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Gato, J. and Leal, D. and Biasutti, C. and Tasker, Fiona and Fontaine, A.M. (2021) Building a rainbow family: parenthood aspirations of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender/gender diverse individuals. In: Araujo de Morais, N. and Scorsolini-Comin, F. and Cerqueira-S, E. (eds.) Parenting and Couple Relationships Among LGBTQ+ People in Diverse Contexts. New York: Springer, pp. 193-213. ISBN 9783030841911.

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Building a Rainbow Family: Parenthood Aspirations of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Trans/Gender Diverse Individuals



Jorge Gato, Daniela Leal, Carolina Biasutti, Fiona Tasker, and Anne Marie Fontaine¹

Abstract

Throughout the last century and the beginning of the present one, multiple events have contributed to the legitimization of families formed by lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender/gender diverse individuals (LGBT). First, the social roles of men and women have come to be seen as not irrevocably linked to their sex assigned at birth. Second, the civil rights movements, including the LGBT movement (Pichardo, 2009), played a major role in reclaiming individual and family rights of sexual and gender minority individuals. Third, reproductive technologies have allowed for the birth of children without heterosexual intercourse. As a result of the above-mentioned advances, same-sex marriage and same-sex parenting have been legalized in many countries (Flores, 2019), and parenthood is nowadays a desired and anticipated life goal independent of individuals' sexual orientation and/or gender identity (Gato et al., 2017; Goldberg et al., 2012; van Houten et al., 2020). Through a narrative review, in the present chapter, we aimed to provide an overview of research focusing on the parenthood aspirations of LGBT persons. Prospective parenthood processes and

¹ J. Gato, D. Leal and A. M. Fontaine
Universidade do Porto, Portugal

C. Biasutti
Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo, Brazil

F. Tasker
Birkbeck University of London, United Kingdom

E-mail: jorgegato@fpce.up.pt

their determinants were described for sexual minority (lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals) and gender minority (transgender and gender diverse individuals) persons separately, given the specific challenges these two groups face regarding family formation. Lastly, directions for future research were outlined.

Keywords: parenthood aspirations; pathways to parenthood; sexual and gender minorities

Parenthood aspirations of lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals

This chapter is a narrative review of the scientific literature in different countries about prospective parenthood among lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender/gender diverse individuals (LGBT). This type of review presents non-systematized data describing the state of the art of a given subject and presenting an in-depth theoretical and contextual analysis (Rother, 2007). Thus, we aimed to provide an overview of research focusing on the parenthood aspirations of LGBT persons up to 2021, considering articles published in indexed journals, with a main focus on empirical ones. Bearing in mind the specific challenges regarding family formation that sexual minority and gender minority individuals face, prospective parenthood processes and their determinants were separately described for lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals (LGB) and for transgender and gender diverse individuals (TGD) persons.

Parenthood aspirations of sexual minority individuals have been operationalized in various ways, such as desires (e.g., Baiocco & Laghi, 2013; Costa & Bidell, 2017; Machin, 2016; Riskind & Patterson, 2010; Shenkman, 2012, 2020), intentions (e.g., Baiocco & Laghi, 2013; Gato et al., 2020 ; Riskind & Patterson, 2010, Shenkman, 2020), expectations (e.g., D'Augelli et al., 2008; Meletti & Scorsolini-Comin, 2015; Shenkman, 2012; 2020), perceptions and motivations (e.g., Baiocco & Laghi, 2013; Gato et al., 2020 ; Leal et al., 2019), or even a “passion-for-parenthood continuum” (Stacey, 2006, p. 33). Diverse psychological frameworks have been used to shed light

on the parenthood aspirations of these individuals, namely the theory of planned behavior (Kranz et al., 2018), attachment theory (Shenkman et al., 2019), parenting perceptions (Gato et al., 2020), or minority stress theory (Salinas-Quiroz et al., 2020; Scandurra et al., 2019).

In general, quantitative studies have revealed that lesbian women and/or gay men express less desire for parenthood (e.g., Baiocco & Laghi, 2013; Costa & Bidell, 2017; Kranz et al., 2018; Leal et al., 2019; Riskind & Patterson, 2010) and intend less to become parents than their heterosexual peers (e.g., Gato et al., 2020 ; Riskind & Patterson, 2010). Findings regarding bisexual individuals' parenthood aspirations are somewhat less clear. In one USA study, the parenthood intentions of bisexual individuals were closer to those of heterosexual individuals than to the ones of lesbian women and gay men (Riskind & Tornello, 2017). In the same vein, other studies suggested that bisexual women who are partnered with women have similar parenthood desires and intentions to those of lesbian women (Delvoye & Tasker, 2016; Riskind & Tornello, 2017; Ross et al., 2012). However, within a Portuguese sample of young adults, bisexual individuals were not different from lesbian women or gay men, nor from heterosexual individuals regarding their parenthood intentions (Gato et al., 2020).

Several rationales for the parenting experience and motivations for parenthood have been offered. The appreciation of children as an enriching factor in one's life is one of the most important parental motivations reported by LGB individuals (Bos et al., 2003; Kranz et al., 2018; Leal et al., 2019; Gato et al., 2020; Goldberg et al., 2012; Siegenthaler & Bigner, 2000). Others have been attributed to the fact that a child guarantees the continuity of the family and can provide support later in life (Goldberg et al., 2012; Langridge et al., 2005; Gato et al., 2020), or to a partner's desire to parent (Amazonas et al., 2013; Goldberg et al., 2012; Herrmann-Green & Gehring, 2007; Machin, 2016; Mallon, 2004; Mezey 2008a; Stacey, 2006). Generally, the reasons identified by LGB individuals do not appear to be different from the motivations identified by heterosexual

individuals (Cassidy & Sintrovani, 2008). However, differences have become apparent in the adoption context: different-sex couples may still seek for adoption motivated by the difficulties of biologically conceiving (Bussinger et al., 2018; Rosa et al., 2016), whereas same-sex couples tend to be more flexible with age and child biological characteristics and show less concern with biological ties in this scenario (Farr & Vázquez; 2020; Machin, 2016; Silva et al., 2017).

Some specificities of lesbian women and gay men's parenthood motivations also have been reported. The gay men interviewed by Goldberg et al. (2012) gave particular importance to educating children with respect to tolerance and diversity. In turn, Siegenthaler and Bigner (2000) found that, compared to their heterosexual peers, lesbian women were less focused on either generativity or the transmission of family tradition.

Qualitative studies allow for a more complex picture of parenthood aspirations of LGB individuals. Stacey (2006) described parental desire as a passion-for-parenthood continuum in her study of 50 racially diverse gay men in Los Angeles. On one extreme of the continuum were those who indicated they were *predestined* to be a parent, for whom parenthood was extremely appealing.

At the other extreme were *parental refuseniks*, for whom parenthood presented no appeal whatsoever. Approximately half of the participants occupied the middle, and more ambivalent, ground: they could be swayed towards, or away from, fatherhood, depending on a variety of factors, most notably, having a persistent partner. Similar results were obtained by Mallon (2004) and Gianino (2008) again with samples of gay men. Mallon (2004) interviewed gay males who had become fathers as gay men in the 1980s noting that these men felt such a compelling urge to become dads that they were willing to pursue their dream despite the lack of precedent, support, or opportunity. Gianino (2008) examined how gay male couples transitioned from being childless to becoming adoptive parents again pointing to the overwhelming desire these men had for parenthood.

Pathways to Parenthood in LGB People

Several paths provide access to parenting for sexual minority individuals. Parenthood can be attained via affiliation through biological or emotional ties, depending on the individual's choice related to variables such as age, financial resources, and the possibilities available in the socio-cultural context. As a result of technological developments, lesbian motherhood through medically assisted reproduction (MAR) techniques has become increasingly frequent. Prospects vary from implanting fertilized eggs from both mothers into one of them; using only the genetic material of the mother who will give birth to the child; or through the mother experiencing pregnancy by receiving oocytes from the partner. Women also can choose between using sperm from a known donor or acquiring it from a sperm bank (Pontes et al., 2017; Vitule et al., 2015). Other forms of fertilization exist, such as self-insemination in home or sexual intercourse (Pichardo et al., 2015), in which a third party may or not participate in parenting practices depending upon the agreements previously established between the parties. In contrast, when gay men are legally and financially able to choose assisted reproduction they might choose surrogacy (Vitule et al., 2015). This scenario allows the surrogate to use either her own egg fertilized with genetic materials of one or both fathers, or the implantation of a fertilized donor egg previously purchased by the commissioning parent(s) to be. These methods, however, are not accessible to all families as the expenses may only be contemplated by high-income couples (Pichardo et al., 2015; Vitule et al., 2015).

Furthermore, there is also the possibility of a coparenting arrangement between lesbian and gay couples, constituting a family with more than two parental figures (Pichardo et al., 2015), often brokered online and with the aid of legal agreements. For those who wish to be parents regardless

of biological ties, there is also the option of adoption (Machin, 2016; Rosa et al., 2016) in countries that allow it (ILGA, 2020).

Concerning the chosen method to achieve parenthood, Vitule et al. (2015) verified that lesbian couples preferred donor sperm in MAR techniques , while gay couples were more inclined toward legal adoption. Vitule et al.'s first group indicated the preference for buying semen from sperm banks as a priority in the affiliation project; the latter opted for adoption, although some actually preferred biological affiliation, but feared that a surrogate might develop a strong bond with the child that might jeopardize gay fatherhood. In an investigation that took place during the *II Encuentro Europeo de Familias LGBT*, in Spain, which brought together families from 14 countries in Europe, as well as American and Canadian families, Pichardo and colleagues (2015) reported that 39.28% of the gay men interviewed reported that they were, or wished to become parents through adoption. In other cases, Pichardo et al.'s participants (2015) explained that their use of a surrogate was motivated either by concerns about the long adoption process or by anticipated obstacles to gay men adopting children. Therefore, choices about route to parenthood are influenced by a wide variety of factors not least the cultural, legal, and financial context as well as biological constraints and preference either as an individual or a couple for biological or adoptive parenthood.

Factors associated with parenthood aspirations among LGB individuals

Following the systematization of Gato et al. (2017) correlates of parenthood aspirations among sexual minority individuals comprise sociodemographic (e.g., gender), psychosocial (e.g., minority stress), and structural (e.g., prejudice) aspects.

Sociodemographic factors

Sociodemographic determinants comprise factors such as gender, age, professional and educational status, relational status, religion, and race/ethnicity/culture.

Gender. In general, lesbian women tend to report greater parenthood desire and intention to become a parent than do their male peers (Baiocco & Laghi, 2013; Gato et al., 2020 ; Riskind & Patterson, 2010). Riskind and Patterson (2010) also found that gay men intended less to have children than their heterosexual male peers but the same was not true for women. In Israel, Shenkman (2012) reported a gap between desire and actual expectation of parenthood among gay men. Kranz and colleagues (2018) also found the desire-intention gap was somewhat larger among gay men, compared to their heterosexual peers. Gato et al. (2020) identified four distinctive profiles of prospective parenthood among Portuguese LGB and heterosexual young adults without children: aspiring parents not anticipating stigma, aspiring parents anticipating stigma, childfree intent, and childfree ambivalent. Lesbian and bisexual women mostly populated the childfree ambivalent cluster, in contrast the aspiring parents anticipating stigma cluster contained an overrepresentation of men, particularly sexual minority men.

Several factors might contribute to gender differences in parenthood aspirations. First, being able to carry a child would ostensibly give ciswomen more options for achieving parenthood compared with cismen. As women, lesbians are also influenced by normative gender roles and as an expression of these traditional feminine gender roles, lesbian women are both more committed to family life, more “maternal”, and more pressurized to parent than are men.

Second, parenthood without the presence of a different sex person is still seen as contesting heteropatriarchal definitions of masculinity (Benson et al., 2005; Hicks, 2013) and also femininity (Epstein, 2002). Furthermore, gay male parents are perceived as not only challenging the stereotype of men in the dominant culture, but also challenge the norms of gay culture, which has been traditionally free of parenthood concerns (Mallon, 2004; Salvati et al., 2019; Schacher et al., 2005;

Stacey, 2006). Additionally, the inaccurate association between male homosexuality and child abuse has presented the additional challenge of suspicion of intent directed at gay men's parenthood aspirations (Gross, 2012). Patterson and Riskind (2010) also have suggested that a lack of familiarity with alternate pathways to parenthood could be involved in the case of gay men.

Age. Older sexual minority individuals appear to have been exposed to and absorbed discourses that equate homosexuality with childlessness (Mallon, 2004) while younger LGB individuals are more likely to desire and intend to have children than their older peers (Costa & Bidell, 2017; D'Augelli et al., 2008; Gato et al., 2019; Rabun & Oswald, 2009; Riskind & Patterson, 2010; Riskind et al., 2013).

Professional and educational status. Having a job and/or a higher educational level (which are often associated with a higher income) are instrumental conditions to attaining parenthood outside of sexual reproduction. Therefore, these financial aspects may be particularly relevant to sexual minority individuals' parenthood decisions, given the costs associated to adoption and/or MAR (Downing et al., 2009; Goldberg et al., 2012; Machin, 2016; Mezey, 2008a; Pontes et al., 2017; Riskind et al., 2013; Simon et al., 2018; Tate et al., 2019; Vitule et al., 2015). For instance, Berkowitz and Marsiglio (2007) found that men with better paid jobs were facilitated in negotiating with medical and legal institutions in ways that enabled them to become fathers. Conversely, working-class lesbians interviewed by Mezey (2008a), particularly ethnic minority lesbian women, expressed concern about how much their precarious work conditions hindered their parenting projects. Rabun and Oswald (2009) found that all the gay men without children they interviewed (mostly white and middle-class and aged between 18 and 25 years) intended to become fathers but only after they or their partners had achieved financial security, i.e., pursuing career pathways that ultimately enabled both financial security and flexibility to support undertaking parental responsibilities. Similarly, in interviews with four lesbian and gay Brazilian couples in a

committed relationship, Meletti and Scorsolini-Comin (2015) highlighted participants parenthood intentions and also their emphasis on the need for emotional and financial preparation prior to children's arrival. In the same fashion, Simon et al. (2018) found that, compared to both their heterosexual and bisexual women, lesbian women were more likely to want a permanent professional position before having children. In fact, Tate et al. (2019) verified that education was positively associated with childless individuals' parenthood intent, irrespective of sexual orientation.

Relational status. Single parents usually have lower income levels than couples and, as we have seen, this may hinder their parenthood intentions. For those in a couple relationship, having greater expectations of relationship permanence was associated with greater likelihood of parenthood intentions in a USA sample (Tate et al., 2019). However, Gato et al. (2019) found that within a Portuguese sample relational status was not associated with either lesbian women's parenthood intent or their desire to become a parent. One of the possible explanations for the latter finding is that sexual minority people may be less influenced by the heteronormative narrative of having a child inside the marriage and conversely more willing to consider single parenthood or create a family of choice (Riggle et al., 2008).

Religion. Individuals that are more religious are also more likely to report greater intent to become a parent compared with non-religious individuals (Hayford & Morgan, 2008). Consistently, Tate et al. (2019) verified within a USA sample that greater religiosity was associated with a greater likelihood of parenthood intentions, irrespective of participants' sexual orientation. However, in Portugal the importance attributed to religious values was not associated with parenthood intentions either among heterosexual or LGB young adults (Gato et al., 2020), a result that was explained by the high level of secularization of the Portuguese society, especially within the young adult generation.

Race, Ethnicity, and Culture. Membership to less privileged racial/ethnic groups is an important factor in differentiating sexual minority individuals' experiences (for a review of studies see Wilson and Harper, 2013). For instance, studies have revealed that white infants were overrepresented in fertility service providers' website photo galleries (Hawkins, 2013), which also contained other implicit racial gatekeeping messages (Johnson, 2012). In turn, Williams and colleagues (2004) verified how Latino gay men's cultural beliefs about the importance of children, particularly sons who would continue the family name, influenced sexual behavior, by promoting sexual activity with women for the purposes of procreation. Race/ethnicity may also intersect with social class, shaping both lesbian women's and gay men's decisions about parenthood. Studying black lesbian stepfamilies in the USA, Moore (2008) did not find evidence of the egalitarian ideology typical of white, middle-class lesbian parent families. Black lesbian biological mothers in these families did more housework and child-care than their partners. In turn, biological mothers were understood to have greater responsibility and power in decision-making on issues involving the children. Mezey (2008b) also verified that lesbian women could be privileged both by race and class i.e., white middle-class lesbians were more likely to become parents because they had greater access than were those less privileged to personal pride in their sexual identity and surrounded by supportive family members and partners, lesbian mother networks, flexible jobs, financial stability, and access to private medical care and adoption agencies. This was also found in the studies of Vitule and colleagues (2015), Machin (2016), and Pontes and colleagues (2017), in the Brazilian context. Other study has shown that for some working class and ethnic minority lesbian women and gay men, revealing a desire to parent appears to be more socially difficult (Mezey, 2008b).

Recent cross-cultural studies have highlighted the role of societal aspects in prospective parenthood processes. In this regard, Leal et al. (2019) found that, irrespective of sexual orientation, individuals without children in Portugal anticipated more social support in parenthood and less

stigma if they decided to have children in comparison with counterparts in the United Kingdom (UK). This seemed to apply to heterosexual and to LGB persons equally, with the more familialistic culture of Portugal acting as a centripetal force pulling family members together across the generations (Hofstede, 2011; McGoldrick et al., 2015). Likewise, higher levels of parenthood desire, intent, and concern about childlessness were reported both in Israel and Portugal compared to the UK. Again, cultural differences such as the individualistic cultural values characterizing the UK compared with the familialistic values characterizing both Israeli and Portuguese contexts, might account for this, together with the strongly pronatalist stance evident in Israel and with the restricted career prospects due to economic downturn in Portugal differentiating Israeli and Portuguese groups (Shenkman et al., 2021).

Psychosocial factors

Some of the psychosocial determinants affecting parenthood aspirations of LGB individuals that have been studied include, on the one hand, vulnerability factors related to a stigmatized sexual minority status and, on the other hand, protective factors (such as perceived social support and partner support).

Minority stress. Aspects explored in this section comprise proximal stressors (Meyer, 2015), such as the internalization of anti-homosexual prejudice, the degree of openness about one's sexual orientation, and the anticipation of stigma upon parenthood. Sexual minority individuals' parenthood aspirations may be hampered by belief that homosexuality or bisexuality is wrong or immoral, that they would be less competent as a parent than a heterosexual woman or a man, that every child should have a mother and a father, and that children could be harmed if they are raised by same-sex couples (Amazonas et al., 2013; Berkowitz & Marsiglio, 2007; Goldberg, 2010; Mezey, 2013; Murphy, 2013; Riskind et al., 2013; Robinson & Brewster, 2014). Not revealing

one's homosexual orientation may also hinder sexual minorities' decision to parent as parenthood might out them in various ways (Amazonas et al., 2013; Brown et al., 2009; Mezey, 2008a, 2008b). Also, non-acceptance of a sexual minority orientation by family of origin members may exert a negative influence on parenting desire by gay male couples (Rodriguez et al., 2015). In Italy, Scandurra et al. (2019) verified that minority stressors associated with parenting aspirations of lesbian and gay adults included prejudice events, outness, and internalized homophobia for lesbian women, but only felt stigma for gay men. Anticipating unfavorable reactions from others as a parent (anticipation of stigma upon parenthood) also has been shown to affect parenthood aspirations of sexual minority individuals. Gato et al. (2020) verified that in comparison to their heterosexual peers, LGB individuals who anticipated more stigma upon parenthood were less likely to intend to have children. These results were replicated in Israel, where anticipation of stigma upon parenthood fully mediated the association between sexual minority membership and lower parenthood desire and intent, and partially mediated the association between a sexual minority membership and lower estimated likelihood of becoming a parent (Shenkman, 2020).

Social support. Social support is crucial to assuring the psychological well-being of sexual minority persons throughout their life course (e.g., Leal et al., 2021; Travers et al., 2020; Watson et al., 2019). Despite the importance of LGBT community when families of origin are not supportive (Weston, 1991), LGB persons seemingly change their support networks when they have children often indicating increased detachment from previous LGBT networks (Brown et al., 2009; Gianino, 2008; Manley et al., 2018). In this regard, families of origin and heterosexual friends may become more supportive after parenthood even when these relatives raised moral objections to the plan of having children (Brown et al., 2009; Ross et al., 2005). In Italy, Scandurra et al. (2019) verified that support from family, or that of significant people, could act as a buffer against the effect of stigma on parenthood desires and intentions of lesbian women and gay men.

Partner's Parental Motivation. Studies have shown that relational dynamics, namely, their partner's motivation to have children, may affect lesbian women's and gay men's parenthood aspirations (Amazonas et al., 2013; Goldberg, 2010; Goldberg et al., 2012; Herrmann-Green & Gehring, 2007; Mallon, 2004; Machin, 2016; Mezey, 2008a; Morningstar, 1999; Stacey, 2006). When partners are not equally motivated to have children or one partner completely rejects this idea, a process of discussion and negotiation may be initiated (Goldberg, 2010). If the conflict is not resolved, the dissolution of the relationship is a possible outcome (Mezey, 2008a; Morningstar, 1999; Stacey, 2006). In other cases, however, an initially less motivated partner may develop a greater interest in parenthood, resulting in an equal parental commitment (Goldberg et al., 2012; Herrmann-Green & Gehring, 2007; Stacey, 2006).

Structural factors: legal, medical, and social barriers

Sexual minority individuals face different legal realities in terms of protection and vulnerability worldwide. Institutional heterosexism can be observed in many legislatures which explicitly prohibit adoption by sexual minority individuals or same-sex couples and/or obstruct these individuals' access to MAR (Gato et al., 2017). While same-sex relationships are legal in 64% of United Nations member countries, only under 14% of these legislatures can same-sex couples marry (rising to 18% if civil unions are included). Additionally, only 14% of the countries worldwide provide legal support for same-sex couples to apply for joint adoption (ILGA, 2020). Lesbian and gay participants in Riskind et al.'s study (2013) who lived in US states with more favorable social climates regarding the rights of sexual minorities were also more likely to express confidence that they could become parents in the future. Consistently, Bauermeister (2014) verified that the presence of legal restrictions (e.g., same-sex marriage, adoption, etc.) moderated the relation between the fatherhood aspirations of gay men and their psychological well-being.

Fatherhood aspirations were associated with lower levels of depressive symptoms and higher self-esteem scores among participants living in USA states without discriminatory policies; the opposite was true of states with discriminatory policies. Besides discriminatory laws, institutional gate-keeping processes and personal biases of professionals working in adoption agencies, reproductive health services, or in human services in general may also hinder LGB individuals' parenthood projects (e.g., Gato et al., 2021; Goldberg, 2010; Hicks, 2000; Kimberly & Moore, 2015; Matthews & Cramer, 2006; Mellish et al., 2013; Rosa et al., 2016; Silva et al., 2017; Tasker & Bellamy, 2019; Ximenes & Scorsolini-Comin, 2018; Yager et al., 2010).

Parenthood Aspirations of Transgender and Gender Diverse Individuals

Transgender and gender diverse individuals (TGD) are those whose gender is different from that normatively expected from their assigned sex at birth and cisgender individuals are those whose sex assigned at birth aligns with their gender identity (APA, 2020; Ellis et al., 2020). Among non-cisgender people, transgender individuals usually have a different gender from the sex they were assigned at birth, while those who are gender diverse, nonconforming, genderqueer and/or non-binary take on a questioning or performative stance and hold a fluid conceptualization of gender (Tasker & Gato, 2020a). Even though parenthood among TGD persons has been frequently viewed with doubt, empirical studies have revealed that many TGD individuals are already parents (Stotzer et al., 2014) and a considerable number of them desire to have children in the future (Cipres et al., 2017; De Sutter et al., 2002; Marinho et al., 2020; Riggs et al., 2016; Tasker & Gato, 2020a; Tornello & Bos, 2017; von Doussa et al., 2015; Wierckx et al., 2012a, 2012b). In fact, according to Tasker and Gato (2020b),

Over recent years a new fourth wave has become apparent to us within social science research on LGBT parent families (...). Through consideration of the ambiguity and fluidity of definition both of individual sexuality and of family membership research studies have begun to consider the fuzziness of categorization, to recognize non-binary sexual and gender identities leading to blossoming of research on queer parenting, bisexual and plurisexual parenting and transgender and non-binary parented families (p. 130).

Thus, the study of prospective parenthood is more recent among TGD than among LGB individuals and often centers around specific aspects of TGD individuals' life course such as gender affirming procedures, the uptake of fertility, and/or (lack of) affirmative health services.

Pathways to Parenthood in TGD People

Parenthood options for TGD individuals include having children through biological means (via sexual intercourse, fertility preservation, or donated gametes to a partner or surrogate) or adoption/fostering (Marinho et al., 2020; Nahata et al., 2017; Tornello & Bos, 2017; von Doussa et al., 2015). If feasible, cryopreservation of sperm offers a reasonable viable fertility preservation option for transgender women who undergo gender affirming medical treatments (De Sutter, 2009). Options available to transgender men who wish to preserve genetic material include cryopreservation of ovarian tissue or more established techniques involving oocyte or embryo storage (James-Abra et al., 2015).

Over one third of transgender men surveyed by Wierckx et al. (2012b) said they would have considered cryopreserving gametes had techniques been available previously and, in an earlier study, over three quarters of transgender women thought that sperm freezing should be routinely offered before hormonal treatment (De Sutter et al., 2002). However, only half of the participants

in De Sutter et al.'s (2002) study indicated that they would have actually preserved their own gametes had this been possible, a finding echoed in recent studies (Auer et al., 2018; Marinho et al., 2020; Riggs & Bartholomaeus, 2018). In sum, a low level of fertility preservation among transgender persons is unforeseen given the high level of expressed desire for parenthood.

Although a clear picture of preference for genetic parenthood or adoption is yet to emerge, studies to date have indicated that preference rates do differ in different groups. For instance, Chen et al. (2018) reported that 70% of their survey sample of over 150 TGD young people considered future parenthood via adoption or foster care. Nevertheless, when genetically related parenthood was considered, it was preferred by more non-binary than transgender people. In another USA sample, Tornello and Bos (2017) found that transgender women more often expressed a preference for adoption (75%) whereas transgender men were more inclined to seek parenthood through sexual intercourse or pregnancy (58%). Preference rates for future parenthood via fostering or adoption were more evenly split among the Australian TGD people in the exploratory survey by Riggs et al. (2016). Over half the sample wanted to pursue biological parenthood (mostly through their partner giving birth) while the remainder planned to explore long-term foster care or adoption. A similar picture emerged in the Portuguese study of Marinho et al. (2020) with half of the 14 interviewed TGD participants wanting to be parents through adoption.

Factors associated with TGD individuals' parenthood aspirations

Prior research has implicated several factors associated with the uptake of fertility preservation and parenthood decision making among TGD individuals including sociodemographic characteristics (e.g., gender), psychosocial factors (e.g., personal motivations), and structural barriers (e.g., quality of services).

Sociodemographic factors

Regarding **gender**, Auer et al. (2018) found that among German transgender men and women, prior to undergoing gender affirming treatments, the former expressed greater desire for parenthood than did the latter. However, among those who had already initiated treatments, the level of expressed interest in having children in the future was higher among transgender women than transgender men. In Auer et al.'s study (2018) the majority of the transgender men indicated that insemination of a female partner with a sperm from an unrelated donor would be an acceptable route to having children, suggesting that this might be another explanation for transgender men's relatively low level of interest in oocyte preservation. Consistent with Auer et al.'s findings, other studies have found that transgender women were more likely to undertake fertility preservation than were transgender men (Chen et al., 2017; Jones et al., 2016). The greater complexity of oocyte retrieval and storage for those who were assigned female at birth may account for the fact that transgender men are less prone to preserve their fertility than transgender women. Yet other authors have emphasized the psychologically distressing nature of giving a semen sample, which makes fertility preservation challenging for transgender women as well (De Sutter et al., 2002; Riggs & Bartholomaeus, 2020; Wierckx et al., 2012a).

Concerning **age**, the level of expressed desire for children and the use of fertility preservation were both found to be particularly low among younger transgender people, even when fertility counselling and fertility preservation options were available (Chen et al., 2017; Nahata et al., 2018; Nahata et al., 2017; Strang et al., 2018). Strang et al. (2018) also reported that although relatively few transgender youth expressed desire to have their own genetically related child, many did not know whether their feelings about having a genetically related child could change in the future.

Psychosocial factors

The psychosocial factors affecting TGD people's parenthood aspirations include personal motivations to have children, social support, and the narrative resources regarding the self-presentation as a transgender parent (Tasker & Gato, 2020a). Transgender and gender diverse individuals' motivations for parenthood are quite similar to those of cisgender individuals. These include valuing genetic relatedness and wanting to have a biological bond (via pregnancy) with one's child through surrogacy or sexual intercourse or providing a loving home for a child through adoption (Marinho et al., 2020; Tornello & Bos, 2017).

In terms of social support received, support from family of origin has been revealed as an important factor in promoting the well-being of TGD people, including those who are themselves parents (Marinho et al., 2020; Riggs et al., 2015; von Doussa et al., 2015). In fact, in Rigg et al.'s study (2016), support from family of origin was positively associated with the desire of TGD people to have children in the future. Parenting is a highly gender related process within cisheteronormative society and various authors have pointed to the absence of affirmative cultural scripts for transgender parenting (e.g., Angonese & Lago, 2018; Haines et al., 2014; von Doussa et al., 2015). Consequently, TGD individuals seeking to become parents have to make sense of and present a coherent psychosocial narrative largely within the mainstream discourses of cisheteronormative societies.

In this regard, participants in von Doussa et al.'s (2015) study tended to shift their narratives between presenting either traditional ideals of heterosexual marriage and parenthood or more radical non-binary approaches to relationships and parenthood. In a quantitative study conducted in Mexico, Salinas-Quiroz et al. (2020) found lower parenthood aspirations among plurisexual (bisexual, pansexual, and queer) and transgender individuals than among cisgender lesbian or gay adults without children. The authors highlighted the lack of cultural representation about

transgender parenting as indicating a possible gap in the construction of this social role in this cultural context. Looking at the parenthood plans of a group of TGD people in the UK, Tasker and Gato (202 1) found that gender identity trajectories had implications for future parenthood; likewise future parenthood had complex implications for the recognition of their gender identity.

Structural factors

Obstacles to TGD individuals' parenthood aspirations include: (i) financial costs involved in MAR technologies; (ii) the physical and psychological invasiveness of fertility preservation procedures; and (iii) the quality of services and cultural competency of professionals. Concerning the first aspect, financial costs are a factor that might hinder TGD individuals' parenthood plans, especially if public funded fertility preservation procedures are not available (Marinho et al., 2020; Millar et al., 2015; Tasker & Gato, 2020a; Tornello & Bos, 2017). Regarding the second aspect, many studies have shown that transgender individuals perceive fertility preservation procedures as negatively affecting their well-being. Fertility preservation procedures are seen as disrupting their gender identity, as participation in them involves thinking about or discussing sex and gender associated internal or external anatomy (including pregnancy), and also interrupts gender affirming treatments (e.g., testosterone usage) that they would rather not delay (Armuand et al., 2017; Chen et al., 2017; Marinho et al., 2020; Nahata et al., 2017; Petit et al., 2018; Riggs & Bartholomaeus, 2018; Riggs et al., 2015; Tasker & Gato, 2020a; Tornello & Bos, 2017; von Doussa et al., 2015).

Similar to cisgender sexual minority persons, TGB individuals often have to negotiate parenthood options with diverse social institutions such as health and social service providers (Pyne et al., 2015). While a few studies have found some residual evidence of positive experiences within health services (Marinho et al., 2020; Payne & Erbenius, 2018; Wakefield et al., 2018), most research has reported negative ones (Coleman et al., 2011; Payne & Erbenius, 2018; James-Abra

et al., 2015; Wingo et al., 2018). These negative encounters in the health care context include having to cope with normative assumptions (e.g., regarding use of gender-related terminology) (Coleman et al., 2011; Payne & Erbenius, 2018; James-Abra et al., 2015; Marinho et al., 2020), discriminatory comments (Wingo et al., 2018), and/or being refused services (James-Abra et al., 2015). Lack of LGBTQ health competency relevant to reproductive health priorities and treatment also has been reported (Angonese & Lago, 2017; Auer et al., 2018; Chen et al., 2017; Coleman et al., 2011; Light et al., 2014; Marinho et al., 2020; Riggs & Bartholomaeus, 2018; Riggs & Bartholomaeus, 2019; Tasker & Gato, 2020a; Wingo et al., 2018).

An Australian qualitative study by Bartholomaeus and Riggs (2020) found that while over half of the participants in their sample of Australian TGD people had been provided with very little information by health professionals about fertility preservation, others, on the contrary, felt pressured by them to preserve fertility or experienced some family of origin pressure, even if that was not their own wish. These contradictory data raise the possibility that biological parenting may not be as universal a goal for TGD people as imagined by some authors. For this reason, health professionals must be aware of the specifics of each individual's life projects, considering that they can change over time, and should not impose a pronatalist norm (Bartholomaeus & Riggs, 2020). On this issue, a qualitative study in Brazil by Angonese and Lago (2017) highlighted that reproductive health professionals appeared only to be concerned with fertility preservation among transgender men.

Looking into the future

Although families headed by LGBT individuals are increasingly visible, sexual and gender minorities tend to have lower parenthood aspirations when compared to their heterosexual and cisgender peers. This phenomenon is associated with certain constraints, such as less accessible

routes to parenthood, sociodemographic characteristics, contextual aspects, and/or structural barriers. LGBT individuals' parenthood aspirations and their determinants are a promising area of research and some directions for future research and intervention can be outlined based on existing knowledge.

Following the trend apparent in other areas of LGBT Psychology, the parenthood aspirations of cisgender lesbian and gay individuals have been more explored than those of their cisgender plurisexual and transgender peers and future studies should take this aspect into consideration. Experiences of intersectional prejudice and discrimination may also affect prospective parenthood processes among dually sexual, gender, and racial/ethnic minority individuals in complex ways, and research with diverse LGBT samples in terms of their sociodemographic composition is advised.

Finally, research findings regarding sexual and gender minority persons' parenthood prospects need to be translated into practice. Human service professionals may want to attend to communalities and specificities of prospective parenthood as a function of sexual orientation and gender identity, in order to provide unbiased and culturally competent support to LGBT individuals (e.g., Gato et al., 2021). In this regard, parental leaves, health security insurance, and parenthood protection laws are needed to guarantee the rights of LGBT parents and their children. The development of inclusive and supportive policies for sexual and gender minorities, in micro and macrosystemic contexts, ranging from workplace LGBT-diversity measures to same-sex and adoption laws, can contribute to the well-being of this group and reduce the stigma experienced, which may promote useful discussion of the pros and cons of prospective parenthood for LGBT people.

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