

MOMMY AND MOMMY? THE NARRATIVES OF HOMOMATERNAL FAMILIES

YÁSKARA ARRIAL PALMA*, MARLENE NEVES STREY**, GABRIELA KRÜGEL***
PONTIFÍCIA UNIVERSIDADE CATÓLICA OF RIO GRANDE DO SUL, BRAZIL.

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Abstract

The present article refers to the study of families constituted by women that identify themselves as lesbians and have children. It has the objective of knowing how these women are experiencing motherhood in lesbian conjugal relations. Eight women that named themselves as lesbians who have sons or daughters were interviewed, independently of the way that maternity occurred. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and analyzed through discourse analysis based on feminist and gender theories. Through the feminist perspectives of gender, it is possible to make an association between the studied themes and the theories which refer to them. Taking into consideration the feminist studies of gender, this study seeks an equal relation between men and women, where the female is not oppressed or subjugated by the male and heterosexuality is not seen as a norm, the reflections that follows pervade these issues and invite other sciences for discourse. The results pointed that the homomaterial families were very satisfied and happy with their condition, however they still suffer prejudice and fear their daughters and sons do too. We understand that it is necessary to have the knowledge and comprehension of the diversity of existing families, so that they can have citizenship respected in all aspects, contributing with the existence of a fairer society with more equality.

Key words: gender, family, homomaternity.

¿MAMI Y MAMI? LOS RELATOS DE LAS FAMILIAS HOMOMATERNALES

Resumen

Ese artículo se refiere al estudio de las familias constituidas por mujeres que se identifican como lesbianas y tienen hijos o hijas. Nuestro objetivo es entender cómo estas mujeres experimentan relaciones lesbianas de conjugalidad y maternidad. Fueron entrevistadas ocho mujeres que se identificaron como lesbianas y tenían hijos o hijas. Después de grabadas y transcritas las entrevistas fueron examinadas a través del análisis del discurso con base en los estudios feministas y de género. A través de la perspectiva feminista de género, es posible establecer interrelaciones y diálogos entre los temas estudiados y las teorías que se refieren a ellos. Llevando en consideración que los estudios feministas de género utilizados en esta investigación buscan una relación igualitaria entre hombres y mujeres, donde las mujeres ya no son oprimidas y subyugadas por hombres y la heterosexualidad no es considerada como modelo, las reflexiones que siguen tratan de estas cuestiones e invitan a ampliar el dialogo con las demás áreas de la ciencia. Los resultados señalaron que hogares homomateriales están muy satisfechos y felices con sus condiciones, pero todavía sufren los prejuicios y temen que sus hijos e hijas también sufran. Entendemos la necesidad de tener el conocimiento y la comprensión de la diversidad acerca de la existencia de otras configuraciones familiares, en este caso, las familias homomateriales, y que estas deben tener su ciudadanía respetada en todos los aspectos, contribuyendo así para la existencia de una sociedad más justa e igualitaria.

Palabras clave: género, familia, homomaternidad.

* Yáskara is psychologist, Master in Social Psychology at Pontifícia Universidade Católica of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, PhD student of Psychology at PUCRS.

yaskarapalma@yahoo.com.br

** Marlene is psychologist, Professor of the Post-Graduate Program in Psychology at Pontifícia Universidade Católica of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, CNPq Researcher.

streymn@pucrs.br

*** Gabriela is graduate student of Psychology at Pontifícia Universidade Católica of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. gabykrugel@hotmail.com

Today's capitalist and contemporary society, has changed over the centuries, they have been slow and gradual changes, but still changes, made of plural identities. These identities create family arrangements, these arrangements cannot be called new, as they have always existed. These are family arrangements different from the ideal heterosexual family; family arrangements of single parents, of remarried people, without any children, and finally homosexuals (Wagner, 2002, 2005). And so, why not a family arrangement made of women.

Women who relate themselves with other women, who have a lesbian orientation and consider themselves happy with their partners, still suffer prejudice from society, but it is mainly their family of origin's prejudice which makes them suffer the most. However, not every family disapproves of their daughter's lesbian relationships. When there is this support, women who identify themselves as lesbians feel supported and strengthened to live in a heteronormative society (Piason, 2009; Palma, & Levandowski, 2008).

In relation to the prejudice lived in some lesbian families, and to their own prejudice, Mott (1987) affirms that there are few homosexuals that are able to gain maturity of self-acceptance and who declare their homosexuality to family and colleagues. The majority of mothers who have homosexual daughters wait for a sexual orientation change to occur and very few families accept and live well with a member who has opted to be homosexual. Intolerance and nonconformity are common feelings constituting the family for the majority of lesbians, and it is the main preoccupation, either as a source of repression or as compulsory social commitment to heterosexuality.

Many times, parents deceive themselves with fake hopes that homosexual sexual orientation will only be present for a period of time, like a phase their children go through. The expectations created by the parents in relation to marriage and grandchildren, and mainly a feeling of guilt, are important issues permeating the find of homosexuality of their sons/daughters. When the sexual orientation has been understood, the authors comment that parents who can lead in a less pathological way with this, perceive they will need to learn about homosexuality and listen to what their sons/daughters have to say in relation to their new experiences (Fairchild, & Hayward, 1996).

These expectations occur mainly due to the heteronormativity of society, instituting ways of behavior for man and woman especially when they refer to sexual-

affective practices. These "norms" produces ways of suffering when desires are avoided and prejudice to occur. Compulsory heterosexuality causes the maintenance of the masculine hegemony, contributing for the non-dissolution of a patriarchal society (Rich, 1980).

By collaborating with the maintenance of the patriarchy, are also the roles of gender, which stereotypically define behaviors for man and woman. These behaviors create pre-defined ways of being man and woman, and a society expecting for the accomplishment of the same (Colling 2004; Strey, 2004).

An example of a stereotyped role is of a woman-mother, for example, referring to a "maternal instinct" innate to women, very debated by Elisabeth Badinter (1985). The author reflects about the natural imposition in women in relation to maternity, being this maternal love constructed and not inherent of the feminine. To reflect about maternity as something constructed is important as it frees women of the expectancies of being a mother, allowing women who do not want to become a mother to be seen as "inhuman" since culturally, maternity would be the ideal for every women.

In order to perceive maternity as something constructed and associate it to concepts of maternity and paternity, which refers to the handling and care taking of the child by a mother and/or father, also creates the possibility for man to raise their sons and daughters in homoparental families, without the stigma that man cannot take care of the children, as something not natural, and therefore cannot live without a woman to acquire this role. Many feminists take on the struggle of a denaturalization of maternity, which holds down woman in a private world and many times still makes it impossible for them to follow their professional aspirations (Nicholson, 2000).

By approaching maternity in a less stereotyped manner, it is possible to visualize the contemporary family diversity, specially the families constituted by gays and lesbians receiving a particular nomenclature. Homoparentality is a term emerged in France in 1997, created by APGL (Association of parents and future gay and lesbians parents) in which a father or a mother assume themselves as gay or lesbian (Zambrano, 2006).

This article uses the theoretical perspective of gender studies, therefore homoparentality is not the ideal term to deal with families constituted by women. The nomenclature *patern* refers to a person of the masculine sex, repeating the masculine hegemony and reiterating the power of domination in relation to the

feminine which a sexist language can exert (Colling, 2004). Since the masculine cannot be used to designate women, it is ideal to use the term homomaternity, when referring to families constituted by woman and their sons and daughters (Palma, 2011), and homoparentality to designate families formed by two men and their children.

In thinking about the constitution of family, gay and lesbian couples can make use of many forms of exercising homoparentality and homomaternity, within them through a previous heterosexual marriage, in the case of recomposed families; by adoption, which already has evolutions in registering, for both mothers and fathers. There also is the possibility of having children through assisted reproduction and also through co-parentality, where one member of the couple generates a child with a man or a woman, being that the child will become part of the homopaternal or homomaternus nucleus (Passos, 2005).

In order to help with a better understanding of homomaternus families, the following pages are an invitation to a reflection about the constitutions of contemporary families and its entailments. More than this, it is a reflection about families constituted by woman, their sons and daughters. By telling these stories it is possible to contribute for the visibility of these families so they can have more recognition as a possibility of family configuration.

And so, here we present some homomaternus¹ families...

The building of the scenario in search of the characters...

The following narratives are part of the research of a thesis for a Master's Degree in Social Psychology, with the aim of understanding homomaternus families and more specifically, themes of maternity and to conjugality associated to maternity, and the nuances that appear in each theme. We did narrative interviews with eight lesbian women who are part of a homomaternus nucleus, and have daughters and/or sons, independently of how maternity occurred.

The research project was sent to the Scientific Commission of the Faculty of Psychology and the Ethical Committee of Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul, and it was analysed and considered within the norms. With the approval of all committees, we started by finding participants interested in being

part of the narrative interviews. The committees assure that this research will take all precautions for the participants interviewed to be secured about their human rights. All norms from the resolution 196/96 from the Ministry of Health, related to researches with humans, were carefully discussed and followed.

The research followed a qualitative outline, with descriptive and exploratory characteristics. The qualitative methods are helpful in order to understand the context where a phenomenon takes place; this will allow the observation of several elements simultaneously, in a small group (Victoria, Knauth e Hassen, 2000).

For data collection, we used narrative interviews, that are indicated for qualitative research, due to being non structured and not superficial. The basic idea is to rebuild social facts from the participant's perspective (Jovchelovitch, & Bauer, 2002). Before starting to record each interview a term of agreement clarifying the procedures, was read and signed by every participant (researcher and participant).

The participants have been selected using the *Snowball Sampling technique*, where each participant indicates the next one and the next and so on (Victoria et al., 2000). This technique is used here since we are working with people from a group which usually know each other, as well as the difficulty of identifying lesbians and gays, as many of them still choose to live with an unrecognized sexual orientation.

All data and information has been recorded and reproduced accurately, it was then submitted to speech analyses. According to Gill (2002), we should not use 'the' speech analyses, as there are 'various' speech analyses. The author defines *speech analyses*, as a name given to a variety of different approaches of speech analyses, which differ according to theories, treatments and subjects. The data discussion in this article uses feminist theories and gender studies (Scott, 2002; Strey, 2004; Colling, 2004).

By analysing the speech produced from the various interviews with lesbian mothers, it was possible to see and understand the feeling, the subjectivity, the way of life and the perception of conjugality and maternity in a contemporary world. In this context, we find issues related to prejudice, compulsory heteronormativity, stereotypes and gender roles which limit and direct behaviours, ways of maternity about this "new" familiar configuration, a homoparental one, in our case homo-

¹ Terminology created by the authors Yáskara Arrial Palma e Marlene Neves Strey in 2009, to represent through a non sexist language, the families constituted by two women and their sons and daughters (Palma, 2011).

maternal, are important themes which will permeate this discussion.

Gender studies contribute so that the asymmetric power relations between men and women can be thought of and be debated, among historical constructions which put women on a secondary role while the masculine is hegemonic. With these findings we perceive that the patriarchal model is still strong and guides the majority of social behaviours, although in a subtle way, turning “natural” the ways of oppressing and excluding women (Scott, 2002; Colling, 2004).

And so the stories we want to tell: the characters and their life stories...

We now present our eight characters², with their narratives and life stories, with their singularities and subjectivities. The table bellow presents the names used for the participants, their ages, occupations, professions and also the way these families were constituted. When speaking of marriage, we are referring to a participant who became a mother by marrying another woman who already had children and brought them to the homomaternal nucleus and remarriage when one of the participants had been married to a man and had children and only after discovered themselves as lesbians, constituting a new relationship with a woman, and their children.

Tabela 1
Participants Characteristics

NAMES	AGE	OCUPATION	FORM OF FAMILY CONSTITUTION
Laura	29	Trader	Remarriage
Maria	51	Trader	Marriage
Ana	43	Social Worker	Adoption
Júlia	39	Social Worker	Adoption
Roberta	40	Businesswoman	Remarriage
Isabela	38	Psychologist	Assisted Reproduction
Manuela	34	Jury	Assisted Reproduction
Bruna	39	Accountant	Adoption

Narratives and the production of meaning on the daily life of homomaternal families

After presenting our characters, we will continue getting to know more about their experiences and their homomaternal families. In order to do this, we present some of the narratives of these women who identify themselves as lesbians and constitute a family with their partners, daughters and sons. On their narratives there is a signification of their ways of living, as well as a re-signification of feelings and behaviours, reflecting on the moment they articulate their experiences on stories that are told.

The aim of this work related to homomaternal families was to understand the way these women who identify themselves as lesbians are living maternity and conjugal relations. For that, the women interviewed were invited through their narratives, to tell their stories, emphasising the issues related to conjugality, maternity and conjugality associated to maternity.

Conjugality

Society is the representative of these partial transformations, since it still cannot live without discriminating and still oppresses what is different, making the ones who do not follow the rules to suffer. Prejudice uses its ways, many times coming from the scientific discourse, to keep the validity of norms. For a long time, homosexuality was considered a serious deviant behaviour, presented on psychiatric manuals. Only in 1973 began the movements to remove the label of illness from homosexuality, and the American Association of Psychiatry eliminates it as a diagnostic category and removes it from the Diagnostic and Statistics Manual of Mental Illness (Zambrano, 2006; Uziel, 2007).

However, even with these movements, the association between homosexuality and illness is still present at the mind of society, which if added to a discourse strongly based on beliefs and myths brought by religion and a compulsory heterosexuality, it ends turning gay and lesbian orientation liable to strong manifestations against its existence (Lacerda, Pereira & Camino, 2002). We know that the stigmas and prejudice faced by gay and lesbian couple influences negatively the quality of their sexual and affective relations, having to create internal rearrangements to deal with the situation (Frost, 2011).

² Terminology created by the authors Yáskara Arrial Palma e Marlene Neves Strey in 2009, to represent through a non sexist language, the families constituted by two women and their sons and daughters (Palma, 2011).

The following lines present this reality, showing that prejudice still makes itself present at people's daily lives, causing them to suffer and avoid a realization of the desire to have a more satisfactory conjugality: *"Never, ever, in reality we don't assume it, for anybody, I don't know why we don't assume it, I think if we do assume it, someone will be creating an expectation, will be saying something, so we decided we will be chilled, will be cool, with prejudice, we prefer to leave it like that, but most people know, we know, so that is not spoken about, but everybody knows..."* (ROBERTA)

The heterosexual norm imposes that the only relationship which can occur affectively and sexually is between a man and a woman, making the binary model and all the theories related to fixations of the masculine and feminine roles stronger. With that, all the pairs of the same sex are put to the position of deviants and this discourse carries with itself the entire stigma and prejudice coming from those that hope norms will be followed (Swain, 2000; Butler, 2003; Gomide, 2007).

The following lines show heteronormativity rising over desire, and producing ways of living: *"In reality, I always had lots of prejudice; I would say, two men together are alright, but two women, that is horrible. I had so much prejudice with that, but then, that's what happened. [...] So I got very confused, it was very hard, it was the first woman I got together with, and everything was so new, I was not well, you know, really very confused. That is even how I started university, running from people, not knowing what to say when they asked personal things, if I had a husband..."* (JULIA)

Gays and lesbians go through some stages of experiences through out time, which can be divided into: recognizing themselves as homosexuals, revealing it to other people, socializing with other homosexuals, having a positive identification and also integration and acceptance (Goldfried, & Goldfried, 2001). We can notice, that apart from prejudice that comes from society, the prejudice felt inside still shows itself as the main one to get over, the internal struggles must be won first, so that the external ones can be won.

The following lines from the participants present the internal struggles which they went through and how much suffering it brought: *"[...] it was with time, you know, that it got better and I made it better in me. It seems like I had two lives, an internal and an external, at my house I was someone and outside I was someone else. I was always lying, either for people telling them she was my friend, or for my self, not assuming my true desire"* (JULIA).

When we speak of women, we need to be careful not to fall on a trap of thinking every woman feels and behaves the same way, because there is not "a" woman, but "womens", with their own peculiarities. Also we need to observe that the adjectives attributed to women, such as kind, sensible, care takers, loving are a cultural product, and so, cultural constructions. These constructions end up becoming absolute truths and go through generations, making women really believe that their behaviour is explained by the biological and not the social (Scott, 2002; Strey, 2004; Rago, 2004).

These attributes related to the feminine, associated with the heteronormativity, transforms and hides feelings of a sexual order to "purer" feelings such as friendship, bringing confusion and lack of coherence to the life of many lesbian women: *"B. began in me a different feeling which started evolving. Having a relationship of complicity with someone, you start enjoying it, admiring the person and then, finally one day after insisting a lot, we had our first experience"* (MANUELA).

Apart from the doubts and confusions, the fact of the difficulty in being able to perceive with clarity, the feelings, made many participants find difficulties on verbalizing the real meaning of their relations, not producing changes on the ways of thinking and operating of society, as the shows the following words of the participants: *"so we were only friends, friends here, friends there, actually I got along with her mother well while I was only a friend, but after, she started hating me and didn't accept the relationship, it was very hard"* (ANA).

When the participants comment about their present relationships, they end up comparing it to passed relationships, in majority heterosexual relationships, and so the idea of equality stands out, when related to the daily life: *"The relationship between women is the same as a hetero relationship, the difference is that we have a bigger understanding, we know what one likes, because practically we do what we would like to have someone do for us..."* (LAURA).

The majority of lesbians, on the interviews, do not go after sexual pleasure as its only purpose on the relation with the partner, finding a deeper sexual-affective relation (Mott, 1987). The equalitarian pair can emphasize the importance of partnership and friendship in the relation, not forgetting the sexual dimension. On the studies of Heilborn (2004), she observed that women couples are very much marked by an intense partnership, with a strong emphasis on the mutual psychological support, moving from conjugality to friendship.

The authors above describe lesbian relationships, defining ways of acting and of being; the following words follow the same logic: *"We have had a heterosexual relationship before, both of us were married to a man, B. for a longer time and myself for six and a half years, but only for one year I was really married. So it is a very different experience, It is much more peaceful because women understand better the feminine dilemmas, like PMT, mood oscillations, cramps, which man freak out about, poor them, but they don't live the same things, right? We have more cooperation, complicities, similarities [...]"* (MANUELA).

However, it must be clear that not every relationship between women occur in the same way, and don't even have the same characteristics. The lines from the next participant draws attention to the generalizations which must be treated with care: *"We got together for the first time [...] everything was so represented that the way of speaking, and the way of being of that women which I fell in love with, a virile, manly way, which contrasted with mine, it doesn't always need to be like that, the homosexual relationships can be with equals, which I have seen at the clinic, is what attracted them, the equality, our case was not like that, each story you will listen to will be different, ours was like that [...]"* (ISABELA).

The narratives presented until this moment were referent to the relationships, to lesbian conjugality. These are discourses filled with emotions, positive and negative. We are able to perceive that the negative emotions are all related to prejudice, still existent in society, and the positive emotions concern the sexual-affective relationships and the feelings of happiness, of following their desires. As they are a family, they have sons and daughters. The discourses that follow concern maternity and the issues related to it.

Maternity

In order to constitute maternity, lesbian couples can make use of a variety of methods. Within them, the cases of recomposed families, the ones in which the mother left a heterosexual marriage and brought the children to a lesbian context; by adoption; by assisted reproduction, as artificial insemination, *in vitro*; and co-parenting, where one member of the couple generates a child with a man, and the child becomes part of the homomaternal nucleus (Zambrano, 2006; Passos, 2005).

From these eight women who have been interviewed, four of them generated their sons and daughters,

from these four; two were pregnant from previous heterosexual relations and the other two from assisted reproduction. About the other participants, two of them have adopted their daughter and the other two are partners of the women who became pregnant of their children. Eight women were interviewed but from these eight women, three of them formed couples, totalizing six participants. The other two women were interviewed without their partners due to the impossibility of interviewing them.

We are able to perceive that maternity still finds itself very linked with the heteronormative logic for many women, as we can understand by the narrative of one of the participant: *"Maternity was a dream; I have always, since adolescence had the desire of having children. I found out when I was sixteen that I liked women, but even though I knew, I wanted to have relations in order to have a family"* (LAURA).

The speech above shows that, even by having awareness of their desire for women, in order to be able to have a family the participant, went through a wedding with a man and, only after becoming a widow, was able to assume to society her lesbian orientation, as well as to constitute a new family with her current partner and their children. Her partner did not become pregnant, however feels as though they were her own children: *"Maternity, maternity I am not, because I did not have the children, oh it is nice being together [...] like, they are not mine, but I recognize them as if they were [...] as though I was really their mom, I give them, education, health, I feed them, the same things the mom does, I do too"* (MARIA).

However, other women have already been able to subdue some rules, mainly the ones related to the idea that for having a family, it must be constituted by a father, a mother and the children, creating their own families through assisted reproduction: *"Many couples will go through the insemination [...] it was so much happiness, but with eight months I had a bleeding, which was the placental abruption, it was a fright, then we found out they were twins, and that is something that may happen, but we did not know, imagine a bleeding, it was a fright [...] I wanted to be the mother of one, not of two, but on the fourth month, when I found out it was a girl and a boy, I started enjoying the idea of having twins, it is two..."* (ISABELA)

But assisted reproduction requires a financial investment, this makes it impossible for certain women that do not have the social and economic conditions for such investment, so this will not allow them ma-

ternity in such way. The following speech presents a participant that used assisted reproduction: *"We had a very intense relationship and so we decided. I thought that it was very natural, as hetero couples do it, why could we not as well?"* (MANUELA).

In Brazil, according to Noda (2005), the majority of cases of homopaternal and homomaternity refer to recomposed families, when the children come from a heterosexual relationship either from the father or the mother. Adoption ends up being a very much used way of having children, even more due to the development that is happening in this area, there are many adoption cases by lesbian and gay couples in the country, especially at Rio Grande do Sul (Farias & Maia, 2009; Cruz, 2009).

The following participant adopted her daughter and together with her partner, built their family: *"It was a decision both of us had, she arrived when she was two years old, we decided to take her, I have always wanted to be a mother and J. as well, as we could not do this in another way we did it like this. It has always been good; we never had any big problems. At school always everything went well with A., she never went through any situations of prejudice"* (ANA). And so, through many ways, lesbian women can become mothers and constitute their families.

However, we can also think the speeches about maternity in women, even if earlier we discussed the fixation of stereotypical roles which take women to think and act in a specific ways, here we are coming back to this point, however we will keep the discussion specifically about maternity. The following lines represents this issue: *"I think, there is no mother or women that does not want to be a mother, this does not exist, I have seen many people like this, they don't want to be, because they already suffer prejudice without children, I believe that they are afraid that their children will go through the same prejudice, that we go through"* (LAURA)

The phrase "it doesn't exist a women who doesn't want to be a mother" ends up turning women who do not want to be a mother into something close to a monster, as the scientific and religious speeches transform maternity into the most glorious moment in a women's life. The qualities related to care and affection, are associated with women, reiterating once

again the role of a caring and loving mother on discourses affirming that every women is like that. The love for sons and daughters is seen as something innate, present in women because maternity is their path. All of these are affirmatives which are taken as true and natural for the majority of women and men, making the women who cannot see themselves in this role to suffer (Badinter, 1985).

So, a woman cannot detach herself from the roles of a mother, even less from the idea of maternity being the peak of happiness. Lots of woman do not allow themselves to think that maybe they don't only love their sons and daughters but also their jobs, and relations and other activities in a very intense way as well. To go against what is expected demands a lot of reflection and a very effective social position, but the following speeches demonstrate that some women have already achieved this understanding.

After reflections about maternity, we put together two subjects that we described previously, maternity associated with lesbian conjugality. Thinking about lesbian conjugality and maternity not connected to each other, does not really show the homomaterial families. When associated, we can understand their complexities, and get to the aims of this study, to understand these families constituted by two women and their children.

Maternity + conjugality: maternity in the context of lesbian conjugality

Being a mother and being lesbian is an association which has been appearing in scientific studies for more or less two decades. However, science is a very recent theme. With the coming of the feminist struggles and the LGBTTT³ lots of lesbian woman empowered themselves to fight for their desires, within them, the one of being a mother. It was than that family constituted by woman and their children started having more visibility and were presented to society, which until than only conceived the formation of a family made by a man and a woman for procreation (Passos, 2003; Santos, 2004, Zambrano, 2006).

To this "new" family constitution, the utilization of the term Homoparentality⁴ possesses the intention of evidencing these families, which finds themselves each time more present into the configuration of society,

³ Letters used to denominate Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Travesties, Transsexuals and Transgender.

⁴ Term created in France in 1997, by the Association of Parents and Future Gay and Lesbian Parents (APGL), naming the situation in which at least one gay or lesbian adult is or (pretend to be) a father or mother of at least one child (Zambrano, 2006).

being known and recognized as a family category. Some authors do not agree with the creation of specific terms to deal with situations that have gays and lesbians inserted, justifying that these terms are not created when dealing with heterosexual couples. However, a nomenclature also has the function of visualizing an issue, in this case, a family constituted by homosexuals (Uziel, 2007).

With this greater visibility, the studies done by American researchers (Tasker, 2005; Gold et al., 1994; Golombok, & Tasker, 1996) focused on the theme of sons and daughters from these “new” families. The results of the studies, presented that having lesbian mothers has no negative influence on the children’s life, and the results are equivalent to children coming from heterosexual homes. Apart from these results there is also the fact that these children have greater amplitude in relationships, which can make them less biased and more tolerant with uncommon aspects.

Studying children who come from gay and lesbian families, has been a way of linking the sexual orientation of mothers and fathers with their competence of exercising maternity and paternity. Studies done in Europe, mainly in France, in the seventies and eighties, did not pay attention to the emotional development of the children, and studies that started in Brazil at the beginning of the nineties, followed the same line (Uziel, 2007). This does not mean that fears and doubts does not go through society’s mind, as it is presented in the speech of one participant. *“The issue of maternity is something that I have always been afraid of, and now in this context even more...”* (JULIA).

The doubts and concerns are also reflected in the following speech, especially in a family constituted without the figure of a father: *“So he was born and we will learn and so, will we be able to do it? And when he goes off to the first school, he won’t have a father, then we thought, what will be missing for him? He will have the most important thing, which is love, he was extremely desired and is loved....it was all planned, literally step by step, then we say, it is obvious that there will be difficulties, and maybe even embarrassing situations, there is lots of bad people around”* (BRUNA).

The reports of the interviews, when participants talk about the issues of maternity associated with lesbian conjugality, refer to the daily home activities, like, fetching the children at school, helping with the shower, helping with school homework, putting them to bed and so on. The following lines show how mothers organize themselves in relation to the children: *“I’m a*

professional in public services, and as I have the guard of A., I work only in the mornings, then I stay with A. in the afternoons, I help her with the school homework, and take care of her. J. arrives at the evening, at around eight o’clock, then, when she arrives, A. is ready with the school homework, and has taken her shower already. Then when she arrives, we get together, the tree of us, and there is this moment, tree of us” (ANA).

Some narratives show comparisons between heterosexual and homosexual relationships still linked to stereotyped speeches about ways of being man and ways of being woman: *“The various tasks are well distributed in our home, who takes to school, or who fetches from school, who will help with the shower, the activities are shared, and so there is not much of this, male and female, there is no dad and mum, everybody goes by the same rhythm”* (ISABELA).

The homomaternal families are different from other families because they are made of two women, their daughters and sons. Certainly this produces differences, subjectivities, as in other families made of two men, by one mother or one father, or in the case of re-married families. However by the interviews we can understand that these mothers do not want the differences to stand out, which makes us think about the history of homosexuality, the fights for their rights, removing it from psychiatric manuals, it can still be causing effects at the contemporary society.

These effects are shown, as presented in the following lines as the great need to put their families as normal, equal to heterosexual families which due to being part of the norms, are considered ideal: *“It is normal, we like to have lunch together, dine together, talk about the day, all normal”* (ROBERTA). *“I want to say that our family is a normal family, there is lots of love, and we raise our daughter very well”* (ANA).

The sons and daughters are being raised based on truth, so that they grow knowing that people are different, liking these differences and knowing that everyone must be respected in their differences. The ways in which children refer to their mothers is an example of new perspectives, including new nomenclatures: *“They learned the word pami, pami is a word that M. invented to tell them, not necessarily that pami has to do with dad, she invented it because she did not recognise herself as mother, as two mothers, she thought that it was not her place, and M. seemed too distant, it was a big thing, not easy as magic, we went slowly [...] in our family there is no father, it is made of two women, we see ourselves in a different way, we are mommy*

and pami, so much that on mother's day I go and on father's day pami goes" (ISABELA). "He calls both of us as mami. Mami M. and mami B." (MANUELA). "Both as mom, call's us both the same" (JULIA).

At the end of the interviews, some participants left messages in their narratives, in order to make it possible to publicise this in our study. These are the following lines: "People should not be ashamed about their feelings, thinking about the others, what others might say, in first place that you need to be happy, and the rest is the rest." (LAURA).

Conclusión

This study has the aim of getting to know the issues related to maternity in the context of lesbian conjugality. For that, we brought part of the narratives alongside the text, in order to think about aspects that have been brought by the participants, together with theoretical approaches about the themes discussed. Furthermore this research has the intention of contributing with the families made of women and their sons and daughters, to make them visible in a society that still treats lesbian and gay orientation, in a prejudiced and oppressing way.

The studies that deal with lesbian themes haven't got a very expressive number when compared to studies about homosexual men, which points out to a double prejudice. Women have been recognised in history through the masculine, and always subjugated to it, and now days we still are not far from this reality. Apart from being in second plan, the women in question have a different sexual orientation from the established one, being considered a "deviation". Prejudice intensifies itself when besides being women, they are lesbian women. This also happens when we talk about studies with lesbian mothers, in relation to homosexual fathers.

For this reason it is necessary that more studies take place with lesbians and lesbian maternity, throughout the publication of this, society may become aware of something they are not aware about. Making this known, it becomes easier for a greater acceptance by society, as it is gradually happening today. Even though this is a qualitative exploratory study, where the number of participants is reduced, we could get close to some homomaternal families and better understand their ways of living.

Knowing a few families got us to think about something we already knew, however by coming up on a

speech, it enhanced our perception, which is to realise that as there is not "a" women, there also is not "a" lesbian, and as a consequence, it does not exist "a" family. So this is about homomaternal families, and not "a" homomaternal family. "I think that for this research the main thing I want to share is that this is our experience, and other couples can organise themselves in another way [...]" (ISABELA).

The study of homomaternal families allowed us to get in contact with their nuance. We could see that for many women that we interviewed, the lesbian orientation was lived after heterosexual experiences including marriages. Even though they are older and have had other experiences in life, for many, assuming the lesbian conjugality caused battles and negative feelings in relation to their original families. The sons and daughters minimised their problems, as many participants mentioned that it was through their children that they managed to rebuild a good relationship with their mothers and fathers. The presence of children is described with emotion, despite some of them are aware of the need of re-ordering their families.

Due to "maternity" being presented by the participants in a different form from what would be in a traditional heterosexual family, also demonstrates the possibility of other family constructions to be thought of, further than this, becoming more real. This movement diverges from the stereotypical norms and roles, since it presents another configuration for the character of the "mother" moreover reframing her in a contemporaneous time.

Finally, homomaternal families have their singularities as any other family. They are not worst or better than other existing families, they are different, like any other family, like an individual is also different from the other. A participant's narrative calls the attention for this aspect: "And also to be careful, as well as a heterosexual couple is sometimes crazy to have a child, a homosexual couple may also be crazy to, two men or two women, and also it may not be the moment, so it must be the individual and the collective" (ISABELA).

This leads us to look first at people and then to their sexual orientation. The sexual orientation will not make a mother or father better or worst, it simply defines the person which these mothers and fathers will have an affective and sexual relationship. So, we understand that to raise a child, independently of being hetero or homosexual, the person needs to love. We found this in great amounts at these homes, they are children raised in homes with love.

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