

# Marriage Patterns Among Portuguese-Brazilian Couples: Are Same-Sex Couples Different from Heterosexual Couples?

## Patrones en los matrimonios de parejas luso-brasileñas: ¿son las parejas del mismo sexo diferentes de las heterosexuales?

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This paper presents the evolution and most relevant characteristics of binational (Portuguese/Brazilian) same-sex marriages in Portugal, from 2010 to 2020, comparing them with the binational heterosexual ones. The analysis was based on marriage micro-data published by the National Statistics Office.



**Abstract**

Data reveals that the increase of binational marriages has been more significant among same-sex couples than among heterosexual couples; binational same-sex couples are younger than heterosexual ones, although they also record lower levels of age-related homogamy, and are more qualified than hetero couples. Hetero binational couples engaged more frequently in cohabitation before marriage and tend to opt for shared estate ownership.

This study enables a diagnosis of the present situation and constitutes a contribution to knowledge surrounding the marriage market within groups that are minorities not only as immigrants but also as homosexuals.

*En este trabajo se presenta la evolución y las características más relevantes de los matrimonios binacionales (portugués-brasileño) del mismo sexo en Portugal (2010-2020), comparándolos con las parejas heterosexuales binacionales. El análisis se basó en los microdatos del matrimonio disponibles en el Instituto Nacional de Estadística.*

*Los datos enseñan que el aumento del matrimonio entre personas del mismo sexo fue más significativo entre las parejas binacionales que entre las parejas heterosexuales; las parejas binacionales del mismo sexo son más jóvenes que las heterosexuales, registran niveles más bajos de homogamia por edad y son más cualificadas que las parejas heterosexuales; las parejas binacionales heterosexuales cohabitan con más frecuencia antes de casarse y tienden a optar por la propiedad compartida del patrimonio.*

*Este estudio ha permitido hacer un diagnóstico de la situación actual y constituye una contribución al conocimiento del mercado matrimonial dentro de colectivos minoritarios por el hecho de ser no sólo inmigrantes, sino también homosexuales.*

Same-sex marriages; binational marriages; transnational relationships; marriage patterns

*Matrimonios del mismo sexo; matrimonios binacionales; relaciones transnacionales; modelos de matrimonio*



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## 1. Introduction

The number of foreign residents has been growing steadily in Portugal, and the Brazilian community has become increasingly important, soaring from 22,202 people in 2000 to 204,669 in 2021, according to data from the Portuguese Immigration and Borders Service. From 2007, people with Brazilian nationality became the most populous foreign community, maintaining this position until 2021, when it represented more than 29% of the total foreign residents in Portugal. As expected, this evolution reverberates on many levels, namely in the context of marriage, with a swelling number of binational marriages between Portuguese and Brazilians. In a context where migrations is increasingly present, it is fundamental to understand how cultures meet, especially in terms of family and intimacy. As such, research on binational marriages in general is important and necessary.

Several authors have studied binational marriages, analysing them through different theoretical frameworks, among which the social exchange theory, the assimilation theory and the social stratification theory stand out. According to the theory of social exchange (Merton, 1941; Kalmijn, 1998) immigrants who marry nationals of the host countries tend to exchange high socio-economic status resources (e.g., qualifications) for symbolic resources, namely the status of being married to a national, perceived as facilitating social integration. From another perspective, the assimilation theory (Gordon, 1964) posits binational marriages as an indicator of immigrant integration into the host society, with factors such as language proficiency and the adoption of (or proximity to) certain characteristics of that society (cultural or lifestyle) reinforcing such unions (van Turbegen & Maas, 2007).

Social stratification theory (Blau & Schwartz, 1984), on the other hand, argues that certain macro-structural factors also condition patterns of binational marriages. Smaller groups will have a greater tendency to seek out-group partners, as their in-group choice is limited. Thus, smaller groups will be more likely to marry outside their own group (Blau & Schwartz, 1984; Mutarak & Heath, 2010); and more heterogeneous groups (e.g., with an imbalanced gender ratio) will also be more likely to choose partners outside their group (Muttarak & Heath, 2010, van Turbegen & Maas, 2007).

In Portugal, various studies (many of them supported by these theories) have focused on binational marriage<sup>1</sup> between a Portuguese citizen and an immigrant, endeavouring to investigate their evolution and identify patterns and tendencies of these marriages (e.g., Evangelista, 2014; Ferreira & Ramos, 2008, 2011, 2012; Gaspar, 2008; Gaspar et al., 2017, 2018; Ramos et al., 2015; Raposo & Togni, 2009). Some of these studies provide a more detailed insight into Luso-Brazilian couples (Evangelista, 2014; Ferreira & Ramos, 2008, 2011, 2012; Ramos et al., 2015; Raposo & Togni, 2009) enabling not only the identification of their key features but also revealing that among heterosexual couples the characteristics of these marriages are slightly different from marriages where both partners are Portuguese.

Of these differences we highlight some related to qualifications and age. As far as academic qualifications are concerned, for all marriages considered (national or binational), the weight of marriage within the same educational level is always the majority. However, in comparison with national couples, among binational marriages the diversity of situations is higher. Although there are some differences between groups of origin; the most qualified groups of origin are more exogamous (Ferreira & Ramos, 2008, 2012; Gaspar et al., 2017, 2018; Ramos et al., 2015). Regarding age, in national couples the tendency is for marriages within the same group of age, although men are slightly older than women. In the case of binational couples, some differences were found regarding women: immigrant women involved in binational marriages tend to be older than Portuguese women in a similar situation (Ramos et al., 2015).

Undoubtedly, same-sex marriage should be framed by the defence of equal rights and seen as an indicator of change and social integration. However, so far, there are few studies on same-sex binational couples and none (to our knowledge) on Luso-Brazilian same-sex couples, which makes which gives relevance and pertinence to this research. Following on from previous research on binational marriages, this article specifically focuses on same-sex couples and aims to contribute to knowledge surrounding the marriage market within groups that are minorities not only as immigrants but also as homosexuals.

Same-sex marriage has been possible in Portugal since 2010, and in this paper, we intend to present the evolution and the most relevant characteristics of binational same-sex marriages (between a Portuguese and a Brazilian) over the past decade, with the principal aim of understanding whether these couples present distinct patterns from those recorded among heterosexual binational couples. Framed within the social stratification theory which postulates the importance of certain macro-structural factors in the choice of partner, namely the group size (Blau & Schwartz, 1984; Muttarak & Heath, 2010), we hope to see a greater tendency towards binational marriages among homosexual couples than heterosexual ones, as well as a greater heterogeneity, in terms of age and education (Muttarak & Heath, 2010; van Turbegen & Maas, 2007).

Furthermore, while it is not the main objective, it seemed important to also carry out a comparative analysis of same-sex couples where both are Portuguese or Brazilian, aimed at perceiving whether we are facing similar or different tendencies among these groups and the binational couples. The analysis was based on the marriage micro-data published by the National

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1 We found that the literature uses different terms associated with distinct theoretical foci (mixed-marriages, exogamic marriages, inter-ethnic marriages, intercultural marriages, transnational marriages, etc.). In this study we use the term binational, as our exclusive criterion for the definition of these couples is the fact that the spouses were born in different countries.

Statistics Office and focused on the characteristics of the marriages as well as on the features of the spouses, where nationality, age and education are key variables.

The innovative nature of this study resides in the fact that it addresses a topic that is markedly understudied in Portugal (and beyond), and as such contributes to enhance our knowledge on the topic through quantitative analysis delineating the evolution and profiles of binational same-sex couples established in Portugal throughout the last decade.

The next section of this article will present a review of the main studies on same-sex marriage that framed our analysis. We then describe the data and method used in this study, followed by a section where we present the most relevant results and discuss these considering the previously mentioned studies. The last part of the article will focus on the contributions and limitations of this study, as well as new points of interest for research.

## 2. Considerations about same-sex marriage

Marriage between persons of the same sex has been a topic of discussion in Portugal, both in civil society and in the academic milieu. The authors who have studied same-sex marriage have focused their analysis on different topics unrelated to the issue of binational couples<sup>2</sup>. No studies were found considering the Portuguese reality of same-sex marriage in relation to binational couples. Outside Portugal, not many authors have addressed this subject either, as the studies focusing on binational marriage essentially deal with heterosexual couples.

Among the authors that do discuss binational same-sex couples we highlight Rosenfeld and Kim (2005). For these authors, studying the US context, the increased number of binational same-sex marriages is symptomatic of a structural change in American society, essentially occurred in the wake of the 1960s, that emerged associated with an emancipation of young adults from their families and communities of origin, underpinned by marriage later in life and a larger number of young single persons living alone, with the decline of parental power over these young people. The authors also argue that living alone and distant from the community of origin, especially in an urban environment, triggers new knowledge, new relationships. Alternatively, departing to live faraway after having started a relationship is also a form of running away from parental control and the pressure of the community of origin. The authors further advocate that this is more likely the scenario of same-sex inter-racial couples than heterosexual inter-racial couples, as these are individuals strongly driven to forging independence from their origins.

Based on Census micro-data (1980 to 2000), the authors conclude that binational same-sex couples have more geographic mobility and are more urban than heterosexual couples, which appears to precisely indicate a distancing from their families of origin. The data also show that

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2 1) Legal issues (Ascensão, 2011; Barroso, 2010; Batista, 2010; Chaves, 2013; Manhoso, 2013; Oliveira 2017, among others) and adjacent issues, such as the study conducted by Brandão and Machado (2012) who examine the content of petitions, draft bills and parliamentary procedures on the legal recognition of same-sex unions; 2) gay marriage associated with family transformations (Torres et al., 2013) or gender issues (Barros et al., 2019; Elísio et al., 2018); 3) marriage and adoption as rights (Vale de Almeida, 2006, 2009; Silva, 2014); 4) perceptions, attitudes or representations and prejudice about same-sex couples and same-sex parenthood (Alves, 2018; Cardeira et al., 2015; Cardoso, 2011; Costa et al., 2013, 2014, 2018; Gato et al., 2012; Gouveia & Moser, 2019; Oliveira et al., 2014; Poesch et al., 2015); 5) same-sex families and heteronormativity (Aboim et al., 2013; Nico, 2011; Santos, 2013).

same-sex couples tend to be more inter-racial than heterosexual couples, which, according to Rosenfeld and Kim, is an indicator of their belonging to a wider group of diversified families, beyond heteronormative unions (endogamic heterosexual marriages).

In Spain, Cortina (2007) also found differences between national heterosexual and homosexual couples, the latter being younger, more educated, and more urban. She also concluded that homosexual couples are more heterogeneous in terms of age, education, and nationality, which may be due, in her opinion, either to the existence of specific structural conditions of the marriage market (namely the fact that the choice of partners is more limited than among heterosexuals), or to selection criteria based on different values.

The findings obtained by Schwartz and Graf (2009), Garrido et al. (2012), Cortina (2016) and Checa and Arjona (2017), although relating to different social realities<sup>3</sup>, point to the same trends: greater diversity in homosexual couples regarding characteristics such as age, education, and nationality, with some gender differences, in which male homosexual couples are prevalent and also more heterogeneous.

According to previous research (Cortina, 2007, 2016; Schwartz & Graf, 2009; Garrido et al., 2012; Checa & Arjona, 2017), there are numerous explanations for these differences: (i) the smaller size of the same-sex marriage market compared to that of heterosexuals, which may lead to greater difficulty in finding similar partners; (ii) the fact that same-sex partners have a greater tolerance for differences (whether age, educational or national), as they themselves have transgressed social norms by choosing a same-sex partner; and (iii) due to being tendentially more urban, homosexual individuals may have more opportunities to marry outside their nationality or educational group.

The geographical distribution of same-sex marriage in Spain is precisely one of the foci of interest of Capote and Clamaestra (2018). Considering all same-sex marriages occurred between 2005 and 2015, and comparing their situation with heterosexual couples, the authors found a predominance of same-sex marriages in urban areas, with low levels of ageing and a high presence of foreigners. These authors also noticed a higher weight of binational marriages among homosexual couples, which can be explained, according to them, by different factors: i) the massive arrival of immigrants to Spain during the previous decade; ii) the fact that Spain has become attractive to homosexual immigrants due to the legalisation of same-sex marriages; or iii) because marriage could guarantee the legal stability of the foreign elements of these couples.

Chauvin et al. (2021) focus their investigation on the effect of inequality of rights (arising from different legal statuses), more than on the effect of different origins. Their study focuses on the lives of same-sex couples who possess unequal residence status. According to the authors, binational marriages in general, instead of being viewed as a strong sign of assimilation/integration in the host societies, are currently perceived as threats to migratory control, especially when implicating socially heterogamic partners which raises a constant concern with so-called “marriages of convenience”. This issue may be extended to same-sex binational couples who, for the same reason, may also face strong legal constraints.

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3 Schwartz and Graf (2009) in the United States and Cortina (2016) in Spain compared homosexual and heterosexual couples without regard to nationality. Garrido et al. (2012) and Checa and Arjona (2017) focused on binational marriages in Spain, specifically marriages between Spaniards and Brazilians in the case of the latter.

More than nationality, for Chauvin et al. (2021), what is in question, above all, is the issue of class as fostering inequality of rights. In this study, the authors compared same-sex couples with heterosexual couples, seeking similarities and differences between them, as well as among same-sex couples. Based on 42 interviews held in France, the Netherlands and USA, the authors found three distinct types of couples (low-income homogenous couples; heterogenous couples; and high-income homogenous couples) in different positions in terms of legal constraints. The low-income homogenous couples are frequently subject to forced immobility and separation due to lack of financial resources. For heterogenous couples, citizenship is presented in dichotomic terms (not authorised/authorised, immobility/mobility) and marriage appears as the main path towards obtaining a legal status for the migrant spouse (fuelling suspicions of the instrumentalization of these marriages to obtain citizenship). Now, for privileged migrants in a homogenous couple, the legal constraints are experienced in a more distant and lighter manner. For these couples, obtaining citizenship, in many cases, is not even the primary objective, but rather a goal among others, such as, for example, investment in their career or education.

In sum, Chauvin et al. (2015) conclude that the possession of larger resources reduces the impact of the restrictive legal constraints (albeit, without eliminating them) and, consequently, reproduces inequalities in accessing residence status. They also conclude that even if there are differences between the experiences and concerns of binational same-sex couples and those of binational heterosexual couples, the effects of the differentiated possession of resources does not differ significantly between these two types of couples.

Following some of the insights raised by these authors, we propose in our study to contribute to closing the gap found in the Portuguese literature on binational same-sex couples, with special focus on couples involving Brazilians (due to the importance of this community in Portugal), to attempt to identify their tendencies, trends and characteristics. To do this, we will examine the evolution and most relevant characteristics of Luso-Brazilian binational same-sex marriages, from 2010 to 2020, in comparison to binational heterosexual couples, seeking to understand how these tendencies characterise both groups.

All the studies have shown that binational marriages do not necessarily have the same characteristics as marriages between individuals with the same origin, and that homosexual and heterosexual couples, despite sharing tendencies, also have some differences.

As the first exploratory quantitative study in Portugal on binational same-sex marriages, we test certain hypotheses suggested by previous investigations to understand if the trends are like those detected in other countries.

Although the literature suggests that individuals tend to choose partners with characteristics like their own (educational and age homogamy), in addition to individual preferences and values, we postulate that the opportunities provided by the structure of the matrimonial market play an important role in the choice of partner, as suggested by the social stratification theory (Blau & Schwartz, 1984; Muttarak & Heath, 2010). Therefore, we expect homosexual couples to have lower levels of age and educational homogamy when compared to heterosexual couples, since their choice of partner is more limited due to the smaller size of their matrimonial market (hypothesis 1).

In addition to the smaller size of the marriage market for homosexuals, their life course presumably makes them more predisposed to break with heteronormativity, since they also had to break barriers imposed by prevailing social norms, as suggested by some authors (Rosenfeld

& Kim, 2005). Thus, for these individuals (who have already broken the social norm by choosing a same-sex partner), marrying outside their group of origin, which can be seen as breaking the prevailing endogamous norm regarding marriage, will be more likely than for heterosexuals. We therefore postulate that the proportion of binational couples is higher among homosexual than among heterosexual couples (hypothesis 2).

### 3. Sources and method

The analysis presented herein is based on the total number of marriages between persons of the same sex held in Portugal between 2010 and 2020. The micro-data used was obtained from the marriage registers provided by the National Statistics Institute. As such, for each year, the information refers to all the marriages recorded in Portugal in that year. In these registers, the unit of analysis is the couple, and the type of existing information (broken down by couple) enables us to distinguish between binational couples and non-binational couples (from the country of birth of each member of the couple) and identify the structural features of each of these types of couples. From 2010 onwards, the marriage register also includes information about the type of marriage (between persons of the opposite sex; between female same-sex persons; between male same-sex persons) which enabled us to focus our analysis on same-sex couples.

Our statistical analysis considered both the individual characteristics of the spouses (such as nationality, age, former marital status, academic qualifications, professional situation), and the characteristics of the couple (in particular, marital property regime, cohabitation, age and educational homogamy). To analyse the data, we used univariate and bivariate descriptive statistics<sup>4</sup> performed by IBM SPSS Statistics (version 27), one of the most common statistical analysis programmes in social sciences. Tables were compiled using this same software, while the graphs were constructed in Microsoft Excel. In this way, we were not only able to have an overview of the main tendencies and patterns of binational same-sex marriages, but also, by comparison, detect similarities and differences in relation to hetero binational couples, as well as with respect to non-binational same-sex couples.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. A portrait of the evolution of same-sex marriages (2010-2020)

In the decade since gay marriage was legalised in Portugal (2010-20), 2794 same-sex marriages have been celebrated involving Portuguese or Brazilians. Of these, 57.1% (N=1596) were between two Portuguese, 14.1% (N=394) were between two Brazilians, and the rest (28.8%; N=804) corresponded to binational marriages, in which one of the spouses was born in Portugal and the other in Brazil.

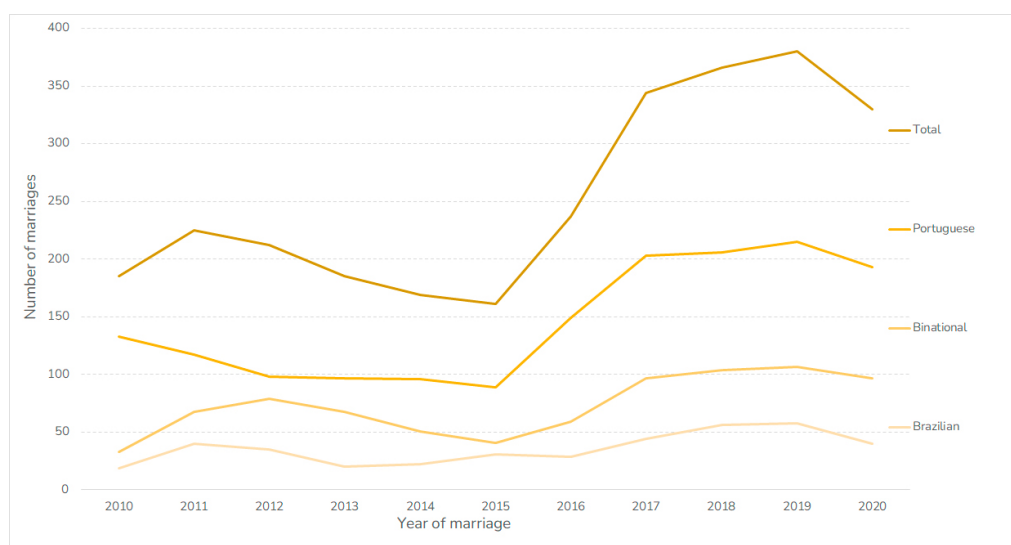
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<sup>4</sup> Since we were working with the population (all the couples married in Portugal between 2010 and 2020), we did not perform inferential analysis.

Between 2010 and 2020, the total number of same-sex marriages increased by about 78%, with the increase being more notable for binational couples (194%) and couples in which both partners are Brazilian (110%) than for couples with both partners born in Portugal. Nevertheless, this evolution underwent fluctuations, as illustrated in Graph 1 which shows the evolution of the total number of same-sex marriages and the different groups of origin (Portuguese, Brazilian and binational).

Following an initial period of growth, right after the legalisation of these marriages, between 2012 and 2015 (corresponding to the period of economic and financial crisis experienced in Portugal) there was a decline, indeed a common situation across the different types of couples, with different origins. A new cycle was set in motion from 2015, with particularly significant growth of binational marriages which, between 2016 and 2019, increased by approximately 80% (among the Portuguese this growth stood at 44%). In the case of marriages between two Brazilians, the increase only occurred in 2017, probably constrained by the actual evolution of the migratory movements between Brazil and Portugal. As would be expected, in 2020 there was a renewed drop in the number of marriages (total and by groups), this time explained by the pandemic.<sup>5</sup>

**Figure 1. Number of same-sex marriages, total and by country of birth of the couple (2010-2020)**



Source: INE, micro-data on marriage, 2010 to 2020. Own elaboration

Despite the fluctuations, some findings are striking. Between 2010 and 2020, the variations were reflected in the reduction of the weight of Portuguese same-sex marriages in the total number of gay marriages (shifting from 72% in 2010 to 59% in 2020), while the weight of binational couples increased from 18% to 30%. In other words, same-sex marriages increased overall, rising in all the analysed groups, but that increase was most notable among binational

<sup>5</sup> The first state of emergency was decreed on 18 March 2020 in Portugal, with the pandemic containment measures affecting all aspects of the life of residents in Portugal, obviously including the number of marriages, as these became highly restricted. It is therefore necessary to analyse the data of 2020 in light of this framework.

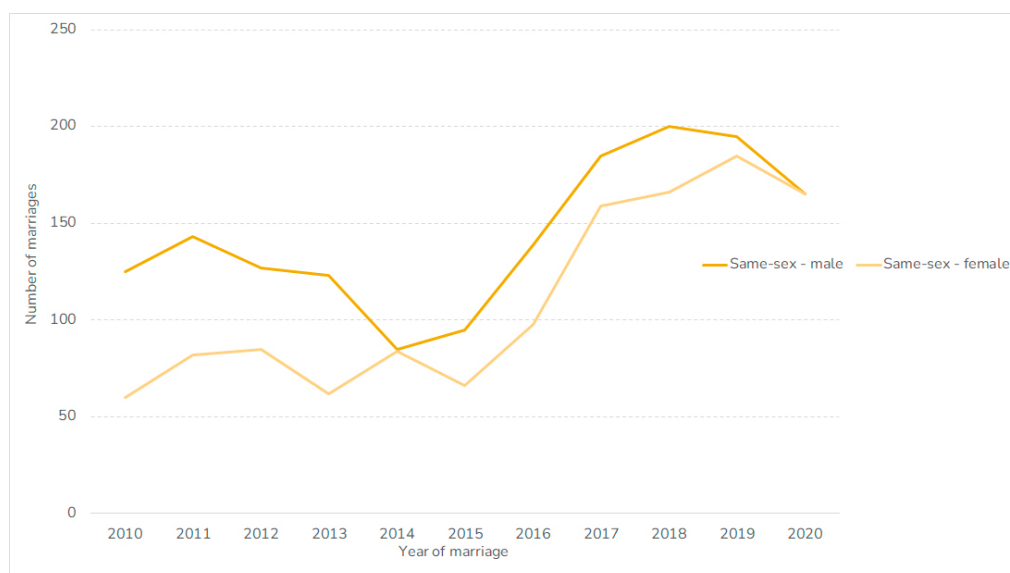


couples. It is important to highlight that between 2019 and 2020, the number of same-sex marriages declined, both in overall terms and among the different types of couples. However, that decrease should be read with some reservations as it corresponds to the period of the Covid-19 pandemic during which there was a sharp reduction in the number of marriages in general, which fell from 33,272 in 2019 to 18,902 in 2020.

When compared to heterosexual couples, this same trend of a growing increase of the number of marriages involving Brazilian immigrants in Portugal had already been detected by Ferreira & Ramos (2012). What is novel in this case is that the proportion of binational marriages (here specifically between Portuguese and Brazilians) is markedly increased for same-sex couples compared to hetero binational couples, as we will see in more detail further on.

Comparing the evolution of these marriages throughout the decade, according to the sex of the two partners (Figure 2), there is an evident trend towards a higher frequency of marriages between two male partners which is similar to the findings in other countries, namely Spain (Garrido et al., 2012; Checa & Arjona, 2017; Capote Lama & Nieto Calmaestra, 2018). In 2010 these couples accounted for 67% of the total number of same-sex marriages. However, the higher growth rate of marriages between two female partners led to a very different situation at the end of the decade, shifting to a position of equality. As suggested by Capote Lama and Nieto Calmaestra, it seems that in Portugal too, there was a need for a longer period for unions between women to be seen as “normal” and be legally formalised.

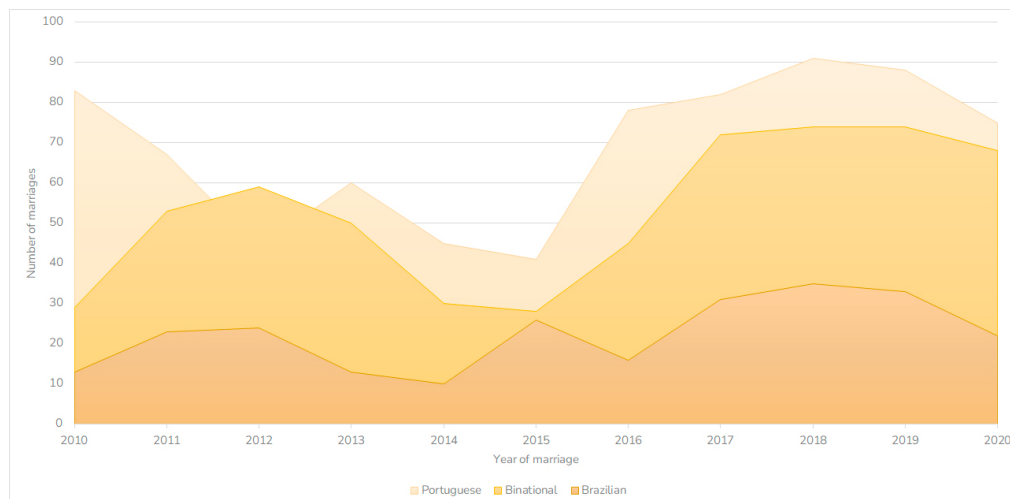
**Figure 2. Number of same-sex marriages by sex of the partners (2010-2020)**



Source: INE, micro-data on marriage, 2010 to 2020. Own elaboration

Comparing the evolution throughout this period according to the type of couple, among male same-sex marriages (Figure 3) we find many fluctuations, especially up to 2015; from then onwards, the trend is relatively similar for the three types of couples, with an increase in the number of marriages up to 2018 and a subsequent decline.

**Figure 3. Number of same-sex marriages (male) by type of couple (2010-2020)**



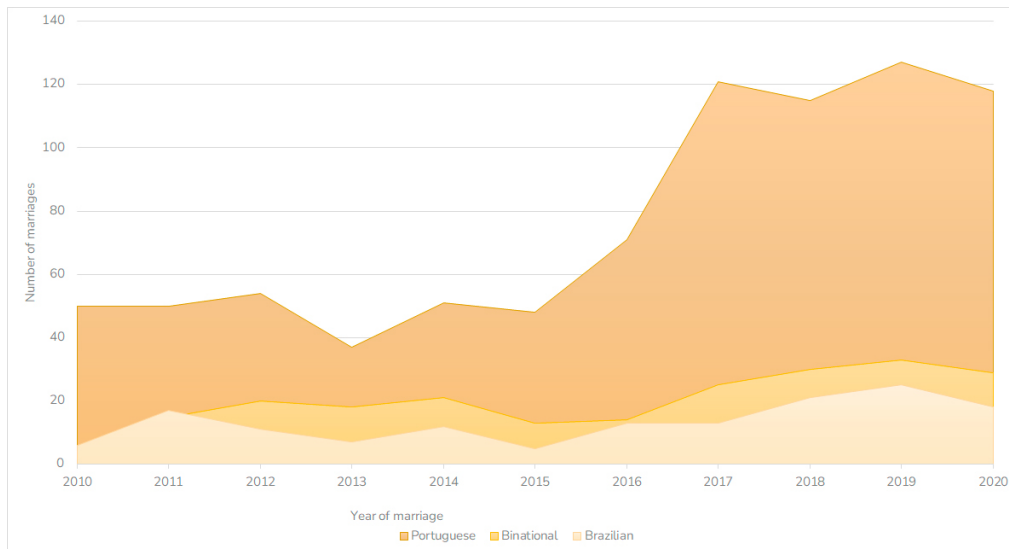
Source: INE, micro-data on marriage, 2010 TO 2020. Own elaboration

With respect to female same-sex couples (Figure 4), the first difference from male same-sex couples is the fact that the volume of marriages between Portuguese women is much higher than the volume of marriages that are binational or between Brazilians, a gap that further widens from 2015 onwards. However, considering the evolution throughout the decade, the increase of female same-sex marriages is most accentuated in binational couples than in other types of couples. Looking just at the period between 2016 and 2019, in other words following the year that recorded a more constant evolution and up to the year before the pandemic, the variation rates are 70%, 136% and 92%, respectively for Portuguese, binational and Brazilian couples.

Considering the total number of marriages occurred in Portugal between 2010 and 2020, we also sought to grasp whether the weight of binational marriages was similar among hetero and homosexual couples. As illustrated in Figure 5, the situation is quite different. Among heterosexual couples, binational marriages only represent 7% of the cases, a very different figure from that found among same-sex couples, especially when involving a union between two male persons (36%). This appears to reinforce the thesis advocated by Rosenfeld and Kim (2005) that the existence of binational same-sex couples is more likely as they involve individuals in which independence from their origins and the breaking of barriers is a driving force.

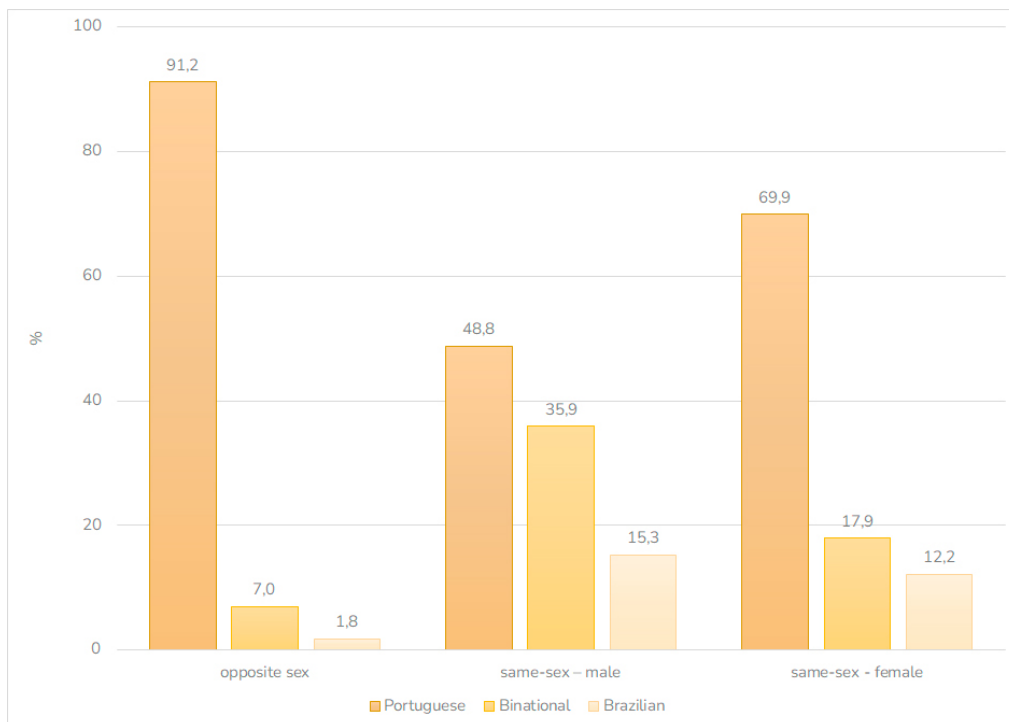
The difference encountered between couples composed of two men and those composed of two women can be partly explained by the fact that the Brazilian community in Portugal presents an imbalance in the ratio of men to women. Indeed, between 2010 and 2020, the ratio has always been unfavourable to men, where women represented 56% of the Brazilians resident in Portugal in 2020 (ACM, 2021). This confirms the importance of structural factors of the matrimonial market, such as size, as influencers of the choice of partner, as suggested by the theory of social exchange (Blau & Schwartz, 1984) and corroborates the findings of authors such as Mutarak and Heath (2010) or van Tubergen and Mass (2007).

**Figure 4. Number of same-sex marriages (female) by type of couple (2010-2020)**



Source: INE, micro-data on marriage, 2010 TO 2020. Own elaboration

**Figure 5. Type of couple by mode of marriage (accumulated 2010-2020)**



Source: INE, micro-data on marriage, 2010 TO 2020. Own elaboration

## 4.2. Characteristics of same-sex couples

### 4.2.1. Marital status, cohabitation, and marital property regime

The great majority of these couples have never been married before, irrespective of the group in question (Table 1). Comparing the marital status of the two spouses, we find that it is among Brazilian couples that the proportion of marriages between two formerly single people is highest (85% against 73% in the case of Portuguese couples and 76% in the case of binational couples).

**Table 1. Marital status of spouses by type of couple (accumulated 2010 to 2020)**

Type of couple	Marital status	Spouse 1		Spouse 2	
		N	%	N	%
Portuguese	Single	1290	80.8	1403	87.9
	Widow(er)	11	0.7	4	0.3
	Divorced	295	18.5	189	11.8
	Total	1596	100.0	1596	100.0
Binational	Single	654	81.3	740	92.0
	Widow(er)	2	0.2	2	0.2
	Divorced	148	18.4	62	7.7
	Total	804	100.0	804	100.0
Brazilian	Single	351	89.1	367	93.1
	Widow(er)	2	0.5	1	0.3
	Divorced	41	10.4	26	6.6
	Total	394	100.0	394	100.0

Source: INE, micro-data on marriage, 2010 TO 2020. Own elaboration

Of the 2794 marriages, around 25% (N=689) involved people who had previously been married once or twice. Considering the dissolution year of the previous marriage, it is likely that many these people were married to a partner of the opposite sex, given that for 382 individuals (55.4%) this dissolution took place before 2010, meaning that the marriage occurred at a time before same-sex civil unions were permitted in Portugal.<sup>6</sup>

Although many of the members of these couples had formerly been single, this does not mean that they had not experienced situations of non-marital cohabitation. As shown in Table 2, approximately 67% of the national couples had already experienced shared living arrangements. For binational and Brazilian couples, the situation is very different, but even so, about half of these couples had shared their residence before marriage. Among heterosexual bina-

<sup>6</sup> Here, we do not know whether, in some cases, we are dealing with same-sex marriages that took place abroad.

tional couples, cohabitation is more frequent (around 61% lived together before getting married).

Regarding their marital property regime, about 75% of Portuguese and Brazilian couples decided on forming a joint estate on property acquired after marriage. Among binational couples, approximately 70% chose this arrangement, a figure that is lower than that recorded among heterosexual binational couples (73%). On the contrary, the preference for separation of property is more common among binational same-sex couples (17%) than among heterosexual binational couples (13%).

**Table 2. Shared previous residence and marital property regime by type of couple (accumulated 2010 to 2020)**

		Type of couple					
		Portuguese		Binational		Brazilian	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>Shared previous residence</b>	Yes	1073	67.2	404	50.2	198	50.3
	No	523	32.8	400	49.8	196	49.7
	Total	1596	100.0	804	100.0	394	100.0
<b>Marital property regime</b>	Community of acquired property	1151	74.5	561	70.3	295	74.9
	Separation	132	8.5	136	17.0	41	10.4
	General community	129	8.3	14	1.8	9	2.3
	Other	27	1.7	50	6.3	43	10.9
	Imperative of separation	106	6.9	37	4.6	6	1.5
	Total	1545	100.0	798	100.0	394	100.0

Source: INE, micro-data on marriage, 2010 TO 2020. Own elaboration

#### 4.2.2. Age, qualifications, and nationality

Portuguese couples are, on average, older than binational or Brazilian couples, with the latter being the youngest (Table 3), which could explain why the greatest proportion of those that had never been married before is found among couples composed of two Brazilians.

**Table 3. Age of the spouses by type of couple (accumulated 2010 to 2020)**

Type of couple		Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Portuguese (N=1596)	spouse 1	18	86	40.4	12.5
	spouse 2	16	90	36.9	11.8
Binational (N=804)	spouse 1	18	75	37.2	12.0
	spouse 2	18	82	33.1	9.1

Type of couple		Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Brazilian (N=394)	spouse 1	18	65	35.6	8.8
	spouse 2	19	74	32.8	8.6

Source: INE, micro-data on marriage, 2010 TO 2020. Own elaboration

Although there is a positive correlation between the ages of the two spouses in all the groups, it is among national couples that we find a stronger correlation ( $r=0.731$ ). Brazilian and binational couples show a moderate correlation (respectively,  $r=0.532$  and  $r=0.504$ <sup>7</sup> (Table 4).

In binational couples, where the age homogamy is lower, about 48% of couples are in this situation, in contrast to the other groups where homogamic marriages are predominant in more than 50% of the cases. Among binational couples, the mean age difference is more than 8 years (being roughly similar irrespective of whether the national spouse is the older or younger of the two), while in the other groups the figure is around 6.8 years.

Once again, these trends are similar to those found in other studies, such as Rosenfeld and Kim (2005), Cortina (2007, 2016), Schwartz and Graf (2009), Checa and Arjona (2017), and Capote Lama and Nieto Calmaestra (2018).

**Table 4. Age homogamy by type of couple (accumulated 2010 to 2020)**

Type of couple	Homogamy	N	%
Portuguese	Yes	860	53.9
	No	736	46.1
	Total	1596	100.0
Binational	Yes	387	48.1
	No	417	51.9
	Total	804	100.0
Brazilian	Yes	201	51.0
	No	193	49.0
	Total	394	100.0

Source: INE, micro-data on marriage, 2010 TO 2020. Own elaboration

It is also important to highlight that, compared to binational heterosexual couples in the same period (2010-2020), the couples consisting of two persons of the same sex have a lower average age upon marriage; in the case of couples composed of people of opposite sex, the average ages are 40.2 years old and 36.2 years old for men and women respectively.

It is also important to highlight that, in comparison with binational heterosexual couples, binational same-sex couples are much less homogeneous, with an average age difference of 9.1

<sup>7</sup> We considered that an age difference of less than 5 years corresponded to a situation of age homogamy.

years being recorded between the partners of male couples and 6.0 years in the female cases, while in couples comprising persons of the opposite sex this difference is 4.8 years.

In terms of qualifications, the analysis of education levels (Table 5) allows us to conclude that, as a rule, these couples have highly qualified spouses, as in all cases we find close to 30% or more of persons with higher level education. However, if we consider the sum of the two highest qualification levels (secondary + higher education), we find that the couples comprising two Brazilians are somewhat more qualified, with figures above 84% in these two categories. In Portuguese couples, this figure is close to 71% and in the case of binational couples, we find 69% for the Portuguese spouse and 76% for the Brazilian.

**Table 5. Qualifications by type of couple (accumulated 2010 to 2020)**

Type of couple		Spouse1		Spouse2	
		N	%	N	%
<b>Portuguese</b>	Elementary education - 1st cycle	56	3.7	58	3.7
	Elementary education - 2nd cycle	113	7.4	97	6.4
	Elementary education - 3rd cycle	275	18.0	279	18.3
	Secondary education	548	36.0	579	38.0
	Higher education	532	34.9	509	33.4
	Total valid	1524	100.0	1522	100.0
	NA	72		74	
Total	1596		1596		
		Spouse1		Spouse2	
		N	%	N	%
<b>Brazilian</b>	Elementary education - 1st cycle	2	0.5	1	0.3
	Elementary education - 2nd cycle	10	2.7	17	4.6
	Elementary education - 3rd cycle	40	10.8	39	10.5
	Secondary education	186	50.3	174	47.0
	Higher education	132	35.7	139	37.6
	Total valid	370	100.0	370	100.0
	NA	24		24	
Total	394		394		
		PT		BR	
Type of couple		N	%	N	%
<b>Binational</b>	Elementary education - 1st cycle	21	2.8	15	2.0
	Elementary education - 2nd cycle	58	7.6	40	5.3
	Elementary education - 3rd cycle	159	20.8	126	16.6
	Secondary education	310	40.6	350	46.1

Type of couple	PT		BR	
	N	%	N	%
Higher education	215	28.2	229	30.1
Total valid	763	100.0	760	100.0
NA	41		44	
Total	804		804	

Source: INE, micro-data on marriage, 2010 TO 2020. Own elaboration

There is a positive correlation between the qualifications of the two spouses in all the types of couples (Portuguese:  $rs=0.623$ ; binational:  $rs=0.528$ ; Brazilian:  $rs=0.592$ ). This reflects the fact that in most couples the partners have similar qualifications (figures between 59% and 71%), and this is especially notable in the case Brazilian couples (Table 6). However, once again, among binational couples there is greater heterogeneity. This same trend was found by Ramos et al. (2015) and Gaspar et al. (2017), about binational marriages between persons of the opposite sex.

**Table 6. Educational homogamy by type of couple (accumulated 2010 to 2020)**

Type of couple	Homogamy	N	%
Portuguese	Yes	905	59.5
	No	615	40.5
	Total	1520	100.0
Binational	Yes	445	58.6
	No	315	41.4
	Total	760	100.0
Brazilian	Yes	264	71.4
	No	106	28.6
	Total	370	100.0

Source: INE, micro-data on marriage, 2010 TO 2020. Own elaboration

However, it is interesting to note that if we compare heterosexual with homosexual couples, within the same time frame (2010-2020), it is among the former that we find the lowest levels of educational homogamy. Although it is always among binational couples that the lowest levels of educational homogamy are found, this trend is much clearer among heterosexuals than among homosexuals, where, in fact, we find gender differences, with female couples always presenting higher levels of educational homogamy (PT: 62.6%; Binational: 62.2%; BR:71.8%) than male couples (PT: 56.6%; Binational: 55.7%; BR: 70.4%), and also higher than those of heterosexual couples (PT: 59.5%; Binational: 53.1%; BR: 67.7%). This greater educational homogamy among homosexual couples can be explained by the fact that, overall, both homosexual partners are more qualified than the heterosexual partners, reflecting a choice of partner between more similar individuals.



As to nationality, among Brazilian couples, in 32% of the cases at least one of the members of the couple has Portuguese nationality, and there is only a small number of cases in which both have Portuguese citizenship (1%). In binational couples, most of the Brazilians married to Portuguese do not have Portuguese nationality (90%).

### 4.2.3. Professional activity

Concerning employment conditions, we predominantly find employed individuals in all groups (Table 7). However, among binational couples the percentage of employees (78%) is approximately 5 percentage points below that of the Portuguese or Brazilians. Moreover, in the case of binational couples, the percentage of unemployed persons (searching for first job or a new job) is higher among the Brazilians (6.0%) than the Portuguese (2.8%) and also higher than that experienced by couples comprising two Portuguese or two Brazilians. It is also among the Brazilians married to Portuguese that we find the highest weight of those in a situation of inactivity (about 16%), with this percentage being much higher than that of the Portuguese (8%). It should also be noted that it is precisely among the Portuguese married to Brazilians that there is the lowest percentage of persons in a situation of inactivity and the highest percentage of employed (89%).

**Table 7. Employment condition (accumulated 2010 to 2020)**

Type of couple		N	%		
<b>Portuguese</b>	Employee	1190	82.8		
	Searching for first job	13	0.9		
	Searching for new job	44	3.1		
	Non-active	190	13.2		
	Total valid	1437	100.0		
	NA	159			
	Total	1596			
<b>Brazilian</b>	Employee	278	83.2		
	Searching for first job	3	0.9		
	Searching for new job	11	3.3		
	Non-active	42	12.6		
	Total valid	334	100.0		
	NA	60			
	Total	394			
		PT		BR	
		N	%	N	%
<b>Binational</b>	Employee	633	89.2	554	78.2
	Searching for first job	9	1.3	14	2.0
	Searching for new job	11	1.5	28	4.0

	PT		BR	
	N	%	N	%
Non-active	57	8.0	112	15.8
Total valid	710	100.0	708	100.0
NA	94		96	13.6
Total	804		804	

Source: INE, micro-data on marriage, 2010 TO 2020. Own elaboration

Regarding professions, among the Portuguese couples, the predominant professions, with very similar weightings, correspond to specialists of intellectual and scientific professions, administrative and similar staff, service personnel and salespersons (each accounting for more than 20%) (Table 8). It is also interesting to note that the spouses tend to hold similar professional positions, with approximately 40% and 37%, respectively for spouse 1 and 2, incorporated in more highly qualified professional groups, i.e., in the first three groups (excluding the armed forces). It is also notable that in 59% of cases, the two members of the couple belong to the same professional group.

**Table 8. Professional group – Portuguese couples (accumulated 2010 to 2020)**

	Spouse 1		Spouse 2	
	N	%	N	%
Members of the armed forces	14	1.2	10	0.8
Senior staff of public administration, of companies and directors	51	4.2	51	4.3
Specialists of intellectual and scientific professions	297	<b>24.5</b>	260	<b>21.8</b>
Intermediate level technicians and professionals	131	10.8	135	11.3
Administrative and similar staff	270	<b>22.3</b>	269	<b>22.5</b>
Service personnel and salespersons	257	<b>21.2</b>	291	<b>24.4</b>
Farmers and skilled workers in agriculture and fisheries	20	1.7	14	1.2
Labourers, crafts-persons and similar workers	61	5.0	51	4.3
Operators of facilities and machinery, and assembly workers	20	1.7	11	0.9
Unskilled workers	89	7.4	103	8.6
Total	1210	100.0	1195	100.0
Missing	386		401	
Total	1596		1596	

Source: INE, micro-data on marriage, 2010 TO 2020. Own elaboration

Among the Brazilians (Table 9), the highest percentages are found in service personnel and salespersons, followed by administrative and similar staff (Table 9), indicating that the Portuguese hold more highly qualified professional positions, despite the Brazilians tending to have higher qualifications. Here, we also find a fairly similar situation for the two spouses,

with, respectively, 34% and 31% in the first three professional groups. This is the type of couple where professional homogamy is most pronounced, with 66% of couples composed of partners belonging to the same professional group.

**Table 9. Professional group – Brazilian couples (accumulated 2010 to 2020)**

	Spouse 1		Spouse 2	
	N	%	N	%
Senior staff of public administration, of companies and directors	16	5.5	8	2.9
Specialists of intellectual and scientific professions	56	19.1	55	19.9
Intermediate level technicians and professionals	26	8.9	23	8.3
Administrative and similar staff	59	20.1	53	19.1
Service personnel and salespersons	82	<b>28.0</b>	90	<b>32.5</b>
Farmers and workers in agriculture and fisheries	2	0.7	2	0.7
Labourers, crafts-persons and similar workers	9	3.1	9	3.2
Operators of facilities and machinery, and assembly workers	7	2.4	5	1.8
Unskilled workers	36	12.3	32	11.6
Total	293	100.0	277	100.0
Missing	101		117	
Total	394		394	

Source: INE, micro-data on marriage, 2010 TO 2020. Own elaboration

Like the case of Brazilian couples, among binational same-sex couples (Table 10), the highest number of cases are concentrated in the groups of service personnel and salespersons, and administrative and similar staff. Here, the predominant situation is also that of professional homogamy, as in 55% of cases, both members of the couple belong to the same professional group. Nonetheless, it should be noted that the percentage of individuals who are incorporated in more highly qualified professional groups (about 24% of the Portuguese and 21% of the Brazilians) is much lower than in Portuguese or Brazilian couples.

**Table 10. Professional group - binational couples (accumulated 2010 to 2020)**

	PT		BR	
	N	%	N	%
Members of the armed forces	5	0.8	0	0
Senior staff of public administration, of companies and directors	41	6.3	23	4.1
Specialists of intellectual and scientific professions	112	17.3	91	16.4
Intermediate level technicians and professionals	64	9.9	47	8.5
Administrative and similar staff	138	<b>21.3</b>	132	<b>23.7</b>
Service personnel and salespersons	163	<b>25.2</b>	174	<b>31.3</b>

	PT		BR	
	N	%	N	%
Farmers and skilled workers in agriculture and fisheries	6	0.9	6	1.1
Labourers, crafts-persons and similar workers	33	5.1	21	3.8
Operators of facilities and machinery, and assembly workers	66	10.2	7	1.3
Unskilled workers	72	11.1	55	9.9
Total	647	100.0	556	100.0
Missing	170		248	
Total	817		817	

Source: INE, micro-data on marriage, 2010 TO 2020. Own elaboration

Thus, we find evidence that the Brazilians tend to have professions requiring lower qualification levels, despite their tendency to have higher qualification levels than the Portuguese. Nevertheless, the weight of the Brazilians included in the professional group of unskilled workers is relatively low, and much lower than that found by Ferreira and Ramos (2012), in their study on binational (Portuguese/Brazilian) heterosexual couples (figures of around 20%). Although it is also among Brazilian couples that the highest percentage of unskilled workers was recorded, again, the figures are much lower than those found by Ferreira and Ramos. Here, the difference is even larger if we consider binational couples where the percentage of cases where the Brazilian member of the couple is within the group of unskilled workers is very similar to that of Portuguese couples.

Both in the case of Brazilian couples and in the case of binational couples, the members of the couple hold very similar professional positions. Contrary to the findings indicated by Ferreira and Ramos (2012) regarding heterosexual binational couples, we did not find signs that qualifications may be being used (by certain individuals) as a tradable element, as suggested by the status exchange theory (Merton, 1941; Kalmijn, 1998). In the case of couples consisting of a Portuguese and a Brazilian partner, Authors found that the Brazilian male member of the couple had lower qualifications and less skilled professions than the Portuguese female partner, where this situation could indicate that, in this case, the higher socioeconomic status of Portuguese women (with academic qualifications and profession being indicators) would be operating as a tradable element in exchange for factors of tropicalism/exotism/erotism of their Brazilian partners.

## 5. Conclusion

Alongside the growth in the number of immigrants in Portugal from the beginning of the 21st century, there was also, from 2010 onwards, an increase in same-sex marriages involving immigrants. In view of the importance of the Brazilian community among the overall set of immigrants in Portugal, in this work we sought to portray the evolution of binational (Portuguese and Brazilian) same-sex marriages compared to same-sex couples in which both are Portuguese or Brazilian.

The characterisation of these marriages and their participants has enabled a diagnosis of the situation so far and constitutes an important starting point for future development. This ex-

ploratory analysis has highlighted that, in terms of age, homosexual couples are less homogamic than heterosexual, but the same cannot be said for educational qualifications, where it is the same-sex couples that show a higher percentage of couples where both partners have similar qualifications, especially in the case of female couples, thus only partially confirming hypothesis 1.

However, hypothesis 2 was fully confirmed, as same-sex couples are more heterogenous in terms of nationality. Indeed, the percentage of binational marriages is much greater among same-sex couples than heterosexual couples. This higher proportion of binational marriages can be seen as an indicator of the cultural diversity/heterogeneity that exists in these couples. Here we found strong evidence of a greater openness to binational marriage in the case of homosexual couples, which gives strength to the thesis that the more limited market for the selection of the partner promotes out-group choice, as suggested by social stratification theory, but also to the thesis that we are dealing with individuals who are more willing to accept difference, as suggested by several authors (e.g., Schwartz & Graf, 2009). It would be necessary to follow this evolution of Portuguese-Brazilian same-sex marriages in subsequent years to understand whether this trend is, or not, merely circumstantial.

We cannot fail to mention two limitations associated with this study. First, the fact that we are analysing binational marriages between Portuguese and Brazilians. Knowing that the Brazilians are, in historical, cultural, and linguistic terms, close to the Portuguese, this may explain, at least in part, the high level of binational marriages between nationals of these countries. It would be important to extend the study to other national groups to understand if this is indeed an overall trend or if we are facing an exception. The findings of this study also call for the need to consider gender issues, as different trends were observed between couples composed of two women and two men, concerning levels of heterogeneity (educational and national).

On the other hand, as this is a quantitative study, it does not allow us to go deeper into certain issues that we consider important. A qualitative study would also be important to deepen our knowledge on the trends detected for Portugal, generally in line with the results obtained in different countries, allowing us to go beyond quantification and identify the reasons behind the decision to marry, as well as the criteria underlying the selection of the partner. This qualitative analysis would also enable us to test the hypothesis that the low expression of same-sex marriages in Portugal can be explained by the fact that the struggle for the legalisation of these marriages was mainly a struggle for equal rights and the search for a symbolic change in perceptions, as argued by Almeida (2009).

There is no doubt that same-sex marriage should be seen in the light of the issue of equal rights, but also as an indicator of change and social integration. It is now necessary to understand if we are facing a new form of homogenous conjugality, or if, like heterosexual marriages, we are also witnessing a diversity in its forms of conjugality. Thus, based on this diagnosis on same-sex marriage in Portugal, it would be important to deepen this topic and identify the main attributes and motivations of individuals who choose to marry, in order to understand if there are differentiated patterns within these couples, but also to advance our understanding of the reasons why other couples do not take this decision, and instead opt for informal cohabitation.

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