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LGBTQIAPN+ people and facing homophobia: life stories and overcoming in the lives of lesbian women

Pessoas LGBTQIAPN+ e o enfrentamento da homofobia: histórias de vida e superação na vida de mulheres lésbicas

Personnes LGBTQIAPN+ et face à l'homophobie : récits de vie et dépassement dans la vie des femmes lesbiennes

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Abstract

Members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Transgender, Transvestite, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, Pansexual, Non-binary (LGBTQIAPN+) movement continually report situations in which they are execrated, violated in various ways, marginalized by people who cannot live with diversity. Concomitant to this fact, these people are able to cope with this harsh reality, however, there is little literature regarding this way of being in the face of oppression and violence, which already characterizes the relevance of a project with this meaning. Thus, the objective of this study is to understand the process of facing and overcoming homophobic situations by members of the LGBTQiapn+ movement in Manaus, under the perspective of Martin Heidegger's phenomenology of these experiences with lesbian women. The research was carried out using a qualitative approach, with a descriptive and exploratory characteristic. The method used was phenomenological-psychological and data was obtained through audio-recorded phenomenological interviews that started from a guiding question and presented developments. 5 lesbian women collaborated in the research. Three categories of analysis with respective subcategories were identified: 1. Sexuality: temporalizing the trajectory; 2. The search for acceptance: the self-view and the gaze of others; 3. The various selves: self-care, self-understanding, self-recognition. At the end of the study, the diversity of their experiences related to confronting homophobia was learned, a topic that contributes to developing proposals for psychological support for people in the lesbian movement who are in a vulnerable situation resulting from violence.

Keywords: Lesbians, Prejudice, Discrimination; Overcoming, Phenomenological-existential Psychology

Resumo

Membros do movimento Lésbicas, Gays, Bissexuais, Transsexuais, Transgêneros, Travestis, Queer, Intersexo, Assexuais, Pansexuais, Não-binários (LGBTQIAPN+) relatam continuamente situações em que são execrados, violentados sob várias formas, marginalizados por pessoas que não conseguem conviver com a diversidade. Concomitante a este fato, essas pessoas conseguem realizar o enfrentamento dessa dura realidade, entretanto, é escassa a literatura no que diz respeito a esse modo de ser diante da opressão e da violência, o que já caracteriza a relevância de um projeto com esta acepção. Assim, o objetivo deste estudo é compreender o processo de enfrentamento e superação de situações homofóbicas por membros do movimento LGBTQIAPN+ em Manaus, sob o viés da fenomenologia de Martin Heidegger dessas vivências com mulheres



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lésbicas. A pesquisa se deu pelo viés qualitativo, com característica descritiva e exploratória. O método utilizado foi o fenomenológico-psicológico e a obtenção de dados através da entrevista fenomenológica áudio gravada que partiu de uma questão norteadora e apresentou desdobramentos. Colaboraram para a pesquisa 5 mulheres lésbicas. Foram identificadas 3 categorias de análise com respectivas subcategorias: **1. Sexualidade:** temporalizando a trajetória; **2. A busca por ser aceita:** o auto olhar e o olhar do outro; **3. Os vários autos:** autocuidado, autocompreensão, autorreconhecimento. Ao final do estudo, apreendeu-se a diversidade de suas vivências relacionadas ao enfrentamento da homofobia, tema que contribui para elaborar propostas de acompanhamento psicológico a pessoas do movimento lésbico que estão em situação de vulnerabilidade decorrente da violência impetrada.

Palavras-chave: Lésbicas, Preconceito, Discriminação; Superação, Psicologia fenomenológico-existencial

Résumé

Les membres du mouvement lesbien, gay, bisexuel, transsexuel, transgenre, travesti, queer, intersexué, asexuel, pansexuel, Non binaire (LGBTQIAN+) dénoncent continuellement des situations dans lesquelles ils sont exécrés, violés de diverses manières, marginalisés par des personnes qui ne peuvent pas vivre avec la diversité. Parallèlement à cela, ces personnes sont capables de faire face à cette dure réalité, cependant, il existe peu de littérature sur cette façon d'être face à l'oppression et à la violence, qui caractérise déjà la pertinence d'un projet ayant ce sens. Ainsi, l'objectif de cette étude est de comprendre le processus de confrontation et de dépassement des situations homophobes par les membres du mouvement LGBTQIAN+ à Manaus, sous la perspective de la phénoménologie de Martin Heidegger sur ces expériences avec les femmes lesbiennes. La recherche a été réalisée selon une approche qualitative, à caractère descriptif et exploratoire. La méthode utilisée était phénoménologique-psychologique et les données ont été obtenues à travers des entretiens phénoménologiques enregistrés audio qui partaient d'une question directrice et présentaient les développements. 5 femmes lesbiennes ont collaboré à la recherche. Trois catégories d'analyse avec des sous-catégories respectives ont été identifiées : 1. Sexualité : temporalisation de la trajectoire ; 2. La recherche de l'acceptation : la vision de soi et le regard des autres ; 3. Les différents soi : soins personnels, compréhension de soi, reconnaissance de soi. À la fin de l'étude, on a appris la diversité de leurs expériences liées à la confrontation à l'homophobie, un sujet qui contribue à développer des propositions de soutien psychologique pour les personnes du mouvement lesbien qui se trouvent dans une situation de vulnérabilité résultant de la violence.



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Mots-clés : Lesbiennes, Préjugés, Discrimination ; Surmonter, psychologie phénoménologique-existentielle

Contemporary times have been characterized as a period of humanity in which the different, the diversity in general has deserved a deeper look from science and society itself. One of these groups concerns participants in the LGBTQIAPN+ movement around the world.

This acronym is literally translated as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender, the + sign means that, with regard to gender identity, other elements come in addition to these. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2018) removes all those who experience diversity regarding sexuality from the status of "sick". Thus, identity is a construct taken, nowadays, as structuring our ways of being, organizing our experiences of the world, representing nothing more than the imprisonment of human existence within previously given categories. Identities, as Trzán-Ávila (2019, p. 56) says, "are structured by hierarchies, concealment and even annihilation of ways of being that deviate from norms." This thought leads us to reflect that identities guide the fields of visibility and invisibility, that is, they determine what is shown as being and what is not shown as non-being and, thus, establish the fields of visibility or showing as possible. of phenomena is in itself the conditioning measure of phenomena (Cabral, 2018). In this way, we agree with Butler (2017, p. 16) when he reveals: "I prefer to exist in subordination than not to exist".

However, a paradox can be observed with regard to gender identity: at the same time that our world attributes a certain gender identity, this world is also a condition of possibility for other identities or "non-identity" to occur (Trzán -Ávila, 2019, p.57). Therefore, some questions already become necessary for reflection: What has gender identity diversity currently caused?



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This result is questioned by the possibility of reflecting that the individual, currently, is coercively impelled to adopt a gender identity for themselves. Our heteronormative society assumes that there are only two options available, being a man or being a woman, and that this adoption is directly related to and guided by your biological body. And when does diversity show itself? We recall Butler (2017, p. 44) who highlights: "the cultural matrix through which gender identity becomes intelligible requires that certain types of 'identity' cannot 'exist' - that is, those in which gender does not arise from sex and those in which the practices of desire do not 'arise' from either 'sex' or 'gender.' And when does 'deviation' occur?

People who 'deviate' from the hegemonically established gender norm are considered aberrations, including by segments of various knowledge.

And for those who transgress, social punishments are evident, from surgical corrections to criminalization, including pathologization, moral harassment, difficulties in obtaining and maintaining employment, violence and annihilation. Thus, homosexuals have been victims of homophobic actions that reverberate in our heteronormative society, considering them as unnatural, sick, maladjusted, aberrations.

And so, they are targets of a range of situations where they experience pain, suffering, physical and psychological violence, prejudice and obvious discrimination directed by members of society who 'do not accept' this other because they are 'different'. Once again, we refer to Butler (2016, p. 46) when he says: "those whose lives are not "considered" potentially regrettable and, therefore, valuable, are forced to bear the burden of hunger, underemployment, deprivation of legal rights and differentiated exposure to violence and death".

The experience of sexuality has been considered taboo in the development of humanity. From time immemorial to contemporary times,



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silence has been the greatest of all aspects when it comes to this very human, personal and therefore individual element and, given this, it deserves the respect of everyone around it.

It becomes more difficult when the diversity of gender identity is present. I am afraid to say that, the non-acceptance of how the other is and presents itself with regard to sexuality, in its aspects of lesbian, gay, transgender, intersexual and asexual people, much has been heard about violence due to gender identity, from this moment on identified under the bias of homophobia, transphobia and similar situations.

The media has continually intensified situations relating to prejudice and discrimination against people from the LGBTQIAPN+ community, often resulting in physical and psychological aggression and, unfortunately, often resulting in death.

However, people from the aforementioned movement, who suffered these situations themselves, carried out, at the time when the situations of homophobia and marginalization occurred, experiences of confrontation and moved forward in their historical construction. Today, when they look back, they can see that they overcame situations of violence resulting from prejudice and discrimination. However, even today, hundreds of young people have their right to sexual life restricted by a series of regulations, looks and attitudes that hurt, discriminate and invade their lives.

Thus, developing this theme allows us to understand how socially relevant it is, considering that the research could result in bringing ways of confronting and overcoming situations that are characterized by homophobia, enhancing in these young people who are currently suffering, the possibility of recognizing themselves and the ability to carry out the necessary confrontation and, with this, overcome the barriers of prejudice imposed by the social environment.



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Academically speaking, the relevance lies in the fact that from this study, we deepen the knowledge about these experiences of hate, most of the time cast on these so-called “different” people, and with this build scientific material that enhances the outlook of the future Psychology professional. and related areas on the situation of homophobia and violence directed at gender identity diversity.

Finally, we problematize the following questions: a) how did people from the lesbian community face situations of homophobia and violence due to their gender identity? b) What is it like to look back and see that you managed to overcome situations of this nature? What could they be saying to women who are going through similar situations?

Fulfillment, in this study, shows the ways in which members of the LGBTQIAPN+ movement, specifically lesbian women in Manaus and other states, have faced and overcome these issues that cast doubt on their own humanity, under the perspective of Martin Heidegger's Phenomenology.

Materials and Method

Study design

The research is qualitative in nature since it is considered that the study aims to understand the meanings of the experiences that are contained in the participants' speech. Therefore, its objective is the phenomenological description of how the experience of homophobia, prejudice and discrimination is perceived by lesbian women, in order to arrive at the meaning of their experiences. Because its concern is directed towards areas of life that cannot be measured, qualitative research focuses on explaining and understanding the dynamics of social relationships, processes and phenomena (Shaughnessy; Zechmeister & Zechmeister, 2012; Minayo, 2014). Thus, agreeing with this last author,



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the qualitative approach aims to work with meanings, motives, aspirations, beliefs, values and attitudes (Minayo, 2014).

Method

The phenomenological-psychological method developed by Giorgi was used (Giorgi & Sousa, 2010; Pereira & Castro, 2019). Through the individual interview, the participants were able to bring to light questions related to the guiding question: “What situations most impacted your trajectory as a lesbian woman?” In total, 5 interviews were carried out, which were intended to capture the meanings of their individual experiences reported in their speeches, adhering to Phenomenological-Existential Psychology.

Data collection and analysis

Amedeo Giorgi presents a method consisting of a descriptive component, following the same proposal as the phenomenological method of research in psychology, configured by four stages, explained in Giorgi and Souza (2010) and Pereira & Castro (2019): Stage 1 – Establishing the meaning of the Whole: After transcription, the first, and only, objective is to grasp the general meaning of the protocol. At this stage, the researcher simply intends to calmly read the complete transcript of the interview, where the researcher places himself in the attitude of phenomenological reduction. It does not intend to focus on fundamental parts, it does not pose interpretative hypotheses, just to have a general understanding of the descriptions made by the subject. Here, the main objective is to obtain a sense of the experience as a whole; Step 2 – Determination of Parts: Division of Units of Meaning: The investigator resumes reading the protocol, with a second objective: dividing it into smaller parts. The division has an eminently practical purpose. The division into parts, called Units of Meaning, allows for a more in-depth analysis. As the objective is to carry out a psychological



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analysis, and as the ultimate purpose of the analysis is to explain meanings, it is used as a criterion for the transition of meaning for the constitution of the parts (units of meaning); Stage 3 – Transformation of Units of Meaning into Expressions of a Psychological Character: The everyday language of the natural attitude of the participants undergoes transformation. Based on the applicability of phenomenological-psychological reduction and eidetic analysis, common sense language is then transformed into expressions that aim to clarify and explain the psychological meaning of the descriptions given by the participants. The objective of the method is to select and articulate the psychological meaning of the participants' experience, in relation to the object of investigation. Maintaining descriptive language, the researcher must be able to express and bring to light psychological meanings, which are implicit in the subjects' original descriptions. It is also at this moment that the interrelationship between the parts and the whole stands out as a methodological instrument; Step 4 – Determining the General Structure of Psychological Meanings: The researcher, making use of free imaginative variation, transforms the units of meaning into a general descriptive structure. The description of the most invariant meanings, called essential constituents of experience, contained in the units of meaning, as well as the relationships that exist between the latter, results in the elaboration of a general structure. The important thing is that the resulting structure expresses the essential network of relationships between the parts, so that the full psychological meaning can emerge. The final step of the method involves a synthesis of the units of psychological meaning. At this moment, this is what Martins and Bicudo (2005), Castro (2009), Pereira & Castro (2019), characterize as the elaboration of Thematic Categories, the synthesis of units of meaning.

Data collect



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Data collection was done through phenomenological interviews. Through it, the objective was to obtain detailed and concrete descriptions of their experiences from the participants. We sought to ensure how adequate the descriptions were so that from them it was possible to establish different structures of meanings of a psychological nature on the research topic (Giorgi & Sousa, 2010; Pereira & Castro, 2019). The interview was audio recorded and lasted from 30 (thirty) to 140 (one hundred and forty) minutes.

Participants

Five self-declared lesbian women were interviewed. A convenience sampling, given that the collaborators were from the researchers' circle of knowledge. The collaborators were invited to voluntarily participate in the research and sign the Free and Informed Consent Form.

Search Location

Online rooms on the Google Classroom platform and in person at the Existential Phenomenology laboratory at the Faculty of Psychology at the Federal University of Amazonas.

Data analysis

Theoretical parameters of Martin Heidegger's Phenomenology in the works *Being and Time*, *Hermeneutic Ontology of Facticity*, *On the way to Language*, *The foundation of the Metaphysics of customs: world, finitude and solitude* and the contribution of Castro (2021, 2023) from the *Clinic of Three Views*.

Ethical considerations

The project safeguarded the ethical aspects contained in resolutions 466/12 and 510/16. CAAE 40088620.8.0000.5020. The project was approved by CEP/UFAM.

Results and discussion



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From this moment on, the Thematic Categories created after the data analysis proposed by Giorgi & Sousa (2010) and Pereira & Castro (2019) will be presented.

1. Sexuality: temporalizing the trajectory

Walking through the interviews with the participants resulted, at this first moment, in understanding the pluridimensionality regarding sexuality. From their speeches, concepts related to: discovery of sexuality, verification of sexual orientation, certainty of sexual orientation emerge, explained below.

1.1 Unveiling sexuality

Sexuality. One of the primordial factors of the human being and, at the same time, difficult to understand and live with. The participants say that from a very early age they perceived themselves as “different”, that their view of other girls was different. Which allows us to infer that it was not a choice as some social instances put it, but something natural, of the person themselves.

Experiencing sexuality in a “different way” to what is usual, to what, as Heidegger (2015) said, is established, standardized, regulated, is indicative of self-questioning, as Simone tells us. For Castro (2021) it means looking back at yourself, without justification and making a decision.

But with the issue of sexuality, it starts a little earlier, so, I say much earlier, that I started to question myself when I was around 14 years old. It's not much, like, it's just, I think I started to realize that [...] maybe I didn't look at other women the way a woman would, but, like, I thought I had to [...] really try it out to I'm sure, and I wasn't too worried either. **(SIMONE)**

For Frida, however, it was the most intimate experience of affection with her friend who, in her view, began the entire process of reflecting on herself and her sexuality. The surprise situation comes to



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me and permeates me in such a way that my view of myself and others undergoes changes (Meira & Castro, 2023). And as Nayá tells us, she 'decided', that is, she realized that there was something different, but she continued on, even though she felt interested in both genders. Perceiving oneself as 'different' is a concept present in the speeches of members of the LGBTQIAPN+ community, as Meira, Façanha, Silva, Fernandes & Castro (2021) highlight in their study on sexuality and reveal that since childhood this view of the other, of same gender, is present, characterizing that it is not a choice, nor is it pathological to feel attracted to a person like me in terms of gender.

It's [...] good, when I was, in my childhood, right? Yes, I had a colleague who arrived, right? I think I was, I was about 5 years old, 6 years old, and then, we already had a little something there, right? Even, I think he kissed on the mouth, I think (laughs) (**FRIDA**)

I think that in my childhood, I wondered, right? That there was something, like, strange, there, you understand? Like, interest in both sexes, and that was it (**NAYÁ**)

And with this focus, on the issue of my sexuality, I think I discovered myself [...] like that, I think I always knew it, the classic, right? "I always knew". Since I was a child, I've said "Um [...] what do you mean this little friend of mine catches my attention?" (**EVE**)

1.2 Verification of sexual orientation

Understanding the dimension of sexual orientation is something or moment of great impact in the lives of the participants. It's a time for reflection, fit, division, naturalness.

As Meira & Castro (2023) tell us, the gaze turns completely on oneself. Simone reveals that after allowing herself to experience a same-sex relationship with two women, she looks at the experience and, consequently, at herself and realizes: "That's how I am".



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At the time I started again, I was working as a salesperson and my co-worker is a lesbian and encouraged me to download it. So, I downloaded it again and started and said that I only liked women. And then, I started talking to some girls, and left with two. And I started dating one of them. But, that's when I [...] really stopped and thought: "No, wait a minute, I don't think I like men." For the first time, like this. (SIMONE)

And looking at herself, understanding the lived world, the experience of sexuality, meant for Nayá, the resizing of being herself. As she tells us "she fit in". Now, this fit means that she understood the dimension of her sexuality in terms of gender. As Castro (2021) tells us, self-encounter takes place.

Then, the first time I kissed a girl [...] mercy, downhill, uphill, understand? Like [...] there, okay. Everything fell into place, everything fell into place. (NAYÁ)

However, the lesbian experience is not always experienced as a means of discovering oneself. Eva, in turn, did not accept it. She talks about "evil", that is, the heteronormativity that is very present culturally, manifesting itself. And the look at me is based on the look I cast on the other's look, as Castro (2021) and Silva & Castro (2023) presuppose.

She is [...] the first girl I liked, even had a crush on, right? A crush, which is said to have lasted 4 years (laughs). Very short, right? It was basically with her that I discovered myself, right? Because we knew each other since we were children, we studied at the same school for years. There, here I am reliving the evil, here. And then she [...] she was talking about the issue of her bisexuality, and I: "No, I'm straight. (EVA)

With Frida, it was exactly the opposite of all the others, as she decided to tell her mother about her feelings for another girl. She considered it natural, despite a whole movement that we know exists in



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cultures, to consider the emotional relationship with this characteristic as “mistaken”. For Heidegger (2015), Meira & Castro (2023), Silva & Castro (2023) this is an authentic movement, a movement of perceiving oneself in one's own existence.

[...] in fact, I told my mother, because I was liking a girl and not a boy.

So I thought it was very natural for me to go up to her and talk, right?

(FRIDA)

1.3 Certainty of guidance

Self-conflicts are continuous on the path to self-recognition regarding sexual orientation. Thus, excerpts from speeches present us with the paradox of liking or not liking, the certainty of not changing, the feeling that fulfills, a mixture of feelings, so that's it, the possibility of being happy

But I thought, not that it was obvious "What if, actually, it's because I never even liked it" and now I think it's more like that. (SIMONE)

And then, I was involved with a girl for four years. And that's when I knew for sure that I wasn't going to change anymore, because I liked being with a woman more than being with the boyfriends I had.

(FRIDA)

But my current girlfriend, she, was like that, the first time I saw her, I said "Wow, ma'am". Slope. Because I knew, my heart feels like I knew, I felt it here. Oh, my God, honestly! We create a feeling, like this, we really create affection. And she was in another relationship, but that feeling was mine, it belonged to me [...] But when I looked at it like that, I said "Mercy, as I am talarica" Because I wanted it because I wanted it. Then I saw that I said "Bro, it's over. Now I've discovered myself. Now I really know what I want, I know what I feel" And, it seems like [...] it gave me relief, you know? Like "That's right, I can't do anything. I know, I'm going to be kicked out of the house,



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that's okay" in my head, because [...] it's a mix of feelings, it's a mix of feelings that we can't understand, he knows? (NAYÁ)

Until a moment came when I saw that [...] so [...] there was nowhere for me to run, I had to make a choice, in my perception, today I see that people see it differently. And then I ended up, "So, that's it, right? Bye, God." It lasted a month because I saw that [...] man, it wasn't that, you know? I had a lot of thoughts that I could marry a woman, spend my whole life with a woman, but I wouldn't be able to live that with a man, you know? (EVE)

The human being, the greatest of all phenomena. Immersing yourself in sexuality means revealing yourself as a phenomenon, as a being-in-the-world full of possibilities. Heidegger (2015), Castro (2023), Meira & Castro (2023), Castro, Silva & Rodrigues (2023) allow us to understand the pluridimensionality of human existence and existence by arguing that situations cross us and launch us towards being who we have become. After all, we are beyond the factual, we are the facticity itself that moves us and drives us to reveal ourselves as people who, even in the face of various setbacks, continue to walk.

The unveiling of sexuality imbues these women with the possibility of self-recognition, which engenders, unless I am mistaken, the flight of the Phoenix, as Castro, Silva & Rodrigues (2023) quote us. From becoming themselves, appropriating their feelings as sexual beings, they broaden their view of themselves and their surroundings, allowing themselves to experience their sexuality without guilt, resentment, distortions of being themselves.

2 The search for acceptance: the self-gaze and the gaze of others

The experience of revealing sexuality provokes the search for acceptance. An acceptance that is not just due to the other's gaze in your direction, but self-acceptance itself. And in this context, two aspects were



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very present in the statements: self-prejudice and prejudice arising from others.

2.1 Self-prejudice

The look at themselves is dysfunctional, as found in the studies by Façanha, Silva, Meira & Castro (2021), Meira, Façanha, Silva, Fernandes & Castro (2021) when studying men and women from the LGBTQIAPN+ movement. Thus, when reflecting on their sexuality we find: a negative look, not working out at all, the other's age is an obstacle, the internal struggle of not being able to experience what they felt, non-acceptance, not being able to be who they were, a resource of religiosity to “take away the devil”.

Look at the negative, very negative. Positive. See what could be worked on. What do I have to adjust to get where I need to be? that has to be polished. that I have to leave behind, that no longer fits. It's not possible, like, there's no way to get here. I'm not going to achieve what I've been climbing since then. And I started to look back and be much more grateful. I have always been very grateful. (**CATHERINE**)

Dealing with the certainty of being LGBTQIAPN+ is dealing with insecurity in relational configurations, as in the case of Frida, who in her speech tells us that interference occurred. Even though he reported it to his mother as something natural, the experience of worthlessness is established in the sense of feeling incapable and even awkward in front of others. And my look at myself is one of disbelief, causing existential suffering from an inauthentic movement of being oneself (Castro, 2021).

Look, how did you respond to the person and so on? So, from then on, it was a milestone, like that, right? in my story, so far. So I said "Wow, I'm not good at anything, I don't know how to do anything" and then "No, I know how to do something, right? What do you know?" There it is. Oh my god, I was like, "No, it can't be like that, this has to



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change and stuff, I have to change." Then I started to get it into my head, you know. "I can't be like this" (**FRIDA**)

The pain of being oneself. Catarina did not accept the possibility of becoming emotionally involved with a woman. Married, one child, what would people say about her? Existential suffering reaches its maximum potential. Doubt, insecurity, the look of others. And corresponding to the look I cast on the other's gaze takes me away from myself, throws me into an unprecedented emotional whirlwind, since I seek to rely on what I believe the other wants from me and, in the meantime, I cancel myself out. , I lose myself, I become a person exhausted by transforming others into the greatest reference in my own life. I don't belong anymore. As Castro (2021) says, emotional turmoil is experienced through the lens of continuous pain and suffering.

But the internal fight with me continued, that I couldn't date my co-worker. The problem wasn't even dating, it was having feelings, having exchanges, relating, she was a woman. How, how was I going to explain it to people. I have a son, I have an image in society, how am I going to appear with a woman? This is crazy! Me, a woman? What will people think of me? My best friend, what will my best friend think of me? [...] I didn't have it, I don't have it, I don't have it, right? But I'm going to talk about what Catarina is like. No, I had no problem having friends, gay colleagues, dykes, lesbians, lgbtqia+, etc. But I had trouble accepting myself. I defend causes. I am the defender of the oppressed. Black, fat, short, tall, poor, gay, lesbian, everything, I defend it. I defend causes. To those who are not, I defend them. And I always defended myself, but when I saw myself, I would have to learn to defend myself too. And I didn't accept the fact that I was going through that, because it could also be a phase, maybe it is a phase. And then, I went back and forth, back and forth. (**CATHERINE**)



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With Nayá, it was no different to Catarina either. When asked about her gender preference, she hesitates and changes the direction of the conversation with the professional who accompanies her. The attitude is understandable. You don't want to cause discomfort in others. The other expects something "normativized" from her, "normal" behavior. Inauthenticity presents itself in the form of a negative response to the question asked. Even knowing what she really felt, she prefers to contest what was questioned. As Heidegger (2015) tells us, the impersonal also constitutes us as a being-in-the-world.

When I was going to see the psychologist, he once asked "Nayá, are you attracted to girls?" Then I was like, "No!" I was deep inside, "Yes, yes!" But I didn't want to get into that either, right? Then I said "No, no way" (**NAYÁ**).

Feeling affection for another woman is understood as an error, mistake, sin. It is clear in Eva's speech how much religion keeps people, especially those in the LGBTQIAPN+ movement, under the yoke of sin, immorality, and evil. The participant asks God to remove the feeling from her, considering that the "disciples of the Lord" excoriated the person who belonged to the aforementioned movement. The religious movement, once again, closes the doors of comprehensibility and throws people into dungeons of faith, where existential pain and suffering are the keynote of the experience (Meira & Castro, 2023; Castro & Meira, 2023; Silva & Castro, 2023).

And in that, I was already aware of my sexuality, so I was attracted to women, so I asked God to take that away from me, and so on. Whoever looks doesn't even think, right? (laughs). I asked God to remove it, and, like, the pastors, they had this issue of saying prayers to remove the demon of homosexuality, woman with woman, man with man, I was like "Take it from me, Lord" (EVA)

2.2 Acceptance of others, prejudice and discrimination



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The journey becomes more difficult when it comes to other people's views on the experience of sexuality. The reports show us that, despite initially experiencing fear, apprehension, mainly related to significant figures, father, mother, grandmother, the result of this perspective makes it possible to observe that talking to parents represented being able to experience sexuality in a milder way.

For Catarina to find this love that she even thought she didn't deserve, mobilized her existentially. She questions that people might not understand her involvement with Carol. Consider. Reflect. She realizes that it is not to follow what the other person thinks or says, but to live their emotions and feelings to the fullest. As Castro (2021) tells us, we live trapped in the prediction coming from others and forget that the journey belongs to us. And Catarina continues forward, regardless of the other person's gaze.

No one will want to be friends with you anymore" And I really bought into this idea. People won't want to be friends with me anymore. People won't want to talk to me anymore, people, like, if I get close to a woman she'll think that just because she's a woman, she'll think I'm into her. And it's not. So I was devastated, I sank, I sank, I was living a... living no, I was alone, that I I didn't have time to mourn. And then I met Carol, and we started to have a relationship. I separated, like, body, everything, everything. It was missing from the paper, which happened very quickly, it was a month, thanks to God. And [...] and [...] I was crazy about Carol, like, I don't know how to explain it to you, it was, but it's like, you know, it was very reciprocal, like, it was a lot, it was something I never [...] And then, I discovered, in fact, the meaning of friendship. That no matter what you are, no matter the color of your skin, no matter what you think, whoever is real will stay with you Regardless of what you are, what you have. And that there are different types of friendship. The one you can count on, the



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one you can laugh at, the one you'll just listen to, because she talks, talks, talks, talks, talks. The one who is the problem, life is never good, nothing is ever good in her life, nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing, everyone's life is good, but hers, nothing is good in her life . Then, it's up to you to consider. And when she welcomed me, accepted me, being who I was, our friendship became very strong, because we started talking about intimate things, like that, that we had never said before, and I, thinking, considered it in a way sister like that, she is a sister that life gave me to make the burden of walking lighter, as there are things that are heavy to carry **(CATHERINE)**.

But I'm a bit afraid of holding hands in public, etc. But I think it's also about... being a person, I've always been a more private person, but there's this fear... of someone looking dirty or something like that, especially those who go out with children [...] I went and sent an audio for my mother, talking like that, summarizing what had happened and telling her. Then she answered me, right? Good thing, it didn't matter, nanana, right? She loved me anyway. She is amazing. And then it's beautiful, that's it [...] And then I was very nervous "Dad, tananana, you know that I also like women, I don't know what" Then "No, my daughter, I know, you said that there once" **(SIMONE)**

And my mother, she said that she didn't want me to be a lesbian because these people are discriminated against in society and that these people never have a place in society [...] But anyway, we stayed and I thought that It was just going to be that, and then we started to get involved, more seriously and so on, because things progressed. Then I told my mother, right? I told my mother that I was dating someone like that, like that [...] And then, okay, my mother started respecting me, accepting my girlfriend at home. And nowadays, she has like a daughter, right? In fact, I never asked,



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never... anything. Normal. Me, what do I hear her saying, right? The other day I heard her saying on the phone that she had had another daughter [...] I thought they wouldn't accept it and so on, people I was really close to, really because... because of that, right? Thinking that they would really discriminate, that they would be ashamed to walk. But the ones I really consider didn't disappoint. They didn't really disappoint. **(FRIDA)**

Official, right? My parents, my family know, people know, right? We let go, practically like that, so people, they know. And people's judgment, in the majority, in the minority of times, because most of us don't even trust them. But we see that judgment. We see those frowning faces, we see those comments, you know? And even if we try not to care - I say I don't care, but I do care - because when it hurts someone we love, it's horrible, especially when it comes from a person we like, like, a comment from a mother, from father, sisters, like that [...] And it's continuous, you know? This prejudice, like in these communities, especially mine, which I say, because I live with it, I live with it, I live with it, right? Did you understand? We see. And as an indigenous person, like, my goodness, when I get there, what will they want to call me, right? They'll call me everything that's no good. But that's okay, too, right? Yeah... I don't respect or accept their opinion, I'll draw attention to it, but let them talk, I'll advise, you know? [...] On that day, I think it was election day, on October 30th, October 30th. I took it, I had a beer, to give myself courage, to do it, I was like "UH, I'm going there, it's now". I lay down next to her and started... starting a topic, right? Then I told him. I said "Mom, can I tell you something?" Nervous, I didn't even know how to react. "I like girls". And I kept quiet, like. **(NAYÁ)**

my grandmother, she is a totally person, everything... like, everything from... every minority that she can attack, she is attacking, you know?



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Like, one time I was watching Caldeirão do Huck, and then she said, "Look, this old woman is the mother of that fagot who died", who was Paulo Gustavo's mother (laughs). Like... but I love my grandmother, despite her great flaws [...] being the town gay, the town lesbian, or "Ah, your mother, poor thing, she is the mother of a homosexual". And I started thinking, right? It's very stigmatizing, from what I observe, right? That effeminate gay. For example, my family is from the interior of Pará, right? My maternal family. And then, during my childhood, what there was most was a history of homosexuals, in a very stigmatized way. [...] and then he told me about his daughter, I took advantage of the fact that we were exchanging secrets and I [...] "So" It was the right time. I told him that I was discovering it and that [...] that was it for me, you know? The issue of me being attracted to women [...] And I would sneak out of my mother to go on dates. I was 15 years old. And then I got home after the day of the robbery, "Man, I can't sneak out! I could have died." And I: "my mother didn't even know where I was, so it's better for me to tell her and for us to have a transparent... relationship than to hide it" So I told her. (**EVA**)

Being-in-the-world is being-with-the-other, as recommended by Heidegger (2015). In this way, relational configurations, especially family ones, experience tremors from the moment they reveal their sexual orientation. Studies have shown how much the revelation of who one is, with regard to sexuality, initially causes distances and dissensions. However, everyday life takes, *pari passu*, another connotation, considering that the experience of dialogue allows rough edges to be smoothed (Façanha, Silva, Meira & Castro (2021); Meira, Façanha, Silva, Fernandes & Castro (2021); Ferreira, Fernandes, Silva, Meira, Souza & Castro (2022)).

What could initially be considered an inauthentic relationship, becomes, when driven by the dialogicity of existence, resized and guided



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by perspectives where the relationship strives for authenticity. Castro (2021; 2023); Meira & Castro (2023); Benício, Gomes & Castro (2023) highlight in their studies that from a relationship that is built under the bias of dialogue, people have been able to extrapolate situations of pain and existential suffering that were initially mistreated into discrimination and prejudice.

Castro (2009; 2017; 2021; 2023) endorses that situations that provoke anguish provide a true dive into existentiality and, most of the time, throw being-in-the-world into unimaginable dimensions of suffering. And this author understands that moments experienced in this way characterize anguish as the storm of being. This can be observed in some of the statements made by the participants.

3 The various selves: self-care, self-understanding, self-recognition

Everyday life is full of experiences that drive people to recognize themselves as living, as existing. Considering that existing comes from the Greek ek-sistir, it means the opening of each one to oneself, to the surroundings, to life. Consequently, this process will allow you to open your eyes to yourself, to believe in possibility, to reveal yourself.

3.1 Self-care: looking at me reveals itself

The experiences of these women allow them to look at themselves. They come to understand that they need, above all, to look at themselves with generosity. Observe yourself with potential, with perspectives. They allow themselves to be themselves as they walk. The reports bring us questions related to the feeling of the relationship working, the need to leave the relationship, the search for help, self-respect.

Looking at yourself takes on another dimension. The affective experience allows Simone and Frida to go beyond themselves, despite the insecurity that the relationship provides. They decide to start dating.



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It puts into effect what Heidegger (2015) expresses as serenity. Which does not represent calm. On the contrary, life is movement. And as Castro (2023) tells us, we cannot control the existential movement, we experience it, we experience it.

I think another thing, from experience, is that, normally, at work, I'm a closed person, but like that, I always consider whether I can mention it or not, because I'm still afraid of having a bad reception, he knows? [...] And dykes are f... [expletive], right? I tried not to make it so fast because I had just gotten out of another relationship, but it ended up being, like, it's f... [expletive]. But, anyway, so far it has worked well [...] (**SIMONE**).

Yes, and to live. Then I looked at her and she said "Come!". Then I said, "Really? So I'm going to get my things, I packed everything and she [the mother] saw me, right? She [the mother] saw me packing things. Then, she [the mother] didn't say anything, she was silente (**FRIDA**)

For Nayá, self-care comes in the sense of crying out for help. The self-imposed silencing took on unimaginable proportions. She asked for help from those around her and was promptly welcomed. Her silence, she screamed. And, when speaking towards others, it was up to them to receive encouragement, acceptance, listening and care. As Castro (2023) reveals in the Clínica dos Três Olhares, it is from this generous listening that reception and care become broader and more effective.

When I really came out as a lesbian, it was scary, you know? Too much fear, because [...] it's complicated, for example, [...] an indigenous family. Like, it's a brutality thing, there's no such thing as [...] I wasn't raised with affection, I was raised with a lot of brutality [...] When I reached that phase, at the height of that [...] From that madness of wanting to end my life, I managed to open up, I managed to tell people that I needed help. I had to scream, understand? "I need



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help!" [...] Then I took it, I said "Wow, I'm going to die when I tell my mom, I'm going to die" I just wanted that peace. My mother was already suspicious. Everyone was already suspicious, right? Wow, no one is stupid. Everyone was suspicious. **(NAYÁ)**

From the moment Eva understands that self-affirmation is completely directed towards the other person she lives with, she takes responsibility for herself. She realizes that it is in her that the possibility of becoming a possible-being resides (Castro, 2021) and, from this understanding onwards, life-being-lesbian takes on another connotation, the freedom of being able to be herself.

No, at the time I wanted it like that, because when your parents are getting divorced you end up clinging to something [...] Yes! (laughs). And for those who matter. Like, I'll never tell my grandmother this, I don't care. Then, I started dating, I was taking my girlfriend home, right? And then, there was a day, when I'm a very responsible person, out of nowhere I went to the cafe at night, 10pm at night, "What if you sleep at home tonight? [...] And I think everything that I wanted to hug that Eva and say "It's going to be okay. You don't need [...] to assert yourself, you don't need to show people who you are, the important thing is that you feel good about yourself and respect yourself", because I think I disrespected myself a lot, yeah [...] and I put myself in situations that weren't productive, you know? Today, when you have self-love, and when you respect yourself, you put more limits on things and you don't let situations get that far **(EVA)**

3.2 The stereotypes of lesbian existence

Life takes on different contours, especially with regard to immersion in the L-world which, as can be seen in the statements, has very different language and attitudes. And in coexistence, you encounter: lesbian male chauvinism, the surroundings' conception of lesbian women's behavior.



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Understanding the lesbian world means entering into issues that are very specific to the L-world. As an example, Eva tells us that machismo, the way of referring to women, denotes how heteronormativity is very present in this social niche, where stereotypes, discrimination and silencing are very present. We consider here that the lesbian movement maintains some behaviors that they exhort in their relationships with the male gender. The discomfort regarding the conception of the lesbian role in their relationships is noticeable in the participants' statements. Taking responsibility for being who they are without the need to throw themselves into the impersonal, into non-being themselves, stereotyping their way of being in order to be accepted by this part of the LGBTQIAPN+ community. Castro (2021) understands that in relational configurations we need to remain attentive to the fact of giving visibility to being-who-I-really-am.

Exactly! I wanted so much. And then you end up reproducing, it's [...] you know this gender violence that, men, machismo, there are a lot of lesbian women who are very sexist, you know? And she's a woman. That it is very sexist, that it keeps reproducing this gender violence. And then, when I saw these things, and I saw "Wow, what ugly language to treat a woman. What an ugly way to treat a woman, without emotional responsibility", you know? Then I was like "No. No. It's better for me to do my own thing, understand myself" [...] you bring the rules of heteronormativity into the LGBT community. So there was a lot of this thing [...] like, I'm sorry for the term, but it's the term we used, right? From the butch, the lesbian, the dyke, the fancha. And as I'm small, thin and delicate, they kept calling me passive, that I would never, my God (laughs), like, like I would never be able, sexually, to give pleasure to a woman, basically, you know? and that I would be passive and I would be a, like, dominated,



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submissive person. Then I felt like I was much smaller than my other friends, because they had this whole fancha thing, you know? (**EVA**).

Frida, in turn, reveals how uncomfortable it is to declare oneself a lesbian due to the view that people in general, especially the female gender, have, that perhaps, by calling oneself a lesbian, it already brings desire to the one to whom it is spoken. The discomfort is existential, and, given the dimension it reaches, it can culminate in the silencing of corporeality, in self-isolation (Meira & Castro, 2023).

my friend also who grew up with me, a cousin friend. I was scared to tell her too, right? Because we had grown up together and then there's that question of thinking "Oh, you like me and stuff", because that's what happens, right? We really think that sometimes the person, [...] there's someone hanging out with us, a woman, we, today, we ask out and think we're already into it, right? [...] And then, for me, that was the culmination, right? I couldn't take it anymore, I was feeling really bad. And then, in the morning I got it in my head that a lesbian doesn't have to be that woman who dresses like a man [...] (**FRIDA**).

Assuming a stereotype originating from the lesbian community leads to separation, considering that, as Catarina tells us, presenting oneself with masculine aspects causes repulsion. And being-with-the-other starts to be lived, as Heidegger (2015) tells us, under the character of the disabled being-with.

One fine day, a girl came close to me, after Manu, and then I understood my repulsion, with masculine aspects, which is what we call a truck driver, right? (**CATHERINE**)

3.3 Beyond any facticities: my being reveals itself.

As self-appropriation occurs, changes also become present in this journey. The speeches bring us these transformations in the eyes of each of the participants: from reading to film, the possibility of work, the search



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for companionship and partnership based on the example of other women in college, the continuous search for oneself, the certainty of having achieved.

One thing that I have, which is very current, is that I have a lot of sapphic books, and I miss more sapphic books a little. Like, I also like reading gay books, right? But, like this, I like the sapphics more because I relate more to the story. But they have a lot, I at least, from what I understand, I think there are a lot more books about gay relationships than there are sapphic ones. I miss books and series too. You don't see sapphic series achieving as much success as gay ones, right? Like "Heartstopper", which I love, but like that, I wish there was [...] And so, today I'm sure that I really don't like men. I remember that I sighed, for heartthrobs, like that, in series, and so on. And today, it's very difficult for me to find a handsome man like that. Looking at a man and saying "That man is handsome", I can do it [...] but it's [...] very difficult, you know? It changed my view of things a lot, realizing that I am a lesbian and that I never liked it. (SIMONE)

So she thought I would be the same, but thank God the world has changed, right? Some people also followed this progress and we see that it is the LGBT community, these people are included in companies, everywhere nowadays. (FRIDA)

And here at college, you end up having several experiences, several voices, I can see, for example, there is a student here who is 40 years old, she is married to a woman, and I was like "Wow! She is 40 years old and is married to a woman!" It's f... [expletive], you know? Women having long-lasting relationships, you know? Of you, I had never seen a woman married to another woman, ever. And then I was like, "Wow, what the f... [expletive]." And then, it helped me to have, to have greater excitement, so, initially, to see several other realities, not just those of teenagers, you know? But from adults, even within the



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community [...] it's like, I think I worked on this in therapy, in the sense that my sexuality is a part of me, but it's not [...] it doesn't represent me completely, I'm not my sexuality, like, I'm not going to define myself by the people I interact with, you know? But I think that as I really wanted to prove myself, for me, it ended up being a big issue, nowadays not [...] my dream is to be a married woman. No, it's because it's not a dream, understand? But the dream is to have a stable relationship where I can share my daily life with a woman, it's something I really want, you know? It's a partnership, a companionship, and I see that sometimes we want all of this right away, but I think it's a constructed thing. And I think the good thing is, I'm still building myself, I'm not yet in the final phase of discovering myself and that's it. I'm still discovering myself, and I think that doing this my way and one day being able to reach and fulfill my dreams, is something that motivates me, in college. And follow. Maybe my sexuality ended up being something that drives me forward, too. And that's it. (EVE)

And when you take ownership of yourself, the other cannot access you easily unless you allow it, because you know yourself to the point that the other cannot reach you anymore, you know your limits, your desires. You are inaccessible unless you allow others to access you. And there will always be in every corner, the Catarina that people think they know, the Catarina that only I know and the Catarina that few know and the Catarina that even I don't know. I'm walking to meet her. (CATHERINE)

Man, I believe that my life is [...] I have a second life. Why does it seem like a Nayá that I don't even [...] know? I discovered over time, he died [...] he died in 2021, he died. Nayá died in 2021. And I was reborn, I was born to really live. Because that year, 2021, for me, was the worst year, you know? And my childhood, I was bullied a lot,



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right? Looking at today, and seeing everything I asked of God, everything I fought for, because it was with my effort too, I achieved it (**NAYÁ**)

Experiencing the L-world is realizing in oneself the Heideggerian potential of being-in-the-world. What we affirm from this meaning is that these women resized their being-themselves, brought to them the perspective and the possibility of being who they became. This movement Heidegger (2015) understands as authenticity, that is, even in the face of the facticities engendered in their lives, they were predisposed to immerse themselves in them and, hence, taking the reins of destiny became the meaning of existing.

Studies related to the sexuality of people who are members of the LGBTQIAPN+ movement signal the importance and urgency of taking their lives beyond any gaze, any situations that try to make them smaller, less capable. On the contrary, the more they can accept who they are, how they are and the human being they have become, the greater the probability of understanding beings-of-possibilities (Façanha, Silva, Meira & Castro (2021); Meira, Façanha, Silva, Fernandes & Castro (2021); Ferreira, Fernandes, Silva, Meira, Souza & Castro (2022); Castro, Silva & Rodrigues (2023).

Final considerations

Although human beings are full of diversity in their way of living and understanding sexuality, a limited and prejudiced view still prevails over society, disregarding the entire LGBTQIAPN+ movement in the search for visibility and the right to exist. This right is being violated in the form of homophobia.

In the case of this research, the focus on lesbian women also explains an old and still current issue related to gender, in which behavior considered as feminine is expected, and when leaving this category, it generates strangeness and invalidates the way of being individual and



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subjective. We then investigated these people's understanding of their own history and the discrimination they suffered.

In their speeches, situations of experiences, reflections, self-prejudice, the importance of validating others, the role of representation, the fears of being in a prejudiced world, the uncertainties of the future, self-understanding on a journey that has not yet ended are highlighted. Being in contact with these women opened up the opportunity to understand points of similarity and divergences, showing that each person has a way of facing events, even if they belong to the same community.

It was noted that the support network, formed mainly by family and friends, is essential on this journey, and that being open to dialogue is necessary. Furthermore, the recognition of lesbians in multiple spaces contributes to comprehensive perspectives of not only themselves, but others about them. Working on self-knowledge also freed them from their fears and made them more self-aware of their possibilities. Thus, it is essential to develop practices that can encompass these meanings, a more plural discussion of sexualities in environments, especially at school, considering the discovery phase and afflictions of this environment.

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