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## **Equality policies and intersections of gender and sexuality: the role of academic research**

Eduarda Ferreira<sup>1</sup>

1) Universidade Nova de Lisboa

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# **Equality policies and intersections of gender and sexuality: the role of academic research**

Eduarda Ferreira

*Universidade Nova de Lisboa*

## **Abstract**

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Gender inequalities are a reality in economic, political and social participation. The lives of women and men, either cisgender or transgender, are deeply affected by gender inequalities. The identity-based approach to equality policies do not consider the interconnections and interdependence of diverse identity categories, and the acknowledgment that it is not possible to explain inequalities through a single framework. Sexual orientation equality policies often fail to take gender inequalities into account. Academic research has the potential to contribute to clarify the concepts underlying equality policies and to promote an intersectional approach. In terms of equality policies this means, for instance, to formulate policies that take into account groups at the different intersections of inequalities and the way that they are affected by the policies in question. This work aims to explore the contribution of the Portuguese research community to sexual orientation equality policies in Portugal. It will analyze in what extent the academic research in Portugal contributes to question identity-based politics and to advance an intersectional approach to sexual orientation equality policies. It will focus on and critically analyze equality policies in Portugal, and scientific and scholarly publications, namely journal articles, conference papers, theses, and dissertations of the Portuguese academia.

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**Keywords:** equality policies, intersectionality, gender, sexual orientation

## **Políticas de Igualdad e Intersecciones de Género y Sexualidad: el Papel de la Investigación Académica**

Eduarda Ferreira

*Universidade Nova de Lisboa*

### **Resumen**

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Las desigualdades de género son una realidad en la participación económica, política y social. Las vidas de mujeres y hombres, ya sean cisgénero o transgénero, se ven profundamente afectadas por las desigualdades de género. El enfoque identitario de las políticas de igualdad no considera las interconexiones e interdependencias de diversas categorías identitarias y el reconocimiento de que no es posible explicar las desigualdades a través de un solo marco. Las políticas de igualdad de orientación sexual a menudo no tienen en cuenta las desigualdades de género. La investigación académica tiene el potencial de contribuir a aclarar los conceptos subyacentes a las políticas de igualdad y promover un enfoque interseccional. En términos de políticas de igualdad, esto significa, por ejemplo, formular políticas que tengan en cuenta a los grupos en las diferentes intersecciones de las desigualdades y la forma en que se ven afectados por las políticas en cuestión. Este trabajo tiene como objetivo explorar la contribución de la comunidad de investigación portuguesa a las políticas de igualdad de orientación sexual en Portugal. Se analizará en qué medida la investigación académica en Portugal contribuye a cuestionar las políticas basadas en la identidad y a avanzar en un enfoque interseccional de las políticas de igualdad de orientación sexual. Se centrará y analizará críticamente las políticas de igualdad en Portugal y las publicaciones científicas y académicas, a saber, artículos de revistas, artículos de conferencias, tesis y disertaciones de la academia portuguesa.

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**Palabras clave:** políticas de igualdad, interseccionalidad, género, orientación sexual

**N**ormative gender is the system which segregates and constructs people as women and men based on biological characteristics, placing them in unequal and complementary positions, replicating differences and inequalities. Gender inequalities are not something of the past, it's a prevailing reality in our days. There are striking inequalities in access to employment, to positions of leadership and decision-making, and in participation in political life (Ortenblad, Marling, & Vasiljevic, 2018; Profeta, 2020). Violence against women, especially domestic violence, is a worldwide issue, intensified by the pandemic (EIGE, 2021). Notwithstanding differences between countries, political regimes and religious creeds, even in the countries where the gender equality is more balanced, there are still substantial inequalities (EIGE, 2020).

Gender stereotypes are at the origin of direct and indirect discrimination based on sex that hinder substantive equality between women and men, reinforcing and perpetuating historical and structural models of discrimination. Gender inequalities are multidimensional. Gender-based stereotypes overlap stereotypes based on other factors of discrimination, such as sexual orientation, gender identity, racial and ethnic origin, nationality, age, disability, and religion.

Sexuality is also a source of widespread and significant inequalities. Despite significant advances on equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, non-binary, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) people in the European Union, there are still many homophobic, biphobic, transphobic and interphobic practices (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2020). Discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sexual characteristics, manifests itself in forms of violence, exclusion and marginalization, such as hate speech, deprivation of freedom of association and expression, disrespect for private and family life, discrimination in the labor market, access to goods and services, health, education and sport.

To tackle gender and LGBTIQ inequalities, the European Union (EU) has implemented equality policies. The current EU equality policies, in particular the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 (European Commission, 2020a) and the EU LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025 (European Commission, 2020b), have been influenced by academic research using the European Institute for Gender Equality definition of intersectionality “analytical tool for

studying, understanding and responding to the ways in which sex and gender intersect with other personal characteristics/identities, and how these intersections contribute to unique experiences of discrimination” (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2018). The European Institute for Gender Equality definition is based on the Glossary of Gender-Related Terms of the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (2004).

This paper will focus on the intersections of gender and sexuality, in particular how academic research in Portugal contributes to question identity-based politics and to advance an intersectional approach to sexual orientation equality policies. For example, the intersections of gender and sexual orientation, namely on lesbian issues, are often not considered in sexual orientation equality policies. Specific inequalities and their intersections that non-heterosexual women experience, must be considered from a dynamic and contextualized perspective, understanding the interaction and interdependence between the various lines of oppression.

The paper starts by analyzing gender and sexual equality policies in the European Union. European Union equality policies are relevant to studying the policies of specific European countries, such as Portugal. The analysis aims to identify which model of equality policies best characterizes gender and sexual equality policies in the European Union. The focus then shifts to LGBT equality policies in Portugal with a historical approach. LGBT equality policies in Portugal are analyzed taking into consideration the presence/absence of an intersectional approach. The research method is addressed, explaining how bibliographic research has been carried out to explore the contribution of the Portuguese academic community to sexual orientation equality policies in Portugal. The results of the bibliographic research are presented aiming to map the Portuguese academic research on sexual orientation. The paper concludes with a critical reflection on the findings in order to answer the original question.

### **European Union Equality Policies**

The equality policies of the European Union (EU) are increasingly adopting an intersectional approach, framed by the emergence of an antidiscrimination policy. The EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 (European Commission,

2020a) clearly states that intersectionality is a horizontal principle for its implementation, alongside with a gender mainstreaming approach. The EU LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025 (European Commission, 2020b) uses “intersectionality as a crosscutting principle: sexual orientation, gender identity/expression and/or sex characteristics will be considered alongside other personal characteristics or identities, such as sex, racial/ethnic origin, religion/belief, disability and age.”

Academic research, in particular feminist scholarship, has made a significant contribution to the adoption of an intersectional approach to equality policies. The term intersectionality was proposed by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) in her analysis of the US antidiscrimination law, disclosing its failure to acknowledge Black women’s unique experiences of racism and sexism as simultaneous and inseparable. After more than thirty years of intense academic production on intersectionality, at the present time, the concept of intersectionality is understood in a wide variety of ways, both as a theoretical and analytic tool (Sigle-Rushton & Wendy, 2013). Despite the multiplicity of possible understandings, it is clear that the focus is on issues of inclusion, privilege, and power. The importance of intersectionality for equality policies lies in the recognition that the different dimensions of social life are inseparable, and that their intersections are mutually modifying. Social structures, normativities, hierarchies, axes of differentiation and of oppression, create unique experiences and opportunities for all groups (Brown & Misra, 2003). To address inequalities, it is not possible to consider just one vector of social structures, it is necessary to understand the "matrix of domination" in which each cell represents a specific position (Collins, 2008). An intersectional approach deconstructs the idea that identity categories are discrete and delimited, which poses significant challenges to equality policies, as legal language is based on naming and labeling. This incompatibility can be overcome, by focusing the analysis on how groups and categories are produced, and policy measures on the patterns of inequality (Sigle-Rushton & Wendy, 2013).

The fact that EU equality policies, namely the statement of the European Commission on achieving a Union of equality, which includes the EU Gender and LGBTIQ Equality Strategies 2020-2025, adopt an intersectionality viewpoint does not mean that specific measures take into account the

intersectional dimensions of multiple inequalities. The EU equality policy model may be better defined as a model of multiple discrimination than an intersectional approach (Cruells & Coll-Planas, 2013). In fact, under the umbrella of intersectionality, EU policymaking often addresses inequalities by adding them up and/or considering them separately (Lombardo & Agustín, 2011). The multiple discrimination model adopts a cumulative logic to discrimination (a simple sum of) and focuses on inequality from a more individual rather than structural perspective. The introductory texts of the European Union's current equality policies contain numerous references to the importance of intersectionality; however, specific measures mainly target specific groups and not the structural causes of discrimination. An intersectional approach goes beyond specific and definable social groups and the effects of discrimination, it covers the whole of society and the structural causes of inequalities. For LGBTIQ equality policies, this means targeting not only those who identify as LGBTIQ, but also how society copes with sexuality and gender. The emphasis shifts from the effects of inequality for LGBTIQ people to the production and reproduction of sexuality and inequality.

We do not question the importance of current EU equality policies, namely the EU LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025 and the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, which represent significant progress towards a more intersectional approach. The EU's LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025 is the European Commission's first LGBTIQ Equality Strategy and clearly defines the European Commission's commitment to the protection of LGBTIQ rights. Despite the value of these equality strategies, they continue to assume a dividing line between women/men, and LGBT equality policies, and do not understand sexism, homophobia, and transphobia as interrelated. The EU LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025 includes only measures specifically targeting LGBTIQ people, as if they were separated from the lives of heterosexual/cisgender people; and references to sexual orientation and gender identity in the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 are included only as an additional factor to emphasize the heterogeneity of women as a social group.

Recent research highlights the need to go beyond seeing the notion of intersectionality only in terms of situating individuals or groups in a matrix of intersecting vectors, and propose that inequalities and their intersections

should be seen from a more dynamic and contextualized viewpoint (McCall, 2005; Yuval-Davis, 2006; Hancock, 2007; Ferree, 2009; Winker & Degele, 2011). It is crucial to understand the interaction and interdependence between the lines of oppression, that people can find themselves in different oppressor and oppressed positions at the same time (Cruells & Coll-Planas, 2013), and to focus policies on challenging the privileges of dominant groups (Lombardo & Agustín, 2011). To achieve a higher level of inclusion the emphasis should not be limited to the individual-identity sphere, it needs to address the structural causes of discrimination (Squires, 2008; Ferree, 2009; Lombardo & Bustelo, 2012).

There has been extensive academic research on intersectionality across the European Union. However, it is clear that it takes time to translate academic research into policies, particularly, complex and challenging concepts like intersectionality.

### **LGBT Equality Policies in Portugal**

After 8 years of the Portuguese Carnation Revolution on the 25th April 1974, which ended 48 years of dictatorship, homosexuality was decriminalized in 1982. It was only after the year 2001 that more significant changes on sexual orientation rights were introduced on the Portuguese legislation, such as: same-sex civil partnerships (2001), inclusion of sexual orientation on the article 13 - Principle of Equality of the Portuguese Constitution (2004), same-sex civil marriage with the exception of adoption (2010), adoption and co-adoption of same-sex couples and access to medically assisted procreation regardless of marital status and sexual orientation (2016). There has been a significant, although late in time, positive evolution of sexual orientation rights legislation. The changes in social discrimination has been slower, the EU LGBTI survey 2019 (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2020) reports that in Portugal 57% avoid often or always holding hands with their same-sex partner, 25% avoid often or always certain locations for fear of being assaulted, 56% hide being LGBT at school, 40% felt discriminated against in at least one area of life in the year before the survey. These are only some of the data available, but the main picture is that discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation affects many areas of life, such as socializing



with family and friends, attending school, the work life, as well as going to a café, restaurant, and hospital or to a shop.

Since 1997, Portugal has implemented equality policies, plans: the Global Plan for Equal Opportunities 1997-1999 (Council of Ministers, 1997), the National Plan for Equality 2003-2006 (Council of Ministers, 2003), the National Plan for Equality - Citizenship and Gender 2007-2010 (Council of Ministers, 2007), the National Plan for Equality - Gender, Citizenship and Non-Discrimination 2011-2013 (Council of Ministers, 2011), and the National Plan for Equality: Citizenship, Gender and Non-Discrimination 2014-2017 (Council of Ministers, 2013).

In 2018 a National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination 2018-2030 (Council of Ministers, 2018), also known by the acronym ENIND, was launched, composed of three action plans: Action Plan for Equality between Women and Men; Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence; and Action Plan to Combat Discrimination on the grounds of Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Expression and Sexual Characteristics.

Portugal came late to equality policies on sexual orientation. The National Plan for Equality - Citizenship and Gender 2007-2010 was the first to mention discrimination based on sexual orientation but did not include specific measures. It was only after 2011 that all equality plans included measures to combat discrimination based on sexual orientation. And it was only in 2018 with the National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination that the Portuguese government launched a specific plan of equality policies on sexual orientation and explicitly assumed an intersectional perspective. The National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination 2018-2030 states: “The perspective of intersectionality reveals that discrimination results from the intersection of multiple factors, being assumed in the National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination as a premise in the definition of measures aimed at disadvantages that occur in the intersection of sex with other discrimination factors, among which, age, racial and ethnic origin, disability, nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual characteristics. Thus, it is intended that the National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination recognizes, deepens, and prioritizes, in all areas,

interventions aimed at intersectional disadvantages.” (Council of Ministers, 2018).

For the first time in 2018 equality policies in Portugal go beyond an identity-based approach, acknowledging the complexity of identities and the urgency of using an intersectional approach to cope with the multidimensional nature of disadvantage, and the way stereotypes on the basis of sex intersect with stereotypes on the basis of other factors of discrimination such as sexual orientation. The National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination 2018-2030 (ENIND) assumes as its central point the elimination of gender stereotypes as factors that are the source of direct and indirect discrimination based on sex that prevent the substantive equality that must be guaranteed to women and men, reinforcing and perpetuating historical and structural discrimination. The ENIND understands gender stereotypes as both the result and the cause of discrimination, manifesting themselves in terms of inequalities in participation and status in the labor market, in horizontal and vertical sexual segregation, in incomes, in the feminization of precariousness and poverty, in decision-making processes, in civic and political participation, in educational and professional options, in violence against women in the public and private sphere, in the greater exposure of women to trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation as well as in harmful traditional practices, in the exercise of family responsibilities, care and domestic, in the constraints to the exercise of an active and caring parenthood, in the failure rates and school dropout of boys, in the state of health of men, in access to health and justice, among others. It is also clear in the introductory text of ENIND, that stereotypes on the basis of discrimination based on sex intersect with stereotypes on the basis of other factors of discrimination, such as racial and ethnic origin, nationality, age, disability and religion, reflecting the multidimensional nature of disadvantage.

The execution of ENIND's Action Plans is based on the dual and complementary approach that has been adopted in these areas, gender mainstreaming and intersectionality. Mainstreaming the fight against discrimination based on sex and the promotion of equality between women and men, and the introduction of the issue of fighting discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender Identity, expression and sexual characteristics. The ENIND aims to act consistently against gender stereotypes, homophobic,

biphobic, transphobic and inter-phobic, which originate and perpetuate discrimination and inequalities, in order to produce lasting structural changes that allow to achieve de facto equality. The perspective of intersectionality reveals that discrimination results from the intersection of multiple factors, being assumed in ENIND as a premise in the definition of measures aimed at disadvantages that occur in the intersection of sex with other factors of discrimination, among which, age, racial origin and ethnic, disability, nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sexual characteristics. It is intended, therefore, that ENIND recognizes, deepens and prioritizes, in all areas, interventions aimed at intersectional disadvantages, such as those suffered by migrant women, belonging to ethnic minorities, refugees, with disabilities, along with dependent descendants and elderly women.

Nonetheless, the separation of division of the national plan into three separate action plans does not reflect an intersectional approach. If we look deeper into the concrete measures to be developed, the mention of sexual orientation is completely absent from the Action Plan for Equality between Women and Men and the Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, and the Action Plan to Combat Discrimination on the grounds of Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Expression and Sexual Characteristics, does not include any specific measures to address gender inequalities. As an example, the strategic objectives of the Action Plan to Combat Discrimination on the grounds of Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Expression and Sexual Characteristics (OIEC), are: 1 - Promote knowledge about the real situation of the needs of LGBTI people and discrimination based on OIEC; 2 - Ensure the mainstreaming of OIEC issues; 3 - Combat discrimination based on OIEC, prevent and combat all forms of violence against LGBTI people in public and private life. In this action plan the objectives specifically target LGBTI people as if there was a clear separation from heterosexual/cisgender people.

Although the national strategy identifies the intersectional perspective as one of the cornerstones, the separation of the action plans and its specific measures do not reflect this intention. There is still a long way to go to have real intersectional equality policies in Portugal.

## Methods

A bibliographic research was conducted to explore the contribution of the Portuguese research community to sexual orientation equality policies in Portugal. The bibliographic research also aimed at analyzing to what extent university research in Portugal contributes to questioning identity policy, and to promote an intersectional approach to sexual orientation equality policies. A bibliographic research should guarantee the quality and reliability of the content. To ensure that the content of the bibliographic research is appropriate, specific criteria should be applied, including authority, objectivity, accuracy, currency, and usability (Boon, 2017). The bibliographic research was conducted on the portal of the Portugal Open Access Scientific Repositories (RCAAP <https://www.rcaap.pt>) which collects, aggregates and indexes Open Access scientific contents from Portuguese institutional repositories. This portal contains bibliographic sources with the depth and extent of information to meet the requirements of the research project, and guarantees that the information provided is accurate, authoritative, and current. RCAAP portal is an aggregator (meta-repository) that collects the description (metadata) of documents deposited in the 276 institutional repositories in Portugal (number at the time of this paper search, 28 to 31 December 2020). It constitutes a single-entry point for searching, discovery and recall of thousands of scientific and scholarly publications, namely journal articles, conference papers, theses, and dissertations, distributed by Portuguese repositories. Although its name specifically mentions ‘open access’ the repository includes many documents which are not freely accessible, such as papers in journals, but their references and abstracts are also included.

The RCAAP portal does not cover the entire Portuguese scientific production, given that some publications are not included in the institutional repositories, however, it is a recognized and reliable source of information developed by FCCN ‘Fundação para a Computação Científica Nacional’ (Foundation for National Scientific Computing) in the context of the UMIC Knowledge Society Agency. We are aware that the results of the research in the RCAAP portal are not comprehensive of the overall Portuguese scientific production on sexual orientation, however, the results may be regarded as

representative of academic research in Portugal, taking into account the number of institutional repositories included.

We have limited our search to Portuguese repositories and have not included the Brazilian repository OASISbr also available on RCAAP.

The research covered the 2007-2020 time frame. In Portugal, there are only a few formal programs or academic degrees on gender studies and no academic degrees specifically on LGBTIQ studies (Ferreira, 2019). In this context, there is a scarcity of academic research. The year of 2007 was the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All and has contributed to promoting equality policies on many grounds, including on sexual orientation. Over the course of the 2007 year, activists, NGOs and institutional bodies worked together and organized activities on equality policies, promoting an interdisciplinary approach to equal opportunities (Alonso, Bustelo, Forest, & Lombardo, 2012). For the first time, public funds have been allocated to intervention projects in this field, carried out by LGBT NGOs, and the first public initiative study was promoted to further the understanding of living conditions and discrimination of LGBT people in Portugal (Nogueira & Oliveira, 2010). Most of the researchers working on Women's, Gender and Feminist Studies, and in LGBTIQ Studies in Portugal, are also involved in activism (Ferreira, 2019) which explains the impetus of academic research from this year.

The bibliographic search was divided into two phases:

1 - A full search was conducted from December 28 to December 31, 2020 using the advanced search function and all possible combinations within the search fields title and abstract, of the words: sexual orientation, lesbian, gay, bisexual, homosexual, queer, intersectional, intersection, intersectionality, and the acronyms LGB, LGBT, LGBTQ, LGBTI, LGBTIQ, LGBTQI, LGBTQ+, LGBTI+, LGBTIQ+, LGBTQI+. The words used in the search were both in singular and plural (for example, lesbian and lesbians), and in Portuguese and English, whereas there is an increasing amount of Portuguese scientific output written in English;

2 - the results of the search were organized by year, selected all that concern sexual orientation, and excluded the duplicate results.

The results were organized into a database to facilitate the analysis of the results.

## Mapping Portuguese Academic Research on Sexual Orientation

LGBTIQ studies or programs specifically focused on sexualities in the social sciences are almost non-existent in Portuguese academia. The lack of LGBTIQ studies is not surprising considering that even the institutionalization of gender studies in Portugal as a scientific field has been difficult and slow. There has been, and still is, much resistance to the formal recognition of women, gender and feminist studies as a scientific field (Ferreira, 2019). Portugal is far behind in this area. For example, the first scientific research center entirely dedicated to gender Studies recognized by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT), was only created in 2012. Other European countries have seen significant increases in gender studies and the establishment of numerous research centers in the academic context since the 1970s (Torres et al. 2015). Although Portugal is a small country, with only 78 public and 42 private universities, the existence of only three MAs and two PhDs in Women's, Gender and Feminist Studies, reveals the current state of this field of study at Portuguese universities. And if we look for programs in LGBTIQ studies the situation is even worse, there is no MA or specific PhD, just a few degree units, and most of the time optional.

Of a total of 52,120 social science publications from 2007 to 2020 (search conducted between December 28 and December 31, 2020), only 361 (0.7%) focus on sexual orientation issues (Table 1).

Table 1  
*Number of documents per year*

Year	Number of documents	Year	Number of documents
2007	6	2014	26
2008	3	2015	22
2009	17	2016	38
2010	7	2017	36
2011	11	2018	44
2012	20	2019	65
2013	36	2020	30

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Total	361
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These numbers reflect the scarcity of formal education programs or university degrees on gender studies and no university degrees specifically on LGBTIQ studies (Ferreira, 2019).

Given the time required to publish academic research, the impact of 2007, European Year of Equal Opportunities for All, on academic research on LGBTIQ studies was more visible from 2009. The number of publications for the year 2020 may be interpreted as a consequence of the pandemic and its impact on academic life.

Most documents are scientific papers and master thesis (Table 2). During the 14-year period from 2007 to 2020, there are only 15 doctoral theses in Portugal dealing with subjects specifically related to sexual orientation issues. This is one of the main indicators of the scarcity of research on these topics.

Table 2  
*Number of documents by type of document*

<b>Type of document</b>	<b>Number of documents</b>
Scientific paper	187
Master thesis	144
PhD thesis	15
Book	8
Book chapter	7
Total	361

In a total of 361 sexual orientation documents, only 13 specifically address intersectionality (Table 3). The main subjects of the 13 documents are: activism, coming out, disabled experiences, discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation, feminist and trans identities, feminist lesbianism, health care, homoparenting, migration, Queer theory, self-categorization, and stereotypes. There may be other documents that marginally refer to intersectionality, but our search focused on documents that had an intersectional perspective as their central approach. This is obviously a gap in Portugal's research on sexual orientation.

We understand that the search in RCAPP is not comprehensive of all the research conducted in Portugal, however the RCAPP is a meta-repository that

collects the metadata from documents deposited in the 276 institutional repositories in Portugal, which constitutes a reliable source of information.

Table 3

*Number of documents that address intersectionality*

Type of document	2009	2010	2012	2018	2019	2020	Number of documents
Scientific paper	1		1	3	2	3	10
Master thesis					1		1
PhD thesis							0
Book		1				1	2
Book chapter							0
Total	1	1	1	3	3	4	13

It's not until after 2018 that we can find documents on intersectionality every year. Interestingly, in 2020, even though there are fewer documents (see Table 1), there is an increasing number of documents on intersectionality. The 13 documents have been written by a total of 34 researchers, although only 14 of them work or study in Portugal. Documents from researchers who do not study or work in Portugal are included in RCAPP, when they are published in Portuguese journals or are produced in connection with international projects involving Portuguese universities. So, we have a total of 8 documents on sexual orientation that specifically address intersectionality written by researchers working or studying in Portugal. The research findings highlight the scarcity of research on sexual orientation from an intersectional point of view. Despite the size of Portugal, a small country of nearly 10 million inhabitants, and consequently of the Portuguese academia with a limited scientific production, these results are striking.

One document presenting an intersectional approach to discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity (Nogueira & Oliveira, 2010) deserves analysis. This study was commissioned by the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality. The Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality is the national body responsible for promoting and advocating gender equality, aimed at responding to the profound social and political changes in society in terms of citizenship and gender equality. The study was funded by the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality to better understand the scale and contours of discrimination based on sexual



orientation in Portugal. The goal was to have a systematic and well-rounded collection of knowledge to support decision-making and action in this area. The study had a set of objectives: (1) Analyze the change in institutional / scientific discourse on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity issues and the related social visibility and problematization; (2) Define the concepts of Homosexuality, Transsexuality and others which are theoretically articulated with Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity; (3) Capture the social representations of LGBT persons and investigate about the existence of a hierarchy in the perceptions of discrimination of different target groups under Article 13 of the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic; (4) Identify the parental pathways, ancestry and descent, of LGBT individuals and their impact on the exercise of full citizenship; (5) Examine domestic violence among LGBT couples; (6) Understand the social contexts that encourage and facilitate the emergence of phenomena such as Homophobia, Transphobia, crimes and hate speech related to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity; (7) Outline a profile of the current situation of LGBT persons, based on official statistical, and/or other instruments, which enables a more in-depth understanding of this reality in our country; (8) Describe the legislative process, national, European and international, concerning sexual orientation and gender identity, particularly in access to housing, health care, the education system, justice and the acquisition of goods and services, identifying potential gaps in the Portuguese legislative framework; (9) Report on the history of LGBT movements in Portugal; (10) Conduct a survey of sexual orientation and gender identity studies carried out in Portugal; and (11) Identify organizations working in this field in Portugal. The publicly funded study was a milestone in the Portuguese research on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Conceição Nogueira and João Oliveira positionality as feminist/critical social psychologists influenced the course of the work from theoretical conceptualizations, methodological preparation, until its final stage of writing. Being feminist and critical social psychologists, they assume a position that understands social issues, based on the analysis of structural, political, and cultural factors that produce and reproduce the problems of groups, communities and populations. According to the authors, critical research should study issues of power, with the objective of promoting the power of

marginalized and stigmatized groups, maximizing their participation in research processes. A people belonging to one or more marginalized groups may experience oppression resulting from the intersectionality of these belongings. All investigations that address the issue of diversity must consider the intersectional perspective, since different identities are experienced not in isolation from each other, but as overlapping categories, which combine to produce particular ways of being in the world (McCall, 2005). In the authors' perspective, if we focus only on gender and sexual identities in isolation from other aspects of identity, we limit our ability to understand the complex needs of the LGBT community in all its diversity (Riggs, 2007). There are groups within the LGBT community that have more powerful positions than others. Understanding the intersections of privilege and oppression is a central theme in the present study. The refusal of essentialization and the interrelationship between oppression and privilege are fundamental elements to understand the dynamics of discrimination and inequality. It is necessary to be attentive and to theorize privileges and oppressions, not as fixed statutes, but as fluid and dynamic statutes, permeable to change both in oppression, in privileges, and in contexts. With this theory we can understand how LGBT people can be both victims of oppression and privileged in other dimensions, which means that their perception of the experience of sexuality can be different, their perception of discrimination or equality may be uneven depending on the interrelation of these different positions (Nogueira & Oliveira, 2010).

Despite the value and impact of this study, primarily the intersectional approach and the fact that it was publicly funded, it did not appear to affect equality policies. In view of the results of our bibliographic research, it also appears that it has had no impact on Portuguese academic research and production. A study is certainly not enough, it would be necessary to have a more systematic academic production on intersectionality, and discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity.

## **Conclusions**

The European Union's equality policies are shifting from identity-based policies to an intersectional approach, influenced by academic research. The recent EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 (European Commission,

2020a) and the EU LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025 (European Commission, 2020b) are examples.

The intersectional approach in the social sciences was developed over 30 years ago (Crenshaw, 1989), but it took time to integrate it into academic production. And it took even longer to translate it into equality policies. And even though the EU's equality policies state that the principle of intersectionality is a guiding principle, the specific plans and measures still reflect a multiple discrimination approach.

Following the adoption of the intersectionality principle as a core element of the EU equality principles, recent Portuguese equality policies (Council of Ministers, 2018) also adopt an intersectional approach. However, the intersectional principle is not the only similarity, the limitations are also similar. Specific measures that reflect an intersectional approach are not included, since each ground of discrimination is isolated from the others, particularly when looking at gender and sexual orientation. The organization of the National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination 2018-2030 (Council of Ministers, 2018) in three separate plans is not the only aspect hindering an intersectional approach. If we look at the specific measures in the Action Plan for Equality between Women and Men and the Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence for references to sexual orientation, and in the Action Plan to Combat Discrimination on the grounds of Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Expression and Sexual Characteristics for references to gender inequalities, there are none.

Academic research is becoming increasingly globalized. We acknowledge that it is not only a country's academic output that influences its equality policies. However, it is critical to have contextualized research of a country's specific social and cultural conditions. In the case of Portugal, it is striking the deficit of academic research and publications on sexual orientation. And there is an even greater lack of academic research and publications on sexual orientation using an intersectional approach. The fact that there are no academic degrees in Portugal on LGBTIQ issues, and that gender studies face much resistance to formal recognition as a scientific field (Ferreira, 2019), is certainly one of the reasons for this situation.

Most of the productions still use LGBTIQ identity categories without a critical perspective, reproducing an identity-based approach. If academia is still lacking behind in using intersectionality as an analytical tool, how can we expect it to have an impact on equality policies. The acknowledgment of the interdependence of gender and sexual orientation inequalities in current equality policies in Portugal, are more a reflex of the EU's equality policies than of the contribution of Portuguese academic production.

It is urgent to have an intersectional shift in the Portuguese academia. In particular when researching LGBTIQ issues. It is not acceptable that most of the contributions to research on LGBTIQ issues in the Portuguese academia are still using identity-based approaches. Even when social structures, normativities, hierarchies, axes of differentiation and of oppression, are addressed in LGBTIQ research, it does not mean that identity categories are questioned and deconstructed. How do gender inequalities affect people who self-identify as LGBTIQ? How does sexual orientation and gender identity interact with gender inequalities? Academic research can have a significant impact on equality policies. But for that, it is urgent that the academic research in Portugal further explores these questions.

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**Eduarda Ferreira** Interdisciplinary Centre of Social Sciences (CICS.NOVA), Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities (FCSH/NOVA). Universidade Nova de Lisboa (Portugal)

**ORCID ID:** <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7482-9362>

**Contact Address:** [e.ferreira@fsh.unl.pt](mailto:e.ferreira@fsh.unl.pt)