Gender and intercultural education
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Homophobia and the Right to Paternity: focusing on identity dynamics.
Irene Gomes; Rui Serôdio; Luisa Morais (FPCEUP)

There is a wide range of interest regarding sexual orientation and its complex relations with gender, sexuality, identity, power and culture (Adam, 2002). With the emerging legal changes relating to the civil rights of sexual minorities, such as marriage or parenthood, it becomes more important than ever to understand these dynamics.

Research has also gathered evidence on factors associated with discrimination against homosexuals (e.g. Crawford, McLeod, Zamboni & Jordan, 1999), attitudes towards adoption by homosexual couples (e.g. McLeod & Crawford, 1998) and also on the stigmatization of adoption (e.g. Ferreira & Aiello-Vaisberg, 2005), and allows us to draw an unflattering picture of the adoption of children by homosexual couples.

The present studies are part of a broader research project that aims to analyze and understand the attitudes towards homosexual parenthood. Understanding how society reacts to this new emerging reality can significantly contribute to the implementation of political, social and cultural changes that promote a more effective equality for people with homosexual orientation.

Despite the extensive investigation on attitude toward homosexuals that took place in recent decades, little has been done to understand this phenomenon in light of a more comprehensive approach that focuses on the dynamics that are established around identity and intergroup relations.

In this research we intend to articulate the "traditional" perspectives on prejudice and discrimination - focusing mainly on sociocognitive processes (cf. Oakes, P. J.,
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Haslam, S. A., & Turner, J. C., 1994) - with the social identity approach. This approach advocates that identity processes underlying relations between, and within, social categories are core processes in the emergence of prejudice and discrimination and essential to a deeper understanding about such phenomena. Understanding how the construction of a social identity, and self-categorization processes, influences the adoption of discriminatory behavior is the key issue in this research.

This research extends previous work concerning homophobia and its consequences (such as negative attitudes towards homosexual parenthood) using the social identity approach wide framework, which includes social identity theory (e.g. Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and its most important development (e.g. Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994), self-categorization theory (Turner, J. C., Hogg, M. A., Oakes, P. J., Reicher, S. D., & Wetherell, M. S., 1987), in order to understand and analyze the above introduced phenomena. By addressing a specific prejudice - homophobia - from the most recent theoretical developments of social identity approach, we intend to define the relation between self-categorization mechanisms, resulting from identity processes, and the emergence of prejudiced behavior.

According to the social identity approach, the search for a positive social identity is the basis of prejudice and intergroup discrimination (e.g. Tajfel, 1981).

Self-categorization theory (Turner et al., 1987) builds on the distinction between interpersonal and intergroup behavior, and a parallel distinction between personal and social identity (Turner, 1982, in Turner & Reynolds, 2004). Depending on the salient identity level at a given time, behavior is qualitatively different (e.g. Hogg & Abrams, 1988), and when individuals focus on their social identity, group-based behavior emerges (e.g. Turner & Reynolds, 2004).

Any event that reduces perceived homogeneity of either the in group or the out group, reduces intergroup distinctiveness (e.g. Oakes et al., 1994) and thereby threatens in group identity. Therefore, regarding their sexual identity,
homosexuals are a relevant comparison group for heterosexuals, and can be perceived as a threat to intergroup distinctiveness. Homophobic prejudice, by enhancing a more positive identity, ensures in group distinctiveness and accounts for the emergence of prejudiced attitudes and behaviors.

Addressing prejudice based on the social identity approach (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) extends the conceptual framework of research in this domain, thus contributing to a deeper and more heuristic understanding of the phenomenon. Therefore, this research can make a significant contribution, opening a relevant venue for further understanding of the complexity of prejudice and discrimination, regarding possible connections between self-categorization processes, identity and the emergence of negatively biased attitudes and behaviors towards homosexuals. On the other hand, homophobia and its implications on civil rights, such as parenthood, presents itself today as a highly relevant social problem (e.g. Yang, 1997; Herek, G.M., 2000; Campo-Arias, A., & Herazo, E., 2008), given the widespread and negatively charged prejudices towards homosexuals and the potentially negative impact they have on the quality of life of this minority. Therefore, fostering a deeper understanding of this specific type of prejudice may contribute to social change, thus contributing for a more effective equality for people with homosexual orientation.