

**HOMO-BISEXUAL TRAJECTORIES OF YOUNG BRAZILIANS: THE RESULTS OF A
POPULATIONAL SURVEY IN THREE BRAZILIAN STATE CAPITALS**

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SHORT ABSTRACT:

Based on a survey (Gravad, 2002) conducted among young people aged 18 to 24 years old in three Brazilian cities (n=4634), we analyzed the homo-bisexual trajectories of men and women. This definition was given to those respondents who declared to have engaged at least once in sexual practices with people of the same sex, representing 3,3% of the sample. The percentage found is consistent with data from international surveys, which reveal the degree of visibility of homosexuality in certain socio-historical contexts. An appreciation of the phenomenon of homo-bisexuality based on a probabilistic sample allows access to a more differentiated profile, one rid of the biases derived from the traditional “snow ball” technique. The profile of homo-bisexual women tends to be more differentiated than that of heterosexuals, the former being precocious and less protected. The men present a higher rate of convergence, such as the age of sexual initiation.

THE GRAVAD RESEARCH:

It has a populational survey module (the **GRAVAD SURVEY**, 2002) that was conducted among young people from 18 to 24 years old (n=4634) in three Brazilian cities (Salvador, Rio de Janeiro and Porto Alegre). The **GRAVAD Research** (“Teenage Pregnancy: a multicentered study of sexuality, reproduction and youth in Brazil”) focuses on the paths and processes of socialization of young people, their choice of partners, their characteristics and the unfolding of a sexual trajectory.

THE PLACES WHERE THE RESEARCH WAS DONE:

Brazil Population: 169.799.170

Human Development Index (HDI): 0.775

Minimum Salary/2005: R\$ 300,00 (US\$ 125)

GNP (Gross National Product) *per capita*: US\$ 3.330



Salvador (State of Bahia)
Population: 2.443.107
HDI: 0.805

Rio de Janeiro (State of Rio de Janeiro)
Population: 5.857.904
HDI: 0.842

Porto Alegre (State of Rio Grande do Sul)
Population: 1.360.590
HDI: 0.865

DEFINING THE HOMO-BISEXUAL GROUP:

- Homo-bisexual trajectories was given to those respondents who declared that they had engaged at least once in sexual practices with people of the same sex, representing 3,3% of the sample. On the one hand, the number of individuals involved is quite small (n=134), just as happens in surveys on the general population; on the other hand, this enables us to appreciate homo-bisexuality without the biases arising from the snow-ball technique. The fact that the Gravad Survey counted on a probabilistic random

populational sample attests to the importance of the cases found. Even though few in number, they have a great representative value since they are dispersed among the population rather than being connected to one another.

- Diverse questions were analyzed and combined in order to reach a number of declarants who would correspond to the total number of persons liable for inclusion in the category, *have had experiences of a sexual nature with persons of the same sex* (TABLE 1). In the our sample set, 107 declarants respond *Yes* to the question “*Have you ever had sexual experiences with persons of the same sex?*”, which represents 2.9% of the population surveyed. A second question, in another module of the questionnaire, poses again to the interviewee the theme of the sex of the partner(s), that is, if the sexual relations were exclusively with the opposite sex or maintained occasionally or regularly with the same sex. A discrepancy is observed in the declarations; however, it is common in this type of investigation. Questions about the entry to sexuality of the teenagers were also analyzed; the interviewed are asked the gender of their partners in these affective relations as well as about the content of the body interactions implied by them (whether just kisses and embraces, petting or penetrative sexual relations).

TABLE 1: VARIABLES SELECTED FOR COMPOSITION OF THE GROUP OF HOMO-BISEXUALS BY SEX

DECLARATION OF SEXUAL EXPERIENCE	WOMEN	MEN	TOTAL
HAD SEX AND/OR INTIMATE CARESSES IN LOVE AFFAIR WITH SAME SEX PERSON	0.33	1.13	0.83
HAD SEX AND/OR INTIMATE CARESSES IN CASUAL RELATIONSHIP WITH SAME SEX PERSON	1.15	0.47	0.64
HAD SEXUAL EXPERIENCE WITH SAME SEX PERSON IN LIFE	3.11	2.76	2.94
SEXUAL RELATIONS WERE			
Only with same sex person	0.38	0.72	0.56
With the same and opposite sex	2.68	2.46	2.57

Base: all respondents (18-24 years) sexually initiated, Porto Alegre (RS), Rio de Janeiro (RJ), Salvador (BA), Brazil.

Source: Gravav Survey, 2002.

- The number of young with a sexual trajectory exclusively with the same sex is quite insignificant: only 10 individuals (5 males and 5 females). In this sense, we argue in terms of trajectories that are more bisexual than homosexual, considering that it is not a matter of identities, but rather one of describing a set of practices. We designate this group of respondents the young *with a homo-bisexual trajectory*, as opposed to those with an exclusively *heterosexual trajectory*.

SOCIOGRAPHIC PORTRAIT OF THE HOMO-BISEXUAL YOUNG PEOPLE:

- With regard to schooling, less than half of the young interviewed currently attend school, 69% of the women with a homo-bisexual trajectory being outside the educational system.
- Among the young who still study, 66% of the homo-bisexuals are found in the government school network, as opposed to 51% of the young heterosexuals. Among the women, no differences were verified; whereas among men, more homo-bisexuals than heterosexuals were observed in government educational institutions (71% vs. 53% respectively). The interviewee's level of schooling does not present differences among the young according to sexual orientation.
- Upon analysis of the distribution of the individuals according to the mother's educational level, the distinctions are striking: the male homo-bisexuals and heterosexuals present similar proportions; while women differ among themselves, and it is the homo-bisexuals who have mothers with the highest educational level.
- In relation to per capita family income level, it is found that, between the two groups, the greater percentage of average income is among the homo-bisexuals; a particularly clear differential is noticed among the men, the homo-bisexuals standing out as less represented in the high income segment, while for women there are no differences.
- With regard to skin colour, the number of declarations stating *brown* and *indigenous* are significantly higher (the response "indigenous" refer to the definition of half-caste in Brazil among the young respondents).
- In the declarations about religion practiced, there is an outstanding preference for Afro-Brazilian religions (*Umbanda*, *Candomblé* or *Batuque*), confirming the traditional acceptance by such cults of homosexuality, in comparison to religions with a stricter morality, such as Catholicism and Pentecostalism. They present similar rates of non-religious frequency.

TABLE 2: SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF YOUNG WITH A HOMO-BISEXUAL OR HETEROSEXUAL TRAJECTORY ACCORDING TO EDUCATIONAL LEVELS, RELIGION AND MONTHLY PER CAPITA FAMILY INCOME AND SEX

VARIABLES RELATIVE TO SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE	WOMEN		MEN		TOTAL	
	Homo-bisexual	Hetero	Homo-bisexual	Hetero	Homo-bisexual	Hetero
SCHOOLING OF INTERVIEWEE						
1st Grade incompl./compl.	38.3	44.9	56.5	54.1	47.7	49.4
2 nd Grade incompl./compl.	44.4	33.8	22.1	28.7	32.8	31.3
Higher incompl./compl.	17.2	21.2	21.3	17.1	19.3	19.2
p-value	0.5097		0.6801		0.9552	
SCHOOLING OF MOTHER						
1 st Grade incompl./compl.	45.8	63.7	70	62.7	58.2	63.2
2 nd Grade incompl./compl.	43.4	20.5	21.9	21.5	32.4	21
Higher incomp./compl.	10.8	15.8	8	15.8	9.3	15.7
p-value	0.0146		0.2860		0.0831	
RELIGIOUS SECT OR CULT						
Catholicism	33	39.9	14.3	30.5	23	35.2
Protestantism or Pentecostalism	6.2	17.8	20.6	14	13.9	15.9
<i>Umbanda, Candomblé or Batuque*</i>	23.5	2.7	11	1.5	16.8	2.1
Spiritism	1.4	5.7	1.7	3.5	1.5	4.6
No religion	35.9	33.9	52.2	50.5	44.7	42.1
p-valor	0.0000		0.0002		0.0000	
MONTHLY PER CAPITA FAMILY INCOME						
Very low or low (up to US\$78**)	27.5	39.1	35.3	33.4	31.5	36.3
Average (R\$78 to US\$234)	52.4	37.6	48.7	39.9	50.5	38.7
High (over US\$234)	20.1	23.3	16	26.7	18	30

p-value

0.1800

0.2848

0.0829

Base: all respondents (18-24 years) sexually initiated, Porto Alegre (RS), Rio de Janeiro (RJ), Salvador (BA), Brazil.

Source: Gravav Survey, 2002.

Notes:

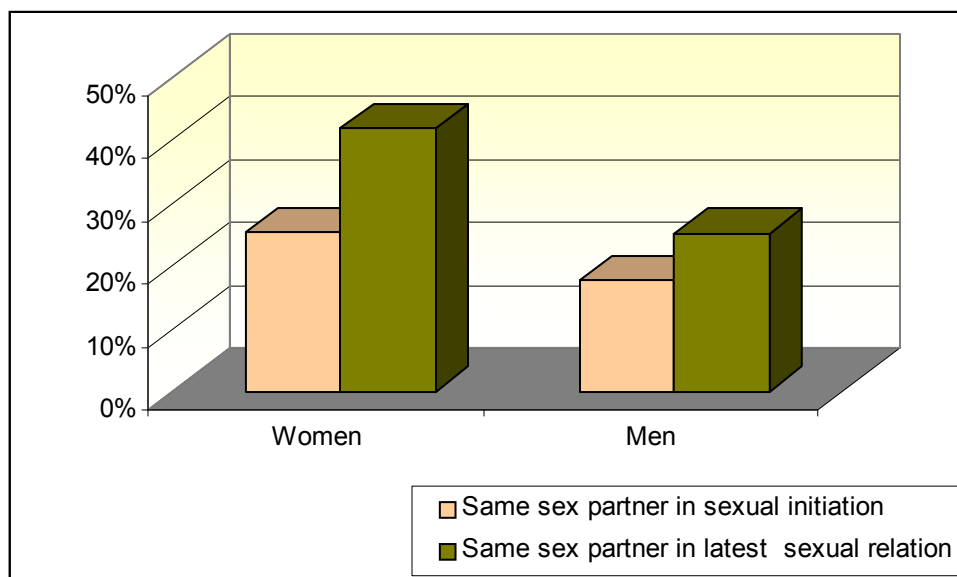
*Afro-Brazilians religions.

** It corresponds to Brazilian one minimum salary at the survey moment.

A DIVERSITY OF TRAJECTORIES:

- The GRAVAD Research enables analysis of events that allow portrayal of the initial phase of the individuals' affective-sexual trajectory. Although it is possible to contemplate some partnerships, we focus on analysis of sexual initiation. There is little exclusively homosexual experience. Thus, we adopt the category of “homo-bisexuality” to designate a specific group that engages, at some moment, in sexual relations with the same sex. It does not constitute a homogeneous group; there is a diversity of trajectories, for example, the young who were only sexually initiated with partners of the same sex and later maintained heterosexual relations, or the young who alternate their relationship partners, at times, the same sex, at others, the opposite sex.
- The diversification of sexual trajectories may be illustrated by the contrast between the first and latest sexual relation: the scale of sexual experience with a same sex partner in the first relation is 21%, and reaches 33% in the latest (GRAPH 1).

GRAPH 1: COMPARISON AMONG YOUNG WITH A HOMO-BISEXUAL TRAJECTORY BETWEEN FIRST AND LATEST SEXUAL RELATION WITH A SAME SEX PARTNER



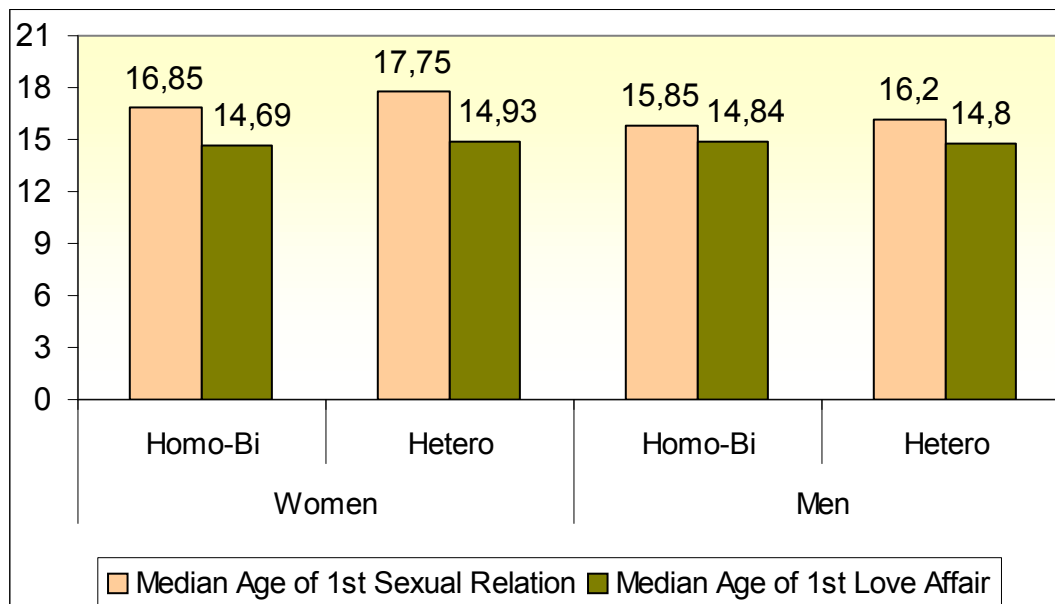
Base: respondents categorized as homo-bisexual (18-24 years), Porto Alegre (RS), Rio de Janeiro (RJ), Salvador (BA), Brazil.

Source: Gravad Survey, 2002.

THE FIRST LOVE LIFE AND THE FIRST SEXUAL RELATION:

- The first love affair presents differential characteristics according to gender, but not to sexual trajectory: they are sexualized relationships for almost half those interviewed, homo-bisexuals or heterosexuals, whose declaration about intimate caresses or sex is similar, reaching 46% for both groups. The differences appear in the female declarations that register “only kisses” as the main form of interaction, while in the male responses there prevail declarations of intimate caresses or sex. The first love affair occurs at similar ages, as much for men as for women, whether homo-bisexuals or heterosexuals (GRAPH 2).
- The age of sexual initiation differs. Among homo-bisexual men, sexual initiation is more precocious, as the interval between the first love affair and the first sexual relation is shorter; a more accentuated difference is presented among women, above all for the homo-bisexuals who are initiated more precociously than the heterosexuals (GRAPH 2).

GRAPH 2: CALENDAR OF SEXUAL INITIATION AND LOVE LIFE ACCORDING TO TYPE OF TRAJECTORY AND GENDER



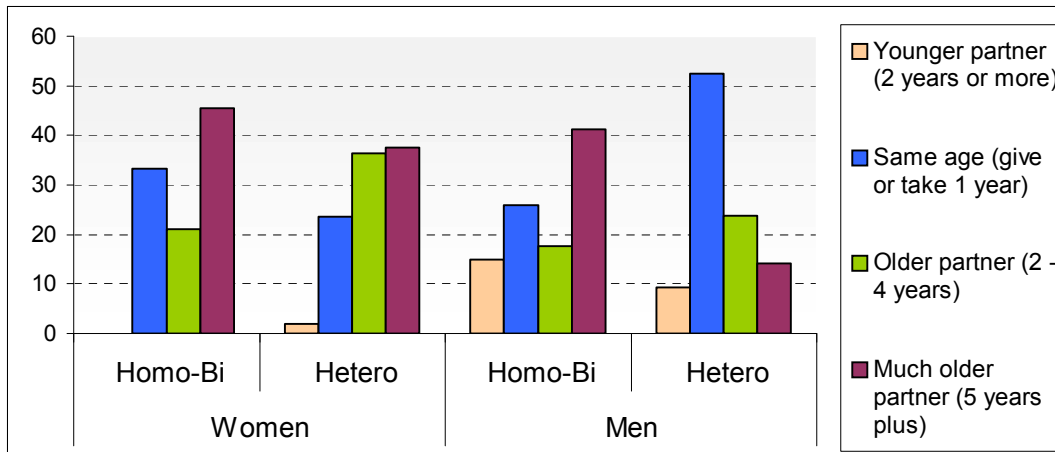
Base: all respondents (18-24 years) sexually initiated, Porto Alegre (RS), Rio de Janeiro (RJ), Salvador (BA), Brazil.

Source: Gravad Survey, 2002.

AGE DIFFERENCE AMONG THE PARTNERS IN SEXUAL INITIATION:

- Men tend to be initiated with partners of the same age, whereas among women the tendency observed is initiation with older or much older partners. Regarding the age difference in relation to the sexual initiation partner, the fraction of the young homo-bisexuals, men and women, is more similar among themselves, such as are the female trajectories irrespective of sexual orientation; the differences found lie, above all, in the sexual trajectories of the men (GRAPH 3).

GRAPH 3: AGE DIFFERENCE FROM SEXUAL INITIATION PARTNER ACCORDING TO SEX AND TYPE OF TRAJECTORY (HOMO-BISEXUAL OR HETEROSEXUAL) (%)



Base: all respondents (18-24 years) sexually initiated, Porto Alegre (RS), Rio de Janeiro (RJ), Salvador (BA), Brazil.

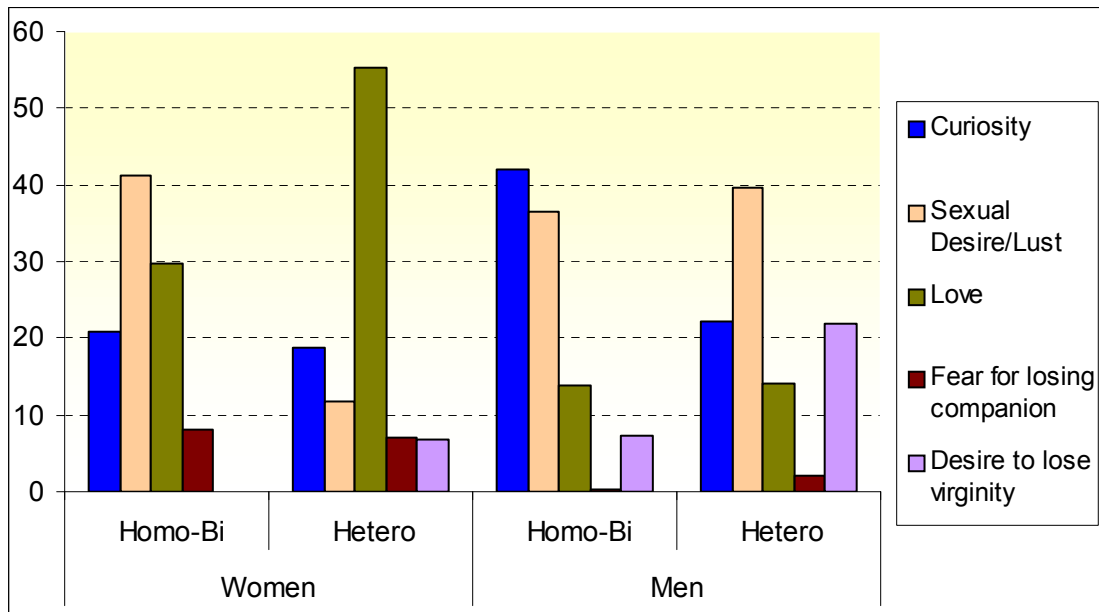
Source: Gravad Survey, 2002.

- The time elapsed between meeting the partner and the first sexual relation also presents a gender ordination. Only for a small fraction of the young with a homo-bisexual trajectory, 8% of the young men and 5% of the young women, did the sexual relation take place on the same day. The median is close to a month for men (21days) and 3 months for women; likewise, 75% of the men started a sexual relation within two months, and 75% of the women only after 9 months (data not presented). In the case of the young men, the interest in rapid sexualization of the relationship is a strong demarcator of masculinity, while women see fit to administrate the pace of corporal contacts in a partnership.

THE REASONS FOR THE FIRST SEXUAL RELATION:

- Distinctions emerge according to sexual trajectory and gender in relation to the reasons cited as motivators for the first sexual relation. The young women, whose sexual trajectories diverge from the established norms for females, allow themselves to enunciate sexual desire as an element of motivation for entry to sex life with a partner. More men than women cite as the principal reason for having the first sexual relation “a wish to lose virginity early”, above all the male heterosexuals (22%). In this topic there are no coincidences in the male and female declarations, heterosexuals or homo-bisexuals (except for female homo-bisexual and male heterosexuals, when both cite, in first place, the category sexual desire/lust) (GRAPH 4).

GRAPH 4: PRINCIPAL REASON FOR HAVING THE FIRST SEXUAL RELATION ACCORDING TO SEX AND TYPE OF TRAJECTORY (HOMO-BISEXUAL OR HETEROSEXUAL) (%)



Base: all respondents (18-24 years) sexually initiated, Porto Alegre (RS), Rio de Janeiro (RJ), Salvador (BA), Brazil.

Source: Gravav Survey, 2002.

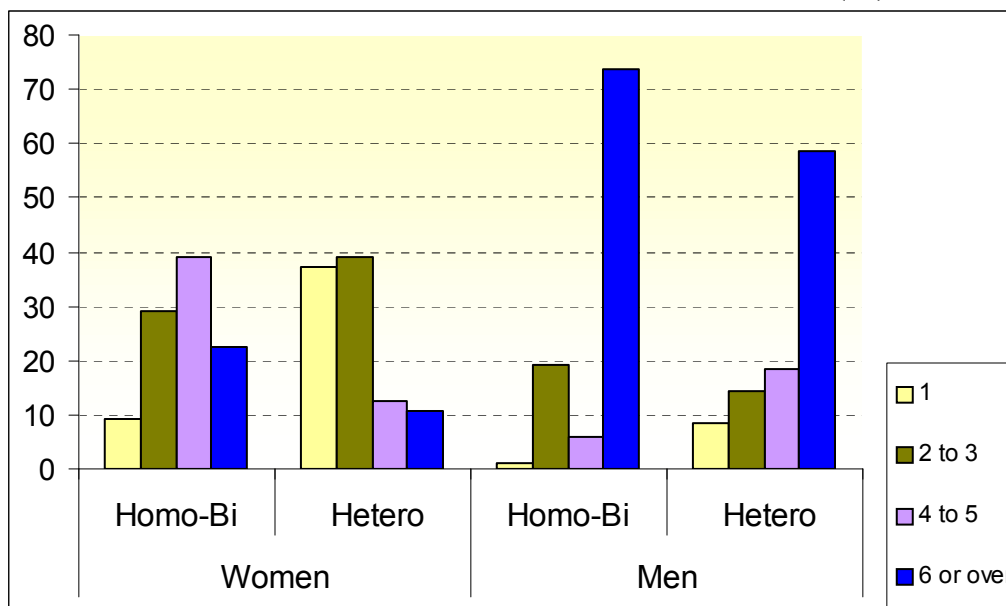
- Although over half of those interviewed had declared that they (males/females) as much as the respective partners desired that the sexual relation would occur, there are significant differences in the male and female declarations in relation to the moment at which it took place: the men declared that they wanted the sexual relation to happen early (58%), whereas women affirmed that they did not think a lot about the matter (53%) or expected it to happen later (26%) (data not presented). This is one of the

examples in which the gender differences supplant the differences in sexual trajectory in the configuration of the scenario in which sexuality unfolds.

THE NUMBER OF SEXUAL PARTNERS:

- The male homo-bisexuals present, in a more intense form, the male gender pattern that is shared by male heterosexuals, that is, the significant declaration of a greater number of sexual partners than for women. However, among the female homo-bisexuals, there is a rupture with the gender expectations that establish a rule of female pudor regarding the number of partners. The declaration by the female homo-bisexuals of having had over three partners is three times more than the number of declarations by the heterosexual women (GRAPH 5). These data enable us to state that the young female heterosexuals fit more into the gender norms, and, therefore, are more “monogamous”.

GRAPH 5: NUMBER OF SEXUAL PARTNERS OF THE YOUNG ACCORDING TO HOMO-BISEXUAL OR HETEROSEXUAL TRAJECTORY AND SEX (%)



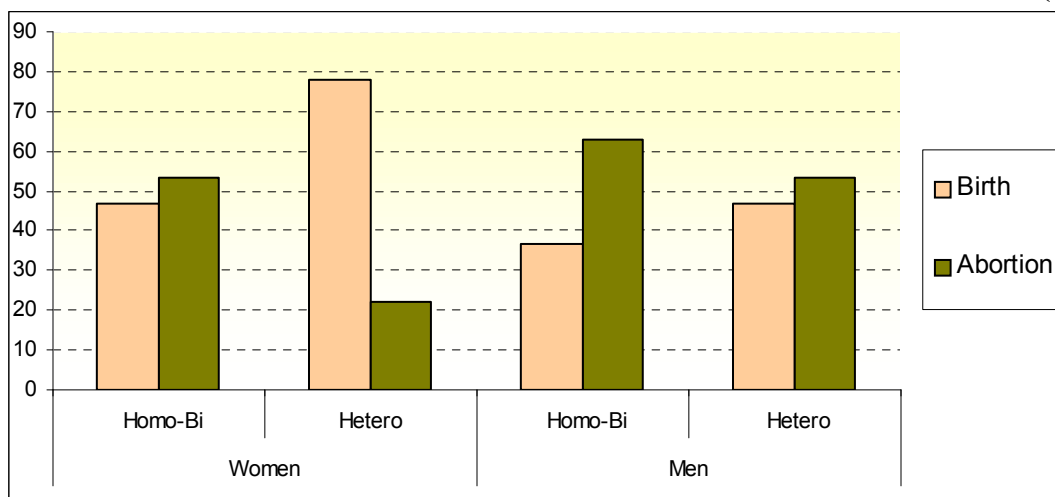
Base: all respondents (18-24 years) sexually initiated, Porto Alegre (RS), Rio de Janeiro (RJ), Salvador (BA), Brazil.

Source: Gravad Survey, 2002.

PREGNANCY, BIRTH AND ABORTION:

- The episode of the first pregnancy in the trajectory of the young aged 20 or over follows the same pattern among homo-bisexuals and heterosexuals: in approximately 70% of cases, the pregnancy occurred under 20. The outcome of this event, however, underlines important differences: for 57% of young homo-bisexuals, it resulted in abortion, a situation declared by 36% of the heterosexuals (GRAPH 6).
- The greatest number of declarations of abortion was made by men. However, the female declaration is differentiated according to sexual trajectory: for over half the young female homo-bisexuals, the first pregnancy resulted in abortion, while for three quarters of the heterosexuals it resulted in birth (GRAPH 6). The greater number of abortions indicates a greater vulnerability of the young homo-bisexuals in relation to the occurrence of pregnancy.

GRAPH 6: DECLARATION BY THE YOUNG AGED 20 – 24 WITH A HOMO-BISEXUAL OR HETEROSEXUAL TRAJECTORY ABOUT A PREGNANCY EPISODE AND ITS OUTCOME (%)



Base: all respondents (20-24 years) sexually initiated and that declared at least one pregnancy episode, Porto Alegre (RS), Rio de Janeiro (RJ), Salvador (BA), Brazil.

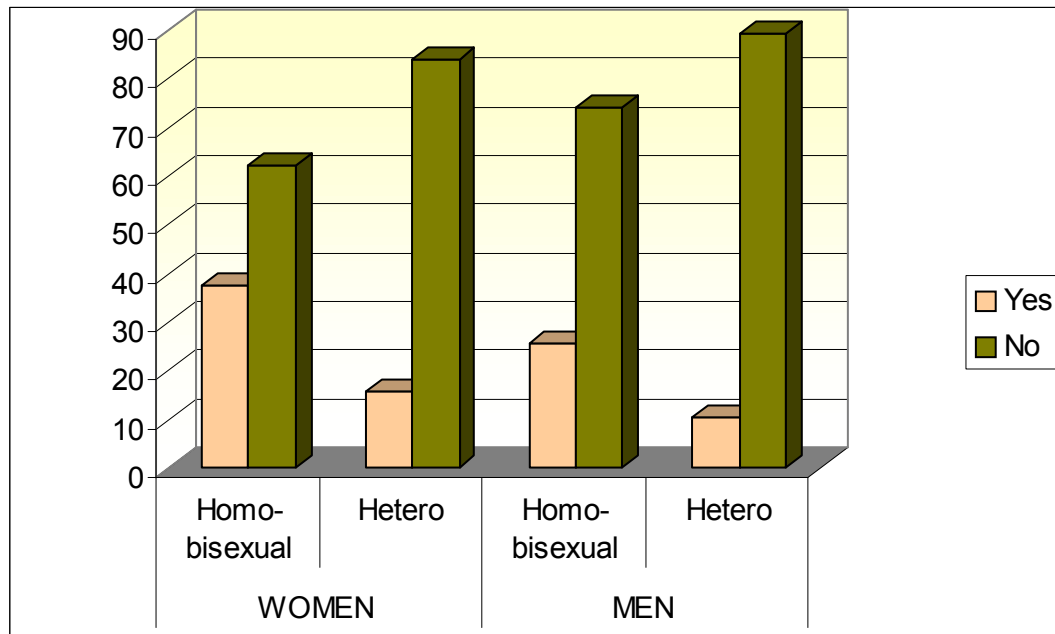
Source: Gravada Survey, 2002.

COERCIVE SEXUAL RELATIONS:

- There is a greater number of declarations by the young with a homo-bisexual trajectory of having been forced to have sexual relations. This proportion is even more acute when the gender difference is taken into consideration, showing greater vulnerability for female homo-bisexuals. Their declarations of forced sex represent a figure that is

twice those of the heterosexuals (37.5% vs. 15.8%). A similar situation occurs among male homo-bisexuals and heterosexuals, whose proportions, albeit lower than those presented for the female population, correspond to 26% and 11%, respectively (GRAPH 7).

GRAPH 7: DECLARATION ABOUT SEXUAL RELATIONS AGAINST THE WILL AMONG YOUNG WITH A HOMO-BISEXUAL OR HETEROSEXUAL TRAJECTORY (%)



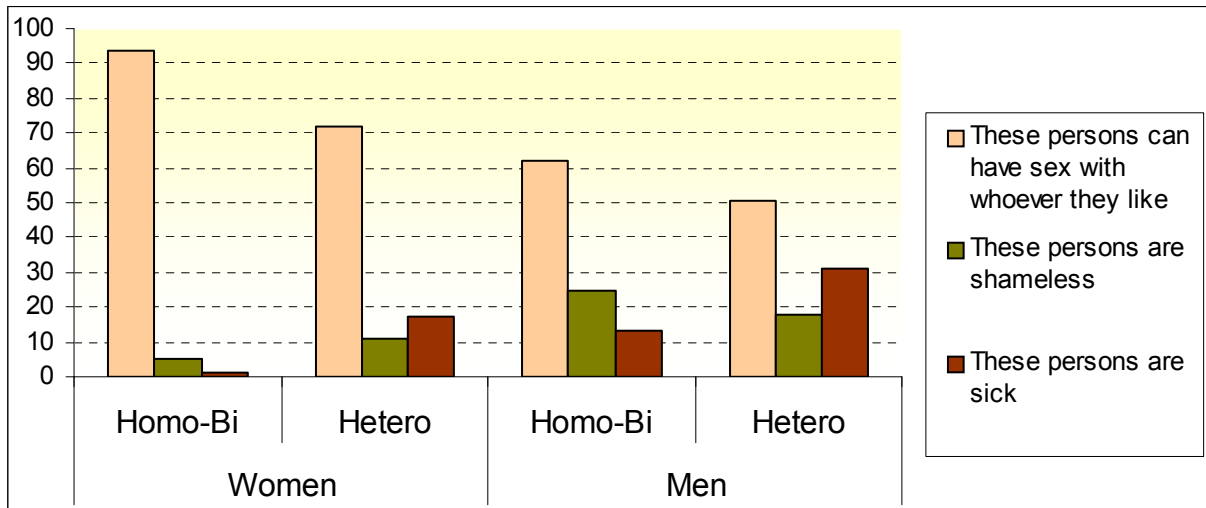
Base: all respondents (18-24 years) sexually initiated, Porto Alegre (RS), Rio de Janeiro (RJ), Salvador (BA), Brazil.

Source: Gravav Survey, 2002.

HOMOPHOBIA:

- The declarations of opinion regarding homosexuality, male or female, are similar, but the rejection is less among the group of young with a homo-bisexual trajectory. It is observed that the acceptance of male homosexuality, expressed in the affirmation that "*these persons can have sex with whoever they wish*", is greater among women than men; contrary to this, *homophobia* is greater among men, even among those who have homo-bisexual experience (GRAPH 8). Quite similar percentages are observed in relation to female homosexuality (data not presented). Thus, it is the homo-bisexual women who express greater acceptance of homosexuality, whether male or female, while heterosexual men are those who manifest greater rejection.

GRAPH 8: OPINION OF THE YOUNG WITH A HOMO-BISEXUAL OR HETEROSEXUAL TRAJECTORY REGARDING MALE HOMOSEXUALITY (%)



Base: all respondents (18-24 years) sexually initiated, Porto Alegre (RS), Rio de Janeiro (RJ), Salvador (BA), Brazil.

Source: Gravad Survey, 2002.

FINAL NOTES:

- Homo-bisexuality is a suitable form of description for the biographical trajectories of these young people, quite diversified until that moment of the life cycle. There is no way of anticipating whether such paths will establish a heterosexual or homosexual pattern.
- Analysis of sexuality can not dispense with the articulation with gender. However, the combination between sexuality and gender does not always take place in the same manner. In general, we observe that gender tends to prevail over sexuality, but in some cases the sexual trajectory that diverges from the dominant norms may produce specific effects on the gender and sexuality articulation.
- Homo-bisexuality for men and women is experienced in a differentiated manner; the profile of the female homo-bisexuals tends to be more differentiated than that of the heterosexuals. The men present, despite sexual trajectory, a greater number of convergences.
- We suggest that, in the case of women, the choice of partner from both sexes signifies that the sexual trajectory shifts them farther away from the gender pattern consensually accepted for their sex. The reverse occurs with young men of the same trajectory. The

imperatives of masculinity make them converge with many of the behavioral patterns of the male heterosexuals, except for the circumstance of age difference between partners.

- In summary, the homo-bisexual trajectories are an exemplary case that illustrates the intricate interlace of sexuality and the imperatives of gender may take place. We argue that the expectations constructed for a gender have the capacity of producing similarities accentuated in distinct sexual trajectories.

