

## How sexual identity and culture matter to parenthood plans?

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**Rationale/Background:** In recent years, sexual minority individuals' access to parenthood has been facilitated both by legal changes concerning same-sex marriage and adoption rights (Gato & Fontaine, 2017) and by increased access to assisted reproduction techniques (Goldberg, 2010). However, few investigations looked into prospective parenthood of LGB persons and the factors that might influence this process. For this reason, we set out to explore the differences in attitudes toward parenthood among LGB individuals compared to heterosexual individuals in two countries with different sociolegal and cultural contexts concerning same-sex parenting: Portugal and the UK.

**Hypothesis and Research Questions:** Comparatively with their heterosexual peers we expect LGB participants to express lower levels of: parenting desire (hypothesis 1); and parenting intention (hypothesis 2). Research Question 1: What is the impact of sexual identity in anticipation of stigma?; Research Question 2: How different were attitudes toward parenthood (parenting desire, parenting intention and anticipation of stigma) in each country?

**Methods:** Our final sample (obtained through the use of “nearest neighbor matching technique” (Stuart, 2010)) was composed of 168 UK participants and 168 Portuguese participants: 26 women defined themselves as lesbian, 52 as bisexual, and 164 as heterosexual; while 32 men defined themselves as gay, 4 as bisexual and 58 as heterosexual in the global sample.

**Measures:** To assess parenting desire and parenting intention, we followed Riskind and Patterson's (2010) and we devised a psychological scale to assess desires and intentions, by constructing two additional items to supplement each of the original single items. To measure the anticipation of potential stigma upon parenthood, we devised a psychological scale to assess the potential anticipation of stigma in parenting.

**Results:** Concerning the effect of sexual identity on parenting desire, LGB individuals reported lower levels of parenting desire than did heterosexual individuals and hypothesis 1 was thus confirmed. A main effect of country of residence was also found with participants from Portugal reporting higher levels of parenting desire than their counterparts from the UK. Concerning parenting intention, a main effect of sexual identity was detected with LGB individuals reporting lower levels of parenting intention than heterosexuals, thus confirming hypothesis 2. Furthermore, participants from Portugal recorded higher scores on this variable than did participants from the UK. Lastly, LGB participants reported higher amounts of anticipated stigma than heterosexuals. Participants from Portugal anticipated less social stigma upon parenthood than did their counterparts from the UK.

**Conclusions:** Our results are consistent with those obtained in previous research: LGB adults are often interested in parenthood (Riskind & Patterson, 2010) but LGB attitudes toward parenthood were positive than those reported by heterosexuals (Baiocco & Laghi 2013; Riskind & Patterson 2010). In this way, living in a familistic society can be associated with lower levels of anticipated stigma in parenthood. Based on the findings of our study this seems to apply to heterosexual and LGB persons equally with the more familistic culture of Portugal acting as a centripetal force pulling family members together across the generations (McGoldrick, Carter, & Preto 2013). This exploratory study has highlighted the importance of considering the influence of cultural values in parenting aspirations.

**Keywords:** Prospective Parenting; Culture; LGB; Parenting Desire; Parenting Intention.

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