

FUNDAÇÃO GETULIO VARGAS  
ESCOLA DE ADMINISTRAÇÃO DE EMPRESAS DE SÃO PAULO

ÁLVARO ALMEIDA LENZA

**THE GAY SUBJECT IN BUSINESS AND ITS DISCURSIVE FORMATION:  
AN EXPLORATION ON POWER, KNOWLEDGE AND SEXUALITY**

SÃO PAULO

2012

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Dissertação apresentada à Escola de  
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Mestre, no curso de Mestrado Internacional  
em Gestão Empresarial

Campo de conhecimento: Ciências sociais

Orientador: Prof. Dr. Isabela Baleeiro Curado

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*To my beloved parents Cacildo and Glória,  
for showing me how to see the world with new eyes.*

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*Power is everywhere.*

Michel Foucault

## RESUMO

Questões relacionadas à realidade de Lésbicas, Gays, Bissexuais e Transgêneros (LGBT) estão sendo incorporadas em estruturas discursivas tanto institucionais como sociais, mostrando os desafios que devem ser superados no desenvolvimento da cidadania. A inclusão dos direitos homossexuais no domínio de instituições como as Nações Unidas e a Secretaria de Direitos Humanos do Brasil é uma resposta a extensas movimentações que posicionam o tema gay como um tópico importante na esfera político-social.

Algumas instituições merecem atenção especial de pesquisadores em questões gays, dentre as quais o ambiente de negócios é um bom exemplo. Neste domínio, a diversidade tornou-se um importante tópico de debate entre estudiosos, contudo, na maioria dos casos a questão da identidade sexual não aparece. A literatura que se foca no tema é explorada por meio de abordagens que não são capazes de romper com universalismos e um vocabulário normativo.

Portanto, essa pesquisa explora estruturas discursivas relacionadas à sexualidade e examina as categorias de significados interpretadas ao longo dessas estruturas, por meio das experiências de indivíduos homossexuais que trabalham no mundo dos negócios. Além disso, padrões de estruturas discursivas normativas são investigados, assim como os consequentes desafios enfrentados por gays no ambiente de trabalho, complementando o debate atual, tanto na esfera sócio-política como na realidade acadêmica relacionada aos desafios LGBT.

As contribuições Foucaultianas relacionadas aos conceitos de conhecimento, discurso e poder, e os principais conceitos das teorias *queer* são incorporados à análise. No mais, considerações relacionadas à política sexual pós-colonial, subordinação, e forças hegemônicas, são exploradas frente aos conceitos de reflexividade na modernidade e seus impactos sobre estruturas mentais secularizadas.

Adota-se uma abordagem fenomenológica baseada em uma perspectiva participativa, onde a amostra escolhida para a coleta de dados consistiu-se de indivíduos gays que trabalham no ambiente de negócios, com o objetivo de gerar categorias de significados por meio da descrição das suas experiências.

**Palavras-chave:** discurso, poder, conhecimento, sexualidade, questões LGBT



## ABSTRACT

Issues related to the reality of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals are being incorporated into institutional and social discourses, and show the challenges that must be overcome towards citizenship. The inclusion of gay rights in the domain of institutions like the United Nations and the Brazilian Secretariat of Human Rights are a response to broader movements that places the gay subject as an important topic of debate in the social-political sphere.

In this scenario, some institutions deserve close attention from researchers related to gay issues, the business environment being a good example. In this domain, diversity has become an important topic of debate between scholars, where the question of sexual identity in most cases does not appear. The literature that actually focuses on the theme is explored through approaches that are not able to break with universalisms and a normatized vocabulary.

Therefore, this research explores discursive structures related to sexuality and examines the meanings construed throughout these structures as described by gay individuals working in business. Furthermore, it investigates patterns of discursive normative structures and consequential challenges faced by gay people in the working environment, and also complements the current debate both in the socio-political sphere and in academic reality on LGBT challenges.

The Foucauldian notions of discourse, knowledge and power, and the main concepts of queer theory are incorporated to the analysis, as well as concepts related to the politics of post-colonial sexuality, subordination, and hegemonic forces, together with role of reflexivity in modernity and its impacts on secularized mental structures.

The research design takes a phenomenological approach and bases its knowledge claim on a participatory perspective, where the sample chosen for data collection consisted of gay individuals working in the business environment, aiming at generate categories of meanings through the description of their experiences.

**Key words:** discourse, power, knowledge, sexuality, LGBT issues

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## **TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| <b>CEMS</b> | Community of European Management Schools |
| <b>FGV</b>  | Fundação Getulio Vargas                  |
| <b>HRC</b>  | Human Rights Council                     |
| <b>HRM</b>  | Human Recourses Management               |
| <b>LGBT</b> | Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender   |
| <b>NGOs</b> | Non-Governmental Organizations           |
| <b>PAR</b>  | Participatory Action Research            |
| <b>UN</b>   | United Nations                           |

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## INTRODUCTION

The United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, in his message to the Human Rights Council meeting on Violence and Discrimination based on Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity, held on March, 2012, in Geneva, Switzerland, identified the frontlines of actions in the debate of human rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals. According to the Secretary-General, countries must “tackle the violence, decriminalize consensual same-sex relationships, ban discrimination, and educate the public” (Ban, 2012). It was the first section in the history of the UN Human Rights Council (UN HRC) dedicated to the debate of LGBT rights, reporting the violence and discrimination cases as an infraction of the international law (UN HRC, 2011).

Issues related to the reality of LGBT individuals are being incorporated into institutional and social discourses, showing the challenges that must be overcome towards citizenship, as well as cases of involvement. Nonetheless, some institutions still deserve close attention from researchers related to gay issues, the business environment being a good example. Multinational enterprises and domestic firms are conservative in many spheres and researchers in this environment should better investigate LGBT issues, in order to nurture the discursive formulations around the topic.

This point is included in the UN HRC report (2011), in which employment is one of the areas where discriminatory practices take place and employees may be fired for being gay or lesbian, and ascension and benefits can be subject to discriminatory limitations. The dynamics of the business work environment thus present a central point to be explored. Examples like Mrs. Beth Broke, global leader for inclusiveness for Ernst & Young, who disclosed her gay identity only after twenty years in the company, saying it out loud in the project *It Gets Better*<sup>1</sup>, shows how the situation is still basic in organizations. Moreover, not a single openly gay chief-executive can be identified in the Fortune 1000 ranking, clearly not because they are non-existent, but since most of the executives are afraid that this disclosure may damage their company’s reputation (Leslie, 2012).

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<sup>1</sup> The *It Gets Better* project was created in September, 2010, in the United States, to support young LGBT people to face the challenges related to their sexuality; the project currently has more than 50,000 user-created YouTube videos, which have been viewed more than 50 million times.

In this context, diversity in the business environment has become an important topic of debate between scholars. There are several studies that tackle the subject of diversity in the workplace, addressing, but not limited to, the following points: diversity as one of the main challenges of the twenty-first century (Barkema, Baum, & Mannix, 2002), the impact of demographic and attitudinal diversity (Harrison, Price, & Bell, 1998), theories of similarity attraction and self-categorization (Harrison et al., 1998), the contact hypothesis and stereotyping procedures (Harrison et al., 1998; Brickson, 2000; Flynn, Chatman, & Spataro, 2001), and the impact of organizational structures in dealing with diversity (Brickson, 2000). However, even if the issue of diversity has been placed into the organizational studies discourses, the question of sexual identity in most cases does not appear.

As presented by Eastman (1998), diversity literature was naively inclined to position race and gender at the center of its analysis, implying the existence of a class hierarchy in the diversity field and placing other issues in the backstage, implicitly read in these theories. Moreover, to support these affirmations, when analyzing Mendes (2005), whose academic dissertation has the objective of reviewing the diversity related topics in the academic literature<sup>2</sup>, no reference to issues of sexual identity was found. Anyway, there are some few authors who address the LGBT issues in the business environment, however, with a perspective not much connected to the diversity realm and more based on the standpoint of the encounter of different worldviews.

The current understanding of the concept of diversity in business is inconsistent due to a diverse range of reasons: (a) it overlooks the notion of classes due to an individualistic dogma, (b) it is used as a rhetoric apparatus that reassures the notion of *us* construed as contrary to, but capable of coupling with, the *others*, or (c) it fails to take into account the Foucauldian notion of power-knowledge (Eastman, 1998). These concepts will remain blurry for a while, since they consist to a significant extent of the theoretical developments to come.

In this scenario, queer theory opens the debate on the socially and discursive instances that build privileged or marginalized sexual categories, and positions sexual identity as the basis of critical deployment (Hostetler and Herdt, 1998). Queer theory has the foundations for its

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<sup>2</sup> It was reviewed the following journals: Academy of Management Journal (1973-2003), Academy of Management Review (1978-2004), Administrative Science Quarterly (1992-2003) and Organizational Studies (1995-2004).

theoretical development in the post-structural critique of Foucault (1978), since it challenges the universalism of sexual identities and the postmodern epistemological hegemony regarding gender and sexual categories (Hostetler & Herdt, 1998). According to Plummer (2005), this theoretical perspective “may be seen as partially deconstructing our own discourses and creating a greater openness in the way we think through our categories” (p. 365). This theoretical lens thus consists of the lens of the further knowledge development of this research.

The literature that actually focuses on LGBT issues in the business environment is explored through quantitative, positivist approaches, not being able to break with the universalism previously presented. Therefore, it leads this research to investigate the exposed issues through a qualitative lens (phenomenological approach) aiming at an actual agenda for change, thus leading to knowledge claims grounded in a participatory action research (PAR) perspective and the study of subjective meanings.

Therefore, this study contributes to the knowledge domain of LGBT studies, with a perspective that seeks to explore the given reality lived by gay individuals in the business world, aiming to not be biased by normative structures that oversee society.

## 1 THE PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of this phenomenological research is to explore the discursive structures related to sexuality and examine the meanings construed throughout these structures as described by gay businessmen. Therefore, the aim is to explore patterns of discursive normative structures and consequential challenges faced by gay people in the working environment, at the same time as increasing the consciousness to these issues. Moreover, this research complements the current debate both in the socio-political sphere and in academic reality on LGBT challenges in modernity.

Therefore, the research question is:

**What is it like for a gay businessman to deal with his gay identity in the business spheres relevant to his live?**

As presented by Creswell (2003), a research question in a qualitative study needs to be broad in its approach, given the explorative essence of the emerging research design. Furthermore, hypotheses are not stated, in order to avoid directional language and bias in the exploration of lived realities (Creswell, 2003).

As a characteristic of a phenomenological inquiry, the experiences of individuals were explored based on the description of their lived realities, interpreted by the researcher in the lens of the theories presented and in his own experiences as a gay individual. This perspective further enabled the avoidance of the interpretation of these discourses with a heteronormative understanding of the central phenomenon being studied. Therefore, the power relations present in this rapport were investigated, in the lens of the queer theorists, the post-colonial sexual politics and humanism.

The discursive exploration was focused on understanding how these relationships take place in the lives of these businessmen and, consequently, a depiction of categories of meanings and power relations. In order to explore the phenomenon, the exploration phase with the subjects was focused on the two main institutions that have an impact on their gay manager identity formation, which are the business school and the work environment.



The method of inquiry was based on phenomenology procedures, characteristic of qualitative researchers, where the research is approached as an emerging design and the categories of ideas and the relationship develops throughout the evolvement of the study, and cannot be effusively anticipated in the beginning. The knowledge claim was based on the lens of PAR, given the theoretical perspective chosen and the importance of the role of the researcher as a gay businessman conducting research about gay lived experiences, with a strong focus on the business environment.

Basing the theoretical lens of this study on queer theory doesn't mean that there is a specific queer methodology to follow. As presented by Plummer (2005), queer theory doesn't have a specific impact on the methods of a research, but is more influential in avoiding a hegemonic and orthodox way of facing the problem and the subjects being studied.

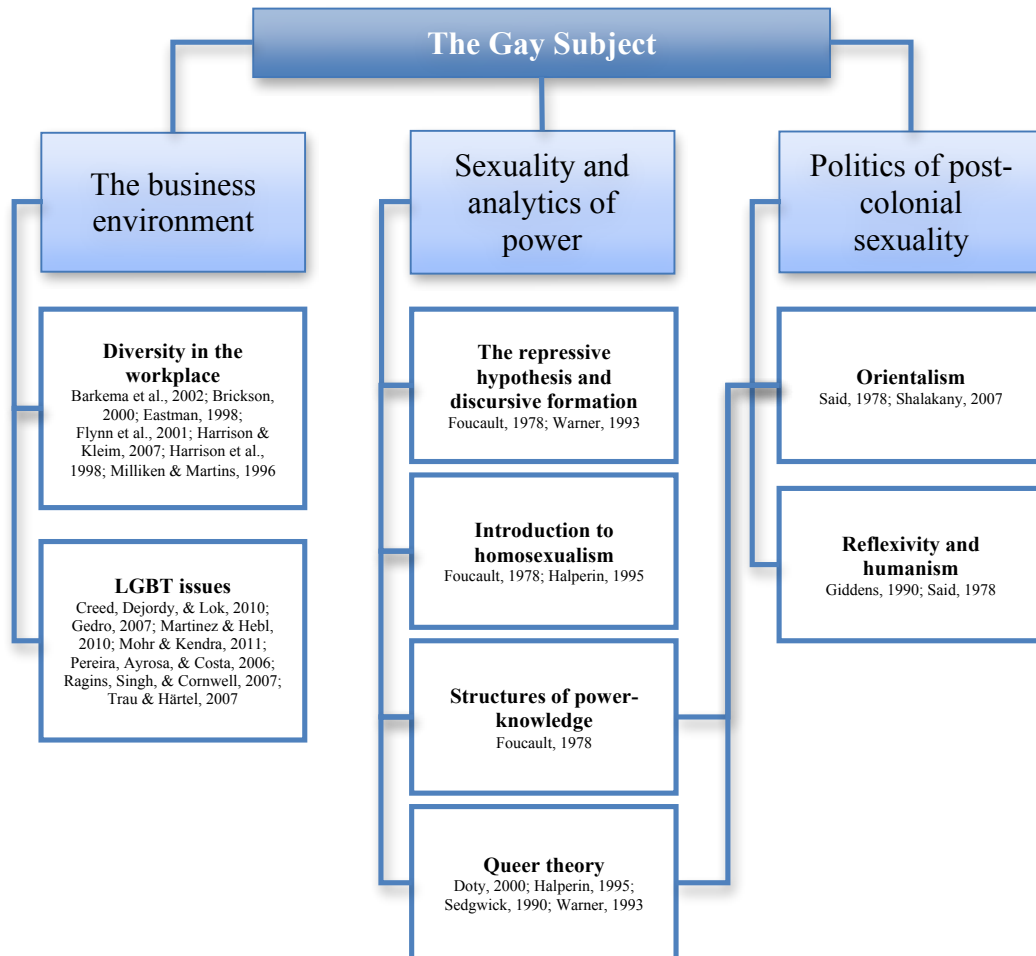
The participants were gay businessmen who are alumni and / or students from Fundação Getulio Vargas (FGV), in the city of São Paulo, Brazil, institution ranked one of the most important business schools in the country. The participants were interviewed in a site outside their business environment so they could fell free to talk about the subject in question.

## **2 SEXUALITY AND RELATED THEORIES: A REVIEW ON DIVERSITY, POWER AND POLITICS**

An introduction to a literature review that talks mainly about sexuality could not start without a critique of the latest developments, and consequently the respective roads taken, in the field of political and social sciences. First, major recent developments ignore sexuality as a contemporary issue, taking it out of the field of analysis (Warner, 1993). Second, amongst the authors who have indeed made sexuality a recurrent issue in their theories, it is usually a heterosexual understanding of the theme that takes the lead (Warner, 1993).

The main consequence of these two statements is a normatization of the vocabulary surrounding these theories, creating a heteronormative language, strongly based on the Malthusian couple, as will be further analyzed (Foucault, 1978; Warner, 1993). Consequently, marginalized sexualities, or the group of sexual minorities, are excluded from the field of analysis, reinforcing their peripheral features, and nurturing an entire chain of knowledge that ignores their existence.

This literature review is divided into three main sections, as shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: A literature map of the research, developed by the author**

The first section, *2.1 The business environment*, is primarily dedicated to an introduction to the literature of diversity followed by some of the studies of LGBT issues in the workplace along with the theoretical bases that guide these studies. The second section, *2.2 Sexuality and analytics of power*, is dedicated to the Foucauldian studies on sexuality (Foucault, 1978) and an overview of the main scholars on the theoretical field of queerness, followed by the third section, *2.3 Politics of post-colonial sexuality*, which introduces Said (1978), his notion of Orientalism and the main connections with the post-colonial sexualities, besides the notions of humanities and reflexivity. A conclusion is subsequently drawn at the end of this literature review.

The theme of diversity is inserted in the business theoretical field for some time already, however, unable to embody LGBT related issues in the majority of cases. Some researchers ventured into the field of gay analysis in business, however, their quantitative approaches limited them in a way or another. In any case, these theories enable this study to reach a

certain pragmatic level of analysis and measurability, and complement the meta discussions that are presented in the next sections.

The work of Foucault (1978) is the theoretical base of much of what will be presented in the second section, due to his pioneering role in addressing sexuality and power through a perspective previously unexplored. Even after over three decades, this work still remains paramount in the field of sexual politics, especially when dealing with the current LGBT issues.

In addition to the Foucauldian notions of discourse, knowledge and power, the main concepts of queer theory are presented. As shown by Warner (1993), “queer theory is opening up in the way that feminism did when feminists began treating gender more and more as a primary category for understanding problems that did not initially look gender-specific” (Introduction section, para. 20).

Subsequently, orientalism is presented as one of the key concepts in “understanding post-colonial sexual politics and possibly redressing some of its injustices for a left-of-center politics” (Shalakany, 2007, p.126). In *Orientalism*, Said (1978) shows the processes through which the building of the others<sup>3</sup> is strictly connected to the building of the dominating us. It is possible to read in *Orientalism* a theory of subordination sexuality, where the theoretical practices developed by it can widen the field of studies of subordination sexual politics (Shalakany, 2007).

## **2.1 The business environment**

This section first presents the main developments in the field of diversity in the workplace and the focal theoretical approaches to tackle this subject, as described in the subsection *2.1.1 Diversity in the workplace: the social contact hypothesis and other theories*. Afterwards, it is presented a review of the LGBT challenges in the workplace to complement the discussion, as shown is subsection *2.1.2 LGBT issues and the business environment: challenges of the XXI century*.

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<sup>3</sup> For Said (1978), the Others is an abstract concept where a hegemonic dominant force creates an image of the dominated through discursive and knowledge formations.

### **2.1.1 Diversity in the workplace: the social contact hypothesis and other theories**

Harrison and Klein (2007) define diversity to “describe the distribution of differences among the members of a unit with respect to a common attribute, X, such as tenure, ethnicity, conscientiousness, task attitude, or pay” (p. 1200). Diversity impacts organizational outcomes, especially turnover and performance, positively or negatively, and it depends heavily on how the organization is able to manage diversity and its impacts in variables identified as important by Milliken and Martins (1996) such as affection, cognition, communication and cognitive and symbolic processes.

Diversity is a controversial theme in the field of social sciences and management, however, rather than being merely controversial, it positions itself as one of the most important challenges of the twenty-first century. Barkema, Baum, and Mannix (2002) consider diversity to be one of the main management confronts and research focuses of this century. The authors recognize that diversity is essential to companies to be responsive to their ever-changing fast-paced environment, presenting a significant challenge, but nevertheless providing one of the most rewarding success factors in this scenario (Barkema et al., 2002).

The effects of surface-level diversity (e.g. race and gender) and deep-level diversity (e.g. attitudes, beliefs and values) on group members' interactions were analyzed by Harrison, Price, and Bell (1998). The main conclusion of the study was that demographic diversity becomes less important over the course of events than deep-level attitudinal diversity (Harrison et al., 1998).

At first, group members tend to use the norms of similarity attraction and self-categorization based on readily detectable attributes to develop their interactions. However, time allows information exchange between group members and a deeper knowledge of an outsider decreases stereotyping and increases meaningful interactions in the workplace (Harrison et al., 1998). However, the opposite occurs with deep-level attitudinal diversity, as cultural values and beliefs, which slightly decrease group cohesion with time and increase role conflict (Harrison et al., 1998). The contact hypothesis is an important concept applied in this study, where group members that manage to deepen their knowledge about other individuals through interactions decrease stereotyping and bias (Harrison et al., 1998).

There are also other studies that were developed using the contact hypothesis theory to show how individuals decrease stereotyping by improving contact between members and increasing idiosyncratic knowledge (Brickson, 2000; Flynn, Chatman, & Spataro, 2001). Brickson (2000) analyzes the impact of organizational and institutional structures in activating personal, relational and collective identities, where identity is recognized as being multifaceted and dynamic. The author shows how the relationship of organizational, task, and reward structures affect the activation of certain subjective identities and recognizes that, in triggering relational identity, organizations can reap the main benefits of diversity while decreasing its possible negative outcomes (Brickson, 2000).

Activating an individual's interpersonal being identity, in opposition to an individualist notion of the self or an extreme group member identification, is the way of reaching a relational identity activation (Brickson, 2000). According to Brickson (2000), the organizations are able to reach this stage by activating "dense and integrated relationships networks" (p. 87) and dyad based task and reward structures, which all combined boost social motivations and self-knowledge that cope positively with diversity.

On the other hand, in organizations that encourage personal identity orientation, the responses of majority groups are automatic categorizations of individuals and stereotyping, where less biased views are possible when individuals enter a more complex process of social cognition; however, since affective investments and trust are often at low levels, these personalized impressions are rare (Brickson, 2000). Discussions surrounding prejudice and discrimination are faced with discomfort since they challenge the individualist structures and they spread beliefs that success is based only on meritocracy (Brickson, 2000).

In organizational structures that boost a collective identity orientation, dynamics are given by group memberships most of the times based on demographic categorizations and placement of ingroups and outgroups members (Brickson, 2000). Minorities belonging to organizational outgroups are most of the times excluded from networks and information sharing and stereotyped (Brickson, 2000).

In conclusion, relational identity arises when the emphasis is not on group membership and integration is high (e.g.: interaction among units) - also the density of ties among groups is

also important (Brickson, 2000). Moreover, complex social and personalized cognitive processes are activated and the individuals are seen as cooperation partners (Brickson, 2000).

Flynn et al. (2001) further develop the studies on the contact hypothesis theory including the role of personal traits in the analysis. The authors begin their analysis showing that even in the face of information exchange between individuals, stereotypes can still be maintained in cases where the interlocutor sends only generalist information that does not disqualify the pre-established stereotype or a pure receptors blockade (Flynn et al., 2001).

Therefore, there are two personality characteristics that help in decreasing demographically diverse individual's stereotypes by increasing the role of personalized information that breaks these biased visions (Flynn et al., 2001). First, extraverted people deliver more individuating information, thus breaking labels in comparison with introverted people that provide no disconfirming cues and, second, self-monitors that are able to work on contingency adaptations and be responsive to given situations (Flynn et al., 2001). The latter controls to a certain extent the self-information sent to others, inducing people against stereotypes and towards a positive image of the diverse different individual (Flynn et al., 2001).

Harrison and Klein (2007) produced a review on the diversity literature, which the authors characterized as confusing for two reasons: firstly, it is difficult to understand given that coherent conclusions have not emerged and second, it is difficult to synthesize given the array of spheres embraced by the theme. However, an important feature is that sexual orientation is not a widely explored subject in the field of diversity. As shown by the authors, the main topics encompassing the diversity literature are: gender, tenure, education, functional background, marital status, values, attitudes, consciousness, affect, dress, network ties, individual performance and pay (Harrison & Klein, 2007).

Furthermore, it is recognized that the theoretical developments in this field are submissive to Human Resources Management (HRM) managerial mainstream that has a simplistic approach to diversity, therefore, "insufficiently attentive to class" (Eastman, 1998, p.357). Furthermore, besides approaching diversity without myopic eyes, another critical issue needs to be addressed: the minority discourses are characterized as personal and emotional expressions of the individuals in the face of the dominant figure of the white-male dominant executive. Consequential is a rhetoric production that leads to a lack of significant changes to minorities

and generates an approach to these issues from the viewpoint the dominant group, and not the other way around (Eastman, 1998).

The research and studies presented above were intended to contextualize the topic based on the latest developments in the field of diversity, in addition to a critique of the perspectives taken by them. The next subsection is thus dedicated to the researches conducted on LGBT matters in the business reality.

### **2.1.2 LGBT issues and the business environment: challenges of the XXI century**

The process of coming out is an important aspect when it comes to LGBT related issues. As shown by Martinez and Hebl (2010), coming out increases the awareness of the existence of homosexual people within the organization, diminishes identity conflict and anxiety, and enhances interactions. The authors argue that this process increases the critical mass of LGBT people, as opposed to a previous belief that this ‘group’ didn’t exist in the organization, and boosts an inclusive climate within the firm (Martinez & Hebl, 2010).

The authors also recognize allies<sup>4</sup> as important influencers in creating an inclusive space, decreasing the use of a heteronormative language and consequently diminishing prejudice within the organization (Martinez & Hebl, 2010). Above all, “the process of coming out is an interactive process” (Gedro, 2007, p.153,) and requires the support of an entire chain of positive responses and a network of acceptance in order to be successful.

Therefore, contextual factors play an important role in the quality of life and career attitudes of gay people, where some companies are clearly more “gay-friendly” than others, with explicit inclusive policies for LGBT people (Trau & Härtel, 2007). As shown by the authors, “a decision to reveal or disclose is highly complex in such that it depends both on individuals traits and contextual factors” (Trau & Härtel, 2007, p 215).

In this context, Creed, Dejordy, and Lok (2010) introduce the concept of institutional contradictions that can be considered as a complementary concept to the analysis of

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<sup>4</sup> “Non-LGBT employees as agents of change” (p. 83, Martinez & Hebl, 2010).



contextual factors. The authors show how LGBT individuals can act as agents of institutional change when there is a gap between their marginalized homosexual identities and the organization realities and its institutional practices. These contradictions, rather than remaining conflicts internal to these organizations, can trigger important political conflicts that will further impact social change (Creed et al., 2010).

The concept of identity becomes central to the discussions presented; where the conciliation of the homosexual identity to the individual's overall identity is an extremely complex process and strictly related to the process of coming out (Pereira, Ayrosa, & Costa, 2006). In modern societies, the subject assumes different identities at different times due to a diverse set of cultural representations and norms. In this scenario, the homosexual identity of the post-modern subject is at the same time rooted in stigmas and self-acceptance of this feature of an individual's trait (Pereira et al., 2006).

The process of identity reconciliation is extremely important in understanding the agents of change. Institutional contradictions of various sources are misaligned with individuals' behavioral expectations and the social arrangements are incompatible with the interests and wishes of minority groups that are supposed to reproduce this contradictory script (Creed et al., 2010). Reflexivity is a key driver to trigger individuals to act as change agents and shift their consciousness, providing alternative interpretative lenses to contradictions and institutional arrangements, followed by a process of role claim and role use (Creed et al., 2010).

Ragins, Singh, and Cornwell (2007) analyze the disclosure process at the workplace, the factors influencing this process and the role of invisible stigmas. The first argument proposed by the authors is that, even in the absence of discrimination, the fear of disclosure can block the disclosure process of individuals, and cause psychological distress and job dissatisfaction due to impossibility of the alignment of the individual homosexual identity and his work life. Understanding the stigma theory is important in the theoretical lens of the authors, Goffman (as presented by Ragins et al., 2007) shows that "stigmas are incorporated into the target's self-concept through environmental interactions and that stigmas influence the target's cognitions, behaviors, and social interactions" (p. 1104).

Stigma theory is increasingly being used in the field of diversity to foster analysis of discrimination, prejudice and stereotyping, and the correlation between stigmatization, the

subject's identity and social constructs involved in the entire process. The sexual orientation of LGBT people are characterized as an invisible stigma, which, given its essence, makes the individual chose whether to disclose it or not. The challenge of disclosing is not faced as a go or not-go choice; however, the disclosure process is a continuing and multifaceted phenomenon in the work life of these individuals, where even after making the choice of coming out, fear can block the individual from concrete action, creating internal cognitive ambivalences. Furthermore, the self-verification theory shows that in order to align the social identity of a homosexual individual with his self-views, the disclosure process becomes necessary to align the individual's public and private lives and decrease internal ambivalences and anxieties (Ragins et al., 2007).

In the introduction of their work on a multidimensional measure of sexual minority identity, Mohr and Kendra (2011) also recognize the difficulty for a homosexual subject in developing a positive identity toward his sexuality, given the stigmatization and marginalization around this identity. Furthermore, the authors consider internalized homonegativity and sexual orientation concealment as important variables in understanding an individual sexual identity (Mohr and Kendra, 2011).

The researches presented in this subsection consist on the main developments in the field of LGBT issues in the workplace. The next session brings the perspectives of the social sciences to the discussion.

## **2.2 Sexuality and analytics of power**

This section presents the work developed by Michel Foucault (1978) in *The history of sexuality*, together with queer theorists. This section is subdivided into four main subtopics: 2.2.1 *The repressive hypothesis and discursive formation*, which analyzes the historical discursive phenomena around sexuality, 2.2.2 *A world of perversion: an introduction to homosexuality*, in which the categorization of homosexuals as a "specie" in the sexual discursive apparatus and subsequent racism is analyzed, 2.2.3 *Structures of power-knowledge and sexuality*, which presents the concepts of power related to the discursive formation around sexuality and homosexuality and 2.2.4 *Queer theory: an introduction*, opening up an entire field of challenges to the studies on sexuality.

### 2.2.1 The repressive hypothesis and discursive formation

Twenty-first century sexuality is a consequence of social dynamics and politics throughout history, which greatly displaced, reoriented and intensified the discourses around sexuality. Therefore, in order to understand modern sexuality and its conceptualization in Western societies, it is first necessary to analyze the historical movements that constitute the foundations of the contemporary understanding of the term.

In this context, Foucault (1978) refuted a repressive hypothesis, and thereby denies a widespread belief that discourses around sexuality have been repressed since the advent of industrialized societies. There was, nonetheless, a discursive production around the sexuality, which has been increasingly proliferated and transformed into a function of power (Foucault, 1978).

The rise of the bourgeois societies was accompanied by two complementary, though seemingly contradictory, phenomena, related to sexuality: first, an authorized vocabulary related to a modern decency was developed, in which a plethora of prohibitions that complemented each other was created around sexuality, and, second, there was a discursive explosion that resulted in a proliferation of discourses around sexuality, culminating in the field of power exercise and reducing sex to the level of language (Foucault, 1978). These developments caused individuals to speak about sex more every day, even though, at the level of consciousness, it seemed that they spoke about it less and less. Moreover, this process resulted in a loss of the *ars erotica*<sup>5</sup>.

The first phenomenon is related to an abstraction of enouncements, a rhetoric of allusion, and a control of statements, which all normatized an entire body of language and speech around sex: it regulated where and when one was allowed to speak about it, it controlled its free circulation and created zones of sensitivity around sexuality (Foucault, 1978). A wide range of mutisms and prohibitions was created, nudity was banned, social constraints were imposed and sexuality was regulated (Foucault, 1978).

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<sup>5</sup> *Ars erotica* (erotic art), is dedicated to the sexualities of the Roman Empire or the Eastern erotic concepts, opposed to *scientia sexualis* (science of sexualities), characteristic of the bourgeois Western societies.

The second phenomenon is the opposite of the first, yet is complementary in creating a discursive apparatus of power-knowledge. There was an explosion of institutional inducement to speak incessantly about sex, as well as a proliferation of articulation structures to speak about it, breaking it down to its most accrued details (Foucault, 1978). Sexuality became part of science, religion, education, family, and various other institutions of the social life – a process coined as indefinite lines of penetration (Foucault, 1978).

In the seventeenth and eighteenth century, different strategies were deployed to bring sex to the level of language as it was presented. The Counter-Reformation of the Catholic Pastoral and the Sacrament of Confession were important movements in the seventeenth century that both contributed to the creation of an authorized vocabulary around sexuality and placed it into discourse (Foucault, 1978). Through the confession act, compulsory for every Christian citizen, the pleasures of the body began to pass through the power of words. Therefore, everything needed to be said, and consequently, a scrutiny of the sexual act into its minimal details was established and punishment structures were founded (Foucault, 1978).

The events of the eighteenth century had different means of inducing sexuality, though not diminishing the extent to which it was put into discourse. There was a surge of discourses in the political, economic and technical bodies of knowledge; sexuality, therefore, was inserted into the discourses of public utility and hygiene, and decreasingly resided in the scope of the Catholic Pastoral (Foucault, 1978). There was a shift from moral to rationality, where the concept of population was introduced, and sexuality became an object of analysis and intervention: an economic and political problem (Foucault, 1978).

Specific management tools were necessary to control the sexuality of ‘couples’, and were developed by policy makers and economists. ‘Sexual behavior’ was then controlled by quotas related to birth rates, birth control mechanisms, marital status of the population, amongst others, and surrounded by a web of discourses, knowledge and interventions that gave the first inputs for the innumerable racisms of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Foucault, 1978).

In conclusion, this entire process, at a first glance, gives the impression that sexuality had become a taboo with the emergence of the bourgeois societies, and that it had undergone a process of censorship. Individuals grew convinced that societies didn’t speak enough about sex: the repressive hypothesis. However, Foucault (1978), while rejecting this hypothesis,

demonstrates that what happened instead was the creation of an entire apparatus supporting the production of a multiplicity of discursive devices surrounding sex, speaking about it and making it speak by itself.

Moreover, the historical facts presented above evoked drastic consequences to the field of social sciences. Most of modern-day political theories are based on a heterosexual society and restrict the understanding and, consequently, the homosexual subject, to his sexuality, thus putting aside all other forms of identification that the individual has outside his sexuality (Warner, 1993). Major social theories that were able to bring sexuality into their work placed marginalized sexualities as a field outside the realm of the social world, in a process characterized “more from rethinking the subjective meaning of sexuality than from rethinking the social” (Warner, 1993, Introduction section, para. 8).

The last two paragraphs presented some of the consequences of the historical facts of this topic. Therefore, the following section will focus on the homosexual categorization within this discourse incitement.

### **2.2.2 A world of perversion: an introduction to homosexuality**

Halperin (1995) shows that Foucault’s studies on sexuality made it possible to understand the “history of the conditions that made possible the institutional and discursive formation of homosexuality” (p.4).

It is important to recognize that this entire discursive explosion around sexuality was not restricted to a simple act of speaking or to a quantitative phenomenon dedicated to policy makers’ analysis. The main consequences of this discursive incitement were the imposition of imperatives against all the marginalized sexualities, those not fitting the established norms of an economy of reproduction (Foucault, 1978).

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries movements converted towards a heterosexual monogamist society, with its discursive and power structure characteristics already in place. The attention is now focused on these excluded practices outside the status quo, given that the sexual practices of couples – heterosexual ones, of course – had already been normatized and

depicted into the discourses of a sexuality that is economically useful and politically conservative (Foucault, 1978).

Now, it is time to speak less about the sex of couples, and to turn the attention from marital relations to sins: an introduction to the family of perverts, as termed by Foucault (1978). The imposed sexual preventions restricted the sex of children, masturbation, hundreds of obsessions and, of course, homosexuality, in addition to a wide range of “perversions” outside the heterosexual monogamist relations (Foucault, 1978). Now, it is time for this class of people to go down to the level of language and speak about what they are, therefore, to be analyzed and judged by ‘experts’ (Foucault, 1978). As a result, an entire body of legal and moral convictions emerged to fight these sexual irregularities, along with their knowledge structures of pedagogical intervention and medical treatment.

Foucault (1978) shows that these movements allowed the ‘normal’ sexuality to build itself through these peripheral, fruitless sexualities. This statement is strongly correlated to the Orientalism notions that will be presented in the next section, where the construction of the *others* is intimately related to the construction of the *self*, and the notion of *us* is intrinsically connected to the prejudicial construct of the *other* (Said, 1978).

According to Foucault (1978), there were two main movements within this period that sought to exercise power over peripheral sexualities. The first consisted of the incorporation of perversion into the discursive machinery and the second of the specification of individuals. Thus, the figure of the homosexual of the nineteenth century was created, which persists to date.

The figure of the homosexual was created as a species. It was suddenly far from a simple aberration that was the act of sodomy, but a way of life, with its own morphology: in the figure of the homosexual, nothing escapes from his sexuality, which is inscribed in the body and in the mind of the individual (Foucault, 1978). This category was scratched in the medical and psychological languages and studies, as a “kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphroditism of the soul” (Foucault, 1978, p.43).

The birth of the homosexual as a category dates back to 1970, as shown by Foucault (as cited in Westphal, 1870), when the author analyses a report published by Westphal on this specific sexual sensibility that became a species:

[t]he machinery of power that focused on this whole alien strain did not aim to suppress it, but rather to give it an analytical, visible, and permanent reality: it was implanted in bodies, slipped in beneath modes of conduct, made into a principle of classification and intelligibility, established as a *raison d'être* and a natural order of disorder. Not the exclusion of these thousand aberrant sexualities, but the specification, the regional solidification of each one of them. The strategy behind this dissemination was to strew reality with them and incorporate them into the individual. (p. 44)

Therefore, this entire categorization process aimed at domination and the construction of structures of power that is elaborated in the following section.

### **2.2.3 Structures of power-knowledge and sexuality**

Foucault (1978) presents the function power-knowledge-pleasure in order to understand the discursive formations surrounding sex. In order to proceed, a definition of power from the perspective of the author is necessary to understand his famous assertion that ‘power is everywhere’ (p.93). According to Foucault (1978):

[...] power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization; as the process which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or reverses them, [...] and lastly, as the strategies in which they take effect, whose general design or institution crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies. (pp. 92-93)

All the above is enabled through a discursive production, which has two specific aims: the production of power and the proliferation of knowledge (Foucault, 1978). This begs the question: why is pleasure part of the triad? Pleasure enters as the relentless will of people to talk about sex, the desire for knowledge about it, the pleasure to speak and create a whole reality about sex; it is, therefore, the refusal of the repressive hypothesis (Foucault, 1978). It is considered as indefinite lines of penetration aiming at specification and consolidation, and creating “perpetual spirals of power and pleasure” around sexuality (Foucault, 1978).

It is extremely important in this conceptualization to refuse the juridico-discourse function when understanding the Foucauldian notions of power: the legislative power is anti-energy or, in other words, its principal mechanisms are rejection, inhibition and restriction, and its output is primarily rooted in obedience (Foucault, 1978). On the other hand, the principles governing the discourse production around sex have a multiplying nature; they are fragmented and far more complex than the legislative nature of the juridico-discursive dual (Foucault, 1978).

In order to understand the triad power-knowledge-pleasure one must escape from the relationship law-and-sovereign and enter a more positive, multifaceted and mobile system (Foucault, 1978). Foucault (1978) shows that Machiavelli was the one who came closest to the notions of power advocated by Foucault himself, which is power based on power relations, although the figure of the Prince is thought-restraining.

In *The history of sexuality*, in a chapter on the methods, Foucault (1978) presents four rules to understand power and sexuality, which are given below:

- a. Rule of immanence: through this rule it was possible to create local centers of power-knowledge, visible at schools, in monitoring the sex of children, in the confession act, interrogations, besides others. Sexuality here is a domain to be explored, surrounded by different forces that give it reality and are based on economical or ideological power requirements;
- b. Rules of continuous variations: the transformative nature of power is explored in this rule, where the focus of understanding is the schema through which power is modified and modifies itself and its correlations;
- c. Rule of double conditioning: how the mechanism of power leads to a global strategy (e.g. the role of the Malthusian heterosexual family is to support the global strategy of power and its discourses, and vice versa);
- d. Rule of tactical polyvalence of discourses: “we must conceive discourse as a series of discontinuous segments whose tactical function is neither uniform nor stable” (p.100). It is a complex relationship where power can be manufactured or a product of discourse. For example, the consequences of all the discourse production around sexuality in the twenty-first century were twofold: on the one hand, all the categorization regarding this type of perversion enabled power controls in the social sphere, yet, on the other hand, a reactive discourse of claims and legitimacy of the homosexual’s existence emerged.



The discussions above aimed at analyzing the concepts of power and sexuality. The next topic will present the so-called queer theory, which is strongly based on Foucauldian theories.

#### **2.2.4 Queer theory: an introduction**

Queer theory has its origins in the 1980s, in the United States, as a step forward to the field of lesbian and gay studies, and since then has had a large number of scholars that fostered the debate within this field (where famous examples are Doty, 2000; Halperin, 1995; Sedgwick, 1990; Warner, 1993, besides many others). However, significant earlier developments in Europe, mainly in France, Italy and England, focused on the radical gay social theories, also contributed significantly to the theoretical development of queer theory, having Guy Hocquenghem, Jeffrey Weeks, and Mario Mieli, as its precursors (Warner, 1993).

Within theoretical developments in this area, “some of the most exciting deployments of *queer/queerness* are related to the word’s ability to describe those complex circumstances in texts, spectators, and production that resist easy categorization, but that definitely escape or defy the heteronormative” (Doty, 2000, p. 7). The term has no fixed concepts given its philosophical perspective itself and, as shown by Doty (2000) it is a “suggestive rather than prescriptive concept” (p. 7).

Warner (1993) recognizes that queer theory explores other milieus other than sex thus influencing and creating knowledge in different spheres of the social life and challenging the normative concepts pre-established by the mainstream social scientists and constructivist theories. According to the author, queer theory abstracts the broad question “What do queers want?”, hence advocating gay needs from the standpoint of their perspectives within the social sphere and theoretical developments (Warner, 1993).

Queer theory is therefore a critique to conventional social and political theories, based on a critical perspective. Marx concept of critical theory is clearly read in queer theories (as presented by Warner, 1993), as the “the self-clarification of struggles and wishes of the age” (Introduction section, para. 1). This critical perspective takes queer experiences as starting

point of analysis of the social order, breaking through the conceived heterosexual understanding of civilization and thus, culture itself (Warner, 1993).

Warner (1993) analyzes the reasons behind the perspectives taken by queer theory, where the main points cited by the author are sexual politics in modernity and the social order itself. It is recognized the existence of a wide range of institutions and a social ideology that are intertwined with the current sexual order, which together consist in the main blockages to theoretical developments in the socio-political sphere (Warner, 1993). Moreover, a stigmatized understanding of the gay political struggles, based on norms of the most basic sort, and social constructivist theories that are unable to tackle the reality of queer issues, also make it clear the need of a critical perspective. As a conclusion, the “[c]ontested issues of sexuality involve problems not captured by the languages designed to name them” (Warner, 1993, Introduction section, para. 22).

The need for such a break with the normative approach and the status quo is necessary, especially when considering the work of Sedgwick (1990), which calls for a critical analysis beyond the binarism of the homo/heterosexual terms that structured the Western modern knowledge and develop limited understandings about its culture and taxonomic discourses. This institutionalized taxonomic discourses hampered any developments in cultural understanding besides the territory of identity binaries of all forms: male-female, homo-hetero (Sedgwick, 1990). According to the author:

[t]he passage of time, the bestowal of thought and necessary political struggle since the turn of the century have only spread and deepened the long crisis of modern sexual definition, dramatizing, often violently, the internal incoherence and mutual contradiction of each of the forms of discursive and institutional *common sense* on this subject inherited from the architects of our present culture” (Sedgwick, 1990, p.1)

After presenting the main ideas around queer theory, the next topic will address the politics of post-colonial sexuality.

### **2.3 The politics of post-colonial sexuality and reflexivity**

This last section presents the concepts of Orientalism proposed by Said (1978) and the reflexivity notion presented by Giddens (1990) as two important theories of modernity that

provide interesting inputs to the theoretical review. The discussion finishes with a topic dedicated to the field of humanism and its applicability to this work.

### **2.3.1 Orientalism and the building of *others***

As briefly presented in the introduction of this literature review, Orientalism can be understood as an influential theory in the field of post-colonial sexuality politics. This theory analyses the processes of knowledge construction regarding the Eastern cultures by the Western civilization, and the consequent hegemonic ideologies and power-knowledge structures supporting this relationship (Shalakany, 2007). In her article, Shalakany (2007) shows that the theoretical practices presented in Orientalism are clearly replicated to other fields of political studies and, hence, a theory of subordination sexuality is clearly present in Orientalism.

The author further presents a certain queer discomfort with Orientalism, to the extent that Orientalism creates normative assessments to the field of sexual politics as feminism had done years earlier. However, she concludes showing that a break from Orientalism is extremely radical and harmful given its influence in the post-colonial discursive formations (Shalakany, 2007).

Understanding the concept of Orientalism and the *Other* is extremely important in order to comprehend processes that took place in the past in order to affirm the Western political hegemony. These structures have kept their dominating imperialism until the present day, be it cultural, political or military (Said, 1978). The theoretical practices developed by Said (1978) in order to understand the domination process through which the Western world created its image of the East and an entire knowledge-discursive apparatus, are clearly applied to the understanding of the sexual dynamics of modernity and the creation of the homosexual figure in comparison with the heterosexual one.

The relationship between the Occident and the Orient has always been characterized by relationships of power and domination, supported by contributing institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imaginary, of multiple degrees of a complex hegemony built by the West (Said, 1978).

According to Said (1978), Orientalism is understood “as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (p. 03). Historically, the Orient was a place for Europe’s richest colonies, its civilization roots and “the most recurring images of the *Other*” (p.1). The European concept of the Orient was created as a mode of discourse to justify the Western hegemony, where the Orient has facilitated the definition of the Western societies as its contrasting image and idea (Said, 1978).

Foucault’s notion of discourse provides the basis to understand the institutions created throughout the European culture to sustain the concept of the Orient as ontological and epistemological processes to distinguish it from the Occident (Said, 1978). As presented by the author, the “European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self” (Said, 1978, Introduction section, para. 6).

In a society without a totalitarian system, ideas and cultural patterns predominate over others through civil society consent: this cultural direction is named hegemony (Said, 1978). This is an important concept to understand the West mentality and the idea of Europe, where the collective concept of *us* Europeans opposed to those non-Europeans, the *Others*, created an identity of superiority (Said, 1978).

To conclude, Said’s arguments are based on the notion of secularized mental structures of the Occident that, even in face of new information regarding the Orient, were incapable of changing their mindsets and prejudicial views rooted in ontological distinctions (Said, 1978). The connection between a theory of a subordination sexuality and Orientalism becomes clear now. Nonetheless, the reflexive nature involved in the encounters remains to be developed, as follows.

### **2.3.2 The role of reflexivity in modernity**

The reflexive nature embedded in these relationships constitutes a key element in understanding the building of the *Others*. As conceptualized by Giddens (1990), the reflexive nature builds the concept of others and is interconnected with the construction of one’s own identity. It is a consequence of modernity and a distinguishing factor compared with pre-

modern societies, where the reflexive nature was bound by symbols and myths extrapolated at tradition (Giddens, 1990).

Whereas in pre-modern civilizations reflexivity was a process of reinterpretation of tradition, reflexivity in modernity is inherent to the construction of self-knowledge (Giddens, 1990). The latter, however, is built through close exchanges between the observer and the phenomenon being observed, creating an interconnectedness between the subject and the object under analysis (Giddens, 1990).

In most of the cases, this reflexivity about self-knowledge is kept at arm's length, mainly manifesting itself through the unconscious, and forms the main building blocks of the construction of the *Others* and hegemonic dominations (Curioni, 2010). In this scenario, observational facts throughout history show that in the face of a lack of understandings of confrontation and in the absence of meanings to understand a given reality, societies have denied the problem, and the responses were hegemonic missions and violence (Curioni, 2010). Therefore, a humanistic perspective to the discussion is given bellow.

### **2.3.3 A humanistic perspective to the field of study**

The idea of presenting Occidentalism was more than a mere description of a possible clash of the modern societies: it was also an understanding of domination structures and imperialistic forces in order to call for a solution based on a humanistic critic. This humanistic critic is valid for the fields of both geopolitics and subordination sexualities.

As presented by Said (2003) a critique based on humanism is able to open the subjects of struggles and brings a reflexivity perspective based on acceptance and widening of the fields of social politics. This will allow a replacement of “the short bursts of polemical, thought-stopping fury that so imprison us in labels and antagonistic debate whose goal is a belligerent collective identity rather than understanding and intellectual exchange.” (Preface section, para. 12).

The humanistic view of coexistence can be reached in interpersonal exchanges even though there is still a long way to go to the achievement of this goal.

## 2.4 Conclusion

This review of literature is undoubtedly a leftist take to the fields of both social sciences and management, aiming at least to give some food for thought for the sexual politics and the social order of the twenty-first century. As a matter of fact, the heteronormative understanding of business, and consequently of society as a whole, are naive given the current reality faced by many LGBT individuals in the business environment.

Therefore, the research design is presented in the lens of both a critical humanism and queer theory as proposed by Plummer (2005). There are commonalities between these two instances of theoretical discussion that can give positive inputs to researchers: the critical self-aware standpoint of the researcher and the subjects being studied, a contextual development based on political and ethical claims and the fact that no categorization processes will lead to justice, are among these commonalities.

According to Plummer (2005), both humanism and queer theory have the same political stances, though the former has broader references when compared with the latter, however, both are complementary where “contemporary humanism method enters the social worlds of different others to work a catharsis of comprehension” (p.371).

### **3 RESEARCH DESIGN**

Creswell (2003) presents four alternative knowledge claims to a research design: postpositivism, constructivism, pragmatism and participatory. These different perspectives are philosophical assumptions that need to be made by the researcher in order to define his approach to knowledge, especially regarding its ontology (what is knowledge), epistemology (how it is comprehended) and rhetoric (the research narrative) (Creswell, 2003).

The theories presented above have a strong impact on the research methodology and, consequently, on the knowledge claim that guides this study. A research approach that takes a postpositivist perspective or has its methodology strongly rooted in the scientific method is definitely not preferred. This would trap the research design in a relationship of causes and effects, which is characteristic of studies that take a perspective of the phenomenon being studied as an objective reality and reduces the problematic to a set of measurable ideas.

Therefore, this research design takes a qualitative perspective throughout the study, and bases its knowledge claim on a participatory approach. This perspective was preferred over the remaining ones due to the phenomenon being observed (sexual identity subordination) and the subjects under study (marginalized individuals). Furthermore, the methods of interview and data analysis are based on phenomenology.

#### **3.1 Characteristics of qualitative research**

The main objectives of a qualitative research are to explore a particular issue in the social sphere and to generate knowledge out of it, nurturing police makers and scholars initiatives, besides the social agenda of a given time (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). This is a process by which, in researching the qualitative inquiry, the researcher constantly goes through reflexive and interactive processes in a flow of relentless decision-making, challenge of assumptions and the research question design and redesign (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

According to Rossman and Rallis (2003), the qualitative inquiry is based on an empiricist approach where, through representations of reality, the processes of analysis and interpretations are able to transform information into knowledge. The authors consider the

research process primarily as emergent, since the researcher's continuous learning is a fundamental part of the process along with a research question that changes throughout the research development, resulting in an interrelationship of the research purpose and processes (Rossman and Rallis, 2003).

Qualitative researches are oriented towards people's lived experiences and thus take place in natural settings (as opposed to controlled ones). Their main objective is to fulfill the lived experiences with meanings; therefore, this type of research is also interpretative, where the processes of reflection and introspection of the researcher are fundamental characteristics (Rossman & Rallis, 1998).

As shown by Creswell (2003), the interpretative essence of a qualitative approach is important to understand the social phenomena where "the researcher filters the data through a personal lens that is situated in a specific sociopolitical and historical moment" (p. 182). Throughout this process, the social phenomena under study are approached in a holistic manner, and broad categories of ideas and panoramic views are drawn and presented both from a personal and a theoretical perspective, always nurturing the research question (Creswell, 2003; Rossman & Rallis, 1998). The biography of the researcher strongly affects this entire process, since the personal and research selves are the same (as will be further explained in the topic *3.4 The researcher's role*).

Qualitative studies are most of the times based on traditional theoretical bodies of knowledge (e.g.: organizational behavior, qualitative sociology, besides others). Recently however, researchers have been adopting perspectives based on ideological positions that challenge the traditional academia, proposing alternative knowledge foundations that are able to address the lives of minorities groups previous excluded from the academic discourse (Rossman & Rallis, 1998). Therefore, this leads to an adoption of a participatory knowledge claim to this research, given the social phenomena under study and the literature chosen. This is how the researcher faces the abstract concepts of ontology and epistemology.



### 3.2 Participatory research

A participatory research perspective explores issues of social justice, like empowerment, inequality, oppression, domination, amongst others, where the researcher have selected one of these key issues as a central point of research (Creswell, 2003). This approach to formulate a research design is based on the believe that postpositivism had rigid and unchanging assumptions of reality and the world being analyzed, which excluded the reality of minority groups, preventing thereby the knowledge formulation that truly reflected the lives and needs of these groups (Creswell, 2003).

Kemmis and Wilkinson (1998) characterize participatory research as a process of both self-reflection on the part of the researcher and a collaborative act given the subjects' participation. The role of the researcher is to investigate reality in order to change some practices that constitute the social interactions that in turn constitute the formation of lived realities and are social by their own nature (Kemmis and Wilkinson, 1998).

Therefore, this approach aims to advocate for an action agenda for transformation where the inquiry is entangled with politics and the political agenda of a given time (Creswell, 2003). This action agenda must include issues that “change the lives of the participants, the institutions in which the individuals work or live, and the researcher’s life” (Creswell, 2003, p. 10).

This definition of the objectives of this type of research leads to a collaborative role of the subjects under study, where these are responsible to assist the researcher in designing the questions that needs to be explored and the information that needs to be gathered, in a constant process of hypothesis testing (Creswell, 2003). This characteristic of inclusiveness is essential not to further marginalize the subjects under analysis, which are by themselves already marginalized in the social sphere. The voice of the subject thus constitutes the political agenda for reform and the researcher also has the role of increasing the subjects' consciousness of the problem being addressed (Creswell, 2003).

Kemmis and Wilkinson (1998) present six main characteristics of a participatory research. Firstly, it is a social process, in which the focus of knowledge is in the individualization and the socialization processes together with the interconnectedness of these relationships: it is

characterized as a circular process where one sphere shapes the other and vice versa. Second, it is participatory, where the subjects are driven to a reflexive process of its knowledge frames, based on an inner exploration of the individuals' worldviews and of how they categorize their understanding of lived experiences and the social world. Third, it is practical and collaborative, exploring the individuals' interactions among themselves and a reflection under this action in order to improve them. Fourth, it is emancipatory in its essence due to its support in helping people "recover, and unshackle themselves from, the constraints of irrational, unproductive, unjust and unsatisfying social structures which limit their self-development and self-delimitation" (p. 24). Fifth, it is critical in its analysis of languages and discourses, working environment relationships and power relations to understand constraints of the social and institutional spheres. And finally, it is recursive (reflexive and dialectical), in which it fosters change by inducing people to a reflexive process of their practices in order to understand the social structure and the social media in which they are embedded.

In order to conclude, it is important to mention that participatory research focuses on actual practices, though fulfilled by the presence of abstraction that comes whenever discourse instances and language are a central part of the qualitative inquiry (Kemmis & Wilkinson, 1998). In their endeavor to analyze practices and discourses in a critical way, researchers ought to see "their work as mundane and mired in history" (Kemmis and Wilkinson, 1998, p. 25) connected to much of the work style developed by Foucault in his works.

Therefore, after presenting the lens through which the research will take place, the next subtopic presents the strategy of inquiry.

### **3.3 Research strategy: Phenomenology**

The knowledge claim that guides this work having been presented, the strategy of inquiry now needs to be explored to give a more pragmatic direction to the research and the procedures of data collection. Among the strategies of inquiry in qualitative research presented by Creswell (2003) - ethnographies, grounded theory, case studies, phenomenology and narrative research, phenomenology is the one that best suits the design of this research.

According to Moustakas (1994), “[t]he empirical phenomenological approach involves a return to experience in order to obtain comprehensive descriptions that provide the basis for a reflective structural analysis that portrays the essences of the experience” (p. 13). These experiences are faced as naïve descriptions of reality in a first instance, where the researcher collects data by means of open-ended questions and dialogue. In a second step, through a process of reflection and interpretation, and in most of the cases returning to the subjects with further assumptions, general meanings are derived from the lived experiences described and entered into the process of structural analysis (Moustakas, 1994).

The author presents some important principles in a phenomenological approach, which helps the research in collecting and analyzing the data gathered: epoche, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation and synthesis (Moustakas, 1994). Epoche is the principle where suppositions and judgments of the reality are set out of the scene and the description of lived experiences by the subjects is what constitutes the validity of findings (Moustakas, 1994). Afterwards, phenomenological reduction is the process by which the world is reduced to a phenomenon that is described by the subject, and the interrelatedness of the phenomenon and the subject is determined. Imaginative variation describes the role of the researcher in the process of understanding meanings and providing perspectives and frames of references to the phenomena, in a process more of imagination than empiricism at this stage, to finding in the synthesis of the data collected broad categories of meanings to the lived experiences described by the subjects under study (Moustakas, 1994).

Furthermore, in this phenomenological research, the investigation of practices is focused on the analysis of language, discourses and traditions, which is one of the possible perspectives in a participatory action research proposed by Kemmis and Wilkinson (1998). A subjective understanding of practice is developed through the participants’ views of the discourse communities in which they are embedded, the business institutions, and the society as a whole in this case (Kemmis & Wilkinson, 1998).

It is important to mention that this research is not a Foucauldian analysis *per se*, given that a phenomenological methodology focuses on the representations of reality and practices by the description of individuals’ lived experiences rather than assemblages of texts. It leads the final objective to be the construction of broad categories of meanings through the interpretation of these experiences, whereas a Foucauldian analysis would be concentrated on a critical

exploration of historical documents and the interconnected formation of knowledge categories surrounding a specific topic. Nonetheless, both approaches recognize that reality is mirrored in history, thus the importance of understanding the socio-historical context in which individuals are embedded, and the use of language as a triggering factor in creating a culturally assembled reality.

Therefore, the Foucauldian concepts are important to this analysis, since they give the theoretical background to understand the processes of normatization and the discursive formation that permeate society and the business institutions in what regards the gay subject. Furthermore, a critical deployment in the lens of queer theory turns the Foucauldian concepts to be essential to a critical analysis within this study.

### **3.4 The researcher's role**

The various dimensions of the research explored above clearly position the researcher as a crucial point in this analysis. Therefore, an important feature is my role as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, especially with a participatory perspective as the frontline to this discussion. Moreover, both my personal biography and the way the study has been shaped have an influence on the final outcomes.

Rossmann and Rallis (2003) show that the direct experiences and worldviews of the researcher have an influence on the social phenomena being explored and, as presented by Kemmis and Wilkinson (1998), one of the essential characteristics of a participatory research is that it is conducted on oneself together with others, clearly including the researcher in the entire process.

Like all the interviewees in this research, I am gay and I walked in their shoes; I experienced myself the struggles through which a gay businessman goes through during university years and afterwards in the business environment. I went through the same processes of reflection and identity reconciliation as all the other interviewees, and like them, I constantly make my efforts to understand our role as agents of change in the society and within the institutions in which we are embedded.

I did my undergraduate education in management at Fundação Getulio Vargas (FGV), from 2006 to 2010, which is the same business institution attended by the interviewees; within this period, I spent my exchange semester at the Richard Ivey School of Business, in Canada, which broadened by understanding about institutions and societies. Within this period, I also developed two internships in the fields of marketing and consulting, in multinational companies, where I managed to experience the business reality. Afterwards, I started a master's in international management in the second half of 2010, in a trinational track within the Community of European Management Schools (CEMS) program, where FGV was my home school, and Copenhagen Business School, Denmark and Luigi Bocconi, Italy, where my host schools.

Therefore, both my academic background and my professional practice have allowed me to incorporate my lived experiences to that described by the interviewees, in a process of hypothesis formulation and an exploration of the given phenomenon both in a collaborative and introspective manner. These experiences allowed me to consistently work in the spheres of imaginative variation and synthesis proposed by Moustakas (1994), which are strongly dependable on the researcher.

Furthermore, I shared a certain degree of intimacy and thus confidentiality with the interviews, both because we all studied at the same business institution and we are part of the same group of gay people at FGV. It has made the process of description of their lived reality much more sincere and less unconfortable, which are important features for this research, also characterizing it as a backyard approach. In order to validate the data and minimize the presence of biases, I used several strategies of validity in the analysis of the data collected, as will be further described.

For ethical and confidentiality issues, none of the interviewees have their names revealed, neither the name of the institutions in which they work. The sample description is concentrated in the business sector in which they work, as well as other demographic data that assists the understanding of the scenario overall picture.

### 3.5 Data collection, recording and analysis procedures

The data collection procedure took place through semi-structured face-to-face individual interviews conducted outside the work environment of the subjects to create a more informal environment that prevented discomfort in talking about sexuality and created an atmosphere of confidentiality. A semi-structured questionnaire with general open-ended questions was developed to assist the researcher during the interviews (see Annex – Semi-structured questionnaire), which generally took from 40 minutes to 1.20 hours.

The questionnaire followed the qualitative approach of Creswell (2003), containing fewer questions that are general and able to stimulate views and opinions of the respondents, as well as the phenomenological guidelines of Moustakas (1994) of setting the ground for the participants, conducting the interview with the general guidelines of phenomenological research presented above and also follow-up interviews when necessary. The questionnaire incorporated the guidelines of epoche and phenomenological reduction previously discussed.

The sample chosen for data collection consisted of 10 gay male students from FGV, in the city of São Paulo, Brazil. All the subjects have work experience, or were bachelor students in their last year of University and had already completed at least six months of internship programs within an organization, or as alumni with a maximum of three years past their graduation. The sample is very homogeneous with regard to other demographic variables, such as race and social class: all interviewees are white and they belong to upper-middle to upper income families.

The process of data collection was to start with the alumni and gather the description of the experiences lived within their organizations related to this research and explore their past experiences while in university. Afterwards, the last year students were interviewed to test some of the assumptions acquired from the first group, as well as to explore their experiences in the workplace.

There were conducted 10 interviews in order to look for practices and patterns of meanings in the described experiences. The summary of the main characteristics of the sample interviewed is found at Table 1.

| Interview number | Student / Alumni |   | Sector / functional area |   |
|------------------|------------------|---|--------------------------|---|
| 1                | Alumnus          | 8 | Financial sector         | 3 |
| 2                | Alumnus          |   | Financial sector         |   |
| 3                | Alumnus          |   | Financial sector         |   |
| 4                | Alumnus          |   | Marketing                | 2 |
| 5                | Alumnus          |   | Marketing                |   |
| 6                | Alumnus          |   | Consulting               | 1 |
| 7                | Alumnus          |   | Law                      | 1 |
| 8                | Alumnus          |   | Own business             | 1 |
| 9                | Student          | 2 | Financial sector         | 1 |
| 10               | Student          |   | Marketing                | 1 |

**Table 1: Sample main characteristics**

There were two main procedures for data recording, depending on the participants' sensitivity to each of them. They were asked whether they felt uncomfortable if the interviews were recorded and, in cases of positive answers, the researcher took notes of the interview, otherwise the recording procedure was preferred. The final output was 80% of interviews recorded and the researcher took notes for the remaining 20%; the higher percentage of recorded interviews allowed a more accrued detail in the analysis and discourse interpretation, having a strong positive effect in the reflexivity process of the researcher.

The data analysis followed the steps proposed by Creswell (2003), as follows: (1) to sort the data by different categories, (2) have a notion of the general ideas and start the reflexive process, (3) coding process to leads to a category labeling, (4) description of the categories and broad themes identified and exploration of individuals different perspectives related to the theme, (5) narrative analysis to communicate the findings of the analysis and finally (6) data

interpretation and generation of meaning out of lived experiences and call for an action agenda based on the theoretical lens presented in the literature review.



#### 4 CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

This context of the research aims at providing a background for the recent debates in the discursive sphere of institutions, both regarding global organizations like the UN, as in more specific cases of the Brazilian institutional spheres and FGV itself. This topic consists of the movements of institutionalization of the debate related to LGBT issues as well as diversity.

As a follow-up of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action<sup>6</sup> and based on the resolution 17/19<sup>7</sup>, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights issued a report on November 2011, addressing patterns of discrimination and acts of violence against LGBT people. The UN HRC (2011) recognizes that the subject is controversial for many and faces a diverse range of opinions, where values related to tradition and culture play an important role. However, the report stresses that universal human rights are above any religious beliefs or cultural values, and that the patterns of discriminatory actions identified indeed deeply hurt universal human rights (UN HRC, 2011). Furthermore, discriminatory laws were identified throughout 76 National States, which were considered a relic of colonial rule that reinforces stigma and discrimination, in addition to hurting individual freedom and privacy (UN HRC, 2011).

Given the systematic patterns of discrimination reported by the UN and widespread placement of LGBT issues into current societal discourses, the present scenario is considered to be a historical shift in the debate of human rights in order to end LGBT struggles and reinforce the universality of human rights (Ban, 2012). The UN HRC (2011) points out three practical recommendations to the National States: (1) to improve their responses to acts of violence and discrimination against LGBT people, (2) alteration of discriminatory laws, and (3) to educate society to extinguish prejudice and biased beliefs.

In this scenario, Brazil is mentioned in the report as one of the countries that have adopted practices to combat homosexual discrimination through public education campaigns, and providing guidance supporting policy responses to acts of violence (UN HRC, 2011). The governmental initiative entitled *Brazil without Homophobia* is considered to follow many of

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<sup>6</sup> World Conference of Human Rights, held on 25 June 1993, in Vienna, Austria.

<sup>7</sup> 17/19 Human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity, a resolution adopted by the UN Human Rights Council, on the 14 July 2011.

the Yogyakarta Principles<sup>8</sup> in combating sexual orientation discrimination (UN HRC, 2011). Even though Brazil was also mentioned in the section pointing out torture acts against homosexuals and local discrimination are far from reaching a civilized state, actions to mitigate the problem are already in place and embedded in the institutional and societal discourses.

Brazilian initiatives for combating violence and discrimination against LGBT people and also for fostering gay citizenship promotion were introduced in the multiyear plan of 2004-2007, headed by the Brazilian Secretariat for Human Rights. The program includes different initiatives aiming to (1) support public institutions and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in promoting gay citizenship and combating discrimination, (2) training professionals in the defense of gay rights, (3) knowledge dissemination and homosexual self-esteem promotion and (4) encouraging the reporting of violations of human rights (Ministry of Health, 2004).

The inclusion of gay rights as a subject of debate in the sphere of global institutions like the UN and the Brazilian Secretariat of Human Rights reflects the discursive formation presented by Foucault (1978) that puts a specific theme into society's attention. These manifestations by the UN are a response to broader movements in the social sphere, which in this case are characterized by an emancipation of LGBT people and their process of coming out and reinforcement within society (e.g.: the number of assumed gay people in the main global metropolis).

Since 1980s, a strengthening of bodies acting in defense of LGBT rights in Brazil has been observed, reaching up to 140 organized groups in recent years (Ministry of Health, 2004). According to the Ministry of Health (2004), political activism also plays an important role in the country, where the gay parade is considered the political manifestation with the greatest reach in the history of the country since the year 2000. Moreover, institutional changes were introduced in the juridical and medical domains: the Federal Council of Medicine removed homosexuality from the list of diseases in 1985 and the Federal Council of Psychology removed homosexual practices from its pathologies in 1999, at the same time that

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<sup>8</sup> International human rights principles related to sexual orientation and gender identity, defined in 2006, in Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

jurisprudential evolvments included pension benefits for same sex couples, social security and adoption to the rights of LGBT people (Ministry of Health, 2004).

Evolvments are also observed in the educational sphere, where the debate is centered on issues of diversity inclusion. The Ministry of Education, in the resolution number 1, May 30, 2012, established the national guidelines for human rights education, pointing to the recognition and valorization of differences and diversities as one of the principles for promoting education on human rights and social change (Ministry of Education, 2012). Regarding initiatives towards LGBT rights, the Brazilian Ministry of Education proposed an anti-homophobia material for elementary schools, which spawned controversies nationwide in the first half of 2011 and was vetoed.

Further exploring the educational sphere, FGV had two institutional changes of fundamental significance. First, the issue of diversity was included into the educational dimensions of FGV during the academic curriculum reformulation in 2012. Second, a LGBT group was created by students of the institution in August 2011, with the objectives of integrating the gay community of the university. Currently, this gay organization has 112 members in the social network Facebook, as of September 2012.

## 5 ANALYSIS OF THE INTERVIEWS AND MAIN FINDINGS

The objective of this topic is to analyze the phenomenon as described by the interviewees, explore the main practices reported and analyze the broad categories of meaning identified in their discourses. In order to give validity to the analysis, some procedures were defined, which are used during the narrative to validate the findings. Therefore, the following nomenclature is used regarding the repetitions found in the interviews:

- a. “All the cases”: all the ten interviews;
- b. “Most of the cases”: from six to nine interviews;
- c. “Half of the cases”: five interviews;
- d. “In some cases”: three to four interviews.

These nomenclatures will allow a smoother flow of the narrative and a better validity of the results.

### 5.1 Key challenges reported by gay people

This subsection is devoted to the key challenges reported by gay people, in order to present the first insights drawn from the interviews. The table above summarizes these findings.

| Gay subject continuously being placed into society’s discourses           |  |
|---|--|
| The society is moving towards the politically correct                     |  |
| Institutionalization momentum (e.g.: gay marriage, adoption, ...)         |  |
| Society’s knowledge related to gay issues                                 |  |
| People still have a lack of knowledge in what regards the gay reality     |  |
| Younger generations are able to tackle the subject more ease              |  |
| Importance of gay figures that break the stereotype in the public spheres |  |
| Categorization and stereotyping   |  |
| Pre-established categories and biased visions leading to prejudice        |  |
| Need of awareness generation and public education                         |  |

**Table 2: Summary of findings related to the key challenges reported by gay people**

According to most of the cases, LGBT issues have been mentioned very often in the socio-political sphere and media; thus, it is recognized that the subject is entering the society's discourse in small but continuous doses. In deepening into the subject, it was mentioned that the gay movement has gone through different stages in the history of the Brazilian society, like the dictatorship, media biases, and religious fury, amongst others, but now the institutionalization momentum (e.g.: gay marriage, adoption) has also entered the debate. Therefore, the discussion is considered to be extremely widespread within Brazilian society, especially as a discourse related to human rights issues.

Nevertheless, a crucial point cited in all the cases is that it isn't all good, and society as a whole still has a lack of knowledge in what regards gay issues, their reality and how to deal with them. Interviewees said that everybody wants to show that everything is fine when it comes to gay related topics, but there are still some enormous gaps to be filled.

Knowledge plays an important role within the LGBT discussion. On the one hand, in half of the cases the interviewees reported that several people from their relational network show a complete exclusion from the gay reality. A good example is that, once people get to know the gay individual better - the interviewee in this case - it was revealed that that person tends to break the gay stereotype previously held. On the other hand, in most of the cases, younger generations were mentioned as being able to tackle the subject with much more openness when compared to their older counterparts.

The issues of categorization and stereotyping were amongst the main challenges mentioned in all cases. The fact that people have pre-established categories, which place the individuals' sexuality above the person behind it, constitutes crucial point for the interviewees, since in all the cases this biased vision leads to prejudice. In most of the times, categorization often happens to people who do not know the interviewee very well, whereas with closer friends this was not common. Therefore, acceptance and openness are essential factors within encounters, where a critical mass of gay people facilitates the process of information assimilation about the gay reality by people *a priori* outside it.

Communication goes along with knowledge and public education about LGBT issues, where a fair-minded communication throughout society supports awareness development. The

interviewees recognized in most of the cases the importance of these aspects, so society is able to learn how to deal with these issues without biased visions.







Primary education is a crucial factor in society: bullying actions in high schools are a concerning factor and professors are not prepared to handle the issue with maturity. However, new generations (post 1990s) are showing higher levels of acceptance, creating a positive feedback loop where generations start educating each other, improving the points of knowledge mentioned earlier.





Awareness and knowledge are thus the crucial concerns in the views of all the interviewees, and it is concluded that a significant part of society still doesn't understand the reasons of homosexuality and do not conceptualize its life style. A quote from one of the interviewees shows his vision on this lack of understanding: *"I do not judge people who see me as the gay object, because it's not normal for them; we live in a bubble of stereotypes created by society"*.

Brazilian society, however, was said in most cases to be moving towards politically correct with regards to the LGBT debate, where this critical mass of gay people coming out, especially in the big cities, positively affects the entire process. Moreover, the disclosure of gay couples that break the stereotype was indicated in half of the cases as being an important aspect in widening people's perceptions about the subject.

## **5.2 Identity formation and the process of coming out**

After the key challenges reported were presented, the Table 3 summarizes the main findings related to the process of coming out and its impacts on the individuals' identity formation.

| The process of coming out  |   |
|--|---|
| Leads to identity reconciliation in the interviewees' lives in general             |  |
| Individuals used to process what their going to say much more – energy burden      |  |
| Fear of an adverse reaction beforehand, however, the opposite is observed          |  |
| Pressure to fit the heteronormative environment they live                          |  |
| In the workplace, it happens in peer-to-peer situations; never with top management |  |
| Initially negative responses reported, minimized by information exchange           |  |

 All the cases (10)   
 Most of the cases (6-9)   
 Half of the cases   
 In some cases (3-4)

**Table 3: Summary of findings related to identity formation and the process of coming out**

The interviewees recognized in all the cases that the process of coming out led to identity reconciliation in their lives in general, as shown by the respondents, “*you finally begin to live only one life*” and “*you’re more open regarding reality*”. Before coming out, they usually processed what they were going to say much more before speaking, in order to avoid contradiction in their histories and speeches, as said in most of the cases. The energy spent during this entire process is seen as an unnecessary expense and a burden in their lives. Most of the respondents recognized that they feel more genuine towards people and also more open.

Family and intimate friends are usually the groups to which respondents were coming out first. Although several of the interviewees feared an adverse reaction of people beforehand, the opposite is observed in most cases, where either “*nothing changed*” or people felt even closer to each other, increasing confidence. Nevertheless, some minority cases of initially negative responses were reported, which were minimized over time by means of information exchange and acceptance.

It was mentioned in most of the cases that during a significant period of the lives of the individuals they felt a pressure to be straight and fit the heteronormative environment that they live in. The perception of individuals in relation to the reasons why some of their gay friends did not come out yet was related to pressures coming from different institutions important to the life of the individual, such as family and/or work. As shown in the perceptions of an interviewee about a gay friend, “*in addition to the non-acceptance of his family, he thinks he will have to endure professional failure*”.

The role of other people, especially friends, in coming out, generates a catalytic process where previously closed gay people recognize that there are many others in the same situation and going through the same problems. In these cases, internal feelings of ambivalence but also courage lead the individual to reflect upon his actual circumstances and also come out.

After coming out, it was experienced in all the cases that people who don't know the individual well might see him with stereotypical eyes at the beginning, a pattern that changes after a while, when deepening their knowledge about the individual's personality, and thereby decreasing biased views. In the workplace, in general the disclosure of the interviewees' gay identity was in peer-to-peer situations in most of the cases, and never with top management, recognizing that there is not much openness.

The process of coming out was indeed recognized as multifaceted and consists in an ongoing discontinued development throughout the life of gay individuals. Within the interviews, certain patterns can be found with regards to the process of coming out (or the decision to not disclose the gay identity) in the university and in the workplace, as will be shown in the subsequent topics, together with other categories of meanings found.

### **5.3 The role and impact of the business school: An analysis of FGV**

It is recognized that there is diversity in terms of sexual identity within the institution; this is an unquestionable fact given that the selection process is through an entrance exam. The general consensus in all the cases was that the student environment of the institution has evolved considerably over the past two years with regards to a greater visibility of the gay community inside the school. In the opinion of the interviewees, the reasons for this increased visibility are several, among which the main ones are: (1) the placement of gay issues in the discursive apparatus of society, as previously presented, (2) new generations inserted into the student environment, which are more open-minded regarding sexual diversity, (3) the role of some students within the university that headed a gay movement among the students and (4) a new curriculum for the undergraduates, which gives a strong focus to other disciplines besides the quantitative domain, like political sciences, innovation and entrepreneurship, which impact students' profile.



A significantly tenuous line characterizes the moment of transition, and rather than identifying specific turning points, respondents reported continuous movements that led to a state of greater acceptance. However, it is a consensus among the alumni interviewed that the environment was expressively hostile in their time. An interviewee explicitly mentioned his discomfort with the heteronormative environment experienced by him: *“there is a diversity because there are gay people there, however, the heterosexual expression is totally free – gays cannot express themselves”*.

They characterized the university period as an extremely important time in the process of formation and acceptance of their gay identity in most of the cases. Most respondents mentioned that they entered college pretty immature, between their 18 and 20 years-old, and faced the coming out process after one to two years of college (and some even after graduation), a period in which they felt more comfortable with themselves and less immature to face the situation.

It is recognized that individuals experience continuous self-development and evolvement while in university. The subjects recognized that the process of reflection upon self-knowledge encourages the action of coming out (here faced as a multifaceted and continuous process), and this normally happens during college. As a consequence, the university structure and environment have a strong influence and a great impact on the individuals' gay identity manifestation, creating challenges and / or opportunities for them. The institution was said to have the power to smoothen this process, increasing reflexivity from both sides, the homo and heterosexual binary, or creating edges of categorization and unfruitful biases.

Related to the last point, some criticism arose from the alumni in some cases saying that people entered college and were not encouraged to think and see different perspectives regarding society in a general point of view. As mentioned by one of the subjects, *“the university can attract different people, but once inside they [the institution] create robots”*. The ideal environment mentioned by these participants would be a place in which people accept each other more, in which there is more authenticity and freedom of expression, points that can be identified in the discourse of current younger bachelors (as said by both alumni and bachelor students).

A change in mindset is currently experienced in the university reality of the given institution, “*now it’s very open there*”, said one of the respondents, describing the current scenario as a transition point. For example, a case was mentioned where a slightly homophobic comment was made in the Facebook group of FGV students, and an entire counter manifestation arose against the sender and the community administrators immediately deleted the comment. It is a very recent opening though, and interviewees see this moment as a turning point and mentioned that things are expected to change drastically towards a more ideal scenario in the years to come.

When asked about the role of professors in this scenario, the interviewees limited their comments saying, “*they know they have gay students*”, recognizing that gay jokes are not part of this environment, especially when compared to high school and preparatory pre-college institutions, where the apparatus of jokes around homosexuality is still present. Homophobic comments don’t exist: “*in a classroom where 10% are openly gay, how can a professor make a joke?*”, said one of the respondents. The pressure against homophobia thus comes from two sides, in a diversity discourse implemented by the university and by the presence of demographic diversity, which is the existence of openly gay people.

With regards to the discourse related to sexuality within the student environment, it is clear that students openly speak about sex and with a relatively high intensity. Sexuality appears not only in the discursive apparatus, but also within the social script and values and rituals of the student milieu, as expected and extremely accepted in every student institution. Students’ parties are still places where a heteronormative script takes place in a very intensive manner.

The responses of interviewees who had not yet disclosed their gay identity were usually self-reclusion, annulling themselves from many social spheres, such as places and the networks. Some of the subjects indeed tried to adapt to the scrip initially, realizing that it would not lead anywhere. As mentioned: “*I felt uncomfortable in relation to that discourse about sex, and I didn’t speak much about it with my colleagues; when the topic was raised, I left for a moment, to smoke a cigarette, for example, or just changed the topic*”.

In summary, a pattern of behavior was mentioned by a small number of the individuals. According to these comments, as general acceptance is higher now, students in general want people to come out and reveal their gay identity: it creates a positive loop where people know

gay people entering the university and encourage them to disclose their gay identity. Nonetheless, the consensus is that this movement still hasn't reached the workplace environment, as will be further explored.

#### **5.4 The business institutions and the workplace environment: Living on the edges**

The organizational environment in which the interviewees are inserted lead to different levels of impact with regard to their sexual identities, however, it is a consensus that the workplace environment of the interviewees is repressive, either by its structure or the discursive apparatus of its actors.

In most cases, respondents said they were not aware of the existence of LGBT inclusion policies in their organizations. However, some cases were identified in which such policies were explicitly communicated and some initiatives put into practice, which were merely naive initiatives of the Human Resources area in the view of respondents. It was a top-down approach, mainly coming from the institution headquarters, which didn't reach the reality of employees.

The weak approach that is given to these initiatives is clear in one of the cases where the institution have had some awards related to LGBT inclusion practices which, in the vision of the interviewee, did not reflect the reality. According to the participant, a pejorative language regarding the gay universe was openly used in the workplace and *"there were policies, but nobody followed the rules, so you just play the game"*. The diversity training, which included LGBT issues, was not mandatory and it was done through online questions for those who were interested.

Interviewees recognized that they would be selfish to say that LGBT initiatives are not important, giving the reality lived by them. They stressed that, in an ideal world, these initiatives just reinforce prejudice, however, these initiatives are crucial in front of the cases reported. Within the interviews in which this point could be better exploited, a feedback was that while there is no CEO that discloses his gay identity and is happy with that, the situation is not going to change, especially in hierarchical structures where junior employees have no influence. As shown by one of the participants, *"I do not want to enter in this fight, I will not*

*face this issue being the weak link in the chain*”, referring to his position as an analyst in the company.

The interviewees mentioned some companies in which they have formalized gay communities and inclusion practices, as Whirlpool, Bain & Company, Ambev and Google, however, none of the interviewees worked for these companies.

The importance of coming out in the workplace was acknowledged, especially when the dynamics move towards friendship and relational bonds are created. When the level of interactions is high and it enters the personal sphere (e.g.: long work hours resulting in dinners and weekends together with coworkers) to keep lying becomes a burden to the individuals. It is recognized that the perspectives of staying in the medium to long-term in the company increases the importance of the sexual identity disclosure of the subjects.

A pattern can be drawn where individuals feel more comfortable in revealing their gay identity after having proven their competence. Some subjects reported that they would feel uncomfortable revealing their gay identity in a new job, before proving their competencies, in order to avoid judgments and biased visions.

The reasons for discomfort in relation to their gay sexuality most mentioned were the existence of a prejudicial high management, a sexist boss, having high positions in the company, fear of one’s image and jokes/gossips, or internal ambivalences and insecurities of the interviewee himself. These are clearly not the only reasons for non-disclosure in the workplace, however, a draft provided by these exploratory interviews. The degree of exposure to external and internal clients to the company is also an impacting factor. Interviewees who had a high frequency of contact with external clients saw these social relations as challenging and clients can sometimes be intrusive.

Revealing one’s gay identity in the workplace is based on contingency negotiations for some of the subjects: *“I’m in the company for quite some time now, so I have to tell”*; however, the situation in some organizations is harsher, as described below.

Pejorative and strong heteronormative discourses have a great pressure on gay individuals in some organizations, leading them to close themselves off: *“there is a gay guy at work that*

*I'm the only one who knows that he is gay*". Comments like these were very common during the interviews, and gay jokes are still part of the workplace vocabulary: *"there are a sissy guy in my area and people make jokes about him incessantly"*.

However, the oppressive environment in some organizations consists in extreme cases of prejudice, with especial focus in two cases where the subjects were at two main institutions of the financial market. In these extreme institutions, the main challenges according to the subjects are to hide their gay identity: *"people didn't know that I was gay, and if one day asked, it would not be a straightforward answer"*. The implications for the individual in these cases are enormous, where top management jokes about gays and use of a heteronormative language is very intense, and in all cases the individuals hid their gay identities, reporting that they depended on the top management for bonus evaluation and career ascension, for example.

Two cases of prejudice during the selection process for these mentioned companies were identified as extreme cases. In both cases, the manager realized that the person being interviewed was "a sissy" and didn't hire him. According to the interviewee, the manager reaction was: *"we're not going to hire him, he's reasonable, but he's gay; that's not a place for faggots"*.

In these cases, the individuals didn't feel comfortable to disclose their gay identity at all, recognizing the workplace as an unfavorable environment to be explicitly gay, giving the aggressive discourse used throughout the organization. According to the interviewees, there was a spread common thought that a gay person would not fit in that environment, *"that I've heard from several people"*, said the interviewee.

The cases above are further exemplified in these two quotes:

"I saw that they didn't hire people suspecting that they were gay, imagine for me, as an intern in the process of being hired; [...] moreover, knowing that you're gay, you understand that you need to prove yourself much more; which, in an extremely competitive environment, that extra mile is way too much".

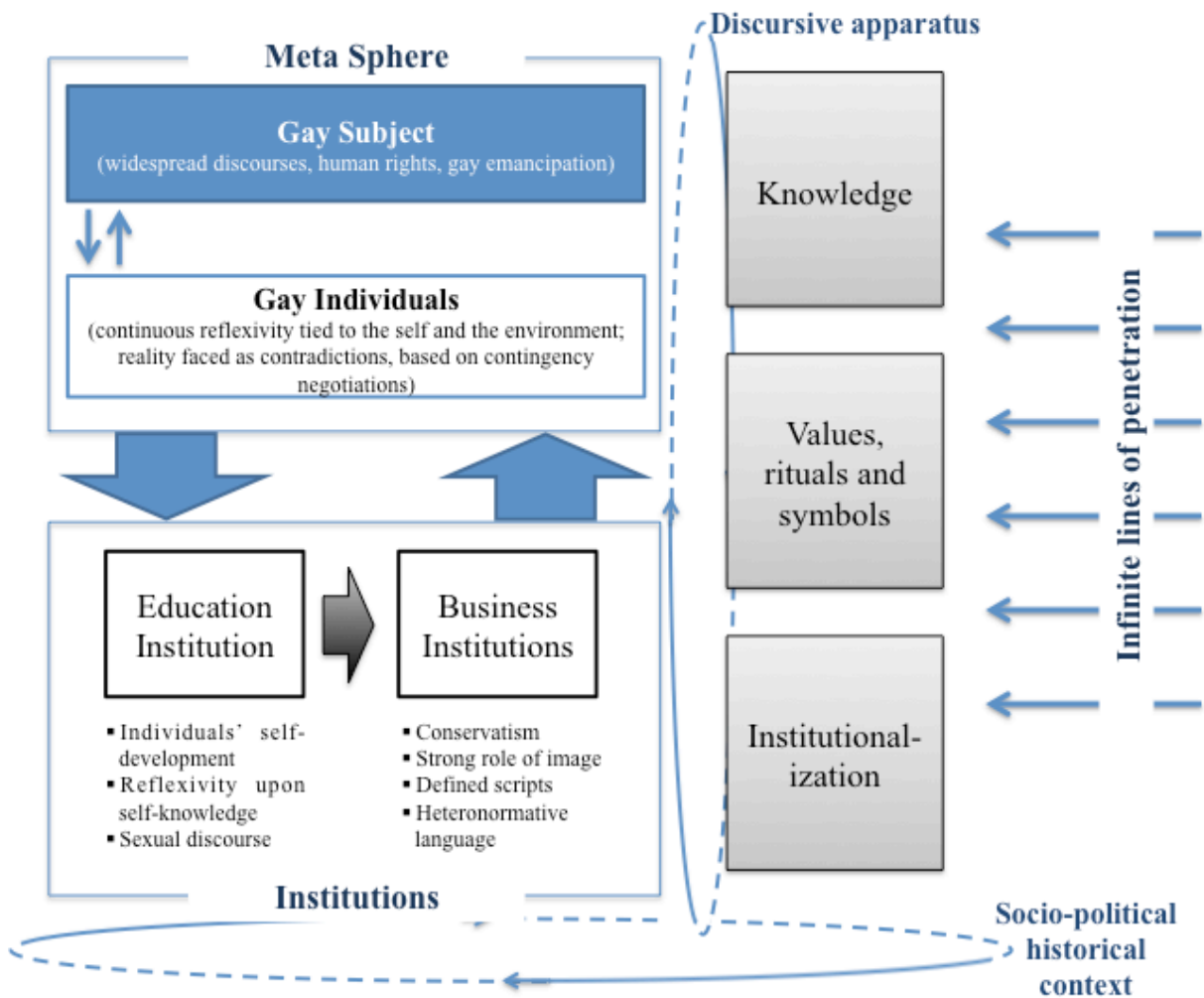
"It bothered me that you have to wear that mask everyday to go to work, you cannot speak with your boyfriend on the telephone, for example".

The interviewees also recognized that an entire discourse around sex was an instrument of power used by many, where the use of a heavy language almost always means: “I’m the man”. Not in all institutions they speak about sex incessantly, but there were significant cases.

In conclusion, interviewees recognized the importance of individuals who show the existence and acceptance of a gay group within the organization. For example, cases where employees who have senior positions open their gay identity during recruitment processes and Public Relation events were cited.

## 6 A FRAMEWORK FOR SOCIAL ANALYSIS ON GAY ISSUES

A framework for social analysis on gay issues is thus developed based on the theoretical discussions previously presented together with the main categories of meanings and practices identified during the data analysis. Therefore, the proposed model is presented below:



**Figure 2: The proposed framework for social analysis on gay issues, developed by the author**

First, the left-hand side of the model depicts the exchanges related to the phenomenon explored. These interactions are focused on the practices and the main categories of meanings identified in the data analysis, and they take place in between the society's meta configuration and the institutions focus of this study.

Within the meta sphere configuration, there are constant exchanges between two main blocks of influence regarding the gay phenomenon: the “gay subject” and the “gay individuals”. The first block, the gay subject, refers to the placement of the gay topic within the society as presented in the context of the research and as described by the interviewees. Two characteristics of the rules of power identified by Foucault (1978) are presented within the gay subject: first, the rule of continuous variations, where the power focus changes towards the politically correct and human rights in gay issues, and the tactical polyvalence of discourses, where the relationships of power strengthens on the gay emancipation and discussions around the theme. Intertwined with the gay subject are all the gay individuals explored in this study that through self-reflection and increased self-knowledge try to understand their realities in a constant exchange with the discursive formations and power relations that take place around the gay subject.

On the other hand, at the level of the institutions presented on the bottom left-hand side of the model, the dynamics reflect the discussion of emancipation and human rights on gay issues that takes place in the meta sphere of society, however, certain classes of prejudice still exist within these institutions, which are operationalized through heteronormative speeches and traditional values.

In this scenario, it is presented the importance of the educational institution to embrace difference and also the discussions presented in the meta sphere, given its educational role of boosting individuals’ reflexivity and stop antagonistic debates that leads to prejudice and categorization. Furthermore, the educational institution has an important impact in the dynamics of the business institutions, where is recognized that the corporate environment is far from ideal in most cases to receive and process such information and dynamics described in the meta sphere, and which are slowly being incorporated by the educational institution.

These two blocks of exchange are embedded in a discursive apparatus that is inherent to these exchanges, and they are clearly rooted in a social-political historical context that creates the lens through which these dynamics evolve, both based on the historical context presented by Foucault (1978) and on the institutionalization dynamics showed at context of the research.

In this configuration, there are three influential blocks of power and force relations that were identified. The first refers to knowledge regarding the gay reality, as presented by the



interviewees: it is necessary to conceptualize into the worldviews of the population that same-sex relations and life styles indeed consist of a reality beyond the stereotypes pre-established. This process consists in knowledge exchange as a beginning in this “encounter”, and boosts a process of reflexivity that goes out of arms length.

Visibility is an important point related to knowledge issues. The creation of a gay community inside FGV revealed a gay reality within the organization, announcing the fact the gays indeed exist in this institution and that it was not mere sporadically occurrences. This event created a line of referencing to other people.

The second block consists in the values, rituals and symbols inherent to the society and embedded in the institutions. The current rituals and symbols are not organized in a way that society understands and encompasses the worldviews of same-sex relations and their individuals’ realities. As regarding the symbols and rituals within the institutions, they have not changed yet and, consequently, there are still subtle aspects of reality that don’t change, thus maintain the predominance of a heteronormative environment within these institutions. These are aspects that do not change with laws, rules or institutionalization, as presented by the anti-energy essence of the legislative power throughout the Foucauldian concepts. These legislative changes are indeed some steps forward, but the symbolic sphere needs to change as well.

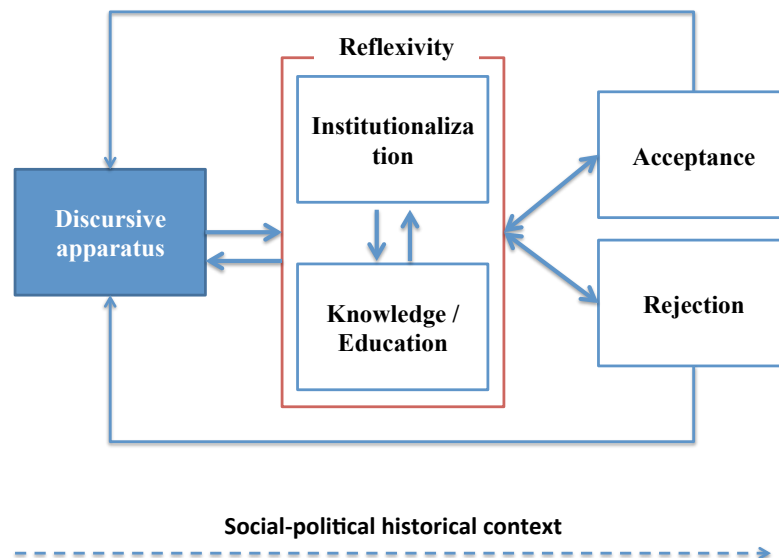
The immanence in values makes the power structures to remain stable in some aspects of the everyday dynamics. In this aspect, it is recognized the importance of managing the collective imaginary through the values, rituals and symbols, in order to embrace diversity. The one who has the control of the collective imaginary has an important impact on these relations of power (e.g.: the role of student union leaders and their speeches, the structure and rituals in university parties, or the role of an openly gay businessman that speaks in a recruitment session).

The role of the gay parade still has a positive impact through its rituals and symbols, positively impacting the generation of knowledge throughout the society. Its irreverent essence creates a positive-loop by incorporating the same sex reality to the *grand public*, where the picturesque is revealed to the public and the numbers expose an unquestionable reality. Even though the gay parade can reinforce the gay stigma in some parts of the social

life, it is recognized its importance in challenging the heteronormative and restructuring rituals.

The scope of institutionalization complements the other two blocks, as a legitimate way to incorporate the gays issues into the discursive apparatus, institutions and the socio-political sphere. The legitimacy of gay rights nourishes the debate on gay issues, and creates regulatory bodies on human rights and thus represses homophobia. It is a political step, which should be complemented to the symbolic and knowledge spheres, in order to generate changes and break through the heteronormative structures of power. However, it is recognized that the legislative initiatives will always stop at values and rituals, in case these don't change.

Therefore, after a proposed framework for social analysis on gay issues was presented, it is important to depict a process for social change and guide the political agenda. The figure below shows this process.



**Figure 3: Understanding change, developed by the author**

This framework for social change is based on a project developed by Said in 1999, called West-Eastern Divan Orchestra. It was a project aimed at creating a workshop between musicians from Israel and other Middle East countries in order to develop their musical skills whereas sharing experiences and knowledge living side-by-side with cultures that were initially rivals.

Daniel Bareboim, Said's partners in this project, analyzes the process as:

“[e]very player listening intently to the voice of the composer and to each other. Harmony in personal or international relations can also only exist by listening. Each party opening their ears to the other's narrative or point of view.” (Bareboim, 2012)

The projects states that knowledge is the beginning in the debate of diversity and reflexivity upon the other individuals' worldviews are essential in order to embrace differences. Therefore, the proposed framework for social change considers knowledge and education embedded in a reflexive process in which the institutionalization of practices and human rights initiatives give reality to these actions. These movements end up in acceptance and turn back to the discursive apparatus, creating a feedback loop of social change and humanism.

## 7 CONCLUSION

The objective of this study was to explore the main categories of meanings behind the question of *what is it like for a gay businessman to deal with his gay identity in the business spheres relevant to his live*. This exploratory research was conducted based on a qualitative approach and a participatory contact with the phenomenon, where I went through reflexive and introspective processes on my own experiences as a gay individual and throughout the lived experiences described by the individuals interviewed.

The entire discussion is based on a social-political and historical context intrinsic to the structural analysis itself and also extremely important to draw general meanings from the interviewees' lived experiences.

Therefore, it was firstly presented the main developments and flaws regarding diversity within the business context, followed by initial explorations on the field of LGBT studies and business. The normatization of the vocabulary around these theories has made the Foucauldian developments on sexuality and queer theories essential aspects to be explored that nurtured the discussion and escaped from heteronormative lenses. The theoretical approach given to this study had a twofold strategy: to give the historical contexts of the sexual dynamics and to create the theoretical categories that aided the structural analysis of the discourses and language.

Consequently, Foucault (1978) introduced the concepts of discourse and the triangle power-knowledge-pleasure, thus bringing theoretical lenses that led the discussion and investigation to place queerness as the main category of analysis and epistemological conceptualization. Moreover, the work of Foucault (1978) is able to interconnect the social-political historical concepts to an analysis of power, extremely relevant to give the narrative hook to this study and set the bases of interpretation of the gay individuals described reality.

The homosexual figure created by this discursive production is thus understood in a connection with the concepts of Orientalism and the Others, presented by Said (1978), and inherent to the reflexivity component in modernity, as conceptualized by Giddens (1990). Orientalism enables the understanding of ontological and epistemological processes to distinguish the building of an hegemonic force against the marginalized others, which

structures allow the understanding of processes of categorization and heteronormativism. Furthermore, a contextual analysis that was mainly focused in the institutional developments and discussions around gays issues were presented, which enabled the contextualization of the interviewees' realities.

Therefore, the main categories were drawn from the interviews through representations of the individuals' realities that were analyzed in the lens of the theoretical discussions and institutional dynamics presented. Firstly, the key challenges reported by gay individuals were analyzed together with the acknowledgement by the interviewees that LGBT issues are being inserted into the society discourses in a continual bases, moving towards a politically correct discourse. In this scenario, the main challenges reported were related to a lack of knowledge regarding these issues by society in general, easy categorization and stereotyping.

The process of coming out is inserted into the discussion as a multifaceted and ambivalent process, which is impacted by the challenges described above. In this scenario, patterns of meanings were found within the educational sphere and the business workplace.

The educational institution is considered an extremely important period in the acceptance and formation of an individual gay identity, where the processes of self-knowledge and the evolvment are constant. The educational institution focus of this study was passing through a transition to a greater acceptance towards LGBT issues, however, the presence of a strong heteronormative script was still present. The business workplace, on the other hand, was recognized to be a repressive environment in most of the times, with a structure and discursive apparatus that in many cases blocked the individuals' gay identity.

There were identified cases in which the individuals recognized to be important to reveal their gay identity, as in closer relationships developed in a peer-to-peer bases, expectation of remaining in the firm for a longer period of time or after proven the his competencies. Therefore, some institutions were identified as extreme cases of prejudice and heteronormative language, which completely blocked the identity conciliation.

In order to summary and conclude the entire theoretical discussion and phenomenological analysis, a framework for social analysis on gay issues was introduced, with the main spheres that have an influence within the discussions on LGBT issues. Based on this framework, a

process to social change is presented, based on the notions of reflexivity, knowledge and institutionalization, aiming at influencing the current sexual politics and discursive apparatus.

## **8 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

As presented on the research design topic, the role of the researcher in qualitative study is of utmost importance and influence in the collection and analysis of data, especially when a participatory approach is chosen.

Several methods of validation and triangulation of data were used along the structural analysis and the techniques of qualitative, participatory and phenomenological researches have been widely studied before the research taking shape, with the aim of sincerely reducing possible negative bias in this study. Either way, this research should be understood through the perspective of the researcher's life experience, which is a positive aspect for a participatory approach, but cannot scape from this personhood standpoint.

As regarding the future research on the theme, other researchers can focus on specific building blocks of the proposed framework for social analysis on gay issues. Therefore, other exploratory researches in the meta sphere of society or in the micro level of the education or business institutions are encouraged, as well as in the other specific blocks of knowledge, institutionalization and values, rituals and symbols. Researchers on these topics can deeply continuous contribute to the social agenda for change.

To conclude, future research exploring normative discourses on LGBT issues could also been explored throughout the descriptions of heterosexual individuals on the theme, to have the perspective of a different worldview on the topic, complementing some of the discussions stimulated in this research as well as formulation of further hypothesis to this domain of knowledge.

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## ANNEX

### **Semi-structured questionnaire**

Introduction:

First, I would like to thank you for our meeting. I am writing my dissertation on gay youth in the labor market, and surely your experience is really valuable. The goal of our conversation, in general, is to better explore your gay identity in your day-to-day life, how you feel in the workplace and how was your academic life.

I have some general points that I would like to explore, and serve to guide our conversation. If you feel uncomfortable with any of them, feel free to move to the next topic.

Your name will not be revealed. I'll record our conversation, if you do not mind. I'll be the only person who will have access to this recording, which will be deleted at the end of the study. In case you don't feel comfortable, I can take notes.

Thank you.

### **Background data**

Age:

Graduation year:

Sector and industry:

### **Main questionnaire**

1. In your day-to-day, what are the main challenges in being gay?
2. How was your process of "coming out"? When was the first time you disclosure your gay identity gay? Tell me more about the process? What led you to disclose it? For whom? What were the reactions?
3. Before you 'come out', what were the main factors that led you to not disclose your sexuality?

4. What were the most impacting groups of people in the process (parents, family, friends, coworkers, etc.)?
5. Currently, where do you still feel uncomfortable in revealing their sexual identity? Why?
6. How did you feel being gay within the FGV? What helped? What didn't help? Did you disclose your gay identity at FGV? Explain.
7. 10. What has changed since you left college, as regards to your sexuality?
8. Now in the workplace. Did you disclose your gay identity? This is a point that you consider important?
9. There are internal policies of integration of diversity in your company? And integration of LGBT?
10. Now forgetting the institutional part, what actually happens in day-to-day operations of your company that impacts your sexuality? How is the relationship with your coworker?
11. Are there a significant number of gays in your organization? Explain better.
12. Do they talk about sex in your organization? With what intensity? How is this speech?
18. Have you ever stopped being promoted and their work was less valued by being gay? Explicit bias exists, or is this submerged in social relations?
13. What we need to change the structure of society and institutions so that you can have an integral gay? What are the main challenges today?