The New Normal:

Same-sex Families Negotiating

Nuclear Family

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Abstract

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France legalised same-sex marriage (mariage pour tous) in 2013. In theory, it also allows a recognition of gay and lesbian families, as the social parents can now adopt their spouses children, thus becoming themselves official parents. However, same-sex families existed prior to that law. Through interviews with French gay and lesbian parents, I focus on two aspects of their family life: the way they negotiate with the model of the nuclear family, and the processes of transmission of values. The new law, rather than accepting same-sex families as a new norm, allows them to melt into the normative ideal of (heterosexual) nuclear family. Departing from this homonormative aspect, and from the informants' family creation narratives, I will investigate on the respondents' representations of family, the way their daily life is organised, and how they approach parenthood. Gay and lesbian families, although they do not at first sight fit into the nuclear family norm, (re)interpret this model to build their own families, rather than simply reproducing it. The conception of parenthood and family life, in the same way as family values, depends on a transmission that happens within the nuclear family. Drawing on Kellerhal, Ferreira and Perrenoud's typology of family identity transmission channels, I identify two transmission patterns: based on rules and based on communication, between which my respondents are trying to find a balance. However, transmission, even regarding heterosexual norms, does not occur solely within the nuclear family, and interactions outside of the family core impact both on the children and their parents. Although children raised in same-sex families do not experience those norms within the familial core, they are subjected to them. The existence of gay and lesbian families is not enough to undermine heteronormativity. However, they can be a departure point to a rethinking of family norms.

Keywords: Same-sex families, nuclear family, homonormativity, transmission

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1. Introduction

In May 2013, France legalised the *"mariage pour tous"*[1], that is the extension of marriage to same-sex couples, and simultaneously extended the right to adopt to married same-sex couples. The final vote of this law by the parliament happened after months of over-covered demonstrations of conservatives – supported by the right-hand political parties – who argued that allowing marriage to non-heterosexual couples would tear the notion of family apart. Their discourse implied that a family (in its current, nuclear meaning) was naturally formed by a father, a mother, and children, thus giving the opportunity to create their own families to same-sex couples was a negation of natural laws and "anthropological rules". Their main motto was *"un papa, une maman, on ne ment pas à nos enfants*[2]", which implies two prejudices. First, they assumed that new reproduction techniques (NRTs) were nothing but a medically assisted prolongation of biological means allowing heterosexual couples dissimulate their lack of biological bond to their children ; they thought homosexual couples would do the same. Second, they implied that the lack of a mother or a father would create an unhealthy environment for the children. Not only is this argument also stigmatising single parents, but this discourse naturalises mothers' role as loving caregivers, as opposed to fathers who represent the law but are unable to love their children as much as mothers can. Their movement did not stop after the vote of the law. They engaged in a battle against the so-called American concept of the *"théorie du gender"*[3], to prevent any change in the family structure (from the nuclear mother/father/children model). All this – still ongoing – movement resulted in the invisibilisation in the media of same-sex families, with over-represented conservative opponents denying – or ignoring – their existence. Giving some kind of a visibility to these families was my principal motivation in the choice of my topic.

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1 Marriage for everyone. As it implies that every type of couples have the same rights to marriage, contrarily to "gay marriage" which supposes a specific form of marriage for same-sex couples, I will use, throughout this text, the locution *mariage pour tous*.

2 A daddy, a mummy, we do not lie to our children.

3 In French gender theory is translated into "études de genre", but the conservatives use the word "théorie" which is synonym to "hypothesis" in order to decredibilise the field. What's more, they use the English word "gender" instead of its French equivalent "genre" to point the Americanism of the concept, which automatically puts it as dangerous.

These recent changes in French family legislation – which are also still ongoing – bring out the dynamics of the family institution. Focusing on same-sex families, which can be read as embodying this change, is an interesting way to have an input into that evolution ; this is the reason why the main focus in this research is on transmission. My research question is: How do gay and lesbian families (re)interpret the model of the nuclear family? Several smaller questions ensue from this general one: How do they conceive the role of parent (of mother, or father)? (How) does it show in their family life? What do they (want to) transmit to their children, in terms of values, way-of-life or kinship? How does that transmission happen? Does the way their own parents brought them up play a part in this upbringing process?

In the next chapter of this essay, I will introduce my theoretical ground, before presenting the field and methods in chapter three. The fourth chapter of this thesis will be a review of the legal situation in France regarding same-sex couples and families. I will present in chapter five the narratives of the families that participated in this research, that is the way they were created. Chapter six will focus on the way gay and lesbian families negotiate with the traditional nuclear family and the gender stereotypes it induces. These gendered roles are undoubtedly challenged by the nature of same-sex couples, particularly regarding domestic labour. The seven chapter will be about transmission, which, according to the Oxford Dictionary, is *"the act or process by which something is spread or passed from one person or thing to another."* Therefore, by transmission I mean the (not necessarily conscious) way by which family values are conveyed. Finally, the last chapter will open on the external world, and question what happens outside of the parental core, as children do not only socialise within their nuclear families.

2. Theoretical framework and previous research

This thesis reports stories of same-sex families, that are gay and lesbian people appropriating the ultimate heterosexual canon: family. In order to analyse the processes through which same-sex families negotiate and/or reinterpret the traditionally heterosexual notion of family, I will use a general framework from queer studies: the concepts of heteronormativity and homonormativity.

As Gail Lewis showed in her analysis of the history of the British normalisation of family, marriage is a way for governments to control gender relations in family, marriage and parenthood (Lewis, 2000: 30), to ensure that the population conforms to norms that are nowadays widely accepted in Western societies. Brad Van Eeden-Moorefield and al., in an article about same-sex relationships, explained that these norms include compulsory heterosexuality, the will to create a family, and the obligation to be monogamous (Van Eeden-Moorefield, et al., 2011: 563). The tacit imposition of this set of rules restricting sexuality, allowing sex only within the – indivisible – heterosexual couple, with the only purpose of production and upbringing of children, is called heteronormativity. Sociologist Christel Stromhøj, in her article about state-regulation in the Scandinavian countries, points out that the extension of marriage corroborates the idea of heteronormative set of rules as the one and only possible norm (Stromhøj, 2003: 50-51). Therefore, as Tuula Juvonen argues, by extending these rules to same-sex couples, homosexuals have no other choices than either to comply with it, or to continue rejecting it – and be even more marginalised (Juvonen, 2003: 90).

The extension of heteronormativity to gay and lesbian couples is called homonormativity. Lisa Duggan refined its definition in the early '2000s as a process bringing a neo-liberalist model based on domesticity and consumption in gay culture, in a way that is presented as depoliticised – thus that invisibilises the gay rights agenda (Duggan, 2002: 179). This definition have been challenged, for instance by human geographist Gavin Brown, who points out the way Lisa Duggan takes the reproduction of the neo-liberal and heteronormative

structures as fixed, and fails to acknowledge the specific contexts in which this reproduction lies. She overlooks its practical aspects in people's everyday life, and also fails to challenge it, for instance by enhancing the alternatives (Brown, 2012: 1066-1067).

Reflecting on homonormativity lead several scholars to go beyond the claim for equality regarding marriage. Christel Stromhøj, for instance, argues for a deconstruction of marriage towards a new law that would actually consider gender/sexual neutrality, and that would be grounded into the pluralism of families. A form of union that would not only challenge the heterosexual norm, but also allow a greater flexibility in family relationships (Stromhøj, 2003: 50-51). Mette Liv Mertz claims that alternative families appear as a threat to the heterosexual norm. According to her, as long as it is not contested, heteronormativity spreads. On the contrary, if it was persistently contested, the whole structure of family would have to be rethought (Mertz, 2003: 35). Gay and lesbian families are not only an alternative to heterosexual family, but they are a step to the rethinking of family, thus the constant negotiation they imply would lead the heterosexual family not to be seen as the norm anymore. These concepts of heteronormativity and homonormativity are useful to analyse the implication of state in same-sex couples' lives, regarding the rights they are given, and how they differ to heterosexual couples'. Thus, they also provide a framework to understanding the mechanisms of imposition of the heterosexual norm, and the way they are reproduced or not in the particular case of gay and lesbian families.

In their analysis of same-sex relationships and their dissolution, Brad Van Eeden Moorefield, et al. (2011) argued for a new framework to approach same-sex couples and families. Drawing on Judith Butler, they take family both as an identity and as a performance that allows same-sex couples to find their way as part of a minority that is enmeshed in a majority culture (Butler, 1990: 198 ; Weston, 1991: 200). What they call the queer feminist lens allow researchers to acknowledge the systems of oppression underlying within both the heteronormative perspective and the radical queer perspective. Thus it enables an understanding of this assimilation as a strategy – performing heteronormative family – rather than a will to actually conform to this heterosexual norm (Van Eeden-Morrefield, et al., 2011: 565). This position regarding same-sex families allows an understanding of the data I gathered which seems to be accurately exposing my respondents' daily lives.

An other focus of this thesis is on transmission of values within the nuclear family. Transmission is rarely the main focus in anthropology of kinship and family, which are rather centring on definitions of kinship, or typologies of families. I will use George Peter Murdock's 1949 definition of nuclear family based on blood ties, heterosexuality and monogamy (Murdock, 1949: 1) that, although far from universal, still applies today to Western, middle-class, white families. In this essay I will focus on same-sex families, which were studied by Kath Weston in *Families We Choose* (1991). In this ethnography, she related the construction of San Francisco gays' and lesbians' kinship networks. According to her, as they were perceived as outside of the regular families, they were to choose their own, thus allowing a family that would not be based on blood ties anymore (Weston, 1991: 109). She argued that this alternative form of family is not a derivation from heterosexual families, but rather a transformation of them (Weston, 1991: 106). Same-sex families would not be as numerous as they are now without NRTs, which, by allowing reproduction outside of heterosexual intercourse, also allow a new thinking of kinship and family. Marilyn Strathern, in *Reproducing the Future* (1992), questioned the implications of these new techniques on the understanding of kinship. According to her, the study of the consequences of NRTs on family and kinship reveal that family and kinship are not imitations of biological reproduction, but rather representations based on biology and elaborating out of it (Strathern, 1992: 3). A decade later, Janet Carsten published *After Kinship* (2004), in which she asked, *"what's happened to kinship?"* (Carsten, 2004: 7). According to her what used to be thought as implicit in the study of kinship, that is the *"moves of inclusion and exclusion"* (Carsten, 2004: 186), the way individuals are taken in and out of the kinship circle regardless of the presence or absence biological ties, is now – since NRTs and the new family ties they imply – obvious. Drawing on David Schneider's *A Critique the Study of Kinship* (1984), she reminds us of the overlapping of the biological and the social in kinship, and that they cannot be dichotomised, in order to move the focus from what according to the researcher's preconceptions is biological or social to what for each culture, is biological or social and how the distinction is made.

Since the process through which values and codes are transmitted by the parents to their children, have not been the target of anthropological research, I will not only use the previous research mentioned above, but I will also supplement it with a sociological research on family identity transmission. Jean Kellerhals', Christina Ferreira's and David Perrenoud's article

Kinship Cultures and Identity Transmission (2002) offers a typology of family identity transmission to analyse my data. In their analysis of Swiss families, they identified six types of transmission channels: the ones based on patrimony, faith and family myth, which are institutional, and the ones based on a charismatic figure, on discipline and on maieutic, which are privatised. Through the analysis of my data regarding transmission, I will elaborate on the two latter, the discipline logic of transmission, which is based on rules, and the maieutic logic of transmission, which is based on communication.

3. Methods

As I decided to write a thesis about transmission of family identity in same-sex families, I opted for a topic for which the primary data is experience. Donna Haraway, in her article *Situated Knowledges* (1988), argued against *malestream* science, which aims to strict objectivity, that is the omniscient position of a detached scientist who would be able to see everything from above, without being subjected to any influence, and without influencing his subject. According to her, this position cannot be reached, it is an illusion. Since every research is influenced by the scientist's position, and research cannot be dissociated from the researcher, thus the inevitable bias should be acknowledged, and research should be recognised as subjective. Distanciation, though, is important to provide an accountable and critical analysis of the data. Nevertheless, that distancing can only be done if the researcher acknowledges this bias as well as his or her own position. Likewise, experience can be accountable in science as long as the researchers keep the impossibility of objectivity in mind, and positions him- or herself as well as the one who tells the experience (Haraway, 1988: 589), since experience is inseparable from the particular places, times, people who are connected to it (Smith, 2005: 120). Ethnographers should acknowledge that experience is always seen, first through the lens of the participant, and then through the one of the researcher (Haraway, 1988: 592). Following sociologist Dorothy E. Smith, I wish to ground my research in the analysis of experience. According to her, experience is dialogic. Although it comes from the body, it only begins when put into words, either through speech or writing (Smith, 2005: 126). Experience is told, it is not something individual, it is to be read as a story *"being made* for *the interviewer"*, as an *"ongoing dialogue"* through which is it created (Smith, 2005: 128).

I chose interviews over participant observation as a method to conduct this ethnography. Though participant observation allows a more holistic view of the field, I felt that interviews in the context of families were more relevant. In small groups such as nuclear families, if observation is possible, participation would modify the entire system. If emotional and affective involvement is part of the participant observation process, it is not necessarily

missing in interviews. The respondents were encouraged to share their own experiences and emotions, and to reflect on them. Nevertheless, interviews are not an ethnographic method in which the ethnographer has no influence on the data production. As Smith puts it, *"the dialogue between interviewer and informant brings the latter's experience into being as an interchange between what she remembers and the interviewer's interest and attention"* (Smith, 2005: 128).

Choosing French same-sex families as a topic leads me to do home-anthropology. Although I have never been part of a same-sex parents family, I decided to focus on my native country. One could argue it prevents me from distancing, but home anthropology also allows some shared cultural grounds that are valuable for the research. As anthropologists Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson remind, anthropologists are expected to leave to an unknown land, or at least, somewhere that differs from Western culture (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997: 8-9). This also supposes observing the field with the vision from above that Donna Haraway showed impossible. Sociologist Val Colic-Peisker argues that using a researcher's own experience is *"a valuable heuristic tool, a source of theoretical sensitivity rather than a source of bias"* (Colic-Peisker, 2004: 91). Conducting an ethnography about Croatian migrants while being herself a Croatian in the same country raised her awareness on the fact she *"was telling one of many possible stories about Croatian in Australia"*, the same way, researching in my own country allows me to keep in mind that the experiences I was told are some stories among all one could encounter. Ethnographers, as humans, have an experiential knowledge of their home countries, whether through their own life stories or through the people they encountered, and this allows them to an understanding that differs from the foreigners'. Anthropology at home is defined by Mariza Peirano as *"the study of one's society, where "others" are both ourselves and those relatively different from us, whom we see as part of the same collectivity"* (Peirano, 1998: 123), which is the way I would position myself regarding this field. The participants and I share some identities (nationality, race, class, education, often gender and sexuality), and yet our differences, especially concerning our differing life stories, should not be forgotten. Nevertheless, as anthropologist Kirsten Hastrup argues in her article *Fieldwork among friends*, the anthropologist, although he or she identifies as part of the field – whether as native, friend, or ally – has to keep in mind that participants still consider them as a third part, allowing the ethnographer to stick on that in-between part (Hastrup, 1987: 104-105).

Moreover, ethnographers as individuals have their own experiences, that influence their researches. Their position is not fixed, and they vary through their new experiences (Haritaworn, 2008), including their researches.

In an article about the production of queer knowledge, Jin Haritaworn reminds us that research is not only produced by the ethnographer, but the informants participate equally, and their contribution is not to be neglected (Haritaworn, 2008). What is more, one should keep in mind that participants are *"active producers of their own interpretations"* (Haritaworn, 2008), thus it is important to acknowledge that the participants to this research all have substantially different stories, particularly regarding the way they had their child(ren). This reinforces Colic-Peisker's idea of research as telling some stories among others. If the respondents were other same-sex couples, the outcomes would probably have been somewhat different.

The search for participants started by contacting the two main French Gay and Lesbian Parents associations, the *Association des Parents et futurs parents Gais et Lesbiens* (APGL) and the *Association Des Familles Homoparentales* (ADFH). The first one, which was created in 1986[4], has a research contact, reserved to students and researchers. They agreed to send a call for participants to their members, about my research, so they could contact me if they wanted to participate if I engaged to give them this thesis, so it can be diffused within the association. Several people contacted me through this call, and three couples participated in this study thanks to the APGL. I contacted the second association, which was created in 2010, through the education contact. Only one person answered, to participate in this research. I also used my personal network, and was introduced to the son of two women, who participated in this study, along with some friends of theirs. Three couples from this network were thus to participate in this study.

The participants are:

✔ **Céline and Estelle**, 32 and 34 (F). They both identify as lesbian. They live in an urban area. They have been a couple for seven years. Céline bore their daughter Agathe (1 year old) after a medically assisted AID in Belgium. Estelle will bear their second child.

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4   http://www.apgl.fr/commission-education/item/226-les-premiers-pas

- ✔ **Christophe**, 41 (M). He has three children from a previous heterosexual relationship, aged 18, 14 and 9. He lives in an urban area. Although he identifies as homosexual since his teens, he lived with a woman (mother of his children) during sixteen years. He has lived with a man, Chad, with whom he cares for the children every second week, for two years.

- ✔ **Aude and Séverine**, 40 and 34 (F). They both identify as homosexual. They live in the deep countryside. They have been a couple for nine years. Séverine bore their two daughters. Margot, 5, was conceived through medically assisted AID in Belgium and Ninon, 2, through home insemination in France.

- ✔ **Christiane and Claude**, 65 and 70 (F). They would both identify as rather bisexual, living a homosexual lifestyle. They live in an urban area. Claude had two children (43 and 45) within a previous heterosexual marriage with Chrtistian. They have met thirty-three years ago. Christiane had a son, Arnaud, 26, with a man, whom she raised with Claude.

- ✔ **Monique and Nicole**, 64 and 62 (F). They both reject labels, and thus would say they are living a homosexual lifestyle. They live outside an urban area. They have been a couple for 27 years. Nicole had a daughter, Aurélie, 32, through medically assisted AID in France, although she was then in a homosexual couple. Nicole and Monique raised her together.

- ✔ **Laurence and Béatrice**, 50 and 48 (F). They both reject labels, and thus would say they are living a homosexual lifestyle. They live in an urban area. They have been a couple for twelve years. Laurence has adopted two Russian kids, Chloé, 6, and Mathis, 8, four years ago, with a homosexual man, Stéphane. She raises them most of the time with Béatrice, when their father (and his partner) cares after them on weekends and holidays.

- ✔ **Julien and Marc**, 34 and 36 (M). They both would tend to say they life a homosexual lifestyle. They live in an urban area in Switzerland. They have been a couple for five years. They both had children through surrogacy in Ukraine. Julien had twins, Léa and Enzo, three years ago, and Marc had a son, Ethan, two years ago.

As historian Jens Rydström argues, it is difficult to define homosexuality. Usually, it is defined as a person who self-identifies as homosexual (Rydström, 2003: 128). But this self-identification depends on several factors that can vary from an individual to an other. Therefore I chose to include in this study parents who raise their children within same-sex couples. In the calls for participants I sent to the associations, I carefully avoided using the words "homosexual parents", leaving it free to the participants to define their own sexuality. This was one of the first questions of the interviews. Half of the participants would identify themselves as homosexual, gay or lesbian, among them one was defining herself as bisexual but rather homosexual. The other half insisted that they reject labelling, and would thus rather highlight their homosexual lifestyle – the fact that they are committed in a homosexual relationship – but would not see homosexuality as constitutive of their identity. Among them one rejects labels but would rather define herself as bisexual. These answers highlight an approach of labels as given by society: they do not want to label themselves, but as society needs to label people's sexual orientations, the consent to apply the idea of homosexuality, but as a practice rather than an identity.

They are all currently involved in same-sex relationships, within which they raise or have raised children. They all are white, and are either from professional-managerial class (see Ehrenreichs, 1979: 12-18) or executives. Most of them are living in the three main urban areas of the country (Paris, Lyon and Marseille), except from three couples, one living in Switzerland, one living in a village close to an urban area, and another one living in the deep countryside. Between March 25th and April 15th 2014, I conducted ten semi-structured interviews (Davies, 2008: 106), on average one hour long ; seven of them were individual interviews and three were couple interviews. The interviews were focusing on the participants families, whether the family they are forming now or the family they grew up in. The last part of the interview was rather focused on their feelings about the late debates around same-sex families that are still occurring in France.

All the interviews were conducted in French. I translated into English the quotes that are used in this thesis. Depending on the schedules of the couples – only once I met just one half of a couple– the interviews were individual or not. Seven of them were individual ; this allowed the participants to dig deeper in some topics, and I thought this would allow them to feel freer to speak. Nevertheless, as most of the interviews took place in their home, their partner would often be close to us and sometimes participate in the conversation. This actually

allowed some dialogues, with the second one completing the interviewee's answers, and pushing her or him to go further in their answers. Three of the interviews were actual couple interviews. Although sometimes one would tend to monopolise the speech on the other, making it unclear what the more discreet one thinks, it seemed to me to be a more constructive method, with each one reacting to her or his partner's answers to things they did not know or do not clearly understand as well as to things they think are missing or should be told.

Eight of these interviews we conducted face-to-face, in the participants' living rooms, except from one which was led outside a café in the centre of the city. This allows some proximity that smoothers the interview. As most of the participants met me in their homes, we would introduce ourselves and drink a coffee or a glass of water before the interview, and also chat afterwards. This strongly differs from Skype interviews (two of which I had to conduct for this thesis, as some participants were abroad). Although Skype interviews do not break the interviewer-interviewee bond, and do not diminish the outcomes of the interviews, the conversation tends to be rather limited to the only interview – while when meeting face-to-face allows more external discussions.

After transcribing the interviews, I analysed them thematically and compared them. Following Dorothy E. Smith, I take this step as the secondary stage of dialogue. During the first stage, the dialogue between each interviewees and myself generates experience. In order to turn the experiences I was told into data, I will engage in a second dialogue, between each experience and other sources, that can be other experiences as well as academic sources (Smith, 2005: 142).

4. Same-sex families and the law

In France, since the adoption of the 1804 Napoleonic civil code (still applicable nowadays, though to a certain extent modified), marriage has been raised as the ground for the filiation and kinship system. Paternity and maternity are only thought inside marriage: the woman who gives birth to the children is inevitably their mother, when her husband is automatically registered as their father (even though he is not biologically their father, he will be considered as such since adultery is not recognised by the law). In the '1970s, filiation outside marriage was recognised, as unmarried parenting couples became the norm. Nonetheless, parenthood is still embedded in a heteronormative frame, which allows filiation only to the biological parents, or, in case on NRTs use, the ones that pass as the biological parents – that is the spouse or partner of the biological parent (Théry, 2014: 38-42). In cases of adoption, although the law authorises single people to adopt, married or long-lasting couples have priority. On May 14th, 2013, the *mariage pour tous* law was adopted. As the creation of family is intrinsically embedded with marriage in France, as opposed to the United States of America, or the United Kingdom (Fassin, 2001: 229-231), it brought new issues in the field of kinship and family. Not only does this lead us to wonder about the extension of the French filiation frame to same-sex couples, but it also underlines the inclusion of state in family forms that reinforces heteronormativity.

The idea of *mariage pour tous* in France actually came from a strong LGBT coalition, allied with left-wing parties (the PS[5] and EELV[6]). Simultaneously, part of the French left-wing took what Eric Fassin calls a *"conservative progressive"* stand by advocating for the protection of some idealised homosexual specificity allowing gays and lesbians to keep out of the heteronormative path[7] (Fassin, 2001: 221), that is to be the ones that are pushed out of the norm. This standpoint, that they view as subversive in the sense that it seems to be placed in a queer dynamic actually reveals a will to protect the heterosexual norm (Fassin, 2001: 227). It

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5   Parti Socialist (Socialist Party).

6   Europe Ecologie – Les Verts (Green Party).

7   The same arguments were used against the PACS were, fifteen years later, still used against marriage and adoption.

is a reactionary stand, that aims to limit marriage to a frame for reproduction. The *mariage pour tous* law marks an incursion of the state inside gay and lesbian couple's intimacy, with a social will to expend heteronormativity to non-heterosexual couples. Thus the American concept of homonormativity can be applied to the context observed in France. French government, by extending marriage to same-sex couples, does not position itself as open to any kind of relationships: it only gives gay and lesbian couples the opportunity to step in the norm, thus to become good couples in the same way as heterosexual couples. Nevertheless, those who chose not to play the government's game are yet not considered acceptable. The main goal of the strong LGBT coalition advocating for the extension of marriage to same-sex couples is to allow the partners of the biological/official parents to legally secure their bound to the children. Among the participants, out of the five couples I met that are still raising under-age children, two married for this reason, one considers maybe getting married at some point, one is getting married soon but for other reasons, and one couple would married to secure the bounds if they could.

Filiation is a central point in the French conception of family, to the point that it is considered as its pillar. In the report about filiation, origins and kinship that was directed by sociologist Irène Théry[8], filiation is defined as *"the very symbol of the unconditional, and ideally indissoluble bound"* (Théry, 2014: 37, my translation). In his study of filiation in France, demographer Francisco Munoz-Perez introduces filiation as the official recognition of the ties between a child and his parents by law (Munoz-Perez, 2009: 556). This filiation is ordinarily symbolised by the family name. At the establishment of the birth certificate of the child, it is usually the father's family name that is recorded as the child's family name. If the (heterosexual) parents are married[9], the presumption of paternity induces that the husband of the woman who delivers is the father. When the parents are not married, usually the father, as he is in charge of registering the child at the city hall, explicitly recognizes his fatherhood. If there is no father, then the child is register with his or her mother's name (Munoz-Perez, 2009: 560). The *mariage pour tous* law, which includes the right to adopt the spouse's children,

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8 This report was ordered by the Ministries of Social Affairs and Health and of Family in October 2013. As the *mariage pour tous* law revealed that a rethinking of the legal definitions of family and parenthood were needed. A group of reflection about filiation, origins and kinship composed of sociologists, jurists, anthropologists, psychoanalysts, gynaecologist and other social scientists was formed to analyse the situation and venture propositions for a new legislation.

9 It is interesting to note that when getting married, most women chose to take their partner's name. However, French law authorises couples to add one name to the other, in any order.

raises several issues considering filiation[10]. When female same-sex couples have children, only the biological mother sees her filiation officially recognised. In most cases the identity of the (male) genitor is unknown, thus the children only have one filiation. Except when a co-parenting project is built, even when the genitor is known, they chose not to recognise the children, leaving them with a lacking filiation, which by law ought to be taken upon by the spouse of the mother. Of course, before the 2013 law, it was impossible for social mothers to establish any filiation with their children.

Concerning the ways of conception, artificial insemination by donor (AID) is only authorised by law when medically assisted and for heterosexual couples[11]. Female same-sex couples usually chose a medically assisted AID in Belgium or in Spain, which both allow this process to lesbian couples. Until 1994, medically assisted AID was open to couples (but not to single women) without any mention to lesbian couples. The idea that lesbian couples could be willing to have children seemed not to have occurred in jurists' minds. Thus, as anthropologist Virginie Descoutures explains in an article about lesbian mothers, before the explicit prohibition of insemination for lesbians in 1994, homosexual women could access medically assisted AID (Descoutures, 2008: 166). Home inseminations, or non-medically assisted AID are strictly forbidden by law, regardless of sexuality or relationship status. In the same way, surrogacy is also prohibited.

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10 Two types of adoption are possible. The full adoption erases original filiation (of either the mother of the father), and grants complete parental rights to the new parent. It is that one that applies to adoption within the nuclear family. Simple filiation grants very limited rights towards the children and does not change the existing filiations (Munoz-Perez, 2009: 557).

11 Article L. 2141-2 of the law n° 2011-814 of July,7th, 2011 related to bioethics. *"The medical assistance to procreation aims to find a solution to a couple's infertility or to avoid the transmission to a child or to a member of the couple of a particularly serious disease. The pathological sign of infertility must be medically proven"* (my translation). What's more, the couple should *"be married or be able to give proof of a common life of at least two years"* (my translation).

5. Family creation narratives

The desire to have children was discussed in each interview. When asked about it, most of the participants stated that they had this desire since childhood, and two said they did not think of being parents before they entered adulthood. Some participants answered that, as children, they did not imagine anything about their future, so they did not think of having children or not. Nonetheless, the participants who claimed they wanted to be parents since childhood did not question in any way this desire, as if that was the way it goes.

> *"Monique: No, me I think that I imagined myself... having a husband, and children, but as soon as I left my, my deep countryside, I... I arrived in Lyon a bit by, to come spend two weeks of holidays. I stayed. But it was living the high life compared to, compared to the countryside. So there were so many things to do and...*
> *Nicole: Than getting married!*
> *Monique: Than getting married, having children."*

Monique's story underlines the normative character of having children. In the environment in which she grew up, young women were supposed to marry and create a family, but as she moved to a new place that enabled freer perspectives, she let go of this ideal and decided not to have children. Nevertheless, short after meeting Nicole and falling in love with her, she also met Aurélie, Nicole's daughter, with whom she quickly built a strong affective relationship. This emphasises the facts that relationships are built by both parts, and that children's feelings are also important and to be taken in consideration in the construction of affective bounds.

> *"The first time I saw Aurélie, Aurélie made me... she was 4 and a half, she made me an incredible little number. (we giggle) She had me fall like completely! [...] We had the same jacket. It was really fun. So, the relationship with Aurélie settled... spontaneously, very very fast, very... very confident from for beginning, and... [...] I had no hesitation towards Aurélie, I had no hesitation towards the... the role, the relation there was between, because I think that is also important, towards the relation there was between Aurélie and her, say, biological mum. [bursts out laughing] And things did not happen this way, but in an incredible facility." - Monique*

When they were children or teenagers, some participants clearly could not think of themselves as parents when they would be adults. It took some time for Aude to start thinking of having children. Though it was a wish when she met Séverine, she claims that she *"would have run away"* if her partner wanted a child a few years earlier ; she still can't consider the idea of being pregnant herself.

Nicole was in a similar situation when she conceived Aurélie, as her girlfriend refused to be pregnant. Retrospectively, she questions this position. In her opinion, if one wants to be a mother but not to bear the child, things are too good and a deeper problem is underlying.

Christophe was in his late teens when he met the mother of his children, and he recalls how they came along the way, without him developing the desire to be a father beforehand.

> *"Yes it happened through our life together because frankly I was young, I had not asked myself this question yet." - Chrsitophe*

His explanation of how he became a parent *"trough life"* seems to summarise rather fittingly how these participants who did not grow up with the idea of having children actually did.

One could think that being homosexual – or being committed in same-sex relationship – and desiring to have children is paradoxical. This issue was discussed with eight of the thirteen respondents. For only three of them (Séverine, Marc and Christiane), being homosexual was an obstacle to becoming a parent. Marc and Séverine stopped considering their homosexuality as an obstacle as technology brought up new reproduction techniques that enabled them to have children. Christiane, who was trying to have a child in the '1980s, felt lonely facing the difficulties of her situation, but persistently managed to find a way to give birth to her son. On the other hand, Nicole, who also had a child in the '1980s, never considered her homosexuality as conflictual with her desire to be a parent. In the same way as her, the other participants with whom this question was mentioned explained that they felt that somehow, thanks to (future) technical progress regarding reproduction, they would be able to have children without engaging in heterosexual intercourse.

Lesbian motherhood, in academic literature, is often referred to as an oxymoron. As Kath Weston clarifies, lesbians, because of their homosexual practices, should be unproductive, thus lesbian mothers are provocative in that which they challenge that

prejudice. On the other hand, as lesbianism and motherhood do not go together in most people's minds, the fact that they are mothers tends to invisibilise their sexuality (Weston, 1991: 168-169). This positioning in regards to third-parties will be discussed in the last chapter of this essay. However, lesbian motherhood raises issues regarding identity as a mother. Since only one woman at a time can bear a baby, the one who does not bear – that is, the social mother – can face difficulties in identifying as a mother. The couples I interviewed – when they did not already have children when they met – displayed three different strategies. Céline and Estelle decided to both bear a child, as well as Laurence and Béatrice, who eventually decided to adopt. Aude and Séverine, on the other hand, chose that only one of them would bear their children – as Aude did not want to be pregnant, while Séverine enjoys it. Nonetheless, Aude had a hard time positioning herself as her daughters' mother. The fact that the law imposes total anonymity to the donor reinforces her feeling of taking the place of the actual genitor.

> *"Because I, I feel guilty for, I say to myself that because of me, it's me the mum who's not a real mum, it's me who takes the place of the father quotation marks, well, I don't know how to. So I can't prevent myself from feeling a bit guilty and saying to myself that, well if they don't have a father and even though, even though I adopt her, if to me they are my daughters, well they, they still have two, tow mums, two parents, but despite everything... I try to put myself in their place. Teenagers. Or young adults. And to think that, somewhere a man who, who gave the little seed. And this man he is somewhere, and they will never know where he is. They will never know where he is, who he is, what he looks like, what he was doing in life, in which country he lives... And I think this is violent. […] And I think that completely closing any access off, to, to the filiation from a biological point of view, because for me it's me the second parent but, but in spite of everything, we don't lie to our children! And, this seed it came from somewhere! Even though to me, it's just a seed, I know that to my girls it will inevitably, not inevitably, probably be more than a seed. There will always somewhere be the confused idea that, that it's their father. And to tell them well no, there's no possible access, I think it's, brrrrrr."* - Aude

Monique and Nicole also raised the question of the absence of the male genitor, as well as Christiane, arguing that their now adult children felt the need to meet their genitors, and that although they would not consider them as parents, knowing their identity, without affectively bonding with them, became something they wished for as they were growing up.

5.1 Conception processes

The panel of participants for this study offered a broad insight on the different ways to conceive children. Out of five women who bore their children, three chose to use artificial insemination by donor (AID), and the two others became pregnant through heterosexual intercourse. Among the five other women, two chose adoption, one plans to bear a child in the near future, one does not want to be pregnant and one did not want to have children before she met her partner who already was a mother. Out of the three men I interviewed, two became parents after surrogacy, and the last one had children from heterosexual intercourse. All these different means of having children do not always lead to the creation of a strictly nuclear family (two parents and the children). It sometimes imply co-parenthood, a form of family that will be elaborated on in the last chapter of this thesis.

Two of the interviewees became parents when engaged in heterosexual relationships. Another participant conceived her son through heterosexual intercourse with a man with whom she was planing on co-parenting ; this case will be analysed in the co-parenting section.

Although he was aware of his homosexuality, and had come out a few years before, Christophe fell in love with a woman with whom he had three children. They lived together sixteen years, until mid-life crisis led them to separate for their own good. They still are in a good relationship, and share custody equally. He does not want to analyse or question this relationship, though he feels this former relationship is misunderstood within the gay community – which either questions his homosexuality or denies the authenticity of the heterosexual relationship.

Claude, on the other hand, got married in the '1960s. Not only homosexuality was seen as pathological and deviant at that time, but marriage was the norm for young women. She would retrospectively tend to say she married her husband out of convenience.

"Claude: [...] I got married to have children. That is visible. I didn't know at the moment I got married but, that was what I... I had to have children. That's all I can say, I had to have children.
Me: Alright. And how did you chose your husband then?
Claude: My sister had a husband who was a professor and [...] they had a friend who was a professor who was, was very neat and tidy, very good and I thought why not and, what's more he was good-looking.. No it was very good. They

thought in my family I did a good choice.
Christiane: But you thought to yourself, you though "he will please my parents".
Claude: Oh yes, he will please my parents, my mother was delighted, she was an English teacher too. She was delighted and my father was absolutely in favour of this wedding, too.
Me: Alright, and was it important for you?
Claude: Yes, very important. Very important to, to be in line with my brothers and sisters. We were six. I had to do the same as everyone."

When elaborating on her sexuality, Claude remembered being attracted to girls since high school, but laying the blame on the homosociality of non-mix schools. She then referred to her marriage as conventional rather than sentimental.

"I though it had to change, that, it was because I didn't know any men, and, the first man I met, Christian, well I thought to myself he's very well, there are no reasons, I will marry him. (giggles) And then I saw it was hard to communicate with him, to share with him, a great loneliness... And, when I met Christiane, it was, it was the greatest happiness in my life." - Claude

The two respondents who became parents when in heterosexual relationships seem to have been aware of their homosexuality or bisexuality when they decided to have children. Although they were not necessarily conscious of it at that time, they engaged in these relationships for convenience, because they wanted to have children and they could not do so in a homosexual relationship.

In theory, adoption for same-sex couples was authorised with the *mariage pour tous* law. Nevertheless, many countries have banned adoption for same-sex couples, leaving them with low chances to become parents this way. What the law renders possible, on the other hand, is for the spouse of the biological – thus legal – parent to adopt the child without the first parent losing their rights over the child. This process will be discussed in the next part of this chapter.

One couple amongst my respondents, Laurence and Béatrice, has adopted a brother and a sister abroad, in Russia. Willing to have children, they had both repetitively tried AID in Belgium as well as in Spain, and as they were ageing, they had to resign themselves to adoption. They found a homosexual man through the APGL who was also looking for co-parents. In order to be able to adopt in Russia, Laurence married the father of the children – Russia only allows foreign adoptions to married heterosexual couples[12].

12 This could not be possible anymore, as in 2013 Russia banned adoption for people from countries that allow

"No, we divorced right afterwards. But it's very cynical. [...] we had the social workers here, who found we were a happy, stable and serene couple."
" [...] they came to question us, we answered... the best we could, we, we had rehearsals beforehand. But I find this both... dramatic, to do this, and we had no choice, so we didn't even wonder. We, we did it." - Laurence.

They decided to adopt siblings from a foreign county as they finances were allowing them to engage in such a procedure (which includes both official and on the take costs). As they proceeded the adoption though a Russian legal office, the whole procedure was shorter than usual (eighteen month).

"Laurence: We see some of our straight friends, who, who are having a hard time to adopt and, who think they will never have any [children], we, once, once in the adoption path, it was for the best.
Me: Alright, so you were lucky.
Laurence: Luck, but, if you're doing a sociological study, it's also a lot of money. [...] It's just crude! Because if we don't give plenty of money to each state, there are back-handers, we don't have Mathis and Chloé.
Béatrice: Back-handers and, and also... non-back-handers.
Laurence: Oh yes, back- and front-handers.
Béatrice: There you go.
Laurence: Well I think it was around 65 000€. Something, something crazy. But that's Russia. Well we had this, this opportunity though a Russian legal office where we knew that, that where we would fetch the children they were not molested, they were fed,
Béatrice: Not stolen.
Laurence: they were not stolen like around Moscow, and all. [...] We were ready to go anywhere around the globe. But Stéphane had friends who had children through this legal office, who were there. So we knew it was a reliable option."

Most French lesbian couples chose to go to Belgium to get AID, which is both cheaper (between 1000€ and 2000€ per attempt) and more easily accessible (it is better served by trains) than Spain. According to one of the participants, French women usually chose clinics in French-speaking regions (either the city of Brussels or Wallonia), which leads to a saturation of insemination demands. Céline thus chose a Flanders clinic, where the delays were much shorter, and was pleased to hear the crew speaking French to her. Insemination in Belgium means having some tests done there, and then being monitored by a gynaecologist in France (this implies finding a French gynaecologist willing to help in the process). When ovulation rates are up enough, the gynaecologist will then tell the couple they have to go to

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same-sex marriages.

Belgium on very short notice to proceed to the insemination. Thus at least the biological mother needs to be able to rely on her co-workers, or on the indulgence of her boss.

Nicole was inseminated in the early 1980s, in France. She was at the time in a same-sex couple, and through the friend of a friend they got in contact with a manager of the CECOS (the French egg and sperm-bank centre) who was interested in giving non-heterosexual couples an opportunity to have a medically assisted AID.

> *"At a time when, it wasn't... even mentioned. Anyway, prohibited. […] [A manager of the CECOS] who was interested, from a... sociological perspective doubtless too, and a scientific perspective and, well. […] He was performing his artificial insemination, before he had me undergoing tests, drawings, I don't remember if there was a real desire to have children […] and when he considered given these... these tests and the discussions that it was a true desire to have a child, ha agreed to, I think he had already done this or that he did it for other people before, later, I don't know, I didn't ask." - Nicole*

AID do not always occur in a medically assisted context. Séverine and Aude explained to me that because some Belgian clinics are lacking of sperm, they have started to request the recipients to provide new donors in order to be inseminated. For this reason, and as they both wanted to be the parents of the child, they chose to look for a donor who would agree not to be anything more than a genitor in order to perform a home insemination in France – which is both dangerous and illegal.

> *"It is, it's not so rare but... it's... it's illegal so people don't talk about it too much, and... Also it's risky, on all levels. It's risky, on a sanitary level, because, we don't, we well might show each other documents showing that... that the man is not HIV-positive, that et caetera... if really... […] he wants to lie he can. […] and it's risky after, after birth because he can always claim for some rights. It's risky also for him because we can impose him paternity, so that's, so that's not at all reasonable. But still we did it. And in the end we don't regret but we say to ourselves we were completely mad. But it's, well it's a man we barely know, but who... well he inspires us trust, he, he exudes morality and... He is straight as, he is even a bit, he seems almost psychorigid." - Aude*

Julien and Marc had their children through surrogacy. Adoption, because of its complexity and its slowness was not convenient for them, and nor was co-parenting. For some reasons, mostly economical, they chose Ukrainian surrogates.

"Me: And why did you chose that country?
Julien: Well, it was the best price-quality ratio. There was India too but India is less safe, they are exploited, put... during the whole pregnancy they are pulled out of their families and put into a centre... we were not really in favour of this, from this point of view. And in the US it costs, it's even more expensive. It's also a budget issue."

When asked about the costs of the surrogacy, Julien said the whole procedure for the twins, four years ago, was about 22 500€, and for their youngest son, several month later, 25 000€. This includes the insemination procedure, the eggs for the insemination, a monthly indemnity for the surrogate who cannot work during the pregnancy, a bonus if she respects the procedure, a bonus for her pregnancy clothes and the agency fees. His partner, Marc, underlined the unofficial costs of the procedure, and said they paid 50 000€ for the conception of Léa and Enzo, and 80 000€ for Ethan. Surprisingly, the costs for their youngest child are higher than for the elder twins; the global economical inflation also reaches the business of surrogacy. Furthermore, when the insemination leads to twins, the costs do not rise so much, with just a 1 000€ bonus to the surrogate.

The children's official fathers are their biological fathers, when his partner has no legal power whatsoever on the child. Thus, when the states recognises no bond between Julien and his partner's son Ethan, Marc has no legal tie to Léa and Enzo either – although they live in Switzerland, French law is the same regarding this issue.

I asked them about the participation or absence of the mothers of the children (surrogate as well as egg donor), who are actually totally untied to their family.

"Marc: Well there crossed-donations are mandatory, with anonymous donor. We don't have any contact with the genitors. You're talking about genitor, do you mean surrogate or mother? The one who gave her oocyte?
Me: For both actually it's interesting to... to know.
Marc: So the, the, the donor we don't know her. We have a few pictures and a, a few informations that are anonymous. And the surrogate on the other hand, we, we have, her contact details et caetera, but the agency with which we had the contacts did everything so we had the least relations possible. Even if their was a demand from us to, to be in contact, to exchange et caetera, the agency was, was blockading, so we didn't know if it was in our interest or not so, we didn't necessarily try to overpass the agency. And in the same time we had, well, the surrogate, culturally even though it was well accepted in this country, the one for our youngest, she didn't want to, to let her family know, so there were still elements that did so that they did not necessarily want to be in contact with us."

"Conversely to the US there, there were no contact at all between the surrogate and... and the intentional parents. [...] Mothers are very detached, regarding pregnancy, so there's no... For them it's a job it's not, there's no [...] they are called genitors, so they are just bearing, there's no, it's not their children, it's not their husbands children. There's... they do it like, really, it's like a job. [...] Mothers are, the bond during pregnancy is much less strong than here over there." - Julien

5.2. Being parent, a privilege for rich homosexuals

Child conception, when it does not happen biologically through a heterosexual relationship is expensive. Surrogacy in Ukraine is even more expensive going up to 80000€ including unofficial costs for the gay couple that I interviewed. Adoption is more than 60000€ in Russia. It is very hard to get an idea of the prices, as surrogacy and adoption can be made from different countries, with different regulations, and also imply hidden costs. It also seems that these procedures' rate are increasing as they become more visible. These two practices are thus only available to wealthy couples. Among the participants, the ones who had recourse to them were the couples with the highest social status. Julien and Marc both claimed they waited until their professional situation was settled and they were advanced in their careers enough to be stable, but also to have gathered the money needed. Laurence, Béatrice and the father of their children Stéphane were in their mid-forties when they engaged the adoption procedure, and could totally afford its costs. AID, on the other hand, is much less expensive: according to the participants, it costs between 1000€ and 2000€ per attempt in Belgium (the cheapest country near France). Nonetheless, considering that usually several attempts are needed to meet some results, it raises fast, leaving this mean only available to middle-to-upper-class women. In her study on gay fathers, sociologist Dana Berkowitz notes that male gay couples who can afford becoming parents are situated at the intersection of their white and upper-(middle-)class men, and of their status as belonging to a sexual minority (Berkowitz, 2011: 520). This meets the neo-liberalist and consumerist aspect of homonormativity that was pointed out by Lisa Duggan (Duggan, 2002: 179): the costs of

NRTs and adoption are so high that they are accessible only to the wealthier households. The only available option for working class gays and lesbians is to resort to heterosexual intercourse.

5.3. Adoption within the family

Adoption within the family is now accessible to same-sex couples. However, the application of this part of the *mariage pour tous* law is not simple in practice. Although they got married before giving birth to their children, Céline and Estelle had to go through the full-adoption procedure, and faced difficulties when it came to the family name of their daughter: they married when Céline was nine month pregnant, thinking it would enable their daughter to have both of their names. However, although Céline was now having a double family name (hers and Estelle's), Estelle needed to adopt their daughter so she can also bear her own name. Five month later, they submitted the adoption file, and it was not until another five month that Estelle was officially recognised as her mother.

Aude and Séverine, on the other hand, had their daughters before the 2013 marriage and adoption law. Aude's narrative highlights the heavy administrative procedures, as well as the fact that each court (on the geographical level) have different requirements in order to judge the adoption request, involving assessors that are not necessarily trained.

"Me: When it comes to your rights, how are you considered... regarding [your daughters]?
Aude: Nothing. A stranger. A stranger and that's all.
Me: You just have the possibility to make an adoption file?
Aude: Yes. So we set it up, from the day after the wedding, we took an appointment to the notary. To... make a... demand, well so Séverine wrote a consent to adopt, well to allow the adoption, the right to ask for the adoption. There. And then we gathered all the necessary pieces, we made the certificates, everything that was asked, and even what was not asked, so we, we submitted a completed file in the beginning of February. We received a favourable opinion

from the Procureur de la République[13]. *[…] Now we are waiting for the file to appear in court. Which can take months because... the court is congested.*
Me: Okay. It's true it completely depends on the region...
Aude: Well, the files are different from one region to another, from a court to the other. They don't ask for the same things.
Me: Okay. What did they ask for here?
Aude: Not much. Here, really, the minimum, plus... the legal minimum plus a police investigation. So that-
Me: A police investigation??
Aude: that gives you a strange feeling though, to have to receive the police in your home.
Me: What are they looking for?
Aude: In theory they check our, my, mine, my capacity to, to... be a good mother.
Me: The police?
Aude: The police. Yeah. [giggles]
Me: Okay. Isn't it usually the social services?
Aude: In some courts it's social services investigations. Here, it was the police, so, who came home. They asked me questions. They lo-, they didn't even visit the house, they just asked me questions. To which I could have lied, or more, anyway, pfff. It's a morality inquiry. They check if I have a blank police record, they asked me if I drink, if I have a job... that's about it, they seemed as discomforted as we were... not to know much why they were here."

Monique adopted Nicole's daughter, Aurélie, a few month ago, although she is now in her thirties, and has founded her own family. They had tried to engage this procedure when she was fifteen, but at that time Nicole had to abandon her parental rights, which they did not consider as a pertinent option. Now that Aurélie is an adult, no parental rights are in the picture, adoption is mostly symbolic. However, it does imply inheritance (the adopted person becomes the main heir), thus Monique had to ask for the authorisation of her own family to be able to adopt Aurélie[14].

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13 Republic Prosecutor.

14 According to French law, children (adopted or not) are the parents' primary heirs. When the person who is adopted is already an adult – and not a minor – during the process, the heirs have to agree to lose their inheritance (or part of it). In Monique and Aurélie's case, as Monique did not have any children – and as children are the primary heirs according to French law – her siblings (her parents are dead) were losing their inheritence.

As French law does not authorise conception to non-heterosexual couples but only tolerates same-sex families, the respondents used different methods to become parents, from the legal co-parenting to the illegal surrogacy in a foreign country. In such cases – couples who can't have children due to sexual orientations – the path to have children differs a lot, and offers as many examples as there are experiences. There are different means of conception, and even the law, which should be the same for everyone, requires different elements to recognise gay and lesbian families. The common point between those stories though is the strong will to have children, whatever it costs, as long as they can afford it.

At first glance, NRTs are triggering changes in kinship, as they imply a human manipulation of biology. Yet these new technologies actually highlight the complex intertwining of what is biological and what is social in terms of kinship. Marilyn Strathern, in her research on the influences of NRTs on kinship, argues that *"kinship systems and family structures are imagined as social arrangements not just imitating but based on and literally deploying processes of biological reproduction"* (Strathern 1992: 3). However, the development of NRTs, with donors, surrogates and social parents, allows a parenthood that is not grounded in biological bounds, but rather is a reproduction of this conception of kinship and family, that introduces changes (Strathern, 1992: 19 ; Hequembourg and Farrell, 1999: 546). NRTs offer a solution to overcome childlessness (Strathern, 1992: 37), and although they are not, in France, legally authorised to same-sex couples, they allow them to gain access to parenthood. Thus NRTs could allow a rethinking of kinship outside of the heteronormative mould. The following chapter of this essay will focus on the way same-sex families negotiate with contemporary kinship, that is the nuclear family norm.

6. (Re)Negotiating family

In *Social Structures*, in 1949, George Peter Murdock defined family as *"a social group characterised by common residence, economic cooperation, and reproduction"* (Murdock, 1949: 1). According to him, a family consists of male and female adults, among which at least two are sexually cohabiting, and the children of that couple. He then defines the nuclear family as *"married man and woman with their offspring"*. Although these descriptions are far from universal, I take them as applying to the French family model. As anthropologist Sylvta Junko Yanagisako underlines in her analysis of domestic groups, the universal definition of nuclear family is a group composed of (at least) a mother and her dependent child(ren) (Yanagisako, 1979: 196). The dependence of the children on the adults is a significant aspect of nuclear family, as usually when the children become totally independent from their parents, they have embraced adulthood. This heteronormative definition of nuclear family does not take into account the possibility for non-heterosexual couples to have children. Furthermore, marriage is no longer a prerequisite for the formation of nuclear families – although the current law makes it inevitable for the recognition of same-sex families. Thus, I want to reformulate the definition of nuclear family as a social group composed of two adults engaged in a long-term sexual cohabitation, and their children. As long as the children depend on their parents, nuclear families live in a unique household, and the adults are engaged in economic cooperation, as well as in the rearing of their children.

In 2010, sociologists Judith Stacey and Timothy Biblarz's proceeded to a meta-analysis of gender and parenthood. The outcomes of this analysis was that scientific studies show that Western stereotypical families grant strictly different roles to fathers and mothers. According to the numerous studies they went through, fathers are mentors and models: they are the families breadwinners, they engage in stereotypically masculine tasks, they play with their children, spend more time with their sons than daughters and show a greater interest (than mothers) in fostering their children's gender conformity (they show their sons how to behave in a masculine way, and encourage their daughters to be feminine). Mothers, on the other hand, are nurturers and care-takers; they spend more time with their children, doing childcare

or domestic work. They also are, contrary to the gentle and peaceful stereotype, the ones that physically punish their children more, due to the amount of time they spend with them as opposed to the fathers (Stacey and Biblarz 2010: 4-5). These stereotypes are the ones of the middle(to upper-)class stereotypes around which Western families[15] are still massively constructed. Nevertheless, they are not based on biological criteria, but rather are the constant reproduction of the commonly accepted idea of parenthood (Berkowitz, 2011: 528 ; Weston, 1991: 19) – an application to the family of Judith Butler's gender performance as a copy of a copy[16].

6.1 Dealing with the stereotypical nuclear family

Same-sex families, as I exposed in chapter two, are both transgressing the heterosexual norm, by becoming parents though not heterosexual, and negotiating it. As sociologist Dana Berkowitz argued in her research on American gay fathers, as well as Gillian Dunne did in her study of English lesbian mothers, gay and lesbian parents carry on the normative family, but in the meantime introduce alternatives to these patterns (Berkowitz, 2011: 516 ; Dunne, 2000:12). In her study of gay and lesbian families, Kath Weston introduced the idea of chosen families, that are the creation of new family patterns, which are not grounded in biology, or in blood ties anymore, but which include, within the family, close friends and kin (Weston, 1991: 109). Although most of my respondents have good relations with their own parents and siblings, who are bonded to their new families, some insisted on that they were careful on the people they chose as close kin. For instance, some of the female interviewees pay a certain attention to keeping men (mostly friends) close to their children, thus revealing the importance they give to the presence of men around the family in order to normalise their children's experiences by giving them the opportunity to socialise with adults of both sexes. In

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15 Stacey and Biblarz's meta-analysis examined studies that were led in *"different states and nations with distinct and changing sociocultural and legal contexts for parenting."* (Stacey and Biblarz, 2010: 6)

16 According to Judith Butler, the repetition of the heterosexual norm by homosexuals is a *"copy to a copy"*, as opposed to a *"copy to the original"* (Butler, 1990: 43). This could be applied to kinship, as it seems primarily based on biology, but now remains on the sole reproduction of social norms (which are deriving from the biological original).

those cases, they tend to choose these men according to the type of masculinity they show, thus enhancing men that do not appear with a macho attitude.

I asked the interviewees about how they would define a parent, a mother, a father, a woman or a man, telling them to answer the first things that would come to their minds. When reflecting on what is a parent, a father or a mother, seven of them would refer to their own parents to answer the question – while only two would when describing a man and a woman. Eleven of the participants make no difference between the roles of mother and father. Among them, four think that in a parental couple, each part is complementary of the other, that is, they bring children what the other can't (whether because of skills or tastes, or depending on the present situation). Two of the interviewees think mothers and fathers have two naturally distinct roles, and two insisted on the social construction of these. When I asked the participants to define "a mother", the adjectives that came up the more were "gentle" and "tender", *"fusionelle"* (giving exclusive, passionate love) regarding the children. The figure of the "foster mother" also came up in a couple of interviews, as well as the idea of the mother as representing authority. When I asked the participants how they would define "a father", the most frequent answer was "the Law and/or authority figure". An other answer that came up was the relation of the father with the "exterior". One of the participants, Aude, who is a psychologist, held a particularly dichotomised discourse regarding the mother and father roles.

> *"Me: Alright. And a father and a mother, how do you define them?*
> *Aude: The differences, between them?*
> *Me: Yes.*
> *Aude: ... Well... The father would be more... The, the* tiers-séparateur *[separating third-party], the Law, the, the frame. Even though a mother can do it too. But as a function, as a symbolic function. The father would be, would be more of this, the Law, the exterior, it's the exterior that comes in the home, it's the representative of... of society and the Law... So he brings this home. To separate the mother from the child. Because, the mother and the child, well there. The mother is* fusion *[passionate, exclusive love], it's tenderness, it's love... it's the... the nurturing side. But... they must, they must lift away from each other. So, the father is here to help her.*
> *Me: And where do you position yourself in all this?*
> *Aude: The father! (giggles) The father. Well, at the same time I'm not a man! (laughs) Hence what I was telling you this morning.*
> *Me: Yes, the issue of your, your place regarding your daughters.*
> *Aude: Because I positioned myself as* tiers-séparateur.*"*

According to her, each parent is to have a determined role. The idea of the mother as *fusionelle* is very present in her reflections, as linked to maternity. The (biological) mother, who bore the child, has a specifically strong and exclusive relationship with the children she delivered. In order for the children to grow up properly, that bond has to be undermined, or at least lessened, by a third-party party, the *tiers-séparateur*. This third-party is the other adult of the couple -in most families, the father. Aude has embraced this position, although she claims it was not consciously, and she acknowledges it retrospectively. She insists on the assisting character of this position, which helps both the children and the mother. However, she also highlights the fact that she suffers from this.

> *"But without doing it deliberately, I found myself in a position that, a position that is not completely natural to me, because I remain a woman, with a woman sensibility. And with a desire to tenderness, to cuddles, to hugs, to, something that I imagine being more feminine, maternal." Aude.*

Although she is steeped in psychological discourse about symbolic roles within the parental couples, and acknowledges their figurative nature, she naturalises gender roles regarding children. She thus finds herself stuck in a situation where the social role she compelled herself in clashes with her desires.

When asked how they would describe a man and/or a woman, the participants would then tend to give distinct roles to each gender, that are closely linked to the mother and father roles in stereotypical nuclear families. Seven of the respondents referred to the biological differences between the sexes – one participant acknowledged that these biological differences are not hermetic and that sex can be medically switched. Two of the participants mentioned that they differentiate men and women according to their look. Five interviewees emphasised they were quoting stereotypes, but that these stereotypes were not applied to them, that they were distancing from them, refusing them. Four of the interviewees could not come with any answer to the question. Answers were very eclectic, and none came up more than twice. To define a man, the most given answers were "male individual"[17], "dominant", "patriarch", "breadwinner". Other answers were also linked to masculine stereotypes (selfish, protector, strong, work, bear, sword, serious, aggressive, sun). Women, in their answers marked their difference (stranger, complicated) or were ambiguous about it (like me but with a different sex). On the other hand, the most given answer to describe women were

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17 Individu de sexe masculin.

"intelligent" (three times), followed by "female individual"[18], "casualness" and "strong but in a different way than men" (both twice). This highlighting of women's skills as superior -or a least, not inferior- as men's was also found in the answers capacity to do anything and freedom (as compared to men's imprisonment in work). Most of the other answers were embedded into stereotypes of femininity (care, responsiveness, gentleness and tenderness, empathy, beauty, nice, capacity to reproduce, sensibility, maternal instinct, self-sacrifice). Finally, a female interviewee answered "complicated" and an other one "like a man but with a different sex", again emphasising the ambiguity of sex differences. The sample only includes three men (for ten women), so it is uneasy to compare the answers according to gender. Nonetheless, Marc and Julien answered in the same way (female/male individual) as Céline and Estelle, as they are the two youngest couple, and have similar ages. Christophe, on the other hand, consciously quoted some gender stereotypes.

Traditionally in French families, the mother is called "maman" (mummy) and the father "papa" (daddy). As in homosexual families the parents are both of the same sex, the name daily used by the children to call each parents can be seen as an issue. Amongst the families that participated in this research, two (female couples) made a point of honour to be both called mummy and the male couple to be both called daddy. The main reason is that this way their situation as parents can be obvious.

> "Me: And how do the children call you?
> Marc: Daddy both of us. [...] We voluntarily did not want to differentiate the designation. Because we don't want to make any difference, we, we give a lot of importance to, to the balance in our respective tasks and, and we don't want one of us to be called any other way. [...] After all, how would we chose which one would be called Daddy? Wouldn't it induce a difference regarding our status? Towards the children or towards strangers, who would... hear the children calling us differently."

> "But for us there was no, there was no, other option than "mummy", whatsoever, because there are people who say "maman", "tata" [auntie], "mamou", "tata", no. But she's a mummy it's not an auntie, Estelle. [...] Especially that we will have, well, crossed children since Estelle will bear the second one. So, what does that mean? That Estelle would be a mamou but a mummy for the second one? It doesn't make any sense." - Céline

They would use different techniques to make understandable which parent there are

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18 Individu de sexe féminin.

talking about. For instance, when talking about Julien, Marc will use the word "daddy", but he would never use it referring to himself, so that the meaning of "daddy" when coming out of his mouth can be clear to his children. Céline and Estelle decided to teach their daughter a nickname made of their own name and "mummy" -nevertheless they acknowledge that the children might as well call them other nicknames. This is also what Aude and Séverine's daughters came up with as they grew up.

For the other respondents, because the current partner of the biological parent got in the game when the children were old enough to speak and understand, the social parent is usually called by their first name. This is also the case for Laurence and Béatrice: when Laurence is the children's "mummy", Béatrice is Béatrice. Only Monique, who met Nicole's daughter Aurélie when she was 4, wasn't called by her first name but by a affectionate nickname.

6.2 Domestic life and childcare

As sociologist Róisín Ryan-Flood observed in 2003, same-sex relationships allow a certain flexibility regarding the sharing of domestic work as well as of childcare, as they induce an other practice of gender (Ryan-Flood, 2003: 18; Rydström, 2003: 129). In order to know if the flexibility was observable among the participants to this thesis, I asked them about how their domestic life was organised, to know if they were reproducing the heteronormative pattern, with one taking on masculine-labeled tasks and the other dealing with the feminine-labled ones. This part of the interview consisted of a list of short questions, about who does what and why. I asked about the cooking, the dishes, the laundry, the cleaning (tasks considered as feminine), the odd jobs (masculine task), and, concerning the children, who cares for them, plays with them, gives them their bath, checks on their homework and put them to bed.

Only one (female) couple stated that their organisation was rather gendered, one taking on the masculine tasks and the other one the feminine tasks, but also specifying that whether

in a heterosexual or in a homosexual relationship, they would take on the same tasks. In their previous relationships, they would be in charge of the same tasks as in the current one.

> *"Rather, I rather take up the... usually masculine roles, quotation marks, and you rather the feminine roles. As they say, who's the man, who's the woman! [we all burst out laughing]" - Christiane*

> *"Christiane: Me I make, here I've got the papers [giggles]. The [administrative] steps, things like this, yeah. Then there are, here this morning people came to install the sun-blinds, it was me who was in charge of the crew. [Claude giggles]*
> *Claude: ... And I served coffee to the crew [we burst out laughing]*
> *Christiane: Oh yes, we're caricatural, but well*
> *Claude: We accept it!"*

Christophe, who had been in a long-time heterosexual couple noticed that though the domestic work is rather equally shared in his current couple, it used to be different with his wife, as if the partner had a strong impact on the personality. Still, as for Claude and Christiane, the task he enjoys the most (taking care of the laundry) was in his charge in both of his relationships.

> *" [...] we don't wonder about if it's egalitarian or not, it just automatically happens. This is something I am discovering, that's to say I take care of ten times more domestic tasks as when I was in a heterosexual couple. Because, heterosexual couples have some kind of a, it comes from men and women, both. We have internalised stuff, like each does some tasks, so that means, to match with our sex." - Christophe*

> *"Proof is that I am not the same man in a straight couple than in a gay couple. So it's, the same, well I am the same, I am the same, but I, I won't react the same way, because I don't have the same social burdens. There are other social burdens." - Christophe*

The other couples would tend to define their domestic tasks sharing as equal. Two types of answers would then show up. Some would answer *"both of us"* to most of the questions, meaning that when something has to be done, the one who's available does it. Other couples would rather tend to have assigned the different tasks to each partner, but their motivations would fluctuate.

I am using some of sociologist Susan Kentlyn's *"factors affecting allocation of tasks"* to define the motives exposed for the division of domestic labour (Kentlyn, 2007: 117). In her 2007 research on domestic labour division in Queensland same-sex couples, she distinguished

six styles of sharing labour in same-sex households (namely responsibility-help, ownership, alternation, fluid shifts, together and outsourcing) and eight factors affecting the division of this labour (preference, aversion, time at home, time at home during the day, health, skills, standards, zone). The styles that can be found in the organisation of participants to the present study are fluid shifts (no strict distribution, one or the other can do anything when needed, they might also do it together), outsourcing (someone else is in charge) and ownership (each partner is responsible for specific tasks). The two main reasons my respondents evoked when asked about their division of labour were preference and time at home. Skills is another often used motive. A factor that was not elaborated in Kentlyn's article is the situation: the one who is present when a task is to be done (when there are dishes in the sink, when laundry is to be hung). One couple explained the main factor for their tasks distribution was relief: one will do what helps the other the most. Only one couple mentioned standards as an explanation concerning cleaning tasks (the one who's the least tolerant to dirt or mess would take care of it first). Although most couples would justify their choices through preference, one could wonder if the actual reason is not standards: one would tend to enjoy more taking care of the cleaning if they are less tolerant to dirt, since they would actually enjoy more neatness than the other.

> " […] our couple works according to skills and enjoyment. It's not a division of tasks according to... gender criteria […] it's not one being the man and the other the woman, so it's really... What she likes to do she does it, what I like to do I do it, and for the things none of us likes to do, well the one who's better at it is in charge. […] We don't say to each other you are doing more than me or, it's not you you do the dishes so I take care of the cooking, it's not... Anyway we never argued over this. We do argue for things, but some domestic tasks. It's, it's possible that Séverine does more than I do I don't know, or maybe it's me who does more than she does, frankly I don't know, and I think we don't care." - Aude

> "[…] let's say, generally, cleaning is rather Séverine. I am rather... tidying. I don't mind too much dust bunnies on the floor, but I can't stand seeing mountains of clothes, toys or I dunno what..." - Aude

The division of tasks, especially when it concerns children, appears to be depending on them as much as their parents. The most obvious example of this is stated by Laurence, who was able to observe since she adopted her children that some habits of distribution, which she calls "rituals", gradually settled from the impulse of the children rather than from a reflection of the couple:

"But there's no, I don't know if it's, a question of role, but there are rituals. For instance at night, Béatrice will read a story, and Mathis, these are funny rituals, and Mathis after the story asks me a tiny massage. I massage his back a bit. We have, he has defined us this way so we play the game." - Laurence

Among the participants, three couples have hired women to take care of some of these tasks, either cleaning and/or caring for the children. Béatrice and Laurence, as well as Claude and Christiane before they retired, are employing a housemaid who is partly in charge of the cleaning labour. They did not elaborate on the reasons of this choice during the interviews, although it seems due to their work schedule, and a will to prioritize the time spend with the children over the time spend on the cleaning tasks. Béatrice and Laurence are the female couple with the higher social status within the research, and Claude and Christiane are not employing a housemaid anymore, although when they were doing so (when they were both working and their son was younger), and Claude had a high responsibility job. It was – and still is – rather common in France to employ a housemaid when both parents are working full-time[19], although it is noticeable that the younger female couples who participated in the research, and who belong to the same class as Claude and Christiane, are not employing any housemaid. The younger female couples, on the other hand, if they take care of the household themselves, do delegate childcare during their working hours. Aude and Séverine leave their youngest daughter to an independent *assistante maternelle*[20] (child-minder), when Céline and Estelle leave their baby to a nursery, and then to an independent *assistante maternelle* when they work late. Although there is no debate about housemaids in France at all, it seems like younger generations are less likely to resort to them. Nevertheless, if a full-time working middle class couple can drop part of the feminine labour (either part of the childcare or the cleaning tasks), it seems they have to chose between one or the other, and keep responsibility for one[21]. Claude and Christiane, and Béatrice and Laurence, can free themselves of the undervalued feminine task of cleaning, but Aude and Séverine and Céline and Estelle rather seem to be giving up on some time spend with their children in favour of their jobs. One male couple that participated in this research is employing a housemaid who is in charge of part of

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19 There is no public debate about these practices, which are considered as going without saying. For instance the French National Institute for Statistic and Economic Research (INSEE), in their latest reports about domestic labour within the households, questions the gendered division, but barely mentions the recourse to employees. (http://www.insee.fr/fr/ffc/docs_ffc/ref/FHPARIT12g_D3tachesd.pdf)

20 Literally maternal assistant, the one who acts as the mother. It is the status of women in charge of childcare, whether in nurseries, or independently, in their own home, as it is the case here.

21 This rather seems to be due to the cost of employing people to do these jobs.

the housework as well as the childcare. Julien justified this by his lack of interest in these unrewarding tasks.

> *"We both work, we are full-time even, even more, so we have a nanny who comes home, which allows us to, to have a rewarding professional activity because, when I was not working [during parental leave], it was morally hard to... not to work and to have the, well, domestic tasks. It is not gratifying to take care of the children everyday like this to do housework, to clean, well it's not a good [self-]image, so, it's more interesting to, to work." - Julien*

Among the participants who delegate housework and/or childcare to some employee, Julien is the only one who argues that this type of work is boring and unrewarding. He also insisted in the importance of work, both as personally rewarding and as a mean to offer his children the better life. The female interviewees also are having full-time jobs, but do not seem to perceive these tasks as pejorative as he does, probably because, as women, they were conditioned to accept that they would have to do them anyway.

If we wonder about gender stereotypes within same-sex couples, this seems to indicate that regarding the division of domestic labour, this gendered difference within gay and lesbian couples is fading, and that middle-to-upper-class couples can get rid of feminine-marked tasks – or at least part of them. Thus, women can is some way – and at different degrees – emancipate from the undervalued feminine frame. However, this is only possible for higher income households, and those who do not have the means to leave these tasks to an employee still have to be in charge of them – although in an egalitarian way. Christophe's case balances the conclusions we could draw from Marc and Julien's account. Having a lower income, and a part-time job, he (and his husband to be) do not employ anyone to take care of the household, and would tend to have an egalitarian division of domestic tasks.

Judith Butler (1990) introduced the idea of gender as performative. Drawing on Monique Wittig's argument that the sex and gender are belonging to the Western system of compulsory heterosexuality, she also uses the foucauldian idea of these categories as discursively constructed to serve a system of regulatory and reproductive sexuality to explain

their existence – and thus the performativity that ensues (Butler, 1990: 140-141). Both gender are supposed to be intrinsically different, and thus gender performance relies on the emphasising of these differences. It is on these preconceptions that the heteronormativity is based. One could thus wonder, in a same-sex relationship, what happens when these differences are no longer there? Most of the families that participated in this research would tend to primarily show a rather undifferentiated division of their parental roles. However, when asked to define gender roles in a general context, some of them would tend to perpetuate – consciously or not – gender stereotypes. Thus they do not escape heteronormative patterns as much as one could expect. As Aude's case shows, balancing what is conceived as natural with what is symbolical or social is not always easy, as she performs a father role in which she does not completely fit. The names the parents are called by their children underline the way – here, in the family – gender is dictated by the heterosexual norm. When there is no longer a father and a mother, but two mothers or two fathers, families have to find ways to verbally differentiate each parent. The division of domestic labour and childcare also questions this gender performativity. When there's no man to take upon the masculine-assigned tasks, who does? Most couples show a rather egalitarian division, however some delegate the cleaning tasks to some housemaids, suggesting that they can avoid the devalued aspect of feminine labour, but also reproducing this unequal pattern as they leave it with lower-class women. Therefore although they do not carry on the heteronormative division of labour within nuclear families, they do perpetuate this pattern on an external level, by restricting lower-class women to the stereotype of the caring and nurturing woman.

7. Transmission

I understand transmission within the family as the process through which the family's identity is reproduced, that is a certain kind of set of values and of social organisation. Using sociologists Jean Kellerhals, Cristina Ferreira and David Perrenoud's 2002 research on identity transmission in Swiss families, I will first analyse the transmission patterns I encountered during the present study, before questioning the education they received from their own parents, and end by looking into the strategies the participants actually came up with.

Jean Kellerhals, Cristina Ferreira and David Perrenoud identified six transmission channels, connected to two general patterns: they distinguished the institutional types of family cultures in contrast to the privatised family cultures. The institutional types of transmission channels are patrimony (a farm, a factory, some lands,...), faith (shared religious, political, cultural beliefs) and a family myth. The privatised family cultures, on the other hand, are rather *"confined to the domestic, intimate, private sphere"* (Kellerhals, Ferreira and Perrenoud, 2002: 225), that is the one of the nuclear family. Privatised transmission includes three different channels that are the charismatic figure, which directly or indirectly rules the family, the discipline logic of transmission, which is a pattern based on rules, and the maieutic logic of transmission, a pattern based on communication (Kellerhals, Ferreira and Perrenoud, 2002: 215). The two latter are the ones I will use to provide a framework to this research. The article distinguished three different age-based generations: the oldest, which is embedded in institutional types of transmission was on average 78,5 years old, the second, which is embedded in the discipline logic of transmission was on average 50, and the last generation, which is embedded in the maieutic logic of transmission, was on average 23,5. The two younger ones do, twelve years later, match with my respondents.

Jean Kellerhals, Cristina Ferreira and David Perrenoud observed that the second generation of their interviewees (on average, 50 years old when their research was lead) presented the same transmission channel, that is the discipline logic. According to them, this

logic of transmission uses strict rules to enable "*order and consensus*" (2002: 223). Although men are still pictured as providers, guides and protectors, and women as responsible for family life, upbringing, sociability and mutual support, the values that are highlighted are duty, efforts, respectability and more importantly, solidarity, as the way to survive. The families which correspond to this pattern challenge the normative order, and tend to be more open, egalitarian and flexible, thus the next generation's model is even more relational. I call this pattern transmission through rules.

An important aspect of upbringing brought up by some the respondents seemed to be the boundaries set to the children. Some of the families insisted on having kind of a strict upbringing regarding the construction of markers for the children. They talked about this way of upbringing as old-fashioned – although good for the children. They would put the children to bed rather early (Séverine and Aude, Laurence and Béatrice), teach them to accept and respect the authority of the elders (Séverine and Aude, Julien and Marc, Nicole and Monique), or restrict their access to television (Séverine and Aude, Laurence and Béatrice). The latter two also insist on giving them a taste for reading. Among the eight participants who presented these aspects as important to them, only one couple belongs to Kellerhals, Ferreira and Perrenoud's second generation, when the three other ones are clearly younger. What's more, among them, three respondents (Aude, Séverine and Marc) were conveying a rules-based pattern of transmission. On the contrary, only one older participant (Monique) seemed to place herself in this pattern.

The third generation (on average, 23.5 years old) of Kellerhals, Ferreira and Perrenoud's interviewees presented what they call a maieutic logic, mostly based around communication. Family relationships are thought in terms of guides and disciples, respecting the uniqueness and the autonomy of each other. Rather than a collective identity, several personalised relationships are built. The values that are highlighted are authenticity, transparency and spontaneity. Their conception of the world *"is both utilitarian (the world is a huge market of opportunity) and humanist (demanding tolerance and respect for others)."* (Kellerhals, Ferreira and Perrenoud, 2002: 224). Emphasis is put on individual relationships and communication. I thus call this pattern transmission through communication.

When I asked the interviewees about the values they want to transmit to their children, three notions came up very often: "respect" (nine times), "open-mindedness" and "tolerance"

(eight times). Several close notions also came up frequently, such as "freedom", "autonomy", "independence", "non-violence", "communication", "love", "not being influenced", "leftist values", "financial disinterest", "fraternity". Once again, the purpose here is to enable the children to find their own place in the world. Out of seven participants whose discourses were connected to this logic, four were part of Kellerhals, Ferreira and Perrenoud's third generation (Céline, Estelle, Christophe and Julien) and three were much older, which is not so surprising considering their post-sixty eight speech. Young adults in May 1968[22], Christiane, and more importantly Claude and Nicole built their lives on a rejection of societal norms that is closer to transmission through communication than through rules. Moreover, there are the two respondents of this generation who managed to have children in the 1980s without being committed in a heterosexual relationship, thus we can consider they were avant-gardists concerning social rights and liberties.

During the interviews, I asked the respondents what being a parent meant to them. The main answer that came up was "to protect" (seven times). "To guide" (five times) and "to love" (four times) were also frequent answers. The other answers that came up at least twice were "to raise", "to bring up", "to be able to say no", "to be present", "to take care", "to be benevolent", "to provide", "to reassure", "to accept the child as he or she is" and "to trust the child". Several notions in these findings can be brought together as specifically illustrating the communication-based pattern of transmission. Parents here are described as providers of a frame to the children's development, not only do they fix them rules, or secure them material security, but most and foremost they do so in order for the children to understand the world they live in so they can find their own place. Raising children also implies loving them. Most of the upbringing nuances that were listed above imply a certain notion of love, benevolence for instance. Loving children means being strong enough to say no when necessary, without leading the child the question the unconditional love his or her parents feel. This also means accepting children the way they are. The difficulty of the unconditional love of the parents no matter what lies in the (mis)understanding of the children. Several interviewees mentioned their concerns about the way to make it clear to the children a "no" does not mean an "I don't love you (anymore)", but is rather a short-term frustration (for the child as well as for the

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22 May 1968 saw in France the revolt of students, soon joined by blue collar workers, against the capitalistic organisation of power. It lead to a general strike in the whole country that lasted a week. The youth was then advocating against capitalism, imperialism and conservatism, in favour of social and political equality and freedom.

parent) with beneficial long-term consequences. This trouble to make the unconditional nature of parental love understandable to children points out the difficulty to open a reproduction pattern based on rules to one that is communication-based. This dynamic position between both models is highlighted by the differences between the way the participants behave with their children, and how their parents did behave with them.

7.1. Relation to own parents' transmission pattern

Seven of the thirteen participants described the family they grew up in as stereotypical, with the mother being in charge of housework, and the father of bread-winning (Monique, Laurence, Séverine, Estelle, Céline, Christiane, Julien). Five of them described a rather egalitarian distribution of tasks within the household (Nicole, Béatrice, Claude, Aude, Marc), and one described reversed roles, with the father taking care of the housework and the mother taking on a dominant position (Christophe). It is impossible to make up categories with regard to age or geographical background, as for instance some participants in their thirties would recall the same stereotyped pattern as some in their sixties. Nonetheless, the five participants who grew up with egalitarian parents also grew up in a rather urban environment. On the other hand, the participants who were raised by rather stereotypical parents are indifferently from an urban or a rural background. Thus, people from the same generation, or from the same location background would describe a stereotypical situation as well as an egalitarian one.

Nevertheless, these models that were transmitted by the parents are the ones around which each of the participants are building their own identities as parents. Most of the participants who were raised in stereotypically organised households would tend either to question it or to reject it. They would always position this organisation as bad, although they would make it clear that their father was not macho.

"But my father he didn't know (...) where were the glasses, neither the towels, nei-... He was doing absolutely nothing in the household. But not macho for all

that, he was a good lad (...)" - Christiane

Among the participants who described a rather egalitarian division of housework, two lived a certain time of their lives with a single parent (whether because of a divorce or the death of a parent). It is also noteworthy that Nicole underlined her disappointment with this organisation.

"Yeah, I wish I had a more authoritarian father. At least capable of saying no. (...) I don't know how to say, but yes there was no, authority, but, even towards his wife he had no authority when, maybe... I'm not sure, maybe, it would have been good if he had some. There (giggles) I do not consider that a man had to... take the authority over his wife but, as it happens, at a certain point you have to... you have to... be capable of saying stop to certain things." - Nicole

Some of the participants were able to take on what they identify in their parents as flaws to turn them into qualities, as Aude elaborated on, thus self-re-appropriating these characters.

"[T]they raised me well, they gave me good values, they let, they had me growing up within a certain idea of freedom, autonomy... That corresponded to them. Them they are very selfish, they transmitted this to me for instance. Except, what with them tends to something that looks like egoism, to me, it transformed into... freedom. Not to the expense of the others." - Aude

When elaborating on upbringing, eight respondents mentioned the way they were themselves brought up. Four of them clearly stated they were breaking, partly or completely with their own parents upbringing methods. They would break off a strict and traditional discipline (Laurence, Marc), or some selfish (Aude), close-minded (Christophe) vision of the world. Thus, they seem to be transitioning from the rules-based pattern of communication they experienced with their parents and the communication-based on they are displaying with their children. On the other hand, six of the interviewees explained they were reproducing the way their parents raised them. In four of those cases, the new parents would claim that they carry on the communication-based pattern that was already surrounding them while growing up: the importance of communication (Christophe), autonomy and independence (Aude, Nicole, Béatrice). Nevertheless, Julien is reproducing aspects that would rather be tied to transmission through rules:

"We basically reproduce the upbringing we were given. We may be even more severe than our parents but well we have three kids, so as they are close to each other [regarding their age]" - Julien

"Me: And so you think the way you were brought up is... it totally suits you and you reproduce it?
Julien: Yes. Yes. Well, there are maybe one thing or two that don't, that don't suit us but well we don't, we don't go to too much trouble with it."

The participants whose environment was grounded in rules tend to be very likely to emphasise communication in the way they are now parenting, although most of them would also be careful in keeping rules in the household. By doing so, they are trying to balance each pattern (rules and communication). In the same way, those who grew up in an environment grounded in communication would emphasise on rules more than their own parents, but not displaying a rules-based pattern of reproduction. According to Kellerhals, Ferreira and Perrenoud, the different reproduction patterns are matching with distinct generations and are evolving linearly through time – from patrimony-based to privatised ones, then from rules-based to communication-based – (Kellerhals, Ferreira and Perrenoud, 2002: 224). I would rather use them as different conceptions in which one picks what they think of as important: they are not antagonists, they are supplementing each other. The most illustrative examples being those of Monique and Béatrice, who held rather balanced discourses, which do not fit in either transmission through rules or through communication. In fact their speech was taking as much from one than the other. For instance, Monique often referred to her parents to describe her own idea of upbringing, and although she rejects the strict discipline they displayed, she still thinks of discipline as important for children's development. Thus she tries to strike a balance between those two models. Taken as a whole, the participants discourses tend to show a will to insist both on communication and on rules, but also in an important will to display a generally egalitarian vision of the world. This will for equality is not only coming to light from the way some of them reject the gender stereotypes they observed with their own parents, but also is very present in the open-minded values they wish to transmit to their children.

7.2. Transmission strategies.

An other important aspect of transmission is the strategies built up by the parents to transmit different values, tastes, that are part of the family's identity. Some of the respondents acknowledge that the upbringing they are giving to their children is influenced by their readings (like Aude's, who after reading a book about the harmful effects of television is now really radical about it regarding her daughters – we discussed that point for fifteen minutes during her interview). On the other hand, most of the participants rather stated that they did not ask themselves any questions, and let things go their way.

> *"So yes, it was, but the, frankly the... there can be, well, I have the feeling I'm hearing in your question, are there sometimes principles that we... that we proclaim a bit like this. Me, I think that things, well doubtless they happened very naturally. I didn't really ask myself any questions regarding my daughter. When I, and I say so related to, where I see things from, now. A bit like... to come back to the earlier question. I didn't ask myself any."* - Nicole

> *"We didn't list the values we wanted to transmit them, but, we maybe could have! It's true we have common values..."* - Laurence

Following the transmission through communication that was exposed above, my respondents are concerned about not imposing anything to their children. For instance, Laurence and Béatrice were concerned about transmitting their love for some activities, without forcing their children into what the parents like rather than what the children actually enjoy. This seems to be an important part of upbringing for them.

> *"Laurence: With something complicated in this, well, we discussed it a lot, it's how to transmit what we like... without it becoming er, I don't know*
> *Béatrice: An obligation.*
> *Laurence: [...] I couldn't do this or that so, there. It's hard to find. Between well, here's what we like and, we like nature let's go hiking, and, this, this should not become... do the same as I do, narcissistically."*

Parents can also chose to consciously adopt some behaviours so that their children might take their habits. That is what Laurence and Béatrice try to do to encourage their son and daughter to read.

> *"Laurence: Books! Sinking into books we love it so. We hope they will like this. There, and we show them, that we're into it. Sometimes on Saturdays in the early afternoon we sprawl here [on the couch] and we read books*

Béatrice: They like the, they love comics, so they read comics... It's not, it's not the 1 000 pages novel, it's really the pleasure of being on your own in your universe, to dream in front of a, of a book this, they have lots of comic books.
Laurence: Yeah, and they get to it.
Béatrice: Yeah. They like it."

Part of the transmission processes happens unconsciously: children would reproduce the behaviours they see in their parents, but that the parents are not conscious of. For instance, the division of domestic labour was traditionally done according to gender stereotypes and appeared as natural. Children tend to reproduce the division their parents displayed whether they were conscious of it or not – this is one way how heteronormativity is reproduced. However, this stereotypical division of labour is now challenged, particularly by same-sex couples. The question of gender stereotypes was touched upon during some of the interviews. In this case the participants claimed that they were trying to behave the same way with their sons and daughters (or would go with the same behaviour if they had children of different genders). One could think that consequently, children would replicate what happens in their homes through games such as playing mummies and daddies. The reality is quite different, with several parents noticing that their children, would yet play mummies and daddies – and not mummies and mummies or daddies and daddies. The reason for the compliance to the heterosexual norm by children who were raised in family that does not conform to it can be explained by the intervention of third-parties outside of the family core. This will be the focus of the next chapter.

8. Outside of the core

As Donald R. Bender notices in his *"refinement of the concept of household"* in 1967, children do not only socialise within their nuclear families. They are in contact with their relatives, with their peers – and their peers' parents – with other adults such as nurses or teachers (Bender, 1967: 501-502). In cases of co-parenting, children are growing between two families that might not have the same conceptions of things. What's more as children grow older, they are might or might not reproduce the parental patterns.

8.1. Co-parenting

When several people, who are not forming a couple, decide to make and/or raise a child together, it is a situation of co-parenting. This implies cooperation between the parents/couples. In case of a divorce, if they agree for a shared custody – as Christophe did – then the parents find themselves in a situation of co-parenting. The participants who considered co-parenting or decided to do so often compare it to a post-divorce situation (this can be a reason to decide not to engage in co-parenting).

> *"There would have been the mummy, the daddy and the partner. And I did not want to live as.. as a mother-in-law and to live as a divorced family. Even though the child was not, well, barely born. I found this too violent. Both towards the child and me." - Aude*

> *"Co-parenting is over-complicated to, to set up and to carry on on the long-run so we did not want to, to be like a divorced couple, having four parents from the start and having to share. It seemed yes difficult and... as much for the children as for the parents, to handle on the long-run." - Julien*

An other difficulty of co-parenting, as mentioned in Julien's quote above, is the need to carry on a certain harmony between the parents. The respondents who motivated their refusal with this reason – two is already complicated, but with even more parents... – tended to highlight the fact that, contrary to their argument, in their own couples there were no disagreements regarding upbringing.

> *"And what's more it was already not necessarily always easy to agree on the way*
> *to bring up a child in a couple so moreover with other people it's even more*
> *complicated." - Estelle*

The main way of co-parenting that came up during the interviews, that was considered to different extents, is the co-parenting of a lesbian couple with a gay man or a gay men couple. It might not work out because of a split, or because the man would decide not to have any children after all. In those cases, the two genitors want to conceive the child though artificial insemination rather than sexual intercourse. Béatrice had IVFs (in vitro fecundations) with a man who decided to stop trying, the same way Christiane tried medically assisted inseminations with a gay friend who would pass as her partner, without any result.

She thus found a man who would agree to have a child with her, through a heterosexual relationship, but making it clear from the beginning that she was in love with Claude with whom she wanted to raise that child, although without kicking the father out. Unfortunately her son's father left the home rather soon, breaking her co-parenting wishes.

> *" [...] It wasn't a misunderstanding but actually he he was looking for a woman,*
> *a partner and... he thought it was funny, to find a woman who wanted to make a*
> *child... well I dunno he was, there, he didn't think of it too much and..."*
> *"Me, in my ideas it was not to make the father disappear, though, it was that, that he*
> would be present. By the way I wrote to him [...] I sent him letters, I sent him pictures and...
> no way to get him to change his mind." - Christiane

The link between co-parenting and divorce is even more evident when we look at Laurence's and Béatrice's process: Laurence actually had to undergo a marriage and a divorce in order to establish a co-parenting situation with her children's official father. They thus have joint-custody, the father taking care of the children on Wednesday mornings, every second weekend and half of the holidays.

Co-parenting raises the question of the number of parents that are necessary to children. Do they need at least a mother or a father, and more if they are separate and have their own new couples, or do children need two parents (no more, no less), regardless of their gender? This question was elaborated on in two interviews, with Aude and with Monique and Nicole. When Monique thinks having two parents is the best for the child, Nicole, on the other hand, would rather go for co-parenting, which induces more than two parents.

> *"I think that, for the child, what is important is to be... it's that they deal with two adults. We saw it, well, we saw, we knew all the same some women who wanted to have children but, who wanted them on their own. And I think it's very important for... for the upbringing of the child, that they have two adults with them." - Monique*

One of the main argument against a multiple number of parents raised by my respondents is the difficulties raised by co-parenting, which implies the need for more individuals – thus more diverging opinions – to agree on the central questions that are raised by upbringing.

Cases of co-parenting can raise several issues concerning upbringing. When children are raised by two couples, these couples might not agree on the upbringing they want to give to the children. Laurence acknowledges that she constructed her identity in reaction the gender stereotypes, especially the idea according to which men are to rule (that is work, bring money and make decisions: that dominates) when women just do what they're told (by men). Thus she wants her children to grow up with the idea that there are no social differences between men and women, and particularly she wants her son to become a *man*, as opposed to a *male*[23], i.e. a man fulfilling the gender stereotypes stated above. Unfortunately for her, the father of her children happens to often identify himself through them and perpetuate them.

> *"Me: And his father doesn't let him play with dolls?*
> *Laurence: It's not like this. It's said "Of course" -this Stéphane said- "of course a boy likes cars. And" what else did he say? I don't remember... [...]*
> *Béatrice: But I think [the children] have a great need for identification and so he, he wants to be his father, that's to say, he wants to be his sister's father, he wants to dominate, give orders...*
> *Laurence: With a dad whom, from time to time, when he doesn't feel well, in my view performs the male. [...] When we want Mathis to play because he has some time to catch up, Stéphane shows him how to be a man. There. And me, I think we*

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23 Male (mâle) and female (femelle) in French are usually only used in a biological frame, to state the sex of animals and plants.

will have succeeded if Mathis is... feels comfortable with himself, without any need to show himself through subterfuges, to hide behind. My job, my big wheels... [...]”

She tells anecdotes about Stéphane giving Mathis his old credit cards, and a wallet, or teaching him to clean the car, when he does not share any of these things with their daughter Chloé. When Laurence asked why, he could not answer.

“But I know the aim is to show Mathis, since he's a boy who'll grow into a man, the weight of money. For Chloé, it's less important. This, there it is, it puts me in such a rage, like when I was young.” - Laurence

Preserving her children from the gender stereotypes she abhors is hard to do as soon as they get of of the core of the couple she forms with Béatrice. And yet, socialisation among other family members, or in daycare and school implies a contact with the norms that are inherent to the heteronormative society they live in. What's more, getting in contact also leads parents to confront their own family to the heteronormative pattern, and thus their children are also confronted with the norm.

8.2. Parents and the external world

As their children get in contact with other people, as they are entrusted to the care of a child-minder, or go to the nursery or to school, gay and lesbian parents are forced to be visible. The lesbian mother oxymoron, that was tackled in chapter two, highlights, what sociologists Amy Hequembourg and Michael Farrell call a *“marginal-mainstream identity”* (Hequembourg and Farrell, 1999: 541). This situation is marginal because of the unconventional character of lesbianism regarding heteronormativity, and mainstream because of the the dominant idea of motherhood as vital to the maintenance of society. In her analysis of the impact of lesbian motherhood on kinship, sociologist Gillian Dunne underlines the engagement of homosexual women when they chose to become mothers. According to her, they have to question their own reasons, and to be critical regarding the norms of motherhood and family as they also have to consider the consequences of raising a child in a

(homophobic) world that marginalises them (Dunne, 2000: 16). Even though motherhood is traditionally thought to imply a strong relationship with the child that is not symmetrical to the one of the father, I would like to expend the contradictory position of lesbian motherhood to homosexual parenthood. As homosexuality is commonly thought as a way of life that does not include parenting, gay fathers are no more recognised than lesbian mothers.

As children's sociality impulses a certain number of new social relations (Dunne, 2000: 13 ; Sobočan, 2011: 399), social worker Ana Marija Sobočan observed in her ethnography of Slovenian female same-sex families that the mothers she interacted with aim to show their families as ordinary, to present themselves as normal (Sobočan, 2011: 393-396). It is an aspect that often came up during the interviews I conducted, as I asked the interviewees about the way they introduce themselves to third-parties. Do they claim to be either two mums or two dads? How do they make their relationship clear, when they interact with the adults that are involved in their children's lives, such as teachers, doctors or minders? Some would favour dialogue to make the situation clear, some others, like Marc and Julien, would communicate it in a less obvious way.

> *"I am a partisan of... not creating difference, to indicate difference. […] When we registered the children [to daycare] we crossed "mother" out and wrote "father" instead and we do as if nothing happened. And it went well this way, there were no question […] no question was asked." - Marc*

> *"Béatrice: Necessarily, me I don't have a sta-, I am not called mummy by the children, I don't have a visible status, I have to give myself one, obliged to take it [giggles]*
> *Me: to claim*
> *Béatrcie: Yeah. Or, also, there are people, often at school, from, well from the beginning, they said "you are Chloé's mother" Oh no no! I am Chloé's mother's* partner. *Just to... […] The more you sound natural when say say it, the more natural it becomes. So, there, that's my contribution. To, say this... serenely...particularly to the people who see me with the children."*

Most of my respondents tended to be open about their relationship towards the other adults that surrounded their children, some often even being amused to see the people's reactions.

This will to show no differences compared to heterosexual families can be related to the discussion about hetero- and homonormativity. This intent is developed in a society that is strongly heteronormative, and that has recently engaged in a homonormative paths. However,

do the individuals who are directly concerned do so in order to negate the differences between heterosexuality and homosexuality regarding parenthood, or do they do so for homosexual parenthood to be also seen as normal? In other words, do they want to be incorporated into the norm – that would remain exclusive – or to challenge it, to redraw its outlines in a more inclusive way -thus questioning the very idea of norms? The material constituted by the interviews does not allow me to answer that question, nor do most of the interviewees did not seem to know this themselves. However, when some of them are rather casual about their families, feeling them as natural and not questioning them, others, while acknowledging their own subversivity (regarding the heterosexual norm), claim for the right to live their life as they want, without anyone bothering. This position is actually depoliticising as it stresses the individuality of each couple while denying the political aspect of gay and lesbian families towards the heterosexual norm. I asked the participants about the gay and lesbian parents associations in France (having found some of them through these associations). Two types of answers came up: most of the participants are members of these associations[24] and although they do not militate for them, are benefiting the support they offer. Some (fewer) participants have been members of these associations, but have quickly distanced themselves, for two reasons: first the associations' discourses are too technical and dehumanising, focusing on law, and second because they were not at ease with the community aspect that they display -an aspect that some other participants clearly enjoyed, mostly because of the comfort it was bringing during the hostile public debates about marriage.

8.3. Children and the external world

Dealing with the heterosexual norms is not necessarily the easiest for the participants to the present study. Laurence, for instance, explicitly raises herself against the normative model of nuclear family, including every gender role it induces. During the interview she questioned her own success in the building of the family she dreamt of, and also recounts an anecdote

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24 The APGL and the ADPH.

about the difficulties she and Béatrice face to avoid their kids to be in touch with these patterns.

"Michou, so Béatrice's mother's partner, the other day he was coming back from shopping, he opened the door, he was at the wheel, and he nod to Mathis. So Mathis went driving. The first time, okay Mathis was so happy, and then Mathis went out, and I say to Michou "but did you ask Chloé, if she it would please her?" He didn't think about it! Because it was a lad thing. And so, as I asked, Chloé went driving, she was delighted...! She was delighted. And, we would have missed out on this. Because, Michou, had decided that only young guys would like to drive." - Laurence

Several of the participants have noticed that although their children were raised in gay and lesbian families, they would still play mummies and daddies – and not mummies and mummies or daddies and daddies.

Laurence: Chloé, in her drawings, once or twice she did a daddy, a mummy, and she was showing that...
Béatrice: It's often, daddy-mummy. They play mummies and daddies Mathis and Chloe. And the daddy is really authoritarian. Even towards the mummy he is...
Laurence: Well I never! The daddy,
Béatrice: the mother she, she toes the line.
Laurence: It's no laughing matter!
Me: Alright... Okay...
[They both giggle]
Laurence: And yet we are not the ones displaying this."

"Me: Alright. And... what games does she play for instance?
Séverine: [...] She plays the princesses a lot, and otherwise daddies and mummies. So, yeah.
Me: Okay. Daddies and mummies?
Séverine. Yes. So she tells her sister "there, you are the baby, I am the mummy" and then well she picks someone else to be the daddy... Well, yeah. It's very familial, her games.
Me: Yeah, well it's often, at this age.
Séverine: Yes.
Me: And she never plays mummies and mummies?
Séverine: No. It's, it's rare, yes, it happened the other day, well, in the bath with her little ducks, she said "yes there's a mummy, then there's the other mummy." Well. There. Then I don't know if the two mums were together. But there were two mums.
Me: Alright.
Séverine: But there's often a daddy."

When children get in contact with their relatives, their peers, or even as they are accessing books or films, they see other family organisations than theirs, and thus are lead to assimilate the dominant norms. As socialisation consist in the process through which individuals learn the norms and values that are predominant in the society they live in, and how to conform to them, it cannot only take place within the nuclear family. Media and school (or daycare, for the younger ones) also play a large part in this process, thus in spite of the efforts made by some parents to preserve them from what they see as negative, children are still subjugated to them. As I showed in chapter 5, my respondents have been struggling between two patterns of transmission, through rules and through communication. In cases of communication-based patterns of transmission, if the parents do not insist on the rules in their upbringing, the children will be exposed to them through the external world (school, daycare, other relatives,...) anyway.

In relation to these norms, two couples of participants raised children who are now adults, and although they were raised by same-sex couples, they are not identifying as homosexual. Nicole and Monique mentioned in the interview that their daughter, Aurélie, have now formed her own family with a man. Claude and Christiane, on the other hand, are relieved that their son is heterosexual – or rather, not homosexual – as they worry about the social pressures that come with such sexual orientation.

> *“Christiane: Yeah. ... So, about that... I don't know if you'll agree with me, to say that we were rather glad that he is straight. Because... It's not easy to be homo, so, we don't wish, for the children still we prefer them to be straight.*
> *Claude: It's true.*
> *Christiane: That's, we prefer them to he straight, we're more, because it's more simple. There. And you can tell about your grand-daughter here.*
> *Claude: Oh well I have a grand-daughter who is homo, who is, how is she now, she's 22. She's homo and, well she waves all the flags needed when they are needed,*
> *Christiane: She's in the front line in the demonstrations and all, yes.*
> *Claude: [whispers of exasperation ; Christiane and I giggle] She gets on my nerves.*
> *Me: Why is that?*
> *Claude: Because, she's gonna get herself banged up. Alright she is tough (...) she's a big mouth, yes. I'm afraid she will take a blow, from times to times, but.*
> *[...]*
> *Christiane: And me, to bounce back on what we were saying before, when [Claude's grand-daughter] announced us she was homosexual, well that she had*

a [female] friend and all, me I had a, I was depressed for a week.
Me: Oh, really?
Christiane: Yeah, because I think it's too...
Claude: Hard.
Christiane: hard, life as a homosexual, it's... Well we were in the closet... for a long time."

Claude's grand-daughter was raised by heterosexual parents – though she does not identify as heterosexual. Likewise, all of my respondents were raised in heterosexual families. It is therefore essential to notice that there is no correlation between the sexual orientations of parents and the ones of their children. Christiane and Claude were born in the mid-1940s, and have an experience of homosexuality that is related to a time when it was pathologised[25], thus they tend to see it as a heavier social burden compared to younger participants. However this tends to indicate, that even though some children are raised by – and primarily socialised in – families that are not positioned within the dominant norm, they do not grow up outside of it, and often end up reproducing the dominant norm – rather than their parents' model.

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25 Homosexuality was decriminalised in France in 1791, and depathologised in 1992.

Conclusion

The extension of marriage to homosexual couples in France has given more visibility to gay and lesbian families. In the meantime, it also allows the imposition of the heterosexual norm of nuclear family, as it encourages non-heterosexual couples to set up home. It it thus a homonormative initiative that spreads a middle-class family ideal not only to straight couples but also to same-sex ones. In fact, only middle- to upper-class gay and lesbian couples can access the procedures necessary to start their own families – apart from heterosexual intercourse. The costs of the NRTs are high, particularly surrogacy, as is adoption. What is more, the NRTs bring a new understanding of family and kinship, as the bounds between parents and children are no longer biological, but were allowed by human handling. Thus, it leads to a questioning of the gender stereotypes induced by the nuclear family norm: if a family is no longer composed of a woman and a man, then how are these roles distributed? Although in practice, the participants to the present research mainly show a domestic labour division that is rather egalitarian, their representation of gendered roles are still embedded in heterosexual norms. If some families manage to escape from the underrated feminine tasks, it is only by leaving them to a housemaid – thus only the higher rated households can get rid of these tasks, and they do not actually permit women to escape them as lower-class women are put in charge. Feminine-marked tasks are then not necessarily women's daily lot, but rather are left to lower-class women who, for their part, cannot escape them. Nevertheless, the parents who participated in the present research are transmitting to their children open-minded and tolerant values. Two patterns of transmission came out of the interviews: transmission based on rules and based on communication. Instead of positioning themselves within one or the other, they rather are trying to find an appropriate balance, as they both value the individuality and personal development of their children and want them to know the rules vital to be part of society. However, children are not only socialised within their nuclear families, and the contact with the external world has several consequences. Not only does it

visibilise the parental couple in the eyes of others, forcing them to justify (or not) their gay or lesbian family, but it also enables children to acknowledge the heterosexual norm, thus allowing them to reproduce that hegemonic model.

Most of the participants told me they were pleased that I chose to study their family – same-sex families – as they had the feeling they were not given any voice in the recent French debates. They all asked me to send them this thesis once done, and also asked if it was to be published. These reactions directly responded to my main motive in my choice of topic, but it also questions the aim of research. As Donna Haraway pointed out, objectivity supposes a total disengagement from the scientist, an inability to question power structures (Haraway, 1988: 590). But as Ulrika Dahl, I wonder *"what would be the uses of ethnographic research be, if not to put it to some political use?"* (Dahl, 2012: 159). By positioning ourselves, we researchers acknowledge our political views, and the fact that even our choices of topics are somewhat connected to these positions. On the other hand, we also have to acknowledge the participants positions, and to respect them, not to crush them with ours. We should not impose our own ideas to the field, nor should we engage in changes the field does not want. Research is part of the world, thus it places itself inside of its system, not aside. The meaning of scientific research is to be available for political use, its aim is to understand the world, to reveal its keys in order to improve it -although what "improving it" has radically different meanings according to the individuals.

Researching on same-sex families, as well as being part of a gay or lesbian family, is not a political act in itself. However, it cannot be detached from the society and norms within which it happens. The primary question of this essay was: How do gay and lesbian families (re)interpret the model of the nuclear family? As Kath Weston puts it, *"for every way in which families we choose seem to depart from hegemonic understandings of kinship, however, there is another way in which the two appear to be cut from the same cloth."* (Weston, 1991: 197) Same-sex families bring a new input on kinship, as they highlight its social dimension – as opposed to biological. Gay and lesbian families have to daily negotiate between the hegemonic heterosexual family norms and the subversive nature of the parental couple. They do not sharply oppose the heteronorm, nor do they exactly reproduce it. The governmental homonormative – extending heterosexual norms to same-sex couples – stand encourages the perpetuation of heterosexual norms in spite of the presence of gay and lesbian couples. Instead of invisibilising non-heterosexual couples, they are now tolerated only to reinforce

heteronormativity even more: they are not expected to challenge these norms, but rather to reinterpret them in order to reproduce them. However, when they are then not undermining the heterosexual norm, it is noteworthy that they offer a starting point to challenging them. This questioning needs to be widen in order to rethink families in an inclusive that would become the new normal.

Acronyms

ADFH   *Association Des Familles Homoparentales*

Homoparental families association

AID   Artificial Insemination by Donor

APGL   *Association des Parents et Futurs Parents Gais et Lesbiens*

Gay and lesbian parents and future parents association

CECOS   *Centre d'Etude et de Conservation des Oeufs et du Sperme humains*

Center of study and conservation of human eggs and sperm

IVF   In Vitro Fecondation

NRTs   New Reproduction Techniques (inseminations, surrogacy,...)

PACS   *Pacte de Solidarité Civile*

Civil solidarity pact

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