



UNIVERSIDADE DE
COIMBRA

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(IN)SATISFAÇÃO COM A IDENTIDADE EM PESSOAS

LGB E VARIÁVEIS FAMILIARES:

A IMPORTÂNCIA DA ABERTURA À FAMÍLIA

Dissertação no âmbito do Mestrado Integrado em Psicologia, área de especialização em Psicologia Clínica e da Saúde, subárea de Psicoterapia Sistémica e Familiar orientada pelos Doutores Ana Paula Pais Rodrigues Fonseca Relvas (FPCE-UC) e Jorge Júlio de Carvalho Valadas Gato (FPCE-UP) e apresentada à Faculdade de Psicologia e Ciências da Educação da Universidade de Coimbra

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(In)Satisfação com a identidade em pessoas LGB e variáveis familiares:

A importância da abertura à família

Resumo

Nas últimas décadas, tem-se verificado uma maior aceitação de orientações sexuais que não a heterossexual. No entanto, as atitudes heterossexistas da sociedade ainda dificultam o processo de aceitação da identidade de pessoas lésbicas, *gays* e bissexuais (LGB). Ainda que, em primeira instância, muitas famílias rejeitem a identidade LGB dos filhos, elas têm um papel importante na aceitação e desenvolvimento da identidade sexual de uma pessoa LGB. Nesta investigação, explorámos a relação entre variáveis familiares, nomeadamente a comunicação familiar e a diferenciação do *self*, e a (in)satisfação identitária em indivíduos LGB (N=188). Testámos, também, o efeito moderador da abertura à família quanto à orientação sexual, na relação entre a comunicação familiar e a diferenciação do *self* e a (in)satisfação identitária. Níveis mais elevados de diferenciação do *self* predisseram níveis mais baixos de insatisfação identitária e a abertura quanto à orientação sexual para com os pais moderou a relação entre a comunicação familiar e a diferenciação do *self* e a insatisfação identitária. Os nossos resultados revelam a importância de estudar as variáveis familiares, em termos de padrões de relacionamento, na integração da identidade sexual LGB de um membro da família, com implicações clínicas na realização de futuras intervenções com indivíduos LGB e as suas famílias.

Palavras-chave: LGB; Comunicação Familiar; Diferenciação do *Self*; Abertura quanto à orientação sexual; Insatisfação Identitária.

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Abstract

In recent decades, there is a greater acceptance of non-heterosexual identities. Yet, societies' heterosexist attitudes still make it difficult for lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people to accept their identity. Although many families reject their children's LGB identity at first, they have an important role on the acceptance and development of an LGB person's sexual identity. In this investigation we explored the association between family variables, namely family communication and differentiation of the self, and identity (dis)satisfaction among LGB individuals (N = 188). We also tested the moderator effect of outness to family on the relationship between family communication and differentiation of the self and identity (dis)satisfaction. Higher levels of differentiation of the self predicted a lower level of identity dissatisfaction and outness to family moderated the relationship between family communication and differentiation of self and identity dissatisfaction. Our findings reveal the importance of studying family variables, in terms of patterns of relationship, on the integration of an LGB members' identity, with clinical implications to future interventions with LGB individuals and their families.

Keywords: LGB; Family Communication; Differentiation of the self; Outness; Identity Dissatisfaction.

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(In)Satisfação com a identidade em pessoas LGB e variáveis familiares:
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Parte A- Introdução

Como eterna apaixonada por História que sou, gosto de poder olhar para o passado, para pensar o futuro. As mudanças sociais a que temos assistido no mundo ao longo das décadas mostram que a sociedade está em constante mudança. Falo, por exemplo, dos movimentos defensores dos direitos das mulheres, uma causa que me é próxima, enquanto cidadã, pessoa, mulher e filha. Acho inspirador o poder que nós, enquanto coletivo, podemos ter na vida em sociedade. O poder de questionarmos a nossa realidade, de nos insurgirmos e orientarmos a direção da mudança, de provocarmos verdadeiras e profundas alterações nas normas que regem as nossas vidas. Como tal, daí surge o meu interesse pelos movimentos e causas defendidas por pessoas lésbicas, *gays*, bissexuais e transsexuais (LGBT).

Recuemos a maio de 2019. No âmbito da disciplina de Intervenção Sistémica em Problemas e Populações Especiais, pude assistir a uma aula lecionada pelo Doutor Jorge Gato, sobre identidade sexual e famílias formadas por pessoas não-heterossexuais. Ao fim de 4 anos de curso, era a minha primeira vez a ouvir falar sobre indivíduos, casais e famílias que fogem à norma do que é considerado expectável na sociedade. Essa aula foi um ponto de viragem. Para mim, tornou-se claro que era importante falar e estudar questões relacionadas com a identidade sexual, de modo a contribuir para a visibilidade desta população. Assim, a escolha do tema de tese revelou-se mais fácil que o esperado, quando percebi que um dos temas dizia respeito a este assunto. Afinal, o compromisso já tinha sido assumido, naquele dia, naquela aula de maio de 2019.

Iniciei, de imediato, as minhas pesquisas. Comecei a estudar as pessoas lésbicas, *gays* e bissexuais (LGB) e percebi que as variáveis familiares, como o funcionamento familiar e a diferenciação do *self*, tão abordadas e exploradas na área Sistémica, eram pouco estudadas na população em causa, apesar de poderem ter relevância na forma como os indivíduos se relacionavam com as suas famílias de origem. Portanto, esta era uma oportunidade de explorar novos caminhos e de contribuir para a literatura da área.

Face à pertinência do estudo, foi-me sugerido que redigisse a minha dissertação em forma de artigo, para posterior submissão numa revista científica. Assim, importa fazer algumas notas concetuais e metodológicas para contextualizar o tema abordado e o trabalho realizado.

Algumas notas concetuais e metodológicas

A família é a quem cumpre o dever de nos receber na chegada ao mundo e de servir de base à nossa vida em sociedade. Como tal, para além de ser um espaço de aprendizagens, é também um nicho de relações e afetos, desde o amor à sexualidade (Alarcão, 2000).

Até há pouco tempo, psicólogos e psiquiatras consideravam a homossexualidade uma doença (Clarke et al., 2010), atribuindo um carácter patológico a outras identidades sexuais que não a heterossexual (Oliveira et al., 2012). Estas convicções vieram a ser questionadas mais tarde. Nos anos

70, as investigações pretendiam demonstrar que as pessoas homossexuais eram “saudáveis” e “normais”. Isto revelou-se importante, uma vez que a investigação da época se centrava no estudo da vida das pessoas heterossexuais (Clarke et al., 2010). Desde então, muitas organizações LGB têm surgido e a campanha pela afirmação dos direitos LGB tem crescido (Lingiardi et al., 2015).

Também em Portugal, mudanças nos campos político e legislativo vieram promover os direitos das pessoas LGB nos últimos anos. Com efeito, foi adicionada uma cláusula de não-discriminação com base na orientação sexual na Constituição Portuguesa (Lei Constitucional n.º 1/2004, de 24 de julho) e criada a lei que permite aos casais do mesmo sexo casar (Decreto-Lei n.º 9/2010, de 31 de maio) e adotar crianças (Decreto-Lei n.º 41/2016, de 29 de fevereiro). Apesar de todos os esforços, 71% da população admite a existência de situações discriminatórias com base na orientação sexual em Portugal (Comissão Europeia, 2019).

De um ponto de vista sistémico, a revelação da identidade sexual à família tem sido considerada uma experiência familiar global, dado o impacto no funcionamento e dinâmica familiares (Baiocco et al., 2014). No entanto, ao contrário de outros grupos minoritários, as pessoas LGB podem não contar com o apoio das suas famílias, por serem consideradas uma possível fonte de *stress* (Lingiardi et al., 2015). É comum as famílias reportarem sentimentos negativos de rejeição aquando da revelação da orientação sexual dos seus membros (Švab & Kuhar, 2014). Sendo as famílias modeladas pelos ideais enraizados na sociedade, a discriminação com base em assunções heterossexistas tem, também, lugar no seio da família (McDermott et al., 2019). Isto parece ser particularmente relevante em países europeus como Portugal e Itália, devido à forte influência do Catolicismo (Küpper & Zick, 2010).

Robinson, Walters, e Skeen (1989) sugerem que os pais passam pelos cinco estágios do luto do modelo de Kubler-Ross’s (1969) no que toca à descoberta da orientação sexual de um filho, desde sentimentos de choque, negação, tristeza, raiva e, finalmente, aceitação (Robinson, Walters, & Skeen, 1989 como citado por LaSala, 2000). Os mais recentes estudos confirmam que, no nosso país, 42% da população reporta sentir-se desconfortável com a ideia de um filho estar numa relação com uma pessoa do mesmo sexo (Comissão Europeia, 2019). Consistentemente, 42% da população lésbica, *gay*, bissexual, transsexual e intersexo (LGBTI) portuguesa teme revelar a sua orientação sexual à família com medo de ser agredida, ameaçada ou perseguida (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2020). No entanto, a aceitação da orientação sexual de um elemento por parte da família é importante para a satisfação das pessoas LGB (Lazarevic et al., 2015), tendo em conta que prediz o nível de conforto com o facto de terem uma identidade que foge ao que é esperado pela sociedade (Savin-Williams, 1989).

Com base na literatura, mostrou-se pertinente aprofundar a relação da família e da abertura para com ela a nível da orientação sexual na identidade dos elementos LGB, através de variáveis ainda pouco estudadas nesta população, como o funcionamento familiar, nomeadamente, a comunicação familiar e a diferenciação do *self*.

Após refletir sobre as variáveis familiares a estudar, testei vários modelos de relação entre o funcionamento familiar e a diferenciação do *self* e diferentes variáveis possivelmente relacionadas

com a identidade LGB. Explorei a relação entre as variáveis familiares e a satisfação com a vida, o efeito do estigma e da motivação para ocultar a identidade, o efeito moderador da discriminação... No entanto, optei pelo modelo que reporto no artigo, por ter tido os resultados mais significativos e interessantes, que pudessem contribuir para a atualização do estado da arte no mundo da investigação sobre pessoas LGB e as suas famílias.

Neste sentido, foi realizada uma investigação com metodologia quantitativa, que foi divulgada *online*. Esta escolha advém da necessidade de obter uma amostra diversificada e, dada a sensibilidade do tema, tornar a experiência dos participantes o mais confortável possível. Quanto às variáveis familiares, para medir o funcionamento familiar dos participantes foi utilizado o instrumento *Systemic Clinical Outcome and Routine Evaluation – Family of Origin (SCORE-15-FO)* e para avaliar a diferenciação do *self* a versão breve do instrumento *Differentiation of Self Inventory Revised (DSI-R)*. Relativamente às variáveis associadas à identidade sexual, para avaliar a abertura quanto à orientação sexual para com a família foi selecionado o instrumento *The Outness Inventory (OI)* e para medir a insatisfação identitária o instrumento *Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Identity Scale (LGBIS)*.

Estrutura da dissertação

A dissertação encontra-se organizada em três partes. Na parte A, a Introdução, elaborei algumas notas conceituais e metodológicas sobre o estudo. Na parte B, irei apresentar o artigo que será submetido para publicação na revista *Family Process*. Foi considerada a hipótese de submeter o artigo numa revista com enfoque específico em temas LGB. No entanto, foi decidido que se optaria por uma revista mais generalista na área da Psicologia da Família. A *Family Process* foi a escolhida, uma vez que procura investigações inovadoras e com implicações na prática terapêutica, focando-se nas temáticas das relações e interações familiares. Neste sentido, o artigo foi redigido cumprindo as normas de publicação da revista¹. Por fim, na parte C, farei um sumário do trabalho desenvolvido, através de algumas notas finais, seguidas de uma reflexão pessoal.

¹ As normas para submissão de publicações na revista *Family Process* podem ser consultadas em: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/page/journal/15455300/homepage/forauthors.html>

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² Segundo as normas da 7ª edição da APA.

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Parte B- Artigo para publicação: (in)Satisfação com a identidade em pessoas LGB e variáveis familiares. A importância da abertura à família

Identity (dis)Satisfaction in LGB People and Family Functioning and Differentiation of the Self: The Importance of Outness to Family

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Abstract

In recent decades, there has been a greater acceptance of non-heterosexual identities. Yet, heterosexist attitudes still make it difficult for lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people to accept their identity. Although at first many families reject their children's LGB identity, they have an important role on the acceptance and development of an LGB person's sexual identity. In this investigation we explored the association between family variables, namely family communication and differentiation of the self, and identity (dis)satisfaction among LGB individuals (N = 188). We also tested the moderator effect of outness to family on the relationship between family communication and differentiation of the self and identity (dis)satisfaction. Higher levels of differentiation of the self predicted a lower level of identity dissatisfaction and outness to family moderated the relationship between family communication and differentiation of self and identity dissatisfaction. Our findings reveal the importance of studying family variables, especially when moderated by outness, in terms of understanding patterns of relationship on the integration of an LGB members' identity, with clinical implications to future interventions with LGB individuals and their families.

Keywords: Family Communication; Differentiation of the self; Outness; Identity Satisfaction.

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Introduction

Social acceptance towards lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people's attitudes and positioning have increased in the last decades (Flores, 2019). However, LGB peoples' lives are still hampered by heterosexism, an ideology which presumes that everyone is and should be heterosexual (Morin, 1977; Reczek, 2016), including within one's own family (McDermott, Gabb, Eastham, & Hanbury, 2019).

Families who promote a healthy environment and relationships, provide its members the opportunity to cultivate a sense of autonomy (Chung & Gale, 2008) and to develop a positive self-concept (Preston et al., 2016). Yet, many parents reject their child's sexual identity leading to poorer health levels (Ryan, Huebner, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2009) and, therefore, aren't seen as a source of support by LGB individuals (Gato et al., 2020). Even though the disclosure of one's sexual identity may affect families' functioning and dynamics (Baiocco et al., 2014), families are systems in constant evolution and can change their reluctant posture, transform their internalized heterosexist assumptions, rebel against stigma (Elizur & Ziv, 2001) and, in turn, help ease the impact of homophobic attitudes on identity formation of their LGB children (Luke & Goodrich, 2015). A family characterized by being sturdy, cohesive and solid, with the resources to face stressful events, may offer a caring and compassionate environment for sexual minority people to come out and fully live their identity (Baiocco et al., 2014; Oswald, 2002). Wilbur, Ryan and Marksamer (2006) state that difficulties in communicating and understanding sexual orientation and identity can increase conflict within the family. Conversely, positive health indicators are found in supportive families such as low levels of internalized stigma, depression and suicidal tendencies (Baiocco et al., 2014).

Deeply related to family dynamics' is the concept of self-differentiation, a process that is crucial for one's growth (Bowen, 1978 as cited in Spencer & Brown, 2007). Bowen's model (Bowen, 1978, as cited in Chung & Gale, 2008) posits that a mature life functioning occurs

when situations in the family system are experienced with a balanced autonomy and emotional regulation. The differentiation of the self can be defined as the ability of a family and its members to shape emotional reactivity, endure thoughtfulness when experiencing strong emotions, and experiment both closeness and independence in relationships (Bowen, 1978 as cited in Skowron et al, 2008; Spencer & Brown, 2007). Families can support the achievement of a separated and personal identity for their members, or demand togetherness originating enmeshed identities (Bowen, 1978 as cited in Chung & Gale, 2008). Sexual minority individuals with a highly differentiated self may handle the stress of being out about one's identity (LaSala, 2000) and be emotionally involved with others while protecting one's individuality simultaneously (Spencer & Brown, 2007). However, sexual minority individuals with a weakly differentiated self can submit to the fusional relationship patterns of the family and hide their identity (including their sexual identity) constraining its development; or choose *cut-off* as a way of showing discontent towards the feelings of rejection, at the expense of the relationship with the family (Bowen, 1978 as cited in Spencer & Brown, 2007; LaSala, 2000).

(dis)Satisfaction with LGB identity and Outness

People seem to experience a sense of integration with their identity when they report feeling positive about their self as an LGB person, urging to be honest with others (Kemer, Demirtaş, Pope, & Ummak, 2016). However, forming a positive LGB identity can be challenging because of social stigma and discrimination (Mohr & Kendra, 2011). The minority stress model (Meyer, 2003) posits that sexual minorities might experience stress inherent to their non-heterosexual identity and further marginalizing situations when compared to their heterosexual counterparts. Minority stress concerning sexual identity issues can lead to the

concealment of one's identity in fear of being rejected or subjected to prejudice circumstances and result in the internalization of stigma (Meyer, 2003). Internalized homophobia (Meyer & Dean, 1998) has reported having effects on sexual minorities' mental health (Lingiardi et al., 2015; Parker, Hirsch, Philbin, & Parker, 2018; Wen & Zheng, 2019), namely depression, anxiety and loneliness, posttraumatic stress symptoms and difficulties in relating to partners (Meyer, 2003). Sexual identity development models (e.g., Cass, 1979) argue that internalized homophobia is part of the process of LGB identity formation. Therefore, individuals should manage to cope with it in order to develop an adjusted identity (e.g., Cass, 1979). However, internalized homophobia (Meyer & Dean, 1998) can be an obstacle to the acceptance of the LGB identity, since it causes confusion, prejudice and non-acceptance (Pereira & Leal, 2005).

One of the most important events in the development of a non-heterosexual sexual identity is the coming-out process, in which people reveal their sexual identity to significant ones (Troiden, 1985). This process can interfere with traditional expectations about gender roles present in the family's narrative (Reczek, 2016). Still, self-acceptance is an important aspect of developing a positive identity and it can be influenced by heterosexist attitudes from family, friends and other society members. In that sense, as Willoughby, Doty and Malik (2010) suggests, when the family denies the child's sexuality, negative messages may be internalized and contribute to a negative sense of identity and to the rejection of one's sexual orientation (Frost & Meyer, 2009). Higher levels of internalized homonegativity (Rosser, Bockting, Ross, Miner, & Coleman, 2008) are linked to a decreased outness level (Rosser et al., 2008; Whitman & Nadal, 2015). In turn, lower levels of outness are associated with a lower satisfaction with identity (Oliveira, Lopes, Costa, & Nogueira et al., 2012). So, being "out" allows the individuals to find supportive systems which will help reduce the impact of the every-day life harassment and difficulties inherent to their non-conforming sexual orientation (Meyer, 2003). As Meyer (2003) suggested, LGB people endure specific and

unique stressors regarding their sexual orientation, including within the family (Lingiardi et al., 2015). In that sense, the internalization of negative attitudes from family regarding the individual's sexual orientation can decrease self-worth levels and influence the level of self-differentiation (Spencer and Brown, 2007). Thus, people with a lower level of self-differentiation may not feel comfortable being their true selves around others, which would contribute to a higher internalized homophobia (LaSala, 2000) and, therefore, a higher identity dissatisfaction (Oliveira et al., 2012).

The Present Study

To our knowledge, no previous studies have focused on the relationship between family variables and (dis)satisfaction with an LGB sexual identity. The main aim of this study was to understand the relationship between family variables, such as family functioning and differentiation of the self, and (dis)satisfaction with an LGB identity, considering the role of outness to the family. Specifically, we wanted (i) to analyse the impact of family variables (communication and differentiation of self) and outness to family on satisfaction with sexual identity, and (ii) to explore the moderator effect of being out to family in the relationship between family variables and identity satisfaction. Taking into account the reviewed literature, we expected that: a) a higher level of family communication and differentiation of the self predicted a lower identity dissatisfaction (hypothesis 1); b) a higher level of outness to family predicted a lower identity dissatisfaction (hypothesis 2); and c) outness to family had a moderator effect on the relationship between family communication and differentiation of the self and satisfaction with sexual identity (hypothesis 3).

Figure 1 represents the moderation model to be used in the present investigation.

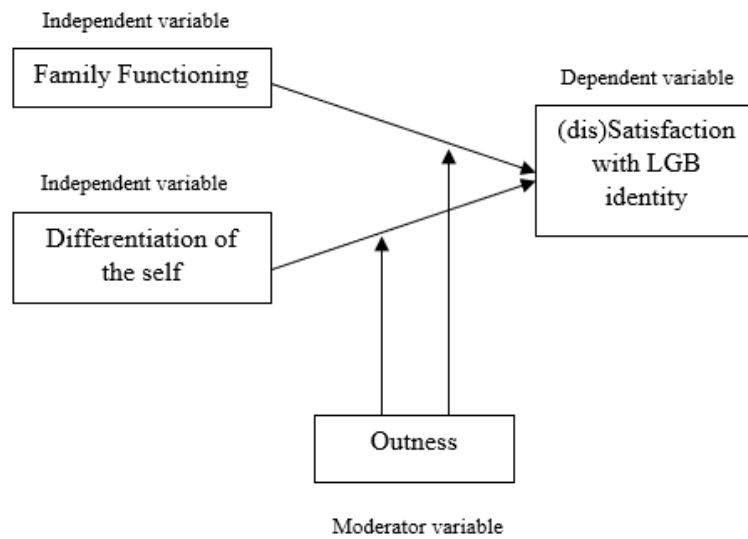


Figure 1. Moderation model being tested: family variables (independent variables), (dis)satisfaction with LGB identity (dependent variable) and outness (moderator variable)

Materials and Methods

Participants

This investigation is part of a larger research, whose goal was to study the impact of family variables on sexual identity and life satisfaction ($N = 350$). Given our aim, we selected cisgender and non-heterosexual respondents ($N = 188$). Participants were aged between 18 and 69 years old ($M = 29.24$; $SD = 10.90$) and were evenly distributed in terms of their sexual orientation (lesbian women, gay men, and bisexual/pansexual individuals). The majority identified as female, were not religious, lived in an urban area, were either employed or not employed, had a university degree and were in a relationship.

Sample characteristics are presented in detail in Table 1.

Table 1*Sociodemographic characteristics of the sample*

| Variable | Total sample (N=188) | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------|
| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
| Age | 29.24 | 10.90 |
| | <i>n</i> | % |
| Sexual Orientation | | |
| Homosexual | 111 | 59.0 |
| Bisexual | 77 | 41.0 |
| Gender | | |
| Lesbian/bisexual female | 110 | 58.5 |
| Gay/bisexual male | 78 | 37.5 |
| Religion | | |
| Religious | 48 | 25.5 |
| Non-religious | 140 | 74.5 |
| Place of residence | | |
| Urban | 163 | 86.7 |
| Rural | 25 | 13.3 |
| Relationship status | | |
| Single/Separated/Divorced/Widowed | 73 | 38.8 |
| In a relationship | 115 | 61.2 |
| Work status | | |
| Employed | 91 | 48.4 |
| Not employed | 97 | 51.6 |
| Educational level | | |
| 12 th grade or lower | 72 | 38.3 |
| University degree | 116 | 61.7 |

Investigation procedures and sample collection

In order to evaluate the suitability and intelligibility of the selected instruments (and after being granted permission for their use) we interviewed two LGB-identified individuals who gave a positive feedback. Next, a self-administrated online survey was developed, and data were collected from December 2019 to March 2020. The study was shared on social media platforms. For example, the research team created a Facebook page to advertise the study and

contacted LGBT organizations. The researchers followed all ethical procedures as recommended by APA. The first page of the questionnaire informed the participants about the objectives of the study, the guarantee of the confidentiality and anonymity and the voluntary character of the participation. To begin answering the questionnaire, participants had to confirm that they had read and agreed with the previous information by clicking on the option “Yes”. Contact information of the research team was provided should participants have any concerns or doubts. IP addresses were not saved, and the participants had the option to “withdraw” from the survey anytime. In order to participate, people had to meet two criteria: 1) have 18 or more years old and 2) live in Portugal.

Instruments

Sociodemographic data questionnaire

To examine the characteristics of our sample, we asked the participants about their age, sexual orientation, gender, religion, educational level, relationship status and place of residence.

Family functioning

To assess family functioning we used the Systemic Clinical Outcome and Routine Evaluation – Family of Origin (SCORE-15-FO; Relvas, Baião-Tragedo, Fonseca, Vilaça, & Silva, 2017). This is a specific retrospective version of the Systemic Clinical Outcome and Routine Evaluation (SCORE-15; Stratton, 2010; Vilaça, Silva, & Relvas, 2014), composed by 15 items evaluating three dimensions of the family functioning: family strengths, family communication and family difficulties. The participants answered about family members’ relationships who lived with them as a child (“*We ask you to describe your family when you were a child, thus, we ask your opinion about your family of origin. Family of origin refers to the individuals who lived in your house when you were a child, and then, a young*”).

teenager”), using a 5-point Likert type scale, from 1 (*describes us very well*) to 5 (*describes us not at all*). A lower score in the subscale corresponded to a better family functioning. The validation studies of the SCORE-15-FO to the Portuguese population (Rocha, 2018), revealed a good internal consistency for the total scale ($\alpha = .90$), and for the Family strengths ($\alpha = .84$) and Family communication subscales ($\alpha = .87$); Family difficulties revealed an adequate internal consistency ($\alpha = .72$). In the present study, good to very good internal consistency indexes were obtained either for the total scale ($\alpha = .91$), and for each subscale (Family Strengths, $\alpha = .86$; Family communication, $\alpha = .79$; Family Difficulties, $\alpha = .89$) (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2014).

Differentiation of the self

To evaluate the differentiation of the self we resorted to the brief version of the Differentiation of Self Inventory Revised (DSI-R; Sloan & Dierendonck, 2016; Relvas, Fonseca, Baião-Tragedo, Major, & Rodriguez-González, 2017). This instrument is composed by 20 items organized into four factors: Emotional Reactivity, I-Position, Emotional Cut-Off and Fusion with Others. For parsimony reasons we only used the total scale. The items were presented in a 6-point Likert type scale, from 1 (*nothing true to me*) to 6 (*very true to me*). The greater the score, the higher the differentiation of the self. In the original investigation (Sloan & Dierendonck, 2016), the total scale revealed a very good internal consistency for its total ($\alpha = .90$), corroborated by the present study ($\alpha = .86$) (Hair et. al, 2014).

Outness

The Outness Inventory (OI; Mohr & Fassinger, 2000; Gato & Fontaine, 2014) is an 11-item inventory that evaluates the extent to which one’s LGB sexual orientation is known among different groups of people, such as family, world, religion, as well as overall outness. For the

purpose of his study, we selected the subscale Outness to the family, composed by four items (mother, father, sibling and extended family). The items were rated on a 7-point Likert type scale, from 1 (*person definitely does not know about my sexual orientation status*) to 7 (*person definitely knows about my sexual orientation status, and it is openly talked about*). In case the item was not applicable to the participant's situation, the option "0" was available. A higher score represented a greater knowledge about the sexual orientation of the participant. In the original study (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000), the subscale revealed an adequate internal consistency (Out to family, $\alpha = .74$). In the present investigation, the subscale revealed a good internal consistency ($\alpha = .83$) (Hair et al., 2014).

Identity satisfaction

In order to evaluate identity satisfaction, we used the Internalized Homonegativity subscale of the Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Identity Scale (LGBIS; Mohr & Kendra, 2008), renamed Identity Dissatisfaction in the Portuguese adaptation of the scale (Oliveira et al., 2012). We will use this designation throughout this study. The subscale Identity Dissatisfaction comprises six items measuring the rejection of one's LGB sexual orientation. The items were rated on a 7-point Likert type scale, from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 7 (*totally agree*). A higher score represented a greater level of dissatisfaction with one's LGB identity. In the Portuguese adaptation of the instrument (Oliveira et al., 2012), the items of the subscale revealed a good internal consistency (Identity Dissatisfaction, $\alpha = .83$), which was corroborated by the present investigation ($\alpha = .84$) (Hair et al., 2014).

Data analysis procedure

We wanted to explore the relationship between family variables and identity dissatisfaction, moderated by a third variable: outness to family. A moderator is a variable that has impact on the relationship between other two variables. In that sense, it can change its direction and

magnitude (Baron & Kenny, 1986), meaning that the relationship between independent and dependent variables vary according to the level of the moderator. The moderator effect is also referred to as the interaction effect (Lindley & Walker, 1993).

We started by analysing the relation between family aspects (family functioning and differentiation of the self) and identity dissatisfaction, through a Pearson's correlation coefficient test. Next, in order to perform the regression analysis, we tested the normality and linearity of the variables by reading and interpreting graphical representations (Histogram and P-P plot) and by assessing the skewness and kurtosis. Also, multicollinearity assumption was assessed through VIF and Tolerance indexes and homoscedasticity assumption through the analysis of the residuals plot.

Then, we performed a four-step hierarchical regression. On the first block, we entered the sociodemographic variables. On the second block, we entered family variables, namely family functioning (family strengths, family communication and family difficulties) and differentiation of the self. Next, on the third block, we entered outness to the family, the moderator variable. Finally, on the fourth block, we entered the interactions between the independent variables and the moderator variable.

Results

The normality and linearity of the variables revealed values within the normality range (Byrne, 2010; Hair et al., 2014) (Table 2). However, the homoscedasticity assumption was not met when considering the residuals plot. This phenomenon is not uncommon among the social sciences field (Fogarty, 2018). In such cases, it is recommended to perform a transformation of the variables in study (e.g., logarithmic transformation) in order to normalize the data (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). When transformations were done (e.g. logarithmic transformation, square root function transformation and weighted least squares

procedure), results were not so different from those obtained without transforming the variables. Tabachnick and Fidell (2011) state that transformations should be used in extreme cases and, given that normality assumptions were otherwise met, we will report results using data without transformations. Regarding multicollinearity, Hair et al. (2014) state that the maximum value recommended for VIF is 10. In turn, Tabachnick and Fidel (2001) suggests that tolerance for an independent variable should be less than .20. All indicators in our regression analyses presented results within the cited values for multicollinearity (Tolerance > 0.77; VIF < 1.31). The interaction between variables were calculated using centred scores (Cohen et al., 2013).

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of All Variables

| Variables | <i>SK</i> | <i>KU</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| Family Strengths | 0.17 | -0.59 | 2.88 | 0.99 |
| Family Communication | 0.10 | -0.75 | 2.89 | 0.99 |
| Family Difficulties | 0.18 | -1.03 | 2.86 | 1.15 |
| Differentiation of the self | -0.16 | -0.12 | 3.78 | 0.80 |
| Outness to family | -0.09 | -0.93 | 4.01 | 1.72 |
| Identity Dissatisfaction | 1.51 | 2.31 | 2.09 | 1.25 |

The correlational coefficients between the variables of interest were analysed (Table 3-Supplementar Information).

Gender, religion, family communication, differentiation of the self and outness to family correlated significantly at a 0.05 level with identity dissatisfaction and were entered in the subsequent regression analyses.

Next, we report results concerning the effect of sociodemographic variables (gender and religion), family variables (family communication and differentiation of the self), outness to family, and interaction between outness to family and family variables, on identity dissatisfaction (Table 4).

Table 4

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Model Analysis for Variables Predicting Identity Dissatisfaction on LGB People

| Variable | R ² | ΔR ² | B | SE B | 95% CI | β | t | p |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|-------|------|----------------|-------|-------|------|
| Step 1 | 0.08 | 0.07 | | | | | | |
| Gender | | | 0.49 | 0.16 | [0.07; 0.78] | 0.19 | 3.13 | .002 |
| Religion | | | 0.51 | 0.18 | [0.21; 1.01] | 0.21 | 3.01 | .003 |
| Step 2 | 0.23 | 0.22 | | | | | | |
| Family communication | | | -0.12 | 0.08 | [-0.36; -0.04] | -0.09 | -1.45 | .148 |
| Differentiation of the self | | | -0.37 | 0.11 | [-0.80; -0.40] | -0.24 | -3.42 | .001 |
| Step 3 | 0.27 | 0.25 | | | | | | |
| Outness to family | | | -0.14 | 0.05 | [-0.23; -0.03] | -0.21 | -2.94 | .004 |
| Step 4 | 0.32 | 0.29 | | | | | | |
| Family communication * Outness | | | 0.09 | 0.04 | [0.01;0.18] | 0.15 | 2.26 | .025 |
| Differentiation of the self * Outness | | | 0.18 | 0.05 | [0.07;0.28] | 0.22 | 3.38 | .001 |

Gender and religion contributed significantly to the regression model ($F(2, 185) = 7.777, p = .001$) and explained 7% of the variation in identity dissatisfaction. This way, lesbian/bisexual women and non-religious persons were less dissatisfied with their identity. When we entered family variables, differentiation of the self showed to be significant on the model, contrasting with family communication which was not statistically significant, ($F(4, 183) = 14.339, p < .001$) adding a 16.1% of variation on identity dissatisfaction. Thus, a higher level of differentiation of the self contributed to a decreased identity dissatisfaction. This step explained the major portion of variance in the model. Entering outness ($F(5, 182) = 13.128, p < .001$) added 2.6% of variation of the outcome variable. Thus, a higher level of outness contributed to a lower identity dissatisfaction. The interactional effects added 5% of variation on identity dissatisfaction. Outness to family moderated the relationship between family variables and identity dissatisfaction. Overall, around 29% of the variation in the dependent variable was explained by principal and interactional effects ($F(7, 180) = 12.105, p < .001$). To deepen the nature of the interaction effect, line graphs were generated.

Regarding family communication, when individuals were not out to family about their sexual orientation, lower levels of family communication were associated to a lower identity dissatisfaction and higher levels of family communication were associated to a higher identity dissatisfaction. On the contrary, when individuals were out to family, they revealed lower levels of identity dissatisfaction whether they had a lower or higher family communication. Nevertheless, participants who were out to family and had a higher family communication were less dissatisfied with their identity (Figure 2).

When it comes to differentiation of the self, when individuals were out to family about their sexual orientation, having a higher or lower differentiation of the self did not seem to be associated with identity dissatisfaction. However, when individuals were not out to family, a lower differentiation of the self led to a higher identity dissatisfaction (Figure 3).

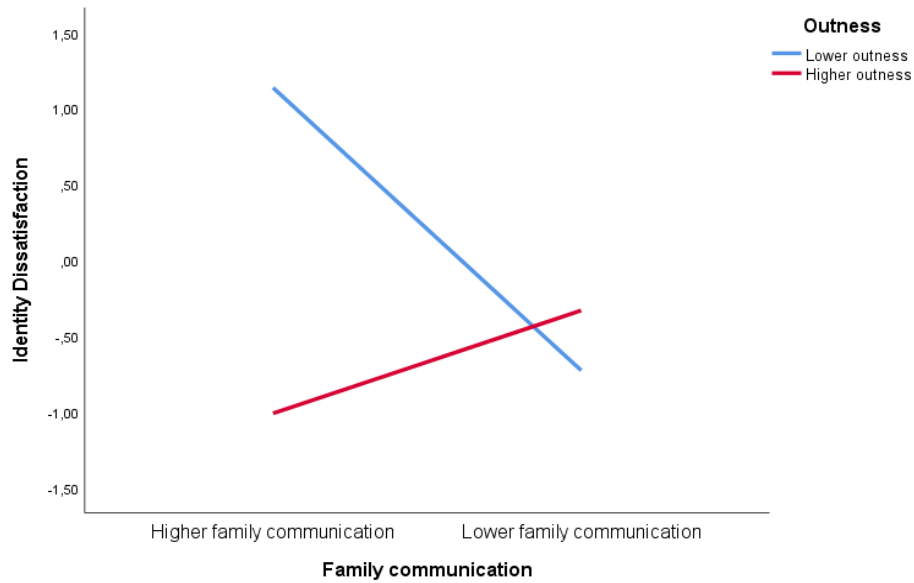


Figure 2. Effect of outness on the relationship between family communication and identity dissatisfaction



Figure 3. Effect of outness on the relationship between differentiation of the self and identity dissatisfaction

Discussion

In this study we explored whether family communication, differentiation of the self and outness predicted identity dissatisfaction and the moderator effect of outness to family in the relation between family variables and identity dissatisfaction. Differentiation of the self and

outness, but not family communication, negatively predicted identity dissatisfaction. Outness moderated the association between family variables and identity dissatisfaction.

Differentiation of the self but not family communication predicted identity dissatisfaction. Thus, our first hypothesis was partly corroborated. Difficulties in communicating and understanding sexual orientation, as well as societies' heterosexist assumptions can increase conflicts in the family (Wilbur et. al, 2006). This seems especially relevant since families are not free from heteronormativity and can condition their members morals and identity (McDermott et al., 2019). However, the scale we used assesses general aspects of family communication and not specifically sexual identity, which may have influenced our results. The differentiation of the self is related to one's maturity and psychological adjustment (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Individuals with lower levels of differentiation of the self are more dependent on relationships and less able to remain thoughtful under stressful events, without enmeshing or cut-off from families (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Based on our results, one can speculate that our participants with a lower differentiated self were emotionally reactive when dealing with others' opinions about their sexual orientation, less able to maintain their individual selves even when they are in contact with their family's conflicts and opinions and more dissatisfied with their sexual identity.

Higher levels of outness predicted a lower identity dissatisfaction, corroborating our second hypothesis. This result is in accordance with studies which found that concealment of an LGB identity and lower levels of outness (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000; Mohr & Kendra, 2011; Rosser et al., 2008; Whitman & Nadal, 2015) are associated with higher levels of internalized homophobia. Even though families tend to initially react with shock to one's identity revealing (LaSala, 2000), outness to family has been found to be positively associated with wellness and social support (Tabaac, Perrin, & Trujillo, 2015) and, therefore, identity satisfaction (Oliveira et al., 2012).

Outness had a moderator effect on the relationship between family communication and differentiation of the self and identity dissatisfaction, corroborating our third hypothesis. Even though family communication was not significant in the model by itself, when moderated by outness it revealed its significance, namely when participants were not out. Parents may reject their child's sexual orientation at first (LaSala, 2010) and LGB people may fear facing discrimination based on their sexual orientation (Meyer, 2003), including from family (McDermott et al., 2019). In that sense, people may conceal their sexual identity (Mohr & Kendra, 2011). The concealment of one's sexual identity allows LGB individuals to maintain important support systems, especially if individuals report having few sympathetic relationships (Bry, Mustanski, Garofalo, & Burns, 2016). Conversely, when people are out to family, feeling the family's support by openly conversing and rethinking interactions with a non-heterosexual member (Oswald, 2002) may contribute to lower levels of internalized stigma (Baiocco et al., 2014) and identity dissatisfaction (Oliveira et al., 2012). Regarding differentiation of the self, individuals who have difficulties in differentiating either stay enmeshed or cut-off from family (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). LaSala (2010) suggests that individuals with lower levels of differentiation of the self might have higher levels of internalized homophobia because they don't feel at ease assuming their identity and may even submit to other's opinion in order to feel accepted (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Thus, beside from having a non-heterosexual identity (Meyer, 2003), poorly differentiated people also have more difficulty in dealing with stress that comes from daily life situations (Murdock & Gore, 2004). This way, it seems likely that when people are out to family, lower levels of differentiation of the self can lead to a higher identity dissatisfaction.

Gender and religion also revealed a negative relation with identity dissatisfaction. Consistent with our results, Katz-Wise and Hyde (2012) proposed that some gay men may present more of a nonconforming gender expression, which would culminate in a higher harassment from

society and, therefore, a higher internalization of homophobic attitudes. Also, since women's image tends to be oversexualized and seen as a source of pleasure for heterosexual men, the sexual involvement between two women would normalize their minority position and reflect lower internalized homophobia levels (Katz-Wise & Hyde, 2012). In turn, research reveals that males tend to suffer from higher levels of victimization than females (D'Augelli, Pilkington, & Hershberger, 2002; Balsam, Rothblum, & Beauchaine, 2005). According to the minority stress model, the victimization non-heterosexual individuals suffer can lead to rejection feelings towards one's sexual identity (Meyer, 2003). Concerning religion, our results support previous studies findings. Herek et. al (2009) found a higher internalized homophobia on participants who identified with a religious denomination or deity. Barnes and Meyer (2012) suggest that when LGB people grow up and maintain a close relation with religious settings, these conforming settings may endure internalized homophobia.

Implications, Limitations and Future Research

The current study showed that differentiation of the self is an important aspect when it comes to internalized homophobia and, therefore, identity satisfaction. Also, our results indicate that outness has a relevant effect on the relationship between family variables (family communication and differentiation of the self) and identity dissatisfaction. These findings may have relevant clinical implications. Considering the impact family support has on LGB identity, families could be involved in therapy interventions to facilitate the acceptance of an LGB member by help reducing minority stress, to discuss heterosexist assumptions and to allow a positive and respectful communication (LaSala, 2000). Also, since the differentiation of the self is relevant for one's identity, LGB people and families with enmeshed identities or in a situation where one has chosen to cut-off as a way of coping with family enmeshment could benefit from therapeutic sessions. A safe space could be created where individuals

would reflect on the impact of past relationships and family patterns on current relations and how to balance the need to be accepted by other while having a solid autonomy. In that sense, it is important for therapist to train performing LGB-affirmative therapy in order to develop new skills and to deal with this specify population's problems and their families (Pepping, Lyons, & Morris, 2018).

Our study has limitations that we must acknowledge. Firstly, our study relied on self-report measures and since this survey focused a sensible issue, is also possible participants gave biased or socially desired answers (Randall & Fernandes, 2002). Also, our study used a non-probabilistic sample, which limits the extrapolation of our findings. For example, our sample is formed by mostly females and highly educated people who live in urban areas. These unequal percentages may have influenced our findings since our sample was generally out about their sexual identity. At the same time, people who are not out about their sexual identity are probably less likely to engage in this type of research, which may have influenced our results (Meyer, 1993). As stated by Morin (1977), it is difficult to collect a representative sample of a minority population that is hidden to avoid marginalization.

A larger sample would allow to compare a wider range of differences on family communication and outness, differentiation of the self, and identity dissatisfaction. Also, a more representative sample would allow to compare, for example, LGB(T) people with non-binary and non-conforming genders, sexual orientations, races, ages and socioeconomic levels that would meet the diversity of the population. In that sense, a similar study or the replication of the current study is advised, namely testing the effect of outness on other relevant family variables to the study of LGB identity. Also, including family members or partners in the study would allow to surpass the confidence on self-report measures and to expand the aim of the investigation. Based on our results, it seems relevant to continuing to explore this relation not only on LGB individuals, but on the LGBTQI+ community.

Conclusion

The results of the present study suggest that LGB individuals could benefit from a better family communication, higher levels of differentiation of the self and higher levels of outness. Thus, family variables, such as family communication and differentiation of the self are important factors when it comes to identity dissatisfaction and internalized homophobia, depending on the level of outness of the LGB family member. The participants who were not out to their families revealed a higher identity dissatisfaction. Given our results, feeling comfortable to be out about one's sexual identity may be crucial to the study of family variables. Also, this investigations' findings suggest it may be relevant to involve families on interventions concerning the LGB identity of a member.

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Supplementar Information

Table 3

Correlations Between All Variables and Identity Dissatisfaction

| Variables | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
|---------------------------------|--------|--------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|--------|--------|----|
| 1. Age | — | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Sexual orientation | -.30** | — | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. Gender | -.27** | -.44** | — | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4. Religion | .07 | -.04 | .05 | — | | | | | | | | | |
| 5. Place of residence | -.22** | .02 | -.01 | .13 | — | | | | | | | | |
| 6. Relationship status | .27** | -.09 | .13 | -.18* | -.01 | — | | | | | | | |
| 7. Educational level | .36** | -.11 | -.03 | -.01 | -.02 | .09 | — | | | | | | |
| 8. Family Strengths | -.02 | .06 | -.08 | -.06 | -.08 | .06 | -.12 | — | | | | | |
| 9. Family Communication | -.03 | .09 | -.11 | -.04 | -.06 | .10 | .06 | .73** | — | | | | |
| 10. Family Difficulties | -.11 | .08 | -.06 | .03 | -.04 | -.07 | .01 | .71** | .81** | — | | | |
| 11. Differentiation of the self | .27** | -.16* | .06 | -.01 | -.15* | .14 | .22** | -.09 | -.10 | -.09 | — | | |
| 12. Outness to family | .32** | -.50** | .13 | -.11 | -.14 | .22** | .07 | .02 | .02 | -.07 | .40** | — | |
| 13. Identity Dissatisfaction | .12 | .02 | .18* | .22** | .07 | -.11 | .02 | -.03 | -.15* | -.07 | -.36** | -.30** | — |

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Parte C- Notas finais

A maioria dos resultados obtidos na investigação corresponderam às expectativas que eu criei, quando comecei a aprofundar o estudo do tema. Ainda assim, consegui ser surpreendida. Por exemplo, o facto de os homens e as pessoas que seguem uma religião serem mais insatisfeitos quanto à sua identidade. No entanto, tentar enquadrar o resultado no contexto da sociedade portuguesa, com valores tradicionalistas com influência católica, poderá ajudar a compreender este resultado. Ao mesmo tempo, esperava que a comunicação familiar fosse estatisticamente significativa no modelo, o que se verificou, efetivamente, quando moderada pela abertura quanto à orientação sexual. Efetivamente, a escala utilizada para avaliar a comunicação familiar não versa questões relacionadas com a identidade o que, no estudo em questão, teria sido importante. Isto revela a necessidade de investigar mais na área das famílias com elementos LGB.

O estudo veio mostrar a importância de explorar o impacto de ser aberto quanto à orientação sexual e das variáveis do funcionamento, relacionamento e dinâmicas familiares no self das pessoas LGB e na forma como vivem a sua identidade.

Nesse sentido, é importante que se continue a “desbravar caminhos”, de forma a podermos caminhar, progressivamente, para sociedades mais esclarecidas. É com essa ambição que a linha de investigação que iniciou com este estudo pretende continuar a produzir conhecimento, com a validação da escala *Systemic Clinical Outcome Routine Evaluation- Family of Origin* (SCORE-15-FO) e da versão breve da escala *Differentiation of Self Inventory Revised* (DSI-R) para a população LGB portuguesa.

Reflexão pessoal

Ter tido a oportunidade de redigir um artigo científico para submeter a publicação como forma de fechar este ciclo de cinco anos de curso foi um privilégio. O sonho que não sonhei. Foi bastante exigente, por ter sido a minha primeira experiência a escrever em rigor científico. Várias vezes questioneei se estaria à altura do desafio, das expectativas e confiança depositadas em mim. Fui encontrando várias dificuldades pelo caminho, que me fizeram parar, refletir e reagir. Nesses momentos, a motivação era só uma: fazer com que a voz dos participantes desta investigação chegasse à comunidade científica. Para além disso, foi a minha primeira vez a redigir um trabalho desta dimensão em Inglês. No entanto, à medida que o tempo foi passando, fui vendo o meu pensamento e escrita tornarem-se cada vez mais fluídos.

Foi, sem dúvida, uma experiência muito enriquecedora, tendo-me dado a oportunidade de desenvolver novas competências. Permitiu-me aprender e contactar com o mundo da investigação, que sempre me despertou curiosidade, bem como expandir os meus conhecimentos.

Arriscando-me a ser idealista, o meu desejo é que o estudo possa alcançar todos os interessados no tema. Que os resultados da investigação possam ajudar a compreender as dinâmicas

das famílias e a sua importância nas vivências dos membros LGB, com efeitos práticos a nível da intervenção clínica. Que possam fazer abalar as estruturas heterossexistas invisíveis da sociedade, que desencorajam as pessoas não-heterossexuais de viverem em pleno a sua sexualidade. Por um mundo cada vez mais responsável, consciente, respeitador e inclusivo. Eu acredito.