COALITION DES FAMILLES LGBT+
LGBT+ Family Coalition

9 questions to help demystify and shed light on the realities of BIPOC LGBTQ2+ families

There is no such thing as single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives.

Audre Lorde

1.

Do racialized, immigrant and Indigenous LGBTQ2+ families exist? How many are there, and why don't we see them?

LGBTQ2+ communities (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, Two-Spirit and more) are diverse and made up of individuals who live at the intersection of various identities—including those who are Black, Indigenous and people of colour (BIPOC). So of course, some LGBTQ2+ people are also racialized, immigrants, Indigenous, disabled or living in financial precarity, to name just a few. So, it's totally logical to imagine that such people might also be parents or parental figures. That means that yes, BIPOC LGBTQ2+ families exist!

While it's impossible to accurately estimate the number of BIPOC families with parents who identify as LGBTQ2+ for a range of reasons, some recent data from the United States, from the National Transgender Discrimination Survey (Grant et al., 2011), show that racialized trans and queer parents are proportionally represented[1] within LGBTQ2+ communities. The survey reports that 45% of Indigenous / Two-Spirit people have children, and that 36 to 40% of transgender Latinx[2] and Black people are also parents (Stotzer et al., 2014). While these data aren't relevant to the Canadian population, for which it's still impossible to get this kind of information, we estimate that they transfer well onto racialized and immigrant LGBTQ2+ families in our national context. Indigenous communities have some of the highest birth rates in the country[3] and so do people who have immigrated here within the last five years (Lacourse, 2015; Kastanis and Gates, 2013a, 2013b).[4] We can assume that a certain percentage of these Indigenous and immigrant parents are also LGBTQ+.

The American studies cited here also show that families with racialized and immigrant trans and queer parents aren't necessarily participating members of their LGBTQ2+ communities (Kastanis and Gates, 2013a, 2013b). For many systemic reasons, these families generally stay close with their ethnic and cultural communities. This is also true in Canada, where the majority of Indigenous

people still live on reserves, and immigrants live in neighbourhoods mostly populated by newcomers to Canada. Many studies show that families with racialized and immigrant LGBTQ2+ parents, and particularly trans and queer parents, face major systemic barriers that have repercussions on their ability to find housing and on their living conditions more generally (DeFilippis, 2018). Racialized and immigrant LGBTQ2+ parents generally live in much more serious financial precarity than their white counterparts. As well, vulnerability related to housing, work, police brutality and imprisonment affect racialized and immigrant LGBTQ+ parents to a much greater degree (James and Magpantay, 2017).

So while it's impossible at this time to get an exact number of racialized and immigrant LGBTQ2+ people who are also parents or parental figures in Québec, we recognize that these people are among the sexual minorities who are most likely to be raising children (Johnson, 2018; Kastanis and Wilson, 2014). That's because, among other things, a high number of them become parents through previous heterosexual relationships or have a different relationship to parenting that may not fit into the Western-centric nuclear family model.

These individuals' family and parenting experiences remain invisible and poorly understood. This invisibility is apparent in the literature on LGBTQ2+ families, which is currently mostly focused on white lesbian mothers and white gay fathers, as well as in pop culture representations (Van Eeden-Moorefield et al., 2018; Brainer et al., 2020). The erasure of racialized and immigrant LGBTQ2+ people from these areas of representation also contributes to keeping them isolated and distant from various LGBTQ+ community spaces, where their absence is remarkable (Radis and Sands, 2020).

Some recent studies show that these people and families don't always want to take part or get involved with LGBTQ+ associations, among other things because they don't feel included, or they feel poorly represented or misunderstood (Brockenbrough, 2016). However, these families exist and live at the intersection of various axes of oppression, and they must be proactively included, particularly within certain LGBTQ+ organizations in Québec, in order to better understand their realities and better meet their needs.

2.

Why do we need to point out the difference between BIPOC LGBTQ2+ families and white LGBTQ+ families? Doesn't pointing out their ethnic, racial and religious specificities heighten their differences and potentially contribute to stigmatizing them even worse?

In 2016, the Black Lives Matter movement shut down Toronto Pride to denounce the racist dynamics that were clearly present within the event's structure and within other LGBTQ+ spaces (Brainer et. al., 2020). In that crucial moment, the group made clear demands for the more explicit and equitable inclusion of racialized and immigrant trans and queer people (Brainer et al., 2020). This event is noteworthy because it highlights the lack of representation and inclusion of racialized, immigrant and Indigenous people within LGBTQ+ communities in Canada and in various Western countries. But it's not the only example of calls for change. In recent years, many racialized activists and academics have denounced and tried to dismantle the racism that also permeates LGBTQ+ organizations (Boston and Duyvendak, 2015).

The demands of the Black Lives Matter movement have helped shed light on the white homona-tionalist[5] narrative that continues to be predominant in the West, and that also shapes the way LGBTQ+ communities frame their demands for change, which often centre on formal legal equality and individual rights. These demands privilege the interests of white people of relatively high socio-economic class (DeFilippis, 2018) but don't necessarily speak to the urgent needs and priorities of BIPOC communities. Despite the demands and movements that have been increasingly visible following certain tragic events in the United States[6] and Canada,[7] BIPOC LGBTQ2+ people remain invisible, and are greatly affected by issues of racism while being generally excluded from

the demands made by white LGBTQ+ communities and within the institution of the family more broadly.

As well, racialized people are still asked to choose between their sexuality and their experiences as racialized people and immigrants (Chehaitly et. al., 2021). We cannot dismiss the fact that racism affects LGBTQ2+ communities, and it's essential to support them by taking a critical, intersectional[8] lens that considers the overlapping effects of various systems of oppression that may affect racialized people and families.

In a similar vein, same-sex parenting works on a white, two-parent model. While white LGBTQ+ parents still face some forms of discrimination and violence in relation to their gender identity and sexual orientation, they operate with the privilege of being able to ignore inequalities related to racism (Hicks, 2011). This is why it's crucial that we recognize that positions such as "colour-blind" or "race as a non-issue" held by some members of LGBTQ+ communities (for instance, white parents who adopt racialized children) are problematic and reiterate a form of racism by ignoring and minimizing the challenges and oppressions that racialized LGBTQ+ people and their children continue to encounter along their journeys.

In our view, bringing up the differences and issues specifically encountered by BIPOC LGBTQ2+ families doesn't contribute to othering them or further stigmatizing them. Rather, it helps shed light on realities that are dismissed or erased within white LGBTQ+ communities.

3.

Have studies been done with BIPOC LGBTQ2+ families?

While a significant number of studies have been produced in the last thirty years about families with LGBTQ+ parents in various context, as well as on the children growing up in these families (Goldberg and Allen, 2020), far fewer studies have looked at LGBTQ2+ families with parents who are racialized, immigrants or Indigenous, and the ones that have been done are not as well known. This gap has consequences, as these families are invisible or underrepresented and often face misunderstanding that's underpinned by negative stereotypes about them (Chan and Erby, 2018).

Intersectionality is a theoretical framework that's increasingly recognized as useful for understanding the complex experiences and pathways of people and groups who live at the intersections of various social axes, such as gender, sexuality, belonging to a minoritized ethnic group, disability, and so on. Some researchers—particularly in Anglo-Saxon contexts, and in a more sustained way in the last ten years—have developed a field of research on the intersection of sexualities, immigration status and racism. This field of research is still recent in Québec and is not yet well developed in French-language studies, but it helps us see how important it us to use a critical lens to understand the experiences of racialized LGBTQ2+ people and those who belong to minoritized ethnic groups.

In the Québec context, current studies are mostly focused on the health of immigrant and racialized LGBTQ+ people and communities and on their experiences of immigration and racism. However, very few studies in French look specifically at the experiences of BIPOC LGBTQ+ **families** and the everyday issues they experience.

Some recent American studies specifically address some of the issues faced by these families (Balsam et al., 2011). These studies, among other things, note that plural and multigenerational configurations are important for these families (Moras et al., 2007) (see question 6). Some also note the way the medical system keeps many families at a distance; this is particularly true of fertility

clinics, which generally have few racialized donors and can be hard for BIPOC LGBTQ2+ people to access (Moore, 2011) (see question 5). Lastly, some studies also address the strategies and identity reconciliations performed by children raised within LGBTQ2+ families and involved in religious organizations (Richards et. al., 2017) (see question 7).

Despite the richness of these studies, they remain partial, and they remind us of the need to develop a field of research on LGBTQ2+ families that includes the multiple and complex experiences of racialized people and immigrants.

4.

Are BIPOC LGBTQ2+ families generally in the closet? Do they come out almost systematically as a result of being rejected by or cutting ties with their extended family or home community?

Generally, white LGBTQ+ communities think of BIPOC LGBTQ2+ people as being outside of their communities of origin, or as having to live a double life. This narrative, still widely shared among white people whether they identify as LGBTQ+ or not, showcases white people's poor understanding of the racism and colonialism experienced by racial and sexual minorities. As well, this narrative underpins a kind of distancing and fear with regard to cultures from countries in the Global South. It reduces these cultures to an essence that's profoundly patriarchal, violent, homophobic and sexist while obscuring the way these same problems affect sexual minorities in the West (Bilge, 2010; Chehaitly et al., 2021).

However, while some racialized or immigrant LGBTQ2+ people may of course be rejected from their communities of origin (just as some white LGBTQ+ people are rejected by their families or the groups they belong to), the white narrative that expects BIPOC LGBTQ2+ people to be automatically excluded and persecuted is reductive and does not represent these people's actual experiences.

Studies about these individuals' identity strategies within their communities of origin (Chbat, 2007; Chbat and Chamberland, 2021) indicate instead that a significant number of them maintain ties with their ethnic, racial and religious communities. This is because, among other things, BIPOC LGBTQ2+ people experience racism as well as much greater financial precarity than white people, and maintaining ties with their communities of origin is an essential factor in their resilience, survival and well-being.

Some people are out in their communities, while others navigate their sexuality in a tacit way that varies between visibility and discretion depending on the people and situations they're dealing with (Acosta, 2013). It's essential to recognize that in many cases, these people are not relegated to silence or to the annihilation of their sexuality. Rather, they experience their sexuality differently, according to codes that don't match up with the call for LGBTQ+ visibility common in white, Western contexts. In other words, many people within their circles and communities know that these people—who may be parents—have a sexuality that's not exclusively heterosexual, but that's not necessarily named out loud or visible at all times. Remember that for some people, renouncing ties with their ethnic or religious communities in order to live out a non-normative sexuality more openly would not necessarily mean greater liberation, and in some case would prevent them from being parents in the fullest sense.

Lastly, it's problematic to insinuate that racialized and immigrant people who are sexual and gender minorities are necessarily oppressed or invisible within their communities of origin, given that some report they find authentic support there, particularly in relation to their parenting. For instance, a study by Grant et al. (2011) reveals that Asian, Black and Latinx trans people report less rejection and more greatly improved relationships with their families of origin after coming out than white trans people do when they come out to their parents. These data are important for research with racialized and immigrant LGBTQ+ families because they show the presence of key support in the lives of these multiply marginalized people. As well, these data call into question the notion that racialized and immigrant LGBTQ+ people are more likely to be rejected by their families on the basis of where they're positioned on the spectrum of sexuality and gender.

The widely held cultural idea that racialized and immigrant communities are more homophobic or transphobic need to be reconsidered based on a critical reading that recognizes the reverse: racialized and immigrant LGBTQ+ people are not systematically rejected by their families and communities of origin, but may in fact find in them a source of support that's even greater than what they would find within white LGBTQ+ communities (Akerlund and Cheung, 2000; Prendergast and MacPhee, 2018).

5.

How do BIPOC LGBTQ2+ parents start their families? Do they use the same methods and resources as white LGBTQ+ people?

Right now, most of the demographic data on racialized and immigrant LGBTQ+ families is found within studies about these people's health, and so they remain partial (Balsam et al., 2011; Ross et al., 2014). Few data are available about parenting or about the ways these individuals establish their families. However, some studies show that while many BIPOC LGBTQ2+ have families, they don't necessarily match up with the normative two-parent model of parenting. Many BIPOC LGBTQ2+ people don't have children with a same-sex partner and don't necessarily make use of reproductive technologies such as fertility clinics (Tasker and Rensten, 2019). This is because, among other things, BIPOC LGBTQ2+ people don't necessarily adopt the traditional narrative of coming out and visibility that's shared by white LGBTQ+ communities, and because founding a family by using methods that are anchored in a white, Western and colonialist understanding of the family is not always possible or desirable for BIPOC people.

Along those same lines, some studies that have been carried out with these parents, often in the United States, tell us that most racialized and immigrant LGBTQ2+ people had their children in previous heterosexual relationships (Tasker and Rensten, 2019). For some racialized women in these situations, a tension between "good mothering" and non-normative sexuality appears to be predominant in their experience. "Good mothering," which is still implicitly linked with whiteness and heterosexuality (Chbat, 2019), generates a conflict for racialized lesbian mothers who have to not only try to deconstruct the idea that lesbian identity is deviant according to some members of their communities, but also pull apart negative stereotypes about their "race" and about Black women's sexuality in general.

Studies about racialized gay and bisexual men who have had children in heterosexual relationships bring up similar issues, where these men's roles as "good fathers" and as providers come into

conflict with their sexual or romantic orientation. For some fathers, it can be more important to pursue their father role, particularly when dealing with their communities of origin, than to openly take on a homosexual identity. Our reading of these choices cannot be reduced to the parent being closed or lacking authenticity. Rather, we need to try and understand the factors that help these parents find **the best balance** so that they can experience both their parenting and their sexuality with the greatest possible comfort. Once again, it's essential to move away from the white, hegemonic narrative about homosexuality to truly understand the ways BIPOC LGBTQ+ people choose to pursue parenting.

6.

Are children who grow up in BIPOC LGBTQ2+ families generally biologically related to their parents or parental figures? How are these families structured?

As previously noted, BIPOC LGBTQ2+ families have many ways to create their families, and also have family arrangements that don't necessarily match the nuclear, two-parent model common for white same-sex-parented families (Cross, 2018). Many racialized and immigrant families live with members of their extended families or are in multigenerational configurations (Moras, 2007). These configurations are especially important for Latinx, Asian and Caribbean immigrant families in order to improve their living conditions after immigrating. LGBTQ+ people are thus also part of these multigenerational families.

Another particularity of the extended or multigenerational families in which many racialized and immigrant LGBTQ2+ people live is the question of **adopting** a child from within the extended family or the community. Racialized and immigrant LGBTQ2+ people may provide major financial support for their extended families, and some also take care of their brothers', sisters' and other family members' children. According to a study by Moore and Stambolis-Rushstorfer (2013), Black same-sex couples are twice as likely to take care of a child they're not biologically related to than white same-sex couples are. But we must note that these parents, parental figures and family arrangements rarely appear in studies on LGBTQ+ parents.

The practice of caring for non-biologically-related children is also present within Indigenous communities, and concerns a high proportion of Two-Spirit people. Historically, Two-Spirit people have always had caregiving and teaching roles with regard to the children in their communities (Gilley, 2006). Many of them have taken charge of children when their parents could not. Two-Spirit people who have taken care of their communities' children have played a key role, in that they take

part in passing down the rites and customs that are deeply tied with Indigenous cultures (Evans-Campbell, 2007).

More generally, Indigenous communities are anchored around family organization styles that are broader than white Western family codes. Many Indigenous families also live in multigenerational structures, and parenting is not reserved for biological parents. The extended family, siblings and cousins are at the heart of Indigenous family structures, and this also extends to Indigenous families with LGBTQ2+ parents.

As mentioned previously, within Indigenous communities, it's common for a member of the extended family to take charge of a child. This configuration, also known as **traditional adoption**, is a key feature of Indigenous communities (Guay, 2015). Adoption can be temporary or of indefinite duration to meet various needs: to momentarily ease parents' responsibilities, to create a complex network of relatives or grow the network of adults who help contribute financially. Of course, the adoptive parents may be Two-Spirit or LGBTQ+ people.

What's important here is to understand that we must expand our understanding of family from nuclear to include multigenerational and community-type families when we're looking at the family lives of Indigenous, racialized and immigrant people. These families' identities are usually anchored within their communities of origin, and it's erroneous to believe that LGBTQ2+ people aren't included in them. On the contrary, many of them may play key roles.

7.

Is it important for BIPOC LGBTQ2+ families to be part of or involved in a religious community? How do these people and families negotiate their sexuality and their religion?

Having a strong religious identity while belonging to LGBTQ+ communities has long been presented as impossible. This is particularly due to the fact that in many religious communities, same-sex relationships are considered against nature or fundamentally bad (Acosta, 2020). However, some LGBTQ+ people feel the **need to claim a faith** or a form of spirituality, and this is true across many religions.

Not all religious people share the same beliefs about sexual and gender diversity. For some, homosexuality is an unchangeable fact, and LGBTQ+ people must be included in one way or another within their religious community. Still, many studies point to the same conclusion: **reconciling a religious identity with an LGBTQ+ identity is much more difficult and complex for people living in contexts where same-sex sexuality and gender non-conformity are perceived as negative or are forbidden** (Fankhanel, 2010). In these cases, the people in question seem to have difficulty developing satisfying romantic and sexual relationships with others of the same sex (Quinn and Dickson-Gomez, 2016).

Studies on people who are part of more flexible religious communities also note that while some LGBTQ+ people are included, the inclusion is almost always partial (Ganzevoort et al., 2011). Ganzevoort et al.'s study (2011) of the experiences of young people who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual and who were raised within Protestant or Pentecostal communities shows that they hold a variable relationship with religion. For some, it was imperative to choose between religious identity and sexual orientation, whereas others found it possible for the two identities to coexist, and claimed them both in different ways within their religious communities. Regardless of how these individuals articulated their identities, that articulation was not always definitive; some fluctuated between affirming their sexual orientation and their religious belonging.

Regardless, many studies support the powerful idea that while LGBTQ+ people of faith develop various strategies over the course of their lives to reconcile these two facets of their identities, the strategy that seems to best match with a positive reconciliation is that of **distancing** from the religious institution (Etengoff and Rodriguez, 2017). This distance is marked by a **reinterpretation** of religious texts or a questioning of the authority figures that represent the religious institution. Distance from the institution also helps people recognize that a literal interpretation of religious texts generally favours homophobic and sexist statements and positions. As such, many LGBTQ+ people who want to develop a faith or maintain their belonging with a given religious community consider that it's essential to first detach themselves from the institution's literal framework, which is generally anchored in a patriarchal vision of social relationships. This critique allows the people concerned to positively rebuild their relationship to their faith and sometimes to their religious community, particularly when it includes them as they are (Battle and DeFreece, 2014).

As well, a growing number of studies that have looked at the intersection of religious belonging and LGBTQ+ identities also support the idea that it's essential to take into consideration the experience of "race" or belonging to a minoritized ethnic group in order to understand the experiences of religious LGBTQ+ people. For many racialized people, especially in the Southern United States, the experience of racial solidarity that's strongly present within some religious communities can hinder the affirmation of a non-normative sexual identity or a trans identity (Acosta, 2020). In such cases, it would be reductive to simply talk about individual choice. Racialized LGBTQ+ people who want to develop their belonging in a religious community are sometimes forced to be silent about or hide their sexual orientation or gender identity in order to feel supported as racialized people by a community anchored in the basis of religion.

Still, let's recall that the degree of openness within these religious communities is highly variable, and that in some cases, religious communities and denominations are explicitly inclusive of sexual and gender diversity, such as, for example, the United Church[9] (UCC) in Canada and the United States (Abramson, 2005), the Episcopal Church, the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC), and some branches of Judaism, such as the Reform and Reconstructionist branches, which have supported LGBTQ+ people since the 1970s (Barrow, 2016).

While these data are important, as they remind us that religious LGBTQ+ people exist while shedding light on their **agency**, it's still essential to recognize that at this time, we know very little about the experiences of LGBTQ+ parents who want to raise their children in religious traditions. This absence of data is significant, and supports the idea that LGBTQ+ people who want to become parents generally leave religious communities and spaces as adults to start their families (Gurrentz, 2017).

Still, a growing number of LGBTQ+ parents who had left their religious communities have gone back to them or want to return, particularly racialized people and immigrants who are isolated, are single parents, or need their community's support (Uecker, 2016). In these cases, the inclusion of LGBTQ+ parents and their children within religious communities is also structured by various factors, such as the ways homosexuality is perceived and the methods LGBTQ+ people employ to have their children (Powell et al., 2010). Within religious communities in which sexual orientation is perceived as something outside the person, or as uncontrollable (ex. a person is a lesbian because God made her that way), LGBTQ+ parents tend to be better accepted by members of the religious community. As well, a study by Gross et al. (2018) shows that LGBTQ+ parents who had their children through adoption or within previous heterosexual relationships seem to benefit from a more favourable view on the part of their religious community members compared to those who had children by using surrogate mothers or sperm donors. This result echoes the point of view of religious people, particularly Catholic ones, for whom reproductive technologies come into conflict with certain religious principles. Assisted procreation and reproductive technologies may go against a "religious" understanding of procreation organized by God; these methods are still perceived as selfish or incompatible with religious values. Adoption, for its part, seems to better match with the religious and humanitarian values held by various religious communities.

Despite many examples of the inclusion of LGBTQ+ people and parents within religious communities, we must note that most major religious institutions have adopted an approach of "tolerance" or silence rather than an affirming approach for sexual and gender minorities. Some religious spaces promote an approach they call tolerant by welcoming LGBTQ+ parents within the community, but preventing them from holding central roles (Froese, 2016). In other words, rather than focusing on affirming and validating LGBTQ+ people and their families, the tolerance approach taken by many religious communities welcomes these people's faith and religious practice while minimizing their potential to influence the community. This approach, while partially inclusive, also leads in some cases to a kind of alienation for LGBTQ+ people, as they are restricted in their ability to fully engage in their communities (Rostosky et al., 2017). This explains the weariness and distance that some religious LGBTQ+ people may feel regarding their religious institutions.

While some people—particularly immigrants, racialized people and people from minoritized ethnic groups—feel the need to integrate spirituality into their lives and to provide it for their children because that spirituality also fits with their cultural identifications, many LGBTQ+ parents end up either distancing themselves from the religious institution or remaining discreet within it, as they cannot be fully themselves there. However, in these cases, the benefits of being part of an ethnic and religious community may be stronger than the need to fully self-affirm within that community.

Some studies describe this negotiation as "tacit avoidance" (McQueeney, 2009). In these cases, the people take part in their religious community with their partner but without necessarily naming their sexuality. This position reminds us of the strategies employed by many LGBTQ+ immigrants who live in contexts where homosexuality is criminalized (Decena, 2008; El-Hage and Lee, 2016). **Here, a person's need to belong to a community is much greater than the need to name or make visible their sexual orientation.**

However, while many LGBTQ+ parents content themselves with tolerant or silent religious spaces, a significant number of these parents want to build ties with other LGBTQ+ families who also share their faith. This desire is strengthened by the fact that these parents also consider the teachings of their faith to be essential values they want to transmit to their children (Rostosky, 2017).

Still, while many religious LGBTQ+ parents want to be active within their religious community and share its values with their children, just as many LGBTQ+ parents encourage their children to remain critical of religious institutions and first and foremost favour a personal religious or spiritual practice (Gallagher, 2007; Tuthill, 2016). This explains how most children raised in a faith by two same-sex parents generally maintain their beliefs into adulthood, but unlike children raised by heterosexual parents in these same religious communities, children who have two same-sex parents tend to practice spirituality outside the institution as adults (Richards et al., 2017). Generally, these adult children feel they can develop a religious or spiritual identity without being engaged with organized religion.

Lastly, more studies need to be conducted on the experiences of Muslim LGBTQ+ parents. While many countries where Islam is the predominant religion still criminalize homosexuality, some studies support the idea that Muslim LGBTQ+ people also find their own ways reconcile their faith and their sexual orientation or gender identity (Kamrudin, 2018). While these people don't appear to practice their religion within the community in spaces such as mosques, many find ways to positively reconcile their identities. In these cases, it seems imperative to pay particular attention to the intense cultural racism these communities experience. The current Western context is marked by many polarized discourses on cultural and religious identities, and Muslim identity is strongly seen as being in opposition to so-called modern, Western identity. Muslim LGBTQ+ people have a hard time finding a place both in their religious communities and in LGBTQ+ communities while also suffering from a great deal of discrimination based on both their sexual orientation and their religious affiliation. Given this hostile context, it is essential to try and understand these people's trajectories and to shed light on their unique position and their agency (Chehaitly et al., 2021).

8.

Are the parenting practices of BIPOC LGBTQ2+ families different from those often shared by white LGBTQ+ parents?

The multiple configurations and structures of BIPOC LGBTQ2+ families support the idea that many of them employ parenting practices that may be different from those mainly shared by white LGBTQ+ parents. In these non-exclusively-nuclear, culturally variable practices, **parenting practices**[10] also emerge that are too often still the target of negative prejudices on the part of white and non-immigrant communities.

For Indigenous families, for instance, it's essential to recognize that they generally operate in a complex structure of relatives which may be hard for a non-Indigenous person to grasp. Many Indigenous authors say that family life in their communities is based on **ties of interdependence**, meaning ties that link family elders vertically with their children and grandchildren, as well as horizontal ties that laterally connect all other members of the extended family (brothers, sisters, cousins, partners and their children), including close friends (Guay, 2015). At the core of this structure of relatives there exists a system of obligations and responsibilities by which mutual respect, aid and a sense of responsibility between **all** members helps create sharing relationships and solid ties that benefit everyone. This is particularly important insofar as children hold a central place within this complex system. This family organization, and this complex and multidimensional relationship to family, necessarily guide the parenting practices of these communities, which go beyond the white, Western colonialist framework. While few studies examine the Indigenous notions and beliefs that form the basis of these parenting practices, we recognize that many of them differ considerably from Western practices in several aspects. These differences are problematic mainly because they are a source of misunderstanding between non-Indigenous people and Indigenous parents. In the context of intervention, this is all the more problematic in that the negative ethnocentric judgement of these families can harm them and reduce the effectiveness of the care and services provided to them (Awashish et al., 2017).

For example, we recognize that many Indigenous communities value the practice of **non-interference** toward their children, or the practice of following **the child's pace**. Generally speaking, these practices come down to the idea that parents have the duty and responsibility to let children develop their autonomy and to let them express their needs and make their own choices very early in their development. In Indigenous understandings of the family and the community, interfering in the lives of individuals, just like commanding or persuading people, can be considered as an intrusion and a lack of respect. As well, it's essential for many Indigenous families to follow the child's pace and not set it for them. In this sense, for many Indigenous families, establishing routines such as naps, bedtimes, dinner times and so on are Western colonialist practices that may contradict some of their child-raising values and strategies.

This being said, it's also important to not exoticize Indigenous parenting practices, and to recognize that some families adhere to and apply practices that are also shared by white, non-Indigenous LGBTQ+ families. Rather, we need to recognize that within Indigenous communities, parenting practices exist that are different from those we have internalized in non-Indigenous contexts, and these practices are not bad or negligent because they're different. On the contrary, they're not only meaningful and central to these communities and families, but they also help in some cases to transmit and preserve their history and culture of these communities, in which people, both historically and currently, have been deprived of their autonomy and their ability to become parents and create families. Let's recall that some family practices and configurations are responses to the colonization and racism experienced by these groups and communities. For example, the extended family as the foundation for the family institution can also be interpreted as a survival strategy for many groups and communities, particularly in an Indigenous context.

While these non-Western practices have not been catalogued in a meaningful way in studies with immigrant and racialized families, they are also shared in some cases by such families. Many BIPOC families (of which some are also LGBTQ+) also share a horizontal family structure and place great importance on the involvement of various extended family members in the raising and care of children (ex.: aunts, grandmothers, and so on). In short, it appears essential to recognize that parenting practices can vary within BIPOC LGBTQ2+ families and that we have some unlearning to do in relation to our practices when we are dealing with these differences. This unlearning starts first and foremost with the **decolonization** of our relationship to family.

Families with same-sex parents have long had to prove they were as good and valid as families with heterosexual parents (Greenbaum, 2015). Many studies have attempted to prove the "similar" and "reassuring" characteristics of families with same-sex parents by comparing them to straight

parenting and finding the anchor points that make them equivalent (Chbat et al., forthcoming). However, today, we note that LGBTQ+ people are no longer necessarily trying to reproduce these normative family models, and many have made conscious choices to dissociate from them in order to take on forms of parenting that better match their values and plans. Think, for example, of multi-parent families that remain invisible and benefit from no legal recognition. In short, by looking at the variability of the models and structures that exist within racialized and immigrant LGBTQ+ families, we can also get around some of the binaries that are often associated with parenting, and rethink our relationship to the family.

The work of Banerjee and Connell (2018) on LGBTQ+ parenting in non-Western contexts encourages us to integrate knowledge that destabilizes understandings of the family that are still very centred on white Western models. According to these authors, true inclusion requires an understanding and integration of family models that differ from the ones we know and see as the best. This kind of attitude, which can also translate into a kind of solidarity-based approach, helps us better understand how colonization has shaped Western LGBTQ+ parenting. This is not just about citing the various models of parenting in non-Western contexts, but rather, changing our perspectives on parenting by deconstructing our Western reference points and presuppositions about parenting and (queer) sexuality. The existence and experiences of racialized and immigrant LGBTQ+ families also ask that we become aware of our privileges and truly understand the hierarchical positionings that necessarily affect these families.

9.

How do LGBTQ2+ parents who are persecuted or experience major barriers in their countries of origin immigrate to Canada? Can these people and families gain refugee status?

Many issues experienced by racialized families and those who identify with a minoritized ethnic group or religion also apply to LGBTQ+ families who have experienced **immigration**. Maintaining transnational relationships, multigenerational structures and closeness with members of their ethnic or religious communities in the context of immigration are all issues that are important to these families and contribute to their well-being and balance (Nakamura, 2020). For some of these people, it's essential to maintain ties with their extended family, particularly for financial reasons; once again, the white narrative of homosexuality cannot always take priority.

As well, the **immigration policies** in effect in the new country are also fundamental factors in ensuring immigrants' smooth integration. In Canada, some immigration policies are favourable to some bi-national LGBTQ+ couples, particularly since same-sex marriage has been recognized since 2005. Some studies show that Canada is often a destination of choice for many LGBTQ+ people, particularly for couples and families that are able to sponsor their partners and other family members.

However, for some LGBTQ+ immigrant families, immigration can be a major challenge, especially for refugees and asylum-seekers. While Canada has recognized since 1993 that persecution on the basis of sexual orientation is a valid reason for a refugee claim, generally the criteria for demonstrating this are problematic (Hamila, 2019). Sexual minority refugees must be able to prove that their

sexual orientation is a reason for persecution in their country in order for their claim to be considered. This demonstration requires that the person be visible to some extent—having come out or being in a romantic or sexual relationship with a person of the same sex. But for the people experiencing such persecution, it's not always possible to come out or to maintain a relationship with a same-sex partner. So it can become difficult for these people to make claims, and many must resort to leaving their country in an unofficial way and requesting asylum. Asylum claims come with their own challenges, as they don't allow individuals to obtain protections such as citizenship and can always be refused once submitted.

Let's note that the narrative by which people are expected to come out in their country of origin is also predominant for trans people, and greatly affects their opportunities to make refugee claims in Canada. These individuals, who experience serious forms of violence and are more likely to live in financial precarity in their country of origin, are not always able to prove they are trans, especially if they have not had access to hormone treatment or have not yet undertaken a transition process for safety or financial reasons. We must therefore recognize that while racialized LGBTQ+ people face similar issues to LGBTQ+ immigrants from the Global South, once they arrive in their new countries, they may experience major barriers in their immigration process and are sometimes separated from their families or partners for some time, exposing them to isolation and loss of their network, which makes their trajectory more complex. While the Universal Declaration on Human Rights says that immigration is a fundamental right for all individuals, in fact, it remains a privilege for people who are generally from privileged economic classes and who have access to education and can apply to be economic immigrants to Canada. Remember that LGBTQ+ people, including parents, experience greater financial precarity in the Global South and don't always have access to education, which makes their immigration more difficult or impossible.

Works cited

Endnotes

1 The National Transgender Discrimination Survey (Grant et al., 2011) was carried out with 6,450 trans and gender-non-conforming people.

2 This term is gender-neutral and is used to refer to people living in the United States whose culture is mainly Latin-American.

3 Indigenous people in Canada saw a population growth of 20% between 2006 and 2011, compared to a 5% growth for non-Indigenous people (Statistics Canada, 2014).

4 Immigrant families represent 22.6% of families with children (MFA, 2014).

5 The term "homonationalism," coined by Jasbir Puar in the work *Terrorist Assemblages* (2007), has become a broad term designating activist strategies and public policy that promotes the acceptance of queer citizens and the recognition of LGBTQ+ rights at the expense of the Other, in particular racialized individuals that are not as progressive. See, for instance, Smith (2019).

6 The deaths of Breonna Taylor in March 2020 and of George Floyd in May 2020 in the United States—two racialized people who died because of police brutality and the unequal treatment of racialized people—are events that have been particularly significant in growing the anti-racist movement in recent years.

7 In Québec, the death of Joyce Echaquan in September 2020—an Indigenous person who died following negligence and racism on the part of medical staff—is another major event in the recent history of anti-racist and decolonial struggles.

8 Intersectionality refers to the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism and classism) combine, overlap or intersect, especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups. The theory of intersectionality was introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw, a lawyer and academic.

9 In 2003, this Church took a resolution in favour of trans people, and in 2006, took a resolution in favour of same-sex marriage. In 2011, the Church showed their support for adoption on the part of LGBTQ+ parents (Rudolph, 2011).

10 Child-raising and parenting practices generally refer to the set of behaviours and attitudes that parents take on toward their children (Guay, 2015).

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