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### Internalized Homonegativity, Disclosure, and Acceptance of Sexual Orientation in a Sample of Portuguese Gay and Bisexual Men, and Lesbian and Bisexual Women

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# **Internalized Homonegativity, Disclosure, and Acceptance of Sexual Orientation in a Sample of Portuguese Gay and Bisexual Men, and Lesbian and Bisexual Women**

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*The purpose of this study was to assess internalized homonegativity and its correlates in a sample of Portuguese self-identified gay and bisexual men, and lesbian and bisexual women. Five hundred eighty participants, aged between 18 and 76 (M = 31, SD = 10), responded to an online questionnaire that included a demographic questionnaire and the Internalized Homophobia Scale. Results revealed that though lesbians revealed the lowest levels of internalized homonegativity and were the most likely to disclose to parents and friends, bisexual men scored the highest on levels of internalized homonegativity and were the most likely to hide their sexual orientation.*

**KEYWORDS** *internalized homonegativity, disclosure, coming-out, gay men, lesbians, bisexuals*

It is well established that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT)-identified people are victimized throughout their lives not only by way of violence and discrimination, but also via more subtle forms of heterosexism. ‘Heterosexism’ is conceptually defined as a “system that denies, denigrates, and stigmatizes any nonheterosexual form of behavior, identity, relationship

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or community” (Herek, 1990, p. 317). Institutional heterosexism is especially powerful in denying LGBT individuals their rights—such as the right to marry and to constitute a family—which conveys the message that LGBT individuals are less deserving than the general population.

In Portugal, notwithstanding recent political and legislative changes—such as the introduction of a clause of nondiscrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in the Portuguese Constitution in 2004, and the 2010 law allowing same-sex couples to marry—same-sex couples and lesbian and gay individuals are still denied their right to constitute a family (Vale de Almeida, 2010). Moreover, according to a report from the Commissioner for Human Rights from the Council of Europe (2011), Portuguese people are not comfortable about having a homosexual person as neighbor, and are largely against same-sex marriage and same-sex parenting. Consequently, the identity development of LGBT individuals is restricted by these negative societal attitudes, which generally results in the internalization of the stigma associated with their sexual and/or gender identity.

These internalized negative feelings and discomfort with oneself are conceptualized as internalized homonegativity<sup>1</sup> (Balsam & Mohr, 2007; Mayfield, 2001). Although there are no published epidemiological studies documenting the prevalence of internalized homonegativity among LGBT individuals, evidence from community studies have shown that this phenomenon is present in virtually all LGBT individuals in varying degrees of intensity (see, e.g., Herek, Gillis, & Cogan, 2009). Internalized homonegativity has been shown to be associated with low self-esteem, psychological distress, substance abuse, risky sexual behaviors, and suicide and suicide attempts—all of which have important health and clinical implications (Dew & Chaney, 2005; Herek, Cogan, Gillis, & Glunt, 1997; Lehavot & Simoni, 2011; Meyer & Dean, 1998; Remafedi, Farrow, & Deisher, 1991). In fact, internalized homonegativity is one of the most important factors affecting mental health of LGBT individuals (Gonsiorek, 1993) and the main issue in LGBT counseling and psychotherapy (Cabaj, 1996).

Although internalized homonegativity presents a unique and difficult challenge for maintaining a healthy nonheterosexual identity, it is one that most LGBT individuals must contend with. Overcoming these negative feelings about oneself is thus required for positive health and mental health outcomes, and the disclosure and acceptance of one’s sexual identity (coming-out) is a necessary part of this process (Cass, 1979, 1984; Rosario, Hunter, Maguen, Gwadz, & Smith, 2001).

Nevertheless, recent studies have shown that disclosing one’s sexual orientation to others does not necessarily resolve this internalized homonegativity. In fact, negative reactions to the disclosure of sexual orientation can have even more pervasive effects, due to the risk of victimization for being out of the closet (Savin-Williams, 1994). This is of particular importance

for young people because earlier self-identification and disclosure are associated with more victimization (D'Augelli & Grossman, 2001; Pilkington & D'Augelli, 1995). Moreover, gay and bisexual men may be particularly vulnerable to feelings of internalized homonegativity as they are more likely to be victimized than are lesbian or bisexual women (D'Augelli & Grossman, 2001; Herek, Gillis, Cogan, & Glunt, 1997).

However, several authors suggest that differences in coming-out are more based on sexual identity than on gender, arguing that bisexuals are more likely than gay men or lesbians to conceal their same-sex attractions (Balsam & Mohr, 2007; Herek et al., 2009). In fact, bisexuals are often victims of a double discrimination on the basis of their sexual identity, from heterosexuals and the gay/lesbian community (Israel & Mohr, 2004; Ochs, 1996). This finding may help to explain why several studies have reported that bisexuals show poorer health outcomes than heterosexuals and homosexuals, and higher levels of internalized homonegativity (Bostwick, 2012; Bostwick, Boyd, Hughes, & McCabe, 2010; Jorm, Korten, Rodgers, Jacomb, & Christensen, 2002).

Parents' negative reactions to adolescents' disclosure of their same-sex attractions are associated with substance use, depression, and risky sexual and physical behaviors (Rosario, Schrimshaw, & Hunter, 2009; Rothman, Sullivan, Keyes, & Boehmer, 2012; Ryan, Huebner, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2009). In contrast, parents' acceptance is associated with positive health outcomes and social adjustment and protects against negative outcomes such as depression, substance abuse, and suicide (Rothman et al., 2012; Ryan, Russell, Huebner, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2010). Moreover, family acceptance mitigates the negative effects of victimization for LGBT youth (Hershberger & D'Augelli, 1995) and therefore mitigates their negative feeling about themselves.

Regarding patterns of disclosure, few young LGBT individuals first disclose their sexual orientation to parents; most of them confide in their peers and friends first (D'Augelli & Hershberger, 1993; Savin-Williams, 1998), as friends and peers are more likely to accept their sexual orientation, thus reinforcing their own self-acceptance (Goldfried & Goldfried, 2001). Self-acceptance, or in other words low internalized homonegativity, seems to be the best predictor of mental health in LGBT youth (Hershberger & D'Augelli, 1995).

Because most of these studies have been conducted on English-speaking populations, in this study we aimed to assess levels of internalized homonegativity among a sample of Portuguese self-identified gay and bisexual men, and lesbian and bisexual women. We were also interested in evaluating the association between internalized homonegativity, disclosure of sexual orientation, and perception of acceptance of sexual orientation by parents and close friends. Because few studies compared levels of internalized homonegativity among these four groups, our hypotheses were based on existing

literature that suggests that gay men and lesbians tend to have less internalized homophobia and are more likely to disclose their sexual orientation than bisexual men and women.

## METHOD

### Participants

Participants were 580 self-identified LGB men and women: 339 gay men, 145 lesbians, 30 bisexual men, and 66 bisexual women. Ages ranged from 18 to 76 ( $M = 31$ ,  $SD = 10$ ); 46% of the participants were in their twenties, and 30% were in their thirties. Almost one half of the participants had at least a college degree, about one third a postgraduate degree, and only 3% had less than a high school diploma. In terms of nationality, although all participants were Portuguese, 5% indicated they had a different ethnic background (1% African, 1% French, 1% Brazilian, and 2% other). Almost 40% of the sample identified as Catholics, 12% as Spiritual, 42% as Atheists, and 6% with other religions. Finally, 12% identified with a conservative (right-wing) political party, 22% as socialists, 27% as liberal (left-wing), 4% with other parties, and 35% with none.

### Instruments

*Internalized Homophobia Scale.* We measured internalized homonegativity with the Internalized Homophobia Scale (Ross & Rosser, 1996). The original scale was developed for men who have sex with men (MSM), and held four dimensions: public identification as gay ( $\alpha = .85$ ), perception of stigma associated with being gay ( $\alpha = .69$ ), social comfort with gay men ( $\alpha = .64$ ), and moral and religious acceptability of being gay ( $\alpha = .62$ ). The Portuguese version of this scale (Pereira & Leal, 2005) was developed for homosexual and bisexual men and held only two dimensions: Internal perception of the stigma associated with homosexuality ( $\alpha = .82$ ) and External perception of the stigma associated with homosexuality ( $\alpha = .65$ ). Because both versions of the scale were developed to be used with men, for this study some changes were introduced, and an exploratory factor analysis was conducted. All items that pertained to gay/homosexual men were reworded to include lesbians (e.g., Item 7: Social situations with gay men or lesbian women make me feel uncomfortable) or changed by omitting references to gender (e.g., Item 5: I do not feel confident about making an advance to someone from the same sex). Items that referred to a person's homosexuality were also changed to include bisexuals (e.g., I worry about becoming old and homosexual/bisexual). Finally, because it was not possible to change Item 1 to also include lesbians (Obviously effeminate gay men make me feel uncomfortable), an extra item was added (Item 25: Obviously masculine lesbian women make me feel uncomfortable).

*Disclosure of sexual orientation and perception of acceptance.* To measure the level of disclosure of sexual orientation and perception of acceptance of sexual orientation, an Index of Disclosure of Sexual Orientation was developed for this study. This index was divided into two questions: (1) “Who knows about your sexual orientation?” assessed with four possible answers: (i) knows it and we have talked about it, (ii) knows it or suspects it but we have never talked about it, (iii) doesn’t know it, (iv) doesn’t apply to me, and question (2) “Considering your answer to the previous questions, how do you feel about their acceptance of your sexual orientation?” with five possible answers: (i) accepts it very well, (ii) with some difficulty in the beginning but now accepts it well, (iii) (still) has some difficulty in dealing with it, (iv) doesn’t accept it, and (v) doesn’t apply to me. Participants were then asked to record their answers, separately, as they pertained to parents and close friends.

## Procedure

Portuguese LGBT organizations were contacted and asked to publicize this study through their mailing lists and website, and other LGBT-related Portuguese blogs and websites were contacted as well. Two online profiles for gay and lesbian social networks were also created (Gaydar and Gaydargirls) to recruit more participants. All respondents were invited to participate in an online survey and directed to an online questionnaire. The first page of the questionnaire explained the objectives of the study and informed participants about how to fill it in, how to withdraw from the study, and how to contact the authors for more information.

## RESULTS

### Exploratory Factor Analysis

The 27-item Internalized Homophobia Scale was analyzed to determine the factorability of the data. Factorability was confirmed by the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test ( $KMO = .849$ ) and Bartlett’s test ( $\alpha < 0.001$ ). Principal components analysis produced eight factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.00, accounting for 59% of explained variance. An inspection of the scree plot and the component matrix revealed that only three factors should be retained, and these were rotated using varimax criteria. Due to ambiguity in factor loading, one item (Homosexuality is not against the will of God) was deleted.

This analysis produced three factors composed of 26 items, and accounting for 37% of explained variance (Table 1). Factor 1 was named Public Identification as Homo(bi)sexual, Factor 2 was named Internal Perception of Stigma Associated with Homo(bi)sexuality, and Factor 3 was named

**TABLE 1** Internalized Homophobia Scale Items, Factor Loadings, and Percentage of Explained Variance

	Scale Items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
		Public Identification as Homo(bi)sexual Explained Variance: 17.51%	Internal Perception of Stigma Explained Variance: 10.33%	Perception of Social Oppression Explained Variance: 9.17%
10	I feel comfortable about being seen in public with an obviously gay or lesbian person	.65		
7	Social situations with gay men or lesbian women make me feel uncomfortable	.64		
1	Obviously effeminate gay men make me feel uncomfortable	.63		
21	I feel comfortable about being homosexual/bisexual	.60		
23	I'm not worried about anyone finding out that I am gay/lesbian/bisexual	.57		
11	I feel comfortable discussing homosexuality in a public setting	.57		
25	Obviously masculine lesbian women make me feel uncomfortable	.52		
6	I feel comfortable in gay and lesbian bars	.50		
8	I don't like to think about my homosexuality/bisexuality	.48		
9	When I think about gay men, lesbians, or bisexuals, I think of negative situations	.46		
27	Homosexuality is as natural as heterosexuality	.45		
22	Homosexuality is morally acceptable	.38		
16	I object if someone tells a joke about gays or lesbians in my presence	.35		
2	I prefer to have anonymous sexual partners	.33		
4	Most of my friends are gay, lesbian, or bisexual	.31		

17	I worry about becoming old and homosexual/bisexual	.71	
18	I worry about becoming unattractive	.62	
19	I would prefer to be more heterosexual	.58	
3	Life would be easier if I was heterosexual	.57	
26	Even if I could change my sexual orientation, I wouldn't	.54	
5	I don't feel confident about making an advance to someone from the same sex	.35	
20	Most people don't discriminate against homosexuals	.75	
15	Society still punishes people for being gay, lesbian, or bisexual	.74	
24	Discrimination against gay men and lesbians is still common	.71	
13	Most people have negative reactions to homosexuality	.68	
12	It's important to me to control who knows about my homosexuality/bisexuality	.41	



Perception of Social Oppression. The scales computed from these dimensions had internal reliabilities of .789, .701, and .693, respectively.

Sample Characteristics

Mean scores for the all measures were obtained. For the three dimensions of the Internalized Homophobia Scale, higher scores (4 and 5) reflected higher levels of internalized homonegativity. Scores ranging from 1 to 4.33 ( $M = 1.93$ ,  $SD = .56$ ) were obtained for Public Identification as Homo(bi)sexual, with 94% of participants scoring 1 or 2. Scores ranged from 1 to 5 for Internal Perception of Stigma ( $M = 2.33$ ,  $SD = .85$ ), with 73% answering between 1 and 2. Finally, for Perception of Social Oppression, scores fell between 1.40 and 5 ( $M = 3.80$ ,  $SD = .71$ ), with 41% of the participants scoring 4.

Regarding participants' levels of disclosure, 54% had disclosed to parents and 93% to close friends, 21% had not at all disclosed to parents, and only 2% had not disclosed to friends. Regarding participants' perception of acceptance, almost one half of the participants (46%) felt well or somewhat accepted by their parents, but 14% felt rejected. An overwhelming majority felt well accepted by their friends (89%).

Correlations Among Measures

Nonparametric Spearman's rho correlations were performed among the three dimensions of internalized homonegativity, disclosure of sexual orientation, and perception of acceptance of sexual orientation from close friends and parents. Significant associations were found among the three internalized homonegativity dimensions, disclosure of sexual orientation, and perception of acceptance (Table 2), showing that higher levels of internalized homonegativity were associated with less disclosure of sexual orientation, and with perception of less acceptance of sexual orientation from friends and parents.

**TABLE 2** Spearman's Rho Correlations Between Internalized Homonegativity, Disclosure, and Acceptance

	Public Identification as Homo(bi)sexual	Internal Perception of Stigma	Perception of Social Oppression
Disclosure to parents	.33**	.25**	.21**
Disclosure to friends	.31**	.20**	.22**
Acceptance by parents	.20**	.29**	.33**
Acceptance by friends	.17**	.09*	.19**

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.001$ .

**TABLE 3** Means and Standard Deviations for the Effect of Gender on Internalized Homonegativity

	Men <i>n</i> = 370	Women <i>n</i> = 210
Public identification	2.09 (.59)	1.88 (.49)
Internal perception	2.56 (.88)	2.30 (.77)
Perception of oppression	3.72 (.70)	3.87 (.72)

### Gender Differences in Levels of Internalized Homonegativity

To assess whether there were gender differences on levels of internalized homonegativity, three independent sample *t* tests were conducted. Whereas men scored higher than women on levels of discomfort with Public Identification as Homo(bi)sexual,  $t(578) = 4.31, p < 0.001$ , and on levels of Internal Perception of Stigma,  $t(578) = 3.58, p < 0.001$ , women scored higher on levels of Perception of Social Oppression,  $t(578) = 2.52, p = .01$  (Table 3). These results showed that men tended to internalize more social homonegativity than women, but women seemed more aware of the social oppression that affects LGBT communities.

### Effects of Gender and Sexual Orientation on Levels of Internalized Homonegativity

To evaluate whether gender and sexual orientation would influence the levels of internalized homonegativity, three one-way ANOVAs were conducted. Levene's statistic showed that the homogeneity of variance assumption was met. ANOVA test results were significant for Public Identification as Homo(bi)sexual,  $F(3, 579) = 10.80, p < 0.001$ , Internal Perception of Stigma,  $F(3, 579) = 5.39, p = .001$ , and Perception of Social Oppression,  $F(3, 579) = 5.11, p < 0.01$ .

For Public Identification as Homo(bi)sexual, post hoc Tukey tests indicated that there were significant differences between gay men and lesbians ( $p < 0.001$ ), between gay and bisexual men ( $p < 0.01$ ), between lesbians and bisexual men ( $p < 0.001$ ), and between bisexual men and women ( $p < 0.01$ ). For Internal Perception of Stigma, Tukey tests showed significant differences between lesbians and gay men ( $p < 0.01$ ) and between lesbians and bisexual men ( $p < 0.01$ ). Finally, for Perception of Social Oppression, significant differences were found only between gay men and bisexual women ( $p < 0.01$ ) (Table 4). Although the sample sizes were very unequal—in particular between homosexual (gay and lesbian) and bisexual participants (men and women)—the assumption of homogeneity of variance was met.

**TABLE 4** Means, Standard Deviations, and Case Ranks for the Effects of Gender and Sexual Orientation on Internalized Homophobia, Disclosure, and Acceptance

		Lesbian Women	Bisexual Women	Gay Men	Bisexual Men
		<i>n</i> = 114	<i>n</i> = 46	<i>n</i> = 264	<i>n</i> = 15
Internalized homonegativity	Public identification	1.85 (.48)	1.97 (.50)	2.07 (.57)	2.40 (.69)
	Internal perception	2.26 (.78)	2.38 (.76)	2.53 (.88)	2.79 (.84)
	Perception of oppression	3.82 (.72)	4.00 (.71)	3.69 (.69)	3.99 (.66)
Disclosure	Parents	198.13	243.51	222.20	275.33
	Friends	216.92	215.00	220.00	258.70
Acceptance	Parents	218.83	269.91	211.38	227.60
	Friends	219.20	234.87	214.54	276.50

Taken together, these results suggest that there were significant effects of gender and sexual orientation on levels of internalized homonegativity. Lesbian and bisexual women scored lower than gay and bisexual men on the internalization of stigma, but higher on the recognition of social oppression, suggesting that gender may have a greater impact on internalized homonegativity than sexual orientation.

Effects of Gender and Sexual Orientation on the Disclosure of Sexual Orientation and Perception of Acceptance

To evaluate whether gender and sexual orientation would also influence the disclosure of sexual orientation and the perception of acceptance of sexual orientation by friends and parents, four non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis tests were performed. Results were significant for disclosure to parents ( $\chi^2(3) = 12.27, p < 0.01$ ), disclosure to friends ( $\chi^2(3) = 22.98, p < 0.001$ ), acceptance by parents ( $\chi^2(3) = 9.17, p < 0.05$ ), and acceptance by friends ( $\chi^2(3) = 18.13, p < 0.001$ ). To assess these significant effects further, cases were ranked and then analyzed using one-way ANOVAs of the ranked variables, as well as post hoc Fisher's Least Significant Difference (LSD) tests for multiple comparisons.

For the disclosure of sexual orientation to parents, significant differences were found between gay men and lesbians ( $p < 0.05$ ), between gay and bisexual men ( $p < 0.05$ ), and between lesbians and bisexual men ( $p < 0.01$ ) and women ( $p = .01$ ). For disclosure to close friends, significant differences were found between bisexual and gay men ( $p < 0.001$ ), bisexual men and women ( $p < 0.001$ ), and bisexual men and lesbians ( $p < 0.001$ ). In turn, for the perception of acceptance by parents, significant differences were found between bisexual women and gay men ( $p < 0.01$ ), and between bisexual and lesbian women ( $p < 0.05$ ). Finally, for acceptance by friends, differences

were found between gay and bisexual men ( $p < 0.001$ ) and women ( $p < 0.05$ ), between lesbians and bisexual men ( $p < 0.001$ ), and also between bisexual men and women ( $p < 0.05$ ) (Table 4).

Similarly to the trend suggested in the previous analysis, lesbian and bisexual women were more likely to disclose their same-sex attractions to their parents and friends, and to feel accepted by them, than were gay or bisexual men.

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to assess and compare lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals in their disclosure behaviors, perceived acceptance of sexual orientation, and internalized homonegativity. Only recently have researchers started to pay attention to possible differences in disclosure practices, social support, and internalized homonegativity among gay/lesbian and bisexual individuals, and many studies now reveal a vast diversity within the LGB community. We found that within this community, some groups may be more vulnerable to psychological distress, and this has important clinical and research implications.

As expected, we found that levels of internalized homonegativity were associated with disclosure of sexual orientation to parents and friends, and with feelings of acceptance of sexual orientation from both groups of significant people. Considering other important variables that affect these internalized negative feelings, such as experiences of discrimination and harassment, we argue that the strength of the correlations ( $r < 0.20$ , and in some cases  $r < 0.30$ ) is suggestive. Although no direct causality can be inferred, in this sample internalized homonegativity seems to be associated with the disclosure and acceptance/rejection of sexual orientation.

It is noteworthy that Portuguese LGB individuals held low levels of internalized homonegativity in general, but high levels of recognition of social oppression. We suspect that this finding may be a reflection of the growing visibility of LGB individuals in the media and on television, as well as in political and social debates. Achievements in the legal recognition of same-sex relationships and parenting rights in several Western countries are also very likely to not only reinforce LGB individuals' self-acceptance, but also to empower them to confront prejudice and discrimination. More than 90% of participants have disclosed their identities to close friends and feel accepted by them, but more than one half of them had disclosed to their parents as well. In a U.S. probability sample, Herek and colleagues (Herek, Norton, Allen, & Sims, 2010) reported that older participants were more likely to disclose their sexual orientation later than younger participants, suggesting that the newer generation may be more empowered to self-identity as gay, lesbian, or bisexual. Our results suggest this same trend.

However, the majority of the participants reported feeling some rejection from their parents after disclosing their sexual identity. This finding is particularly relevant in light of the fact that levels of internalized homonegativity were more strongly associated with disclosure and acceptance by parents than by friends. In fact, it seems that although LGB individuals in this sample and North American samples (D'Augelli & Hershberger, 1993; Savin-Williams, 1998) first confide in their friends, to these participants the disclosure and acceptance from parents is more likely to affect their own self-acceptance.

Another relevant finding that emerged from the gender analysis was that men scored higher on internalized homonegativity, whereas women scored higher on the recognition of social oppression. Given that men, gay and bisexual, are more likely to be victimized as a consequence of disclosing their sexual identity, or for displaying some kind of gender nonconformist behaviors (D'Augelli & Grossman, 2001; Herek et al., 1997; Toomey, Ryan, Diaz, Card, & Russel, 2010), we hypothesize that men may be more prone to internalize the underlying negative messages rather than recognizing and confronting them. Moreover, gay and bisexual men who experience gender role conflict are more likely to internalize homonegative messages (Szymanski & Carr, 2008).

This hypothesis seem to have some support when considering that sexual orientation had a weaker effect than gender on internalized homonegativity, disclosure, and acceptance. In fact, contrary to previous findings (Bostwick, 2012; Bostwick et al., 2010; Jorm et al., 2002), bisexuality *per se* did not imply higher levels of internalized homonegativity, greater likelihood of concealing sexual orientation, or of being rejected. Lesbian and bisexual women showed lower levels of internalized homonegativity than gay and bisexual men, scored higher on the Perception of Social Oppression, and were more likely to disclose their identities to their parents and friends. However, bisexual individuals did have higher levels of internalized homonegativity when compared to their same-sex homosexual counterparts, which only partially confirmed that bisexual individuals hold higher levels than homosexual individuals.

There are a few limitations to this study that need to be acknowledged and may have influenced the results. The sample sizes were unequal, in particular between homosexual (gay and lesbian) and bisexual (men and women) individuals. Bisexuals were indeed in a very small number, and future efforts should be made to replicate this study with larger samples. Furthermore, although we collected a heterogeneous sample, a more attentive look at some of the demographic characteristics revealed that this was a fairly young sample, well-educated, nonreligious, and politically liberal (left-wing). To the extent that these particular characteristics are representative of the Portuguese LGB population is unknown, and claims about generalizations of the present findings cannot be made. A final limitation of this

study is related to the adaptations we made to the Internalized Homophobia Scale. This scale has not been previously used with lesbian or bisexual women, and some of the items may not resonate as much for women with nonheterosexual identities.

To conclude, the major implication of our findings is that the diversity within the LGB community should not be overlooked. In particular, it is yet not well established whether gender identity or sexual identity has greater effect on LGB individuals' self-acceptance and disclosure. In this study, we found that women, whether self-identified as lesbian or bisexual, were in general more comfortable with their same-sex attractions than men. However, they were also more aware of the social oppression that victimizes LGB individuals. We suggest that future research should focus on the different mechanisms that are involved in the internalization of this social oppression, as they seem to be differently experienced by gay men, bisexual men, bisexual women, and lesbians. Furthermore, it would be of particular relevance to evaluate how the differences found on levels of internalized homonegativity and recognition of social oppression would correlate with measures of mental health and psychological well-being.

## NOTE

1. Other terms commonly used are "internalized homophobia" (Weinberg, 1972), "internalized heterosexism" (Szymanski, Kashubeck-West, & Meyer, 2008), or "internalized sexual stigma" (Herek, Gillis, & Cogan, 2009). For a comprehensive review, see Herek (2004).

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