Thematic session 4
Gender and identity development

Political socialization of young Portuguese women
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Gender differences in political participation tend to reveal that female adolescents are less interested in politics and more reluctant to become politically active than males, even if they reveal a higher tolerance regarding political and social rights of disenfranchised groups (e.g., Rosenthal, Rosenthal & Jones, 2001; Sotelo, 1999; Torney-Purta, Lehman, Oewald & Schultz, 2000). In this paper, we explore some factors that might account for political engagement of young Portuguese women, using a focus group methodology. Groups include both activists and non-participants and explore the role of variables such as the family "political" climate (attitudes towards political participation, participation experiences, political discussions...), gender conceptions, and associational features (topic, organizational characteristics...) in the development of political engagement.

Masculinities and resistance: boys undoing boys
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This paper examines competing conceptions of masculinity within a secondary school setting. Grounded in feminist, profeminist and cultural studies, the author extends a contemporary theorizing of gender relations that unsettles past responses to boys and masculinity in schools. (see Epstein et al., 1998; Lingard & Douglas, 1999; Mahony, 1999; Martin & Meyenn, 2001; Skelton, 2001)

Taken from a larger ethnographic study, the conversations and interactions of four young men illuminate how and when counter-hegemonic practices directly and indirectly unsettle conventional versions of masculinity. The responses and resistance these young men experience highlight the kind of gender work necessary but also the tensions for doing so from among boys willing to challenge heteronormativity. The study not only problematizes essentialist arguments of masculinity but also offers data to suggest the various ways certain young men opt out of being one of the boys while remaining a dissenting voice from among the boys. There also emerges out of this data a tension that in subtle and not so subtle ways sets these young men apart because of how they embody and display their masculinities. This is closely examined and taken up to extend previous arguments for re-envisioning masculinity and men as social allies.

Identity construction and social support in Portuguese lesbian and gay youth
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Several authors have criticized the heterosexist bias in the psychological study of human development and sexuality, both in its theoretical and methodological implications. In virtue of such bias, little is yet known about the developmental patterns of lesbian and gay identity construction as well as the negotiation of these identities with significant others. A deeper understanding of homosexual identity formation in adolescence and youth is especially necessary, since it represents a developmental phase in which it is harder to deal with identity's negotiation within oppressive contexts. Loneliness, shame, low self-esteem, risk-behaviour and suicide attempts are the most frequently reported consequences of unsupportive reactions to gay and lesbian identity construction (e.g., D'Augelli, 2000). In this paper, we consider the relationship between general identity processes of commitment and exploration and different phases of sexual identity development (awareness, exploration, deepening/commitment, and synthesis/integration) according to McCarn & Fassinger's model (1996). Additionally, we consider the relevance of perceived parental and peer support to these various dimensions of gay and lesbian youth identity construction.