological Association (APA) defines sexual orientation as “an enduring pattern of emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attractions to men, women, or both sexes. Sexual orientation also refers to a person's sense of identity based on those attractions, related behaviors, and membership in a community of others who share those attractions.” It is noteworthy that sexual orientation is not an intrinsic

characteristic of the individual, such as gender identity or age, because sexual orientation is defined in terms of relationships with others (APA, 2008).

After reviewing four databases and facing measurement difficulties regarding the mutability of sexual expressions and the individuals who do not openly portray them, Gates (2011) argues that determining the size of the LGBT community is less important than understanding the struggles its members face on a daily basis in the various realms of their lives. Demographers ought to be concerned with all population groups, no matter their size or how hard it is to measure them. In the next section, I discuss how Demography currently delimitates the discussion on gender, children and families.

## **2.2 Gender, families and fertility intentions**

The thread connecting gender analysis and families in Demography is fertility. The work of Peter McDonald (2000) represented an important landmark for studies on fertility decline and gender equality, arguing that gender equality needs to be mutually reinforced by the family and the institutional contexts, denominated individual-oriented institutions. Hence, equity within the family is a necessary but not sufficient condition for fertility to decline. According to his argument, individual-oriented institutions such as politics, the labor market, and the educational system must also be egalitarian because women with higher levels of education will seek more egalitarian norms in the family context.

Early studies in the area in Brazil relate to Alves (1994). His doctoral dissertation shows the reduction in fertility rates is the result of secularization and structural and institutional transformations that affected gender relations, emphasizing the impact of increasing female labor force participation rates on fertility decline and on the differences between the rural and urban areas of the country.

Riley and McCarthy (2003) argue that Demography focus on “women”, mostly because of how fertility is studied, but not on gender. Measures on women’s status supposedly tackle this gap, but it is important to differentiate between measures that inform about women and those that inform about gender relations.

Mason (2001, p. 161) defines the gender system as:

a set of beliefs and norms, common practices, and associated sanctions through which the meaning of male and female and the rights and obligations of males and

females of different ages and social statuses are defined. Gender systems typically encompass both a division of labor and stratification of the genders.

In this sense, gender systems that limit women's educational attainment, their entry in the labor force and consequently their possibility to learn and adopt contraceptive methods maintain the demand for children at a high standard, thus slowing the rhythm of the fertility transition.

England (2010) considers that overtime changes in the gender system have been unequal for different groups of men and of women. The essentialist gender perspective and the individualism based on equal opportunities structure an environment in which traditionally female activities remain devalued. In this way, women, especially the more educated, have incentives to pursue traditionally male activities, e.g. formal and paid work.

When it comes to fertility decline, most studies focus on the labor market, gendered division of domestic labor and the effect of public policies that provide support for families. Recent studies on developed countries assert that total fertility rate and gender equality are not linearly related. They tend to form a convex parable over time, thus allowing for a resumption of fertility growth after its decline. Esping-Andersen & Billari (2015) affirm that low fertility levels are not permanent, depending on the diffusion of gender egalitarian norms to be reversed. They predict a U-shaped relationship between gender equality and fertility. In the same lines, Esping Andersen (2016) analyzes trends on family life in developed countries and claim that men adapt when their wives work full time.

However, Kolk (2018) found a longitudinal negative relationship between gender equality and fertility and defends there is no evidence for a U-shaped relationship across time in 35 gender equal societies. In countries where gender equality is not homogeneous to all population groups, and that is true for most countries, it is likely that no specific pattern regarding gender equality and fertility will show, although many patterns can be at play. Similarly, Neyer et al. (2013) contest the assumptions made on studies that analyze gender equality and fertility: they are simplistic and consider gender equality as a uniform set of distribution differences.

An important academic benchmark regarding families, societal norms, and the ideational sphere is the theory of the Second Demographic Transition. Originally, Lesthague and Van de Kaa (1986), and later Lesthague (2010), suggested that a second

demographic transition was underway in the West: secularization, diverse family arrangements, the fertility decline, a shift from the child to the couple, and the dissociation between sexuality and reproduction, due largely to the dissemination of hormonal methods of contraception, structure their argument for a new demographic era.

The authors argue that not only socioeconomic changes enabled all these transformations, but also ideational changes allowed individuals to be more self-centered and focused on their higher order needs, following the Maslowian preference drift (Maslow, 1954). These changes are related to many different life events, such as earlier age at first sexual experience, older ages at first union and first child, higher divorce rates, higher educational attainment, and an increased number of same-sex partnerships. The Second Demographic Transition has diversified family life, signaling the emergence of many family groups that fall outside the idealized traditional family (Carroll, 2018).

The second demographic transition can develop in different societies as different combinations of indicators. In that sense, demographic trends are likely outcomes rather than determinants of institutional changes in contemporary societies, reflecting a shift in gendered power hierarchies (Carlson 2019).

Increasing individualism, the demand for fulfillment in adult relationships and the possibility of divorce pressure the organization of marriage. Institutions that used to have authority over and regulated domestic behaviors, such as religion, no longer have that much power to influence individuals' family decisions (Lesthague, 2010). Besides, in contemporary Western societies, parenthood is rather a matter of individual choice than of social imperative, irrespective of sexual orientation.

Consequently, fulfilling higher order needs sometimes includes the choice of not becoming a parent – growing numbers of women finish their reproductive life without biological children, a phenomenon called childlessness. According to Tanturri et al. (2015), childlessness is an important variable to low fertility in some European countries and the negative association between cohort completed fertility and childlessness is increasing over time. Moreover, the authors found individualistic values are significantly and positively associated with the proportion of childless women. Brazil also displays a continuous rising trend on childlessness (Fujiwara, 2018;



Leocádio, 2018), reflecting the modern separation between conjugality and reproduction.

Nonetheless, the concept of the second demographic transition is not consensual among demographers. Coleman (2004) argues that the phenomenon is only secondary, that it is neither a transition nor demographic, because it does not involve other demographic components such as mortality. Zaidi & Morgan (2017) claim the second demographic transition fails to account for the variation in low fertility, making it hard to establish a consistent pattern across countries beyond the spread of cohabitation.

Bernhardt (2004), one of the authors of the gender revolution later on, questions the second demographic transition due to its lack of a gender perspective. Autonomy and self-actualization hold different meanings and consequences for men and women. In that sense, Goldscheider et al. (2015) identify that the family trends analyzed in the second demographic transition framework are products of a gender revolution.

The authors defend that the second demographic transition is only ideational while the gender revolution is structural and strengthens the family. Goldscheider, Bernhardt & Lappegård (2015) argue that the gender revolution is to be complete when men participate in the domestic sphere as women have done in the public arena. In this scenario, fertility will become stable at the replacement level.

However, the gender revolution in that model reduces gender to a proxy of the heterosexual nuclear family. It is crucial to acknowledge the power embedded in the categorization of the multiple systems of oppression that operate and use categories of identity to their own regulation, making the fundamental statements about the gender revolution filled with moral judgment about what a family is or what it should be.

The work on the gender revolution has been increasingly dominant for family demographers to theorize about the relationship of present and future fertility patterns with gender relations. Nonetheless, this conceptualization narrows gender discussions in Demography to married educated heterosexual couples of a privileged class of privileged European countries.

The weakening of patriarchal authority, and the resulting changes in gender relations, opened space for the diversification of household patterns and domestic arrangements. In this scenario, the gender revolution creates a profound change in how couples build their dynamics and organize their life. Same-sex relationships are fundamentally important to this transformation, ideally leading the way to more

egalitarian forms of connections, democratizing intimate life and revolutionizing the day-to-day of families (Weeks, 2007).

Therefore, to include same-sex relationships within the field of fertility studies is a crucial step to broaden the discussion. Demographers usually examine fertility intentions as a proximate determinant for actual fertility or as a variable to determine the gap between intended and actual fertility as a driver of low fertility, or, in the past, as a proxy for unmet need of contraception. For same-sex couples, fertility intentions are not only predictors but determining factors for fertility behavior. They reliably represent the case of intentional and reasoned action when it comes to having children.

Parenthood is a complex phenomenon that may begin even before a child arrives. Beyond biological factors, future mothers and fathers can imagine their experiences of parenthood (Araldi & Serralta, 2016) and their intentions are subject to downward or upward adjustments over the life course. The elements causing variations in fertility intentions seem to be actual fertility events, changes in partnership status (Liefbroer 2009), age and partner's expectations (Iacovou and Tavares 2011), and the presence or absence of siblings during childhood (Carvalho et al., 2018).

While some scholars defend that fertility intentions are effective predictors of actual fertility, especially when considering parity-progression (Schoen et al. 1999; Berrington 2004, Philipov 2009), others underestimate the explanatory power of fertility intentions, arguing that quantum intentions are an inadequate predictor of the total actual or realized number of children (Quesnel-Vallée and Morgan 2003).

The measurement of reproductive preferences is controversial because it is not straightforward to project levels of fertility based on the answers about ideal family size and the desire to have children in relation to past births. Bongaarts (1992) affirms, however, that although the desired size of the family is subject to some bias, such as the rationalization of unwanted births, this measure continues to serve its purpose.

There is general agreement about the rise of contraception use being a determinant for fertility decline and couple's desired family size being smaller as a requirement for fertility transition. Paradoxically, as the transition progresses, the risk of unplanned pregnancies increase – although low-fertility societies present high levels of birth control, their unintended fertility is significant. Hence, unplanned fertility does not seem to impact the demographic transition (Bongaarts & Casterline, 2018).

Fertility intentions were at first related to a fixed target model. That is, individuals or couples “formulate a desired completed family size and pursue this relative constant target throughout their reproductive life” (Lee 1980). Nonetheless, demographers were concerned about the conceptualization and operationalization of such “fixed target” model. A series of sequential decisions are made in relation to fertility and they are not a one-time choice aiming at a fixed target. Birth intervals, for example, allow for a set for reassessments of earlier decisions.

So, fertility decisions are parity and time dependent. Hence, another relevant issue for surveys of fertility intentions is time reference. Wanting a child in the next year or in the next five years carries different weights. The intent for a child in the more distant future allows for more intervening events to occur and alter one’s original intentions. Lee (1980) suggests that cumulative cohort fertility is influenced by period factors that alter the timing of childbearing and the number of additional children couples intend. Moreover, substantial evidence indicates that the predictive power of fertility is enhanced by including the intent and characteristics of both partners, although Morgan (1985) defends that the wives’ and husbands’ reports of the couple’s intent tend to reflect their combined preferences.

The theory of planned behaviour (TPB), stated by Ajzen (1991; 2012) and Ajzen and Klobas (2013), claims that intentions are the pinnacle of three previous conditions: (i) attitudes (i.e., perceived costs and benefits), namely behavioral belief; (ii) subjective norms (e.g., influence of social network), namely normative belief; and, (iii) perceived control the individual has over behavior, control belief, which is used as a proxy for actual control.

The TPB assumes that fertility intentions are the motivation that drives behavior, as they are indications of how much people are willing or planning to make the effort to perform behavior. That is, intentions are supposed to mediate the association between personal attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived control and factual behavior. The more favorable the personal attitude and subjective norm and the greater the perceived control, the stronger the individual’s intention should be and, consequently, the probability of performing the behavior.

Generally, the theory predicts that the stronger the intention is to behavior engagement, the more likely it is to be performed. However, these intentions to perform certain behavior are subject to the individual’s perception of control over external

factors and the confidence to perform the action. Hence, the behavioral realization depends jointly on the motivation (intention) and the ability (behavioral control) to implement it.

Considering contextual factors and the issue of unintended pregnancies, some authors criticize the TPB, contesting how intentional fertility can really be. Johnson-Hanks et al. (2011), for instance, propose the Theory of Conjunctural Action (TCA). This theory proposes that vital events that constitute the object of social demography must be treated as the products of the action of social life, and that the understanding of social action requires a conception of social structures.

In order to understand social action, one must first understand social structures, which refer to enduring forms of social organization and recurrent patterns of behavior, taking into account the fact that behaviors are not necessarily rational, but the result of unconscious processing by the naturalization of circumstances. Besides, it is necessary to keep in mind the concept of conjuncture – a temporary configuration of the structure and where social action takes place.

The structure refers to the recurrent standardization of social life in which cultural schemas are an unavoidable component of human perception and interpretation, and therefore of action. The focus on cultural schemas and the duality of structure implies models of reproduction that go beyond the traditional demographic focus on numbers of children, birth progression, child characteristics, and the integration of reproduction with other domains of life as central to understanding of reproductive behavior. Depending on their life cycle, an individual can occupy multiple locations and interact with different structures. The locations also affect the conjunctures that are experienced and which schemes are used for such experience (Johnson-Hanks et al., 2011).

According to the TCA, fertility behavior is the result of an interaction between a specific set of normative expectations, structural factors and schemas, which are mental structures that the human brain uses to represent the surrounding world and to process information. This theory differs from the TPB, because it acknowledges that fertility behavior might not only be the result of a reasoned rational deliberation, but also the result of automatic unconscious processing (Johnson-Hanks et al., 2011).

Regarding the Brazilian context, Carvalho (2014) studied the fertility intentions of couples of high educational attainments in Belo Horizonte. The author identified that

the higher the level of education of women, the higher was the percentage of women bearing fewer children than they originally wanted. According to the author, fertility intentions are formulated inside and outside of the family context and they are influenced by past social rules that guided previous fertility regimes. Moreover, Carvalho et al. (2018) show that couples that desire a higher number of children than the number they currently have can still be satisfied with their present fertility.

Another important variable to the models of fertility is men's intentions. However, fertility patterns are defined through women's reproductive behavior and most of the studies focus on the contexts of women's lives to examine fertility determinants. According to Oliveira (2007), reproduction is seen as feminine and sexuality is seen as masculine, following the symbolic ideological construction of gender.

Same-sex parents, however, fall out of that framework. Becoming a parent is a highly intentional life transition for someone who falls out of the cis-heteronormative world. The planned nature of their parenthood means their parental timing is deliberate. Gato et al. (2017) found a cohort effect conditioning lesbians' and gay men's parental aspirations – younger generations come out earlier and include parenthood in their life cycle projects.

In previous decades, having children in a heterosexual relationship before getting involved in a same-sex relationship was the most common route to parenthood. Nonetheless, same-sex couples are increasingly choosing different pathways nowadays (Moore & Stambolis-Ruhstorfer, 2013). To Mezey (2013), the intentionality of building their family is a strength of same-sex couples.

Pathways to parenthood are diverse among same-sex couples (e.g., surrogacy, adoption, biological child of one partner from previous relationship), and these pathways differ by age and cohort, gender, race, and socioeconomic status, all factors that may influence parenting experiences (Umberson, 2015; Gato et al., 2017).

Gato et al. (2017) analyzed the factors shaping parental decisions of gays and lesbians. They were categorized as sociodemographic (gender, age, cohort, and race), personal (openness and internalization of homophobia), relational (partner's parental motivation and social support), and contextual (work conditions, support networks, resources, and social, legal, and medical barriers).

Appreciation for children as a source of personal fulfillment was the main parental motivation, which does not differ from heterosexual individuals. However, internalized homophobia and concealment of sexual orientation represented one of the major obstacles to pursue parenthood among gays and lesbians. According to Meyer (2003), internalized homophobia is defined as the assimilation of societal homophobic attitudes related to poor psychological well-being and lower relationship quality among same-sex couples.

Goldberg (2010) highlighted the role that some life events or turning points may have on the parental trajectories of gays and lesbians, particularly those who experience internalized homophobia, who lack motivation to have children, or who do not have access to a support community. These turning points comprise encountering and forming friendships with lesbian and gay parents, being exposed to their children, experiencing a growing awareness of the desire to parent, and meeting someone who is equally motivated to parent.

Intentional parenting creates learning possibilities. The fact that lesbians freely choose to become mothers means motherhood is not an oppressive obligation to them. Therefore, studying the effects of intentional parenting decision making on parents and on children might offer some insight into how to create stable and healthy families for various population groups regardless of sexual identity (Mezey, 2013).

Given parenthood is crucial for individual life planning (Liefbroer, 2009), Kranz & Niepel (2018) assert that the lack of motivational research on gay fatherhood is surprising, because most of the work on heterosexual motivation for parenthood is based on rational choice models. Hence, rational choice models of parenting motivation ought to be addressing same-sex couples, because their way to parenthood is paved with many biological, social, legal and institutional obstacles that require complex decision-making processes as well as active goal pursuit.

Considering non-traditional arrangements, as I do in this dissertation, Stewart (2002) analyzes remarriage and shows that stepchildren negatively affect couple's fertility intentions and childbearing behaviors. In that sense, she defends that stepchildren must be included in future demographic models of fertility.

Kazyak et al. (2016) found that sexual minority women have a broad notion of motherhood, distinguishing between having and raising children. The authors argue that survey research in fertility could be improved by changing the wording of questions

and by addressing the sexuality of participants, to reflect the variety of experiences all individuals can have.

Stewart (2002) asserts that “parity should be conceptualized to reflect the parentage of children”. In accordance, I believe that rather than focusing exclusively on predicting live births, demographers could explore intentions from a different perspective, emphasizing the role of parenting to the creation of families. In this sense, the next section explores the changing dynamics of family formation processes.

### **2.3 Family formation**

In western contemporary societies, shaped by romantics from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the notion of family is constituted by mother, father and children. Its fundamental structure is biological sex difference, a requirement for reproduction and for naturalizing heterosexual kinship (Butler, 2002; Mello, 2005; Zambrano, 2006).

The traditional family configuration, defined by the heterosexual nuclear family composed by father, mother and their biological children, structures the sanctification of marriage, parenting, and sexuality. Most religions prescribe guidelines to validate these sacred bonds – they include rules about sexual relations, gender roles, self-sacrifice, and conflict resolution. The meaning attached to conceiving and giving birth foster the sanctification of the parent-child relationship, commonly portrayed as a blessing and fulfilling the primary spiritual purpose of marriage (Mahoney et al., 2003).

Choosing a partner depends on the exposure to potential mates, individual preferences, and cultural norms that encourage or discourage relationships between various population groups – assortative mating happens within marital endogamy or exogamy. It is believed the formation of intimate relationships is easier when partners are endogamous, sharing similar characteristics, such as age, race, education, and religion (Lichter & Qian, 2019).

Given romantic love may be a universal phenomenon (Jankowiak & Fischer, 1992; Munck et al., 2016), marriage is an important marker of social standing and it is widely considered the most desirable form of family life. However, the institutions of marriage and the family have been transforming, especially since the second half of the twentieth century. Many nontraditional arrangements, such as cohabitation, nonmarital childbearing, and interracial and interreligious relationships, have become more common and accepted in Western countries (Cherlin 2004; 2010).

The rise of male wage labor in the Industrial Revolution and the rise of female wage labor after World War II undermined patriarchal control and generated this shift of attitudes, according to Ruggles (2015, p. 1819). He states: “the two great transformations of family economies—from corporate to male breadwinner and from male breadwinner to dual earner—undermined the economic logic of patriarchal authority”.

Matos (2000) asserts that the history of the family can have multiple shapes and meanings. Nonetheless, changes have happened through five main avenues: women entering the labor force; the civil rights movement, the LGBT movement; the feminist movement; and the access to contraception.

In a similar fashion, Weeks (2007) describes four main shifts to family life determined by trends of liberalization, secularization and growing individual agency. First, the democratization and informalization of personal relationships; second, the development of sexual agency, emphasizing the women’s movement and gay liberation’s movement; third, the reshaping of the boundaries between public and private spheres; and finally, the heightened risk scenarios created by the HIV/AIDS crisis.

Roudinesco (2003) defends that a specific type of family appeared around the 1960s: the post-modern family. It is comprised of two individuals seeking intimacy and sexual satisfaction, untying the knot between sex and reproduction. Grounding kinship in love mitigated distinctions between erotic and non-erotic relations, bringing lovers and children under a single concept. Love, therefore, determines identity and unity (Weston, 1997).

In this scenario, parenthood is considered more an affection bond than a biological one. However, parenting is still often seen as a heterosexual, primarily maternal task of gender role identity. As social and parental roles are conventionally defined by the male/female dichotomy, homosexual families challenge the sexual dimorphism upon which the ideal family is based.

In *Families we choose*, Weston (1997) examines the historical transformations in kinship, ideology, and social relations in the United States based on fieldwork conducted in the San Francisco Bay Area during 1985 and 1986. It is argued same-sex families cannot be understood apart from their families of origin, because these two categories of family have been defined relationally through contrast.



Same-sex couples are part of a historical move toward family as a site of emotional and sexual gratification. The separation of sexuality from reproduction results in the dissociation between reproduction and heterosexuality, revolutionizing the possibilities of organizing family life. To the extent that cultural and social gender configuration are transforming, the behavior of parental figures change, and the configurations that construct diverse gender-identifying positions will also change (Matos, 2000).

Practices of lesbian motherhood are a product of the different institutional possibilities for reproduction (Souza, 2005), such as public policies that either allow for adoption or recognize the family created by affection bonds when reproductive technology is used. Being pregnant and giving birth are markers of parenthood tightly linked to femininity. Those who do not wish to get pregnant, but intend to parent, might be open to the possibilities of constructing a masculine identity within parenthood or a feminine identity that does not rely on biology (Kazyak et al., 2016).

As for gay fatherhood, Carroll (2018) argues that gay fathers who form families without mothers are situated outside of normative expectations for men, for gays, and for parents. As men, because they act as caregivers; as gays, they contradict stereotypes of promiscuity; and as parents, they challenge normative heterosexual parenthood that sanctifies motherhood. In the same line, Mallon (2004) identified gender was a more conspicuous theme than sexual orientation in his interviews with gay fathers. As men, they struggled to find validation in family spaces and were scrutinized over their competency as fathers.

The notion that children should have both a mother and father assumes women and men parent differently, having gender-exclusive abilities. Although researchers agree that, on average, women and men parent somewhat differently, they do not agree on the causes and consequences of these differences (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010).

The fear that same-sex couples threaten the heterosexual family and traditional norms reflects specific understanding of gender and sexuality. People with traditional religious beliefs who attend religious worship services are more likely to oppose same-sex relationships, although religious women are less likely than religious men to hold negative beliefs toward homosexuality (Barringer et al., 2013; Whitehead & Perry, 2016).

Various religious practices can significantly predict attitudes toward homosexuals and same-sex relationships. Studies have indicated personal religious beliefs and affiliation to a religion as strong predictors of attitudes towards homosexuality depending on national cultural context (Schulte & Battle, 2004; Olson et al., 2006; Adamczyk & Pitt, 2009).

Despite the progress of contemporary society, various religious dominations have not changed, or changed very little, when it comes to sexuality. However, spirituality and religion are core parts of some families' experiences and are often interconnected with one's family system, hence playing crucial roles in the coming out process of gays and lesbians (Goodrich et al., 2019).

Religion has great importance as a tool for organizing cultural practices and meanings, and studies on Judeo-Christian traditions suggest that specific aspects of religiosity are inversely correlated with the acceptance of sexual minorities (Etengoff & Daiute, 2014). Most religions classify homosexuality and associated behaviors as "unnatural", "ungodly", and "impure" (Yip, 2005).

Although one can experience psychological benefits by believing family relationships hold spiritual meaning and significance, it is possible that the sanctification of the family may, under some circumstances, create psychological problems. The theologies of many religions imply that certain family relationships are not deserving of such sacred status. This dissonance between the reality and expectations of sanctified family relationships, such as parent-child relationships of single parents or gay couples, contradicts the traditional model in which children are born of married, heterosexual couples. In this sense, those with non-traditional families may often encounter prejudice and rejection from religious institutions, communities and from their own relatives (Mahoney et al., 2003).

Szymanski & Carretta (2019) examined the impact of religious-based sexual stigma to lesbians, gays and bisexuals. The authors indicate that interpersonal prejudice and discrimination from religious leaders and members of one's faith and community is a negative experience to LGB individuals related to increased psychological distress and less wellbeing.

Consequently, according to Moore & Stambolis-Ruhstorfer (2013), "heterosexual and same-sex relationships function similarly but are differently exposed to risk factors associated with relationship stability". Family disapproval of same-sex

couples has been shown to be associated with increased relationship strain and lower social network support (Reczek 2016). Prince et al. (2017) examine how a supportive social context influences the formation of same sex coresidential unions in the United States. Considering young adults, the authors found that coming out to one or both parents impacts positively same-sex union formation in adult life.

According to Juros (2019), it is to be expected that family arrangements that resemble the heteronormative norm are the most acceptable in the view of parents. Parents' initial reaction to their offspring's nonheterosexuality typically reflect loss or grief due to heteronormative expectations. Another possibility is what Sedgwick (1990) calls the *glass closet*. Whoever is in the glass closet has not officially disclosed their sexual orientation, but is seen by others, through social markers of their identity, as not heterosexual.

Parental reactions can be negatively affected by misinformation, religious beliefs, and internalized homophobia. Even when supportive, parents describe shock and concern for their child's future. These negative or mixed initial reactions may develop into complete rejection or turn into tolerance/full acceptance (Biblarz et al., 2014; Grafsky, 2014).

Research about how parents of gays and lesbians react to their grandchildren is notably absent from the literature, but the existing studies suggest most parents are welcoming to little kids – it is the arrival of grandchildren that usually brings acceptance to previously hidden same-sex relationships in the family (Juros, 2019).

As elders desire to have grandchildren and youngsters desire to become grandparents one day, increasing longevity allows for the formation of new kinds of family relationships. Psychological research shows that as family patriarchs and matriarchs, grandparents hold a respected authority role, especially in many Asian, African and Latin American countries. This respect-based social identity vitalizes intergenerational interactions (Hossain et al., 2018).

Tornello & Patterson (2016) studied the experiences of gay grandfathers to identify predictors of intergenerational relationship quality and to examine the associations of intergenerational relationships and health among gay grandfathers. They found disclosure of gay grandfathers to their grandchildren is associated with closer familial relationships and grandfathers' better mental health.

Reczek (2014) discusses how gays and lesbians experience support, strain, and mixed feelings in their intergenerational ties, identifying linkages between solidarity–conflict and ambivalence paradigms. Gay and lesbian adults give important support to aging parents, even when relationships are contentious (Reczek & Umberson, 2016).

Family change usually revolves around the size of families, their structure and the relative position of individuals within families. These three dimensions depend on the power relations put into practice within the family. One important and frequently studied aspect of power is the division of labor in the household, stressing how gendered family dynamics can be.

Same-sex couples tend to embody a more egalitarian structure of household and childcare tasks, dividing them more equally between partners in comparison to heterosexual couples (Patterson, Sutfin, & Fulcher, 2004; Giddings et al. 2014; Bauer 2016). However, Blumstein & Schwartz (1983) argue that gay couples are more prone to have problems when allocating chores, because men are generally disinclined to do what has always been considered women’s work. Kurdek (2007) found that in comparison to gay cohabitating partners, lesbian partners report more household chores done equally.

Likewise, Brewster (2017) did a systematic review of the literature from 2000 to 2015 on lesbian partnerships and the division of household labor. The results indicated that women in lesbian relationships engage in a more equal distribution of chores than heterosexual couples.

Withal, lesbian mothers tend to have cooperative parenting roles and dialogue with their children about their sexual orientation (Lira et al., 2015) and the children raised by lesbian parents hold a less rigid definition of gender norms than the children raised by a heterosexual couple (Gartrell et al., 2011; Goldberg & Garcia, 2016).

Nonetheless, some believe that having children and getting married has undermined important feminist critiques of marriage and of familial ideology, domesticizing homosexual relationships (Young & Boyd, 2006). As Butler (2002) argues, although recognition renders individuals and communities intelligible, same-sex marriage can extend, rather than challenge, the conservatism of marriage. It has the potential to create a hierarchy within queer communities, with the highest tier reserved for those who choose the respectability of marriage, further marginalizing individuals in alternative relationships.

However, others believe the full access of same-sex couples to the institutions of marriage and parenthood are more likely to reshape the existing social order rather than preserving status quo (Weeks, 2007). In the next section, I investigate the emergence of studies on same-sex marriage and the pathways gays and lesbian take to parenthood.

#### **2.4 Homosexual families and their parenting intentions**

According to Blumstein & Schwartz (1983), gays and lesbians were an invisible part of the American population up until the 1970s, because disclosing their sexuality carried great risk. Recent publications, such as OECD (2019), show homophobic bullying still affects gays and lesbians, even from a young age. The report states discrimination happens through discourse, verbal harassment and physical violence worldwide.

Reczek (2016) identifies that, later in life, discrimination toward gays and lesbians is tied to family form and structure. Hence, parenting intentions are inevitably shaped by the discriminatory discourse homosexual individuals have been subjected to throughout their life (Goldberg et al., 2012).

Nonetheless, Smock & Greenland (2010) indicate that current transformations, such as new technologies and looser social norms, have made parenthood a real possibility for LGBT individuals. Due to sociohistorical changes, an increasing number of gay men see parenthood as an expected part of their life (Goldberg et al., 2012). The possibility of parenthood tends to be stratified by social class and ethnicity, creating many pathways to parenthood and to diverse family configurations.

As Itaborahy (2014) points out, it is easier for upper-class gays and lesbians to be financially independent and/or to have better socioeconomic conditions to live their sexuality and relationships more openly. However, that does not mean they are exempt from facing hostility, prejudice or even exclusion by family members and society at large.

There are two main factors associated with the emergence of papers, articles, and books concerning LGBT individuals in demographic studies. The first is related to obtaining rights, especially matrimonial rights. The second factor is directly associated with the first one, since the formalization of same sex conjugal unions made it possible to obtain data about this group through civil registries.

Andersson et al. (2006) was one of the first to examine the trajectory of homosexual couples in Scandinavia with longitudinal data. In 1989, Denmark was the first country in the world to allow civil unions for same-sex couples, followed by Norway in 1993 and Sweden in 1995. They found the patterns in divorce risks are rather similar in same-sex and opposite-sex marriages, but divorce-risk levels are considerably higher in same-sex marriages.

Manning et al. (2016) indicate that same-sex cohabiting couples typically experience levels of stability that are similar to those of heterosexual cohabiting couples. Using Dutch panel data, Withal et al. (2018) found same-sex and different-sex partnerships overall have similar effects on the wellbeing of individuals. However, since only recently homosexual couples have become socially recognized, they can still suffer serious social pressures, such as difficulties to access their legal rights, discrimination and lack of family support.

It is known marriage benefits men and women in heterosexual relationships – they are healthier and happier than single individuals (Grover & Helliwell, 2019). Research on the benefits of marriage for individuals in same-sex relationships, however, is not yet possible in most countries due to the lack of longitudinal data from probability samples that enable analysis of the consequences of same-sex relationships for health outcomes over time. However, there are signs of possible marital advantages for same-sex couples: Carpenter et al. (2018) have found that legal access to marriage increased healthcare access and care among sexual minority men in the United States.

The research framework guiding quantitative studies on same-sex partners usually has a comparative perspective, aiming to measure relationship quality, parenting behaviors, and children's educational and socioemotional outcomes to heterosexual family arrangements. The qualitative research on lesbian and gay family formation focuses on three areas: family bonding, expression of identity in relation to gender norms, and the connections with extended family and social institutions (Moore & Stambolis-Ruhstorfer, 2013).

Much of the literature on parenting and homosexuality is focused on child health (Reczek et al., 2017), child development and the role of sexual orientation in parenting. Consistent with the literature, Farr et al. (2010) found that measures of children's adjustment, parenting approaches and couple relationship adjustment were not significantly associated with parental sexual orientation.

Likewise, Araldi & Serralta (2016) show, through a systematic review of the literature, that parents' sexuality is not determinant for children's well-being. Biblarz & Stacey (2010) defend the strengths typically associated with married mother-father families appear to the same extent in same-sex parents. Because parenting skills are not dichotomous or exclusive, the gender of parents has minor significance for children's psychological adjustment and social success.

However, that is not to say that socially prescribed gender norms do not impact same-sex parents. Webb et al. (2017) researched attitudes toward same-sex parenting and found that in Australia there is a more positive attitude about lesbians parenting than about gays. In the United States, same-sex partners living with children are more likely to be female than male and they tend to be more economically disadvantaged than same-sex couples without children (Gates, 2013).

Goldberg et al. (2012) found that gay men perceive the ideal moment to become a father depend on age, financial situation and their relationship maturity level. Their motivations to parent can be both normative life-course decisions and unique to their sexuality. Once they do have children, Erez & Shenkman (2016) found gay fathers present higher levels of subjective well-being when compared to heterosexual fathers. The authors explain that the many difficulties gay fathers face in their journey to become parents give them a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment.

Stacey (2006) described a "passion-for-parenthood continuum" in her study of 50 racially diverse gay men in Los Angeles. On one extreme of the continuum were the predestined parents, for whom parenthood was extremely appealing. On the other extreme, were individuals for whom parenthood presented no appeal whatsoever. Approximately half of the participants fell into the middle and more ambivalent category. They can be swayed toward (or away from) parenthood due to many reasons, most notably, a persistent partner.

Gato et al. (2017) also mention the importance of partners. Those who did not have the same degree of commitment to becoming parents decided to end their relationship, prioritizing their parenting desire. In other cases, however, the less motivated partner develops a greater interest in parenthood, resulting in an equal parental commitment.

Parenthood, like any other identity, is accomplished through meaningful practices that create social legibility (Finch, 2007). Oakley et al. (2017) examined how

gay and lesbian parents socialize their children, specifically around having same-sex parents. Since families with same-sex parents continue to experience stigma in society, there is reason to believe these parents engage in cultural socialization strategies specifically around issues of sexual orientation.

Findings revealed that the majority of parents endorsed behaviors designed to promote children's awareness of diverse family structures and prepare them for potential stigma-related barriers socialization along three dimensions. These findings corroborate previous research that has shown that gay and lesbian parents are capable parents. To determine whether any specific form of family is ideal for children's development requires sorting a great array of often inextricable family and social variables. It is most likely that ideal parenting comes in many different ways (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010).

D'Lane and Baumle (2018) examined the possible paths for parenting of homosexual couples in the United States. Based on the data from the last two censuses of the country, the authors show that in households with children, they are probably the result of previous heterosexual relationships or were adopted or conceived by only one of the couple's spouses. A smaller number of couples choose reproductive technologies. In this scenario, men are less likely to use egg donation than women to use sperm donation. A relevant issue for male couples is the need for surrogacy – it has high financial costs and there is a high risk of legal problems.

Studies on same-sex family formation emerged in many countries. Costa & Bidell (2017) analyzed the parenting intentions of 568 gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals in Portugal. More than half of them (56%) intended to parent in the future and younger participants were more likely to express intent to parent.

Baiocco & Laghi (2013) evaluated parenting desires and intentions in Italy, where same sex marriage and adoption are forbidden for homosexual individuals. Gay and lesbian individuals without children were less likely than heterosexual individuals to express parenting desires and intentions. The authors defend that high levels of social stigma can hinder the fulfillment of same-sex parenting intentions.

Finding similar results from a large national sample of adults in the United States, Tate et al. (2019) explored the intentions for parenthood, ideal family size, and predictors of parenting intentions as a function of gender and sexual orientation. The predictors of parenting intentions (socio contextual and demographic variables) were



similar among the participants, regardless of sexual orientation. However, their results showed that, in comparison to heterosexual individuals, fewer lesbians and gays intended to become parents. Among those who did have parenting intentions, lesbian and gay individuals reported wanting smaller family sizes than their heterosexual peers. The authors point out that lesbian and gay adults have pathways to parenthood that require considerable time, effort, and money, which impacts their parenting intentions and desired family size.

Hank & Wetzel (2018) analyzed a nationally representative survey data for two cohorts of young adults in Germany (born 1971-1973 and 1981-1983). They found that in comparison to heterosexual individuals, gays and lesbians expect lower benefits and greater costs of being in a partnership, but not of parenthood. Gays and lesbians endorsed the overall value of parenthood as strongly as their heterosexual counterparts.

Likewise, also in Germany, Kranz & Niepel (2018) studied the motivation for fatherhood in a sample of childless German men, both gay and heterosexual. Referring to the theory of planned behavior (TPB), they considered three potential predictors: the individual's attitude toward having children, perceived attitudes of significant others toward fatherhood, and anticipated parental self-efficacy. Results showed that young gay men are less likely than their heterosexual counterparts to report that they want to become fathers, but the associations between TPB predictors and fathering motivation were independent of sexual orientation.

Voultos et al. (2019) analyzed how low social acceptance influence lesbian parenthood in Greece. Participants with a positive attitude towards biological parenthood claimed pregnancy would give them a sense of completeness as women. A smaller number of women focused on the importance of parental responsibility and care, disregarding traditional genetic ties. Goldberg & Sayer (2006) interviewed lesbian couples before and after the birth of their first child and found that lesbians' perceptions of support from both their families increased after their transition to parenthood.

Jennings et al. (2014) show that same-sex couples are more likely to choose adoption over other routes to parenthood in the United Kingdom (UK). Gays and lesbians share similar reasons to decide to adopt: they believe adoption offers protected parental rights for the couple, without the involvement of third parties, and they tend to attach little importance to biogenetic kinship.

Bowling et al. (2019) analyzed the parenting intentions of sexual and gender minorities in India using data from interviews and focus group discussions in Bangalore, Chennai, and Kolkata. Adoption and assisted reproduction procedures, such as IVF, were the preferred methods. Although social pressure to have children was reported high, participants who intend to parent prioritize their relationships and their financial stability.

Gender is often cited as a strong determinant of poverty, because households headed by women, especially single-parent households, are more likely to be poor than those headed by men. Schneebaum & Badgett (2019) found, after controlling for a set of poverty predictors, that same-sex couples are more likely to be poor than comparable heterosexual married couples. The authors identify many studies showing higher poverty rates for lesbians and female same-sex couples, confirming the higher poverty burden falls disproportionately on women, regardless of sexual orientation.

Simon et al. (2018) found that lesbian women reported wanting to work full-time and have a permanent position before parenthood more so than heterosexual women. Nonetheless, lesbians' household incomes usually rank below those of heterosexual and gay male households, even though their individual incomes tend to be higher than the incomes of heterosexual women. Ahmed et al. (2011) show those results for Sweden and Aksoy et al. (2018) for the United Kingdom. Itaborahy (2014) analyzed low-income LGBT people in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and found high rates of discrimination, homelessness and unemployment in this population group.

In Brazil, psychoanalysis is the main theoretical framework used in studies about homosexual parenthood, according to Santos et al. (2013). Research in Psychology usually portrays qualitative case studies of same-sex couples. A few examples are Tombolato et al. (2018); Meletti & Scorsolini-Comin (2015) in Uberaba (MG); Borges et al. (2017) in Goiânia (GO) and Gurgel & Uziel (2019) in Fortaleza (CE). They discuss the concern of participants with conjugal dynamics, societal norms regarding children's well-being and the stigma of having same-sex parents.

Machin (2014) investigated the experience of five lesbian couples in São Paulo that used a reproductive technology method called Reception of Oocytes from Partner (ROPA). It involves a semen donor and two biological mothers, one providing the egg and one carrying the embryo. From in-depth interviews, the author showed how

biomedicine creates different paths for building a family, respecting the couple's desire to involve both partners and their concerns about donor health history.

Patterson (1994) wrote an important article in the 1990s about the barriers that gay and lesbian couples face when considering parenthood, showing how social norms make it unlikely for them to be parents. Twenty-five years later, some changes occurred. In Brazil, same-sex couples can now be legally married and the barriers for them to conceive or adopt are loosened, although far from ideal. The next section outlines the recent context for gays and lesbians in Brazil.

### **2.5 Same-sex marriage and same-sex parents in Brazil**

Brazilians are internationally known to be liberal and warm people, often displaying acts of affection and sexual openness. However, when it comes to the LGBT community, Brazilian society can be discriminatory and intolerant, reflecting persistent religious and moral conservatism (Itaborahy 2014).

Trevisan (1986) wrote a notable book on homosexuality in Brazil, from colonial times to the end of the military dictatorship. Another important book addressing male homosexuality in Brazil is by Green (1999). With different approaches, both authors depict how important activist groups, such as Somos in São Paulo and Grupo Gay da Bahia (GGB) in Salvador, played a fundamental role in the discussions of a homosexual identity in the midst of the fight for democracy and minorities' rights.

Grupo Gay da Bahia was the first Latin American gay organization to be granted state recognition, in 1980. In the final years of the military dictatorship, Brazil had the region's most important leftist newspaper, *Lampião*, which was first published in 1976. Although the newspaper featured many articles and features on many different social movements, it mostly focused on a gay male audience. At the end of the dictatorship, Brazilian gay activists allied with the Workers' Party (PT), because it incorporated most of the major social movements of the democratic transition (Encarnación, 2018).

However, after the reinstatement of democracy, all presidents, including Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff from PT, had the tendency of seeking the support of powerful Evangelical politicians in the Legislative branch and have not been allies to the LGBT cause. The newly elected president Jair Bolsonaro, internationally known for his misogynistic and homophobic remarks, ensures domestic and foreign policies on gender issues are based on confronting the so-called "gender ideology", a

denomination with no academic or theoretical basis. His government favors anti-gender policies, the naturalization of male/female binary categories, the divisibility of human rights and a nationalist discourse (Martins, 2019).

Hitherto, no federal legislation has been approved regarding same-sex families. The progress in that area has taken place in the Judiciary front. The Supreme Federal Court approved of domestic partnership between people of the same sex in 2011. The ruling gave same-sex couples in domestic partnerships the same financial and social rights of those in heterosexual relationships. Later, in 2013, the National Judicial Council of Brazil (*Conselho Nacional de Justiça* - CNJ) legalized same-sex marriage in the entire country, ruling that all civil registries must notarize same-sex marriages and convert previous domestic partnerships in marriage if the couples so wish (CNJ, 2013). Hence, there is no law that legitimates gay marriage, but it is a right guaranteed by the jurisprudence.

Although parenting is not exclusively related to marriage, the approval of same-sex marriage stirred discussions about the suitability of homosexual individuals to become parents and raise children. In 2013, the Brazilian Institute of Family Law (IBDFAM) proposed a Statute of Families under the law project 470 (Brasil, 2013). It aimed at creating rules of material and procedural law to protect new family configurations, updating family legislation that endorses a pluralistic family concept. The project included the protection of all family structures, including those formed by affective bonds, regardless of sex or gender.

It should be noted that the Federal Constitution mentions the union between man and woman as the basis for family formation. However, the Federal Supreme Court has an inclusive interpretation that considers individuals. On September 2019, the Supreme Court excluded from the Civil Code any interpretation that would prevent recognition of same-sex couples as a family entity, ruling all families should have access to family-oriented public policies.

In 2013, another law project (PL 6583/2013) was proposed to establish the Statute of the Family, intending to show only one family form was conceivable. This project restricts the concept of family to the one formed by one man and one woman, failing to recognize same-sex unions. It awaits deliberation of appeal to the Presiding Board of the Chamber of Deputies, while the Statute of Families was archived on December 2018.

Encarnación (2018) argues that, despite the similarities common to Latin American countries, such as the prominence of Catholicism, each country has been developing a unique landscape of gay rights over the years. According to the author, the campaign for gay rights in Brazil has been like a conventional political struggle for civil rights, whereas in Argentina, the first to enact a same-sex marriage law in 2010, it was framed as a human rights issue.

In Argentina, the same-sex marriage law allowed all benefits and responsibilities of marriage to homosexual couples including adoption. In Brazil, the same happened after 2013, but it's not uncommon that, to make the process less complicated and less risky, one of the partners in the same-sex couple proceeds in the adoption as a single person.

Adoption in Brazil occurs through a judicial process and is regulated by the Statute of the Child and the Adolescent (*Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente - ECA*), under the federal laws 8.069 (Brasil, 1990) and 12.010 (Brasil, 2009). It establishes that for someone to adopt a child or adolescent, one must be at least 18 years old, having a minimum difference of 16 years in relation to the adoptee and not be a sibling or ascendant of the adoptee. It is possible to adopt as a single person, but if two people choose to adopt together, they must be married or living under a domestic partnership, proving their family structure is stable.

ECA does not mention the gender or sexual orientation of the adoptive parents as requirements to be considered in the adoption process. As long as same-sex couples meet the requirements of age and stable familial context, there is no impediment for them to become adoptive parents.

Adoptive parents can also apply for maternity leave. The maternity leave benefit was expanded over the years, being guaranteed from 1999 to all Social Security insured persons, even when adopting (Law 10.421/ 2002). There is the possibility of extension for additional 60 days after four months, if the employer participates in the citizen company program (Law 11.770/ 2008). The new formulation brought by Law 12.873 (Brasil, 2013), ensures maternity pay, guaranteed on the grounds of the child, can be granted to men.

Thus, in the case of same-sex couples who have adopted a child, they may choose which one will receive maternity pay, subject to legal requirements. In the event of the death of the one who was entitled to the social security benefit, the other,

provided he or she is also insured with the social security, will be entitled to the benefit for the entire period or for the remaining time to which the surviving spouse or partner would be entitled.

In 2016, CNJ published Provision 52, which gives homosexual couples in a stable relationship the right to conceive and register their children from artificial insemination with an anonymous donor. This procedure is usually performed at fertility clinics. For couples who have had a child through assisted reproduction techniques, such as surrogacy and the donation of genetic material, the civil registry office does not require identification of donors. However, it requires an official statement from the clinic where the procedure was performed.

Provision 63 (CNJ, 2017), authorizes the registration socio-affective maternity and paternity in Brazil, which was previously only allowed in a few states that had specific regulation on the matter or through court decisions. Now, birth certificates shall not contain pre-established space for the name of the mother and father. That is, it allows a newborn to have two mothers, two fathers or even an affiliation between three people, which facilitates the registration of children generated by home insemination with a known donor.

Until August 2019, when Provision 83 (CNJ, 2019) changed Provision 63/2017 on socio-affective maternity and paternity. It removes the possibility for lesbian mothers who conceived with home insemination to register their babies directly with the registry office. The current rule states the registration of children by socio-affective bonds can only be done after the child is 12 years old. Before this age, parents must hire a lawyer and go to court to apply for registration.

The establishment of joint parenting by gays and lesbians using reproductive technology is recent in Brazil. To date, there is no specific legislation regarding assisted reproduction. The medical regulation that governed this practice in the country included the rights of same-sex couples on May 2013 and the current resolution on the matter is 2168 (CFM, 2017). In Brazil, semen is not for purchase and surrogacy cannot be a commercial transaction. That same Federal Medical Council Resolution (2.168/2017), states uterine hosts must be fourth-degree relatives (mother, daughter, sister, grandmother, aunt, or cousin) of the genetic donor. But, the Regional Council of Medicine can authorize cases in which there are no available women with this degree of kinship.

*Serviço Único de Saúde* (SUS), the universal health care system in Brazil, offers a human reproduction program in twelve hospitals in the country<sup>1</sup>. In Brasília, a public reproduction center, *Serviço de Reprodução Humana do Centro de Ensino e Pesquisa em Reprodução Assistida do Hospital Materno Infantil de Brasília (SRH-CEPRA-HMIB)*, offers assisted reproduction procedures to infertile heterosexual couples and to lesbian couples, but not to gay couples.

There are clear discrepancies between the paths to parenthood that are allowed to gays and to lesbians. Compared with the range of possibilities for women to access assisted reproductive technologies, the options available to men in same-sex relationships are certainly narrow, limiting to some extent the transformation of gender relations.

Carroll (2018) examined how structures of gender and family affect gay fathers' everyday lives and their management strategies of resilience to navigate heteronormative ideologies. One of the most important strategies is community support – social support from extended family, friends, and community can shield the effects of discrimination and of consequent psychological distress.

The more accepting the families of origin are of their sexual identity, the easier it is for gays and lesbians to turn their parenting desires into a reality. Besides, support from peers also shape their parenting decisions. Having proximity to, and knowledge about other gay and lesbian parents, is very important to those who decide to become parents (Mezey, 2013).

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<sup>1</sup> Belo Horizonte (MG) – Hospital das Clínicas da UFMG; Brasília (DF) – Hospital Materno Infantil (Hmib); Goiânia (GO) – Hospital das Clínicas; Natal (RN) – Maternidade Escola Januário Cicco; Porto Alegre (RS) – Hospital Nossa Senhora da Conceição (Fêmeina); Porto Alegre (RS) – Hospital das Clínicas; Recife (PE) – Instituto de Medicina Integral Professor Fernando Figueira (Imip); São Paulo (SP) – Hospital das Clínicas de São Paulo; São Paulo (SP) – Centro de Referência da Saúde da Mulher de São Paulo/Pérola Byington; São Paulo (SP) – Hospital das Clínicas Faeba Ribeirão Preto; São Paulo (SP) – Faculdade de Medicina do ABC.

There are civil society entities that empower LGBT families in Brazil. The Brazilian Association of Homotransaffective Families (*Associação Brasileira de Famílias Homotransafetivas* - ABRAFH)<sup>2</sup> provides a solidarity network across the country. Mothers for Diversity (*Mães pela Diversidade*)<sup>3</sup> is non-governmental organization of parents who have LGBT children and want to spread information and support. They work through social media and attend the annual pride parade in many Brazilian cities.

The following chapter explains the methodology employed in this study to examine the parenting intentions of same-sex couples residing in Brasília.

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<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.abrafh.org.br/>

<sup>3</sup> See <https://maespeladiversidade.org.br/>



### **3. THE METHODOLOGICAL PATH**

Issues surrounding intentions and desires are, in their nature, subjective and could hardly be understood with the use of quantitative surveys. Thus, the best methodology to analyze same-sex couples' parenting intentions is qualitative. I chose to use interviews in particular, because through the interview the researcher can access time, places and experiences, bringing a wealth of details that can elucidate the dynamics of the reality being studied.

Qualitative methods have been successfully used in demographic studies for several decades. In Brazil, qualitative methodology has been increasingly used (Simão, 2005; Miranda-Ribeiro and Potter, 2010; Carvalho, 2014; Franceschini et al., 2017; Marteleto et al., 2017; Vasconcelos, 2017). The qualitative methodology is structured in order to illuminate social processes or to access areas of social life that are not open or receptive to other types of research, but it does not lead to deterministic relations of direct causality. What is sought is a better integration between individual processes and macro aggregates, linking the relevance of everyday behaviors, and their motivations, to macro structures (May, 2004).

The interview, according to Britten (2005), can be defined as a process of social interaction between two people in which one of them, the interviewer, aims to obtain information from the interviewee. It is conducted based on a free framework, which consists of open questions that define the subject to be explored, and from which the interviewee and the interviewer can interact in order to proceed with an idea or an answer in more detail.

One of the main advantages of this technique is that it allows the researcher to obtain information that is not accessible through structured questionnaires. Such information helps to understand the behavior of the interviewee, as well as the representations he or she has about his or her life experiences (May, 2004). Thus, due to its characteristics, the semi-structured interview enables me to investigate the imagery of partners in a same-sex union in relation to building their family and having or not having children.

I chose to use the interviewing methodology because I am not only interested in the families' life experiences, but also in the meanings they attach to those experiences. I seek to analyze how individuals interpret and narrate the events in their

lives they see as important to understand their families' formation and parenting intentions.

A semi-structured guide facilitates conversations with participants. It lists topics and lines of inquiry to provide a loose structure to the conversation with respondents and ensure that the same broad range of topics are covered in all the interviews (Weiss, 1994). Thus, I conducted loosely structured, open-ended interviews to facilitate the gathering of conversational narratives about the couple's history and plans, encouraging rich descriptions from participating couples and ensuring some degree of comparison across interviews. Although there are advantages and disadvantages to a joint interview, it can bring forward rich dialogues not only between the participants and the interviewer, but also between the partners.

My own identity as a childless heterosexual woman enrolled in a PhD program framed the couples' interactions with me as an interviewer. Qualitative researchers both benefit and are hindered by insider and outsider statuses. Insider status helps to establish access to marginalized communities, provides a basis for initial trust and rapport in interviews. However, insider status also presumes a level of base knowledge or shared cultural attitudes that can limit the scope and depth in which some topics can be discussed in interviews. Outsiders benefit from expected ignorance on a topic or group and, as a result, have greater latitude in asking seemingly "simple" or "obvious" questions (Weiss, 1994).

A case study is an empirical inquiry and a research strategy based on descriptive and exploratory analysis of a group to explore their underlying principles and characteristics. As Bernardi (2007) points out, the purpose and the unique contribution of case studies is less that of providing a quantification and/or generalization of the phenomenon under study, but exposing the mechanisms involved in generating it and clarifying its complex interconnections.

Therefore, qualitative research does not have a rigidly defined sample size. For the desired information to be reached, so many interviews will be carried out so that the saturation point is reached. That is, the collected information begins to repeat itself and no new information comes to light.

Making broad generalizations, which typically requires a random sample, is not a goal in this dissertation. I am more interested in exploring how couples produce

meaning through the unique, interconnected contexts of their own lives. In the words of Blumstein & Schwartz (1983), “the couple is a basic unit of society”.

Selecting the sample required organization and planning. The selection of the studied population was not random, since the participants of the research were selected by colleagues’ referrals and new referrals came from the participants themselves, generating a network of participants – a technique called snowball sampling. I grew up in Brasília and had the possibility to create various starting focal points for the word-of-mouth snowball to happen.

The quality of the referring process is invariably related to the quality of the interaction during the interview, because the participants whom the researcher meets are those who supply the referrals. Therefore, the interrelations between snowball sampling and interviewing are tied to the definition of the snowball procedure, being crucial for the interviewer to gain the respondents’ trust and sympathy (Noy, 2008).

Requirements for participation in the study were self-identification as a same-sex couple living together in Brasília at the time of the interview. The choice of the city of Brasília stems from the fact that the country's capital is considered modern and has relatively high development indexes, which, in theory, facilitates recognition and access to the rights of same-sex couples, generating less taboo and social discrimination around this group. Besides, Brasília is a young city that welcomes many migrants from all Brazilian regions since its early years, making the population diverse in terms of familial background.

All invited to participate in the study were informed about the purposes of the research as well as the dynamics of the interview. Those who were willing to participate agreed to the Free and Informed Consent Form (*Termo de Consentimento Livre e Esclarecido* - TCLE), which informs about the objectives of the investigation, the need to record the interview and the confidentiality of the information. The TCLE makes it clear that participation is voluntary and that it does not entail any personal harm or monetary gain to the participants.

Out of the people contacted, six couples turned down the request for an interview. Most couples demanded some persistence and flexibility in (re)scheduling to have their participation. The interviews were conducted online using the platform *Appear.in*, later named *Whereby*. It provided a safe and cryptographic way to exchange and store information.

Online interviews were convenient both for the researcher and for the couples. There was no need for transportation, scheduling was flexible, and the absence of a formal presence created a relaxed and friendly environment, allowing the couples to be home without any physical interference to their daily dynamics. To conduct the interviews, I followed a semi-structured script to guide the talk and guaranteed a calm and private moment for the couples to speak for as long as they wanted.

Interviews happened from June to October 2019 and were audio recorded, typically ranging from 40 to 55 minutes, although several extended beyond that time, because couples with children and/or familial difficulties tended to talk more. At the end of interviews, I asked participants if they could recommend other couples to participate in the study. The project was duly registered in Plataforma Brasil, under number 14914619.0.0000.5149, respecting all the precepts and norms regarding the research with human beings in Brazil.

#### 4. INTERVIEWEES

The interviewees of this study belong to a middle-class urban group and do not comprise a representative sample. The Brazilian Census Bureau (*Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística* - IBGE) conducted the last census in 2010 and it was the first demographic census to count heads of household and their same-sex spouses in Brazil.

Umberson et al. (2015) points out that in order to identify individuals in same-sex relationships researchers have juxtaposed information about sex of household head, the relationship of head of household to other household members, and their sex, stressing however that this strategy can unfortunately result in substantial misidentification of individuals in homosexual and heterosexual relationships.

Fortes Lena (2016) analyzed the endogamy and exogamy of homosexual couples in Brazil using the 2010 census data. The author analyzed 67167 households, from which approximately 46% were of gay men and 54% of lesbian women. Most individuals were found to be white, young (25-35 years old) and educated. Using binary logistic models to define the characteristics of the head of the household, the author found lesbian couples tend to be younger and less educated than the men in gay relationships. Moreover, most households of same-sex couples did not seem to have children. Hitherto, it is not possible to estimate how many children have been registered with same-sex parents.

Fortes Lena and Oliveira (2016) also present an interesting comparison about marital selection patterns between same-sex and opposite-sex couples, based on the Brazilian 2010 census. Regarding schooling, ethnicity and age, endogamy rates for homosexual couples are found to be lower than for heterosexual couples. Same-sex couples seem to be less endogamous when it comes to mating and the authors suggest this may be due to the nature of their relationship in the first place, already seen as a transgression of social norms when it comes to choosing a partner.

According to OECD (2019), no country has ever included in their national census a question about sexual orientation to identify LGB people, but surveys have filled the gap in developed countries. Disclosure of LGB status is increasing over time and this trend will probably continue to grow, given younger cohorts are more likely to be open about their sexuality.

Gates (2015) mentions a series of databases on the LGBT population in the USA: General Social Survey, Gallup Daily Tracking Survey, National Survey of

Family Growth, American Community Survey, Census, National Health Interview Survey, Pew Research Center survey of LGBT adults. The author explores the debates around access to marriage for same-sex couples and investigates how social and legal change is affecting the demographic characteristics of LGBT people and their families, whether parents' gender composition affects children's wellbeing, and how social science research has contributed to track the impact of these changes in the future.

Powell et al., (2016) point out scholars often reduce families, particularly those that are alternative in some way, to one dimension when, in fact, many characteristics of family members and connections between these characteristics may be relevant to outcomes of interest. Gay and lesbian families can be single-parent or stepparent families. Same-sex parents may be married, cohabiting, or living apart. They can be monoracial or interracial and adoptive, biological, or a mixture of both.

Reczek (2020) describes research in the last decade as having a focus on white gay, lesbian, and same-sex families, lacking attention to the life cycle, the racial diversity and the family ties of sexual and gender minorities, such as intersex, asexual, queer, gender non-binary/non-conforming individuals. Likewise, Lambert (2005) criticizes the homogeneity of subjects in studies that focus on gay and lesbian families. According to the author, they almost exclusively study populations focused on white, well-educated, middle class, and American individuals.

In the present study, there was substantial effort to find a diverse sample of couples, though that was not completely possible. Some respondents considered themselves brown or black, but most considered themselves white. They all belong to a middle-class urban group.

#### **4.1 Portraying the couples**

Since couples have their privacy secured, the names displayed here are fictitious to protect the interviewees' identities. Couples either lived together without registering their union (cohabitation), or they held a domestic partnership (*união estável*) or they were legally married. All individuals identified themselves as white or brown (*pardo*) or black. Table 1 and 2 summarize the couples' characteristics and the following subsections present a brief history of them. The current number of children shows how many kids the couple raises together, independently of biological ties. Lesbian couples are presented first, and gay couples are listed next.

### 4.1.1 Lesbian couples

Table 1 – Socio demographic characteristics of lesbians

	Name	Age	Born in	Ethnicity	Educational Attainment	Occupation	Couple's monthly income (R\$)	Living arrangement	First conjugal union	Current number of children	Desired number of children
1	Tatiana	28	Rio de Janeiro (RJ)	White	Some college	Cooking chef	4-6k	Marriage	Yes	0	1
	Marcela	33	Parelhas (RN)	Black	Bachelor	Historian			Yes	0	2
2	Diane	28	Brasília (DF)	White	Bachelor	Public servant	4-6k	Cohabitation	Yes	0	2
	Daniela	27	Brasília (DF)	Brown	Some college	Public servant			Yes	0	2
3	Lara	29	Brasília (DF)	White	Some college	Realtor	>10k	Cohabitation	Yes	4	4
	Larissa	34	Brasília (DF)	White	Bachelor	Advertiser			No	4	4
4	Juliana	27	Brasília (DF)	White	Bachelor	Master student	4-6k	Marriage	Yes	0	2
	Clarice	35	Brasília (DF)	White	Bachelor	Advertiser			Yes	0	2
5	Mirela	30	Brasília (DF)	Brown	High school	Beautician	4-6k	Marriage	Yes	2	2
	Elis	31	Ceres (GO)	Brown	Bachelor	Realtor			Yes	2	2
6	Renata	45	Teresina (PI)	Brown	Bachelor	Public servant	4-6k	Marriage	No	1	2
	Priscila	31	Picos (PI)	Brown	Some college	Saleswoman			Yes	1	1
7	Adriana	33	Dores do Indaiá (MG)	White	Bachelor	Saleswoman	8-10k	Domestic partnership	Yes	1	2
	Carla	38	Brasília (DF)	White	Master	Physiotherapist			Yes	1	2
8	Lorena	37	Brasília (DF)	Brown	Bachelor	Gym teacher	6-8k	Cohabitation	Yes	0	2
	Cristina	46	Brasília (DF)	Brown	Some college	Driver			No	0	2
9	Antonia	30	Brasília (DF)	White	Bachelor	Elementary teacher	8-10k	Marriage	Yes	1	2
	Denise	32	Rio de Janeiro (RJ)	White	Bachelor	Elementary teacher			Yes	1	2
10	Alicia	25	Brasília (DF)	Brown	Bachelor	Artist	2-4k	Domestic partnership	Yes	1	3
	Rebeca	27	Brasília (DF)	Brown	Some college	Masseuse			No	1	2
11	Bruna	31	Brasília (DF)	White	Bachelor	Public servant	2-4k	Marriage	Yes	0	2
	Bianca	31	Brasília (DF)	Black	Some college	French teacher			No	0	2
12	Leticia	27	Brasília (DF)	Black	Bachelor	Social worker	2-4k	Cohabitation	Yes	0	2
	Rafaela	22	Brasília (DF)	Brown	High school	Telemarketer			Yes	0	2
13	Silvana	39	Rio de Janeiro (RJ)	White	Bachelor	Nurse	6-8k	Cohabitation	No	2	2
	Meire	33	Mãe do Rio (PA)	Brown	Some college	Saleswoman			No	2	2
14	Natália	23	Floriano (PI)	Black	High school	Youtuber	4-6k	Cohabitation	Yes	1	1
	Joana	22	Brasília (DF)	White	High school	Unemployed			Yes	1	1
15	Fabiana	35	Goianésia (GO)	White	Bachelor	Psychologist	8-10k	Domestic partnership	Yes	0	0
	Flora	36	Teresina (PI)	White	Bachelor	Public servant			Yes	0	0
16	Érica	30	São Paulo (SP)	Brown	Bachelor	Photographer	8-10k	Domestic partnership	Yes	2	3
	Verônica	36	Uberlândia (MG)	White	Doctorate	Professor of Anthropology			No	2	2
17	Maria Clara	31	Brasília (DF)	White	Bachelor	Educator	6-8k	Marriage	Yes	0	3
	Paola	33	Brasília (DF)	White	Bachelor	Logistics specialist			Yes	0	3
18	Sandra	29	Brasília (DF)	Black	Bachelor	Physiotherapist	>10k	Marriage	No	1	2
	Tânia	42	Santos (SP)	White	Doctorate	Professor of Public Health			No	1	2
19	Flávia	36	Brasília (DF)	White	Bachelor	Psychologist	>10k	Marriage	No	0	3
	Fernanda	35	Anápolis (GO)	White	Bachelor	Businesswoman			Yes	0	3
20	Helena	28	Rio Grande (RS)	White	Bachelor	Bank clerk	>10k	Marriage	Yes	0	2
	Marta	30	Vilhena (RO)	White	Bachelor	Pet shop owner			Yes	0	2

Source: Answers from interviewees.

1. Tatiana, 28 and Marcela, 33: Tatiana was born in Rio (RJ) and Marcela was born in Parelhas (RN). Tatiana is a cooking chef and Marcela is a historian. They met during carnival in Rio. One year later, without any family support, they decided to move in together. They are now legally married, and this is their first conjugal union. They both wish to get pregnant in the future and consider seeking the SUS reproductive program.

2. Diane, 28 and Daniela, 27: Diane and Daniela are public servants and they were both born in Brasília (DF). They met online on a dating site. They have been living together for one year and their current plan is to buy a house. They both wish to get pregnant in the future, but that is still a long-term plan. They are not sure whether they would prefer to conceive with the help of a male friend or in a medical clinic.

3. Lara, 29 and Larissa, 34: Lara and Larissa were both born in Brasília (DF). Lara is a realtor and Larissa works in advertising. They met on the dating app Tinder. Larissa has four children. They are 15, 11, 9 and 6. She had her first child with her boyfriend when she was a teenager. Later on, she married another man and had three more children. Both fathers of the children are present in their lives. All of them, including Lara, co-parent together. As a kid, Lara imagined having many children, so she feels Larissa and the children fulfilled her dreams.

4. Juliana, 27 and Clarice, 35: They were both born in Brasília and they met on Tinder. Juliana is finishing her master's degree in Geology and Clarice works with media at a non-governmental organization. They decided to marry the day after the elections in Brazil. They feared the new president would prohibit gay marriage once he took office. They now plan to move abroad so Juliana can pursue a PhD degree. Clarice always wanted to be a mother but fears she cannot get pregnant now because of her age. The couple plans to adopt two children in the future.

5. Mirela, 30 and Elis, 31: Mirela was born in Brasília and Elis was born in Ceres. They met when Mirela went to Ceres for vacation. They were both 15 years old at the time. They became close friends, but only started a relationship when they were 21. Tired of their long-distance relationship, they decided to move in together in Brasília and got married. Afterwards, they signed up for the SUS program for assisted reproductive technology. Elis got pregnant and they now have twins. They do not wish to have more children.



6. Renata, 45 and Priscila, 31: They were both born in the state of Piauí – Renata in the capital Teresina and Priscila in a nearby city named Picos. They met in Teresina through mutual friends and kept a long-distance relationship because Renata already lived in Brasília. Priscila then moved to Brasília and they got married. At the moment of the interview, they were expecting their first child, due to be born in the following week. Priscila got pregnant through in-vitro fertilization at a private clinic. They are still not sure if they will want more children after the baby is born.

7. Adriana, 33 and Carla, 38: Carla was born in Brasília and Adriana was born in the state of Minas Gerais. When Adriana visited her brother in Brasília, she met Carla on a New Year's Eve party, and they started dating. After a few years of moving around, they registered a domestic partnership and adopted a seven-months old baby boy, who is now five years old. Carla's mother lives with the three of them. Adriana and Carla want their son to have a sibling, so they are now waiting their turn on SUS reproductive program.

8. Lorena, 37 and Cristina, 46: Lorena and Cristina were both born in Brasília. When they met at the Pride Parade in São Paulo, more than ten years ago, Cristina was still married to her ex-wife. After a few weeks, they started dating and quickly moved in together. They plan to move to Fortaleza soon, live near the beach and have two children. Lorena wants to get a home insemination from João Holland, a somewhat famous donor in Brazil<sup>4</sup>, and adopt their second child.

9. Antônia, 30 and Denise, 32: Antônia was born in Brasília and Denise was born in Rio. They both studied Pedagogy and they met at the elementary school where they teach. Denise proposed to Antônia and they got married in 2013, right after marriage became legal. Denise always wanted to be a mother. After going to a few private clinics, they decided a home insemination would work better for them. A gay friend of the couple was the donor and Denise was six months pregnant at the time of the interview. They believe they will have more children in the future.

10. Alicia, 25 and Rebeca, 27: They were both born in Brasília. They decided to move in together after dating for three months. Following the advice of their Umbanda group, they decided to register a domestic partnership. Alicia wants to get pregnant and they have talked to a gay friend about being the donor. Rebeca had a

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<sup>4</sup> See <https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/geral-42145205>

daughter in a past heterosexual relationship and they raise the five-years old girl together. The father of the child is not present in their life.

11. Bruna, 31 and Bianca, 31: They were both born in Brasília. They met at a party through mutual friends at a lesbian collective. Bruna had just ended another relationship, but they quickly started dating. They decided to get married after the elections in Brazil. They did not have the time to plan much, they were just scared of what could happen. Bianca wants to get pregnant, but they will consider adoption if that doesn't happen.

12. Leticia, 27 and Rafaela, 22: They were both born in Brasília. They met at work, but now they have different jobs. They decided to live together with the support of both their families. They don't plan to get married, but, in the future, they would like to have children. They still haven't decided if they will get pregnant or adopt.

13. Silvana, 39 and Meire, 33: Silvana was born in Rio de Janeiro and Meire was born in Mãe do Rio, Pará. They met on a UOL chat room in 2015 while Meire still lived in Pará. Meire had a daughter, from a previous heterosexual relationship, but the father never registered the child. Silvana and her ex-wife had adopted a girl and share her custody. After one year in a long-distance relationship, Meire moved to Brasília and the couple now raises the two daughters, who are both nine years old. They plan to get married soon, but they do not want to have more children.

14. Natália, 23 and Joana, 22: Natália was born in Floriano (Piauí) and Joana was born in Brasília. They met on Tinder and started dating on the same day. After four months, they decided to do a home insemination and Natália got pregnant. Their donor was an acquaintance, who is straight and married. He is not involved in their life. Natália, Joana and their one-year old daughter currently live with Natália's parents.

15. Fabiana, 35 and Flora, 36: Fabiana was born in Goianésia, Goiás and Flora was born in Teresina, Piauí. A mutual friend introduced them five years ago and Fabiana says she "took Flora out of the closet". After three months, they started living together. They have a domestic partnership and plan to get married soon, because of the political situation in Brazil. Neither of them desires to be a mother and they do not intent to have any children.

16. Érica, 30 and Verônica, 36: Érica was born in São Paulo and Verônica in Uberlândia. They met through mutual friends and they started dating after Verônica divorced her ex-wife in 2016. Verônica had started the adoption process with her ex-

wife when they were still together. Right after they adopted two boys, her ex-wife asked to be removed from the process and they separated. At first, Érica was unsure about her role in the boys' life, but quickly developed a strong maternal bond with them. Their sons are currently 8 and 7 years old. Érica wishes to get pregnant with a girl and give them a sister.

17. Maria Clara, 31 and Paola, 33: They were both born in Brasília and they met on Tinder. They decided to register a domestic partnership to begin a visa application process for residency in Canada. After the elections in Brazil, they converted the domestic partnership in marriage, so their political rights are more solid. Once they move to Canada, they plan to have children through pregnancy and/or adoption.

18. Sandra, 29 and Tânia, 42: Sandra was born in Brasília and Tânia was born in Santos. They met through mutual friends and got married after the elections in Brazil. Tânia has a 12-years old son from a past heterosexual relationship. She shares his custody with the father. Sandra wants to get pregnant soon so their son can have a sibling. Sandra is herself the daughter of two mothers.

19. Flávia, 36 and Fernanda, 35: Flávia was born in Brasília and Fernanda was born in Anápolis. They met on Tinder and started dating in 2014. A surgery Flávia had is what motivated them to register a domestic partnership, so they could make decisions for each other. A year later, they decided to get married and they got a free party from an event planning company in Brasília. They have wanted to have kids for a long time, but have been postponing this decision for professional reasons.

20. Helena, 28 and Marta, 30: Helena was born in Rio Grande do Sul and Marta was born in Rondônia. They met because Helena's ex-girlfriend is Marta's childhood friend. They have been together for eight years. They both want children, but Marta does not want to get pregnant. Helena has decided she will get pregnant before the age of 32.

## 4.1.2 Gay couples

Table 2 – Socio demographic characteristics of gays

	Name	Age	Born in	Ethnicity	Educational Attainment	Occupation	Couple's monthly income (R\$)	Living arrangement	First conjugal union	Current number of children	Desired number of children
1	Tomás	30	Brasília (DF)	Brown	Bachelor	Public servant	6-8k	Marriage	Yes	0	0
	Ronaldo	32	Brasília (DF)	White	Bachelor	Public servant			Yes	0	0
2	Rafael	30	Rio de Janeiro (RJ)	White	Bachelor	English teacher	6-8k	Marriage	Yes	0	0
	Leandro	28	Belford Roxo (RJ)	White	Master	Historian			Yes	0	0
3	Túlio	36	Belo Horizonte (MG)	Brown	Bachelor	Public relations	4-6k	Domestic partnership	Yes	0	0
	Gabriel	29	José dos Campos (SP)	White	Bachelor	Architect			No	0	0
4	Márcio	30	Brasília (DF)	White	Master	Economist	>10k	Cohabitation	No	0	1
	Paulo	25	Goiânia (GO)	White	Bachelor	Public servant			Yes	0	1
5	Danilo	32	Nazaré da Mata (PE)	White	Bachelor	Personal trainer	>10k	Marriage	Yes	2	3
	Renan	42	Fortaleza (CE)	White	Bachelor	Sales rep			Yes	2	3
6	Ivan	33	Brasília (DF)	White	Bachelor	Journalist	8-10k	Cohabitation	Yes	0	1
	Samuel	29	Medellin (Colômbia)	White	Master	PhD student			Yes	0	1
7	Iago	27	Brasília (DF)	Brown	Bachelor	Art director	6-8k	Marriage	Yes	0	0
	Luiz	25	Brasília (DF)	White	Bachelor	Theater teacher			Yes	0	0
8	Gael	29	Brasília (DF)	Brown	Bachelor	Psychologist	6-8k	Domestic partnership	Yes	0	2
	Jorge	29	Brasília (DF)	Brown	Bachelor	Realtor			Yes	0	1
9	Roberto	48	Araxá (MG)	White	Bachelor	Engineer	>10k	Marriage	No	0	0
	Adriano	28	Canindé de São Francisco (SE)	White	Bachelor	Public servant			Yes	0	0
10	Davi	27	Machado (MG)	White	Bachelor	Lawyer	>10k	Marriage	Yes	0	2
	Vinicius	30	Montes Claros (MG)	Brown	Bachelor	Public servant			Yes	0	2
11	Bernardo	31	Brasília (DF)	White	Bachelor	Bridal designer	4-6k	Marriage	Yes	0	2
	Júlio	39	Brasília (DF)	White	Bachelor	Financial Analyst			No	0	0
12	Heitor	32	Paraiso do Tocantins (TO)	White	Bachelor	Social Worker	>10k	Cohabitation	Yes	0	1
	Hugo	29	Patos de Minas (MG)	White	Bachelor	Lawyer			Yes	0	1
13	Nicolas	30	Brasília (DF)	White	Bachelor	Graphic designer	>10k	Cohabitation	Yes	0	0
	Miguel	34	Brasília (DF)	White	Bachelor	Medical doctor			Yes	0	0
14	Sérgio	31	Brasília (DF)	Brown	Some college	English teacher	4-6k	Cohabitation	Yes	0	0
	Anderson	31	Brasília (DF)	Brown	Bachelor	Architect			Yes	0	0
15	Maurício	29	Brasília (DF)	Brown	Bachelor	Lawyer	>10k	Domestic partnership	No	0	1
	Cláudio	42	Fortaleza (CE)	White	Bachelor	Accountant			No	0	1
16	Fernando	30	Brasília (DF)	Brown	Bachelor	Bank clerk	>10k	Domestic partnership	Yes	0	2
	Otávio	34	Ubajara (CE)	White	Bachelor	Public servant			Yes	0	2
17	Alexandre	30	Brasília (DF)	White	Some college	Public servant	>10k	Cohabitation	Yes	0	2
	Caio	27	Brasília (DF)	Black	Bachelor	Public servant			Yes	0	2
18	Jonas	40	Tupanciretã (RS)	White	Bachelor	Public servant	>10k	Domestic partnership	Yes	1	3
	Alberto	55	Caxias do Sul (RS)	White	Bachelor	Lawyer			Yes	1	3
19	Vicente	38	São Paulo (SP)	Brown	Bachelor	Bank clerk	>10k	Marriage	Yes	2	2
	Diego	44	Goiânia (GO)	White	Bachelor	Bank clerk			Yes	2	2
20	Marcelo	36	Juiz de Fora (MG)	White	Bachelor	Public servant	>10k	Domestic partnership	Yes	0	0
	Felipe	37	Além Paraíba (MG)	White	Bachelor	Medical doctor			Yes	0	0
21	Pablo	41	Brasília (DF)	White	Bachelor	Public servant	>10k	Marriage	Yes	1	1
	Francisco	42	Brasília (DF)	White	Bachelor	Public servant			Yes	1	2
22	Fábio	30	Brasília (DF)	White	Bachelor	Elementary teacher	>10k	Domestic partnership	Yes	1	2
	Augusto	28	Brasília (DF)	White	Bachelor	Public servant			Yes	1	2

Source: Answers from interviewees.

1. Tomás, 30 and Ronaldo, 32: Tomás and Ronaldo were both born in Brasília (DF) and they both work as public servants. They met in high school and became best friends before they started dating. They have lived together since 2011 and decided to get married right after it became legal in Brazil, in 2013. They always had family support in their choices. Their future plans are buying a house and traveling. They do not wish to become parents.

2. Rafael, 30 and Leandro, 28: They were both born in the state of Rio de Janeiro, but Rafael was born in the capital and Leandro in Belford Roxo (RJ). Rafael is an English teacher and Leandro is a historian. They met at a party and started dating shortly after. When they decided to live together, they still shared a house with friends. Only a year later, they got their own place and decided to register a domestic partnership. After the elections in Brazil, they decided to turn the domestic partnership into marriage. They do not wish to become parents.

3. Túlio, 36 and Gabriel, 29: Túlio was born in Belo Horizonte (MG) and Gabriel was born in São José dos Campos (SP). Túlio works as public relations and Gabriel is an architect. A friend set them up and they started dating. Túlio dated women during his teenage years and he always imagined himself becoming a father. However, Gabriel's younger sister was born when he was 14 and from that moment he decided he would not want to be a parent. Now, they have both decided they will not have children.

4. Márcio, 30 and Paulo, 25: Márcio was born in Brasília (DF) and Paulo was born in Goiânia (GO). Márcio is an economist and Paulo, a public servant. A mutual friend introduced them at a party, and they started dating. Ideally, they would like to have two biological children, but they consider the financial and emotional costs too high, so they plan to have just one child in the future.

5. Danilo, 32 and Renan, 42: Danilo was born in Nazaré da Mata (PE) and Renan was born in Fortaleza (CE). Danilo works as a personal trainer and Renan is a sales representative at a multinational tech firm. They started talking online over ten years ago and met in person in Recife. Their plans to move in together coincided with the job offer Renan received to work in Brasília. They are now legally married and have adopted twin babies.

6. Ivan, 33 and Samuel, 29: Ivan was born in Brasília and Samuel is Colombian, from Medellín. They met on a dating app and started a relationship shortly after. One

year later, they moved in together. Ivan is a journalist and Samuel is a PhD candidate in International Relations. Their immediate plan is getting married. In the future, they consider adopting.

7. Iago, 27 and Luiz, 25: They were both born in Brasília and they met on a dating app. Iago works as an art director and Luiz teaches theater and dance in a public school. They decided to marry after the elections in Brazil and their short-term plan is moving abroad to Canada. At the moment, they are not thinking about having children.

8. Gael, 29 and Jorge, 29: They were both born in Brasília and they met through mutual friends. One year after dating, they moved in together. Later on, they decided to register a domestic partnership, because they plan to adopt children in the future.

9. Roberto, 48 and Adriano, 28: Roberto was born in Araxá (MG) and Adriano was born in Canindé do São Francisco (SE). They met online and they have been together for ten years. They decided to get married in 2015. Currently, they do not have the intention to become parents.

10. Davi, 27 and Vinícius, 30: Davi and Vinícius were both born in the state of Minas Gerais, respectively in the cities of Machado and Montes Claros. They met at the university in Brasília, where they were both Law students in 2012. Once they graduated and started working, they moved in together. In the future, they would like to have two children.

11. Bernardo, 31 and Júlio, 39: Bernardo and Júlio were both born in Brasília. They met on Tinder and started dating one week after their first date. One year later, they got engaged in Paris and are now married. Bernardo dreams to be a father and feels ready for parenthood. Júlio does not want to have children.

12. Heitor, 32 and Hugo, 29: Heitor and Hugo were both born in Brasília. They met on Tinder and they moved in together after one year. Heitor has done an internship at Vara da Infância e Juventude (DF), which motivated him to adopt in the future. The couple's immediate plan is travelling, but they do want to become fathers in a few years.

13. Nicolas, 30 and Miguel, 34: Nicolas and Miguel were both born in Brasília. They met through mutual friends. They consider moving abroad and getting married for immigration purposes. Currently, they do not have the intention to become parents.

14. Sérgio, 31 and Anderson, 31: Sérgio and Anderson were both born in Brasília. Anderson's brother studied at university with Sérgio and introduced them after finding out his brother was gay. Sérgio and Anderson were friends at first and then

started dating. They currently live together with Sérgio's mother and they do not want to have children.

15. Maurício, 29 and Cláudio, 42: Maurício was born in Brasília and Cláudio in Fortaleza. They met at a supermarket in Brasília and exchanged phone numbers. They lived in the same neighborhood and decided to move in together a few weeks later. They plan to adopt a child in the future, after Maurício finishes the doctoral program he wants to be admitted in.

16. Otávio, 34 and Fernando, 30: Otávio was born in Ubajara, Ceará, and Fernando was born in Brasília. They met each other on Facebook. They registered a domestic partnership, but felt it was too bureaucratic and not a celebration of their relationship. So, their wedding is planned for October 2019 and they will have a big party. In the future, they intend to be parents, but they have not decided if they prefer adopted or biological children.

17. Alexandre, 30 and Caio, 27: Alexandre and Caio were both born in Brasília. They met each other during carnival in Salvador through mutual friends. In the future, they would like to get married and have a big party. They are unsure about children, but, ideally, they would like to adopt siblings.

18. Jonas, 40 and Alberto, 55: Jonas and Alberto were both born in the state of Rio Grande do Sul. They met at a party in Brasília and they have been together for eighteen years. When Alberto turned 50 years old, they decided to apply for adoption. After waiting almost five years, they adopted a baby girl, who is now nine months old. They want her to have siblings, so they are still registered for adoption.

19. Vicente, 38 and Diego, 44: Vicente was born in São Paulo and Diego in Goiânia. They worked at the same company in São Paulo and were later transferred to Brasília. They have been together for fourteen years and two years ago they adopted two boys. They are now 10 and 7 years old. Vicente and Diego are happy with two children and do not plan to have more.

20. Marcelo, 36 and Felipe, 37: Marcelo and Felipe were both born in the state of Minas Gerais. They met on a UOL chat room sixteen years ago. When they moved to Brasília, they decided to live together. They have registered a domestic partnership for health insurance reasons. They do not have children and do not intend to become parents.

21. Pablo, 41 and Francisco, 42: Pablo and Francisco were born in Brasília. They met at a movie theater, while waiting in line. Eight months later, they moved in together. Now together for seventeen years, they got married and adopted a seven-year-old boy, who is now eleven years old. Francisco would like to have more children. Pablo feels one is enough.

22. Fábio, 30 and Augusto, 28: Fábio and Augusto were both born in Brasília. They met seven years ago at a party and moved in together three months later. Having never had any family support, they struggled during the adoption process. They have a ten-year-old son, who was adopted two years ago. They would like to have more children in the future, but not now.

#### **4.2 Sample descriptions**

The planning department of the Federal District Government (*Governo do Distrito Federal* – GDF) has published a study on the LGBT population. It shows, from data of the National Household Sample Survey (PNAD), that 5386 households in the Federal District in 2013, and 3659 in 2014, had a same-sex couple. The variation coefficient is 33%, so the authors assume the LGBT population size in DF is somewhere from 1879 to 8892 households. (CODEPLAN-GDF, 2017).

Brazilian census and PNAD can only catch same-sex couples indirectly, by their cohabitating status. Single individuals, couples who do not live together, or who do not declare this cohabitation, are not captured by these databases. Therefore, it is possible to predict that there are estimation problems with the data, especially because same-sex marriage was not legal before 2013.

When analyzing Brasília as a single municipality, 2010 census data shows that 1502 households out of 821130 are composed of same-sex partners. Of those, 55,71% are white, 34,29% are brown and 10% are black. Their mean age is 34,2 years old, 32,8 for men and 35,7 for women (IBGE, 2010).

I interviewed 84 individuals (20 female couples and 22 male couples), who are diverse in age, income, professional occupation, and parenting experiences. Out of the 84 individuals, 44 of them were born and raised in Brasília, 22 women and 22 men. The mean age of the participants is 32,5 years old – 31,8 for women and 33,1 for men.

All male participants have a college-level educational attainment or higher. Four female participants have up to secondary education, but all others also have



college-level educational attainment or higher. Regarding their color, 23 women considered themselves white, 12 brown and 5 black. As for the men, 32 white, 11 brown and 1 black.

Compared with heterosexual couples, the relationships of same-sex couples are less easily defined by an official starting point. Some couples had a hard time defining for how long they are together, mainly due to troubled beginnings in the face of self-acceptance and family support. They may have cohabited for many years but been in a legal union for a short time because legal union status became available only recently.

Regardless of their relationship duration, 10 lesbian couples declared to be married, 4 hold a domestic partnership and 6 cohabit without any official document. Likewise, 9 gay couples declared marriage, 7 a domestic partnership and 6 cohabitation.

The characteristics of participants are summarized next. Table 3 presents individual traits and Table 4 presents couples' characteristics.

Table 3: Summary of participants' individual characteristics

<b>Individual characteristics</b>		<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
<b>Total number of individuals</b>		40	44
<b>Born in Brasilia</b>		22	22
<b>Age</b>	<b>20-29</b>	13	14
	<b>30-39</b>	24	22
	<b>40+</b>	3	8
	<b>Mean age</b>	31.8	33.1
<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Black</b>	5	1
	<b>Brown</b>	12	11
	<b>White</b>	23	32
<b>Educational Attainment</b>	<b>High School</b>	4	0
	<b>Some College</b>	8	2
	<b>Bachelor</b>	25	39
	<b>Master/PhD</b>	3	3
<b>Desired number of children</b>	<b>0</b>	2	17
	<b>1</b>	4	10
	<b>2</b>	26	13
	<b>3+</b>	8	4

Source: Answers from interviewees.

Table 4: Summary of couples' characteristics

Couples characteristics		Women	Men
<b>Total number of couples</b>		20	22
<b>Couples intending to parent</b>		19	14
<b>Couples with children</b>		10	5
<b>Marriage</b>		10	9
<b>Arrangement</b>	<b>Domestic partnership</b>	4	7
	<b>Cohabitation</b>	6	6
	<b>2-4</b>	3	0
	<b>4-6</b>	6	3
<b>Monthly income (thousands, R\$)</b>	<b>6-8</b>	3	4
	<b>8-10</b>	4	1
	<b>10+</b>	4	14

Source: Answers from interviewees.

In twenty-two interviews with gay men, eight of them did not intend to have children. In total, five couples already had children and they all decided for adoption. The most discussed challenges among gay couples were the restrictive regulations on surrogacy in Brazil and the long wait for adoption.

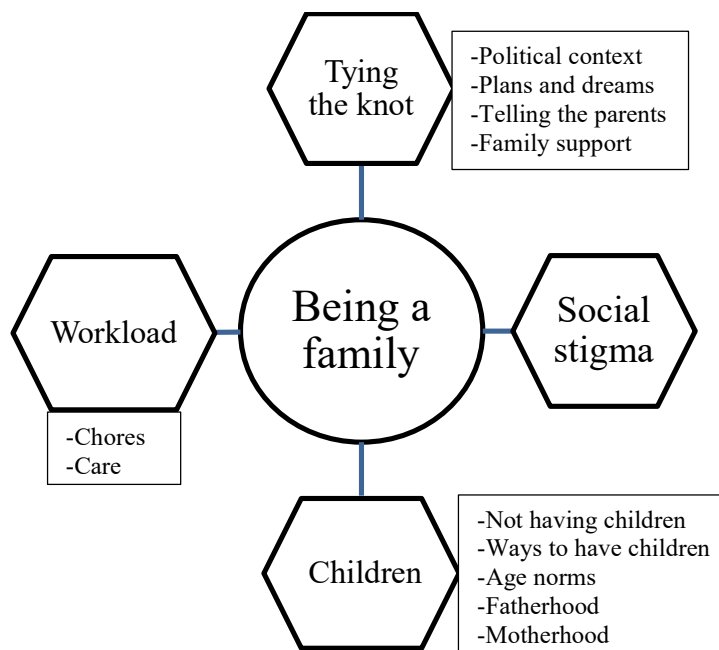
In twenty interviews with lesbian couples, only one couple did not express intent to have children. The most discussed challenges among women were the high costs of private treatments and the possibilities to find a reliable semen donor. Ten of them already had children using different pathways: in vitro fertilization (IVF) through the SUS program, IVF through private clinics, adoption, home insemination and previous heterosexual relationships. The following chapter systematizes the recurring themes in the interviews and presents the analysis of the couples' narratives.

## 5. THEMATIC ANALYSIS

After the interviews, the material was examined according to the analytical proposition of Attride-Stirling (2001), denominated thematic networks. It organizes qualitative data by categorizing the main themes that appear at different levels and it includes six basic steps: (i) the coding of the material; ii) the identification of themes; iii) the construction of the thematic network; iv) the description and exploring of the thematic network; v) summarizing the themes and their patterns, and finally; vi) interpreting the described patterns in light of the research question and the literature review.

I employed blended inductive and deductive coding techniques to identify the predominant themes in the interviews. The central theme of the interviews was family formation. From the couples' narratives, the organizing themes to family formation were marriage, children, work and stigma. Each organizing theme was framed by basic themes, creating a thematic network as shown in Figure 1 below. The central theme is represented by a circle, organizing themes by hexagons, and basic themes by rectangles. Figure 1 does not aim to establish causal relationships among themes, but to illustrate the main topics discussed during the interviews.

Figure 1: Thematic network of same-sex couples in Brasília



Source: Answers from interviewees.

The thematic network is the structuring point for the thematic analysis as follows. Results were clustered in each theme of the network.

### **5.1 Tying the knot**

The narratives of the couples, although each unique in their own way, boil down to the fact they are all love stories. Although Rosenfeld (2014) found that committed couples who live together can be stable regardless of legal recognition, most couples decided to get married or envisioned one day tying the knot. The given reasons for it were categorized as romantic, spiritual, pragmatic, and political. The reasons are non-excluding, sometimes intersecting.

*Denise, 32: "Getting married is a big act of love. It's also a political act, because we wanted to protect our rights. We had a beautiful party and our friends helped us with everything. We invited 200 people and 300 showed up."*

*Iago, 27: "We decided to get married so we can move to Canada. We are insecure about the political situation in Brazil... But I don't like to think we got married out of fear. We got married because we love each other."*

*Túlio, 36: "After four years living together, we decided to register a domestic partnership because of health insurance issues, but we still plan to get married. It's my dream to have a big romantic wedding!"*

As Goodrich et al. (2019) put it, spirituality and religion are core parts of some families' experiences and are often interconnected with the family system. The spiritual reasons given by the couples to get married reflect religious affiliation and/or the desire of blessings and protection, in line with the sanctification of familial bonds described by Mahoney et al. (2003).

*Alicia, 25: "Our Umbanda coordinator encouraged us to celebrate our union, to make it official, so our house and our family would be better protected."*

*Silvana, 39: “We want to get married, but not only for bureaucratic reasons. We want a religious ceremony. We are both Catholic and our daughters go to catechism classes on the weekend. I recently found out that the Anglican church in Brasília celebrates same-sex weddings and we have been talking to the priestess to set a date.”*

*Danilo, 32: “Although we didn’t have a religious marriage ceremony, our twins were baptized in the Catholic Church. Both grandmothers insisted on it. It is tradition, right, and it was very moving.”*

The pragmatic reasons refer to initiating an adoption process; including one’s partner in their health insurance plan; saving money by paying utilities and appliances for only one household or downgrading from paying two rents to paying only one, or not paying rent at all if one of the partners owned a home.

*Márcio, 30: “The decision to move in together happened day-by-day. I lived alone and Paulo was there every day. It only made sense that we live together.”*

*Adriana, 33: “We already lived together, but we decided to register a domestic partnership because of health insurance. In the end, it was also important to have it to file for the adoption of our son.”*

*Rafael, 30: “Getting married is pragmatic, in terms of health and life insurance for example, but it is also a political attitude to affirm our rights.”*

Many respondents echoed Rafael’s opinion. The political reasons given to get married were based on the assertion of this recently acquired right. Moreover, they were impacted by the electoral results of 2018, which I discuss in the following topic.

*Mirela, 30: “Right after marriage became legal for us, we decided to do it. We are together, we want to be together forever, and it is our right.”*

*Paola, 33: “We decided to get married to protect our rights. Even though we are white college-educated women who live in a nice neighborhood, lesbophobia is at our door all the time.”*

*Tânia, 42: “Our decision to get married was based on love, but it was rushed for political reasons. The last electoral period made us afraid we could lose our rights.”*

### **5.1.1 Recent political context**

The 2018 elections in Brazil represented a rightward shift in the country and a win for conservatives. The presidential election of the controversial far-right candidate Jair Bolsonaro, whose inauguration took place on January 1<sup>st</sup> 2019, deeply affected the LGBT community in Brazil – same-sex couple’s lives were shaken, and many of them were apprehensive about the future, scared to lose their acquired rights.

*Juliana, 27: “We felt really bad during the whole electoral period. It was really sad to feel that intense hate against the LGBT community. So, we decided to get married the day after the elections, because we feared it was not going to be allowed in the upcoming years.”*

*Vinícius, 30: “We believe the democratic institutions are functioning. However, there is no actual law in Brazil allowing gay marriage – there are only judicial decisions. The election of such a homophobic president pushed us to get married on December 2018, before the beginning of his term.”*

Like Vinícius and his husband and Juliana and her wife, many same-sex couples rushed to get married after the elections result. According to civil registry data, same-sex marriages soared in 2018 compared with 2017. In 2018, 9520 homosexual couples were formally united all over Brazil. In 2017, 5887. The increase in same-sex marriage was greater in the last months of 2018. Of the 3958 marriages between men, 29.6% occurred in December alone. Among female couples, 34% of the 5562 unions also took place in the last month of 2018. Same-sex marriage increased 61.7% in 2018. Table 5 presents the data for Brazil and Table 6 for the Federal District (*Distrito Federal - DF*).

Table 5: Number of same-sex weddings registered each month in Brazil

	Gay			Lesbian			Total		
	2016	2017	2018	2016	2017	2018	2016	2017	2018
Jan	190	189	195	208	218	293	398	407	488
Feb	151	170	226	192	195	245	343	365	471
Mar	196	199	258	205	281	268	401	480	526
Apr	199	165	201	232	234	257	431	399	458
May	176	201	228	245	293	313	421	494	541
Jun	191	192	249	232	265	290	423	457	539
Jul	194	213	246	254	287	330	448	500	576
Aug	193	162	222	217	284	296	410	446	518
Sep	255	247	268	294	332	406	549	579	674
Oct	209	244	265	261	305	409	470	549	674
Nov	231	266	408	279	331	549	510	597	957
Dec	226	252	1192	324	362	1906	550	614	3098
All year	2411	2500	3958	2943	3387	5562	5354	5887	9520
Annual growth (%)		3.69	58.32		15.09	64.22		9.96	61.71

Source: Estatística do Registro Civil, IBGE.

Table 6: Number of same-sex weddings registered each month in DF

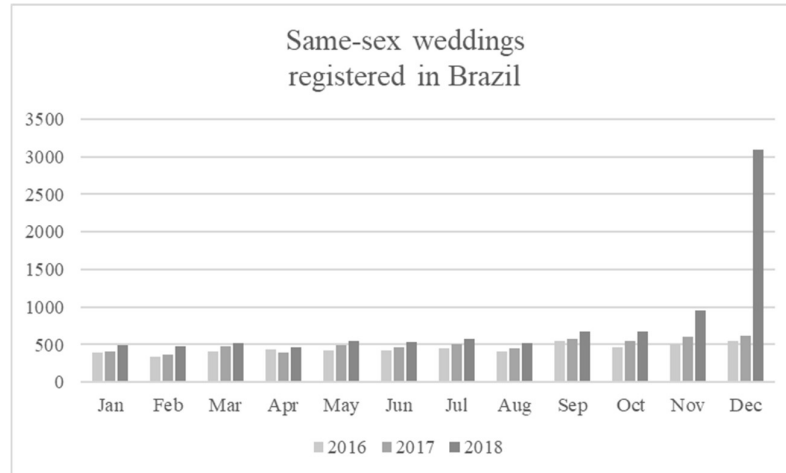
	Gay			Lesbian			Total		
	2016	2017	2018	2016	2017	2018	2016	2017	2018
Jan	5	2	6	8	6	11	13	8	17
Feb	5	8	5	1	4	11	6	12	16
Mar	7	7	10	6	5	7	13	12	17
Apr	6	8	9	2	8	6	8	16	15
May	4	9	10	5	8	6	9	17	16
Jun	7	8	8	2	7	11	9	15	19
Jul	4	6	7	6	8	8	10	14	15
Aug	6	5	13	7	5	5	13	10	18
Sep	7	12	8	11	9	9	18	21	17
Oct	10	13	9	9	6	9	19	19	18
Nov	7	6	10	9	10	11	16	16	21
Dec	4	5	43	7	6	42	11	11	85
All year	72	89	138	73	82	136	145	171	274
Annual growth (%)		23.61	55.06		12.33	65.85		17.93	60.23

Source: Estatística do Registro Civil, IBGE.

The figures by IBGE (2019) clearly show the number of same-sex marriages increased after the election results. Between January and October, the average in Brazil was 546 marriages per month. In November, the number rose to 957 and jumped to 3098 in December, five times the average. Proportionally, the Federal District presents similar results: the total annual growth in 2018 compared to 2017 is 60.2%, while

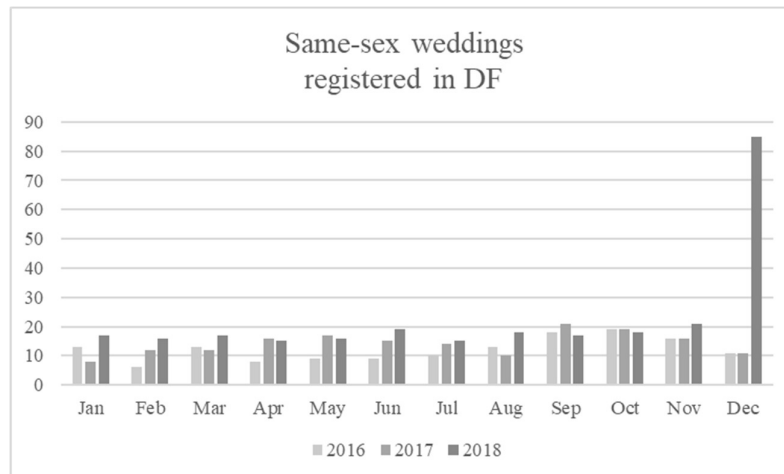
Brazil's is 61.7%. Graphs 2 and 3 illustrate the monthly variation in Brazil and DF, respectively, illustrating how Brasília followed the national trends.

Graph 1: Number of same-sex weddings registered each month in Brazil



Source: Estatística do Registro Civil, IBGE.

Graph 2: Number of same-sex weddings registered each month in DF



Source: Estatística do Registro Civil, IBGE.

Besides the rise in wedding data, perceptions of violence against LGBT people also rose among the group since the beginning of the electoral period in 2018 until the first weeks of 2019, according to the organization Gênero e Número (2019). Some participants emphasized in their narratives that the homophobic climate of the elections was marked by several attacks on the LGBT community, causing widespread panic.



*Bruna, 31: “We got officially married because of the past elections in Brazil. We didn’t really plan it; we were just afraid of what was going to happen. The elections were a horrific period for the LGBT community in Brazil. Everybody panicked – I know of two people who committed suicide in Brasília.”*

*Sérgio, 31: “We have been very afraid since the election, because the president does not recognize us as a family and promotes the armament of the population. Recently, a gay hairdresser in our neighborhood was murdered and we believe it was a homophobic crime.”*

*Flora, 36: “We registered a domestic partnership, but we feel it’s a fragile document. We want to get married soon, because Brazil’s current situation is very threatening for the LGBT community. Our rights are under attack and we don’t know what the future holds... I feel very afraid. Actually, I became afraid after the elections. Nothing happened to us, but some friends were insulted at a fancy shopping mall here in Brasília. I can’t act naturally in public anymore. We don’t hold hands in the street as we used to do.”*

Violence and lack of support during the electoral period affected the couples in the public sphere, but also inside their family life. Many participants said the election sparked conflicts with relatives and mentioned cutting ties with a family member previously close to them.

*Maurício, 29: “My stepmother is from Piauí and during the electoral period I tried explaining to her about Bolsonaro’s positions against the Northeast population and the LGBT community. Same with my cousin who is from Maranhão. It didn’t work and I decided to stop talking to them. It was alarming and eye-opening to realize the monsters who elected the president are not far away from us.”*

*Miguel, 34: “My family is from the rural part of Goiás and they are very religious. We have followed a don’t ask don’t tell policy about my sexuality*

*for a long time. But, for obvious disagreements, we are not talking since the electoral period.”*

*Cláudio, 42: “I decided to delete my social media profiles and I left my family group on Whatsapp. Being online was harmful to me. There was too much fake news and no possibility of a civilized conversation.”*

*Jorge, 29: “The elections in Brazil felt like a war. People had to take a stand, expose their opinions and that brought widespread conflict. Some of our relatives were supporting Bolsonaro and we couldn’t understand that. We felt we were in real danger and it was very scary.”*

The decision to live together and/or to get married impacted how couples were perceived by family members and their relationships to them. In the next section, I discuss the parental reactions to their children’s sexual orientation and their decision to fully live an adult relationship.

### **5.1.2 Telling the parents**

Although all interviewed couples were in committed relationships, some participants had never talked to a family member about their sexual orientation. Not disclosing one’s sexuality is associated with increased relationship stress and lower levels of relationship quality, whereas being out is associated with relationship satisfaction regardless of parents’ level of disapproval, as discussed by Reczek (2016) and Voultzos (2019). Bruna makes this point clear:

*Bruna, 31: “A serious issue in the LGBT dating scene is whether the person is out to their family. If not, that can be a big burden on the relationship.”*

Participants reported a range of responses from their family of origin. Many participants had already experienced an evolution of support from family members before getting married and some perceived increased support, acceptance, or positive responses following marriage. However, marriage did not translate into greater familial support or acceptance for all participants.

*Clarice, 35: “When I told my mom I was getting married, she said it was the worst thing I could ever do to her.”*

*Antônia, 30: “My parents are Catholic and I feel they are very hypocritical. How can you preach love and be so intolerant at the same time? When I decided to move in with Denise, I wrote a letter to my parents saying I’d live with a friend. After that, we didn’t speak for a few weeks. Today our relationship is still difficult. They didn’t go to our wedding.”*

*Juliana, 27: “When I told my father I was getting married, he said it was a big mistake.”*

*Cláudio, 42: “My family is from Ceará. They are very conservative, and dialogue is not their strongest suit. I have never talked to my parents about my relationships. My mother visited me in Brasília, saw we sleep together in the same bed, but the official narrative in the family is that I share the apartment with a friend.”*

The situation lived by Cláudio is not unusual. Sedgwick (1990) coined the term *glass closet* to refer to the in-between status of someone’s public sexual identity. Whoever is in the glass closet has not officially disclosed their sexual orientation, but is seen by others, through social markers of their identity, as not heterosexual. Many participants had not officially discussed their relationships with at least one of their parents. However, at the same time, respondents believed that their parents knew about the relationship. Hence the glass closet concept applies here.

*Marcela, 33: “I never officially announced to my mother that I am a lesbian, everything just happened.”*

*Paulo, 25: “I never told my parents I had moved in with my boyfriend. They kind of figured it out by themselves.”*

*Hugo, 29: “My parents don’t talk about my sexual orientation and we get along very well. I don’t feel like I need to have this conversation.”*

The glass closet sometimes is extended to only one of the parents, usually the father. Gendered cultural notions that assign feelings to women and reason to men, make women responsible for the maintenance of family life. Some individuals, like Márcio, expressed motherly understanding and no fatherly involvement.

*Márcio, 30: “Although I lived with my ex before, this is the first time I introduced a partner to my mother. When it comes to my father, I have never talked to him about any of it, but I know that he knows about my life and my relationships.”*

The coming out process happened to some participants alongside the relationship formation process, as described by Luiz and by Túlio:

*Luiz, 25: “My family knew I was gay, I knew that they knew, but we never talked about it. The day before our marriage, I decided to tell them. They were shocked at first, but they now respect and understand me.”*

*Túlio, 36: “Only after a year of living together with Gabriel, I told my father that I shared the apartment with my husband and not with a friend. At the same time, I told him that I was gay and that I was married. His first reaction was asking me not tell anybody in our extended family, but everybody already knew because of Facebook.”*

To Renan and his husband Danilo, the family formation process was crucial to bring legitimacy to their relationship, corroborating Juros (2019) in the sense that the arrival of grandchildren brings acceptance to previously neglected same-sex relationships in the family.

*Renan, 42: “For a long time, my mom referred to Danilo only as my friend, though she knew the truth about us. It was just after we got married and adopted our children, that she began to see Danilo as her son-in-law.”*

*Danilo, 32: “I came out when I was 18, but I had a really hard time with my family. They are from a very small town; my father is from the military and my mother is very religious. I had to hide my relationships. My mother only started to accept my marriage with Renan after we adopted our sons.”*

Nonetheless, this was not the case for all couples with children. As Biblarz et al. (2014) and Grafsky (2014) discussed, parental reactions can be negatively affected by religious beliefs, and internalized homophobia, developing into complete rejection of their children and grandchildren. Fábio and Augusto still deal with the stress of rejection and disapproval from their parents even after the adoption of their son.

*Fábio, 30: “The first time we registered for adoption, our application was denied because of our family issues. You need to show the psychologists you have a support network and we didn’t. Augusto’s parents are Jehovah’s witnesses and they haven’t been in touch for years. My father has always pretended he didn’t know about my sexuality. To him, my husband and I are friends who adopted a boy. The biggest issue for me is that he didn’t treat our son as his grandson, so we had a big fight and stopped talking.”*

On the opposite direction of rejection, some individual described having total support from at least one parent, as I discuss in following section.

### **5.1.3 Family support**

Some participants experienced an evolution of support from family members from their adolescent days until their recent decision to live together with a partner.

*Leticia, 27: “My parents are present in my life every day. When I came out ten years ago, we had a big fight. So, to have their support nowadays is like a dream come true.”*

*Marta, 30: “When you’re young and you say you’re dating a girl, the parents can have a somewhat negative reaction. But, after we have dated for so many years, both families were happy about our relationship and both our grandmothers attended our wedding.”*

As aforementioned, Juros (2019) affirms that family arrangements that resemble the heteronormative norm are the most acceptable in the view of parents. Parents’ initial reaction to their offspring’s nonheterosexuality typically reflect loss or grief of their heteronormative expectations. When same-sex couples portray a lifestyle that follows conventional middle-class standards, parents seemed to react favorably.

*Ivan, 33: “My mother was happy to see I was living together with Samuel. I think she was relieved. In her eyes, it’s better to be living with someone than going out and partying every night, like she thinks gays do.”*

*Samuel, 29: “When my mother came to visit us, she was glad to see we live in a nice house and have a good relationship.”*

*Bianca, 31: “I left home when I was 17 and only recently my mother started coming to our house. She sees we have a stable relationship, we live in a nice neighborhood, my wife is a public servant. I know all these things matter to her and open the possibility for us to connect.”*

Following the findings of Prince et al. (2017) that coming out to one or both parents impact positively same-sex union formation in adult life, some participants described feelings of legitimacy, pride and privilege in their relationships because of their family support and the affectionate intergenerational ties they share with their own relatives and their in-laws.

*Bruna, 31: “My mother keeps telling us that she wants grandchildren. It feels good to see that my parents recognize our relationship and our family. I feel privileged in that sense.”*

*Otávio, 34: “I have 9 siblings and they are all coming to my wedding. My mom completely supports me, she is even part of the group Mães pela Diversidade. It feels really good to know I can count on them.”*

*Júlio, 39: “My mother never accepted me, and she didn’t go to our wedding. At the same time, all my husband’s relatives were there for us. His family is warm and open. Through the years, my husband and his family became my family.”*

*Maria Clara, 31: “We never had any problems with our relatives because of our relationship and my parents were always by my side. Everybody attended our wedding, including our grandmothers.”*

*Caio, 27: “Our families were very happy when we decided to move in together. In the future, we want to have a wedding celebration, throw a big party, get everybody together. We know we are privileged for being loved and accepted like we are.”*

The couples who experienced some sort of support seemed to have an easier time to make family plans. In the next section, I discuss the couples’ dreams for the future.

#### **5.1.4 Plans and dreams**

When asked about the future, the couples gave many different answers. Younger and older participants mentioned the desire for certain material acquisitions related to what is perceived as a comfortable life. Gabriel summarized it well:

*Gabriel, 29: “Our plans are to travel as much as we can, buy an apartment and a new car.”*

All the couples who have or who desire having children described plans that involve them, even though they are still related to material acquisitions.

*Renata, 45: “We have very ordinary dreams: decorating our house the way we want, buying a new car, traveling with the baby next year. They are not big plans, but they satisfy our dreams.”*

*Gael, 29: “We plan to move to a bigger house and grow our family. I would love to be pregnant if I could. I think it’s such a singular and special moment between a parent and a baby. But we can offer love for kids who don’t have it. That’s why we plan to adopt – boy, girl, siblings, regardless of age.”*

Adoptive parents especially talked about the expectations they have in relation to their children, due to racial and background differences.

*Verônica, 36: “I dream about our sons as teenagers. I imagine we’ll have a more mature relationship and we will be able to have deep conversations. They are two black boys and I want to discuss racism with them, sexuality, homophobia, memories, identity. They are still very young and can’t elaborate on these issues.”*

The couples that do not want to have children expressed their future plans in terms of higher-order needs and the pursuit of happiness, as described by the proponents of the second demographic transition (Lesthague, 2010).

*Anderson, 31: “My mother in law keeps saying we should adopt a baby girl. But our plan for the future is traveling and getting to know new places. We don’t dream nor plan to have children”.*

*Marcelo, 36: “Our plan for the future is to stay together, happily married, taking care of each other. I don’t think we’ll have children. Adoption and reproductive technology seem too complicated for us. I’m sure my parents would love to become grandparents. They have that idea that you get married, have kids and your kids take care of you when you’re old. Their life plan is very different from ours. I like to follow my happiness and not a script on how life should be.”*



*Túlio, 36: “When I was a child, I imagined being a father someday. But now as an adult, the most important thing for me is not being alone, is being with my partner.”*

*Tomás, 30: “Deep down, everybody wishes for the Hollywood dream of a perfect family with two children and a dog, but today is not something we want. We just want to be happy together, whether we have children or not.”*

Hollywood dreams aside, the next section details the real life struggles of the couples who have children or are in the process to enlarge their family.

## **5.2 Children**

As previously explained, lesbian and gay couples face significant barriers to parenthood: social norms surrounding family formation, discrimination, and the emotional and financial costs of fertility treatments (Gato et al., 2017; Tate et al., 2019). However, the majority of the couples interviewed intend to have children.

*Ivan, 33: “LGBT people have been denied so much. We shouldn't be denied our families. Why would children not be for us?”*

The couples that have or want to have children usually described the complexity of the decision-making process, emphasizing the differences between homosexual and heterosexual couples.

*Helena, 28: “Most people think children legitimate the marriage. If I was married to a man, I'm sure I would have children by now. But I'm not straight and the option to get pregnant is not easily available. We have to plan it very carefully and we end up postponing it”.*

*Bianca, 31: “I really want to get pregnant, but if that doesn't work, we think about adoption. It is complex... I believe lesbian motherhood is different than*

*heterosexual motherhood. It is really hard to have to make those kinds of decisions.”*

*Bernardo, 31: “I dream about being a dad since I was 17 years old. Once, I tried to have a baby with a female friend, but it didn’t work out. That’s good, because I wasn’t mature enough at the time. Nowadays, I feel ready, but my husband doesn’t want to have children. At least for now, I’m prioritizing my relationship, but I don’t know what will happen in the future. I think about biological and adopted children, but I guess I need to study the options. Since we won’t get pregnant by accident, we can give it more thought.”*

Having proximity to, and knowledge about other gay and lesbian parents, was important to those who decided to become parents. Vicente shared his experience, which relates to Goldberg (2010) and Mezey (2013): having proximity to and/or forming friendships with lesbian and gay parents is crucial in the process of choosing parenthood.

*Vicente, 38: “I always wanted to have children, but during the 80s and the 90s, I constantly got the message that a gay man couldn’t be a father. My family is Evangelical, and they emphasized that. One day in 2016, I met a male coworker who was the first at my company to adopt a child and get parental leave. My husband and I talked to him and we learned a lot. Soon after, we decided to get married and register for adoption.”*

A few gay couples were concerned that fulfilling their desire to parent would not be in the best interest of a child, as they had internalized heterosexist concepts of appropriate parenting and were worried that their future children might be disadvantaged or stigmatized.

*Caio, 27: “I always wanted to have kids. But I worry about the challenges and psychological issues my child will face for having two dads. I know society is changing, but still... Maybe it’s not so complex as I envision in my mind.”*

Relating to findings of Stacey (2006) and Gato et al. (2017), the process of discussion towards parenthood may result in a less motivated partner developing a greater interest in the prospect of parenthood, ultimately matching the other's enthusiasm, so that both are equally committed to parenthood.

*Danilo, 32: "I always wanted to be a father. I love children. At first, Renan wasn't into the idea and we got our first dog. Now, we have four children: 2 with 2 paws and 2 with 4 paws."*

*Francisco, 42: "I've had the dream to be a father since a very early age, but my husband wasn't so keen on the idea of having children. It took us some years to reach consensus. After both of us started working in government, we decided it was time to become parents."*

Although most couples were keen on having children, one lesbian couple and eight gay couples expressed they would not like to become parents. Their decision relates to the second demographic theory proponents, as explained in the following section.

### **5.2.1 Not having children**

The second demographic transition represents the transformation of couples making reproductive choices based on normative, hierarchical gendered roles to couples negotiating their decisions. The rise of same-sex couples is a feature of the second demographic transition in the sense that they are an obvious break away from the classic family model; even more so when same-sex couples do not intend to have children. Eight gay couples and one lesbian couple expressed no intention to become parents and some showed self-worth and confidence in their choice.

*Leandro, 28: "At some point in my adult life, I realized the necessity to have kids is an idea created by society, it is not my idea."*

Individualistic values are significantly and positively associated with the phenomenon of childlessness (Tanturri et al., 2015). In that manner, it is possible to see

attitudinal patterns among the couples who do not want children – they focus on their career, but the financial gains are not an incentive for deciding to parent.

*Tomás, 30: “What matters is having time to be a father, not money. Having more money wouldn’t change our decision of not having kids.”*

*Adriano, 28: “We don’t want children and our friends don’t want children, not even the women. Nobody is willing to sacrifice their careers.”*

*Miguel, 34: “I never thought about having children. If I had a lot of money, I wouldn’t become a father, I’d open a school for poor kids, do some charity work.”*

Moreover, those who do not want children seek to protect their time and their freedom, focusing on self-actualization. Increasing individualism and the demand for fulfillment in loving unions structure the shift from king child to king couple (Lesthague and Van de Kaa, 1986) and reflect the rising importance of relationship quality to the adult dyad.

*Felipe, 37: “It’s not the financial aspect that prevents us from having children. We just don’t want to deal with the difficulties that fatherhood brings. Our relationship and our careers take up all of our time.”*

*Fabiana, 35: “We don’t have the intention to have children. When we visited my cousin who was recently pregnant, we realized what a great life we have. We like kids, but we don’t want to become mothers. It’s not about external issues, like money, it’s an internal decision of prioritizing our freedom. We don’t want that long-term dependency relationship that is motherhood.”*

The decision not to have children can also be related to challenges regarding social acceptance, especially for older individuals. This kind of concern was also present in the studies of Meletti and Scorsolini-Comin (2015) and Gurgel & Uziel (2019).

*Roberto, 48: "I believe we would suffer more discrimination if we had children. Society can maybe accept two men living together but I guess adding a child to that environment would not be ok."*

The couples who do want children had a few methods to choose from to make their dreams come true, as I show in the next section.

### **5.2.2 The ways to have children**

New reproductive technologies create fertility possibilities out of the two-parent heterosexual couple norm (Riley and McCarthy, 2003), but it is not the only available route. The pathways to parenthood are diverse among same-sex couples and they differ by age and cohort, gender, race, and socioeconomic status (Umberson, 2015; Gato et al., 2017).

The experiences and the wishes of the interviewed couples showed gender is the biggest determinant for differences on the pathway to parenthood. Since commercial surrogacy is not allowed in Brazil, male couples focused their narrative almost entirely on adoption, while female couples had broader discussions. The majority of women talked about home insemination and/or the SUS program, in addition to adoption.

*Mirela, 30: "At first, I thought we wouldn't have children. I didn't see how we could do it. Clinics are very expensive and insemination at home is not legal, allowing the semen donor to claim father rights. But Elis always wanted to have children and she is the one who did most of the research on how we could do that. One day, she found the reproductive technology program from SUS and we decided to get wait-listed. It took three years for us to start the procedures, but everything was excellent, and we didn't spend almost any money at all to have our twins."*

*Priscila, 31: "We tried the insemination at the SUS program twice, but they were not successful. During that same time, we started gathering the*

*documentation to try for adoption. But, finally, we decided to go to a private clinic, and I did get pregnant.”*

*Lorena, 37: “I plan to do a home insemination. Many men try to sell their sperm online, especially on Facebook groups. But there is a famous man in São Paulo who donates his sperm and we’re planning to go there. At a private clinic, everything is very expensive, even the initial appointment.”*

Lesbian couples were concerned about what kind of donor they should use, either anonymous or known, in order to protect their autonomy as parents. They discussed the potential difficulties of incorporating a third party into parenting practices. Women who had a known donor, a friend or acquaintance, expressed mixed reactions to his involvement with the baby.

*Natália, 23: “We thought about adopting, but it’s such a bureaucratic process and it’s so hard to adopt a newborn baby... Why not have our own baby if we can? We researched home insemination and found a donor who agreed to give up all parental rights. We have our daughter and he is not a part of our lives.”*

*Alicia, 25: “It doesn’t make sense to us to pay a lot of money for something that’s so purely natural. So, we have asked a friend if he would be our donor. Our daughter knows she has a father, so our next child needs to have that kind of reference as well.”*

Couples who considered private clinics discussed the medical possibilities regarding the inclusion of the nonbiological mother in the process, matching donor characteristics to the women’s or using the reception of oocytes from partner (ROPA), studied by Machin (2014).

*Denise, 32: “We went to a private clinic and started looking at the profiles of viable donors. It’s an overwhelming market. If you pay more, you can have access to their voice, to their handwriting, even their zodiac sign.”*

*Flávia, 36: “Our professional plans made us postpone having kids, but I wish we had already had them. We have been discussing our options with our doctor. He explained to us that it is possible to buy sperm in the United States and see the face of the donor. In Brazil, you only know the characteristics, you don’t see the person. Fernanda doesn’t want to get pregnant, but we are looking into the procedure to implement her egg in my uterus”.*

Compared with the range of possibilities for women to access assisted reproductive technologies, and ultimately pregnancy, the options available to men in same-sex relationships are certainly narrow. Some gay couples seemed frustrated with the medical norms regulating surrogacy in Brazil.

*Heitor, 32: “I believe adoption is the most accessible option at the moment. It’s hard to imagine that a woman close to us would get pregnant and give up her motherhood once the baby was born.”*

*Alexandre, 30: “It’s nearly impossible for gay men to have biological children in Brazil. I would never ask my mother or my sister to be my surrogate.”*

However, the fathers who chose adoption reported valuing their social parental role more than genetic parenthood.

*Alberto, 55: “Pregnancies can happen by accident; many biological children are unwanted. In our case, we wanted a child so much, we planned it so much. Adoption is really powerful.”*

Like the same-sex couples in the UK, studied by Jennings et al. (2014), gay couples gave little importance to biogenetic kinship. They valued that adoption offers protected parental rights for the couple, without the need for a third party. However, a common complaint was the long wait of the adoption process.

*Vicente, 38: “Adoption grants you the certainty you will have your child at the end of the process, even if it takes long.”*

*Jonas, 40: When we registered for adoption, we were told the we would need to wait at least 3 years for our child. In the end, it took almost 5 years. It is so difficult to wait all this time...It's a pregnancy without a due date. Your child can come at any moment, but you have no idea when that is going to happen."*

Most couples said they did not or would not have sex or age restrictions when adopting a child, but race was a sensitive subject.

*Alberto, 55: When we registered for adoption, we asked for a white girl or boy, up to six years old. We worried that, besides dealing with two fathers, our kid would need to deal with racial issues. We felt it would be easier if he or she was the same color as us."*

*Ivan, 33: "A gay couple adopting is a political act in the country we live. So, I wouldn't want to perpetuate discriminatory practices and adopt white babies."*

The next section is about another controversial subject: age appropriateness for parenthood.

### **5.2.3 Social norms about age**

Besides their differences on the pathways to parenthood, men and women also differ on what they consider to be the right time to have children. Most women seemed affected by the biological limit between age and fertility to make decisions about getting pregnant.

*Clarice, 35: "I always wanted to be a mother. But now I'm 35, and I feel I won't get pregnant. I guess if I ever have children, I'll adopt them. Paying for insemination procedures at a clinic is too expensive and getting it through SUS is very difficult."*

*Helena, 28: "I always knew I'd like to have a baby, so I have decided I will get pregnant before I turn 32."*



Men's concerns about age were not related to their reproductive capacities, but to an internal sense of readiness, related to their own youth and mortality. Similarly, Goldberg et al. (2012) pointed out that gay men perceive the ideal moment to become parents depend on their age and maturity level.

*Alexandre, 30: "I guess there is no right age, but I'd like to become a father before I turn 35. I don't want to wait too long. If I ever become a grandfather and have grandchildren, I'll want to be around them as much as possible."*

*Ivan, 33: "When I was 25, I imagined having children at 35. But, now, I can't picture myself having children in two years. I don't think I have the emotional or financial stability for that. Since we plan to adopt, I don't think we have to worry about our age. But, at the same time, I wouldn't want to be an old dad. You got to have stamina to be a dad."*

*Vinicius, 30: "We talk a lot about having kids, but I don't feel ready to make that decision. At the same time, I don't want to be an old dad. I hope we will figure it out before I turn 40."*

Beyond age, becoming a parent implies new responsibilities. Having children brings changes in lifestyle and community that restructure social networks in ways that reflect the changing families.

*Renan, 42: "Now we have more heterosexual friends with kids. After we adopted the boys, we lost touch with the friends we used to go out with. They just want to party every night! They even told us we were very brave to face that kind of responsibility. But I think that, at some point, we all need to grow up and have responsibilities, right?"*

In this sense, the next section underlines how men relate to fatherhood.

#### 5.2.4 Fatherhood

When asked about the meaning of fatherhood, some couples emphasized the adjustments they have lived since becoming parents. Hence, having children not only brings changes in lifestyle and community, but core transformations to the individuals.

*Jonas, 40: "Being a father represents a big change in my life. I knew love since I met my husband, but the love I feel for my daughter is so much bigger than I could ever have imagined. Having a child really is feeling infinite unconditional love."*

*Danilo, 32: "Talking about fatherhood is so easy and at the same time so difficult. We change so much... I think the meaning of fatherhood for me is change. I love being a dad. If I could, I'd have many more children."*

Others talked about the importance of being present in their children's lives.

*Renan, 42: "Fatherhood gives a bigger meaning to life. You care more about the future and about your own health. I don't want my kids to be short of anything."*

*Samuel, 29: "I think fatherhood is a responsibility for your whole life. After my father passed away, I really felt a big sense of abandonment. I don't want my kids to ever feel that. I plan to always be there for them."*

Given individuals imagine their future experiences of parenthood (Araldi & Serralta, 2016), it is likely they will have expectations about their roles as fathers, about the children, and about their future.

*Diego, 44: "At first, I wasn't completely sure I could love my children. But now I see parental love is different. It is a love that grows more and more every day. My only hope is that my children turn out to be good adults, good people. If we can't leave a better world for our children, we can try to leave better children for the world."*

*Heitor, 32: "Fatherhood is about always being there for someone who depends on you. Sometimes, I dream about having a gay son, I dream we can support each other throughout our lives."*

Usually, adopted older children, and children who have experienced multiple foster home placements, encountered unique challenges that require significant time, energy, and attention. Thus, couples who adopt them experienced particularly high levels of stress, living longer adjustment periods.

*Pablo, 41: "Fatherhood is chaotic, it turns you upside down. It is too much responsibility. Becoming a father was a traumatic experience to me. I had depression right after the adoption, because I felt dissociated from who I was before. I'm still working on it."*

*Augusto, 28: "There is still much to be done regarding our father-son bond. Love is built every day and fatherhood shows me how to be a better human being, how to be less selfish."*

*Fábio, 30: "Fatherhood is complex to me. Our son was with another family before coming to us and he acts out a lot. I guess fatherhood taught me how to love, but you must first deconstruct your expectations for love to grow. After I understood that, our life got easier."*

The next section addresses how women relate to motherhood.

### **5.2.5 Motherhood**

When asked about the meaning of motherhood, some women described the linkages and deep connections with themselves, their loved ones and the world around them.

*Maria Clara, 31: "I believe motherhood is a long experience of meeting new people. When we become mothers, we will become different individuals and we will occupy new positions in society. It will be a new phase for our family."*

*Verônica, 36: "Motherhood is to come back to your own childhood. Deep down, we are like our parents<sup>5</sup>. We can think and act differently, but we pass forward the same values we grew up with. And that makes us part of a larger network connected to human existence. Motherhood is personal growth beyond your own self."*

*Alicia, 25: "Motherhood is a mirror that shows all my rights and wrongs and all the patience I need to have with myself and my child."*

On a different note, some women associated motherhood with sacrifices and the burdens of daily routine.

*Elis, 31: "Motherhood is dedication 24 hours a day. You only think about your kids. You can barely eat or sleep."*

*Tânia, 42: "I love being a mother to my child, but I don't know if I love being a mother... Motherhood demands too much from women."*

*Clarice, 35: "My mom dreamed I'd study Law, become a public servant, marry a man and have children. She raised me as a single mother, and she wanted me to have the perfect life she didn't have. Now I see everything she had to give up because of me, and I realized how much motherhood takes away from women, regardless of their sexual orientation."*

Goldberg & Sayer (2006) affirmed lesbian couples experience an initial decline in the quality of their relationships upon becoming parents, because couples lack time and energy for their relationship, jeopardizing their sexual intimacy. Adriana corroborates their finding:

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<sup>5</sup> Verônica sang a bit of *Como nossos pais*, from singer Elis Regina.

*Adriana, 33: "Motherhood is not easy. You give up sex, you stop going out with your friends, I'm telling you the truth. If your relationship is not solid, it's going to brake. Everything gets very hard. We almost separated at one point... Motherhood is very challenging."*

Given the male couples in the study did not use surrogacy, adoptive parents reported having balanced status as fathers. Some mothers, however, felt their status was heavily biased by pregnancy and its social meanings, as I explain in the following section.

### **5.2.6 The other mother**

Lesbian couples who conceive using donor insemination invariably have asymmetric genetic ties to their child. More noticeably, the experiences of carrying out the pregnancy and giving birth challenge the parenting identity of the nonbiological mother. The nonbiological mother's role is less defined, less recognized, and less protected, creating legitimacy struggles when society regards her as less of a parent or not really a mother. The birth mother, in contrast, receives recognition of her full parental status during pregnancy, and afterwards, as a function of the biological bond she shares with the child.

*Mirela, 30: "People do not acknowledge the motherhood of the mother who wasn't pregnant. It is as if there could be one only mother. People don't know the right way to call me. Whoever has seen my wife pregnant with the twins or breastfeeding them tends to dissociate me from the situation. I can understand their confusion, but I feel hurt."*

Regardless of the actual social arrangements of families, same-sex parents are not easily identified through the lens of heterosexual reproduction that symbolically defines the field of kinship (Butler, 2002). The nonbiological mothers reported feeling invisible during the pregnancy, emphasizing their status as an expectant and actual parent often was unrecognized by friends and family members.

*Renata, 45: "It's hard for people to understand that I'm pregnant in another uterus."*

Parents who were previously hiding their children's homosexual relationships from friends and extended family are faced with the additional challenge to choose whether they will accommodate new relationships with their own children and their spouse when grandchildren arrive.

*Antônia, 30: "My parents don't feel they will become grandparents. My family cannot understand the notion of two mothers. My aunt has asked me if I am going to be a daddy now".*

Lesbian couples decided to have children together, make parenting decisions together and want society to accept them as equal parents.

*Antônia, 30: "I want to be a mom, but I don't want to get pregnant. I never had that dream. I'm not less of a mother because I am not pregnant. I am a mother too, in my own way".*

*Renata, 45: "I'll open a legal process to request my maternity leave. Although I am a public servant and should be allowed a six-months leave, the Law 8112 is restrictive to pregnant or adoptive mothers and I fit neither of these categories."*

Some couples described their process to name the children, seeking to legitimate parental identities and to assert the child's relationship with the nonbiological and/or nonlegal parent.

*Joana, 22: "I never saw myself pregnant, but I always wanted to be a mom. We are not officially married, so we needed to hire a lawyer to register our daughter with both our names. I dreamt of having my family exactly like it is today."*

*Verônica, 36: “Since Érica wasn’t with me during the adoption process, the legitimacy of her motherhood is sometimes questioned. Her name is still not on the boys’ birth certificates and that is a delicate issue for our family.”*

*Érica, 30: “I don’t feel less of a mother because my name is not on the birth certificate, but it upsets me. My wife had already adopted the boys when we started dating. At first, my role was to help her with them. But affection grew among us, we began sharing motherhood and family love. After a while, I asked the boys to stop calling me tia. I wanted them to call me by my name or by mom. The youngest started calling me mom right away, but the oldest took his time, until one day, he called me mom. I was so happy! I pretended I didn’t hear it, just so I could hear him say it again.”*

Becoming a mother or a father brings happiness, but implies higher financial costs and more household chores. In the next section, I discuss how the couples juggle their work-life balance.

### **5.3 Workload**

The necessary workload to maintain a household comprises domestic labor and paid labor. Within the workplace, lesbian and gay individuals have historically experienced discriminatory practices related to hiring, wages, relationship building, and promotions (King & Cortina, 2010). Work conditions are important to lesbians’ and gay men’s parenting decision-making, because besides children being costly, there is the need to pursue jobs that provide both financial security and flexible schedules to accommodate personal priorities and parental responsibilities.

*Lara, 29: “My work is very flexible and that allows me to organize our family life. Larissa works full time, so I pick the children at school and I make them lunch.”*

*Cristina, 46: “If you work too much, you don’t pay attention to your household, to the needs of your marriage.”*

*Elis, 31: "We decided to cut on our workload, so we could both be home with the babies. We'd rather have a decrease in our income than being away from them."*

*Ivan, 33: "The work routine specifically doesn't affect much my life at home, but what comes along with the work: money and stress."*

Lesbians' household incomes usually rank below those of heterosexual and gay male households, even though their individual incomes tend to be higher than the incomes of heterosexual women (Simon et al., 2018; Schneebaum & Badgett, 2019). Working-class lesbians of color struggle even more with structural barriers that often force them to choose between motherhood, education or a career.

*Leticia, 27: "What I value most is economic security, so that I can have any kind of plan for my life. As a black lesbian woman, what I truly need is a steady job that pays well."*

Workplace policies that prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, and gender identity, explicitly promoting a tolerant and inclusive labor culture help to minimize the stress homosexual parents might face.

*Priscila, 31: "Everybody respected my pregnancy at work. They let me get lighter shifts and sit for a longer period of time if I need."*

*Renan, 42: "I had total support from my company when I adopted the boys. I was out for forty days on paternity leave and they even offered me to take more time off."*

*Pablo, 41: "I was the first man in my department to get the six months of parental leave after adopting. It was very bureaucratic, but it worked out."*

Although most experiences were respecting of labor legislation, negative experiences were also reported.



*Paola, 33: "The United Kingdom Embassy often promotes diversity campaigns, but I suffered lesbophobia when I worked there. One day, when my wife visited me, the security manager expelled us from the office, and we were very saddened by that. I always thought my workplace was a safe environment, but now I see discrimination can happen anywhere."*

Work-life balance is not limited to paid work. In the next section, the couples talk about how the work at home affects them.

### **5.3.1 Chores**

Regarding domestic labor, gender can be considered a driving predictor of relationship experiences. Same-sex couples tend to embody a more egalitarian structure of household and childcare tasks, dividing them more equally between partners in comparison to heterosexual couples (Patterson, Sutfin, & Fulcher, 2004; Giddings et al. 2014; Bauer 2016). However, following the literature (Blumstein, & Schwartz, 1983; Kurdek, 2007; Brewster, 2017) gay couples reported difficulties to allocate chores, while the lesbian couples described dividing household chores equally. Interestingly, men without children were the group most dissatisfied with the fairness of their division, displaying implicit expectations of traditional gender roles towards the partners who work more or less outside the home.

*Ronaldo, 32: "I don't think we have a good division of household chores... I worry a lot more about what needs to be done around the house, but my husband does not. He is an only child and he was very spoiled growing up."*

*Gabriel, 29: "Now, the situation is better, but we argued a lot in the past about chores. It came to a point that either we bought a dishwasher, or we would separate."*

*Ivan, 33: "I believe Samuel does more around the house than I do... He is the one who cooks. When he travels, I spend a lot of money on food delivery."*

*Heitor, 32: "I wish we had a better division of household chores. Since my work hours are more flexible, I feel my husband expects me to do more around the house and I think that is a little unfair."*

*Nicolas, 30: "I think my husband gives more time and attention to domestic chores than I do. I tend to wait for the cleaning lady who comes once a week."*

In contrast to the gay couples, all lesbian couples said their experiences with the division of household chores involved open dialogue and making decisions together.

*Rafaela, 22: "We have the same level of organization and we share all the chores, so it is not overwhelming for neither of us."*

*Sandra, 29: "We always talk, and we help each other a lot. Sharing household chores is not a burden for us".*

*Natália, 23: "I was pregnant with the baby and I breastfeed, but apart from that, we share everything in our family life. We share all the chores related to the baby and to the house."*

*Érica, 30: "Our daily routine relies completely on the both of us, because we don't have a support system. We can't send the boys to spend the weekend at a grandparent's house, for example. So, we always talk to make sure we share everything according to our individual schedules."*

*Paola, 33: "In lesbian relationships, nobody can use the excuse of being a man. We must talk and understand each other. Men are not trained to discuss their thoughts and their feelings. We, on the hand, talk about our daily routine and about our household, how to balance and organize everything. That generates dialogues that most families don't have. In a way, it is a privilege for us to relate to each other as individuals, outside of that heterosexual binary of man and woman."*

The maintenance of male privilege in the sexual division of labor is represented by this scenario. Clearly, chores, as well as care giving, are highly gendered activities even when considering same-sex relationship dynamics, as further explained in the next section.

### 5.3.2 Care

The context of gender necessarily shapes lesbians' and gay men's transition to parenthood, in that mothers and fathers are treated differently in society. Gay men who become parents do so in the context of powerful stereotypes of men as incapable of nurturance. Parenting as a male couple subverts gendered norms of caregiving. Most gay men who choose to parent have the primary responsibility for care. As Mallon (2004) and Carroll (2018) argue, gay fathers who form families without mothers are situated out of normative expectations for men, for gays, and for parents. Men struggle to find validation in family spaces and are often scrutinized over their competency as fathers.

*Jonas, 40: "People are curious about us. Not only because we are a gay couple with a baby, but mainly because we are two men taking care of a baby girl. Women are often doubtful about the care we give to our daughter. But after they get to know us, they usually say we are better care givers than some mothers. I don't think we are better or worse."*

Parenting without the presence of a different sex person is still seen as a challenge to the conventional definitions of masculinity and femininity (Gato et al.,2017). Since early childhood work is deeply feminized, gay men with children usually need women to help with childcare and domestic tasks. Some gay couples talked about having the presence of women in their daily life.

*Renan, 42: "Our life changed so much after having kids, I feel we lost our privacy at home. There is always someone here helping us with the babies: the nanny, my sister, my mother-in-law."*

Gender influences care and socialization across many contexts. As Lira et al., (2015) and Oakley et al. (2017) point out, lesbian mothers prioritize dialogue with their children about gender and sexuality.

*Verônica, 36: “I struggle with my sons’ masculinity. The way they talk, the way they play. It’s very strong and it is reinforced at school, everywhere. We try to make sure they respect girls and that they do chores at home, but it’s difficult sometimes.”*

The following section discusses one of the biggest obstacles the couples faced to form their families: the stigma related to their sexuality.

#### **5.4 Social stigma**

Family formation and parenting intentions are inevitably shaped by the discriminatory discourse homosexual individuals have been subjected throughout their life, which impacts their wellbeing and feelings of self-worth. As Goldberg et al. (2012) and Gato et al. (2017) pointed out, internalized homophobia affected the pursuit of parenthood among gays and lesbians.

*Márcio, 30: “When I was a kid, I imagined getting married and having children in a distant future. But as a gay teen, I stopped imagining that. It was like my sexuality was related to something sinful, lascivious and individualistic. So, I couldn’t envision something so traditional and conventional as forming a family. I guess I thought I couldn’t be gay and have what I have today.”*

*Priscila, 31: “I was raised in a small town and my mother is very religious. Although I was very curious to be with women, I couldn’t accept myself, I knew I was raised to marry a man.”*

*Samuel, 29: “When I was a teenager, I had a very strong sense of internalized homophobia. I thought I’d never find someone who loved me, who would want to have a relationship with me. As I grew up, I realized gay people can have it all, that they can also have families.”*

Young people suffer homophobic bullying and discrimination through discourse and verbal harassment, in addition to physical and psychological violence, sometimes from their own parents. Parental reactions can be negatively affected by misinformation, religious beliefs, and internalized homophobia (Biblarz et al., 2014; Grafsky, 2014).

*Adriana, 33: “My mom always respected me, but she never accepted me. There is a big difference, right?”*

*Rebeca, 27: “My parents found out I was dating a girl in high school and moved me to another classroom. They made me promise I would never date women again. But the only lesson I learned from that was to lie. I started lying to my family and we had many conflicts. They beat me up and expelled me from home”.*

*Iago, 27: “My older brother is also gay and when my parents found that out, they were very disappointed. My mom cried a lot. So, for some time, I decided I’d never tell them I was gay. I was so afraid and scared; I figured I’d die alone.”*

*Alicia, 25: “My brother is gay and the family reaction to our sexuality was totally different. Men can always do anything, and women cannot. I had to hide everything. When my parents caught me with a girl, they grounded me and took away my cellphone. So, I forced myself to have a boyfriend and I lost my virginity with him... But every time we had sex, I felt horrible and I cried a lot. I went through a period with depression and anorexia. After all that happened, I finally understood that being with men did not make me happy.”*

As Szymanski & Carretta (2019) indicated, discrimination from religious leaders and members of one’s faith and community bring negative experience to gays and lesbians, generating increased psychological distress and decreased wellbeing. The

struggle may emerge as a result of the pain experienced with stigma and the challenges of navigating a gay identity in a religious institution.

*Maurício, 29: “I felt trapped in a suffering cycle when I was younger. I couldn’t imagine how I would have a family as an adult. When I was 13 years old, I had many conflicts at the Catholic church. It was a place that brought me spiritual well-being but, at the same time, didn’t welcome me. A priest told me that regardless of my good deeds, I would not be accepted in Heaven.”*

Exposure to negative messages regarding homosexuality and same-sex marriage in the media is also associated with higher levels of distress (Rostosky et al., 2009).

*Fernando, 30: “When I was a teenager, I didn’t know anyone who was gay. There were no gay couples on TV and the internet was not so accessible as it is today. The only cultural references were stereotypical characters like Tom Cavalcante’s Pit Bicha. That was how a gay man looked like in my imagination, so I felt couldn’t be gay, because I didn’t want to be like him. After I joined Orkut and started university, I started talking to new people and having new ideas. Then, I understood I could just be myself.”*

As adults, according to OECD (2019), LGBT individuals are under widespread psychological distress and they are at greater risk of suffering from mental health issues.

*Mirela, 30: “I never suffered any direct attack in my daily life, but I have received many homophobic attacks online in my social media profiles.”*

*Elis, 31: “When I was pregnant, I received an anonymous letter at my workplace saying I would go to hell for getting pregnant like I did.”*

*Renata, 45: “My biggest fear related to homophobia is physical violence. Something happened to me a few years ago, and I still feel very afraid.”*

Many lesbian and gay parents are troubled by the possibility that their children might be harassed or teased because of their family structure. They wonder how best to navigate the dual challenge of modeling a sense of acceptance and pride in one's family structure while also preparing their children for possible encounters with stigma, in the lines with Oakley et al. (2017) description of how gay and lesbian parents socialize their children, specifically around having same-sex parents. Since families with same-sex parents continue to experience stigma in society, there is reason to believe these parents engage in cultural socialization strategies specifically around issues of sexual orientation.

*Joana, 22: "I think, in general, society doesn't accept us. People stare at us a lot on the streets. Sometimes, we are asked very homophobic questions... I feel my daughter will suffer discrimination in the future, but we want to teach her early on how to deal with that."*

*Priscila, 31: "People always ask us if we have decided who is going to be the father and who is going to be the mother. They cannot understand that our family is of two mothers, but I know my daughter will."*

*Larissa, 34: "My oldest daughter and my youngest son think it's great that I have a wife, but my 9-year-old feels shy when my partner picks her up at school. Sometimes I worry her friends with religious parents pick on her, so I try to keep an open dialogue."*

*Silvana, 39: "Every day I want to make it very clear that we are a family. I have always told my wife I don't want to be introduced as her friend or as the aunt of our children".*

Being a family, the central theme of the thematic network, encompasses the totality and the intersections of work, marriage, parenthood and the stigma around them. Consequently, the following section is about the threads made by the couples out of affection and recognition to create and live their family life as they please.

## 5.5 Being a family

Grounding kinship in love, makes love a well-suited symbol to carry the nuances of central to identity and unity (Weston, 1997). This central theme discusses the interviewees' notion of family based on affection, their experiences of conjugality and their desire for parenting. Couples discussed whether their living arrangements are normative, but their answers greatly varied.

*Ivan, 33: "My parents are divorced, so I never held this ideal model of a family. But, at the same time, I always wanted to get married. I don't know if it's just an attempt to fit into the social model we are offered. Why does a queer family have to conform to the standards of a conventional family anyway?"*

*Diane, 28: "We want to have children and a stable family life, like every couple."*

*Helena, 28: "I see us as a traditional family. We married in white, we had a big celebration, all our family participated. We have a very quiet routine every day and a solid monogamic relationship. Aside from the fact that we are lesbians, we are very traditional."*

*Diego, 44: "Before having children, our plans were all about travelling. I didn't imagine we'd follow the mainstream model of getting married, buying a house and having kids. But, little by little, that model seemed safe and good for us. My husband taught me the importance of supporting each other and building our life together. Growing our family and becoming a father was the outcome of that learning process."*

On a different note, some gay couples feel they live their own configuration of family, out of standard heteronormative patterns.

*Rafael, 30: "Us being married doesn't mean we emulate a straight married couple. Our marriage is between two gay men."*



*Nicolas, 30: "I think heterosexual couples aim at family formation and having children. As a gay couple, we don't intend to have children, we don't need to follow their logic."*

*Gabriel, 29: "My divorced mother raised me and Túlio's widowed father raised him. Neither of us had a traditional family. And for us, a mother and father with kids is not our family model. I don't think having children is a requirement to be a family. Our family is the two of us."*

*Davi, 27: "After I realized I wouldn't have heterosexual relationships, that hurt a little, as if I'd never be able to have a family like that of my parents and of my grandparents. But after a while, I understood I can still be happy and have my own kind of family."*

*Renan, 42: "We adopted twins, but we don't want our family to be the traditional model for gay families. There are many different types of families. There are families with travesties and transgender parents. Anyone has the right to be a mother or a father in their own way."*

As Finch (2007) affirmed, parenthood, like any other identity, is accomplished through meaningful practices that create social legibility. To some couples, the establishment of family was marked by the arrival of children. The couples with children said they were perceived and legitimized as family units only after having kids.

*Danilo, 32: "After having children, everybody sees us more like a family. But, sometimes, people ask, 'Where is the mommy?' and we tell them that there is no mommy, it's two daddies. We always want to show that our family exists and that what matters is the love we have."*

*Carla, 38: "Even though we already lived together, people treated us as roommates. There was no respect for us as a couple. But after the arrival of our son, things changed, we are now seen as a family."*

*Jonas, 40: “The social perception of us as a family completely changed after the arrival of our daughter. Before, we didn’t know any of our neighbors. Now, we are included in the WhatsApp group for families with kids in the building and we have made many friends in our neighborhood. In the beginning, people used to ask about her mother, but we always answer she has two fathers.”*

Each step of the family formation process – choosing a partner, deciding to live together and having children, despite the amount of workload and stigma – function as kinship mechanisms for constructing relatedness, affective connection, and legitimacy. In a moving metaphor, Adriana refer to these steps as bricks:

*Adriana, 33: “I always wanted a family made of hard bricks, not drywall, you know? Our family was built one brick at a time. My wife and I are so different from each other, but together we have conquered so much. It’s the family I always wanted to have. We are really blessed to have each other.”*

## **5.6 Thematic network overview**

Being a family, the central theme of the thematic network, and its organizing themes (marriage, children, work and stigma) are not isolated constructs. Sexual orientation stigma and the workload the couples bear, inside and outside of home, per pass their decisions to live together, to become parents and to manage their family life.

The findings in this dissertation are consistent with the international literature, although the phenomenon of a presidential election driving a rise in same-sex marriage seems to be specific to the recent events in Brazil.

As aforementioned, the 2018 elections represented a rightward shift in the country and a win for conservatives. Through their narratives, participants emphasized how the homophobic climate of the elections was marked by several attacks on the LGBT community, by conflicts with relatives and cutting ties with family members.

Besides the political reasons for tying the knot, couples have decided to live together and get married due to romantic, spiritual, and pragmatic motives. Although all interviewed couples were in committed relationships, some participants had never talked to a family member about their sexual orientation, living in a form of glass closet. Many participants had already experienced an evolution of support from family

members before getting married and some perceived increased support, acceptance, or positive responses following marriage. However, marriage did not translate into greater familial support or acceptance for all participants.

Parents' initial reaction to their offspring's nonheterosexuality typically reflect loss or grief of their heteronormative expectations. Hence, when same-sex couples portray a lifestyle that follows conventional middle-class standards, parents seemed to react favorably, giving the couples' feelings of legitimacy, pride and privilege because of their family support, leaving room to interpretation as to how many structures must be maintained in order for heterosexuality to be subverted.

Regarding the future, most couples wish to make certain material acquisitions throughout their life, but the dreams and plans they mentioned were different depending on whether they envisioned becoming parents or not. Those who have/desire children plan their family life around them, while those who do not want children focus on their individual satisfaction.

Same-sex couples who do not want children seek to protect their time and their freedom, focusing on self-actualization. Individualistic values are associated with childlessness. Participants showed attitudinal patterns of career-oriented individuals, who look for personal fulfillment in the quality of their spousal relationship.

However, the majority of the couples interviewed showed intent to have children. The decision-making process of parenthood involved one's idealization of parenthood, their partner expectations about the transition to parenthood, their social circle, internalized homophobia and the changes in their finances and professional lives.

The experiences and the desires of the interviewed couples showed gender is the biggest determinant for differences on the pathway to parenthood for same-sex couples. The most discussed challenges among gay couples were the restrictive regulations on surrogacy in Brazil and the long wait for adoption. Most couples said they did not have sex or age restrictions to adopt a child, but race was a sensitive subject.

The most discussed challenges among women were the high costs of private treatments and the possibilities to find a reliable semen donor. Lesbian couples were concerned about what kind of donor they should use, either anonymous or known, in order to protect their autonomy as parents. They discussed the potential difficulties of incorporating a third party into parenting practices. Women who had a known donor, a friend or acquaintance, expressed mixed reactions to his involvement with the baby.

Biological constraints, and the consequent physicality of choices, are determinant to gays and lesbians forming a family. Corporeal possibilities are an obvious and important driver of decisions and behavioral differences. Besides their diverse pathways to parenthood, men and women also differ on what they consider to be the right time to have children.

Most women seemed affected by the biological limit between age and fertility to make decisions about getting pregnant. Men's concerns about age were not related to their reproductive capacities, but to their energy, to their youth and mortality.

When asked about the meaning of fatherhood, some couples emphasized the adjustments they have lived since becoming parents. Having children not only brought changes in lifestyle and community, but core transformations to the individuals. Others talked about the importance of being present in their children's lives, describing their expectations about their roles as fathers, about the children, and about their future. Some adopting fathers experienced particularly high levels of stress, living longer adjustment periods.

When asked about the meaning of motherhood, some women described the linkages and deep connections with themselves, their loved ones and the world around them. On the other hand, some women associated motherhood with sacrifices, which include decline in the quality of their relationships upon becoming parents.

Differently from fatherhood, motherhood was divided by the perspectives of biological and nonbiological mothers, because lesbian couples who conceive using donor insemination have asymmetric genetic ties to their children. The nonbiological mother's role is less defined, less recognized, and less protected, creating legitimacy struggles when society regards her as less of a parent or not really a mother.

The birth mother, in contrast, receives recognition of her full parental status during pregnancy, and afterwards, as a function of the biological bond she shares with the child. The nonbiological mothers reported feeling invisible during the pregnancy, emphasizing their status as an expectant and actual parent was often unrecognized by friends and family members. Lesbian couples decided to have children together, make parenting decisions together and want society to accept them as equal parents.

The necessary workload to maintain a household comprises domestic labor and paid labor. Within the workplace, labor regulations and good work conditions are important to lesbians' and gay men's parenting decision-making.

Besides children being costly, there is the need to pursue jobs that provide both financial security and flexible schedules to accommodate personal priorities and parental responsibilities. Workplace policies that prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, and gender identity, explicitly promoting a tolerant and inclusive labor culture, help to minimize the stress homosexual parents might face.

Regarding domestic labor, gender can be considered a driving predictor of relationship experiences, considering how the internalization of gender stereotypes influences parental decisions and family life in same-sex households. Gay couples are more prone to have problems when allocating chores, because men are generally disinclined to do what has always been considered women's work.

Although same-sex couples tend to embody a more egalitarian structure of household and childcare tasks, gay couples, especially the ones without children, reported difficulties to allocate chores, while the lesbian couples chose dialogue and described dividing household chores equally.

Gender is also fundamental to understand lesbians' and gay men's transition to parenthood, because mothers and fathers are treated differently in society. Parenting without the presence of a different sex person is still seen as a challenge to the conventional definitions of masculinity and femininity. Families are exposed to a heteronormative ideal that prioritizes mothers' caregiving, even when it is not reflected in their own family structure. In this sense, gay men who become parents do so in the context of powerful stereotypes of men as incapable of nurturance.

Family formation and parenting intentions are inevitably shaped by the discriminatory discourse homosexual individuals have been subjected throughout their lives, which impacts their wellbeing and feelings of self-worth. Exposure to negative messages regarding homosexuality and same-sex marriage in the media is associated with higher levels of distress.

Young people suffer homophobic bullying and discrimination through discourse and verbal harassment, in addition to physical and psychological violence, sometimes from their own parents and religious leaders. As adults, gays and lesbians are under widespread psychological distress, subject to real and virtual attacks. Many lesbian and gay parents are troubled by the possibility that their children might be harassed or teased because of their family structure.

The concept of being a family reflected the interviewees' experiences of conjugality and parenting, reinforcing the notion of kinship based on affection. The couples discussed the conventionality of their living arrangements and the changing social perceptions they were subjected to upon the arrival of children.

Finally, the themes of the thematic network on family formation for same-sex couples in Brasília showed the different avenues and challenges of their search to build relatedness, affective connection, and social legitimacy. Table 7 summarizes the similarities and differences between gay and lesbian couples regarding the topics on the thematic network.

Table 7: Summary of thematic network

Topics	Gays	Lesbians
Tying the knot	Couples decided to live together due to romantic, spiritual, pragmatic and political reasons.	Couples decided to live together due to romantic, spiritual, pragmatic and political reasons.
Political context	Homophobic climate of the 2018 elections made couples fearful of their future.	Homophobic climate of the 2018 elections made couples fearful of their future.
Telling the parents	Some never talked to a family member about their sexual orientation and some only did after getting married.	Some never talked to a family member about their sexual orientation and some only did after getting married.
Family support	Some couples had family support from the beginning.	Some couples had family support from the beginning.
Plans and dreams	They wish to make material acquisitions, but the plans varied if they wanted or already had children.	They wish to make material acquisitions, but the plans varied if they wanted or already had children.
Having children	Couples discussed the restrictive surrogacy regulations in Brazil and the long wait for adoption.	Couples discussed the high costs of private treatments and how to find a reliable semen donor.
Not having children	8 couples want to prioritize their relationship and their careers.	1 couple want to prioritize their relationship and their careers.

The ways to have children	Adoption.	Adoption; public or private treatments; home insemination; heterosexual relationship.
Social norms about age	Men's concerns were not related to their reproductive capacities, but to their energy levels, to their youth and mortality.	Women worry about the biological limit between age and fertility to make decisions about getting pregnant.
Fatherhood/Motherhood	Men with children had changes in lifestyle, community, and in their individuality.	Motherhood is associated with levels of sacrifice and of connection with self and others.
The other mother	-----	The nonbiological mother's role is less defined, less recognized, and less protected, creating legitimacy struggles.
Workload	Within the workplace, labor regulations and good work conditions are important to parenting decisions.	Within the workplace, labor regulations and good work conditions are important to parenting decisions.
Chores	Gay couples, especially the ones without children, had difficulties to allocate chores.	Lesbian couples choose dialogue and divide household chores equally.
Care	Gays who are parents face powerful stereotypes of men as incapable of nurturance.	Couples struggle to be seen as two mothers.
Social stigma	Individuals suffer homophobic bullying and discrimination from an early age.	Individuals suffer homophobic bullying and discrimination from an early age.
Being a family	Kinship based on affection.	Kinship based on affection.

Source: Answers from interviewees.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This study examined the contextual factors regarding parenting intentions of same-sex couples. The main goal of this doctoral dissertation was to bring to light how gays and lesbians residing in Brasília form their family structure, whether they intend to have children or not, how they choose to do it and what challenges come with their choices. In this sense, I could investigate the ways in which the couples engage in the struggles of meaning, recognition and fulfillment with family life; and through them, see how they enact, confront, and renegotiate normative family ideologies.

The narratives of the interviewed couples, although each unique in their own way, were told as love stories. Not so differently from the great romances, the couples faced great difficulties they had to overcome to live their love. However, the conventional heterosexual experience of family formation is different in many ways from the experiences I had the privilege to learn about in this study, because sexual orientation stigma per passes individual lives from a very early age, affecting the expression and development of loving relationships.

This study represents one of the first explorations on parenting intentions of same-sex couples in Brazil, which limits comparisons with previous findings. Having a willing and supportive partner surely facilitates the transition to parenthood – given the couples I interviewed were already living together, they were more likely to have the intention to parent than single individuals. There was variation among gay men, among lesbian women, and between the two groups, in regards to the importance they place on parenthood; proportionally, more women reported parenting intentions than men.

Three divisions were important to shape the couples' profiles: (1) whether or not the couple got married after the elections in Brazil; (2) whether or not they intended to have children; and (3) whether or not they had family and/or community support in the decision to live their life together. These categories not only relate to demographic variables, but they reflect meaningful identity features of the participants and the context they experience.

In this sense, the discussions in this dissertation advance existing scholarship on families by articulating points of connection between the emergence of same-sex marriage in Brazil and social norms regarding family life and parental gender expectations. Gay men and lesbian women are exposed to the same heteronormative



ideology that establishes women are caretakers and men are providers. Although they may sometimes enact traditional gender roles, their relational context opens new gendered possibilities for family life, as a couple and as parents.

Therefore, this dissertation contributes to the study of family arrangements, integrating a broad gender perspective into the demographic analyzes of fertility intentions and giving visibility to a social group that is not usually included in the demographic field of research in Brazil. In addition to demographers and social scientists, this study is relevant to public health specialists, policymakers, family lawyers, professionals who work with parents during the processes of adoption and fertility treatments, and at organizations that provide information and resources about pathways to parenthood.

The work on gender, families and identity is developed and expanded by studying experiences and everyday practices. Many couples consider parenthood to be rewarding; they mentioned their appreciation for their children, for family ties and for a home environment of tolerance and love. Learning more about the parenting intentions of same-sex couples is not only valuable in itself, but it can also inform social and political debates regarding sexual orientation, gender roles, and parenthood.

It is complex to define to which extent same-sex couples are living an alternative lifestyle and to which extent they have been incorporating the hegemonic family model. In a New York Times piece, Coontz (2020) urge heterosexual couples to make their marriages “gayer”, because same-sex couples share domestic and care giving tasks in ways that their marital satisfaction is higher than that of heterosexual couples. According to the author, whether in same-sex or different-sex relationships, couples are still figuring out how to change conservative marriage rules in order to balance individual modern values.

Therefore, having more than one model to do it is beneficial for all. In this sense, studying same-sex couples contribute to a more complex and multi-layered understanding of the household, the family, the gendered division of labor, and kinship structures.

To understand the particular challenges same-sex couples face regarding their parenting intentions and incorporate a gender perspective to demographic studies, one must examine the hierarchical complexity of the relationships between masculinity

and femininity, in a multidimensional and intersectional fashion, to establish an integrative understanding of diverse cultural practices and demographic outcomes.

Therefore, the link between gender and Demography must go beyond women status variables and heterosexual assumptions. There are many contributions of gender studies to the long historical path that allows different kinds of families to exist in the public realm.

In this sense, the gender revolution concept, made popular after Goldscheider et al. (2015), should not be used lightly. It produces and perpetuates racial, sexual, class and gender hierarchies, opposing its original intent to put men and women at the same playing field. The concept of a gender revolution, as it is, does not account for the real dynamics of social and historical reality. This dissertation does not question whether the nuclear heterosexual family will follow the pattern laid out by the gender revolution framework enthusiasts. Instead, I question if such pattern is a revolution when it comes to gender analysis.

It seems more of a revolution in the field to begin calculating male fertility rates or analyzing how homosexual couples structure their families, as this dissertation does. It would be a true revolution to consider the full complexity of the gender spectrum bringing individuals who identify out of the normative binary into population studies.

A revolution ought to create spaces for expressions of gender and family life out of a preconceived ideal of what a family should be. The gender revolution may be right to predict that the family will be stronger in the future, but that must mean a pluralistic vision of families. Broadening how we look at families will allow a fuller, richer account of population trends and changes.

As Matos (2008) argues, collective and individual realities must be analyzed through critical emancipatory multiculturalism that allows us to deconstruct western, patriarchal knowledge in search of knowledge that is plural and diverse. The paradox between equality and difference, collective and individual identities, is the basis of ever-changing universality in the feminist field of gender.

The thematic network explored in this dissertation shows the social locations that influence the paths same-sex couples take to enact their parenting intentions. Gender and sexual identity interact in a way in which same-sex couples have the

potential to challenge dominant practices of heteronormative masculinity and femininity. Therefore, also of parenthood.

Research on the parenting decision-making processes of same-sex couples clearly indicates that economic, legal, and social support are critical to helping people transition to parenthood. Social support in the way of supportive families, communities, jobs, partners, and society in general helps lesbians and gays create their families. In this sense, the social meanings ascribed to parenthood, filiation, and kinship, and how legislation and biomedical sciences shape those meanings are all important for demographic analyzes and projections.

This study invariably takes a feminist political stand in defense of human rights, reproductive rights, and sexual diversity. Despite its limitations, by bringing to light the stories of this group of same-sex couples, this dissertation increases awareness about the difficulties lesbians and gays face throughout their lives and in the process to form their family.

The aforementioned hypothesis that, although same-sex couples are an obvious break away from the classic family model, they do value child rearing, and union stability, seems to be valid in the context of committed couples who already live together. Whether or not they are reinforcing traditional gender roles or family ideology, their unions display unique dynamics of individual and collective living.

Although family relationships are complex, and all familial relationships do not conform to one specific pattern, all same-sex couples in the sample of this study valued their romantic relationships and their experiences give meaning to a construction of familial bond beyond the heteronormative family ideal.

Future research should explore larger samples of same-sex couples in different Brazilian cities, especially small municipalities, and rural locations, considering cohort, racial and educational differences, in pathways to and probability of parenthood for same-sex partners. A nationally representative study would be valuable to draw broader conclusions.

Researchers will greatly benefit from more qualitative and quantitative sources and investment in future data collections will be essential to advancing knowledge on same-sex couples. It is likely the experiences out of urban scenarios, or even in other urban scenarios, are different from the ones discussed here. Moreover, future research

in the field ought to consider investigating the parenting experiences of queer individuals and sexual and gender minority families, beyond same-sex couples.

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## 8. ANEXES

### Perguntas norteadoras para entrevista com os casais

- 1) Como o relacionamento de vocês começou? Como vocês se conheceram e decidiram namorar?
- 2) Há quanto tempo estão juntos? Como foi a decisão de morar juntos?
- 3) Como foi a reação familiar e de amigos próximos em relação a essa decisão de morar juntos?
- 4) Como é a rotina diária de vocês? Como organizam as tarefas domésticas? Existe alguma razão específica pra quem é responsável por cada atividade dentro e fora de casa?
- 5) De que forma a vida profissional de vocês interfere na vida conjugal?
- 6) O que cada um de vocês imaginava em relação ao futuro quando se uniram? Quais eram os planos para o futuro?
- 7) Os planos mudaram desde então? Quais? Por quê? (Viagens, aquisição de patrimônio, ter filhos)
- 8) Vocês planejam ter filhos? Por quê? Ou por que não? Se sim, quantos filhos? Quando? De que forma? (Explorar concordância ou discordância entre o casal)
- 9) (Para quem deseja ter filhos) Vocês acham que a vida de vocês vai mudar quando tiverem filhos? Se sim, de que forma? Como vocês imaginam que vai ficar a divisão de tarefas domésticas? Ter filhos vai afetar a vida profissional de vocês? Por que ou por que não?
- 10) Vocês convivem com crianças? Vizinhos, parentes, filhos de amigos? Como é essa convivência?
- 11) Vocês acreditam que a percepção social em relação à família de vocês seria diferente se vocês tivessem (ou não tivessem) filhos?
- 12) Vocês acham que algo faria vocês mudarem de opinião em relação à decisão de ter ou não filhos? (Se não for dito espontaneamente, maior renda financeira ou maior rede de apoio, a decisão sobre ter filhos seria diferente?)
- 13) Quando criança, qual família você imaginava ter no futuro? Vocês imaginavam ter filhos e ter uma família parecida com a sua da infância?
- 14) O que a paternidade/maternidade representa para vocês?
- 15) Vocês gostariam de acrescentar ou compartilhar mais alguma coisa?



## Entrevista #

### Perfil sócio demográfico individual

Onde você nasceu?

Qual é a sua idade?

Qual é a sua profissão?

Qual cor/raça melhor te representa?

Preta    Parda    Branca    Amarela    Indígena

Qual é a sua escolaridade no momento?

Ensino fundamental incompleto                       Ensino fundamental completo  
 Ensino médio incompleto                                 Ensino médio completo  
 Ensino superior incompleto                               Ensino superior completo  
 Mestrado ou Doutorado

Qual é a renda do casal por mês?

Menos de R\$ 1999  
 De R\$2000 a R\$3999  
 De R\$4000 a R\$5999  
 De R\$6000 a R\$7999  
 De R\$8000 a R\$9999  
 Mais de R\$10 000

Moram juntos há quanto tempo?

Menos de dois anos  
 Entre dois e cinco anos  
 Cinco anos ou mais

Em regime de

Coabitação  
 União estável  
 Casamento

É sua primeira união conjugal?

Sim    Não

Vocês têm filhos?

Sim, do nosso relacionamento atual    1    2    3+  
 Sim, de relacionamentos anteriores    1    2    3+  
 Não

Você gostaria de ter (mais) filhos?

Sim, em breve                       1    2    3+  
 Sim, futuramente                       1    2    3+  
 Não

## **TERMO DE CONSENTIMENTO LIVRE E ESCLARECIDO PARA ENTREVISTA EM PROFUNDIDADE**

### **INTENÇÕES DE MATERNIDADE E PATERNIDADE DE CASAIS HOMOSSEXUAIS UNIDOS: UM ESTUDO DE CASO EM BRASÍLIA**

Este termo de consentimento deve ser apresentado em duas vias e explicado, pela entrevistadora, de maneira clara, para todos os participantes.

#### **OBJETIVOS DA PESQUISA**

Esta é uma pesquisa de natureza acadêmica que tem por objetivo entender os desejos, intenções e planos de casais de mesmo sexo em relação à paternidade e à maternidade.

#### **PROCEDIMENTO UTILIZADO**

- ENTREVISTA EM PROFUNDIDADE. A pesquisadora explicará aos participantes em que consiste a pesquisa e fará perguntas ao casal sobre sua história, sua rotina diária e sobre seus planos para o futuro, com ênfase nos planos relacionados ao desejo de ter (ou não ter) filhos.

#### **CONFIDENCIALIDADE**

A participação é absolutamente voluntária e os entrevistados poderão deixar o estudo a qualquer momento. A conversa será gravada, pois este é um procedimento necessário para o estudo, mas as falas jamais serão associadas aos nomes. Os arquivos com as gravações serão guardados em local seguro e mantidos sob responsabilidade das coordenadoras da pesquisa. Os dados obtidos terão uso exclusivamente acadêmico. Os resultados serão utilizados pelas pesquisadoras responsáveis para elaboração de trabalhos acadêmicos que garantam o total sigilo das informações e privacidade dos participantes.

#### **DESCONFORTOS, RISCOS E BENEFÍCIOS**

Espera-se que não haja nenhum risco significativo envolvido na pesquisa. Contudo, apesar da expectativa sobre os riscos e ser mínima, durante a realização das entrevistas, é possível sentir algum tipo de desconforto emocional ao compartilhar informações ou opiniões íntimas. Nesses momentos, caso não se sinta bem, os entrevistados podem relatar esse incômodo ou mesmo encerrar a entrevista, a qualquer tempo e sem quaisquer prejuízos, podendo retirar o seu consentimento se assim desejar. A participação é totalmente voluntária e a recusa em participar não acarretará qualquer penalidade ou modificação na forma com que os entrevistados serão atendidos pela pesquisadora.

A pesquisa contribuirá para crescimento pessoal dos entrevistados e para o crescimento da área de pesquisa em demografia. Dar opiniões e pensar sobre a sua própria história é muito importante e poderá criar momentos de reflexão para os participantes, que vão além do momento da pesquisa, sendo muito úteis para ampliar o auto conhecimento e o conhecimento coletivo. Para participar, os entrevistados não terão nenhum custo nem receberão qualquer vantagem financeira.

## DÚVIDAS – PESQUISADORES RESPONSÁVEIS

Qualquer dúvida poderá ser perguntada no momento do convite para participação na pesquisa ou mesmo durante a realização da própria pesquisa. Uma via do termo de consentimento será oferecida para o participante. Caso a dúvida persista ou caso a pessoa demande confirmação sobre a seriedade do estudo e de suas intenções, o participante poderá entrar em contato com a professora coordenadora do projeto. Já as dúvidas éticas poderão ser esclarecidas pelo Comitê de Ética em Pesquisa. Todos os contatos estão listados abaixo:

Profa. Paula Miranda-Ribeiro - Pesquisadora Principal  
Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais  
Faculdade de Ciências Econômicas  
Centro de Desenvolvimento e Planejamento Regional - Cedeplar  
Tel.: (31) 3409-7001 - E-mail: paula@cedeplar.ufmg.br

Luísa Cardoso Guedes de Souza - Pesquisadora  
Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais  
Faculdade de Ciências Econômicas  
Centro de Desenvolvimento e Planejamento Regional - Cedeplar  
Tel.: (61) 96033461- E-mail: luisacgs@gmail.com

Comitê de Ética em Pesquisa  
Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais  
Av. Antônio Carlos, 6627, Pampulha - Belo Horizonte - MG - CEP 31270-901  
Unidade Administrativa II - 2º Andar - Sala: 2005  
Telefone: (31) 3409-4592 - E-mail: coep@prpq.ufmg.br

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## CONSENTIMENTO

A pesquisadora, \_\_\_\_\_, leu em voz alta todas as informações sobre o estudo que está desenvolvendo e eu tirei todas as dúvidas a respeito da pesquisa que busca conhecer mais sobre as famílias de casais homossexuais e seus planos em relação a paternidade e maternidade. Sei que a minha participação é voluntária e que posso desistir de participar mesmo depois da pesquisa já ter sido iniciada, sem que isto me traga qualquer prejuízo pessoal ou de qualquer ordem. Sei também que a minha participação não terá nenhuma consequência para mim.

Por tudo isso, declaro que li este termo de consentimento e concordo em participar da pesquisa.

Local: \_\_\_\_\_ Data: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_.

Assinatura do participante (ou primeiro nome): \_\_\_\_\_

## CONSENTIMENTO PARA PARTICIPAÇÃO

### INTENÇÕES DE MATERNIDADE E PATERNIDADE DE CASAIS HOMOSSEXUAIS UNIDOS: UM ESTUDO DE CASO EM BRASÍLIA

Este termo, em duas vias, deve ser lido pela pesquisadora quando for convidar casais para participar da pesquisa.

Bom dia/ boa tarde/ boa noite, meu nome é \_\_\_\_\_ .  
Estamos convidando você para participar de uma pesquisa sobre paternidade e maternidade de casais homossexuais. Se você concordar em participar, gostaria de lhe explicar sobre a pesquisa e ver se sua participação seria possível. A pesquisa tem por objetivo analisar a formação de família e parentalidade de casais homossexuais que moram juntos. A sua participação é confidencial e nenhum nome completo ou endereço será associado às suas respostas. Você pode deixar de participar a qualquer momento, sem que isso lhe cause nenhum prejuízo. É importante ressaltar que os dados serão guardados em local seguro e mantidos sob responsabilidade da coordenadora da pesquisa. Os resultados obtidos serão utilizados somente para fins desta pesquisa e das publicações dela advindas.

Você só participa se quiser, mas a sua participação é muito importante para que se possa conhecer melhor como são as famílias de casais do mesmo sexo. Você concorda em participar?

NÃO CONCORDA (agradeça a atenção)

CONCORDA

\_\_\_\_\_  
Nome

\_\_\_\_\_  
Assinatura

\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_  
Data