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# Diverse families: Challenges and social acceptance

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## Abstract

The family is a social institution that has evolved by adapting to diversity and reflecting historical, economic, cultural, geographic, and political changes. Taking these elements into account, this article examines the challenges faced by diverse families, which represent alternative models to the traditionally accepted forms of monogamous and heterosexual families. This is a qualitative study, applying the method of documentary exploration and based on the review of academic sources with recognized institutional prestige. Among the main findings, the study highlights a break with the traditional model of the nuclear, monogamous family, characteristic of the bourgeois family, which generates prejudice and barriers against other family forms, particularly same-sex parent families, who face strong discrimination and stigmatization despite demonstrating their ability to function and thrive socially. The study concludes that diversity is an undeniable reality within families, and therefore requires full recognition and acceptance, overcoming existing prejudices and ensuring inclusive and democratic civic participation.

**Keywords:** Family; diverse families; same-sex families; inclusion; social acceptance.

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# Familias diversas: Desafíos y aceptación social

## Resumen

La familia es una institución social que ha evolucionado adaptándose a la diversidad y reflejando cambios históricos, económicos, culturales, geográficos y políticos. Considerando estos elementos, este artículo examina los desafíos que enfrentan las familias diversas, que representan modelos alternativos a las formas tradicionalmente aceptadas de familias monógamas y heterosexuales. Se trata de un estudio cualitativo, que aplica el método de exploración documental y se basa en la revisión de fuentes académicas de reconocido prestigio institucional. Entre los principales hallazgos, el estudio destaca una ruptura con el modelo tradicional de familia nuclear y monógama, característico de la familia burguesa, que genera prejuicios y barreras contra otras formas de familia, en particular las familias homoparentales, que enfrentan una fuerte discriminación y estigmatización a pesar de demostrar su capacidad para funcionar y prosperar socialmente. El estudio concluye que la diversidad es una realidad innegable dentro de las familias y, por lo tanto, requiere su pleno reconocimiento y aceptación, superando los prejuicios existentes y garantizando una participación cívica inclusiva y democrática.

**Palabras clave:** Familia; familias diversas; familias homoparentales; inclusión; aceptación social.

## Introduction

Traditionally, the family is conceived as a group of people bound by blood, kinship, or marriage, legally recognized and socially accepted, thus constituting the social institution that sustains relationships among individuals. In this sense, the family is a form of cultural, political, and economic organization where emotional, psychological, and interpersonal bonds are established. It is essential not only for individual development but also for driving social change, whether by maintaining or transforming central aspects of culture, religion, or law.

In this formation process, the monogamous and heterosexual family model has been privileged. At present, the diversification and plurality of this concept have become evident, which, beyond kinship relations, reflect the dynamism of society and its ways of conceiving it. Recent studies have focused on specifying the role of the family from broad, inclusive, and interdisciplinary approaches.

Notable studies include those addressing the feminist perspective on the family and the questioning of machismo in the present (Tovar

et al., 2020), domestic violence (Donoso et al., 2021), the characterization of family roles (Delfín-Ruiz et al., 2021), the impact of social networks on new family dynamics (Ibanez-Ayuso et al., 2022), and the pluralization and evolution of the concept of family (Bohórquez, 2024), among others. Based on the above, the research aims to analyze the challenges faced by diverse families, considering these as alternative models to the traditionally accepted forms of monogamous and heterosexual families.

## 1. Theoretical foundation

According to Oliva & Villa (2014), the family is the oldest institution in society. It is essential for the study and analysis of society, history, and other disciplines that focus on human beings. From an axiological perspective, it represents the primary means through which values, traditions, customs, and behaviors are transmitted from generation to generation, playing a decisive role in shaping individuals for their activities and role within society.

In this line of thought, the family arises from human needs for evolution, social progress, and historical development. It is presented as the fundamental nucleus of society, where bonds are established that serve its integration and are consolidated within a common space known as the home. The family is understood as the result of historical evolution, as well as social, legal, and economic factors, which have expanded the initial conception of the family made up of spouses and children, into an open space of relationships where different actors interact, sharing common affective, psychological, cultural, physical, and economic needs.

This is how the family becomes a means of social regulation. It determines procreation, the forms and channels through which culture is transmitted, and the types of values that shape society. Initially, it is constituted through marital bonds, protected by legal norms, which throughout its historical development have sought social balance, the humanization of education, and the transmission of values that go beyond mere survival instincts, connecting with the human side of each individual.

According to De Martino (2022), beginning with the French Revolution a profound political and social crisis emerged, which included the weakening of community ties and the rise of urban centers. In this context, the sociological and philosophical thought of the time, represented by emblematic authors such as Alexis de Tocqueville (1805–1859), Karl Marx (1818–1883), Friedrich Engels (1820–1895), and Émile Durkheim (1858–1917). They addressed the question of how to integrate the family into the evident social transformations.

In line with the above, Tapia & Quezada (2019) argue that the prototype of the family defined within this philosophical and social context privileged the bourgeois image of woman as destined for procreation and man for production, supported by the medical, psychological, sociological, and intellectual writings and theories of the time. In this way, the traditional nuclear family gave rise to manifestations of individualism and the

rejection of community ideals, as a result of the effects of modernity, rationalism, and the ideals of the French Revolution and industrialization. This process gradually set aside the association between sexuality and love as part of the family, moving instead toward a model centered on fertility, subsistence, and economic interests.

These early attempts to reflect on the family led to its definition as a mediator between the individual and society, connected with other practices such as hygienism, educational voluntarism, and the search for new social orders. With the arrival of the twentieth century, however, the family assumed a role of integration and transformation within society, recognizing its intergenerational relevance, a position that proved significant in the postwar periods, when debates emerged regarding the function of the family and its role in maintaining political trust within nations.

According to Benítez (2017), the family has undergone a constant historical evolution, which means that there is no universal concept of it; rather, it is subject to human evolution and the social structures that accompany it. Nevertheless, what has been traditionally accepted within the social sciences points to the monogamous and heterosexual family, formed through ties of consanguinity and affinity. In this context, a period begins in which social relations are linked to economic interests, well-being, and social development.

In this way, the stereotypes of the monogamous family formed by a man and a woman who combine their material assets to undertake a shared life project, adding their reproductive capacities to raise children, for a long time were the privileged image of the family within the political and state interests. This constitutes an ideological, religious, political, and cultural model that shapes social relations, where the family aligns with the interests of capitalism, the grouping of individuals out of necessity, private production, and consumerism, representing an obstacle to any conception different from the monogamous and heterosexual family (Tapia & Quezada, 2019).

This type of relationship cannot be conceived as a wholly positive event; on the contrary, it often involves suffering or the exchange of partners as interchangeable goods. Understood in this way, the monogamous union was positioned as the foundation of economic activity, business production, private property, and a significant part of Western geo-historical reality, displacing other forms of family, such as the polygamous family, the extended family, and the blended family. While the monogamous family cannot be regarded as the only form of family, it has nonetheless opened space for new forms of family and coexistence, for its pluralization, serving as a medium through which other family forms can be tested, beyond affective or biological ties (Bohórquez, 2024).

Benítez (2017); and Bohórquez (2024), agree that, in the present context, it is necessary to recognize single-parent families, reconstituted families, same-sex parent families, Indigenous families, bilocal families, neolocal families, among others. This reality guides the definition of the family as an institution that encompasses a set of regulations that favor the constitution of the sexual couple and the bonds of filiation, where the main interests are summarized in marriage, sexuality, procreation, filiation, place of residence, and the possibility of change. This type of structure, understood today as the family, emerged in the twentieth century and reflects the historical and social evolution of this institution.

This type of family, or families, corresponds to a definition characteristic of the new millennium, which, in the words of Torio (2004), forms part of the postmodern or post-patriarchal model. It is characterized by the introduction of new ideologies, legal reforms, distinct geographic and demographic conditions, and by granting women a more active and prominent role in the workforce. However, from the author's perspective, these definitions of family maintain an individualistic focus, centered on the self and not on social commitment or the interests of the majority, instead reaffirming and reinforcing the ideal

of privacy and private space, connecting with broader economic interests such as globalization.

This position can be contrasted with that of Oliva & Villa (2014), who argue that the economic approaches applied to the family in recent times have led to its definition as a factory, subject to costs, expenses, income, consumption, and investments, where each member occupies an essential role. In contrast, Jaramillo et al. (2010) expands on these considerations by stating that economic uncertainties and the changes associated with globalization necessitate the establishment of new work dynamics and, consequently, new ways of conceiving the family and its needs. This has resulted in the absence and weakening of family relationships, creating rifts and disagreements among its members.

However, this reduces the definition of family to economic subsistence and productive dynamism, subject to the interests of social classes, where only minimal and essential qualities prevail, such as security, subsistence, protection, shelter, among others. Thus, the new orientation of the concept of family focuses on it as a cultural, spiritual, and economic unit, in which each member, beyond occupying a place of economic interest, also shares psycho-emotional needs, common interests, and objectives that involve everyone.

The family is a private and unique space, based on specific norms, by the culture, and by the particular customs of its members. It transcends regulations linked to religious aspects or monogamy, without losing its essence as a primary group and a place of encounter among its members. In light of this reality, the family has entered a stage of adaptation to diversity and heterogeneity, as a product of globalization.

According to Oliva & Villa (2013), the result of social changes has given rise to new forms of family, as well as to new meanings of what it represents to be and to belong to a family. This, in turn, calls for new dynamics to ensure the growth and survival of this social institution. For this reason, families adapt to the surrounding reality, to the recognition of

new rights, and to the principles of equality, inclusion, and non-discrimination.

In summary, the family is a social institution that has undergone a series of evolutionary changes at the historical, economic, and cultural levels, aligning itself with human needs. It has moved from being a space devoted to the transmission of values and behaviors to one that responds to the demands and complexities of a globalized world, characterized by plurality, diversity, and the need to adapt to new ways of understanding reality. This evolution requires the acceptance and coexistence of alternative family models, highlighting the family's capacity for integration, inclusion, and change in response to the tensions of globalization, while preserving its essence of meeting the demands of its environment, promoting respect and acceptance among its members, and strengthening the social fabric.

## **2. Methodology**

This research follows the guidelines of the qualitative paradigm, considered by Corona (2018) as an emerging form of inquiry, whose epistemological and methodological foundations refer to the subjective and intersubjective experiences of individuals. The practices established within this paradigm are oriented toward a comprehensive understanding of the human being, where different perspectives, opinions, ways of being, and ways of acting converge, enabling a closer approach to the observed phenomena and thereby constructing a framework of references cooperatively. As such, it is grounded in the philosophical corpus of various authors, offering an interpretative and critical perspective consistent with research developed in the social sciences, and adaptable to different methods and contexts.

Regarding its methodology, documentary exploration is employed, defined by Arias-Odón (2023) as a process oriented toward the search for and acquisition of new knowledge through the retrieval, analysis,

and interpretation of texts collected from different means of publication or from printed, audiovisual, and electronic sources. Thanks to its versatility, this type of methodology is appropriate for both the natural and social sciences, as it incorporates diverse perspectives in order to validate the information reviewed.

Consequently, the strength of documentary research lies in its capacity to employ an explicit, replicable, reproducible, and reasonable method. Therefore, its path is clearly defined, beginning with the identification of a problem, the collection of information sources, the extraction and validation of data, and culminating in the construction of the theoretical proposal.

For the selection of bibliographic sources, academic repositories of recognized prestige were consulted, such as Scopus, Latindex, Redalyc, Dialnet, and Google Scholar, among others. This process includes the organization of information, the selection of materials according to their relevance, the choice of citations, and the presentation of research results. In summary, the article provides a critical analysis resulting from the application of a series of techniques, acknowledging that the topic addressed is not exhausted by this reflection, but rather gives rise to future research, contributing to clarifying the conceptual boundaries of the phenomenon under study.

## **3. Results and discussion**

### **3.1. Diverse Families**

According to Arriagada (2007), family diversity, or diverse families, gained relevance in the Latin American context at the end of the twentieth century, particularly during the 1990s. This was a period marked by a significant decline in the monogamous family model, giving rise to extended families of up to three generations; single-parent families, led mainly by women; single-person households; families without a conjugal nucleus, that is, without marriage; reconstituted families; long-



distance families resulting from migration; consensual families, among others.

This marked the beginning of the breakdown of the family model characterized by the man as producer and provider. It promoted women's participation in the workforce and equality in labor conditions, encouraged the equitable distribution of childcare, domestic work, and household responsibilities, and also witnessed the rise of the matrifocal family, along with a significant reduction in large families, due to factors such as declining fertility rates and the assumption of diverse roles by women within society.

Likewise, there is a consistent trend toward the diversification of social classes and the recomposition of households accordingly. In this way, it is assumed that family diversity stems from issues related to the recognition of economic needs and the unequal distribution of resources. In response to this reality, the sexual division of labor is questioned, as well as the equal consideration of employment, recreation, and leisure needs for all members, in addition to the urgent need to address population growth and the integration of women into political spheres. This represents a shift from homogeneity to heterogeneity within the family, where both women and men actively participate in work and in the distribution of responsibilities.

According to Tapia & Quezada (2019), this has led to a questioning of the nuclear family, introducing the need for affective and emotional bonds, the grouping of individuals, sexuality, geographical interests, among other aspects, which have resulted in the definition of diverse family models that are non-restrictive and go beyond Western hegemonic patterns. As López (2017) points out, these elements make evident the evolution and substantial changes that have taken place regarding the family, from which it is concluded that this institution is not homogeneous but instead integrates a series of spaces conditioned by violence; that is, by contexts of domination toward women (Castro-Avalos & Morocco-Colque, 2024), young people, and diverse identities, such as same-sex parent families,

giving rise to uninterrupted cycles of exclusion and marginalization.

In this way, addressing the issue of family diversity also represents a matter of cultural identity and openness toward others, toward alterity (Morán, 2021), with the aim of mitigating vulnerabilities and the adversities that are continuously faced (Alvarado, 2023). As stated by Blanco (2015), diverse families are those that do not conform to the monogamous, heterosexual, nuclear family model, as they present a variety of structures and strategies for their formation. These include cohabitation, blended families with children from previous relationships, families formed through assisted reproduction, such as surrogacy or adoption, and even families that define their relationships through emotional bonds or diverse parenting practices, such as same-sex parent families or blended same-sex parent families.

According to Carvajal (2020), the definition of diverse families encompasses both the traditional notions of monogamous and heterosexual families as well as same-sex families, which contrast with a normative family model considered ideal and natural, typically composed of a father, mother, and children. This pattern refers to heteronormative standards that regulate sexual behaviors within society, ensuring that the family maintains an internal, adjusted, and invisible order that excludes any possibility of divergence. In this sense, the term "diverse family" has gained ground by including a range of non-conventional family forms that constitute Latin American cultural diversity, making this an ongoing field of discussion, not fully regulated, and requiring constant interdisciplinary review and intervention.

For his part, Eduarte (2020) asserts that, implicitly, the family is a diverse conceptualization, shaped by the multiple factors that compose it and by the individuality of each of its members, as well as the communities in which they develop. The family is inherently diverse, subject to internal and social changes, and faces similar challenges whether monogamous and

heterosexual or same-sex parent families. In this way, it is the responsibility of the State and public policies to address the family comprehensively, as well as the critical aspects that define it, such as child-rearing, protection and safeguarding of opportunities, care for the elderly, and the integral development of girls, boys, and adolescents, among other aspects.

Within this context, individual experiences are significant, leading to the understanding that the traditional family model is not the only one that should be considered, as this otherwise delegitimizes and renders invisible the alternative bonds among other family members or other forms of family formation. In this way, the diverse family encompasses the union of individuals in an extended manner, resulting from affective bonds, whose manifestations are broad, varied, and different in each case, with the common denominator being expressions of love, affection, and care.

For Placeres et al. (2017), despite its diversification and the restructuring of its forms, the family maintains basic functions, such as economic, educational, affective, and cultural roles, which endure over time and provide consistency to this social institution. For this reason, coexistence is a noteworthy factor within any definition of family, as it involves the individual and collective evolution of its members (Díaz-Correa, 2024), ensuring its dynamism while also determining its functioning through communication, cohesion, adaptability, harmony, and the autonomy of its members, among other central aspects.

As can be observed, the concept of diverse families is linked to the traditional conception of the family, but in a way that challenges the hegemonic patterns on which it has been based in the Western world. Nevertheless, social transformations have led to the reconfiguration of the family, resulting from the economic, cultural, and affective needs of its members, allowing it to transcend the limits imposed by heteronormativity. It represents a recognition of difference, but it also emerges as a call for legal acknowledgment, with the aim of enjoying the same rights and freedoms as the

rest of the population, reflecting the capacity to love, care, support, and show commitment to society.

### **3.2. Same-Sex Parent Families**

Within the categorizations of diverse families, the topic of same-sex parent families continues to be a subject of discussion, particularly regarding the possibility of parenthood among individuals of the same sex. While this issue is not new, it has gained prominence following the legalization of same-sex marriage in various parts of the world, generating controversies among religious and conservative sectors, who question both the union of same-sex couples and, more significantly, the well-being of children, including their psychological, social, and emotional development within these families. Nevertheless, recent studies tend to demonstrate that child well-being depends on the quality of the environment, characterized by love, respect, and stability, rather than the sexual orientation of the parents (Placeres et al., 2017).

In contrast, Castaño-Suárez et al. (2018) point out that unions between same-sex couples have begun to gain acceptance in various locations, albeit with certain controversies and challenges. However, the debate over adoption and child-rearing within same-sex parent families remains unresolved. Nevertheless, the authors argue, in agreement with Placeres et al. (2017), that children's psychological development and well-being depend on respect, a harmonious environment, social integration, and recognition of their human condition, rather than the sexual orientation of their parents.

Same-sex parent families represent a challenge to conventional norms of child-rearing and to culturally accepted forms of monogamous families, often facing prejudice, rejection, and discrimination, as they are not considered a consolidated family and their diversity is denied recognition. In this regard, same-sex parent families, like conventional



families, maintain a complex and composite structure that requires positive environments for the socialization and fulfillment of their members. Additionally, they must face adversities with resilience, seeking their place within social spaces resistant to change in the definition of the family institution.

In contrast to these perspectives, Castaño-Suárez et al. (2018) argue that same-sex parent family models do not fit within the established patterns of homonormativity, revealing a heterosexist view of the family anchored in traditional notions of masculinity and femininity. Despite this resistance, the evolution of diverse families has been continuous, integrating it into the United States, Latin America, and some European countries' legislation incorporating laws in favor of marriage equality for same-sex couples, as well as granting them the right to adoption.

However, same-sex parent families, according to Castaño-Suárez et al. (2020), continue to face distrust and constant scrutiny, as well as prejudgments of being considered deviant, contradicting the evolutionary advances of society, which recognizes these family models as part of social dynamics that promote inclusion. Consequently, the acceptance of same-sex parent families also pertains to individual freedom and the construction of democratic, political, ethical, and civic values that validate cultural forms. In this way, the modification of the family definition and the acceptance of diversity lead to new forms of interaction, enhance the development of all members both individually and collectively, and redefine the roles exercised within the family.

In this context, same-sex parent families face greater challenges than monogamous and heterosexual families, as both the couple and the other members, including children, confront societal labeling, estrangement, and scrutiny. It is essential to promote inclusive environments, education in values, and the protection of affective and sexual rights, so that mutual understanding and the diversity of family models become an undeniable reality within social settings (Ceballos, 2012).

Evidently, same-sex parent families constitute part of a social reality that challenges traditional family models. While they face prejudice and social rejection, they have also demonstrated the ability to nurture their members, fostering resilient, respectful, and responsible environments, far from the socially assigned stereotypes. Therefore, this type of family should no longer be regarded as an anomaly but rather as an integral part of social reality and of the accepted forms of social, civic, and democratic coexistence within the legal frameworks of nations.

## Conclusion

Although the topic of diverse families is not new within academic and social debates, their acceptance, complexity, and definition contrasted with the normative monogamous and heterosexual model remain subjects of reflection and critique in the context of contemporary asymmetric and discriminatory settings. Family plurality represents the ways in which the family has evolved to face globalization and advances in human rights, establishing new forms of acceptance regarding child-rearing and coexistence, while remaining mindful of persistent challenges such as social acceptance, legal recognition, and the stigma present in everyday life.

The urgency of an inclusive and equitable approach is recognized, one that allows for the coexistence of diverse family forms while ensuring respect, tolerance, and full access to rights. This requires judicial frameworks and public policies that foster the recognition of diversity, address legal gaps, and promote essential democratic values to strengthen the civic fabric, enabling families to continue their natural development.

The article presents a significant theoretical contribution, offering insights into the definition of diverse families from a critical and interdisciplinary perspective. Its strengths stem from this qualitative approach, as it allows for an integral, holistic analysis from multiple viewpoints, focusing on common, tangible

aspects and specificities that can be understood by the reader. However, this same strength also constitutes a limitation, since there is no interaction with actual subjects, nor are there encounters with first-hand informants.

For this reason, the possibility of pursuing future lines of research is proposed, involving specific social actors, same-sex parent families situated in particular geographical contexts, as well as highlighting other types of diverse families, such as Indigenous families, which, according to legal provisions, have their own characterization, definition, and forms of social functioning.

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