Sexual Freedom in Europe: Sex, Birth-Control, Pregnancy and Motherhood among Brazilian Women in Lisbon

Gispen, Maurice

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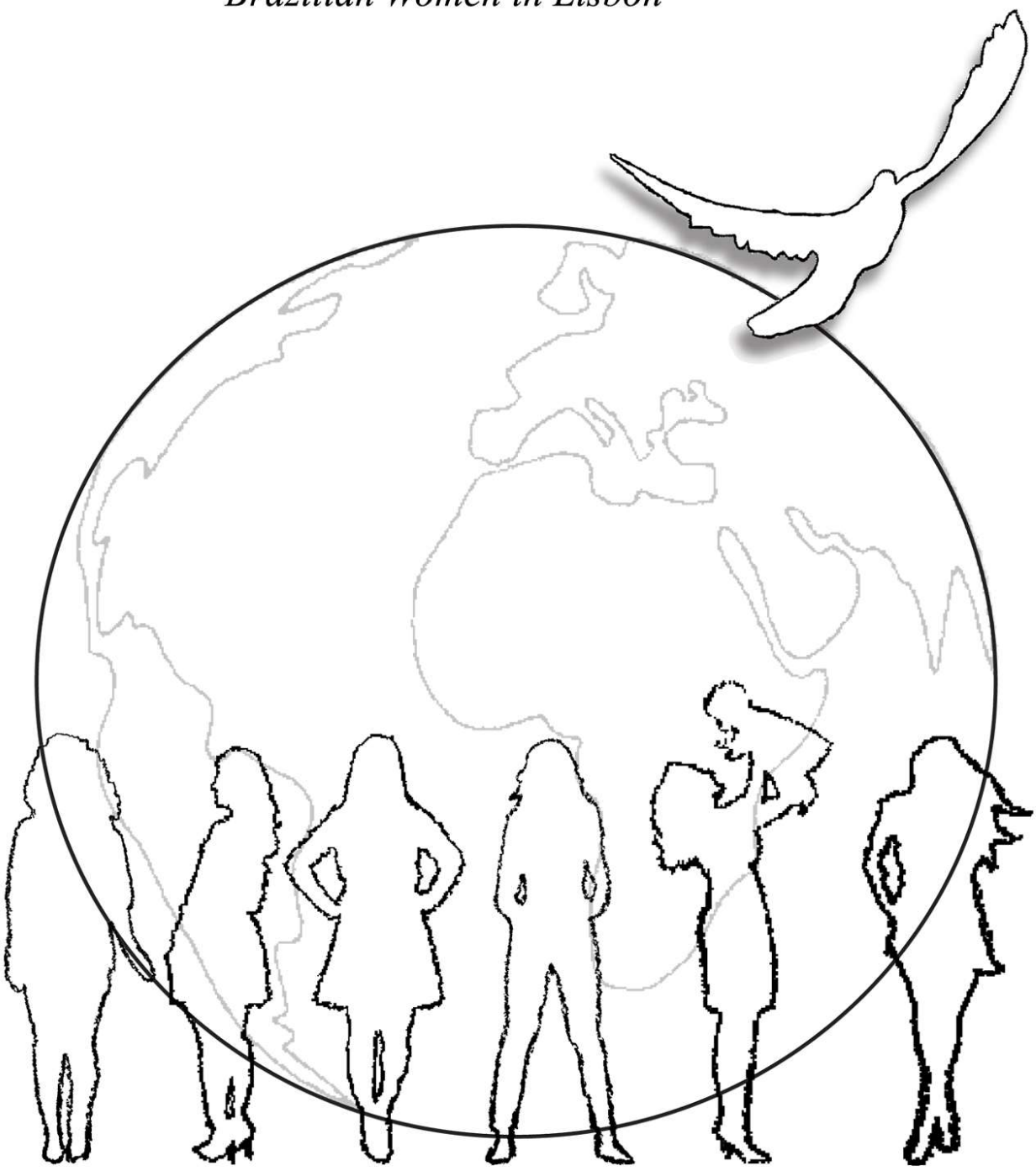

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Among Brazilian Women in Lisbon

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

From the 3rd of January 2022 to the 7th of April 2022, I have conducted ethnographic anthropological research in Lisbon, Portugal. After two months of preparations for doing fieldwork in Brazil, my request to do so got rejected by the university because of the covid pandemic. This rejection turned out to be one of the most positive things that could have happened to me. It resulted in a fruitful and inspiring period in Lisbon where I got to meet many Brazilians who taught me so much about their country. Also I was able to close an intense period of traveling back and forth between The Netherlands and Rio de Janeiro.

Within these three months I made friends that recognized my ambitions as an anthropologist and my passion for writing and talking about female sexuality. They became part of this academic journey, my research and of my personal life for which I am thankful in an indescribable way. Even though I did not mention every woman specifically that has been a part of this research, I want to say that every tiny interaction was of great value in order to get answers to the question that I had.

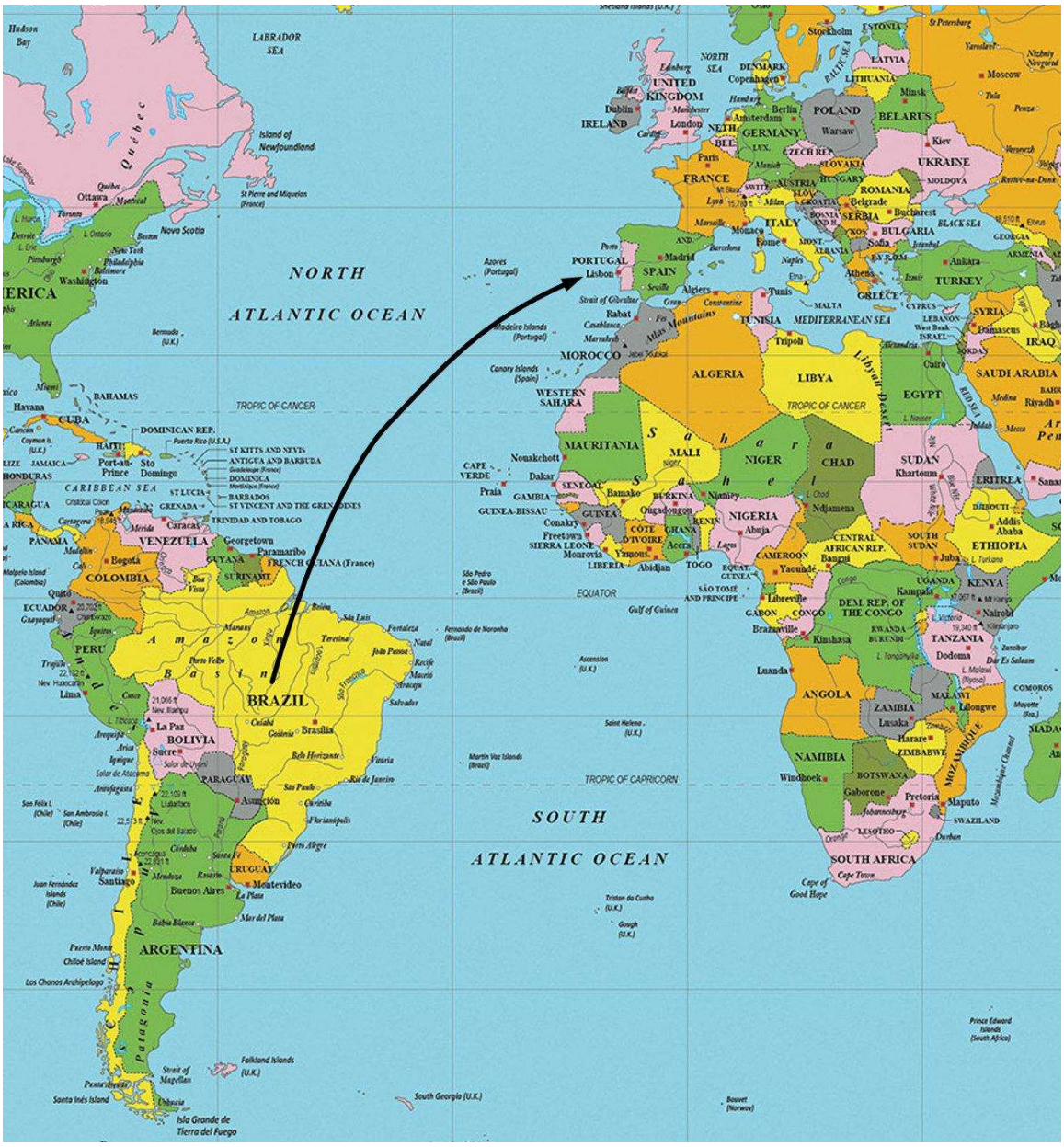
A crucial person in this process has been my supervisor Dr. Benjamin Fogarty-Valenzuela, who convinced me to continue my research even when I was not able to go to Brazil. He showed me how to be flexible and how my academic ambitions would find their ways, even if I could not follow my original plans. During and after fieldwork his feedback helped me to improve myself as an academic writer. His trust and enthusiasm in my project have been major motivators.

Also, I thank my dad who has been the closest reader of this thesis. Without his critical feedback on the sentences, words and structure this final version would definitely have been much less clear than what it is now. Elise as partner in crime during fieldwork in Rio de Janeiro. Many thanks to Karen van Dulmen Krumpelman for the beautiful design of the cover symbolizing this research.

In Rio de Janeiro I thank everyone who taught me how to speak Portuguese over the past three years. Without their patience I would not have been able to speak Portuguese as I do today.

And finally I thank my mother, my sister and Kaat who are my biggest inspiration, who made me ask these questions in the first place, the question who we are as women on this strange planet.

MAURICE CÉCILIA GISPEN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URUGUAY
COLOMBIA
VENEZUELA
TROPIC OF CANCER
TROPIC OF CAPRICORN
EQUATOR
CARIBBEAN SEA
Sahara
Libyan Desert
Atlas Mountains
Amazon Basin

INTRODUCTION[1]

It is midnight, at least 28 degrees Celsius outside, February 2020 as I wake up in my small room in Tabajaras, one of the many *favelas*[2] in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. I wake up from noises, the sound of beating pans together with people screaming "*Fora Bolsonaro!*"[3] (Out with Bolsonaro) out of their window. Nationally and even internationally the hashtags #*ForaBolsonaro* and #*EleNão* (he not) got a lot of media attention as citizens throughout the whole country protested against the conservative right-wing president Jair Bolsonaro who got elected in 2018. This hashtag has become a public movement to show frustrations about the president who is often portrayed as sexist, racist and homophobic (Diniz, 2020: 18). But what does a population do when screaming "*Fora Bolsonaro"* does not help?
They leave the country.

For the past three years there has been an increase in Brazilians leaving the country (Nesheim, 2019). And what place would be perfect to migrate to for Brazilians? Portugal. As the former colonizer, a country with the same language and a large Brazilian community, Portugal has always been a popular destination for Brazilian migrants. The worsening political and economical situation during Bolsonaro's presidency, an increase in violence and the unstable conditions during the ongoing covid pandemic, made even more Brazilians leave the country. With an increase of 22% since 2019 Brazilians are currently the largest group of migrants in Portugal, with more Brazilian women[4] than men now living in Portugal (SEF, 2021 ed.). In June 2020 Human Rights Watch (HRW) called out for more attention to reproductive health (e.g. access to birth-control and legal/safe access to abortion) in Brazil, since domestic violence and unplanned pregnancies increased during the pandemic (HRW,

[1] Many sections of this introduction and theoretical framework are developed from either the research proposal or field reports that I have submitted at Leiden University for the courses of the master program Cultural Anthropology and Developmental Sociology 2021-2022.
[2] A direct English translation of *favela* would be 'shanty town' or 'slum' (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021**).** In Brazil '*favela'* is the name for poorer areas where a lot of small houses are built on top of each other. Often they are also called *comunidades* (communities), referring to a strong sense of social control and belonging within the community. In Rio de Janeiro there are over 250 *favelas.* (fieldnotes and conversations with Henrique a 23-year-old *carioca*, 2018-2020).
[3] This movement started with *#ForaDilma* during the presidency of Brazil's first female president: Dilma Rousseff. Her impeachment in 2016 was a result of corruption scandals leaving the country in economic recession. Many women protested against sexist ideologies underlying her impeachment. After in 2016 *#ForaTemer* became a movement as the new president Michel Temer - a man - succeeded Rousseff. The hashtag was a movement against his conservative religious and right-wing ideologies concerning women's and reproductive rights. (Hao, 2016; Rangel et. al., 2020: 172).
[4] In 2020 *Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras* (SEF) reports 102,673 Brazilian women in Portugal and 81,20 Brazilian men.

2020). But, Bolsonaro seemed to ignore any request. What do unsafety, instability and insecurity mean for the reproductive health[5] of Brazilian women?

In 2019 anthropologist Elise Fellinger and I conducted complementary ethnographic research (*Being a Woman in Zona Sul*[6]) on femininity, sex and love among *carioca*[7] women and female tourists in (intimate/sexual) relationships with Brazilian men in Rio de Janeiro. During interviews at that time *carioca* women often idealized European countries as (sexually) liberal, anti-racist, safe and free of *macho*[8] men (Gispen and Fellinger, 2019). But is Europe as utopian as they imagine it to be?

This thesis is a follow-up study about different ideas on sexual freedom among Brazilian women who currently live in Lisbon; as an exploration of the perception of sexual freedom while being outside Brazil. Building on three months of research on parallel themes in Rio de Janeiro, I now attempt to answer the following main question: "*How do Brazilian women in Lisbon experience sexual freedom in relation to their reproductive health?*".

In our previous research female sexual identity was studied in relation to gender, sexual desire and intimacy. This research focuses on 'reproductive health' as an umbrella term relating to four themes: (1) *sex* as the physical act of having sex; (2) *birth-control* as for example the pill, sterilization or abortion; (3) *pregnanc*y as both the bodily experience of being pregnant as well as the idea or desire to become pregnant; and (4) *motherhood* as a social cultural concept that gives meaning to 'the mother' beyond the mere biological aspect of 'the mother'.

Previous anthropological studies on these topics mainly focus on teenage pregnancies among lower class women from poorer areas of Brazil (e.g. O'Dougherty, 2008; Sax, 2010; Steele, 2011). Without the intention to underestimate the influence of certain factors, such as instability, violent environments or limited access to healthcare, I do not primarily focus on one specific class as an indicator. I wish to build on these previous studies from a more *intersectional* perspective (Crenshaw, 1991). Intersectionality is used as a methodological tool to understand how experiences of and ideas on sexual freedom among

[5] Within this inquiry I follow the World Health Organization's (2022) definition of reproductive health: "Reproductive health implies that people are able to have a satisfying and safe sex life and that they have the capability to reproduce and the freedom to decide if, when and how often to do so."
[6] This research can be found online at the university library of Utrecht University.
[7] *Carioca* is a name and (self)identification for the local inhabitants of Rio de Janeiro. *Paulista* is another example of such an identification for local inhabitants of São Paulo (Goslin, 2008: 9).
[8] *Machismo* can best be defined as the traditional essentialized ideas on roles ascribed to gender. Such as a man being the one who makes money in the family and the woman the one who takes care of the children (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021). A *macho* man is a man who reinforces such essentializations.

Brazilian women in Lisbon are shaped by different 'layers' of their identity (e.g gender, class, age, sexual orientation).

In order to write an inclusive narrative *with*, *about* and *for* women I emphasize the diversity *within* the social categorization 'Brazilian woman', in terms of age, class, sexual orientation and social background. To illustrate the diversity of Brazilian women in Lisbon I set out six ideal types[9] of Brazilian women (Chapter 3) based on Max Weber's methodological approach on ideal types in qualitative research (Weber 2012b in Swedberg, 2018). These ideal types should function as an observation and an interpretive description of the variety of women that I have met, rather than as a solid representation of empirical reality (Swedberg, 2018: 184).

To write with, about and for women, the final product often does not necessarily need to be the most important aspect of the research. This research, as a form of collaborative ethnography (Lassiter, 2005), has been more about the process and practice of it and not solely about the final written product (Lassiter, 2005: 133). Therefore the main goal of this research was actually achieved *during* fieldwork and this thesis is a representation of how these goals were accomplished. Talking with other women about reproductive health and becoming more conscious - through conversation - about the sexual decisions women make, was the main goal of this research. This thesis aims to inspire women to think about their - and others'- ideas on sexual freedom and about the (sexual) decisions they make - or not - in order to become the best sexual version of themselves.

From January to April 2022 I spoke with over forty women from all over Brazil. The youngest was nine-teen and the oldest was sixty years old. With at least twenty of them I did one or more in-depth interviews and with five women I was able to build reciprocal long-term friendships who became key-figures on an academic and personal level until today. Nara is a woman who I met in my first week in Lisbon. She invited me to all kinds of events with her huge Brazilian group of friends. We enjoyed dinners at her place together, celebrated carnival and the birthday of her boyfriend and almost on a weekly basis I would pass by at the bar where she works to hang out there with her Brazilian colleagues and friends. Thanks to her many lovely invitations I got to know almost half of all the Brazilians that I have met in Lisbon.

[9] In *Come As You Are*, Emily Nagoski (2015) also sets out four archetypes that represent all women she spoke with over a long period of time. Being deeply inspired by her book and style of writing I also use this way of representing my participants by setting out six ideal types of Brazilian women.

Michele, another important key-figure who lived around the corner of my house, invited me for lunches and dinners at her place and every now and then we would have long walks through the city where we continued our conversation on female sexuality. Rosangela and Juraçara were two young women both working at a Brazilian lunchroom in the center of Lisbon. The three of us could connect since we were all relatively new in the city (they arrived only two months before me). Together we reflected on Lisbon from the perspective of newcomers from different countries.

And Jamilla is a woman who I met at a samba night in a Brazilian-African restaurant Mocambo. With her I had coffee, dinner and long interesting conversations about the colonial history of Brazil from the perspective of a woman who left her home country decades ago. She introduced me to various Brazilians (mostly men) with whom we would hang out at her place.

Each story of each woman has its own specific contribution and value to a broader understanding of sexual freedom among Brazilian women who live in Lisbon. These stories are illustrated throughout the thesis in the following order:

Chapter 1 is a theoretical and contextual overview in which I present various definitions of (sexual) freedom (Foucault, 1982; Hunt, 2013; Parsons, 2014; Sheller, 2012). With these definitions I illustrate how *being* free in a literal sense and *feeling* free as an internal process are two intertwined ways to look at sexual freedom. For example, how being physically and financially able to move to Europe - in comparison to other Brazilians who are not - does not necessarily make these women *feel* as if they are (more) free. Or how the absence of safe and legal access to abortion did not limit some Brazilian women in performing abortion when they wanted to. From there on I focus on feminism in the postcolonial context of Brazil and how multiple interpretations of feminism(s) are necessary to understand sexual freedom.

Next I illustrate how gender (woman/man) can be seen as a biological categorization, but also as a culturally constructed idea on what makes a woman a woman or a mother a mother (Butler, 1999: 15). What I suggest in this section is that there is no clear-cut definition of either biological facts or cultural interpretations, but rather how both aspects seem to be crucial in understanding the way in which Brazilian women give meaning to their reproductive health. This is illustrated with various case studies on reproductive health in Brazil (Edmonds, 2010; O'Dougherty, 2008; Sabriana, 2016; Sax, 2010; Steele, 2011)

Chapter 2 focuses on the most important methods used throughout this research. I explain why the intersectional lens (Crenshaw, 1991) is important while looking at Brazilian

women - as an almost infinite and diverse categorization, why friendship in the field can be both helpful and an obstacle, why this research is both collaborative (Lassiter, 2005) and multi-sited (Marcus, 1994), how all interviews were conducted in terms of language, form of the relationship and the type of participant and why this research was with women and not with men.

Chapter 3 is an analytical and methodological chapter in which I set out six Weberian ideal types of Brazilian women: (1) the half half type, (2) the future focused feminist, (3) the immigrant, (4) the mother, (5) the childless feminist and (6) the bird. I have based these ideal types on Weber's methodological approach that helped me as a researcher and should help you as the reader to make a sense of the complex whole of empirical findings (Gerhardt, 1994: 79; Weber 2012b in Swedberg, 2018: 183). These ideal types are not solid representations of reality; rather they can be seen as tools towards a first step of analyzing the endless diversity among the Brazilian women that I have met in Lisbon.

Chapter 4 is an empirical analysis of the 'European Dream', as this utopian idea of Europe as a stable, wealthy and safe continent full of possibilities. In this section I elaborate on the meaning Brazilian women give to *qualidade da vida* (quality of life) in Lisbon and what this quality of life does with the sexual decisions they make. For example, how this quality of life sometimes seems to be closely related to the desire to raise their kids in Europe. I elaborate on experiences of the friction between dreams and realities among Brazilian women after moving to Europe.

In Chapter 5 empirical findings and theory on sexual freedom come together. I analyse how for some Brazilian women sexual freedom can be seen as something that is experienced internally, which means *they* are the only ones who enable themselves to be sexually free, no matter where, when or with who they are on earth. At the same time other women see sexual freedom as something that can either be triggered or restricted by external factors such (un)safety, a partner and the family; as the most commonly mentioned factors. I show how ideas on internal and external freedom are closely connected to each other in the sexual lives of Brazilian women.

Chapter 6 is an empirical analysis on what motherhood means for mothers who gave birth in Brazil and then moved to Lisbon with their children; for a Brazilian mother who gave birth in Lisbon; for Brazilian women who never want to have children and for Brazilian women who want to have children one day in Lisbon. I show how the meaning of motherhood can change in a different social cultural environment and how a different time and place can shape the way in which Brazilian women make decisions in relation to their

reproductive health. These stories illustrate how different women from different generations give meaning to feminism and their role in society.

And finally chapter 7 is an empirical analysis of how to practice intersectionality in relations with participants. Furthermore, the chapter sets out what it means to be an insider and outsider as a woman in Portugal and how being either an insider or outsider shapes the ways in which Brazilian women are able to feel sexually free. This is illustrated with ethnographic descriptions of women who feel that not being part of a certain social environment, excludes you from the sexual norms and values which enables them to feel sexually free. At the same time other women describe exactly that this *not* being part of an environment, makes them feel naïve and strange about how to sexually behave in relation to others.

While guiding you through this thesis, I ask you to sit back and prepare to travel through time and space with me. I take you to the United States, where the first wave of feminism arose, resulting in The Sex Wars, sexual liberation and the use of birth-control. We go through crucial historical events in Latin America to get a slight idea of Brazilian women's position in a postcolonial society. We go to Porto Alegre, Salvador and Rio de Janeiro where we dive into the Brazilian world of virginity, abortion, teen-pregnancies, sterilization and the communal role of churches in motherhood. We travel between The Netherlands, Lisbon and Rio de Janeiro, as I actually did for the past three years through conversations I had on sexuality with women from all over the world.

All in all, I provide you with an overview of important concepts, ideas and narratives that guide you and me through different fields of anthropology and gender and sexuality studies. This thesis builds on three months of ethnographic research in Lisbon, which is seen as a part of this utopian idea about Europe. Yet, while the field has been Lisbon, the findings are connected to the broader context of Europe and Brazil since these places were of utmost importance to understand how Brazilian women gave meaning to sexual freedom in relation to their reproductive health. Therefore I consider 'the field' as multi-sited (Marcus, 1995), as a collection, a journey and a get-together of interconnected *patches* of knowledge (Günel et al., 2020), that all contribute to an ethnographic, qualitative and in-depth understanding of sexual freedom and reproductive health beyond the borders of one single place.

1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

" ... the desire for freedom and liberation
is a historically situated desire
whose motivational force cannot be assumed a priori ..."

- Saba Mahmood anthropologist from Pakistan (2001)

With Mahmood's quote in mind, I would like to take you to Rio de Janeiro, January 2021. As I am preparing to go to sleep I take the pill, that one pill preventing me from getting pregnant. My ex-boyfriend, a 24-year-old carioca looks up to me from the bed asking when I will ever stop taking these stupid pills. I swallow the pill and look at him. How can he even ask me this, when he knows how hard it is to have a child? At the age of seventeen he got a kid, who is now living with his ex-girlfriend. "Aqui no Brasil a gente não escolhe isso. Quando tem um filho, tem um filho. Não pode fazer nada" (Here in Brazil we don't choose to have children. If you get one, you have one). I was annoyed by his comment, easy talking as a man; I *am the one getting pregnant. But his comment made me think about the way I was taught to see pregnancy. I was told to wait for the right moment, the right person and some form of stability in life before I would 'start' with children. This was something good right? The way in which I was taking control over my - or our - sexual lives and future?*

1.1 SEXUAL FREEDOM

Freedom can best be described as the ability to control your own life, body and future and to individually choose what to do (Tannen and Lakoff in Parsons, 2014: 13). *Sexual freedom* has to do with choice in relation to reproductive rights and access to birth-control to be able to decide what to do sexually (e.g. having children or not) (Parsons, 2014:13). Thus, freedom is about something you want to achieve (Hunt, 2013: 27). This could be about going somewhere (e.g. Portugal), getting something (e.g. the morning-after pill) or doing something (e.g. having sex with who you want). But in order to achieve such things Brazilian women might face certain obstacles that either support or disable them to achieve such goals. But, the capability to be 'free', to travel, buy or perform does not seem to be the only aspect of freedom (Hunt, 2013: 27).

Someone in jail for example does not necessarily have to *feel* imprisoned, while someone who is practically 'free' to move and do whatever she or he wants might feel less free than the person in jail. So what is freedom beyond this physical capability to be able to move around to wherever you want to? This is what Mimi Sheller (2012) and Matthew Hunt (2013) refer to as *embodied freedom.*

Sheller (2012) elaborates on embodied freedom in the postcolonial context of the Caribbean. She analyses how a history of slavery shapes the way in which freedom is expressed, performed and exercised by Caribbeans. In doing so she emphasizes how bodies are carriers of certain histories that shape the way in which one is actually able to 'act out' freedom (Sheller, 2012: 16). She states that the interaction of individuals in private and public spaces, as carriers of race, sex and class, shapes the ways in which freedom can be understood (Scheller, 2012: 17, 246). For example, how Brazilian women express or experience sexual freedom within both the private (e.g. within a conservative family) and public (e.g. at pro-abortion protest in Rio de Janeiro) spheres, and how the interaction of these two spheres shapes the way in which freedom is performed.

Hunt (2013) analyses embodied freedom as a metaphor. He states that freedom is an abstraction that needs to be explained with concrete visualizations such as being imprisoned or handcuffed to understand what it means to be free. He states that freedom is something more than being literally free to move. In this sense he uses embodied freedom as a concept to understand freedom not literally, as the physical capability to move freely, but as a more metaphorical abstract idea of freedom that we cannot grasp with something concrete such as handcuffs (Hunt, 2013: 27). Ways to understand his theory might be: are Brazilian women who are (financially) able to leave Brazil per definition more free than women who are not able to leave the country? Are Dutch women more sexually free because they have the legal right to abortion? Or why can someone feel sexually restricted while no one is literally holding her back from being sexually free? Embodied freedom within this research is used as a concept to understand this complex dynamic between literally *being* free and internally *feeling* free.

To Foucault (1982), nothing - for example sexual behavior - can be seen as completely independent from structures of power (Foucault in Parsons, 2014: 6). Thus, when talking about sexual freedom of (Brazilian) women, we need to take a look at power. To define power and freedom within this inquiry I follow Foucault's (1982) thoughts on the dynamic and reciprocal connection between the two. He argues that power can only be exercised on 'free' subjects, which means in this context: Brazilian women. By free he refers

to the actual possibilities one has to realize certain personal desires. He states, however, there is no such thing as a clear-cut single definition of freedom, since freedom is closely tied to its *relationship* with power (Foucault 1982: 790). In other words, freedom is only freedom in relation to power and vice versa.

Mahmood (2001: 208) and also Lila Abu-Lughod (2013: 40) argue that the way in which women take control over their lives, is constructed by various cultural, social, economical, political and historical factors (what Foucault refers to as power). These factors, to them, are deeply interwoven in cultural systems of traditions, norms and values. Abu-Lughod (2013) for example illustrates how in the so-called West, the cultural practice of veiling is often represented as a symbol of women's oppression in Afghanistan. While covering up the female body can be seen as a form of oppression, nakedness can be connected to (sexual) liberation, however, reality shows how both practices involve more complex cultural nuances. With their ethnographic studies both Mahmood (2001) and Abu-Lughod (2013) show how to move beyond a universalist idea about one form of sexual liberation for all women. In other words, feminism, sexual liberation and desires about gender equality, reproductive health and freedom do not necessarily have to be the same for *all women (*Ang, 1995: 193).

The way in which I control my sexual life, by taking the pill for example, is something I consider as freedom. I have the ability to *choose* whether I want to take it or not and *I* can decide whether I want to have a child or not. But do I actually choose myself? While the accessibility seems to be closely connected to my ability to choose, I want to take it a step further. Did I choose freely, independently and personally to take the pill because *I* think it is not the right moment to have kids at the age of twenty-five? Or did society tell me that I need to have my life sorted out before I have children? This is where it comes to power - at least to some extent.

Thus, for Brazilian women to experience a sense of sexual freedom, we might need to take a look at the factors that define their individual perception of sexual freedom. Departing from here I wish to emphasize that freedom is not - or at least not *only* - something you have or do not have, get or do not get, but is an active process of an individual or group, as a performance and something you can act out. The next section focusses on different paths towards sexual liberation for women around the world to understand how and why both freedom and power need to be placed in a specific context.

1.2 WAVING THROUGH POSTCOLONIAL FEMINISMS

As the first feminist wave began around the 1960s, many women started striving for the acknowledgement and liberation of female sexuality (Rubin, 1992). Women were tired of being seen as reproduction machines; sex could - and should - also be about pleasure for both women and men, right? This first wave of feminism started in The United States, dominated by mainly white women. But what about other women, not white, not-highly educated, non-Western (Henry, 2004: 78; Rich, 1984: 34)? As the first wave arose in The United States, other countries followed on their own terms.

Brazil can be identified as a patriarchal country (Diniz, 2020: 18; Leite, 2013: 8). In short patriarchy means that the man is the official head of the family, placing women and children in a subordinate position in relation to men. For a long time this meant that officially, by law, men were the ones to have (financial) control and power over women and their sexuality (Edmonds, 2010: 223: Leite, 2013: 8). After a long history of colonialization and military dictatorship, around the 1980s progressive democracy and feminist movements arose in Brazil, which resulted in new laws about gender relations within the family (Leite, 2013: 16). By 1972 divorce was legalized, enabling women to separate from their husbands in Brazil. By 1985 women became equally recognized within the household and by 1991 the legitimization of wife-killing as 'defense of honor' was no longer recognized by law (Edmonds, 2010: 223). But, while new laws in this time started a change against gender inequality within the country, many ideas, norms and values on gender in Brazil still seem to be looming within larger institutional (e.g. government, church[10]) structures of power. (Diniz, 2020 18; Steele, 2011: 6).

In *Darkness Before Daybreak* (2012) Hans Lucht analyzes globalization with his ethnography on the migration of Ghanese men to Italy. Lucht (2012) describes the neo-liberal globalized world today, with on the one hand people who are part of "the global circulation of material and symbolic goods and having greater freedom of movement … " (Lucht, 2012: 87) and on the other hand people who are not part of this 'globalized world' with limited possibilities to do what she or he wants to do. He links this division to capitalism, a dominating ideology to belong to this global consumption of products and knowledge. In order to become part of this idealized materialistic globalized world, Lucht

[10] Worldwide, Brazil has one of the largest Catholic populations (Leite, 2013: 8; Steele, 2011: 7).

(2012) states, people might migrate to other countries (e.g. Ghanese men to Italy or Brazilian women to Portugal).

The idealization or rather the stereotyping of this part of the world is, according to Homi Bhabha (1983), presented as 'fixed' as a static fact while to him idealizations are constituted within the colonial discourse. He states that stereotypes have so often been repeated (e.g. Europe is a place of success, wealth and opportunities) that they *appear* to become reality (Bhabha, 1983: 18). To him stereotypes need to be recognized as " … an ambivalent mode of knowledge and power … " (Bhabha, 1983: 18). In other words, the contradictions and realities that underlie such stereotypes are shaped by power structures (e.g. colonialism).

Centuries of Portuguese colonial domination created a division in Brazilian society, a colonial divide that is - according to Lucht (2012) - still present in the 'globalized world'**.** During colonial times the world was separated - or rather imagined - with on the one hand the colonizer, the superior and on the other hand the colonized, the inferior (Darke & Khan, 2021: 725). As Brazil's independence from Portugal in 1882 was not a result of a public revolution, but rather a result of a movement led by the elite, the country's independence only reinforced domination by a specific dominant group, namely that same elite. In this sense discourses of domination (European/elite) and subordination (Brazilians) only continued until today (Darke & Khan, 2021: 726). But how does Brazil's past shape the ways in which Brazilian women position themselves in society today?

Multiple feminists and activists prepared for a shift in women's position in society and a worsening of gender inequality in Brazil after Bolsonaro, got elected because of his often sexist, homophobic and racist ideologies (Barasuol, 2020). But his election did not seem to silence Brazilian women. In January 2020 a large protest and social movement '*#1000DiasSemMarielle*' (#1000DayWithoutMarielle) took place when a great number of Brazilians stood up against the many unanswered questions about the murder of Marielle Franco, exactly a thousand days after the murder. Franco was a leftist, feminist, black and lesbian woman who got elected as city council of Rio de Janeiro. She was murdered in 2018, two weeks after her election (Lima, 2021). Many citizens, journalists and activists believe Bolsonaro to be the one giving the order to kill her. The two men who got arrested and were suspected of the murder, were former military police officers with strong ties with the Bolsonaro family (Greenwald, 2019). Women such as Franco can be seen as a prominent figure in the fight against gender, class and racial inequality in Brazil.

While other Latin-American countries (e.g. Argentina, Mexico) started legalizing abortion[11] in 2020, anti-abortion policies in Brazil made access to safe and legal abortion more difficult[12]. After Dilma Rousseff[13] Brazil's first female president got impeached in 2016, her successor president Michel Temer assigned conservative Fátima Peleas as the new Secretariat of Women. Her strong conservative opposition against the legalization of abortion (also in case of rape) resulted in a backlash in reproductive rights for Brazilian women (Rangel et. al. 2020: 169). Such developments resulted - again - in many pro-abortion and women's rights protests throughout the country[14].

Debora Diniz, an activist and anthropologist who is at the frontline of legalizing abortion, had to flee the country in 2018 after receiving various death threats from right-wing anti-abortion activists in response to her work on women's reproductive rights (Diniz, 2020: 17). Such political events seem to motivate Brazilians to leave the country - especially women - seeking for a more stable future on the other side of the ocean (SEF, 2021).

Where do Brazilian women put themselves, being born in a postcolonial country, into a historical cultural discourse of feminism? Who decides whether someone is sexually free or not? Does everyone *wants* to be sexually free and if yes, how can we use a definition of sexual freedom that fits everyone's individual definition? And what examples do we, as women, follow if and when we think about sexual freedom? Our mothers? Our sisters?

[11] Abortion in Brazil is only legally possible under three circumstances: rape, when a woman's life is in danger or when the fetus has a fatal disfunction in the brain. A woman can get imprisoned up to four years for performing an abortion (Diniz, 2020: 17; Sanabria, 2016: 95). In Portugal abortion is legal since 1984, however until the 2007 the abortion laws remained restrictive and thus difficult to perform. After a large social referendum in in 2007 abortion was completely legalized (Stifani et. al. 2018).

[12] Last month (May 2022) an eleven-year-old girl who was raped in Brazil was held away from her family by the court to prevent her from performing legal abortion. If she would not perform abortion in the first 22 weeks, she would pass the legal deadline of abortion in case of rape. This week (20th June 2022) the girl was sent home again to her family. The female judge Joana Ribeiro Zimmer got a lot of criticism in the media since she seems to be the person responsible (Globo, 2022). I am part of a Whatsapp group chat with 221 Brazilian women in Portugal. In this group chat an international petition was shared for the removal of the judge from court. The news got a lot of attention in the group chat with women expressing themselves with a lot of anger against Ribeiro Zimmer. Also many participants shared the news through Instagram. The national court is now doing further research on the role of Ribeiro Zimmer in preventing the girl from performing legal abortion.

[13] Under Rousseff's presidency abortion became legal in case of a disfunction in the fetus brain and she started a program with care for women who are victim's of sexual violence (Coutinho and Hinz, 2020).

[14] Some protests: every year on the 8th of March millions of women get together in more than forty cities throughout Brazil for International Women's Day. This year specifically violence and poverty were a topic of protest during the march (Suarez, 2022). In December 2021 anti-Bolsonaro protest organized by women took place in Frankfurt, Lisbon and forty five cities throughout Brazil (Poder360, 2021).

Beyoncé? Marielle Franco? Dutch women? Brazilian women? The following section is a theoretical analysis of the meaning construction of ‘the woman’ and ‘the mother’, to understand why reproductive rights need to be placed in a specific context.

1.3 THE WOMAN AND THE MOTHER IN BRAZIL

"What is more feminine than a [womans] body
that looks as if it can carry a child?
A momma's body is femininity for me!"

- Nora from Sweden, participant during
fieldwork in Rio de Janeiro (2019)

At the age of fourteen I remember having my first period. In comparison to my friends from school I was quite late, so I was happy when the moment was finally there (little did I know about the inconveniences of menstruating, but it made me feel that I belonged to something). And it surely was a moment I remember well, my mom even got a bit emotional, because this was the *moment I would start becoming a woman. After years I realized that by then I was definitely not 'a woman', I was just a young girl and apparently my body was getting ready for something more. But why does the physical capability of being able to get pregnant actually make me a 'real woman'? Does that mean that if I would never get pregnant in my life, I would always be an unfinished girl missing out the chance of being this 'real woman'? This section elaborates on ideas how birth-control, pregnancy and motherhood contribute to the construction of 'the woman'.*

Through the concept of gender I want to understand what it *means* to be a woman culturally intertwined with biological factors that make a female body a 'woman's body' (for an in-depth analysis on this topic please read our previous research '*Being a Woman in Zona Sul')*. In this sense the physical indicators of a female body (e.g. uterus) are related, rather than oppositional, to cultural (essentialized) ideas ascribed to a woman such as being emotional (Butler; 1999: 15). With this approach I leave room to place 'a woman' in a specific context without assuming a shared universality solely based on biologically determined similarities (Ang, 1995: 200; Mohanty, 1988: 60).

A certain specific context, let's say a *favela* in Rio de Janeiro or a Brazilian restaurant in Lisbon, shapes the way in which 'a Brazilian woman' is perceived, seen or even approached. At the same time, the way in which a woman positions herself within this specific context might also shape the way in which her 'being a woman' is constructed, for example by the way she dresses, behaves or talks. We could think about how the *tanga* bikini

which is - almost mandatory - worn by women on Copacabana beach. Just like the color pink that is often seen as the color for girls and the color blue for boys; stewardesses on the airplane wearing skirts and heels, while men wear pants and flat shoes or how men are often seen as physically stronger and outgoing in contrast to sensitive, emotional women. These are all small examples of stereotypes that can be linked to cultural expectations or norms ascribed to femininity and masculinity.

Adrienne Rich (1976) argues that motherhood is made-up, an idea and a creation by patriarchy. She states how biological assumptions ascribed to 'the mother', such as stereotypes of 'the mother's instinct' or 'natural care-givers', co-created this idea of 'The Mother' to let women stay home in order to take care of the children, taking away their autonomy in society (Rich in Wallace, 2021; Rich in O'Reilly, 2004: 6). For her, this means there is no such thing as 'motherhood', since all things a mother can do are not specifically related to her gender, and therefore could be performed by men as well. Thus, the physical capability to become pregnant or to give birth is not necessarily the same as the cultural perceptions of what it means to be a mother in society (Rich in O'Reilly, 2004: 2).

In Brazil, motherhood is often seen as the ultimate goal for a woman (Kristeva in Leite, 2013: 7; Sanabria, 2016: 84). In other words, a woman is not a real woman until she gives birth (Leite, 2013: 7). While the mother can be seen as the person who gives birth to a child, the mother can also be seen as a reflection of patriarchal ideologies about what a woman is, should or could become (Edmonds, 2010: 177; Galli in Leite 2013: 7). Rather I emphasize how both cultural and biological meanings related to reproductive health (sex, pregnancy, birth-control and motherhood) can be seen as two sides of the same coin (Butler, 1999: 12; Ghisleni et. al. 2016: 770).

For example, why do some women identify as a mother even though they never gave birth? Why do some women see motherhood as the ultimate goal of being a woman, while other women disagree? Why do some women say they could never be sexually attracted to a man, while other women say they fall in love with a person and not necessarily with that person's gender? Biological implications, for example the uterus, a penis or menstruation, that make a woman biologically a woman or a man a man and cultural meanings that makes a woman feminine, are not as opposite as they appear to be. The following case studies on reproductive health in Brazil should exemplify this statement.

Lila Sax (2010) did research on teenage pregnancies in a *favela* in Porto Alegre. One remarkable finding in her research is the way in which her participants (20 girls between the ages of 9 to 18) ascribe meaning to virginity and pregnancy. Whereas I would say a woman

is pregnant after fertilization, noticed by missing a period, a changing body or a positive pregnancy test, these girls seem to understand pregnancy in a different way. The mothers of the participants would let their daughters take, what they call 'virginity tests', what in Sax' and my reality would be seen as pregnancy tests. The girls were either pregnant and obviously no longer a virgin or, when the test was negative, they were still considered to be a virgin, regardless whether they had had sexual intercourse or not (Sax, 2010; 328).

In '*A Gift from God'* Liza Steele (2011) analyzes the meaning of motherhood in relation to religion in various *favelas* throughout Rio de Janeiro. She illustrates how traditional Brazilian ideas on 'the mother' are reformulated within the context of impoverished violent environments with neither legal nor safe access to abortion and an ever present role of religious institutions (Steele, 2011: 4). She argues how being a mother in Brazil is closely related to femininity (Steele, 2011: 7) and that the reasons for having children - becoming a mother - among lower-class women is often related to a form of self-identification because the mother within the *favela,* is often a more respected identification than 'a woman' (De Carvalho 2007 in Steele 2011: 8).

While many of her participants had had sex before marriage and got pregnant before marriage, religious figures in the *favela* did not seem to moralize their behaviour with religious norms and values. Instead, the religious community wanted to help young mothers rather than punishing them for their 'unreligious' sexual behavior as this would not help them in their unstable environment; something everyone has to deal with within the *favela*. So while sex without marriage is seen as a sin, having a child can be seen as "a gift from God", which is more important than the circumstances in which a baby is born (Steele, 2011: 25). In this sense the freedom to choose whether to abort or not and the meaning of motherhood are closely related to religion and to the life circumstances in an environment of structural violence with unsafe access to abortion.

Alexander Edmonds (2010) illustrates in his ethnography on plastic surgery in Rio de Janeiro *Pretty Modern* how motherhood often is a culturally idealized goal, while *after* giving birth many women perform plastic surgery such as vaginal tightening or breast lifting in order to become a sexual desirable woman with the same body as before they gave birth (Edmonds, 2010: 184). Edmonds' (2010) rich ethnographic descriptions show how the performance of plastic surgery for his participants is often related to conflicting roles ascribed to 'the woman' as both a sexual object of desire and the importance of 'the mother' as social role within the patriarchal family (Edmonds, 2010: 32). This shows how (sexual) decisions that women make, are dependent on both internal and external expectations of 'the

woman'. Such expectations might put constraints on or liberate the way in which freedom is experienced by (Brazilian) women (Edmonds, 2010: 32; Malacrida, 2012: 748, 757).

In *Plastic Bodies* (Sanabria, 2016), a study on sex hormones in Salvador and *Pretty Modern* (Edmonds, 2010), a study on plastic surgery and sex in Rio de Janeiro, both authors show how the access and ability to choose for Brazilian women is dependent on their position in society. Especially race and class seem to be main factors that influence the way in which access, and thus the 'range' of the ability to choose, is constituted. Abortion for example is often safely performed in private clinics, accessible only for high-income women. In contrast to women from poorer areas who perform abortion under unsafe, high-risk circumstances with no professional medical help (Sanabria, 2016: 152; Edmonds, 2010: 188).

Remarkably, sterilization is the most popular option - for women - of birth-control, offered as a safe, free, practical and beneficial procedure to prevent women from getting pregnant (O'Dougherty, 2008: 416). However while many Brazilian women get sterilized, other options that might be more favorable are not available; such as safe and stable life conditions under which a woman *wants* to have children or other forms of birth-control (O'Dougherty, 2008; 418). These examples illustrate how certain life circumstances (see power) influence the way in which women *decide* (see sexual freedom) what to do.

Again in *Plastic Bodies* Sanabria (2016) illustrates how abortion in Salvador can be interpreted in different ways. After an abortion[15], the way in which her participants referred to the procedure, was determined by the literal outcome out of the woman (either blood or a fetus). When only blood appears after 'the abortion' they rather call it a form of menstruating instead of aborting. These interpretations are related to the illegality of and negative attitudes towards abortion in Brazil and therefore to the way in which women moralize and justify their decision to abort (Sanabria, 2016: 96).

Overall, I tried to show how biological and cultural factors are two sides of the same coin when we look at women, pregnancy, virginity and motherhood. Thus, when we look at physical and biological factors, there is always room for a cultural interpretation that might change the way we look at factors that seemed obvious at first sight. Also I tried to show how reproductive rights are closely related to intersections of one's identity such as race, class or nationality. In the following chapter I elaborate on the most important methods that were used in the field.

[15] "*Aborto* (abortion) is the generic term for both miscarriage and (intentional) abortion (Sanabria, 2016: 95).

CHAPTER 2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 INTERSECTIONALITY

Who are these Brazilian women actually? Who identifies as a Brazilian woman? Who do I consider a Brazilian woman? Is there such a thing as 'the Brazilian woman'? How do I create an inclusive narrative which represents Brazilian women with nuance? And how do I use this categorisation without overlooking the complexities and differences that such a linguistic simplification can have?

Within this research *intersectionality* (Crenshaw, 1991) functions as a tool to look at different layers that shape the (self)identification of 'Brazilian women'. While 'Brazilian women' might seem to be a group based on their shared gender (being a woman) or shared nationality (being Brazilian), there seems to be much more that makes these Brazilian women different from each other. The intersectionality approach enables me to look at different 'layers' of identity *within* this group to emphasize how this social identification is not as universal as the word might imply (Crenshaw, 1991; Wekker, 2016: 21). In this section I elaborate on social background (class), age, political preference, place of birth and sexual orientation.

Over a timespan of three months I have spoken with more than forty women, with at least twenty of them I had one or more in-depth conversations and interviews, with five of them I was able to build on a longer-lasting friendship that developed throughout the three months of fieldwork. Especially Nara, Jamilla, Rosangela, Juçara and Michele became key-figures and important women in this intense period on both an academic and personal level.

Firstly, I consider every individual who identifies herself as a Brazilian woman, as such. Including women who were, for example, born in Portugal with Brazilian family ties, who consider themselves Brazilian even though their official nationality is Portuguese.

Secondly, I include women from different social classes. While I am aware of the fact that maybe not all Brazilians are (financially) able to travel abroad, I tried to look in different kinds of social areas in Lisbon. Most women described themselves as neither rich, nor poor; they could not eat out or buy anything they wanted, but they never had to starve either. Three participants described themselves as *pobre* (poor) in Brazil and four participants gave several indications to explain they belonged to the upper class for Brazilian standards, meaning that they had a big house in a wealthy neighborhood, went to a private school and both of their parents drove a car.

The different perspectives of women among different classes gave me interesting insights, for example on what the role of the family is in terms of household income and care, and how education, financial stability (being able to travel or to pay safe abortion) or healthcare (e.g. birth-control) shapes ideas on their sexual freedom. Other things that were interesting in understanding their point of view was if they had ever been in another country than Brazil before or if they were able to speak English. At least five participants had never been in another country or in an airplane before they came to Portugal. Five participants lived in other countries such as Australia, Ireland and Spain. Six participants spoke English on a fluent level, the rest were either able to understand and speak the basics or did not understand English at all. These factors seemed to shape their experiences in life in Portugal. Some Brazilian women for example who were not able to speak English, often felt more excluded and inferior in comparison to English speaking Brazilians.

Thirdly, I spoke with women from different generations. The youngest woman was nineteen and the oldest was sixty years old. I consider age as an important factor that gives meaning to the way in which Brazilian women think about their sexual freedom. Since every women was born into a specific generation in terms of feminism, reproductive rights and emancipation. Being raised by their mother being from a different generation which shapes their position in specific waves of feminism as well. I was able to talk to multiple generations of women who - for example - gave birth several times already, who wish to become a mother one day or who were able to reflect on themselves as daughters and mothers.

Fourthly, without explicitly looking for it, I happened to only speak with women who were openly against Bolsonaro. Political preference was an important factor in a sense that their often leftist, feminist and progressive perspectives on women in society, shaped the way in which they spoke about reproductive rights (e.g. being pro-abortion and anti-machist). Also many women asked me about my political preferences in Brazil - even though I am not Brazilian and thus not able to vote in Brazil. What would they do if I was pro-Bolsonaro? Many told me that they would not have participated in my research. It is interesting that I have never met a woman who - at least not openly - told me about being pro-Bolsonaro.

Fifthly, from the key participants eight women were born in São Paulo, four women in Rio de Janeiro, three women in Minas Gerais, two women from smaller cities near Goiânia, two in Rio Grande do Sul and one in Bahia. One participant was born and raised in Portugal but lived in São Paulo for twenty years. Her perspective as a Portuguese woman with a lot of experiences in Brazil made her ideas interesting since she was able to experience

moving between Brazil and Portugal but then 'the other way around'. The women with whom I had more short interactions and small talk came from different places all over Brazil.

Sixthly, in terms of sexual orientation the majority was heterosexual, some of them single and many in a relationship with a Brazilian man. Two women were single and lesbian and three women were bi-sexual. Most women experimented sexually with European men and women from Italy to Spain, from The Netherlands to Portugal, but most preferred Brazilian women or men because of their way of flirting, interacting and behaving. Often Brazilians were described as more open, *caloroso* (warm) and more direct in expressing sexual desires in comparison to *gringos*[16].

In conclusion, I think it is important to emphasize that even though intersectionality could be a way to look at diversity within a group, I was still - and of course - not able to include or represent every Brazilian woman. This research might not include nor interest every woman and therefore I strongly emphasize here that I am not trying to do so either. Rather I try to be as inclusive as possible, to represent the diversity of women that I have spoken to in these three months. But, after almost one year in Brazil and three months in Lisbon I realized even more how 'Brazilian woman' is not a universal categorization at all and how extremely complex it is to grasp different experiences of women from a country that is so diverse.

2.2 FRIENDSHIP IN THE FIELD

"When we [women] arrive in a new city
we always look for female friends,
just in case,
for when we need them when shit hit the fends"
- Kaja a women's coach from Germany (2022)[17]

The way in which I was able to build friendships was dependent on various factors. I can not be friends with everyone, and more importantly I don't *have* to be friends with everyone. So most of the interactions that turned into in-depth relationships, were a result of two

[16] 'Gringo' is a word used in Brazil to refer to foreigners. Often this word is used to describe white, non-Latin-American foreigners (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022).
[17] She mentioned this in her opening talk during the first 'Women in Lisbon' meeting on 01/02/22 at Unobvious Lab

personalities that happened to match well on the basis of life-experiences, shared interests, humor or because we were both just new in Lisbon. But what does friendship in the field actually do? Friendship is closely related to reciprocity and trust in the field, two aspects that are very important in order to have in-depth conversations, especially about such intimate topics. What I found is that sharing my own experiences made other women feel free to talk about themselves as well. So this research has been a reciprocal process in which *they* had to feel comfortable to open up to me as well as *I* had to feel comfortable enough to open up to them as well. Not only me as a researcher, but as two individuals willing to *share*.

Often I would not ask directly for an interview but we shared contact details and agreed on having a drink anytime soon. Often the research would be something we would talk about later on in the conversation. While talking about intimate topics I wanted the interviews to be more like informal conversations such as I would have with my friends rather than creating a formal researcher-researched dynamic. And often it was indeed more than that; from woman to woman, talking about experiences that brought new insights about ourselves and other women around us.

My personal involvement enabled me to be fully engaged both as an anthropologist and as a woman together with the women I was talking to. I had to be critical and conscious at all times on why, how and when personal experiences would actually help me to dive into the topics that were discussed (Lassiter, 2005: 110).

While building on friendships it has been important to "get close, but not too close" as Helen Owton and Allen Collinson (2014) describe. With friendship as a method, I emphasize how the positionality of the anthropologist is inherently connected to the data gathered in the field (Lassiter, 2005: 109). It is important to be constantly aware of a certain power dynamic that *does* exist, even though friendship can be assumed a "power-free zone" (Whitaker, 2011: 57). By building on reciprocal and equal friendships while doing research with, for and about women I tried to minimize this power relation. Still, this was sometimes difficult because of my position(ality) as for example an academic researcher, a Dutch woman, a European or as an English-speaking woman.

Therefore constant personal and academic reflection at the end of the day has been crucial in order to remain self-critical and self-aware of my position and of my relation with others in the field. Such reflections were done by checking in on my participants, with a simple question as "Can I write this down?", "Can I use this for my research?" in order to keep them aware of my research goals. Sometimes it was so natural and easy to have a conversation about sexuality, that I felt as if I had to remind them of my intentions during

such a conversation. Also I reflected with my participants on their and my positionality in Lisbon and our relation which is thoroughly presented in chapter 7.

2.3 COLLABORATIVE ETHNOGRAPHY

On the 8th of March I received many messages of Brazilian friends that I met during fieldwork in Lisbon and Brazil. Every message was a lovely text related to International Women's Day. Remarkably, none of my Dutch friends sent me anything on this day. Are my Dutch friends aware of this international day? Or is it not a coincidence that this day is much more celebrated among Brazilian women? The answer I cannot really give you. What I can say is that many women that I have met during fieldwork in Brazil and Lisbon do give meaning to this day. What it also might illustrate is their involvement in thinking about our position as women in society. This resulted in fruitful conversations as they thought talking about sexuality among women was just as important for them as it is for me. By placing myself as an active participant in this research as well, while looking for friendship and deeper connections in order to dive into the topics of this research, fieldwork became a reciprocal process of collaboration. In this section I explain why this research can be seen as a form of collaborative ethnography and to what extent some Brazilian women became as much - or even more - an anthropologist than I am.

Collaborative ethnography is a form of ethnography in which there is no clear-cut distinction between the researcher and the participants, but there is an equal collaboration between two or more people with no hierarchical dimension of the academic and the subject. Changing ideas in anthropology, traditionally a Western science, challenges this binary way of thinking between the observer and the observed (Lassiter, 2005: 16). I was an anthropologist as well as a participant in my own research, being a woman who lived with a Brazilian man in Rio de Janeiro for one year. I was an outsider in Portugal and in Brazil, while my experiences in Brazil made many women include me as 'one of them'. The boundaries between my position and my intention as a researcher were sometimes vague and blurred, as I would sometimes become a "partial insider" (Sherif, 2001: 437) together with Brazilian women. As I mentioned above, friendship is never really a power free zone (Whitaker, 2011: 57). Yet, while being conscious of this zone and these boundaries, beautiful collaborations can arise if you allow room for that.

During fieldwork various collaborations took place that contributed to this research and made it more complete. Something I could not have done without the women who felt

the same urge to share knowledge about our experiences as women. One of the most important collaborations was with Michele, a woman from Minas Gerais who did various interviews with me. She became an important friend in the field and who shared her knowledge and ideas on her project 'InnerSister'. Her current project is a six week course offered to women who want to learn more about setting boundaries in life. During many of our conversations we both had epiphany moments that motivated and inspired us for both of our projects.

In the second week that I met her she took me to an 'only women event' in Lisbon, she thought it might be a good place for me to meet people. That night I was asked to organize another women's focused event with sexual freedom as the main theme. I am thankful that Michele brought me to this place, because in April I eventually organized a successful event together with Korra from Curaçao and Kaja from Germany. Two inspiring women who thought my research and ideas needed a bigger audience. Through this collaboration I presented my research aim and three questions to a group of forty women from India to Germany from France to Brazil , to let them talk about their ideas on intimacy, sexual freedom and sexual pleasure. The positive energy and responses at the end of the night only confirmed the need among many, many women to talk about such topics.

After interviews I would sometimes receive messages of women who kept on thinking about the questions I had asked them. They would message me, elaborating on the thoughts that popped into their mind afterwards which they thought might be interesting to put in my thesis as well. It was nice to see how women were involved in my research and kept on thinking about how their stories might contribute to this final work. While writing this thesis I also tried to collaborate with participants during the writing process. According to Lassiter (2005) fieldwork is always collaborative to a certain extent, but including the 'collaborators' into the process during and after fieldwork is at the core of really working together with participants (Lassiter, 2005: 15). I did this for example by texting some participants by summarizing or revisiting certain conversations that I was using for the thesis, to make them part of my writing process as well. In this sense their collaboration during writing was as important as during fieldwork.

In order to make the thesis as accessible as possible I tried to use jargon only when necessary. In this way my thesis is readable - unfortunately only for the women who can read English - but for the ones who *do* read English most parts are hopefully recognizable and fun to read.

2.4 MULTI-SITED AND PATCHWORK ETHNOGRAPHY

As a result of various circumstances, I perform some kind of mixture of what George Marcus (1995) calls *multi-sited* ethnography and what Gokce Günel et. al. (2020) call *patchwork ethnography*. *Multi-sited ethnography* can best be described as a methodological approach whereby the anthropologist does not merely attempt to represent one specific local phenomenon, but rather focuses on the cultural formation within different interconnected field sites (Marcus, 1995: 99).

The approach of *patchwork ethnography* puts emphasis on how the researcher's personal position plays a key role in limitations or possibilities of going to 'the field'. Especially at this time, during the ongoing pandemic (Günel et. al, 2020). In other words, we as anthropologists, have to position ourselves as flexible researchers, being aware of how the global (covid) situation influences the way in which we are (or not) able to conduct research. With these two approaches in mind I argue how my fieldwork period can be seen as a journey through different places through conversations that take us beyond Lisbon. I was lucky that throughout the period of three months I was able to stay in Lisbon, although some interviews had to be cancelled because of covid cases. The pandemic was an interesting topic during conversations especially because Brazilians were not able to travel to Europe for almost six months. Therefore many women stayed away from their family or partners during this period. During fieldwork I noticed how the field was a mixture of multiple field sites because. For many Brazilian women Portugal was often not seen as an 'end goal', neither their home, nor their point of reference when talking about their sexuality.

My previous fieldwork in Rio de Janeiro, personal experiences in a total of nine months in Brazil and the personal lives of my participants in both Brazil and Portugal contribute to this study. Even though my field site has been Lisbon for a period of three months, the *multi-sited* (Marcus, 1995) and *patchwork ethnography* (Günel et. al., 2020) approaches enabled me to see 'the field' from a different angle, a more fluid one, which makes me more flexible as a researcher especially in this time. I put emphasis on the interconnections of different field sites and the mobility of the lives of my participants that are not primarily bound to one single place (Kubik, 2018: 264; Marcus 1995: 102).

2.5 PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

Participant observation has been my main method. I believe that only through participant observation the anthropologist is *really* able to dive into a topic. Being in the field - in its broadest sense -, living everyday life - as much as possible - and being part of socio-cultural life in the field is important since you are and will be - whether you like it or not - an outsider to some extent. Especially for me, as a blond, white, non-Brazilian woman I am easy to recognize in the middle of a group of Brazilians since most Brazilians are not as blond and white as I am - not to talk about the exceptions of course. Luckily I have learned to speak Portuguese, almost fluently throughout the years, which enables me to communicate easily.

Small talk has been an important, if not crucial, technique to meet new people and to start a conversation while *hanging around* (Driessen& Jansen, 2013: 249). I have been hanging around in Brazilian places throughout the city such as Boteco Da Dri, a popular Brazilian bar with live samba every day; Brazilian Concept, a Brazilian café with typical Brazilian food such as *açai*, *pão de queijo* and *feijoada;* Aki Brasil a small Brazilian restaurant around the corner of my house; Casa Mocambo a African/Brazilian restaurant with live samba on Sunday's; various Brazilian beauty salons in the neighborhood were I lived; Oakberry, an *açai* bar with eight locations throughout Lisbon and multiple *blocos*[18] during carnival organized by Colombina Clandestina, a samba organization in Lisbon with an activist ideology to include the LTBTQ-community, all genders, skin-colors and nationalities . In all these places there were mostly Brazilians working and visiting. Being there enabled me to observe and participate in places that were common to visit among Brazilians in Lisbon in order to understand their daily activities, conversations and habits.

Small talk enabled me to get accustomed and to recognize local ways of interacting with each other, for example how to introduce oneself (e.g. a hand, a kiss, two kisses). Some things that I have learned in Brazil were also useful in this context. In Brazil it is normal for example to ask the barkeeper's or hairdresser's name, this often creates a personal and intimate way of communicating without really knowing the person. Also in Lisbon I recognized that this was a common thing to do. So if I would enter Oakberry for example I would start with *"Bom dia, tudo bem? … O que é seu nome?"* (good morning, how are you? … What's your name?). Most of the time a conversation would flow from these simple

[18] A *bloco* is the Portuguese word used to describe the parties - most of the time with live music - on the streets during carnival. Sometimes *blocos* are organized by collectives such as Colombina Clandestina, sometimes they start unplanned.

interactions since there seemed to be a connection based on the 'Brazilian Portuguese' that I was speaking. The Portuguese language that is spoken in Portugal is easy to distinguish from the Portuguese that is spoken in Brazil. Many Brazilians joked that it sounds as if Portugueses have a hard boiled egg in their mouth, since their way of talking sounds closed, less elegant and less melodic than in comparison to Brazilian Portuguese.

Driessen and Janssen (2013) state that *small talk* might even be an icebreaker to talk about taboo subjects (they exemplify abortion) that are often avoided in more formal interview settings (Driessen and Janssen, 2013: 254). From my experiences during fieldwork there was not any ice that had to be broken, at least not on a superficial level. There were only a couple of Brazilians that were more introverted when I started talking to them, but most of the time Brazilians loved to talk about their country, their life and about sexuality.

In Alameda, the neighborhood where I lived, it was almost as if I was in Brazil; only a bit colder. With a dense Brazilian community living in this neighborhood the area is full of Brazilian supermarkets, hairdressers, shops with Brazilian beauty products, Brazilian bars and of course: Brazilians. I was overwhelmed by the amount of Brazilians that I was surrounded by and sometimes it was hard to decide with whom to have a chat or not. Did I have to talk with every Brazilian that crossed my path? After one month of actually talking to almost every Brazilian that crossed my path I was tired, exhausted and full of information. I decided that observing would now be an important method without having to talk with everyone all the time. At this time I started seeing patterns of the different kinds of Brazilians that moved to Lisbon.

Every Friday and Saturday I worked in Pasteleria Brasília, a bar in the middle of Lisbon's tourist hot spot owned by a Portuguese man with two Brazilian men working there. Working at this place gave me interesting insights in overall differences in the way Brazilians and Portuguese would approach and talk to me. And it was a nice way to participate within various Brazilian communities that often came to the bar. Lisbon is not a big city, so on other days I would see a lot of Brazilians at the samba places or at parks, viewpoints or bars throughout the city. On these nights many Brazilian clients would often ask me in which part of Brazil I was born, referring to my Brazilian accent and blond hair. From one thing came another, which was obviously introducing my reasons for speaking Brazilian Portuguese and reasons for staying in Lisbon. Among various Brazilians groups throughout the city people got accustomed to me walking around with my notebook and pen; "The Brazilian *Gringa* Anthropologist".

2.6 INTERVIEWS, ETHICS AND LANGUAGE

Being able as a Dutch, blond, white woman to speak Brazilian Portuguese to an almost fluent level, proved the easiest way to encounter almost any Brazilian in Lisbon. Brazilians are in general very open, friendly and proud of their country and seemed to be interested anyways in having a conversation with a *gringa* speaking 'their language'. Being able to share a certain passion, which was often the shared love for Brazilian food, Brazilian music, Portuguese language and yes, again: Brazilian food, there was not any 'ice to break'. Most of the time after such a conversation I would introduce my research and almost every time Brazilian women would readily offer themselves to participate. I was lucky to meet women who were very active, passionate and motivated to have conversations about female sexuality. Only two times in the whole period of three months Brazilian women told me they did not want to participate because they did not have time or interest in doing so.

As elaborated on in 'Friendship as a Method' the form of the relationship between the participants and myself was dependent on a kind of connection and shared interest in talking about the topics of my research. For each type of relationship whether it was a friendship, humorous and 'light' way of interacting or a more introverted, timid and calm way of interacting, based on the participants personality, I had to be flexible and reflexive on what would work best. So women who love to talk almost sat down immediately asking "So where are the interview questions!?", while more introverted women had to 'warm up' to some extent.

With women who loved to talk it was important to remind myself during conversation what my actual questions were, but at the same time I did not want to focus on these questions too much since the 'flow of the conversation' is sometimes more important than getting answers to the questions you had in mind. I wanted to let them tell the stories that they considered important. At home I would reflect on the meaning of their stories, I could always message them again for any further questions.

With more introverted women - women who actually told me that they never talked with others about certain topics - I felt I had to make them feel comfortable and create a safe zone based on trust. With these women sharing some of my own experiences helped a lot. I did not have to elaborate on my own experiences in-depth but by only slightly 'giving' them some of myself, felt like key to opening them up. To a nine-teen-year-old participant I told my own personal experiences with abortion, only after this comment, she completely opened up and told me about her abortion last year. She herself was surprised at the end of the

conversation because normally she never talks about this. She describes herself as timid and shy. She had not talked about her abortion before to her friends as they "don't know what it feels like" and because they had not experienced such things.

With some women, who became like friends in the field, I had conversations on such a frequent level that I reminded them sometimes about my intentions of the research; just to make sure about their informed consent. Such conversations enabled me to move far beyond a 'question to be answered' dynamic, towards an in-depth understanding of someone's world, mind and ideas. My most favorite moment of realization during such interviews was when I had no more questions to ask, when I said the interview to be officially 'over'. At such moments I would leave it up to them what to do and sometimes women would ask "shall we have a beer?". At such moments I knew there was more than a formal dynamic because they enjoyed it and decided to continue even after the interview.

With most mothers in the field I conducted structured interviews. Often they already told me about their busy schedules in between jobs, kids and personal life. I always felt thankful that they wanted to make time for me and I knew that these meetings would be a one-time interaction. On such occasions I had to be well-prepared and make sure I was diving into the interview as much as possible in the little time we had.

Many participants worked in bars, cafés and restaurants throughout the city. These were most often the places where I met participants for the first time. Often they invited me to come over again and - if it was not too busy - I could come by to talk with them. It was a nice way to not 'taking their time' in a sense that it was not their free time on a day off. But I had to be aware of when and how to interact since at the end: they were working as well.

All - except for one - interviews were done in Portuguese. As a Dutch woman, who lived in Rio de Janeiro for almost a year and not being able to speak my own language, I know how hard it is to not be able to express yourself in another language. Some women actually spoke English but I still decided to have all conversations and interviews in Portuguese. To make them feel comfortable and to enable them to express themselves in the best way possible. Sometimes this was hard since I learned to speak Portuguese in a specific area in Rio de Janeiro, while this time I had to speak with Brazilians from all over Brazil. Every state, every city and every social group in Brazil has their specific *sotaque* (accent), *giria* (slang) and way of pronouncing. After one month in the field I was able to recognize specific *sotaques* from other areas of the country. Training my Portuguese again, in a different context was difficult but I was lucky to meet women who helped me *melhorar* (improve) my understanding of this complex language.

Many women asked me if I was okay if they corrected me in grammar and pronunciation or if I was asked if they had to speak more slowly during interviews. This helped me to feel comfortable about asking about the meaning of a specific word or if they could explain something in a different way.

Language is a huge factor that influences the way in which we interpret things. The Dutch word '*gezellig'*[19] for example has no direct translation in English or the Portuguese word '*saudade*'[20] is something we can not capture with one specific word in Dutch. What do we do with such words in order to understand the things people are saying in another language? I have tried to translate my findings in English as close to what was said in Portuguese. But, no language is the same. To be able to translate words and expressions as closely to what the meaning of these words were in the context, I had to be critical and careful. I am aware of the way in which I tried to listen instead of interpret directly during interviews. As a Dutch speaking woman, who writes her thesis in English, while doing interviews in Portuguese and thinking in all three languages at the same time, it was often a hard and exhausting job to be done. Listening without translating it to 'my language' directly is something that was only possible if I was full of energy and if the person was talking to me in a way that was fully understandable for me. Often this would be women from Rio de Janeiro, since I am accustomed to the *carioca* way of speaking Portuguese.

[19] Some English words that could capture 'gezellig' to a certain extent could be coziness, friendly, amusing or nice.

[20] Some English words that could capture '*saudades*' are missing, melancholy, longing. Still, the same as with 'gezellig', these synonyms or comparisons do not capture the exact meaning of the word.

2.7 BUT WHAT ABOUT MEN?

"We never ask nannies why they don't work with old people,
Neither do we ask dog doctors why they don't work with cats.
But it is so in our system to have the men centered,
that if you work with only women
there is always someone asking: but what about men?"

- Kaja, a women's coach from Germany (2022)[21]

Some months ago I had an interview for a scholarship funding when the interviewer asked "but what about men?". A question that would be asked many more times during and after fieldwork. But why? After three months in the field this question kept coming back at me, mainly asked by Brazilian men that I met in the field. But why am I only doing research with women? And to understand sexuality, am I not supposed to include 'the other sex' as well? In this section I give multiple explanations of why I decided to only talk - in terms of the research - with women and not with men and how this question might represent the whole importance of this research.

First of all safety and sex are two main issues why this research is done with women and not with men. My previous research in Rio de Janeiro made me aware of an underlying sexual tension (either from both sides or just from one side) that would arise one way or the other, if I wanted it or not. In Rio de Janeiro, a large city with risks such as violence, robbery or sexual assaults, I realized how I often felt *safer* on the streets when I was accompanied by a man. Funny though that the main thing that made me feel *unsafe* at the same time were always men as well. How was it possible that men were both my protector and threat? As I searched for female friends in this chaotic city I realized how building on a female community was important as an anthropologist and a woman in order to feel secure.

Lisbon, as a relatively safe city, is just like Rio de Janeiro: a place where blond women seem to attract a lot of (male) attention. Men turning their heads, cat-calling every second of the day or looking at you as if you are a piece of meat ready to be eaten; exactly

[21] During a talk in Parque Eduardo VII in Lisbon on 24/02/22 as a preparation for the 'Women in Lisbon' event in April.

the same as what I experienced in Brazil. So again, this time I started looking for female friends and participants in order to feel safe, secure and comfortable. Doing this research with women felt as a way to protect myself from the sexual intentions many (no not *every* men) men would have while participating.

Sexual intentions are - of course - not always a one-way street, also my sexual desires might play a role in the way in which I interact with men as a heterosexual woman. Maybe exactly because of this I am extremely interested in other women's perspectives to understand *ourselves* as women in relation to men. But I conducted this research also with lesbian and bi-sexual women. I have to say that of course also women there might have another (sexual) intention as well while interacting with me. However, such interactions often started with a common interest in sharing ideas, knowledge and experiences from woman to woman.

Secondly, this research is done with women because I think there is (still) an urge to bring female perspectives into the dominant discourse of anthropology, gender studies and literature. As I am an anthropologist focussed on female sexuality, the conversations I have with many women constantly makes me realize how many women did not know they actually felt the need to talk about intimacy, sexuality and sex but after an interview they often realized how much they actually wanted to talk about such topics.

However, I do like to emphasize the underlying role of men in this research. Even though I did not do interviews *with* men, many conversations were *about* men. The way in which women positioned themselves as sexual beings was often - especially among heterosexual women - done in relation to intimate/sexual male partners, male partners in the past or 'imagined' male partners with whom they prefer to have sexual/interactions in the future. The next chapter sets out six Weberian ideal types of Brazilian women as an explanation on how to read the thesis.

CHAPTER 3 WEBERIAN IDEAL TYPES OF BRAZILIAN WOMEN

Before we start diving into the empirical part of this thesis, I would like to introduce the women I am writing about. Since this thesis is too short and the interviews and participants are too many, I can not not make an individual life history of each individual. So in order to give you some kind of an overview of the women that are represented throughout this thesis, I present to you six Weberian ideal types of Brazilian women. This section can be read as a toolkit, an explanation and a guide of how to read the thesis.

Weber (1904) came up with ideal types already more than a century ago. However, even today his approach seems to be useful in qualitative research. By using ideal types Weber wanted to emphasize how qualitative research differs from natural sciences in a sense that empirical findings are in its essence based on cultural interpretation and not on natural facts (Swedberg, 2018: 183). He states that the ideal types can be seen as an "emergency safe haven until one has learned to find one's bearings while navigating the immense sea of empirical facts" (Weber 2012n in Swedberg 2018: 184). In other words, researchers need to hold on to clear concepts (ideal types) in the first place, in order to grasp and analyze the underlying meaning that lies beyond such concepts (Weber 1904/1949 in Gerhardt, 1994: 79). The ideal type therefore is not a representation *of* reality but a comparison *with* the complex reality that I am trying to analyze (Gerhardt, 1994: 79); to move towards a deeper understanding of Brazilian women and their ideas on sexual freedom. Some women belong to multiple types at the same time and some women symbolize only one specific type. Along the road of this reading I *will* dive into specific interactions and meetings with various individuals.

3.1 THE HALF HALF TYPE

The first one is the *half-half type*. This type has been living as long or maybe even longer in Portugal than in Brazil. In this sense she is almost as much shaped by Portuguese norms and values as by Brazilian ones. At home she speaks Brazilian Portuguese with her family, eats Brazilian food and listens to Brazilian music, while at school she learned how to speak Portuguese from Portugal, had social contact with Portuguese children and was supposed to adapt to Portuguese values. She notices how Brazilians laugh with their mouths open and talk out loud, while in her Portuguese environment it seems to be less acceptable to be expressive like that. She sees Portuguese as more closed, less friendly and less social than

what she knows from Brazilians. Because she has been in Portugal for such a long time, she identifies as partly Portuguese and partly Brazilian. However, in her heart she is and will always be a Brazilian. If she will ever have children, she would want to raise them with Brazilian norms and values.

3.2 THE IMMIGRANT

The immigrant is a woman who feels as if she is seen as inferior in Portugal. She does not speak English, studies at the Portuguese university but feels that in comparison to Europeans she comes from a country with a messed-up economy, poor education and an idiot as president. So who would consider her as a woman with value? She came to enjoy Europe and escaped her home country in search for a better, safer, more enjoyable life. But life in Portugal does not seem to be as easy as she expected it to be. The salaries are low, fixing documents for a visa is difficult and also in Portugal racism, *machismo* and sexism exist. While she sometimes feels alone and lost in Lisbon, going back to Brazil does not seem to be an option either. She enjoys life as much as she can but 'life of an immigrant' is for sure harder than what she wished for.

3.3 THE FUTURE FOCUSED FEMINIST

The third type is the *future focused feminist.* She is a young woman around the age of twenty-eight. She does not have children but she will have kids one day. She is either single or in a relationship with a Brazilian, but this does not really influence the way in which she is enjoying, developing and making sense of her own sexuality. As long as there are questions and desires to discover her sexuality, the time to have children is not there yet. Until this time she will sleep with whoever she wants, dances at parties until the sun comes up and makes just enough money to enjoy cold beers in the sun with friends. For her, having children means responsibility, and the only responsibility she wants to have at this moment is being able to pay her own bills; nothing more. However somewhere deep inside of her, this intrinsic desire to have children one day influenced her decision to move to Portugal. Because having children in Europe is always better than in Brazil. So while enjoying life in the moment, she is focussed on the future. And all she knows is that Brazil does not offer many future opportunities - at least, as long as Bolsonaro will be the president.

3.4 THE CHILDLESS FEMINIST

The fourth type is the *childless feminist.* She is a woman around the age of forty-five and apart from her age she has many things in common with the future focused feminist. They differ in a sense that the childless feminist knows she will never have children in her life, in contrast to the future focussed feminist who is planning to have children when she is older. She has various personal reasons for not having children, that mostly have to do with her background. Being a woman that was born in the 1970s makes her feel as if she is in the middle of two generations of feminism. She was raised by her mom, in a traditional, conservative household where her dad was the head of the family. Her mom was supposed to cook, care and clean while her dad would come home tired from work. Her mom would do anything for her dad, without her dad she would be (financially) lost. While growing up she started to realize how the next wave of feminism enabled women to become financially independent and how not every woman is supposed to give birth, serve her husband and live under control of a *machisto* man. Now that she is older she sees how the generation after her, is even more independent and liberal, since they were raised by mothers from this generation in the middle. However, she developed such hate against this traditional idea of the woman that she decided to never become like her mom: she will stay childless, single and free.

3.5 THE MOTHER

The fifth type is the *mother.* She came to Portugal with her husband and kids. While always having the dream in the back of her head to live outside of Brazil, the covid pandemic pushed her to make this dream come true. She is in her forties and happily married with her Brazilian husband. Back in Brazil she had a well-paid job, a house in a safe neighborhood and a car. However Brazil is too expensive to travel around, in contrast to Europe, a continent where many countries are - in comparison to Brazil - very close by. Living in a wealthy neighborhood for her, felt as living in a closed community within her own country. Outside these safe neighborhoods danger was around the corner every minute of the day. Letting her children walk alone on the streets is something she would never think of in Brazil, but here in Lisbon she knows she does not have to worry about violence, robbery or even murder. Currently she works in a bar, which pays less than her job in Brazil would. But she does not

really care about the money, since there are other things that give her quality of life in Portugal, such as safety, financial support for parents by the Portuguese government and the ability to travel to other European countries for little money.

3.6 THE BIRD

The sixth type is the *bird* or actually, the bird-who-flew-away-from-the-family-type. In contrast to the other types the bird did not necessarily want to leave Brazil. The most important thing she wanted to escape from was her family. Her family always told her what they expected from her, how to behave, what to wear, what to become: a studying and hard-working woman but overall a lovely wife of a Brazilian man and eventually the mother of a huge family. While growing up in a small village in Brazil she was annoyed by the social control of her environment. If she kissed someone on Friday night the whole village would tell her parents the next day. Portugal for her does not necessarily mean opportunities or a better future, Portugal for her signifies freedom. She is a bird that flew away from her family, the family that caged her. Now she is free in the sky and that makes her happier than ever.

These six Weberian types are not exact representations of one individual nor solid descriptions of specific women that I have met. What these types should illustrate is a kind of structure in the immense amount of women that crossed my path in the field. Some women identified themselves specifically with one Weberian type, others might belong to multiple types at the same time.

From an intersectionality point of view each type contains different layers of identity that point out differences among Brazilian women. Yet again, throughout the thesis these types function more as a guide to eventually recognize each woman, their individual stories and their specific experiences on a deeper level. The following chapter is about the way in which many of these women often idealized Europe and what being in Europe meant for them in relation to their reproductive health.

CHAPTER 4 THE EUROPEAN DREAM

"Eu queria morar na Europa para viajar e ganhar uma grana,
agora estou trabalhando seis dias na semana
e nao estou ganhando porra nehuma"

(I wanted to live in Europe to travel and to make some money,
now I am working six days a week
and I am not making even a fucking bit"

Rosangela from Minas Gerais (2022)[22]

This quote represents the struggle of a young woman who was disappointed when she woke up from her dream, her European dream. She is happy to be in Lisbon and there is no way she wants to go back to Brazil, but to say that she is living an easy life in Europe is not the case either. This chapter focuses on 'The European Dream', an idealization of a continent being everything that Brazil is not. This is illustrated with the struggle of various Brazilian women who are confronted with the difficulties of living in Lisbon and with experiences of Brazilian women who actually feel as if they are living this dream.

4.1 QUALIDADE DA VIDA

During fieldwork in Rio de Janeiro in 2019 I often got the question if I was a European. "Uhm, yes?" I would say, "but actually, I am Dutch". Never before did I feel as a European, nor did I identify as such to other people. In 2020 I went to Rio de Janeiro again, this time during the covid pandemic. Instead of staying for one month, I ended up staying for three because my flight got cancelled. After having said goodbye to everyone I was ready to leave the country, ready to go back home. But there I was, arriving at the airport, when everyone told me there would be no flight until further notice. What to do? They did not know. I went back to Copacabana beach where everyone was continuing the day in the same way as I left them one hour before. On the phone the Dutch embassy told me they could not do anything. "Search for any other country in Europe that still accepts Brazilian airplanes. Once you're in

[22] Conversations during a walk through Lisbon on 05/04/22

Europe, you will get home.". Until that moment I did not really understand what being a European could mean. And while enjoying my cold beer on Copacabana beach - I honestly did not have anything to complain about - I could not wish for anything else but going back to Europe. All of a sudden I felt how being inside of Europe gave me some kind of safety, a security, a certain freedom that I did not have in Brazil. But what was this Europe that Brazilians were talking about?

Portugal, The Netherlands or Italy are countries in Europe. Still, not many people from these countries - as far as I know - identify as European. They would rather call themselves Portuguese, Dutch or Italian. On the contrary, Brazilians - the ones I have spoken to - describe life in Portugal not specifically as 'life in Portugal' but as 'life in Europe'. It seems as if Portugal is seen as part of a bigger whole, as a gateway to other countries, a safe place full of opportunities, possibilities and stabilities. For example, Camilla originally wanted to migrate to Canada, but that was too difficult and expensive to get a visa. Inara wanted to live in The Netherlands and Nara in Australia but for the same reasons as Camilla they eventually decided to go to Portugal. Getting documents for Brazilians in Portugal - in comparison to other European countries - is much easier[23].

But there are some things that make women stay specifically in Portugal. Nara, for example, had lived in Australia but decided to change her life for Portugal because of multiple reasons. One of these reasons are the possibilities to travel easily between Brazil and Portugal. Traveling between Australia and Brazil takes at least forty hours, in comparison to direct flights to Brazil from Lisbon on a daily basis. Now that her parents are getting older, she wants to be able to travel to Brazil as fast as possible. The other reason for her is her wish to have children in less than five years. In Australia it would take years for her to fix her documents and *if* she manages to get an Australian visa at all, her future child would only get a Brazilian passport. If she gives birth in Portugal, her kids would automatically get a Portuguese (and thus European) passport.

A European passport is considered of high value, since it brings you closer to other European countries and thus to possibilities - whatever these possibilities might be. "If I would have been pregnant in Australia years ago I would have been able to keep the baby.

[23] After five years of residency in Portugal Brazilians can apply for a permanent residency, which would enable them to legally live throughout the whole continent (SEF, 2022). Whereas in The Netherlands for example Brazilians need to perform a specific kind of profession that cannot be performed by any other Dutch citizen and they need to pass a long and expensive process of *inburgering*, which is an exam about 'Dutch culture', learning to speak Dutch and being able to show their financial capability to sustain themselves in the country (Rijksoverheid.nl, 2022).

We [Nara and her boyfriend] both had a good salary, a house and a car". If she got pregnant right now in Lisbon she would not keep the baby, first she wants to have the same kind of stability as she did in Australia. Even though she knows she will never make the same amount of money as she did in Australia, the quality of life in Portugal is worth it[24]. But what is this quality of life?

Emily for example, who lived in Ireland for years, moved to Portugal because of this quality of life. For her this means being able to pay your bills, travel through Europe, being able to go out with friends and of course - the sun. "Now that I moved from Ireland to Portugal I feel how much I was missing the sun. The gray weather in Ireland made me really sad."[25].

For Rosangela, the woman whom I quoted in the beginning of this chapter, even though she is not able to travel or to make enough money to pay her bills, does not even doubt about going back to Brazil[26]. As if making euro's - regardless of the amount - is something that is always seen as more valuable than making reais in Brazil.

The division of a globalized world as presented in paragraph 1.2 can be applied to these ideas. Since the euro is considered of higher value than the Brazilian reais, it enables women to feel as if they are closer to being part of this global flow of material goods, knowledge and ideas, which is often related to a sense of freedom. Which means 'freedom' is as a way to be able to physically move around (e.g. traveling), freedom as a way to consume, whatever they want to (e.g. beers at a bar or eating out in restaurants) and freedom in a sense of being independent (from family or partner). Even though all these perceptions of freedom are not necessarily enjoyed by everyone who moves to Europe; being physically close to certain possibilities of being free makes them feel as if they are more free already.

Apart from these aspects there are a couple of other things that Portugal offers that makes many women stay: the sun, the language and financial reasons. At the same time many women do not want to let go of some crucial parts of Brazil while living in Lisbon either: Brazilians, Brazilian food and Brazilian music.

Most Brazilian women in Lisbon only have a relationship with or only date Brazilians. Why? Because they prefer the way in which Brazilians date, communicate and

[24] An interview at Nara's work La Palma, a cafe in Lisbon on 10/01/22.
[25] An interview at Padaria Portuguesa, a lunchroom in Bairro Alto on 18/01/22.
[26] Rosangela emphasized this during multiple conversations throughout the period of three months.

flirt. Emily[27], Maria[28], Nara[29] and Juçara[30] describe Brazilians as warm, especially in contrast to Portuguese. Nara for example experienced with *gringos* how they only kiss or make a move after a couple of dates, "you need to have 'I want to kiss you' written on your forehead and even then they don't kiss you." She thinks it is a form of respect that *gringos* are not as direct in flirting, since Brazilians' openness and way of communicating can be invasive as well. But she surely prefers that Brazilian direct way of flirting. She would want her children to have this kind of respectful distance of *gringos* but the warmth of Brazilians.

Some women did have intimate or sexual relationships with Portugese men. Exactly what Nara was talking about is something Ana really likes with her current sexual partner. The patience of non-Brazilian men is something that might pay off after a while, she tells me. "After one night with a Brazilian they already gave you everything. With Europeans you need to wait and invest a bit more, but you can definitely come to the point that you reach with Brazilians in bed"[31]

Becoming friends with Portuguese among Brazilians was rather an exception than the rule. Many Brazilians generalized Portuguese as less friendly, closed, grumpy and angry about life. "Portuguese people hate Brazilians, because we are always so happy." is what Luciana[32] told me. Remarkably, almost every Brazilian woman I spoke with stated that Portuguese men - in comparison to Brazilian men - are much more *machist,* more conservative, traditional and sexist. So yes, Brazilian women often prefered going to Brazilian places with their Brazilian friends and partners. But why go to another continent, live in another country and leave your family in Brazil behind to hang out with Brazilian friends at Brazilian bars while dancing to Brazilian music?

In conclusion, certain 'qualities of life' as illustrated above, can be seen as reasons for women to live in Lisbon. As Foucault (1982) mentioned, freedom is relational. So it seems as if a constant comparison is made between what this quality in life is in *relation* to something that was 'less' or different; often a comparison between Portugal and Brazil. But obviously not everything is simply better in Europe. The next section elaborates on the

[27] Interview at Padaria Portuguesa, a lunchroom in Bairro Alto on 18/01/22.
[28] Interview at a beach bar in Parço D'Arcos on 27/01/22.
[29] Interview at her work La Palma on 10/01/22.
[30] Conversations as Pasteleria Brasilia on 26/01/22.
[31] Interview and conversations throughout Lisbon on 15/02/22
[32] Luciana is married to my (Dutch) uncle, the brother of my dad. She was born in Brazil and lived in Lisbon for more than fifteen years. This conversation was on the phone right before I went to Lisbon.

difficulties of leaving everything behind to live the 'European Dream' and what this might do with the reproductive health of Brazilian women.

4.2 EUROPE IS EVERYTHING BRAZIL IS NOT

"*Quando eu cheguei aqui em Lisboa,*
eu me realizei que machismo é uma coisa mundial."

"When I arrived here in Lisbon,
I realized how *machismo* is a global thing."

- Elisa from Goiânia (2022)[33]

Elisa told me how many people idealize the world outside of Brazil, simply because they have never left the country. Also Elisa expected the violence, *machismo* and poverty to be a Brazilian thing. Only now she knows better after having lived in Spain and Portugal for three years. Bhaba (1993: 18) describes stereotyping as a way to idealize something or someone, based on mere imaginations rather than facts, as if we create ideas about a culture, person or country based on contradictions, by looking at the other to see ourselves**.** I am white because she is black. I am a woman because he is a man. I am Dutch because she is Brazilian. Portugal is a safe country because Brazil is not. Europe is stable because Brazil is unstable. And so on and so on. But what do such dichotomies actually tell us? And what would happen if we step out of our point of view to see things from 'the other side'?

Brazilian women, or at least the women we have spoken to during fieldwork in Rio de Janeiro in 2019, often saw Europe as safe, stable and free of *machist* men. This time I spoke with women who went to the other side, to live on the other side, to feel the other side and what 'Europe' meant for them, now, while living in Lisbon. In this section I elaborate on the interplay of imaginations and realities. On how a place can be idealized, what the pitfalls can be of stereotyping and how certain idealizations - which might become realities - shape Brazilian women's ideas on their reproductive health.

Some Brazilians told me that their family would not believe them if they would call, telling them that life was hard in Europe and that they were not able to pay the bills. How

[33] Interview at Café La Palma on 07/02/22.

could they struggle with paying their bills if they are living in Europe? Lucht (2012) writes about Ghananian migrants in Italy and observes how they suffer from exclusion, poverty and discrimination in Italy but still prefer this to life in Ghana. He states that we can not assume that life with friends and family back home is a simple replacement for the desire to have progress and growth in life (Lucht, 2012: 87). In other words, the suffering is 'worth it' since progress and growth are 'around the corner' in Europe in comparison to their lives in Ghananian villages. This is something that can be linked to some Brazilian women I have spoken to as well. They[34] missed their families but going back was not an option either. Growth in terms of education (for themselves or their children), stability in terms of more democratic, less corrupt political systems and financial support by the government for parents and students are chosen above being physically close to the family.

Building on some kind of stability seems to be easier in Portugal. In Brazil, as many women told me, you work seven days a week without being able to do anything with your money. In Portugal you work five or six days a week, not to become rich, but at least you are able to do *something* with your money. Especially women from lower classes in Brazil[35] see money as an important factor to stay in Europe. Becoming rich is not their desire, but as a kid they were never able to do anything fun since it was already hard to pay for food. With no doubt they link money to happiness, because they know how hard it is to not have any money.

Kate's parents grew up in a poor village in Brazil, before she was born they moved to Rio de Janeiro in search of better opportunities in a big city. "When I moved to Europe it was hard for my parents to understand. I compared my decision to their decision back then, when they moved to Rio for more opportunities."[36] Kate lived in France and is now living in Spain to study. She is in Portugal for a couple of weeks to feel close to Brazil again. "I feel more free here [Lisbon], because just as in Rio, I am able to randomly meet people on the streets. Life is more spontaneous here.". The reason for her to be in Europe is because as a woman who works in the cultural sector, it is much easier to make money. She would only go back to Brazil if she had an inspiring project to work on. In this sense her personal passion, as someone who works in the artistic cultural scene, is more important than all the things she loves about Brazil. She is happy that Portugal offers her all the things (food, music, Brazilians) that she misses.

[34] Rosangela, Juçara, Emily, Nara
[35] Kate and Elisa
[36] Interview at Brazilian Concept on 18/01/22

Juçara on the contrary, comes from a higher middle class in São Paulo. Growing up in a more wealthy Brazilian family she never had to worry about money[37]. She always dreamed of moving to another country, to get to know another culture and to have the "international experience", as she calls it. But she is confronted by the difficulties of life in Portugal. Now she is all by herself without family, she does not have her Portuguese residency fixed yet and she has difficulties paying her bills because she makes 3 euro 60 an hour. For her the quality of life is much less than what she had back in Brazil. Here it is no longer about quality of life but about *"a vida do um imigrante"* (the life of an immigrant).

In paragraph 1.1 freedom is defined as the ability to take control over what you want in life. Embodied freedom defines freedom beyond this literal physical capability to move around to wherever you want; towards an understanding of freedom that is more about how certain freedom is expressed (Sheller, 2012: 17). That these women were able to move around, to actually go to Europe, to be outside of their country - whether they like it or not - is something that seems to make them happy to some extent. As if this sense of freedom, being able to freely move, is the starting point to eventually *feel* free as well.

Some women feel some kind of guilt towards their family or Brazilians in Brazil in general. Life is supposed to be easier in Europe because of safety, more social equality, job and education opportunities and a more stable economy, but this does not necessarily mean they do not struggle. *"Eu não quero reclamar com uma barriga cheia"* (I don't want to complain with a full stomach), Nara said, meaning that if you are not starving, poor or living on the streets, there is no reason to complain either. But she has to admit that life is not *that* easy, making 850 euros a month for working forty hours a week.

Jamilla, a lesbian Bahian woman in her fifties who lived in Boston, New York and Spain knows what it is like to start all over again as a Brazilian far away from home. "When I left my home-country thirty years ago, there were no telephones to call your parents. I just left. At that time there were only two types of Brazilians leaving the country: fucking good artists, like me, or the ones who fell in love with a *gringo*, like your ex-boyfriend". Back then, she was lucky to be a successful samba musician who worked her ass off to travel to Boston. She does not understand what all these young Brazilians are looking for in Europe nowadays. "They have nothing and they don't understand how important the family back home actually is." But then why do you think nobody is going back? I ask her. "You know,

[37] Conversations at Montaditos a bar/restaurant at Praça Dom Luís on 20/01/22

there is nothing, but really nothing more embarrassing than to go back home to your family empty handed."[38].

Do these Brazilian women believe in the dream that they want to live, or do they actually live this dream? Maybe that is not even a relevant question; what is reality and what is not. As long as we believe in something it should be enough right? What these ideas *could* tell us about the way in which women take control of their sexual lives, is happiness. If certain qualities of life, as elaborated on in the previous paragraph, result in feeling free and happy, then this also might shape the way in which women sexually behave. Michele[39] told me: in order to be able to love someone else (a partner) or to take care of someone else (a child) you need to be okay with yourself first. So if feeling happy is related to a certain amount of 'quality in life', a quality that Portugal offers, than this sense of happiness could be closely related to the way in which women have intimate and sexual relationships or to the ways in which they decide to have children or not.

So the immigrant moved to Europe to see the world outside of Brazil, to feel like an adventurer, and ended up feeling like an immigrant excluded from 'The European Dream'. Being away from home has made the world a bigger place, but whether it made her happier is another question. The future focused feminist knew what she came for. She is realistic and honest about the difficulties of life in Portugal; becoming rich was never her ambition anyways. And by the way: see things from the bright side, she would say, because look at all these qualities in life that Portugal is offering us! We have the sun, we have Brazilians and we have music, what else do you need?

In sum, stereotyping seems to be a way to believe in certain idealizations that are made to believe in the decisions that some Brazilian women make. Stereotypes, according to Bhabha, 'stay in place' because of its constant repetition (Bhabha, 1983: 19). So while Brazilian women might be confronted with the 'reality' of their idealization in the first place, comparing Europe to Brazil in the ways as presented above, makes that certain stereotypes about Brazil or Europe might be reinforced as well. In the next section I elaborate on internal and external factors in the lives of Brazilian women in Lisbon that can either liberate or restrict them in order to feel sexually free.

[38] Conversation during a walk after dinner near Praça Martim Moniz on 09/03/22
[39] Interview at Fonte Luminosa on 25/01/22

CHAPTER 5 INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL SEXUAL FREEDOM

Remember that comment in chapter two? The comment of my Brazilian ex-boyfriend, about taking the pill and how in Brazil you don't choose to have children? Well, after all it seems I was either naive or not as free as I expected myself to be at that time,, being as affected as I was by his comment. Perhaps it only reflected his one-sided perspective on birth-control, pregnancy and freedom that definitely - and obviously - does not represent the perspectives of the many Brazilian women I spoke with. This chapter is about what Brazilian women need in order to feel free in terms of sex, birth-control, motherhood and personal sexual development and how (sexual) freedom can be seen as something that we carry inside ourselves as well as something that external factors in life can either reinforce or limit.

5.1 I AM FREEDOM

"Liberdade sexual é:
que você pode fazer tudo que você quiser,
quando você quiser,
como você quiser,
Sem precisar explicar nada pra ninguém "

"Sexual freedom is:
that you can do everything you want,
whenever you want,
however you want,
without having to explain anything to anybody"

Inara from Goiânia (2022)[40]

It is a sunny afternoon in Lisbon as I am waiting for Ana[41]. We meet at Praça Martim Moniz in the middle of Lisbon. "Do you ride a motor?" she texts me right before the interview. "I don't have a driver's license, but if you drive.. I'm in!", I reply. Via a group of Brazilian

[40] Interview at a bar near Praca do Chile on 17/01/22
[41] Interview and conversations throughout Lisbon on 15/02/22

friends I got her number, this will be the first time I meet her. From a distance I recognize her even though I have never seen her before, it is the way she is standing there in the middle of the crowd. "*Olaaaa flor, vamos ver o por do sol!?* (Hellooo flower, let's go see the sunset!?). I jump on the back of her motor, and off we go into the traffic jam of Lisbon. We try to have a little bit of conversation in between all the honking cars and humming motors. "Everything you need in Lisbon is a motor!" she screams, "you are able to see the city from such a different point of view!". We do not wait for the traffic jam and pass every other car. "*Sou solteira na Europa! A melhor coisa da vida!*" (I am single in Europe! The best thing in life!). Ana is in her thirties, from São Paulo and has been living in Lisbon for four years. She came to Lisbon with her Brazilian boyfriend with whom she had been in a relationship for five years. Now that she is single again, she realizes how much of herself she had lost in that relationship. As if she forgot who she was. During our walk on …. while watching the sunset, we talk about how sexual freedom for her is something only *she* has. Nothing or nobody will be able to give her, her freedom. So for her is does not matter where she is around the world, either Portugal, Brazil or any other country; the sexual freedom she gives herself is all the freedom she will have.

Ana and I continue our walk on the boulevard. Every ten seconds sweating, muscular men are passing us while they're jogging. "Look at all these gorgeous men here! When you are in a relationship your eyes are not open for these kinds of things. We are open to this only if we are single and free." She emphasizes how this is her ultimate feeling of sexual freedom, being able to do and think whatever she wants; without having to worry what the other person would think.

Jamilla's opinion stands in line with Andreas' perspective. As we cheer with a glass of red wine in Barrio Alto she looks me in the eyes and tells me from the bottom of her heart: "freedom is not about this glass of wine, or about the money or a good job. Freedom is the way in which you are on earth, your attitude!". For Rosangela, a twenty-nine-year-old woman from Minas Gerais says you have to search for your sexual freedom before you will be able to feel sexually free with someone else. How is she doing this? A lot of masturbating.

As presented in chapter two, sexual freedom is about the ability to choose what to do sexually (Parsons, 2014: 13). But while reflecting with Brazilian women on the accessibility of different options to choose, they often relate their ability to choose rather to personal wishes than to the possibilities that are offered to them. For example abortion in Brazil, is something that is not as 'easy' to perform in comparison to The Netherlands. Whereas abortion in Brazil is illegal, women in The Netherlands can perform legal abortion up to

twenty-two weeks of pregnancy. Yet, many women see their individual decision-making as more important than laws (abortion being illegal) or social norms and values (women are meant to become mothers).

Ana for example got pregnant after she had unprotected sex at the age of eighteen, "of course I aborted it! Having children at eighteen years old. Hell no!"[42]. Without her mom knowing she was pregnant, she started looking for places to abort with a friend. Of course it was difficult and sketchy, because it is illegal, but there is always a way. Again at the age of twenty-six she aborted, this time with her mom knowing. This time she went to a clinic where it was done more professionally. Various participants[43] did not experience difficulties aborting in Brazil. Yes, it is illegal and expensive and sometimes under unsafe conditions. But the options were there and they had to do what they wanted to do, because being a mom was not something they wanted.

But why, if sexual freedom is something we only give ourselves, is it sometimes hard to feel sexually free? So freedom is not - or not only - something you (physically) have or not, but maybe it is something you perform, act out and take yourself. Yet, this internal feeling of being sexually free seems to be closely connected to external factors that either limit or support women to feel this. Freedom can be seen as *embodied* into certain social (e.g. partner), cultural (e.g. Brazil), historical (e.g. postcolonial) environments of an individual. How freedom is eventually expressed is related to others within these same environments (Sheller, 2012: 17). In the next paragraph I describe some of these external environments that were important for Brazilian women and how they shape internal processes to actually feel sexually free.

5.2 WHAT GIVES YOU FREEDOM

As presented in chapter two freedom is something that is relational (Foucault, 1982). You need to know some kind of limitation in life, to experience a sense of freedom as well. To put it another way: blond hair is only blond because there is brown hair. Otherwise blond hair would just be hair. Therefore color is something relational: the one exists because of the other; freedom exists because of restriction. Departing from this point of view, how can we understand ideas on freedom as presented in the previous paragraph? As various women

[42] Interview and conversations throughout Lisbon on 15/02/22
[43] Ana and Michele.

argue that sexual freedom is only something they have 'inside' themselves, then this would mean that the only thing that could make them feel limited in experiencing sexual freedom, would be a result of internal personal limitations. In this paragraph I elaborate on three external factors - (un)safety, a partner, and family- that shape experiences on sexual freedom for various Brazilian women.

Safety

In February I met a group of four Brazilians, two couples from Minas Gerais, all around the age of twenty-five. As I am serving them drinks in the bar where I am working on friday nights, they ask how dangerous Lisbon is. "You have to be careful of course, always" I tell them based on my own experiences, "but I think Lisbon is quite safe. At least I feel safe here". "But are there many people with weapons on the streets? Is it normal to have weapons here? And can I leave my phone like this on the table?". It happened to be their first night ever in Portugal, coming from Brazil to stay in Lisbon for good. Their questions reflect their point of reference and how their perception of safety is shaped by the normality of weapons, violence and robbery on the streets from where they come from. That Portugal is safe, or at least in comparison to many big cities in Brazil, is an often - very often - expressed motivation for Brazilian women that they feel more free in Lisbon. Being able to walk alone at night, being able to wear whatever you want and being able to drink and lose control a bit on the weekend are things they could not do in Brazil[44].

For some women it still feels strange to live in a city that is so much safer than what they knew. Rosangela for example is scared to go home at night, even after six months of living in Lisbon, as if it is still in her system to be careful like she used to be[45]. After one of our many nights in Montaditos, a place where many Brazilians come together - mainly because of cheap food and beer - we say goodbye: "Text me when you get home! Oh no hahaha never mind", she laughs, "we are not in Brazil!". I walk home and feel strange. Even though I am from the Netherlands, which is relatively safe, me and my friends actually *do* text each other when we get home. Apparently, safety is something that you experience only from your point of reference. Lisbon might feel extremely safe in contrast to Brazil, while The Netherlands or Lisbon also have their dangers at night for women alone on the streets.

[44] Nara, Michele, Elisa
[45] Conversations after dinner with Rosangela and Juçara at Montaditos on 16/03/22

Yet, because a place *feels* more safe in comparison to another place, does not necessarily mean it *is* completely safe.

I can hear you think, but what does this say about sexual freedom? Well let me try to explain this with some examples. There are several ways to express your sexuality: e.g. by the way you dress, by the way you behave and by the way in which you interact with others. If you feel physically and emotionally safe in an environment, then the way in which you will sexually express yourself might be closely connected to feeling safe. For example, if you are scared to be sexually assaulted on the streets, because there is a high risk of being sexually assaulted in the area where you live, then you might decide to wear different clothes the next time you leave the house; clothes less naked, less 'sexy'. But what if you *want* to wear a short skirt? What if you *want* to wear a short and a tiny top to a party? What if you *want* to wear high heels but you never do because men might not be able to 'control' themselves. Then you were not able to dress in the way you wanted to, to get the attention of the people you *prefer* to get attention from, just to make sure that you would not get unwanted attention from the people you *do not* want attention from.

Another example is Tinder. Would you go on a date with a random guy at a random place if you do not feel safe with anyone, anywhere? But what if you *do* feel safe in general, maybe you would decide more easily to go on dates via applications such as Tinder. Or that you feel safe enough to spend the night with someone you met at a party because even though you know something might happen, you are always able to leave and go home because there is no risk of going home at night.

These examples show the way in which safety might shape the way in which women could feel more sexually free. Again, what I *do not* want to say is that feeling safe is always a guarantee of actually *being* safe. In any place around the world risks, danger and unpleasant situations can arise, how safe you thought you were[46].

A Partner

In the previous paragraph Ana tells us about how being single enables her to feel as open and free as possible, even though she states that sexual freedom is something internal. In that

[46] According to research of the World Health Organization (2021) worldwide 1 to 3 women have been physcially, emotionally or sexually abused by their intimate partner. Not to say that an intimate partner is per definition a 'safe' partner, rather I wish to emphasize here that 'unsafe situations' often take place in assumed 'safe' domestic environments.

sense her partner can be seen an external factor that influenced her capability to feel sexually free. But could it be possible to feel free *and* to have a relation at the same time, without feeling limited in expressing your sexual wishes, desires and fantasies? For Ana in order to be in a sexual and intimate relationship with someone, while still being able to feel as free as she wants to be, she does not want to 'label' these relationships. For some reason, she feels as if labelling a relationship into something official, directly limits you to some extent to feel, think or do whatever you want. Thus for Ana a partner takes away a certain sense of sexual freedom that she wants to have, especially at this point of her life after being in a relationship for so long. Also Inara thinks a partner is limiting the way in which you are able to express all your sexual thoughts. She thinks you should not restrict yourself because of a partner; she wants to be able to do whatever she wants.

Emily[47] a woman in her thirties has been in a relationship and is now married to her Brazilian husband for eleven years. She decided to discover her sexual freedom during the pandemic. While she was living in Portugal and her husband was stuck in Brazil, she discovered her sexuality by masturbating a lot and by sleeping with various men and women. "If he doesn't ask me, that's a sign he doesn't want to know. Because deep down I think he knows what I have been doing. But he is very traditional when it comes to an open relationship. I won't tell him if he doesn't want to know, just for me to not to feel guilty.". For her even though she is in a relationship with someone who does not support her ideas on sexual freedom, she decides independently what she wants to do. But, she emphasizes, these interactions where mostly sexual ones, while emotionally she knows with certainty that she wants to be and stay with her husband. When I ask Julia if she has a partner she laughs and tells me a boyfriend is not everything in life. "I like my freedom, I like my independence". But that is not something you can experience in a relationship with someone? I ask her. She never had a relationship where she was able to feel as free as she is doing right now. So maybe it will be possible one day, but until then she will believe her freedom is at its highest level when she is single.

The Family

For other women a main factor that limited their sense of sexual freedom is the family. Coming from more conservative, close-minded households - as they describe it themselves

[47] Interview at Padaria Portuguesa, a lunchroom in Bairro Alto on 18/01/22

- their desires on sexual exploration were influenced by the opinion of their family. Inara for example experienced how being lesbian was seen as a sin in her family[48]. At the age of fourteen she prayed every night for her sexual interest in women to pass by. As she turned older she found how this was something that would never pass by. The social control and opinion of her family shaped the way in which she was sexually able to do whatever she wanted. For her, therefor, being away from the family, whether it is Lisbon or any other country, enables her to feel sexually free. Inara describes how she is practically imprisoned in Portugal. She does not have any legal documents to stay, because of which traveling to other countries is not an option. Thus to some extent her freedom of movement is limited in a geographical, official sense. But she describes herself as more liberated than ever, since she can finally sexually behave how she wants without the social control of her family.

In many families, as women told me, talking about sex was absolutely off topic. Most had to learn about sex and birth-control *na rua* (on the streets) since school or their parents did not offer any form any sexual education. Eventhough some of them feel as if it is the parents responsibility to talk and learn your children about sex, they never felt as if they missed out on something. Women like Nara and Kate had their olders sisters or friends from school to teach them how to prevent pregnancy[49] or what to do with an unwanted pregnancy. Kate a twenty-six-year-old bi-sexual woman from Rio de Janeiro experienced how her mom became more open towards conversations about sex after she had divorced her dad. As if the '*machist* man' at home holded her back from being open towards such topics. Kate saw how her mom started talking about her sexuality in the same way she was doing. Being able to talk about sexuality and sex with your family is by many considered an important aspect in order to know what you sexually want, need or like which eventually will helps to understand what sexual freedom means[50].

In sum, (un)safety, a partner or the family can all be seen as factors that can restrict or enable women to feel sexually free. Yet, Brazilian women seem to take control over these external factors in order to feel sexually free on their own terms by leaving Brazil, leaving a partner or their family. To relate this back to the Weberian types of Brazilian women: the future focused feminist seems to be discovering her sexuality on her own terms, the bird is making

[48] Interview at a bar near Praca Do Chile on 17/01/22
[49] Most women started around the age of fourteen with the pill. This was easy since they could get the pill without a doctor's prescription in Brazil.
[50] Michele, Nara, Catarine, Emily)

decisions as a result of her family that controlled, bothered and limited her in discovering her sense of sexual freedom. Remarkably someone who is left out in this chapter has been the mother as she was looking for safety and opportunities for her children in Lisbon. She is not so much focused on sexual freedom or how to eplore this. The following chapter is about different ideas on motherhood, sexuality and womanhood from the perspectives of women with and without children.

CHAPTER 6 INTERGENERATIONAL WOMANHOOD

"Why am I having all these conversations
about sexuality with women my mom's age,
but not with my mom?"

"Because the moment a woman becomes a mother,
she forgets that she is a woman as well"

Kaya, a women's coach from Germany (2022)[51]

Some women grew up in a family where sexuality is a topic that could be discussed during dinner, others had to share ideas, knowledge and experiences with friends at school. But, for the women who still have a mother, isn't a mother the most important person to learn from? In this chapter I illustrate how the meaning of 'the mother' is not only something biological, as being the person who gives birth to a child but also how there are socio-cultural meanings ascribed to the mother. Also I illustrate the importance of learning from other generations of women to discover what sexual freedom could mean for Brazilian women, which emphasizes the importance of multiple feminisms instead of 'one feminism for all' (Ang, 1995: 193)

6.1 BEING A MOTHER

"The first thing they asked me was if I wanted to keep the baby or not. How *otímo* (excellent) is that!"[52]. Maria, a thirty-four-years-old single mother from São Paulo, got pregnant in Lisbon two years ago. In the pause of her online job she has an hour free for me. As a single working mother she has little time, but she would love to talk about sexuality, Maria texts me. She orders two beers for us at the beach of Parço D'arcos. "Let's enjoy my break! *Saude!* (Cheers!)". The interview won't last long, but she tries to tell me as much as possible in one hour.

[51] During a talk in Parque Eduardo VII in Lisbon on 24/02/22.
[52] Interview at a beach bar at Parço D'Arcos on 27/01/22

At the age of twenty-five, when Maria was still in Brazil, she felt her body was already preparing to get pregnant. Her body was ready but her life was not. Back then she was married to a Brazilian man with whom she did not have any form of stability in life. She divorced and started planning to move to Portugal. In five years her dream to live in Europe became reality, she moved to Lisbon and fell in love again, the man who would become the father of her child. She was ready to have children and the Portuguese man seemed to offer her some form of stability that her ex-husband could not. After one year she got pregnant but when her daughter turned one she broke up with the father. During and after pregnancy she was confronted in a negative way with his personality which made her leave him. She would rather be a single mom than in a toxic relationship which only gave her more stress. That the doctors asked her that question back then, about keeping the baby or not, represents the way in which pregnancy in Portugal is considered a choice in its most positive sense rather than something that happens with no further options than to keep the baby. This section elaborates on decision-making in relation to motherhood and the meaning of being a mother in both Brazil and Europe.

As a result of different historical events, as elaborated on in chapter 1.2, the meaning of 'the mother' changed. The rise of birth-control, changing laws that enabled women to divorce and financial independence of women changed the way in which women could see their position within the family and society. Becoming pregnant no longer had to be something that would just happen, but women were now able to take control when, whether or with whom to have children. As Juliana says, it is excellent that in Portugal this is offered as a decision, in contrast to Brazil where such an option is not offered in the hospital 'out in the open'. It should be offered as a choice as well in Brazil, many Brazilian women think. But unfortunately the abortion laws do not seem to change any time soon. Or at least, many Brazilian women do not expect it to change.

It may not be specifically the abortion law that made many women leave Brazil, but politics and distrust in the country's future has been an important push factor. Raising a child in a country with Bolsonaro as the president, with a country with little opportunities seems to be a bad decision when thinking about their children's future. Why would they want to raise a child in a country that they themselves already wanted to leave in search for a better future?

Camilla is a woman in her forties[53]. Born and raised in Rio de Janeiro it showed her the difficulties of growing up in Brazil. While having a well-paid job back home and living in Barra de Tijuca which is a neighborhood in Rio de Janeiro known for its expensive houses, clean beaches and wealthy areas, the safety and opportunities of Europe made her leave. Motherhood for Camilla, who is the mother of an eleven-year-old-boy, became something different for her in Lisbon in terms of money. While in Brazil only lower-class families have the possibility to get financial support from the government, every family in Portugal gets financial support regardless of the amount of money you make. She understands that poor families need it, especially in Brazil, but in Portugal the government takes much more responsibility. In Brazil her son had to be in a private school because the public schools are "a *bagunça*" (mess), in Portugal she does not have to pay extra money for a private school since the public schools are already of good quality. In Brazil children have school until lunch-time, while in Portugal the kids stay at school the whole day. "You can even ask school to bring your kid to after school activities such as ballet classes. Here there are more facilities." All of this enables her to have more time for herself apart from being a mother. That school and the government takes more responsibility as a support for parents, takes away some of her responsibilities as a parent which makes motherhood easier, she says[54].

Most young Brazilian women I spoke with are on birth-control, until the moment they have not everything ready in life - such as a stable income and a house - to have children they will stay on birth-control. The responsibility that Camilla experiences as a mother is a huge motivation for young women not to have children (yet). For Inara[55], Julia[56], Rosangela[57], Emily[58] and Ana[59] motherhood signifies responsibility. A certain responsibility to be able to translate your knowledge, the responsibility to take care, love and be there unconditionally. Rosangela, Jucara and Kate will only have children after they are 36, before that time there is no way they could handle such responsibility. All that they can give right now, is responsibility to themselves; and even that is not always easy!

Rich (1976) saw motherhood, the mother instinct and specific characteristics ascribed to the mother, as invented patriarchal stereotypes that have nothing to do with how

[53] Multiple conversations at her work, an açai bar in Alvalade throughout the period of three months.
[54] A structured interview in a coffee bar in Campo Pequeno on 13/01/22.
[55] Interview at Praça do Chile on 17/01/22.
[56] Interview in near Cais de Sodré on 05/02/22.
[57] Conversations throughout the whole period of three months.
[58] Interview at Padaria Portuguesa in Bairro Alto on 18/01/22.
[59] Interview in the center of Lisbon on 15/02/22.

women are in reality. Her perspective, however, conflicts with how some Brazilian women perceive themselves, 'a mother' or 'a woman'. Some women actually *do* identify with such expectations or stereotypes. Elisa[60] and Rosangela[61] for example would never leave their (future) child with the father if they would separate him. They trust themselves as mothers more than any man on earth, since women know how to take care and men are irresponsible. Emily thinks a woman is born to take care. She herself is a hard-working woman, who is making more money than her husband. "Sometimes I need to control myself to let him manage his own things. But I like to take care like that, because I know when I do it things will be done the right way." She knows that her power position in terms of salary is doing something with the libido of her husband. "Men don't like it when women are in control like that."

Some Brazilian women see themselves as the mother of children who are not their biological children. Ana and Emily for example practically raised their little brothers after their mother gave birth again a long time after they were born themselves. They both experienced the struggle and hard work of motherhood, therefore they already know what it feels like to be a mother without having to give birth themselves. That they both had to take care of their spouse took away a certain need for them to raise another child that would be 'theirs' in a biological sense.

In sum, different women give different meanings to motherhood. Motherhood does not always have to be seen as an invention by the patriarchy, in contrast to what Rich (1976**)** stated, nor as the ultimate goal in life. Therefore the future focused feminist is controling her fertility with birth-control for now; her body, her desires, her future. The mother is already at a stage where the future is more something in the present, now she only has to think about the future of her child. As a mother she is able to put her child on the first place, she is fine by being on the second. As a reaction on these two women the childless feminist would scream: "But you don't *have* to become a mother to be a real woman! That's only something patriarchy tells you!". The next section focuses on different perspectives on feminism and motherhood in relation to lessons Brazilians women learned from their own mothers.

[60] Interview at Café La Palma on 07/02/22
[61] Conversations throughout the whole period of three months.

6.2 I (DON'T) WANT TO BE LIKE MY MOM

Sexual freedom, as illustrated in paragraph 5.2, can be influenced by external factors such as the family, a partner or feelings of unsafety. But how were these Brazilian women raised? What did their mothers tell them? Should the mother be an example or can you disagree with the things your mother told you? This paragraph focusses on sexual decisions women make in terms of motherhood, in relation to the role of their mothers, to understand the importance and dynamic of intergenerational feminism.

An important key-figure in the field in understanding these topics has been Michele. A fifty - sorry to put down your age! - year old woman from Minas Gerais. We saw each other for the first time at a small bar around the corner of my house. We happened to be neighbors. This first encounter was the beginning of an intense period of conversations, interviews, diners at her place and long walks through Lisbon. She became like a friend, sister and sometimes even a mother in the field, guiding me through all my questions as an anthropologist and a woman of twenty-five. Michele has been living in Lisbon for two years now. Before she had lived in Brazil, Italy and Ireland. Lisbon for her is a place where she hopes to find stability, happiness and some kind of calmness in her life. Our conversations became almost therapy sessions rather than interviews in which Michele was able to share her experiences with a woman from a different generation with a different perspective on intimacy, sex and men; while Michele for me became a woman that explained me things I do not know yet, simply because a lack of life experiences.

Michele comes from a conservative, traditional *machist* household**.** Her dad would come home from work, waiting for her mom to take off his shoes and to make him dinner[62]. She remembers how they were never allowed to eat the favorite parts of the chicken, these were supposed to be for her dad. Her mother would obey her dad in every way. Growing up with a mother like this as an example, put Michele in a difficult position, she saw the struggle of her mother, her pain and how she was stuck in a marriage like this.

Michele feels as if she is a woman that lives in the middle of two generations of feminism: the first one being her mom, as unemancipated woman, dependent of a man who cheated on, lied to and control her. The other generation is my generation being fully independent, with a strong sense of sexual freedom, living life how we would like to. Michele is caught in between and never had the chance to raise a daughter the way *she*

[62] Interview at Fonte Luminosa on 25/01/22

wanted to be raised. Her childhood and experiences throughout her life make her a strong and sensitive woman. She is a feminist, critical and aware of the little things that can cross her boundaries; she became wise through harm and shame. “My journey of self-discovery is much more important than having children." she told me. However, as a woman in her fifties she experiences how she is not able to discover this in the same way you can when you are twenty-five. Twenty-five is assumed to be an age of sexual short-term discovery, while fifty is assumed to be an age of more long-term stable relations, she tells me.

Sophia is a Portuguese woman in her forties, a good friend of Michele whom I met during an event. Three weeks later the three of us had dinner at Michele place[63]. Michele and Sophia met each other in Brazil, where Sophia lived for twenty years. Sophia has a strong opinion about motherhood. In Portugal, she tells me, women are supposed to have a nice house, get married and have kids. But, she says, it has never been her ambition to be normal, so having children is not something she desires just to belong to the rest of the women who do. She moved to Brazil in order to feel free, away from her family that expected her to fit into the ‘perfect picture’ of a Portuguese woman. Michele and Sophia might be the perfect examples of how they fight against this patriarchal idea of ‘the woman’ Rich (1976) writes about; who needs to become a mother to be a real woman. They do not feel the pressure to live up to these standards or norms and consider their individuality, liberty and development as more important than living up to norms that their family or society puts on them.

Camilla was abandoned by her mother as a kid. Also her mother was living under control of a *machist* man. Did her mother leave her kids and husband behind as an act of feminist ideas to take control over her own life? Absolutely not, she says. “To be a feminist you need to be intellectual. My mom was just crazy and not intellectual at all.”[64]. While Michele never decided to have children, since having children equals the same struggles as her mom, Camilla wanted children very badly to become the mother her mom never was. “There are two types of women”, Camilla states, “women who have their life as a mother separate from their life as a woman and women who don’t. I can not separate these two things. My mother could.”. In this sense Camilla’s kid became as important or maybe even more important than herself. Michele on the contrary put her personal journey on number

[63] on 13/02/22
[64] Small talk at her work Oakberry on 07/01/22

one. She thinks you can not have children when you have to process such influential events from your childhood.

Camilla found her way through a steady and loving relationship, the father of her son. Michele started looking - and is still looking - for knowledge by herself in order to understand the way in which she wants to be in the world as a woman.

Most participants[65] described their own parents as traditional, conservative and close-minded about gender relations. Their mothers became mothers because there was no other option and because that was what a woman is supposed to be in her life. Nara's mother for example never complained about motherhood or pregnancy, which she relates to a traditional idea about how women should be thankful for being able to have a family. Her mom, coming from a small town in Brazil, did not have the freedom she has right now, Nara tells me. Freedom in what? Birth-control, traveling and the possibility to understand the world from a more global perspective. As some kind of contra-reaction many Brazilian women I spoke with decide to have children at the age of thirty-five - or sometimes even older. Various women talk about teenage pregnancies in Brazil and how they themselves became extra protective during sex. Kate for example used the pill *and* a condom when she was a teenager, because the biggest fear of her and her friends was to become pregnant. Emily got told over and over by her mom to not have children at a young age, because her mom, who got pregnant at the age of eighteen, was not able to enjoy her youth without responsibilities of being a mother. The struggle of her mom showed her how motherhood is not something she desires at all.

Nara and Michele see motherhood as a way to pass on your ideas and values in life. While Nara, at the age of twenty-five is planning on doing so in the future with her current Brazilian boyfriend, Michele as a fifty-year old woman teaches me all kinds of things, she would have wanted to teach the daughter she never had. So motherhood for them, is about leaving something behind, making their ideas of value into another's person's life and being there for a woman in a way they think is best. Open conversations about the complexity of sex, love and intimacy are considered important and being able to acknowledge how difficult being a woman in its broadest sense should not be something be considered a taboo; but rather something that we should embrace and talk about. Talking with all these women can be seen as a step towards such openness, by sharing and creating a space without taboos among different generations of women.

[65] Kate, Rosangela, Emily, Nara, Michele, Sophia, Camilla, Jamilla.

All in all, many decisions in relation to birth-control, motherhood and pregnancy seem to be closely connected to the way in which the *mothers* of these Brazilian women positioned themselves within the family. As elaborated on in section 1.1 there is no such thing as one feminism for all women (e.g. Ang, 1995: 193). Thus, what I argue here is that each woman from each generation or country follows a feminism on her own terms in order to define her sense of feminism. In the next section I elaborate on how sharing experiences and knowledge about definitions of feminism(s) might help women to understand their (sexual) decisions. Also I explain how womanhood is something that can be shared, while at the same time it might blur the differences that underlie the social identification of a woman.

CHAPTER 7 WHERE DO YOU, WE AND I BELONG?

7.1 SUA LUTA NÃO É MINHA LUTA (YOUR FIGHT IS NOT MY FIGHT)

Doing fieldwork is always a challenging experience. As anthropologists we try to dive into another world, a world that is not 'ours' in order to understand the life-worlds of others. And while diving into these life-worlds of the women that I have met, I stumbled upon many different, but also upon many similar experiences that connected us. This section is a critical analysis of how to actually practice intersectionality (Cho et al., 2013: 796; Wekker, 2016: 21) in conversations with participants who became like friends in the field. And how through collaboration and vulnerability in the field, knowledge about feminism(s) comes into being (Lassiter, 2005: 56, 106).

Lassiter (2005) writes how the rise of feminist anthropology challenged dichotomous thinking within anthropology, such as the researcher and the researched, the subject and the object, the woman and the man. By deconstructing these dichotomies, and by acknowledging the complex power relation within writing, feminist ethnography is more about the "the self that participates in multiple identifications" (Abu-Lughod 1990 in Lassiter, 2005) in which both parties influence each other in the way they respond, talk and feel in the company of the other person. In other words, they might - and most likely - will repond differently to me, than to Brazil's president Bolsonaro, when he would ask them about their sexual lives

With some women with I found similarities in experiences in past relationships, experiences with birth-control, experiences with abortions and sex and the struggles of living in another country than your country of birth. As a Dutch woman in Lisbon, Portugal felt as a strange country that does not feel like The Netherlands; it is sunnier, less rainy and the spoken language is not Dutch. For Brazilian women Portugal might have felt a bit closer to Brazil in terms of language and climate but still, that did not make them feel Portuguese. Being away from home could make you feel like an outsider, looking at the life of locals that are not the same as you.

I am Maurice Gispen, a twenty-five-years-old woman born and raised in The Hague, the Netherlands. I finished high school when I was eighteen years old and I moved to Utrecht where I studied for five years. During these five years I worked in bars to pay my rent but if I would ever have financial trouble, I would always have my parents to rely on. In 2019 I started fieldwork in Rio de Janeiro, this was the second time I went outside of Europe and before this I went on many trips for school, university and on holidays to Spain, Bosnia,

Turkey and multiple other countries throughout Europe. When I arrived in Brazil for the first time I could not speak any Portuguese, but I spoke English. Far away from The Netherlands it never felt as if I had to start all over again, because in the back of my head I knew back home, there is always 'my stable life' waiting for me again. I never had to start from zero, I never had to worry about money, I never felt discriminated, or excluded or treated as less coming from The Netherlands. But what does this all say about me in relation to my participants?

One of my dear friends and key informants during fieldwork in Lisbon used to work in a Brazilian lunchroom. Many of her experiences as a woman in Lisbon, who arrived in the city only two months before me, were negative ones. She got paid too little, spent all of her savings in three months in Lisbon and noticed xenophobic attitudes towards Brazilians by professors at her university.

As I started looking for a job in Lisbon, a good way to blend in and build on social networks, I started comparing my experiences with hers. She got paid three and a half euros an hour, had to work six days a week and was not allowed to eat or drink anything she likes during work. The three places where I did a job interview offered me flexible working schedules, five euros an hour and I could choose whatever I wanted to eat at work. "Just leave the place where you work!" I told Rosangela, "There are so many options! In one week I found all these three places that offer much more than your job.". "It's not that easy *amiga* (friend). Look at you! You are blond, you are European and you speak English". But is that really the reason why I got offered all of this and she did not? This is where it comes to the 'power-free zone ' (bron) or preferably, the 'not-so-power-free-zone' that I mentioned in the paragraph …. Yes, we became friends in the field, yes we are both women and yes, we shared some experiences but that does not make us the same. It was Rosangela who left her home-country to search for opportunities on the other side of the ocean and me doing my research.

While sending her some of my optimistic positive energy, I try to convince her of the possibilities she has. That she makes more money in comparison to Brazil does not mean she has to accept everything that she gets offered in Portugal. But maybe she is right, we are not the same. I go home frustrated and confused. Was I being too harsh on Rosangela? Can I only be this optimistic because such things *are* easier for me as a Dutch, white, blond woman? The next week we meet again. I say sorry and try to clarify myself. Maybe I do not understand her situation, maybe her possibilities *are* less than mine, maybe she *does* experience discrimination because she *is* a Brazilian woman. She is thankful for my

apologies and tries to explain where her feelings come from. “It’s a combination of two things”, she says, “I am going through a rough period anyways on many levels and I think I need to process these things to feel strong and confident again.”. “But what do you need?”, I ask her. She wants to get fit again, training, running, doing exercises and … sex! Well? I ask her, what is holding you back?

We come to conclude that we can have conversations about our experiences, but we need to remind ourselves that we simply have different personalities, born in different contexts, in a different world with different backgrounds. This is where intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) becomes relevant: we both might belong to the same group of ‘women’ (gender) but within this group there are many other layers of our identities that make us different such as nationality, class, social background.

Thus, while sharing experiences as women it is important to remember that *“sua luta, não é minha luta”*[66] (your fight is not my fight). Only through conversation and reflection (in collaboration) we become aware of certain blind-spots we might have had before as a woman *and* as a researcher (Cho et al., 2013: 796; Lassiter, 2005: 56). It felt as if I wanted to connect with her on the basis of shared similarities, while in reality there were much more ‘layers of our identity’ that made us different to some extent. But how and why are such differences of value in understanding sexual freedom? The next section illustrates that being an outsider can either stimulate or limit women to feel sexually free.

7.2 SEXUAL FREEDOM AS AN OUTSIDER

After a long interview with key participant Michele, we go to an expat event in a bar at *Rua Rosa*, one of the hotspots of Lisbon’s nightlife. “At such events”, Michele tells me on the way, “I only talk with women.” Why? Because men always want something else and it is important to make new female friends. The event has already started when we arrive, so we get a drink and try to mingle into one of the conversations on the street. The goal of the event is to meet new people, so it is a kind of organized get together in a bar where everybody is looking for some kind of connection as strangers in the city. The events are always an interesting social experiment to observe how everybody is positioning themselves in a new environment surrounded by people they do not yet know. Some people do not feel any discomfort in taking over a conversation and starting a long and loud story about their life.

[66] Conversation at Pastelaria Brasília on 04/04/22

Others wait patiently and somewhat awkward until someone includes them into the conversation. In this section I illustrate how being a stranger, an outsider, a new one in a social environment shapes the way in which sexual freedom can be experienced.

Michele and I meet a Japanese woman in her thirties, who left Japan thirteen years ago. When we start the conversation, she explains to us how at such events she normally never talks with women. She prefers to talk with men, has more male friends and does not want to be a "female kind of woman". Interesting because here she is, talking with two other women; with Michele who on the contrary who only prefers to talk with women since she does not like the sexual intention that men often have. What is a female kind of woman for her? She starts telling us how she does not want to have kids, does not want to have a boyfriend or how she does not want to be feminine.

In Japan, she often felt the pressure of living up to these standards, but as she never had the desire to do so, she left Japan and started building her own norms and values on how to be a woman. "When I go back to Japan, people on the streets would give me compliments on how good my Japanese is. Because I lived in The United States for so long I don't look and behave Japanese anymore, so people would think I am a tourist in my own country". She loves it that she is now considered an outsider in Japan, because that enables her to escape the social norms and values that are forced onto Japanese women. "When you are an outsider, you don't have to follow the rules anymore!". Michele laughs and rolls up her T-shirt, to show a tattoo. We need to get closer to read the letters in the dark. In small curly letters there is written 'Outsider' on her wrist . "That's exactly why I left Brazil", Michele says.

While these two women experience a kind of freedom and social exclusion from the rules they felt they had to live up to as women in their home-country, Rosangela, on the contrary, felt that these social norms and values in Brazil actually enabled her to feel sexually free. She describes how it is hard to know how to flirt, interact or talk in Portugal with *gringos* because she does not know what is considered normal. In Brazil she knows exactly how to encounter a man, but here in Lisbon: what do they expect her to do? This is for many women[67] a reason to eventually end up with a Brazilian. As if the same 'cultural' way of communicating make it easier to sexually position yourself in relation to someone else. However Rosangela, who has a hard time to understand the 'sexual rules' with non-Brazilians, thinks she would feel less at home in Brazil than she does in Lisbon at this

[67] Nara, Rosangela, Emily, Juçara

moment in life. As if leaving your home country makes you an outsider per definition, even if you never feel at home in the country you moved to. Maybe that is exactly the reason why so many Brazilian women keep looking for all the things in Portugal that keep them close to Brazil.

CONCLUSIONS

"Liberdade sexual é que você pode fazer,
pensar e sentir tudo que você quer,
sem culpa!"

Elisa from Goiânia (2022)[68]

"Sexual freedom is that you can do,
say and feel whatever you want,
without guilt"

This thesis is an illustration of how Brazilian women give meaning to sexual freedom in relation to their reproductive health. This quote above might cover everyone's individual perception of sexual freedom in it most perfect way. As if it does not matter what or who limits or supports her, no matter where she is on earth: as long as she is able to not *feel* guilty about *anything* she will be sexually free. The reproductive health of Brazilian women, the umbrella term to explain sex, birth-control, pregnancy and motherhood, were topics that were not equally important for each individual. Depending on the person, her background, her interests and current state of life (e.g. working, single, mother, in a relationship, studying, taking some time off etc.) each theme would have a different value. As an anthropologist I had to be aware of all these differences and I had to to decide which story would or would not contribute to this overall understanding of sexual freedom among Brazilian women in Lisbon.

Many Brazilian women I spoke with, enabled themselves not to feel guilty and thus enabled themselves to feel free. This was sometimes a difficult process of letting go, taking distance from certain people or convincing themselves that their feelings were valid.

Some women did not want to feel guilty towards their family for leaving Brazil. Some women did not want to feel guilty about their sexual desires while being in a relationship. Some did not want to feel guilty for being attracted to women and not men. Some did not want to feel guilty towards their families and society for not becoming a mother. Some did not want to feel guilty for aborting. Some did not want to feel guilty by

[68] Interview at Café La Palma on 07/02/22.

controlling their fertility by taking birth-control. Some did not want to feel guilty about kissing someone they wanted to kiss. Some did not want to feel guilty for complaining about living in Europe. Some did not want to feel guilty for dressing the way they wanted to dress. And I could continue for ever, writing down all the things they did not *want* to feel guilty about. As I said, as long as they were able to give themselves this peace and calm to accept their wishes, desires and decisions, their sexual freedom was experienced in the way exactly how they wanted it.

But sexual freedom is not only something you want, have or get (Hunt, 2013: 27). To *be* free and to *feel* free seems to be a constant dynamic of internal and external factors that either limit or enable women to feel free. Thus, what I am trying to say is that in order to *feel* sexually free, it is not the simple act of 'uncaging' yourself from the things that restrict you in order to feel so. Rather, freedom can be seen as an embodied process, an individual, personal journey towards acceptance and confidence, to own your decisions without feeling guilty about norms, rules, laws, expectations, opinions or traditions from your environment (Hunt, 2013: 27; Sheller, 2012: 17). Thus, sexual freedom is related to a certain extent to restrictions, limitations or power that make freedom what is it because again: freedom is only freedom in its relation to power (Foucault in Parsons, 2014: 6).

Often Portugal was seen as a gate and a country closely connected to Brazil. Europe was often seen as a place, a dream, a continent full of opportunities in financial, educational and even emotional terms. Lisbon itself was many times irrelevant as a place; it were the stories that all these women carried inside themselves either in Brazil, in Portugal or anywhere else around the world that made them understand sexual freedom as they do today. The interplay of these places that contributed to the understanding of sexual freedom among Brazilian women, made this research multi-sited (Marcus, 1994).

I observed different aspects that shape the way in which Brazilian women are able to feel sexually free. Again, I emphasize here that there is no such thing as 'sexual freedom for the Brazilian woman'. There are endless ways to understand sexual freedom, and each way to approach sexual freedom has to be related to the different layers of identity that make each Brazilian woman, the woman she is. From an intersectional perspective (Crenshaw, 1991) this research emphasizes that there are multiple interpretations and ideas on feminism. Thus, this research presents a way to move beyond 'one feminism for all' towards various feminisms for each. It can be seen as invitation to create a space where women can talk, meet, reflect and discover sexual freedom internationally.

To come back to the Weberian types of Brazilian women: the half/half type is feeling free because she was lucky to grow up in both worlds. The immigrant is feeling physically close to freedom, yet her sense of freedom will come when she is able to feel like a local in Lisbon. The future focused feminist is feeling free - for now - because she does not have children (yet) and because she is able to build on a future that Brazil could not offer her. The childless feminist feels free because she will never be like her mother. The mother feels free because she is able to give meaning to motherhood in a new, progressive and different kind of way than she did in Brazil. And the bird, well the bird freed herself from the family and is now able to fly wherever she wants.

Ideas on sexual freedom are constantly in motion and related to the experiences and environments of Brazilian women. At the same time leaving a country does not mean you leave your past, it does not mean you leave your body or mind, nor does it automatically set you free. Because sexual freedom has its own specific meaning for each woman, regardless of where they are on earth.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Since this research has been done exclusively with women who happened to be openly against Bolsonaro, for any further research it might be interesting to focus on women who support Bolsonaro. Also it would be interesting to study the same topics but then from the perspective of Brazilian men. In September 2022 I will start my PhD in Anthropology at the Nova University of Lisbon. This upcoming project will be a comparative study about sexual stereotypes and the representation of Brazilian sex workers in European countries and Brazil.

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