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**8TH CONGRESS OF THE EUROPEAN SOCIETY ON FAMILY RELATIONS (ESFR)  
CHANGING FAMILY RELATIONS – GENDER AND GENERATIONS**

**AUGUST 31 - SEPTEMBER 3, 2016, TU DORTMUND UNIVERSITY, GERMANY**

**THE INFLUENCE OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION IN PERCEPTIONS OF  
FAMILY SOLIDARITY IN PORTUGAL**

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# INTRODUCTION

- Sociodemographic transformations (e.g., growth of life expectancy, increased participation of women in the labour market) had a profound impact in family life.
- Intergenerational solidarity (Bengtson & Roberts, 1991) is as a valuable resource to family functioning, especially in countries characterized by familistic values and where the State does not provide the the necessary support to families, such as Portugal.

## However...

- Family/intergenerational solidarity studies still characterized by heteronormativity.
- LGBT studies mainly focusing on variables related to sexual identity aspects (e.g., coming out process).
- Gap in research: intergenerational family solidarity processes in families with LGB adult children

# THE PORTUGUESE SITUATION REGARDING LGBT INDIVIDUALS

- Many **legal changes** have taken place in Portugal in recent years, as far as LGBT people's rights are concerned:
  - Same-sex marriage (2010)
  - Legislation facilitating procedures for the acquisition of a new name and desired gender for transgender/transsexual persons (2011)
  - Same-sex adoption and access to ART for all women independently of sexual orientation and fertility status (2016)
- Nevertheless, **high levels of prejudice against LGBT persons** can be observed in Portugal, especially in comparison with other Western European countries (e.g., European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2013; European Commission, 2012; Nogueira & Oliveira, 2010; Stulhofer & Rimal, 2009; Takacs & Szalma, 2013; van den Akker, van der Ploeg, & Scheepers, 2013).

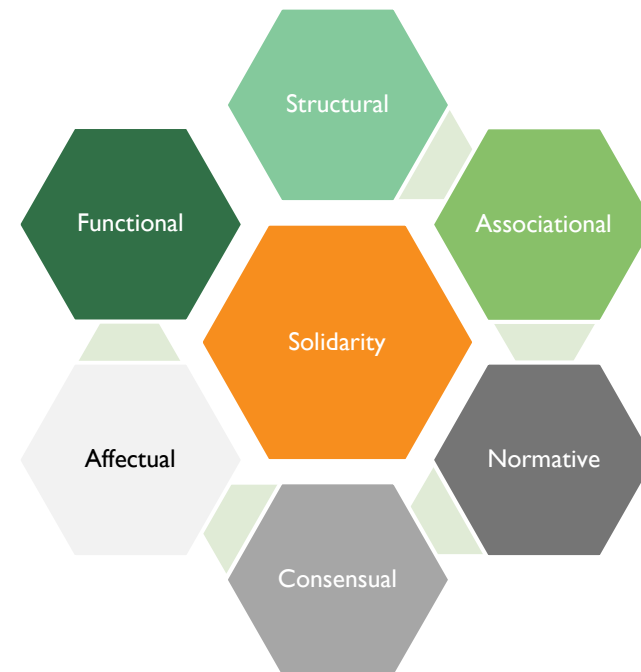
# THE PORTUGUESE SITUATION REGARDING LGBT INDIVIDUALS

- Regarding **the perceptions of LGBT persons** themselves, 51% of the LGBT Portuguese respondents to a European survey felt discriminated against or harassed on the grounds of sexual orientation in the previous 12 months. Moreover, 59% said they avoid holding hands in public with a same-sex partner for fear of being assaulted, threatened, or harassed (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2013).

# INTERGENERATIONAL FAMILY SOLIDARITY (BENGTSON & ROBERTS, 1991; LOWENSTEIN, 2007)

“... multifaceted, multidimensional construct reflected in six distinct elements of parent-child interaction: affection, association, resource sharing, the strenght of familism norms, and the opportunity for structure for parent-child interaction.

The aim of the theory is to specify interrelationships among these elements of intergenerational solidarity (Bengtson & Roberts, 1991, p. 856).”



# INTERGENERATIONAL FAMILY SOLIDARITY (BENGTSON & ROBERTS, 1991; LOWENSTEIN, 2007)

TABLE 1. SIX ELEMENTS OF INTERGENERATIONAL SOLIDARITY, WITH NOMINAL DEFINITIONS AND EXAMPLES OF EMPIRICAL INDICATORS

Construct	Nominal Definition	Empirical Indicators
Associational solidarity	Frequency and patterns of interaction in various types of activities in which family members engage	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Frequency of intergenerational interaction (i.e., face-to-face, telephone, mail)</li> <li>2. Types of common activities shared (i.e., recreation, special occasions, etc.)</li> </ol>
Affectual solidarity	Type and degree of positive sentiments held about family members, and the degree of reciprocity of these sentiments	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ratings of affection, warmth, closeness, understanding, trust, respect, etc. for family members</li> <li>2. Ratings of perceived reciprocity in positive sentiments among family members</li> </ol>
Consensual solidarity	Degree of agreement on values, attitudes, and beliefs among family members	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Intrafamilial concordance among individual measures of specific values, attitudes, and beliefs</li> <li>2. Ratings of perceived similarity with other family members in values, attitudes, and beliefs</li> </ol>
Functional solidarity	Degree of helping and exchanges of resources	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Frequency of intergenerational exchanges of assistance (e.g., financial, physical, emotional)</li> <li>2. Ratings of reciprocity in the intergenerational exchange of resources</li> </ol>
Normative solidarity	Strength of commitment to performance of familial roles and to meeting familial obligations (familism)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ratings of importance of family and intergenerational roles</li> <li>2. Ratings of strength of filial obligations</li> </ol>
Structural solidarity	Opportunity structure for intergenerational relationships reflected in number, type, and geographic proximity of family member	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Residential propinquity of family members</li> <li>2. Number of family members</li> <li>3. Health of family members</li> </ol>

Source: Adapted from Bengtson and Schrader (1982); McChesney and Bengtson (1988).

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- R1.** To what extent do the perceptions of intergenerational family solidarity (IFS) of lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) individuals differ from their heterosexual peers?
- R2.** To what extent does the gender of LGB individuals influence their IFS perceptions?
- R3.** To what extent does the gender of the parent (mother versus father) influences LGB individuals IFS perceptions?



# PROCEDURE

- Data was collected **on-line** and special measures were taken to ensure that all ethical standards were met.
- The **confidentiality** of data was ensured, given that the survey link was hosted on a server of the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of the University of Porto.
- **Anonymity** was also guaranteed since the software did not allow the identification of the IP addresses of respondents.
- There were **no forced answers** and an 'exit' or 'withdraw' button on each page allowed for participants to withdraw from the survey at any given time. By clicking this button, participants were led to a statement asking if they required their data to be withdrawn, or whether their partial data could be used.
- The main researcher **contact information** was provided in case participants decided at a later point to withdraw their data. (There was a time limit within which participants could do so.)
- **Informed consent** was presented electronically on the first page of the survey and participants indicated that they had read and understood consent information by checking a box at the start of the questionnaire.
- Completing the questionnaire took no longer than **15-20m**.
- The study was approved and authorized by the **Ethics Committee** of the Faculty of Psychology and Education of Porto University.

# PARTICIPANTS

$N = 530$  individuals with a mean age of 31 years ( $DP = 9.43$ ).

		n	%
Gender	Women	268	50.6
	Men	262	49.4
Education	9 years	11	2.1
	12 years	142	26.8
	Higher education	376	70.9
Residence	Urban	466	87.9
	Rural	63	11.9
Sexual Orientation	Heterosexual	291	54.9
	LGB	239	45.1

# INSTRUMENTS

We used the following subscales of the **Intergenerational Family Solidarity Index** (Bengtson & Roberts; 1991; Monteiro, 2010).

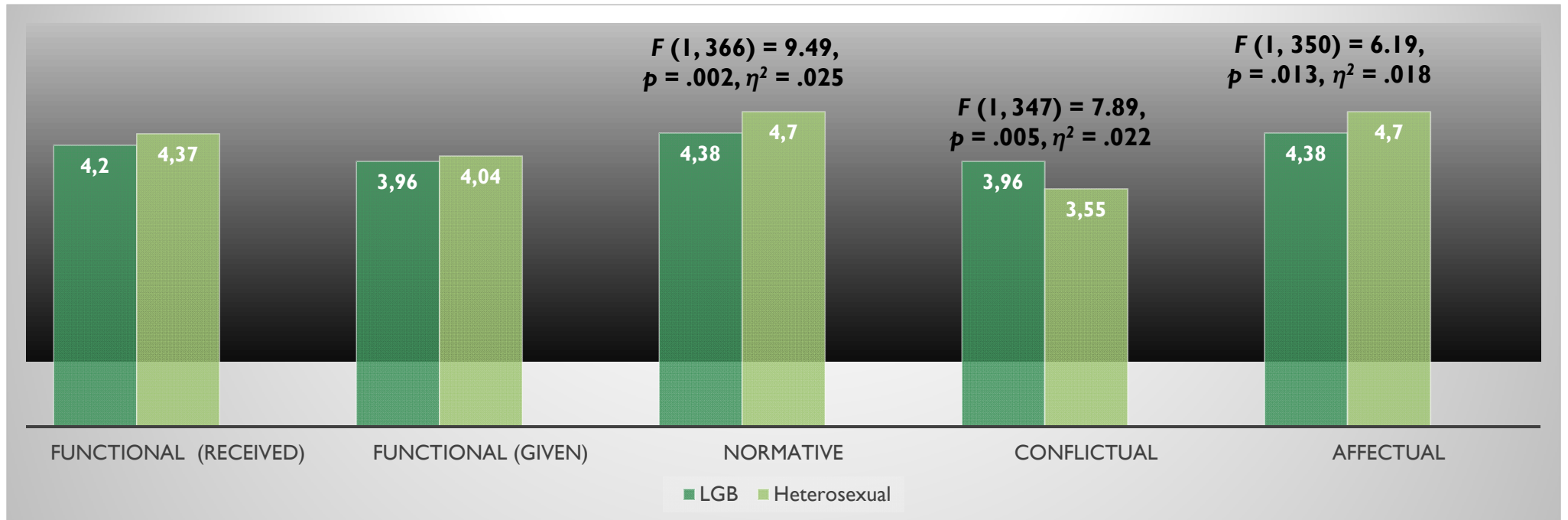
- Functional Solidarity, received ( $\alpha = .91$ )
- Functional Solidarity, given ( $\alpha = .92$ )
- Normative Solidarity ( $\alpha = .72$ )
- Conflictual Solidarity ( $\alpha = .88$ )
- Affectual Solidarity ( $\alpha = .93$ )
- **Likert scale**



# RESULTS



# RI. DIFFERENCES IN IFS IN FUNCTION OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION

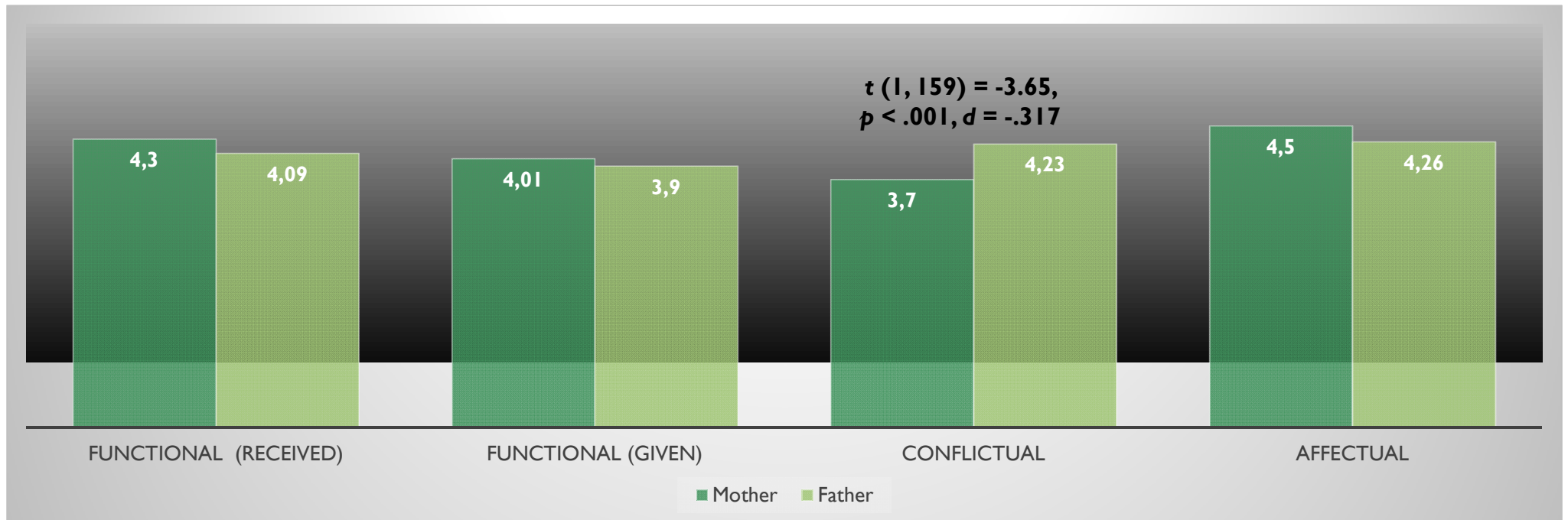


## R2. DIFFERENCES IN IFS IN FUNCTION OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER

- Lesbians and bisexual women reported the lowest levels of (1) functional solidarity (received) and (2) normative solidarity
- Heterosexual men reported the lowest levels of conflictual solidarity.

		Hetero women	LB women	Hetero men	GB men	df	F	p	$\eta^2$
<b>Functional (received)</b>	M (SD)	4.43 <sup>a</sup> (1.24)	3.90 <sup>b</sup> (1.26)	4.31 <sup>a</sup> (1.26)	4.46 <sup>a</sup> (1.41)	3,337	3.01	.030	.026
<b>Functional (given)</b>	M (SD)	4.17 <sup>a</sup> (1.38)	3.77 <sup>a</sup> (1.30)	3.91 <sup>a</sup> (1.30)	4.15 <sup>a</sup> (1.50)	3,341	1.66	1.76	.014
<b>Normative</b>	M (SD)	4.63 <sup>a</sup> (0.97)	4.22 <sup>b</sup> (1.04)	4.76 <sup>a</sup> (0.87)	4.54 <sup>a</sup> (1.00)	3,364	4.89	.002	.039
<b>Conflictual</b>	M (SD)	3.70 <sup>a</sup> (1.44)	3.83 <sup>a</sup> (1.21)	3.40 <sup>b</sup> (1.28)	4.10 <sup>a</sup> (1.57)	3,351	3.90	.009	.032
<b>Affectual</b>	M (SD)	4.71 <sup>a</sup> (1.20)	4.24 <sup>a</sup> (1.20)	4.70 <sup>a</sup> (0.99)	4.52 <sup>a</sup> (1.46)	3,345	2.80	.040	.024

### R3. DIFFERENCES IN IFS AMONG LGB INDIVIDUALS: MOTHER VERSUS FATHER



## DISCUSSION

- LGB individuals perceive less normative and affectual IFS than their heterosexual counterparts and more conflictual solidarity.

Higher chance of deteriorated family relations among LGB individuals (D'Augelli et al., 1998; D'Augelli & Hershberger, 1993; Huegel, 2011; Needham & Austin, 2010; Wilson et al., 2011).

However, no differences in functional support: ambivalence?



## DISCUSSION

- Lesbians and bisexual women reported the lowest levels of (1) functional solidarity (received) and (2) normative solidarity.

Women tend to perceive higher levels of family solidarity than men (Lynch, 1998). However, the opposite was true for lesbians and bisexual women in this study. Are sexual minority women being “sanctioned”, within the family, because of their sexual identity?

- Heterosexual men reported the lowest levels of conflictual solidarity.

Men abiding more to family rules? More independent and detached from family?

## DISCUSSION

- LGB individuals reported a higher perception of conflictual solidarity with fathers than with mothers.

Higher involvement of women in family life and closer relationships with mothers than with fathers (LaSala, 2010).

Men present more negative attitudes toward lesbians and gay men (Kite & Whitley, 1996) and this translate into families, affecting LGB individuals's relationships mainly with with fathers.

Differences among LGB individuals in function of gender?

**These are exploratory results. Further analyses should conducted in the future. Possible moderating/mediating effects of variables such as age, social class, outness, among others, should be assessed in the future.**



DANKE \* OBRIGADO \* THANK YOU

