

SUICIDE AND MASCULINITIES: AN ANALYSIS THROUGH GENDER AND SEXUALITIES¹

Felipe de Baére ^{2,3}, Orcid: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1270-4887>

Valeska Zanello ², Orcid: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-2531-5581>

ABSTRACT. The Brazilian suicidal behavior epidemiology, in what concerns to gender, is analogous to most countries in the international scenario, according to the World Health Organization survey, with 172 nations. In Brazil, the number of suicide deaths is three to four times higher among men and, in addition, research shows that the prevalence of self-extermination attempts may be higher in the male sex-diverse population. Based on the statistical data that infer gender and sexuality issues related to the psychological suffering of men, the present research aimed to qualitatively analyze, through the theories of masculinities, the biographical reports of gay, bisexual and heterosexual men who have already manifested suicidal behavior. The intention was to focus on the contexts of suffering that led the participants to ideations and attempts at self-extermination. In the end, the categories identified point to similarities and distinctions in the narratives of each sexual orientation group and show how the non-correspondence to hegemonic masculinity is expressed in the studied sexualities.

Keywords: Suicide; masculinity; sexuality.

SUICÍDIO E MASCULINIDADES: UMA ANÁLISE POR MEIO DO GÊNERO E DAS SEXUALIDADES

RESUMO. A epidemiologia brasileira do comportamento suicida, no que tange ao gênero, é análoga à maioria dos países no cenário internacional, de acordo com a pesquisa da Organização Mundial de Saúde, envolvendo 172 nações. No Brasil, o número de óbitos por suicídio é de três a quatro vezes maior entre os homens e, além disso, pesquisas revelam que a prevalência de tentativas de autoextermínio pode ser maior na população sexo-diversa masculina. A partir dos dados estatísticos que inferem questões de gênero e de sexualidade relacionadas ao sofrimento psíquico de homens, a presente pesquisa teve como escopo analisar qualitativamente, por meio das teorias das masculinidades, relatos biográficos de homens gays, bissexuais e heterossexuais que já manifestaram o comportamento suicida. O intuito foi dar enfoque nos contextos de sofrimento que levaram os sujeitos às ideações e tentativas de autoextermínio. Ao final, as categorias identificadas apontam para similaridades e distinções nas narrativas de cada grupo de orientação sexual e evidenciam a forma como a não correspondência à masculinidade hegemônica se expressa nas sexualidades estudadas.

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² Universidade de Brasília (UnB), Brasília-DF, Brazil.

³ Email: felipebaere@gmail.com



Palavras-chave: Suicídio; masculinidade; sexualidade.

SUICIDIO Y MASCULINIDADES: UN ANÁLISIS A TRAVÉS DEL GÉNERO Y DE LAS SEXUALIDADES

RESUMEN. La epidemiología brasileña del comportamiento suicida, con respecto al género, es análoga a la mayoría de los países en el escenario internacional, de acuerdo con la investigación de la Organización Mundial de la Salud, con 172 naciones. En Brasil, el número de muertes por suicidio es de tres a cuatro veces mayor entre los hombres y, además, investigaciones revelan que la prevalencia de intentos de suicidio puede ser mayor en la población sexodiversa masculina. Con base en los datos estadísticos que infieren las cuestiones de género y sexualidad relacionadas con el sufrimiento psicológico de los hombres, la presente investigación tuvo como objetivo analizar cualitativamente, a través de las teorías de la masculinidad, los relatos biográficos de hombres homosexuales, bisexuales y heterosexuales que ya manifestaron conductas suicidas. La intención fue centrarse en los contextos de sufrimiento que llevaron a los participantes a ideas e intentos de autodestrucción. Al final, las categorías identificadas señalan similitudes y distinciones en las narrativas de cada grupo de orientación sexual y muestran cómo la falta de correspondencia con la masculinidad hegemónica se expresa en las sexualidades estudiadas.

Palabras clave: Suicidio; masculinidad; sexualidad.

Introduction

Studies on masculinities intensified in the 70s and 80s, in the wake of the feminist movement. In this theoretical field, two currents are observed: one that works with the signs of masculinity as the essence of men, in archetypal terms; another that is based on feminist thinking, which understands gender as an analytical category for observing power relationships, both in the comparison of men and women and among men themselves (Zanello, 2018). The second perspective points to a hierarchy of masculinities, in which the one at the top is known as 'hegemonic masculinity' (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2013). The current representative of this masculine category is the white, cisgender, heterosexual, sexually active, productive and prosperous man.

Since masculinity is constituted by permanent social proof, its validity is crossed by frequent tests, whose main and unifying rule, as pointed out by Kimmel (2016, p. 106, authors emphasis), is also the most arduous: "[...] whatever the variations of race, class, age, ethnicity or sexual orientation, being a man means 'not being like women'". Thus, anti-femininity is at the heart of historical and current concepts of masculinity (Kimmel, 2016).

The sociologist Daniel Welzer-Lang (2001) points out that the legitimacy of a man in his group is not restricted to the denial of femininity, but also to its striking depreciation. Therefore, it is necessary that man, in search of his place of belonging, performs misogyny as a passport to what he calls 'House of Men', the set of monosexual environments, in which gender education of boys is structured from an early age.

When considering the theoretical contributions that masculinity studies bring to the clinic, Zanello (2018) proposes the 'efficacy dispositif' as an analytical category for understanding suffering in the male experience. According to the author, in the Brazilian society, men subjectify themselves from this dispositif, which is based on sexual and labor virility.

Compulsory sexual virility consists of two opposing points: the positive, related to the production and exhibition of active sexuality performances; and the negative, which includes the prohibitions on signs that put this virility in check (Zanello, 2018). In the positive field, there are the impositions of identity that claim to be the true man the one whose potency is proven by the constant demonstration of a sexual performance. The enhancement of the role of penetrator as a symbol of active sexual virility is opposed to any anal pleasure and experience. Therefore, penetrability is the negative of sexual virility and deprives men of their male social status (Saez & Carrascosa, 2016).

As the man sexual activity is represented by strength, power and domination, there is the enhancement of the figure of the penetrator (active role) and the disqualification of the penetrated (passive role). In this sense, because the bodies of women are seen as the place of enjoyment and penetration of men, the representation of passivity and femininity is associated with homosexual men, as if they, when relating affectionately and erotically with other men, were renouncing the masculinity. Therefore, even though all men enjoy social privileges compared to women, non-heterosexuality grants a place of inferiority to certain masculinities (Borrillo, 2010).

Labor virility, in turn, is built by the exaltation of productivity and the accumulation of wealth as signs of masculinity. Since the changes in the means of production based on capital, the role of labor has been redimensioned, becoming relevant not only as a means of support, but also as a moral value for the worker, a criterion for assessing the dignity of a man. When determining for themselves the enjoyment of public space, men began to exercise the role of provider of private space, and their status in the House of Men rises as they accumulate wealth and show their prosperity (Zanello, 2018).

Therefore, it is considered a 'true' man who demonstrates to be a worker/provider and who actively plays his sex life. And even though work and sexuality are identity dimensions in their lives, there are subjects who will not correspond to the hegemonic standards of these fields, either due to unemployment, low productivity or low-paid activities, as well as having a dissident sexual orientation (Zanello, 2018).

With regard to sexual dissent, Zanello (2018) points out that the subversion of the sexuality dispositif does not necessarily subvert the gender dispositifs. However, it gives them specific configurations (Baére, 2018). In other words, on the one hand, even though many subjects call themselves gays and lesbians, there is a list of normative performances that bring them closer to heterosexual people (Baére, Zanello, & Romero, 2015). On the other hand, the dynamics of the functioning of the efficacy dispositive are challenged by issues different from those of heterosexuals. In the case of men, since virilities (sexual and labor) guarantee their identity preservation, there is a permanent effort to ensure them, which usually leads to the psychic illness of many subjects when this is not possible (Windmüller, 2016).

According to Santos and Castejon (2016), the aggressions suffered in socialization spaces; the distancing of parents as a symbol of identity emancipation; the silence and isolation that denote self-sufficiency are attitudes that lead men to psychological suffering, which can culminate in the manifestation of suicidal behavior. In the case of men whose

sexuality is dissident, these factors become even more intense, either by silencing their desires, or by aggression as a form of punishment against any traits considered socially as feminine.

In Brazil, the number of deaths by suicide among men is almost four times higher than among women. According to the epidemiological bulletin of the Ministry of Health, released in 2017, between 2011 and 2016, there were 62,804 deaths from self-extermination in the country. Of this total, 21% were women and 79% men. These values do not refer strictly to the Brazilian phenomenon, but to a worldwide trend, in which the death rate from suicide among men is 3.5 times higher than that of women in high-income countries, and 1.6 higher in low- and median-income countries (Organización Mundial de la Salud [OMS], 2014)⁴. As sexual virility is an identity component for mostly men, the dissident sexualities also present high epidemiological rates of suicide attempts and deaths.

International publications point to the greatest vulnerability to suicide among self-declared homosexual and bisexual people, with the presence of certain symptoms, among them depressive states, anxiety and internalized homophobia among the participants (Plöderl et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2014). If studies on suicide include sexual difference, there is a scarce number of studies in the Brazilian scenario that proposes to investigate the association between dissident sexuality with suicidal behavior (Da Silva & Barbosa, 2014; Teixeira-Filho & Rondini, 2012).

In Brazil, the official survey of the number of deaths from suicide among the LGBT population is carried out by the Gay Group of Bahia (GGB), due to the absence of mechanisms to record these occurrences in the Mortality Information System (SIM), from Datasus. The reports produced by the GGB show the growth of violent deaths in this population, and in the last publication, related to the year 2017, the highest value since the beginning of this survey was recorded, with 445 deaths (Grupo Gay da Bahia [GGB], 2017). Among the causes of these deaths, suicide ranks third (58 cases), behind firearms and bladed weapons, with 136 and 111 cases, respectively.

Considering the causes of violent deaths, self-extermination, as a limit expression of psychological suffering, when investigated from a gender perspective, can provide another look at the field of suicide (Jaworski, 2010). Thus, it is relevant to understand the complex mechanisms that drive a large number of men to suicide. Although research expresses statistical values that denote greater susceptibility of non-heterosexual people to suicidal behavior, it is necessary to investigate, from the perspective of theories of masculinities (Badinter, 1993; Welzer-Lang, 2001), how the non-correspondence to hegemonic ideals intensifies this behavior among gay and bisexual men.

When considering the reflections above, the present study aimed to analyze the life stories and personal experiences of gay, bisexual and heterosexual men who manifested suicidal behavior, with the purpose of determining how the efficacy dispositifworks (Zanello, 2018) in these subjects and their relationship with self-extermination. The focus was not on the multiplicity of factors that led individuals to attempt suicide, but on the description of the contexts of suffering resulting from the social imposition of certain gendered performances.

⁴ According to the OMS (2014), there is a large difference in the rate of suicide deaths by sex according to the region. The regional ratio in low- and median-income countries ranges from 0.9 in the Western Pacific region to 4.1 in the Europe region.

Method

After approval by the Research Ethics Committee in Human and Social Sciences of the University of Brasília (IH/UnB), with opinion number 2,047,212, a virtual public call was made in order to invite participants to the interviews. The public invitation was made on social networks, in order to avoid indications that could embarrass the suggested person, due to the work themes (suicidal behavior and sexual orientation). The interviews were scheduled as interest in participation was signaled. Initially, the expectation of the number of participants was two subjects for each sexual orientation. However, until the end of the last group of interviewees (heterosexuals), it was possible to conduct more interviews in the other two. In the end, nine interviews were carried out with cisgender men: four self-declared gay men (G), three self-declared bisexual men (B) and two self-declared heterosexual men (Ht).

The age of the interviewees ranged between 19 and 28 years, with an average of 24 years. Four are from the Federal District, two are from the State of Piauí, one from the State of Minas Gerais, one from the State of Ceará and one from the State of São Paulo. The nine respondents made no mention of a specific family income, but all claimed to be from middle-class families. Seven respondents are undergraduate students and two are already graduated from federal universities, one of them with a recently completed master's degree at a public university. Only one interviewee declared himself black during the interview, while the others did not mention the race, probably because they are brown and white. The marital status of the nine interviewees is single and, in terms of relationships, only two said they were engaged (01 gay and 01 heterosexual).

The research took place through open interviews, using triggering questions 'Tell me your story' or 'Tell me about your life', so that the other questions were raised from the content brought by the interviewee. However, when there was no specific information related to the research topic and/or there was no deepening in the areas of suicidal behavior and sexual orientation experiences, guiding questions were used, such as 'Tell me more about it' and 'How so?'. Despite being poignant to talk about this theme, there were no interurrences (such as convulsive crying, crises etc.) during the interviews.

The interviews took place between October and December 2017, in a room at the Integrated Laboratory for Graduate Studies and Experimental Research in Psychology with Humans (LIPSI), on the Darcy Ribeiro campus, University of Brasília. The average duration of the interviews was 01 hour. The audios were recorded in full for later transcription and analysis. The transcriptions took place between December 2017 and January 2018 and, at the end of this stage, categorical content analysis was performed according to Bardin (2011). Two researchers carried out, separately, the full reading and analysis of the interviews for a previous survey of the themes. From these listed themes, they met to deliberate on the categories found.

The content was assessed in each of the three sexual orientation groups (heterosexual, bisexual and homosexual) and subsequently compared to each other. The purpose was to observe if there were specificities in the information, as well as similarities and differences in the experiences of each participant. The results were analyzed in the light of theories of masculinities (Badinter, 1993; Welzer-Lang, 2001; Zanella, 2018).

Results and discussion

Through the content analysis of the interviews, in the three sexual orientations, four categories were listed, namely: (1) socialization space; (2) I am different: what now?; (3) labor virility; (4) loss of gains from a woman’s love dispositif. Although certain categories were found in more than one sexual orientation, their expressiveness was different in each one. The distribution is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of the four categories found in the interviews

Gays	Bisexuals	Heterosexuals
Socialization spaces		Loss of gains from a woman’s love dispositif
I do not belong: what now?		
Labor virility		

Source: The author.

Next, a description of the four categories found and excerpts from the interviews that exemplify them. The fragments of the narratives were identified with the following acronyms (G) gay, (B) bisexual and (Ht) heterosexual.

1) Socialization spaces

This category is related to the cultural and social aspects that determine the paths of subjectification, through the directives about what is considered to be a man in society. Therefore, the ‘socialization space’ refers to what comes from outside and restricts, shapes and imposes itself. In other words, these are contexts that involve experiences of violence and exclusion. Identified in the group of gays and bisexuals, here we highlight the way in which the environments of interaction reproduce the functioning of the House of Men. In them, any performances considered or constructed as feminine are punished, since masculinity is based on misogyny (Welzer-Lang, 2001).

It is in the socialization spaces where the traits, the postures, the characteristics read as deviants from the virile masculinity become the target of the correction mechanisms. “I had a difficulty in socializing with other children because I had mannerisms, because my voice was very soft, very nasal. So, in the most varied spaces, I experienced situations of homophobia” (G4). The punishment at the House of Men was very present in the interviewees’ discourse, mainly at school, which proved to be the place where the most homophobic violence was managed, as already mentioned by other studies (Albuquerque & Williams, 2015). “I was playing with them (girls) and one of the big boys threw a stone on my forehead. And he started shouting a bunch of things, like ‘faggot’, ‘sissy, get out of here’, ‘become a man’” (G4, emphasis added).

For groups that are commonly targets of violence in school institutions, returning home is an encouragement, as it is possible to find support and openness to share the aggressions suffered with the family. However, regarding the experience of non-heterosexual and/or effeminate subjects, this consoling environment is not always possible, as discrimination is present within the victim's own home (Schulman, 2012). "I knew that I could not tell anyone in my family that these hours would be our biggest support. That all this (depression) was because of my insecurity about who I am" (G1). In this report, we see how homophobia converts a discriminatory social issue into an individual experience, that is, an internalized homophobia that does not allow the statement of who one is for the family.

According to the reports, the male parental figure was the one who manifested most explicitly in the statement of what the interviewees could or could not perform. "I always heard from him (father) that if he saw two men kissing on the street he would hit, that he thought it was a sin, that they really had to die" (G4). The conception of the father as responsible for the manly teachings goes back to the Roman period (Thuillier, 2013). Even today, the father of the House of Men is the herald, "[...] the first man to assess the boy's male performance, the first pair of male eyes before which he tries to prove himself. Those eyes will follow him for the rest of his life" (Kimmel, 2016, p. 111).

The imposed virility and the absence of shelter places in childhood and adolescence usually predispose to the manifestation of suicidal behavior among young assumed homosexuals and/or effeminate men (Plöderl et al., 2014). According to the narratives, it was only after entering higher education that it was possible to alleviate psychological suffering, as in university environments there was contact with progressive discourses, which have a good reception among the sex-diverse community. They are transitional spaces, in which LGBT subjects come to accept differences and envision the right to exist in their otherness. In addition, when they find collectives and places for political debates, many choose to join the composition of these groups, which allows for a broad redefinition of homoeroticity and the development of personal resources for self-preservation. "Sometimes I was very depressed, wanting to die. But at the same time, I linked myself to collective projects. I feel very connected to the collective projects that I get involved in and they are extremely therapeutic for me" (G2).

Regarding the category 'socialization space' and suicidal behavior, according to the reports, it was in pre-adolescence that the first attempts started.

That day I never forgot. I remember I was a child and I was very sad; I even had a fever. They probably cursed me, made fun of me at school. I said I was going to die. It was one of the first times I talked about suicide. I was 12 years old. And then I took Dipirona. It was adamant about that. I was a child, so I had no idea of dosage. I remember that I lay in bed and said I was going to die, but I ended up sleeping (G2).

For all respondents, both gay and bisexual, suicidal ideation has always been present also due to the daily discomfort in socialization spaces. "I was more afraid of living than of dying" (G3). However, in relation to homosexuals, it was after events of physical or verbal aggression that the first attempts occurred, such as the boy who, upon getting a stone in the head, at the age of ten, tried to kill himself on the same day. Living in an apartment protected by fall protection screens, his mother found him at night, cutting the screen with a knife, so he could jump out of the window (G4).

The ideations and attempts of jumping from high places (G1, G3, G4) and hanging (G3) are means that usually have less chances of rescue. The literature points out that men tend to use more lethal methods, since non-fatal suicide would be a certificate of failure, yet another challenge to the lack of virility (Canetto & Sakinofsky, 1998; Jaworski, 2010).

Therefore, the attempt must be infallible. "I always knew that if I were to kill myself, it would be in one go. And it would be successful. I always had that thought" (G3). Furthermore, because violence is a sign of virility, which plays a role in the certification of masculinities (Cecchetto, 2004), the choice for more aggressive methods of self-extermination also supports the choice of means with greater lethality among men.

In short, this category expresses the influence that socialization spaces have on the mental health of young people who have dissident sexualities and/or have effeminate mannerisms. Thus, social support mediated by respect for diversity, which includes the suppression of macho socialization within the House of Men, is a way of preserving lives. As a study by Columbia University points out, the propensity for suicide attempts is 21% for the group of dissident sexualities and 4% for heterosexual young people. However, it was found that the risk of suicide attempts increases by 20% in environments where there is no support for the sexual orientation of these young people, compared to places where support is available (Hatzenbuehler, 2011).

2) I do not belong: what now?

While the first category is related to constraints from outside and the suffering resulting from social contexts crossed by violence, discrimination and prejudice, this involves the internal aspects and the awareness of difference, of non-belonging. At a certain moment, when you perceive yourself as the 'other', what are the possible ways to deal with what you are not? This category, as well as 'socialization spaces', was also found in the groups of gay and bisexual men. However, distinctions were observed between both, both in the experiences around the identification of otherness, and in the directions taken from this perception.

In relation to homosexuals, the narratives about discovering the difference allude to the period of childhood and pre-adolescence. "I think that since I was a child, I already perceived myself with feminine references, of what was read as feminine, of games, of little things. And I already understood from there that it was a reason for rejection too" (G2). "When I was about eleven years old, I already knew. But then I believed that I would be able to pretend to be straight forever and that I would be happy with that" (G1).

As a way to avoid isolation or to protect themselves from the possible threats of aggression already announced, many boys choose to perform the most acceptable masculinity. "I always felt pressured and forbidden, so to speak, to be who I was" (G1). Staying at House of Men, therefore, can also involve showing interest in girls, representing a fictitious heterosexuality.

I remember once that I found my brother's porn videos. And I had to call everyone from school to see it. And I remember that I didn't even find much fun in porn. And there was that thing of forcing comments like: 'Look at the hot one', 'Look at the big ass', to exalt masculinity, even forcibly (B1, emphasis added).

Furthermore, as virility is also based on homophobia, misogyny and feminophobia (Welzer-Lang, 2001; Zanello, 2018), the subjects themselves resort to homophobic aggressions, in a kind of protective camouflage. "There were some moments that today I regret a lot. In cases where I expressed homophobia very clearly" (B1). In this sense, it is possible to point out here a significant cohesion factor between masculinities, which is the rejection of the feminine. "The effeminate were the ones who suffered the most. And I used them as a shield" (G2).

Existential trenches to protect themselves from aggression often take a heavy toll on young people's mental health and further hinder the arduous process of coming out.

The first feeling I had to think about dying, I think since about 10 years old. I remember I was in the shower. I was in that position (genuflection), waiting for the shower to wash away my desire. Because I knew that I would either be washed or I would have to die (G2).

Assuming yourself to be different before society is usually a dilemma (Sedgwick, 2007). Depending on the scenario in which they are inserted, with the permanent sharing of intrafamily homophobia, suicidal behavior begins to materialize as a way of interrupting intolerable helplessness arising from a probable parental rejection. "If I am kicked out from home, I go out the window, not the door" (G3)

With respect to the possible paths to be taken from the glimpse of the difference, even if gay men and bisexual men feel the pain of not belonging, the interviewees' narratives point to distinctions regarding the solutions found by both to suppress the suffering. Among homosexuals, coming out of the closet and discovering social places of belonging become real identity shields for them. "I think I managed to understand myself, know myself, work myself better. My relationship with homophobia is better. I think I am lucky because the spaces I have attended are more open, more inclusive" (G4). "I started going out with people who were doing me well" (G1).

On the other hand, the discourse among bisexual men was different. While gays said they had found places of belonging, through new friendships and participation in collectives, bisexuals complained about the lack of identification spaces. In a society so used to monosexuality, the desire orientation is expected to be exclusive. Bisexuality, therefore, is usually little debated or even overlooked in terms of the expression of sexuality. "I didn't even know it existed. I was just in that mess. 'Wow, if I liked him, I'm gay', but, wait. 'I like her now'. And even today, I feel a need to prove to others, you know?" (B1, emphasis added).

According to the reports, given the statement of bisexuality, there is an attempt to fit the bisexual subject into the homo/heterosexual binary-oppositional category.

I even presented myself as bi sometimes, but it never had much appeal, nothing. My gay friends thought I couldn't accept myself. Many even today think that I am gay. Pure blood as they said out there. Anyway, and women give a certain credit when they have an interest, when any of them wants to hook me up. Then the story changes. He is a straight guy [...] In short, it is always an unresolved story (B2).

Given the lack of understanding, it is common to choose not to share bisexuality. "Few of my friends know that I am bi. Because I get really tired of having to explain. And there is always a joke. I don't have much trouble saying that I'm gay. I have even preferred" (B2). This omission of bisexuality aimed at avoiding social fatigue has the effect of reinforcing the belief that there are few bisexuals, that bisexuality is an intermediate experience that precedes something definitive (Seffner, 2016).

The emotional instability resulting from the feeling of not belonging is part of the predictions of bisexuality. "I think that this permanent feeling of misfit, it is closely related to the way I identify myself" (B2). In the impossibility of finding places of reception and affective expression free of moral judgments, the subject becomes isolated. "I don't have bisexual friends; I don't have many people to talk to about it. I end up being isolated" (B3). In LGBT environments, recognized for their openness to diversity, restrictions are also found. "Within this acronym (LGBT), I don't feel included. I don't even know many bisexual activists" (B2).

Here, 'what comes from within' points to the way in which these young people are subjectively constituted, without offering symbolic support to sustain their identity. Although there is a social belief that bisexuality is the most free and unimpeded sexual orientation, there are controversies. "I do not know who lives bisexuality freely. It is always you having to choose a place, to assume that. I don't think bisexuals are the freest groups as they say out there. I think quite the opposite" (B2).

Since the lack of support networks is among the risk factors for suicidal behavior (Barrero, Nicolato & Corrêa, 2006; Botega, 2015), the difficulty in obtaining acceptance and social understanding is a source of greater fragility for these subjects. "I read about suicide statistics the other day. Suicide rate among gay, straight and bisexual people. And I saw that the rate among bisexuals is the highest" (B3). In Brazil, a research on suicide ideation and attempts among adolescents, carried out in public schools in the interior of São Paulo, pointed out that, of the non-heterosexual groups, the self-declared bisexuals and those who answered 'others' (not defined) in the questionnaires were the who presented a higher risk of self-extermination (Teixeira-Filho & Rondini, 2012).

3) Labor virility

The relationship with work is a constitutive aspect for men. As it is one of the two pillars of the efficacy dispositive (Zanello, 2018), together with sexual virility, the largest investment in labor virility can guarantee that a man is still valued socially, if he does not comply with sexual virility. In this sense, it was not surprising that this category was the only one identified in the three sexual orientations analyzed. However, its representativeness was different in the triad, as well as its identity relevance for gays, bisexuals and heterosexuals.

In relation to the gay group, proof of identity based on labor virility begins in parallel with the discovery of difference. The conflict with sexuality, therefore, is mixed with uncertainty in the professional field. "There was this unpredictability of who I will be: both professionally and in terms of my sexual orientation" (G1). Among homosexuals, investment in labor virility aims to compensate for non-attendance in sexual virility. "If I can no longer give him pride (father) because I am not straight, I will at least have a good academic success" (G1).

Family pressure in the labor field was also present among gays. The imposition of parents, coupled with the desire for personal reparation due to guilt for homosexuality, generates greater anxiety and suffering. As the pressures are constant, there are subjects who negotiate the period of coming out for the family only when there is a professional rise, so that the impact of the news is dampened by the proof of labor virility. "How many titles will I have to have?" (G2).

With little expression in the group of bisexuals (only in B1), labor virility appeared as anxiety due to a period of uncertainty regarding the chosen program. "I was also in a crisis with my program, as to whether I really wanted to. Wow, I dedicated myself my whole life to doing medicine and now I didn't want that? How so? It was not just the issue of sexuality" (B1). In the case of this interviewee, the only black participant in this research, race also affected the labor field. "Being black in medical school is not easy. Another issue was to begin to identify the oppressions and to make a broader analysis. 'I don't need to feel this way because of this'. And working better with it" (B1, emphasis added). One hypothesis to explain the scarcity of this content in the bisexual group is that, in terms of psychic suffering,

the failure to fit into a socially accepted category is so disturbing, that it overlaps other adversities faced.

It was among heterosexuals that the imposition of labor virility was more pronounced. A fundamental dimension in the identity constitution of men, the relationship with work, especially in contemporary times, was predominantly present in the biography of these interviewees (Zanello, 2018). "I think it has a huge importance in my story, because the fact that I spent so much time to find out what I wanted influenced a lot. And it still influences today" (Ht1).

Depending on the family context, parental expectations can be overwhelming for the young person. "My father asked me to study for the exam, but I really wasn't getting" (Ht2). If society is already organized to demand an incessantly productive performance from men, when this imposition is added to the wishes of parents, the weight of responsibility can be unsustainable, so that the internal demand for non-correspondence becomes a burden. "I came from a slightly poor family. My father is vigilant. We have never been in such a good condition. So, they put pressure like 'You need to be what we were not'. It's kind of bad to hear, but at the same time I understand" (Ht1, emphasis added).

There is a requirement for the commitment to 'become someone in life', which is remarkable in this group. Although among homosexuals, labor virility appeared as a form of compensation for dissident sexuality, in heterosexual men it is not a compensation, but an identity achievement that is also achieved in parental desire. "I was not that stereotype of the person he (father) wanted me to be" (Ht1).

It is noted that the value of masculinity, as it is also associated with labor virility, is capable of making the subject who is not adequate to social standards and parental ideals have his self-esteem shaken in an intense way, which can lead to the emergence of self-destructive ideations.

I think the main thought of these episodes, especially the last one, is that I would not be missed. I had completely convinced myself that the world would be better off without me. As much as people told me that it was something completely clueless, for me it was very real. I do not serve this world. I need to do this favor to the world and leave it (Ht1).

4) Loss of gains from a woman's love dispositif

According to Zanello (2018), in Western culture, the path by which women become subject is the love dispositif. This means that they become subject, even in relation to themselves, through the eyes of a man who chooses them. They are taught from an early age to believe that the biggest investment they will have in their lives will be the loving relationship. Consequently, in most relationships, 'chosen' women find themselves in roles of subservience to men, seeking, even if this implies compromising their well-being, to make the lives of their partners as pleasant and comfortable as possible.

The conditions to remain in heterosexual relationships are usually costly for women, but advantageous for men (Zanello, 2018). Consequently, in comparison to married, divorced and widowed women, it is the single women who present less impairment of mental health, while for men, marriage presents itself as a guarantee of greater care (Zanello, 2018). From there, it is possible to notice how much men get emotional advantages from a woman's love dispositif.

In this category, which appeared only in the narratives of the heterosexual interviewees, both reported the end of relationships that became potential for psychic suffering. In the case of Ht1, the end of the relationship was due to the change of country of

his girlfriend, who used to embrace him and be present in his most difficult moments. "I was so dependent on that relationship. And when she went, I was very groundless. Very fragile indeed".

Regarding Ht2, although the first breakup caused him suffering due to the constant fights that preceded the end of the relationship, two months later he was in a new relationship. In this new union, disagreements with his ex-girlfriend still made him suffer. Allied to the context of the employment situation, it was at this moment that his crises intensified. However, he was supported by his new girlfriend in this critical period. "She knew since we started to make out, that I had depression. That I was down. She knew I was getting more and more down. She had already realized. I think it was not really a surprise for her" (Ht2).

Respondents reported that in the period when they were in a suicide crisis, with intense ideation of death and attempts at self-extermination, their companions were important support to overcome this phase.

There was a day when I was very convinced that I wanted to kill myself. Throw me off the JK bridge. It would be clean for me. I didn't speak, but I think she knew me a lot. I was on my way to the bridge when she called me asking where I was going. I tried to dodge, but she realized and warned my parents. She held me on the phone to the point that my uncle, who is a police officer, called the fire department. In the end I was not going to be able to kill myself, because the people arrived on time (Ht1).

Final considerations

From the categories presented in the light of the theories of masculinities, the contexts of violence were presented and the contents referring to the intense psychic suffering, which direct men of different sexual orientations to suicidal behavior, were also analyzed. Qualitative research brings the possibility of sharing information that does not usually appear in research that focuses on the presentation of epidemiological data. In this sense, it makes possible greater depth in the themes of gender and sexuality, present in shared biographical discourses.

In this study, it is observed that gay and bisexual participants broke with normative sexual virility in terms of desire orientation and, in some cases, with the performance of a virile masculinity. On the other hand, when certain participants claimed to have performed heterosexual behaviors as a way of hiding sexual dissent, it is noted that there is still a reinforcement of heteronormativity based on internalized prejudice. Despite discussions and changes in health codes that depathologize homosexuality, social and subjective changes do not necessarily accompany legal and institutional advances.

Moreover, as the rejection stems from both sexual orientation and the non-representation of virility, it is possible that self-declared gay and bisexual subjects may be more spared from homophobic/misogynous violence compared to others who are seen as effeminate, as these are the major targets of social aggressions.

The heterosexual participants in this research, in turn, are free from this type of constriction, because they correspond to the dictates of House of Men. Even so, there are specificities in this group. Even if they are users of the women's love dispositif, which is seen as a protective factor of mental health, the labor virility falls on them more sharply. Therefore,

there is intense suffering when the subject does not achieve professional recognition or loses hope of achieving it.

In terms of the limitations of this research, it is pointed out that the nine respondents are from federal universities. In addition, there was no great variation in the age range of the participants, nor in racial aspects, with only one of them being self-declared black. Therefore, it is opportune to invest in research that focuses on the intersectionality of masculinities with race, age and social class, so that other narratives and perspectives can be shared.

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Felipe de Baére: doctoral student at Clinical Psychology and Culture Program, Department of Clinical Psychology, Institute of Psychology, University of Brasília.

Valeska Zanello: Associate Professor I, Department of Clinical Psychology, Institute of Psychology, University of Brasília.