



The Relationship Between Sexism, Affective States, and Attitudes Toward Homosexuality in a Sample of Heterosexual Italian People

Luca Rollè¹ · Cristina Sechi¹ · Fabrizio Santoniccolo¹ · Tommaso Trombetta¹ · Piera Brustia¹

Accepted: 10 January 2021 / Published online: 20 January 2021

© The Author(s), under exclusive licence to Springer Science+Business Media, LLC part of Springer Nature 2021

Abstract

Background Research within the Italian context on the determinants of attitudes toward gay men and lesbian women is relatively poor compared with the large number of investigations carried out in other countries. Our goal is to examine Italians' attitudes toward gay men and lesbian women, as well as the factors that encourage these perspectives. We are interested in whether socio-demographic characteristics such as gender, age, education level, and religiosity predict negative attitudes toward gay men and lesbian women. Another goal is to examine affectivity and sexism's role in predicting attitudes toward homosexuality.

Methods The study was conducted online with 1328 Italian heterosexual participants (women, 67.3%; men, 32.7%) ranging in age from 18 to 78 (women: $M = 23.9$, $SD = 5.2$; men: $M = 26$, $SD = 8.9$).

Results The results show that men, older people, more religious people, sexists, and those who had higher negative affectivity were more predisposed to having negative attitudes toward gay men and lesbian women.

Conclusions The results are discussed, while considering their practical implications for prevention and education programs focused on reducing discrimination against lesbian and gay people in Italian society today.

Keywords Attitudes toward gay men and lesbian women · Sexism · Positive and negative affect · Gender · Age · Education level

Introduction

Attitudes toward homosexuality have undergone a worldwide positive change in the past few decades (Roberts, 2019), and this change has occurred within Italian society as well, which has become more open about lesbian women and gay men (LG people). Such attitudes have changed from perceiving gay men and lesbian women as “intrinsically disordered” individuals who need to be healed (Lingiardi et al., 2005), to supporting gay men and lesbian women as

being free to “come out of the closet” and become actively involved in society. However, discrimination based on sexual orientation is quite common today at both the social and institutional levels (e.g., a lack of civil rights, disapproval of same-sex parenting, and overt homonegative attitudes), exerting a strong, negative impact on individual health and society (Baiocco et al., 2019; Rollè et al., 2020; Santona & Tognasso, 2018).

Thus, it is necessary to continue researching factors that predict negative attitudes toward gay men and lesbian women; designing interventions, such as education programs, that aim to diminish such negative attitudes; and promoting this change. Furthermore, it is important to evaluate these factors in the specific sociocultural context in which they are active (Donaldson et al., 2017). In recent years, the number of published studies on these topics has been increasing within the Italian context, but the need for more research remains (Lingiardi et al., 2005; Prati et al., 2011; Santona & Tognasso, 2018; Salvati et al., 2019; Scandurra et al., 2020). In the USA and Australia, more studies have been conducted than in other countries, so a

✉ Cristina Sechi
cristina.sechi@unica.it

Fabrizio Santoniccolo
fabrizio.santonicc@edu.unito.it

Tommaso Trombetta
tommaso.trombetta@unito.it

Piera Brustia
piera.brustia@unito.it

¹ Department of Psychology, University of Turin, Via Verdi 10, 10124 Turin, Italy

new study from Italy would contribute to this research area. The importance of conducting studies in different countries has been confirmed by De Witte et al. (2019), who found significant differences between European countries regarding perspectives toward homosexuality—even among teachers and pupils, which should be two categories of individuals with more access to education and training, when compared with the general population.

Furthermore, even though considerable extant research has examined socio-demographic variables' (gender, education, age, sexism, and religious orientation) impact on attitudes toward gay and lesbian people, the role of affective states concerning sexual orientation has not been investigated significantly. The present study aims to fill this gap to shed light on the association between affective states concerning sexual orientation and homonegative attitudes.

Gender, Age, Education Level, and Attitudes Toward Homosexuality

Many extant studies have found significant effects from gender on attitudes toward homosexuality. For example, men display more negative attitudes than women (Herek and Gonzalez-Rivera, 2006; Lingardi et al., 2005; Ratcliff et al., 2006; Scandurra et al., 2020). Recently, Donaldson et al. (2017) confirmed that “gender played a key role in the likelihood of adopting pro-homosexuality attitudes” (p. 106). Moreover, attitudes toward gay men appear to be more negative than those toward gay women (De Witte et al., 2019; Herek, 2002). This difference is particularly evident in males' attitudes toward gay men; i.e., males have fewer negative attitudes toward lesbian women. Females' attitudes do not significantly differ according to gender, as they view gay men and lesbian women the same way (Donaldson et al. 2017;). One possible reason may be that society emphasizes the value of heterosexuality in the context of masculinity also in terms of intimate relations (Rollè et al., 2018), or the ageing period (Gerino et al., 2018), and gender roles (Caldarera et al., 2019). Petersen and Hyde (2010) found that men, compared with women, conform more to gender-role attitudes, which are linked to attitudes toward gay men and lesbian women. Also, homonegativity today remains related to the perception of threatened masculinity (Konopka et al., 2019).

Regarding age, cross-sectional studies, both in our nation (Italy) and in the international context (Baiocco et al., 2020, 2013; Herek, 2002; Steffens and Wagner, 2004), have demonstrated that negative attitudes toward homosexuality are stronger in older people. A few longitudinal studies have been conducted to gain a deeper understanding of this relationship. Patrick et al. (2013) tested many variables, including age, as predictors of attitude change across a time-span of 2 years. When examining factors that could lead

to a negative change in positive attitudes across time, they found that “the younger cohort was more likely to retain their tolerant viewpoint toward homosexual behavior” (p. 618). The authors argued that this resilience in tolerance among the young indicated a “generational acceptance of homosexuality as a valid and normal type of sexual association” (p. 618).

Twenge et al. (2015), in a longitudinal US study, separately analyzed the effects from time period, generation, and age on tolerance toward different groups, including gay men and lesbian women, and found an increase in tolerance over time “cause(d) by a combination of time period and generational effects, suggesting that the increase in tolerance is a broad cultural trend.” (p. 393). Thus, although embedded in complex relations, age generally has been found to be associated with attitudes toward lesbian women and gay men.

Higher education levels were found to be associated with freer moral values (Lubbers et al., 2009), with such results interpreted in relation to those with higher education levels being more open to new ideas and having more opportunities to develop cognitive abilities (Ohlander et al., 2005)—and, consequently, more opportunities to share principles (and meanings) of equality (Van de Meerendonk & Scheepers, 2004).

Religiosity and Attitudes Toward Homosexuality

Heterosexual people with strong religious beliefs were found to show fewer positive attitudes toward LG people (Finlay & Walther, 2003; Schulte & Battle, 2004; Olson et al., 2006; Scandurra et al., 2020; Sheldon et al., 2008; Vincent et al., 2011). More specifically, Longo et al. (2013) outlined how religiosity can impact attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors beyond the reach of religious tradition, after describing the difference between the two constructs:

Religiosity is the devoutness or importance of religion in one's life (e.g., Craven, 2004; Regnerus et al., 1997), whereas religious tradition represents the categorization of religious beliefs into major families that share a core belief system and history (e.g., Christian, Buddhist, etc.) (p. 274).

As mentioned by Longo et al. (2013), Hicks and Lee (2006) found that religiosity significantly predicts public attitudes toward gay and lesbian people, with less religious people showing more positive attitudes. Religiosity's role also was highlighted in studies focusing on protective factors for LGB adolescents' psychological well-being (Nielson, 2017), in which a more supportive climate in religious families is associated with lower health risk behavior (Hatzenbuehler et al., 2012).

Moreover, a recent study (Piumatti, 2017) confirmed a model in which “religiosity and both mediators [male

role endorsement and homosexual stereotyping] positively explained anti-homosexual attitudes” (p. 1961).

Sexism, Affective States, and Attitudes Toward Homosexuality

The perception of behaviors that do not conform to gender and gender roles may influence negative attitudes toward LG people (Deaux & Lewis, 1984; Kite & Deaux, 1987; Whitley, 2001; Doyle et al., 2015). Glick and Fiske (1996) highlighted how sexism is a particular and multidimensional form of prejudice toward women because it is marked by ambivalence. For this reason, the authors introduced the construct of ambivalent sexism. These attitudes are subjectively positive in the tone of feeling (for the person who perceives it) and also tend to provoke behaviors typically categorized as prosocial (e.g., helpful) or seeking intimacy. The problematic element resides in the reference to reductive stereotypes and the male gender’s supposed dominance over the female.

Regarding the link between sexism and discriminatory attitudes toward LG people, some feminist authors (Wittig, 1992) identified a link between heterosexism and gender oppression: The consequent prejudice of a heterosexist nature also creates a bias against LG people, leading to a marked favoritism for heterosexuals (Jung & Smith, 1993).

In the literature (Whitley, 1987; Black et al., 1998; Davies, 2004; Sakalli, 2002; Madureira, 2007; Capezza, 2007; Rees-Turyn et al., 2008; Wilkinson, 2008; Brambilla et al., 2011a, 2011b; Doyle et al., 2015; Ioverno et al., 2018; Salvati et al., 2018, 2019), a significant correlation between sexism—in its hostile and benevolent forms—and discriminatory attitudes toward the LG population has emerged. Traditional gender roles are related to the increased assumption of sexist opinions (Glick & Fiske, 1996) and sexual prejudice (Sakalli, 2002; Capezza, 2007). The results from a study done by Whitley (2001) confirmed that the main predictors of anti-homosexual attitudes were the beliefs connected to traditional sexism, adherence to male role norms, and benevolent sexism. In a study conducted in Turkey by Sakalli (2002), only a weak correlation between benevolent sexism and discriminatory attitudes toward LG people was found, while a strong relationship between the latter and hostile sexism emerged. It also was found, in line with the literature, that men showed higher scores on sexism, particularly in the hostile component, and more negative attitudes toward homosexuality than women, while there were no significant gender differences concerning benevolent sexism. In research by Sakalli-Uğurlu and Uğurlu (2016), the benevolent attitude, both for men and women, leads to rejection of those who do not comply with cultural prescriptions, violating gender differentiation

and heterosexuality. Another finding from this study is that women who reported higher scores on the hostility scale demonstrated more negative attitudes toward gay men, while men’s hostile beliefs were not associated with an aversion to homosexuality. In Italy, as underlined by Salvati et al. (2019), stereotypical gender roles seem to be “more prominent than in other Western regions” (p. 463), with the ideology linked to traditional gender roles “closely related to the concepts of machismo and sexism” (p. 463).

Generally, individuals with high negative affective states concentrate on the negative aspects of themselves, of others, and of the world (Watson & Pennebaker, 1989). As Serafini et al. (2016) noted, *positive affect* could be defined as the extent to which a person has an experience of alert in a pleasant direction. Conversely, according to the authors, *negative affect* refers to a state of subjective distress with unpleasant feelings. In the literature on the relationship between affective states and attitudes toward gay men and lesbian people, the number of studies is very poor, and scant research exists on the topic of the relationship between mood and openness to diversity and stigmatized behaviors (Manucia et al., 1984; Mahaffey et al., 2005; Morrison et al., 2018). More specifically, the area of cognitive components of attitudes has been covered more widely in studies related to discrimination against LG people, while the area of emotional reaction to a stimulus that may be subject to prejudice remains little explored. In fact, in research on attitudes toward homosexuality, the emotional dimension is viewed as central, but as far as we know, few studies have examined this aspect significantly and deepened its connection to prejudice. Despite affective responses emerging as stronger predictors of prejudice and discrimination, most research in the field of homonegativity has focused on the cognitive component, with minimal attention paid to affect’s role in understanding anti-gay men/lesbian women bias (Mahaffey et al., 2005; Morrison et al., 2018). We believe that this literature gap could be bridged through studies that deepen and expand the knowledge available on the subject. The framework within which the present study was planned—with the intention of filling this gap—connects sexual prejudice and emotional states. In line with Herek and McLemore (2013), sexual prejudice, as an attitude, is based on the information that individuals derive from their affective responses. It is most likely to occur when individuals experience negative affective states (Bless et al., 1996). Shaffer and Augustine (2003) and Parrott et al. (2006) confirmed the existence of a relationship between sexual prejudice and negative affectivity. Therefore, it is reasonable to hypothesize that the predominance of negative affective states would entail more unfavorable attitudes toward gay men and lesbian people. To better establish this framework, one source of

information about attitudes and affect is the literature on intergroup attitudes (Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005; Parker Tapias et al., 2007; Ray & Parkhill, 2020). In this field, we can find models that conceptualize attitudes, including three components: cognitive, affective, and behavioral (Breckler, 1984; Esses & Dovidio, 2002). The cognitive component refers to “specific thoughts or beliefs about the attitude object, the affective component involves feelings and emotions associated with the attitude object, and the behavioral component reflects associations with the person’s past or intended action toward the attitude object” (Esses & Dovidio, 2002, p. 1202). Affect contributes to intergroup attitudes (Eagly et al., 1994; Jussim et al., 1995; Esses & Dovidio, 2002; Taylor, 2007), and, as stated by Morrison et al. (2018), “The affective component of social bias refers to the emotions evoked by members of a target group” (p. 5). Previously, Cottrell and Neuberg (2005) reported evidence that supported the notion that outgroups could activate specific threats, such as contamination or harm, and that these threats are associated with distinct emotions. Outgroups may elicit emotion by activating either a form of judgment relating to a basic appraisal theme or a socio-moral theme (Parker Tapias et al., 2007). Studies about anti-gay attitudes and affect, e.g., the one by Parker Tapias et al. (2007), stressed the association between a gay prime and negative feelings (e.g., disgust, anger, fear). In the study cited above in particular, the close relationship between disgust sensitivity and anti-gay attitudes emerged, and a relationship between anger and prejudice toward gay men was revealed. What emerges from the analysis of the literature is how emotions that have negative connotations are associated with discriminatory attitudes (risk factor), while positive emotions’ role in reacting to an LG matrix stimulus (protective factor) is less clear. Consequently, one of the objectives of the present study is to deepen the association between positive and negative emotional reactions and unfavorable or prejudicial attitudes toward the LG population.

Aims

As noted above, affective states (Bishop, 2015; Parrot & Peterson, 2008), religiosity, sexism, and personal characteristics (e.g., gender, education level, and age) are associated with attitudes toward homosexuality (Warringer et al., 2013; Nielson, 2017). Moreover, such attitudes change across different cultures (Kite et al., 2018), and the Italian context still ends up being a traditional one in which religion is particularly important compared with other Western countries (Yerkes et al., 2018). Therefore, in line with the empirical research mentioned above,

our study intended to test the association of gender and religiosity with attitudes toward gay men and lesbian people in an Italian sample, along with the factors that encourage these attitudes. Specifically, the present study had the following aims:

- to test differences as a function of gender and religiosity in attitudes toward LG people, affective states elicited by LG themes, and sexism.
- to examine whether religious orientation, affective states, and sexism significantly impacted negative attitudes toward homosexuality incrementally beyond the effects from demographic factors.

Methods

Procedure

Between July 2014 and December 2016, we conducted a national survey.

A questionnaire was created in a web survey system so that it could be completed online. Several.

Sampling strategies were used in the present study, including snowball, convenience, and respondent-focused sampling, with most participants contacted using online surveys. Of these, 1328 heterosexual individuals completed the survey and were included in final analyses.

Completion of the questionnaire was voluntary and anonymous, and participants were informed that responses would be reserved and that they should not attempt to look at others’ answers or discuss responses while the questionnaire was being administered. They had the right not to answer any questions that distressed them, but were told that they should try to answer the questions honestly.

The study protocol was in accordance with the national research committee’s ethical standards and was approved by the University of Torino’s Bioethics Committee in 2014. In mid-2016, the project was expanded to include research on same-sex parenting attitudes. The same committee approved integration of the projects.

Participants

The sample comprised 1328 Italian participants—894 women (67.3%) and 434 men (32.7%)—who all self-identified as heterosexuals. Participants’ ages ranged from 18 to 78 (women: $M=23.9$, $SD=5.2$; men: $M=26$, $SD=8.9$).

As for the women’s education levels, 59% of the participants held a high school diploma, 36% held a university degree, and 5% held a PhD. As for men’s education levels, 64% of the participants held a high school diploma, 32% completed a university degree, and 4% held a

Table 1 Demographic and socioeconomic sample's characteristics

Variable		Number (%)
Gender	Males	434 (32.7%)
	Females	894 (67.3%)
Educational level	High school	841 (63.3%)
	University degree	469 (35.3%)
	PhD	18 (1.4%)

PhD. Table 1 reports on the sample's gender and education characteristics.

All participants were Italians living in Italy who did not receive any incentives for participating in the study.

Measures

Demographic information: A demographic questionnaire was administered to participants to collect information on gender, age, education level, marital status, and employment status.

Religious Orientation

Religiosity was measured by asking participants, "Do you consider yourself as belonging to a religious denomination? (1 = yes, 0 = no). Altogether, 46% ($n = 608$) of the participants indicated having no religious affiliations, while the other 54% ($n = 720$) had religious affiliations. Altogether, 62% of female participants and 39% of male participants had no religious affiliations.

We then measured, using one item, whether or not participants practiced their religion: "Do you practice your religion?" (2 = yes, 1 = no, 0 = no religion). Altogether, 25% of the participants ($n = 336$) indicated that they practiced their religion and 29% do not practice their religion ($n = 384$), with 18% of females and 13% of males claiming to practice their religion and 25% of females and 26% of males stating that they have a religious affiliation, but do not practice their religion. There was no significant relationship between gender and religious involvement ($\chi^2 = 4.56, p = 0.03$).

Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men Scale

The ATLG scale (Herek, 1988) comprises 20 items, 10 to assess attitudes toward gay men (ATG) and 10 to assess attitudes toward lesbian women (ATL). The items linked to approval of male homosexuality and lesbianism were assessed through a five-point, Likert-type scale (from 1 = strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree). Sample items include "Lesbians are sick" and "I think male homosexuals are disgusting." A higher total score indicates negative

attitudes toward homosexuality, whereas lower scores indicate positive attitudes (Herek & McLemore, 2011). In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha of reliability was $\alpha = 0.77$ for the ATG, $\alpha = 0.75$ for the ATL, and $\alpha = 0.86$ for total score (ATLG).

Positive and Negative Affective States

The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) is a 20-item self-report instrument that measures positive and negative affect (Watson et al. 1988; Italian version by Terracciano et al., 2003). It is the most frequently used instrument to assess positive affect (PA) and negative affect (NA) in terms of affect intensity (level) (Nicolas et al., 2014). The PA subscale indicates the level of excited and determined pleasurable engagement, or the extent to which a person feels enthusiastic and active. The NA subscale indicates a general aspect of subjective distress and disagreeable engagement that includes aversive affects such as nervousness, fear, shame, and guilt. Each of the items is evaluated on a scale from 1 ("very slightly or not at all") to 5 ("extremely").

The Italian version of the scale offers solid psychometric properties and notable cross-cultural convergence. In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha of reliability for the PA was $\alpha = 0.87$ and for the NA, $\alpha = 0.85$.

The Short Version of the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory

The short version of the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI), a 12-item scale developed by Glick and Whitehead (2010), is a revamp of the original 22-item ASI (Glick & Fiske, 1996), containing the items found to have the greatest factor loadings on benevolent sexism (BS, six items) and hostile sexism (HS, six items). The items are shown as a sequence of statements concerning relationships between men and women in society (e.g., "When women lose to men in a fair competition, they typically complain about being discriminated against"). Participants were required to rate their agreement with each statement using a six-point Likert scale ranging from "0" (disagree strongly) to "5" (agree strongly). A higher ASI score is symptomatic of a greater endorsement of sexism.

In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha of reliability was $\alpha = 0.74$ for the BS, $\alpha = 0.72$ for the HS, and $\alpha = 0.80$ for ASI total score.

Data Analyses

Data analysis was conducted with IBM SPSS Version 21.

Descriptive statistics were calculated on the assessed variables, with mean scores and associated standard deviations reported. For analyses of gender and religiosity

(in terms of non-religious participants and religious participants, including those who practice their religion and those who do not), differences in levels of negative attitudes toward homosexuality, affective states, and sexism, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed. Post hoc analyses were performed wherever appropriate.

Pearson correlation coefficients were used to assess the association between age, gender, religiosity, positive and negative affective states, hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, and attitudes toward homosexuality.

After controlling for relevant demographic characteristics, hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted to investigate the association between participants' religiousness, positive and negative affective states, hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, and negative attitudes toward homosexuality.

Results

Correlations Among Variables

A correlational analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between negative attitudes toward homosexuality, positive and negative affective states, hostile sexism, and benevolent sexism among the sample of heterosexual Italian participants. The results (Table 2) showed a significant correlation between negative attitudes toward homosexuality, positive and negative affective states, hostile sexism, and benevolent sexism. In particular, the analysis showed that negative attitudes toward homosexuality were correlated significantly to greater negative affective states, hostile sexism, and benevolent sexism, as well as decreased positive affective states.

Gender and Religiosity Differences in Attitudes Toward Homosexuality, Affective States, and Sexism

Attitudes toward homosexuality

A 2 (gender: men vs. women) × 3 (participants' religious orientation: non-religious participants vs. participants who practice their religion vs. participants who do not practice their religion) MANOVA was conducted on the ATG and ATL subscales and total ATLG score.

A significant main effect from gender was found ($F[2,1281] = 40.54$; $p < 0.001$, Wilks' $\lambda = 0.94$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.06$). Given the overall test's significance, the univariate main effects were examined. Univariate tests for gender revealed that the ATG and ATL scores and total

Table 2 Correlations among all variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Gender											
2. Age	-0.105***										
3. Educational level	0.001	0.702***									
4. Religiosity	0.042	-0.144***	-0.179**								
5. PA	0.229***	-0.001	0.071**	-0.038							
6. NA	-0.167***	-0.030	-0.038	0.146***	0.108***						
7. BS	-0.073***	-0.026	-0.053	0.122***	-0.020	0.131***					
8. HS	-0.256***	0.029	-0.048	0.055*	-0.029	0.187***	0.431***				
9. ATL	-0.050	-0.009	-0.061*	0.209***	-0.187***	0.261***	0.191***	0.142***			
10. ATG	-0.174***	0.017	-0.059*	0.213***	-0.207***	0.364***	0.246***	0.241***	0.573***		
11. ATLG	-0.132***	0.008	-0.064*	0.228***	-0.218***	0.346***	0.241***	0.217***	0.848***	0.895***	

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Table 3 Means and standard deviations for scales by gender \times religiousness groups ($N=1328$)

	Male ($N=434$)		Female ($N=894$)		Participants' non-religious ($N=778$)		Participants' who do practice their religion ($N=216$)		Participants' who do not practice their religion ($N=334$)	
	M (SD)	M (SD)	F	η^2	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	F	η^2	
ATLG										
ATL	8.11 (2.97)	7.68 (2.50)	12.98***	0.01	7.36a (2.28)	8.89b (3.14)	8.21c (2.92)	31.94***	0.05	
ATG	9.85 (3.96)	8.30 (2.70)	73.32***	0.05	8.24a (2.84)	10.07b (3.84)	9.33b (3.43)	39.3***	0.06	
Total score	17.83 (6.18)	15.96 (4.68)	47.49***	0.04	15.59a (4.53)	18.69b (6.28)	17.48c (5.68)	43.03***	0.06	
PANAS										
PA	15.95 (5.44)	19.14 (6.92)	41.15***	0.04	18.42a (6.92)	17.41a (5.51)	17.81a (6.64)	1.5	0.00	
NA	12.16 (3.80)	11.08 (2.35)	22.15	0.01	11.19a (2.58)	12.05b (4.01)	11.70b (2.87)	8.4***	0.02	
ASI										
BS	2.80 (.63)	2.72 (0.64)	7.6**	0.05	2.62a (.55)	2.89b (.59)	2.85b (.48)	14.2***	0.03	
HS	2.88 (.70)	2.52 (0.67)	73.1***	0.01	2.65a (.65)	2.79b (.66)	2.85b (0.56)	4.9**	0.01	

Means followed by the same letter at the same row are not significantly different ($p < 0.05$) according to the pairwise t test with Bonferroni correction

ATL attitudes toward lesbians, attitudes toward homosexual men, PA positive affect, NA negative affect, BS sexism benevolent, HS sexism benevolent

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

ATLG score were significantly higher for males than for females (Table 3).

A significant main effect from religiosity was obtained ($F[4,2562] = 21.01$; $p < 0.001$, Wilks' $\lambda = 0.93$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.03$).

Univariate tests for religiosity showed that the ATG and ATL scores and total ATLG score were significantly different among religious groups.

Post hoc analyses using Tukey's HSD showed that the ATG and ATL mean scores and total ATLG score of non-religious participants were significantly lower than those of religious participants who practice their religion and those who don't.

Also, the mean ATL and total ATGL scores of the religious participants who practice their religion were significantly higher than the mean scores of the religious participants who do not practice their religion (Table 3).

Finally, no interaction effects were obtained ($F[4, 2562] = 2.05$, $p = 0.09$, Wilks' $\lambda = 0.99$, $\eta^2 = 0.003$).

Affective States

A 2 (gender: men vs. women) \times 3 (participants' religious orientation: non-religious participants vs. participants who practice their religion vs. participants who do not practice their religion) MANOVA was conducted on the PA and NA scores for PANAS.

A significant main effect from gender was found ($F[2,1321] = 59.91$; $p < 0.001$, Wilks' $\lambda = 0.92$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.08$). Given the overall test's significance, the univariate

main effects were examined. Univariate tests for gender revealed that females obtained a significantly higher PA score and a significantly lower NA score than males (Table 3).

A significant main effect from religiosity was obtained ($F[4,2642] = 6.45$; $p < 0.001$, Wilks' $\lambda = 0.98$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.01$). Given the overall test's significance, the univariate main effects were examined. Univariate tests for religiosity revealed that the NA score was significantly different among groups.

Post hoc analyses using Tukey's HSD showed that the mean NA scores of non-religious participants were significantly lower than the mean scores of religious participants, both those who practice their religion and those who do not. No interaction effects were found ($F[4, 2562] = 1.04$, $p = 0.39$, Wilks' $\lambda = 0.99$, $\eta^2 = 0.002$).

Sexism

A 2 (gender: men vs. women) \times (participants' religiosity: non-religious participants vs. participants who practice their religion vs. participants who do not practice their religion) MANOVA was conducted on the BS and HS scores for ASI.

A significant main effect from gender was found ($F[2,1321] = 50.33$; $p < 0.001$, Wilks' $\lambda = 0.92$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.08$). Given the overall test's significance, the univariate main effects were examined. Univariate tests for gender revealed that males registered significantly higher BS and HS scores than females (Table 3).

A significant main effect also was found for religiosity ($F[4,1321]=13.27$; $p<0.001$, Wilks' $\lambda=0.96$, partial $\eta^2=0.03$). Given the overall test's significance, the univariate main effects were examined. Univariate tests for religiosity revealed that BS and HS scores were significantly different among groups (non-religious vs. religious who practice and religious who do not).

Post hoc analyses using Tukey's HSD showed that non-religious participants' BS and HS mean scores were significantly lower than the mean scores of religious participants who practice their religion and religious participants who do not practice their religion.

No interaction effects were found ($F[4, 2562]=1.37$, $p=0.24$, Wilks' $\lambda=0.99$, $\eta^2=0.002$).

Incremental Prediction of Negative Attitudes Toward Homosexuality by Demographic Variables, Religiosity, Affective States, and Sexism

A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed to discern whether religiosity, affective states, and sexism exerted a significant incremental impact on negative attitudes toward homosexuality in ways that extend beyond demographic variables' effects.

In Step 1, demographic variables were entered (gender, age, and education level). In Step 2, religiosity, the two affective states' variables, and the two sexism variables were entered.

As can be seen in Table 4, demographic variables significantly predicted negative attitudes toward homosexuality, explaining 4.7% of the variance. Age, gender, and education level were significant predictors; those who were younger, females, and those with higher education levels were less likely to show negative attitudes toward homosexuality than older people, males, and those with lower education levels. Religiosity, affective states, and sexism were introduced in

Step 2 and explained a relatively large amount of variance in negative attitudes toward homosexuality. The gender and education characteristics no longer were significant predictors of negative attitudes toward homosexuality when affective states and sexism were included in the prediction model. Religiosity was a strong predictor of negative attitudes toward homosexuality. Also, higher negative affective state scores and lower positive affective state scores indicated stronger negative attitudes toward homosexuality. Both hostile and benevolent sexism contributed, independently and positively, to negative attitudes toward homosexuality. Hostile sexism was the stronger of these two predictors.

Both hostile and benevolent sexism contributed, independently and positively, to negative attitudes toward homosexuality. Hostile sexism was the stronger of these two predictors.

The proportion of variance accounted for by the full model was 27% ($F[8, 1327]=62.07$; $p<0.001$).

Discussion

This study's purpose was to gain knowledge about the factors that can encourage negative attitudes toward gay men and lesbian people, using a sample of Italian heterosexual individuals. One of the paper's aims was to discover whether Italian people of different genders and religiosity reported different attitudes toward gay men and lesbian women. In line with the literature, heterosexual men in the study showed higher levels of negative attitudes toward homosexuality than heterosexual women (Donaldson et al., 2017; Lingiardi et al., 2005; Ratcliff et al., 2006; Scandurra et al., 2020). A possible explanation for this difference may be that the Italian culture still stresses the importance of rejecting men who contravene social norms that affirm one's masculinity. Lesbian women and gay men

Table 4 Hierarchical multiple regression models predicting negative attitude toward homosexuality

	Step 1 β	Step 2 β
Gender (1 = Males; 2 = Females)	- 1.68**	- 0.33
Age	0.11**	0.07*
Educational level (1 = High school; 2 = University degree 3 = PhD)	- 1.31**	- 0.52
Religious orientation (0 = participants' non-religious; 1 = participants who do not practice their religion; 2 = participants' who do practice their religion)		1.10**
Positive affective states		- 1.19**
Negative affective state		0.56**
Sexism hostile		1.31**
Sexism benevolent		0.60*
R^2	0.047**	0.27**
Adjusted R^2	0.044**	0.27**
ΔR^2		0.23**

* $p < .01$; ** $p < .001$

are perceived as violating traditional gender-specific norms, which may lead, in this mindset, to homosexuality being viewed as a threat to masculinity, as we noted in the introduction (Konopka et al., 2019).

Our results also confirmed significant differences in attitudes toward gay men and lesbian people (Ng et al., 2015) as a function religiosity. Non-religious participants consistently reported lower levels of negative attitudes compared with religious participants, regardless of whether they practice or do not practice their religion. In addition, religious participants who practice their religion showed higher levels of negative attitudes on the ATL and ATLG scales compared with religious participants who do not practice their religion. In other words, the present findings support the hypothesis that both religiosity and religious practices are associated with different levels in attitudes toward lesbian women and gay men. This corresponds with extant research (e.g., Herek & Capitanio, 1995, 1996; Scandurra et al., 2020) in demonstrating religiosity's role in influencing ethical issues, which is particularly significant within the Italian context. As suggested in the literature, in Italy, religious attendance has declined over time (Vezzoni & Biolcati-Rinaldi, 2015), and if such a decline continues, it could lead to shifts not only toward greater acceptance of civil rights for lesbian women and gay men but also toward changes in beliefs regarding the morality of homosexuality. Future studies are needed to investigate such a shift.

Interesting results were elicited on gender differences on the levels of emotional reaction to LG stimuli. In particular, female participants registered average scores on the scale that detects the highest positive affective state compared with males. This could indicate a greater disposition among women toward reacting positively to making contact with lesbian and gay content. On the other hand, no gender differences were found regarding negative emotional activation levels. In line with previous results in the literature, men demonstrated higher levels of benevolent and hostile sexism than women.

The exploration of the influence of gender, age, education level, religiosity, affective states, and sexism variables on participants' attitudes toward homosexuality in the present study indicated that hostile sexism is the best predictor of negative attitudes toward gay men and lesbian women, followed by religiosity, benevolent sexism, age, negative affective states, and education level. Regarding gender and education, we found that while they were significant in Step 1 of the hierarchical regression, they lost statistical significance in Step 2, when sexism and affective states were entered as predictors. This finding may indicate a potential interactional effect between demographic variables and sexism and affective states in their relationship with attitudes toward gay men and lesbian people (Sakallı-Uğurlu & Uğurlu, 2016). In Step 2 of the regression, age

remained significant, but with a very low impact, confirming the stronger effect that sexism and affective states exert on attitudes toward homosexuality compared with demographic variables. Regarding the predictors of attitudes toward LG people, both the emotional component and sexism are significant. Specifically, the positive affective state seems to lead to less-discriminatory attitudes, while the negative affective attitude, hostile and benevolent sexism, leads to more-discriminatory attitudes regardless of gender and religious attitude.

These results confirmed that individuals who are more sexist were more likely to have negative attitudes toward homosexuality because they strongly accept traditional gender roles and believe that legitimate sexual and emotional relationships only can exist between males and females. Also, it is interesting to note that negative attitudes toward gay men and lesbian women are influenced by low positive affective states and high negative emotions. In particular, the predominance of negative affective states leads to higher levels of negative attitudes toward gay men and lesbian people. Instead, people with positive affective states are more inclined to have positive attitudes toward gay men and lesbian people. Considering that the present study's results are lacking on affective states' impact on reticence to diversity, future research should consider continuing to examine whether affectivity impacts attitudes toward homosexuality. In the hierarchical regression model presented here, the results relative to the PA, whose influence on attitudes is more marked than that relative to negative affectivity, help clarify how a positive emotional reaction to an LG stimulus can play the role of a protective factor against discriminatory attitudes toward a target population. The emotional reaction's negative component retains its role as a risk factor, as does sexism. Regarding the latter, the greatest burden is found on hostile sexism, although benevolent sexism is not exempt from manifesting an effect. This complexity regarding risk and protection factors certainly needs further investigation, but also highlights how important it is to give primary importance to the emotional dimension in preventing discrimination, e.g., by means of specific education interventions (Bartos et al., 2014). What has been stressed so far could be integrated effectively with the theory of enlargement and the construction of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2004). This approach suggests that positive emotions can help broaden awareness and encourage changes in thoughts and actions toward greater acceptance and flexibility.

Future Directions

Future research should investigate and pay closer attention to the combined effects from socio-demographic characteristics due to important practical implications and the need for

prevention education programs to focus on appropriate target groups. In addition, considering that the present study's results are lacking on the affective state's impact on reticence to diversity, future research should consider continuing to examine whether and how affectivity impacts attitudes toward homosexuality.

Limitations

Some limitations in the present study should be noted. First, our results were acquired through a correlational design on a convenience sample, thereby requiring greater caution in generalizing. Also, this limitation does not allow for a causal interpretation of our results. Only future longitudinal research can offer a response to the issue of causal relations' direction.

Regarding each participant's relationship to religion, we measured religiosity but did not address various religious identities. Also, the accuracy of self-reported religiosity may be improved by using validated measures of religiosity orientation. These issues could be examined further in future studies.

In addition, an assessment of affective states, sexism, and attitudes toward homosexuality based on self-reports may show probable biases. Other assessment instruments and informants should be adopted in future studies to reduce shared variance.

Another limitation in the present study was the uneven gender distribution (67.3% of the participants were women). Future studies should use similar or matched samples of men and women to minimize sample bias.

Clinical and Social Implications

Despite the limitations, the present study's findings still provide precious information concerning predictors of the intention to behave in a certain way toward gay men and lesbian women.

We have provided a principal examination of the role of various types of socio-demographic characteristics, beliefs, and emotions, and we have confirmed that gender, age, education, religiosity, sexism, and affectivity are all significant predictors of attitudes toward gay men and lesbian women.

Of course, our research could not fully address all possible predictors of these attitudes. Future studies should focus on testing the role of additional variables (e.g., political orientation, direct and indirect contact with lesbian women and gay men, different traits, and beliefs) that have been shown to be significant elements of attitudes, or important moderating and mediating variables.

It is important to develop preventive education programs in Italy associated with clearly formulated organizational (i.e., at school or university) policy on zero tolerance

toward unequal treatment, bullying, and negative conduct against lesbian women and gay men. Only in this way can a constructive organizational or educational environment be achieved, and a feedback loop that reduces negative attitudes' frequency can be put into place (Birkett et al., 2009). Our results show that these education programs should be directed toward individuals who are more religious and more sexist, as well as males, those who are less educated, and the elderly. These programs should include occasions for constructive contact with gay men and lesbian women, as numerous studies have demonstrated that more contact with gay men and lesbian women offers a motivational framework in which heterosexuals can increase their knowledge and become psychologically reinforced to change their behaviors and attitudes (Herek, 2007).

We hope that this research will inspire Italian academics to focus on understanding individuals' attitudes toward homosexuality. Increased psychological research could help decrease preconceptions of and discrimination against gay men and lesbian women, their relationships, and their groups.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of Interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval This research was approved by the University of Torino's Bioethics Committee.

Informed Consent All participants provided informed consent for participation in this research.

References

- Baiocco, R., Nardelli, N., Pezzuti, L., & Lingiardi, V. (2013). Attitudes of Italian heterosexual older adults towards lesbian and gay parenting. *Sexuality Research & Social Policy: A Journal Of The NSRC*, 10(4), 285–292. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-013-0129-2>.
- Baiocco, R., Rosati, F., Pistella, J., Salvati, M., Carone, N., Ioverno, S., & Laghi, F. (2019). Attitudes and beliefs of Italian educators and teachers regarding children raised by same-sex parents. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 17(2), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-019-00386-0>.
- Baiocco, R., Rosati, F., Pistella, J., Salvati, M., Carone, N., Ioverno, S., & Laghi, F. (2020). Attitudes and Beliefs of Italian Educators and Teachers Regarding Children Raised by Same-Sex Parents. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 17(2), 229–238.
- Bartos, S. E., Berger, I., & Hegarty, P. (2014). Interventions to reduce sexual prejudice: A study-space analysis and meta-analytic review. *Journal of Sex Research*, 51(4), 363–382. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2013.871625>
- Birkett, M., Espelage, D. L., & Koenig, B. (2009). LGB and questioning students in schools: the moderating effects of homophobic bullying and school climate on negative outcomes. *Journal of Youth and*

- Adolescence*, 38(7), 989–1000. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-008-9389-1>.
- Bishop, C. (2015). Emotional reactions of heterosexual men to gay imagery. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 62(1), 51–66. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2014.957125>.
- Black, B., Oles, T. P., & Moore, L. (1998). The relationship between attitudes: homophobia and sexism among social work students. *Affilia*, 13(2), 166–189. <https://doi.org/10.1177/088610999801300204>.
- Bless, H., Schwartz, N., & Kimmelmeier, M. (1996). Mood and stereotyping: affective states and the use of general knowledge structures. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 7(1), 63–93. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14792779443000102>.
- Brambilla, M., Carnaghi, A., & Ravenna, M. (2011a). Subgrouping e omosessualità: rappresentazione cognitiva e contenuto degli stereotipi di uomini gay. *Psicologia Sociale*, 6(1), 71–88. <https://doi.org/10.1482/34474>.
- Brambilla, M., Carnaghi, A., & Ravenna, M. (2011b). Status and cooperation shape lesbian stereotypes. *Social Psychology*, 42(2), 101–110. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1864-9335/a000054>.
- Breckler, S. J. (1984). Empirical validation of affect, behavior, and cognition as distinct components of attitude. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 47(6), 1191–1205. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.47.6.1191>.
- Caldarera, A. M., Marengo, D., Gerino, E., Brustia, P., Rollé, L., & Cohen-Kettenis, P. T. (2019). A parent-report gender identity questionnaire for children: psychometric properties of an Italian version. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 48(5), 1603–1615. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-018-1372-7>.
- Capezza, N. (2007). Homophobia and sexism: the pros and cons to an integrative approach. *Integrative Psychological & Behavioral Science*, 41(3–4), 248–253. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12124-007-9033-8>.
- Cottrell, C. A., & Neuberg, S. L. (2005). Different emotional reactions to different groups: a sociofunctional threat-based approach to “prejudice.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 88(5), 770–789. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.88.5.770>.
- Davies, M. (2004). Correlates of negative attitudes toward gay men: sexism, male role norms, and male sexuality. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 41(3), 259–266. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224490409552233>.
- De Witte, K., Iterbeke, K., & Holz, O. (2019). Teachers’ and pupils’ perspectives on homosexuality: a comparative analysis across European countries. *International Sociology*, 34(4), 471–519. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0268580919854295>.
- Deaux, K., & Lewis, L. L. (1984). Structure of gender stereotypes: interrelationships among components and gender label. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 46(5), 991–1004. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.46.5.991>.
- Doyle, C. M., Rees, A. M., & Titus, T. L. (2015). Perceptions of same-sex relationships and marriage as gender role violations: an examination of gendered expectations (sexism). *Journal of Homosexuality*, 62(11), 1576–1598. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2015.1073038>.
- Donaldson, C. D., Handren, L. M., & Lac, A. (2017). Applying multilevel modeling to understand individual and cross-cultural variations in attitudes toward homosexual people across 28 European countries. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 48(1), 93–112. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022116672488>.
- Eagly, A. H., Mladinic, A., & Otto, S. (1994). Cognitive and affective bases of attitudes toward social groups and social policies. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 30(2), 113–137. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jesp.1994.1006>.
- Esses, V. M., & Dovidio, J. F. (2002). The role of emotions in determining willingness to engage in intergroup contact. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 28(9), 1202–1214. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01461672022812006>.
- Finlay, B., & Walther, C. S. (2003). The relation of religious affiliation, service attendance, and other factors to homophobic attitudes among university students. *Review of Religious Research*, 44(4), 370–393. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260516665110>.
- Craven, F. (2004). Determinants of attitudes held by Irish catholic and protestant women towards gender roles, maternal employment and social perceptions of women in Irish society. *International Review of Sociology / Revue Internationale de Sociologie*, 14, 293–308.
- Fredrickson, B. L. (2004). The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, 359(1449), 1367–1378. <https://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2004.1512>.
- Gerino, E., Caldarera, A. M., Curti, L., Brustia, P., & Rollé, L. (2018). Intimate partner violence in the golden age: systematic review of risk and protective factors. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9, 1595. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01595>.
- Glick, P., & Fiske, S. T. (1996). The ambivalent sexism inventory: differentiating hostile and benevolent sexism. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 70(3), 491–512. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.70.3.491>.
- Glick, P., & Whitehead, J. (2010). Hostility toward men and the perceived stability of male dominance. *Social Psychology*, 41(3), 177–185. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1864-9335/a000025>.
- Hatzenbuehler, M. L., Pachankis, J. E., & Wolff, J. (2012). Religious climate and health risk behaviors in sexual minority youths: a population-based study. *American Journal of Public Health*, 102(4), 657–663. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2011.300517>.
- Herek, G. M. (1988). Heterosexuals’ attitudes towards lesbians and gay men: correlates and gender differences. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 25, 451–477.
- Herek, G. M., & Capitano, J. P. (1995). Black heterosexuals’ attitudes toward lesbians and gay men in the United States. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 32(2), 95–105. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499509551780>.
- Herek, G. M., & Capitano, J. P. (1996). “Some of My Best Friends” intergroup contact, concealable stigma, and heterosexuals’ attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 22(4), 412–424. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167296224007>.
- Herek, G. M. (2002). Gender gaps in public opinion about lesbians and gay men. *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 66(1), 40–66. <https://doi.org/10.1086/338409>.
- Herek, G. M. & Gonzalez-Rivera, M. (2006). Attitudes toward homosexuality among U.S. residents of Mexican descent. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 43(2), 122–135. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224490609552307>.
- Herek, G. M. (2007). Confronting sexual stigma and prejudice: theory and practice. *Journal of Social Issues*, 63(4), 905–925. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.2007.00544.x>.
- Herek, G. M., & McLemore, K. A. (2011). Sexual Prejudice. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 64, 309–333.
- Herek, G. M., & McLemore, K. A. (2013). Sexual prejudice. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 64, 309–333. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-113011-143826>.
- Hicks, G. R., & Lee, T. T. (2006). Public attitudes toward gays and lesbians: trends and predictors. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 51(2), 57–77. <https://doi.org/10.1300/J082v51n02>.
- Ioverno, S., Carone, N., Lingiardi, V., Nardelli, N., Pagone, P., Pistella, J., et al. (2018). Assessing prejudice toward two father parenting and two-mother parenting: the beliefs on same-sex parenting scale. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 55(4–5), 654–665. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2017.1348460>.
- Jung, P. B., & Smith, R. F. (1993). *Heterosexism: An ethical challenge*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

- Jussim, L., Nelson, T. E., Manis, M., & Soffin, S. (1995). Prejudice, stereotypes, and labelling effects: sources of bias in person perception. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *68*(2), 228–246. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.68.2.228>.
- Kite, M. E., & Deaux, K. (1987). Gender belief systems: homosexuality and the implicit inversion theory. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, *11*(1), 83–96. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.1987.tb00776.x>.
- Kite, M. E., Togans, L. J., & Case, K. A. (2018). Cross-cultural attitudes toward sexual minorities. In K. D. Keith (Ed.), *Culture across the curriculum: A psychology teacher's handbook*. (pp. 407–426). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316996706>
- Konopka, K., Rajchert, J., Dominiak-Kochanek, M., & Roszak, J. (2019). The role of masculinity threat in homonegativity and transphobia. *Journal of Homosexuality*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2019.1661728>.
- Lingiardi, V., Falanga, S., & D'Augelli, A. R. (2005). The evaluation of homophobia in an Italian sample. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, *34*(1), 81–93. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-005-1002-z>.
- Longo, J., Walls, N. E., & Wisneski, H. (2013). Religion and religiosity: protective or harmful factors for sexual minority youth? *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, *16*(3), 273–290. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13674676.2012.659240>.
- Lubbers, M., Jaspers, E., & Ultee, W. (2009). Primary and secondary socialization impacts on support for same-sex marriage after legalization in the Netherlands. *Journal of Family Issues*, *30*(12), 1714–1745. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X09334267>.
- Madureira, A. F. (2007). The psychological basis of homophobia: cultural construction of a barrier. *Integrative Psychological & Behavioral Science*, *41*(3–4), 225–247. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12124-007-9024-9>.
- Mahaffey, A. L., Bryan, A., & Hutchison, K. E. (2005). Using startle eye blink to measure the affective component of antigay bias. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, *27*(1), 37–45. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15324834basp2701_4.
- Manucia, G., Baumann, D., & Cialdini, R. (1984). Mood influences on helping: direct effects or side effects? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *46*(2), 357–364. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.46.2.357>.
- Morrison, M. A., Trinder, K. M., & Morrison, T. G. (2018). Affective responses to gay men using facial electromyography: is there a psychophysiological “look” of anti-gay bias. *Journal of Homosexuality*, *66*(9), 1238–1261. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2018.1500779>.
- Ng, C. G., Yee, A., Subramaniam, P., Loh, H. S., & Moreira, P. (2015). Attitude toward homosexuality among nursing students in a public university in Malaysia: the religious factor. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, *12*(1), 182–187. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-015-0182-0>.
- Nicolas, M., Martinent, G., & Campo, M. (2014). Evaluation of the psychometric properties of a modified Positive and Negative Affect Schedule including a direction scale (PANAS-D) among French athletes. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, *15*(3), 227–237. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2014.01.005>.
- Nielson, E. (2017). When a child comes out in the latter-days: an exploratory case study of Mormon parents. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, *20*(3), 260–276. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13674676.2017.1350942>.
- Ohlander, J., Batalova, J., & Treas, J. (2005). Explaining educational influences on attitudes toward homosexual relations. *Social Science Research*, *34*(4), 781–799. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2004.12.004>.
- Olson, L. R., Cadge, W., & Harrison, J. T. (2006). Religion and public opinion about same-sex marriage. *Social Science Quarterly*, *87*(2), 340–360. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6237.2006.00384.x>.
- Parker Tapias, M., Glaser, J., Keltner, D., Vasquez, K., & Wickens, T. (2007). Emotion and prejudice: specific emotions toward outgroups. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, *10*(1), 27–39. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430207071338>.
- Parrott, D. J., Zeichner, A., & Hoover, R. (2006). Sexual prejudice and anger network activation: mediating role of negative affect. *Aggressive Behavior*, *32*(1), 7–16. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ab.20101>.
- Parrot, D. J., & Peterson, J. L. (2008). What motivates hate crimes based on sexual orientation? mediating effects of anger on antigay aggression. *Aggressive Behavior*, *34*(3), 306–318. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ab.20239>.
- Patrick, K., Heywood, W., Simpson, J. M., Pitts, M. K., Richters, J., Shelley, J. M., & Smith, A. M. (2013). Demographic predictors of consistency and change in heterosexuals' attitudes toward homosexual behavior over a two-year period. *Journal of Sex Research*, *50*(6), 611–619. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2012.657263>.
- Petersen, J. L., & Hyde, J. S. (2010). A meta-analytic review of research on gender differences in sexuality, 1993–2007. *Psychological bulletin*, *136*(1), 21–38. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0017504>.
- Piumatti, G. (2017). A mediational model explaining the connection between religiosity and anti-homosexual attitudes in Italy: the effects of male role endorsement and homosexual stereotyping. *Journal of Homosexuality*, *64*(14), 1961–1977. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2017.1289005>.
- Prati, G., Pietrantoni, L., & D'Augelli, A. R. (2011). Aspects of homophobia in Italian high schools: students' attitudes and perceptions of school climate. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, *41*(11), 2600–2620. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2011.00842.x>.
- Ratcliff, J. J., Lassiter, G. D., Markman, K. D., & Snyder, C. J. (2006). Gender differences in attitudes toward gay men and lesbian: the role of motivation to respond without prejudice. *Personality and Social Psychology bulletin*, *32*(10), 1325–1338. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167206290213>.
- Ray, T. N., & Parkhill, M. R. (2020). Heteronormativity, disgust sensitivity, and hostile attitudes toward gay men: potential mechanisms to maintain social hierarchies. *Sex Roles*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-020-01146-w>.
- Rees-Turyn, A. M., Doyle, C., Holland, A., & Root, S. (2008). Sexism and sexual prejudice (homophobia): the impact of the gender beliefs system and inversion theory on sexual orientation research and attitudes toward sexual minorities. *Journal of LGBT Issues in Counseling*, *2*(1), 2–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1553860080277467>.
- Regnerus, M. D., Smith, C., & Sikkink, D. (1997). Who Gives to the Poor? The Influence of Religious Tradition and Political Location on the Personal Generosity of Americans toward the Poor. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, *37*(3), 481.
- Roberts, L. L. (2019). Changing worldwide attitudes toward homosexuality: the influence of global and region-specific cultures, 1981–2012. *Social science research*, *80*, 114–131. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2018.12.003>.
- Rollè, L., Gardina, G., Caldarera, A. M., Gerino, E., & Brustia, P. (2018). When intimate partner violence meets same sex couples: a review of same sex intimate partner violence. *Frontiers in psychology*, *9*, 1506. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01506>.
- Rollè, L., Trombetta, T., & Santoniccolo, F. (2020). The help-seeking process in same-sex intimate partner violence. In T. K. Shackelford (Ed.), *The SAGE Handbook of Domestic Violence* (pp. 333–351). Thousand Oak California: SAGE Publication.

- Sakalli, N. (2002). The relationship between sexism and attitudes toward homosexuality in a sample of Turkish college students. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 42(3), 53–64. https://doi.org/10.1300/J082v42n03_04.
- Sakallı-Uğurlu, N., & Uğurlu, O. (2016). Predicting attitudes toward gay men with ambivalence toward men, questioning religion, and gender differences. *Sex Roles*, 74(5–6), 195–205. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-015-0571-0>.
- Salvati, M., Pistella, J., & Baiocco, R. (2018). Gender roles and internalized sexual stigma in gay and lesbian persons: a quadratic relation. *International Journal of Sexual Health*, 30(1), 42–48. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19317611.2017.1404542>.
- Salvati, M., Piumatti, G., Giacomantonio, M., & Baiocco, R. (2019). Gender stereotypes and contact with gay men and lesbians: The mediational role of sexism and homonegativity. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, 29(6), 461–473. <https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.2412>.
- Santona, A., & Tognasso, G. (2018). Attitudes toward homosexuality in adolescence: an Italian study. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 65(3), 361–378. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2017.1320165>.
- Scandurra, C., Monaco, S., Dolce, P., et al. (2020). Heteronormativity in Italy: psychometric characteristics of the Italian version of the heteronormative attitudes and beliefs scale. *Sex Res Soc Policy*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-020-00487-1>.
- Schulte, L. J., & Battle, J. (2004). The relative importance of ethnicity and religion in predicting attitudes towards gays and lesbians. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 47(2), 127–142. https://doi.org/10.1300/J082v47n02_08.
- Serafini, K., Malin-Mayor, B., Nich, C., Hunkele, K., & Carroll, K. M. (2016). Psychometric properties of the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) in a heterogeneous sample of substance users. *American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse*, 42(2), 203–212. <https://doi.org/10.3109/00952990.2015.1133632>.
- Shaffer, D. R., & Augustine, M. L. (2003). Affective mediation of homophobic reactions to homosexual males. *Journal of Psychology & Human Sexuality*, 14(4), 67–85. https://doi.org/10.1300/J056v14n04_04.
- Sheldon, J. P., Pfeffer, C. A., Jayaratne, E., Jayaratne, T. E., Feldbaum, B. A. M., & Petty, E. M. (2008). Beliefs about the etiology of homosexuality and about the ramifications of discovering its possible genetic origin. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 52(3–4), 111–150. https://doi.org/10.1300/J082v52n03_06.
- Steffens, M. C., & Wagner, C. (2004). Attitudes toward lesbians, gay men, bisexual women, and bisexual men in Germany. *Journal of Sex Research*, 41(2), 137–149. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224490409552222>.
- Taylor, K. (2007). Disgust is a factor in extreme prejudice. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 46(3), 597–617. <https://doi.org/10.1348/014466606X156546>.
- Terracciano, A., McCrae, R. R., & Costa, P. T., Jr. (2003). Factorial and construct validity of the Italian Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS). *European Journal of Psychological Assessment*, 19(2), 131–141. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1015-5759.19.2.131>.
- Twenge, J. M., Carter, N. T., & Campbell, W. K. (2015). Time period, generational, and age differences in tolerance for controversial beliefs and lifestyles in the United States, 1972–2012. *Social Forces*, 94(1), 379–399. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/sov050>.
- Van de Meerendonk, B., & Scheepers, P. (2004). Denial of equal civil rights for lesbians and gay men in the Netherlands, 1980–1993. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 47(2), 63–80. https://doi.org/10.1300/J082v47n02_04.
- Vezzoni, C., & Biolcati-Rinaldi, F. (2015). Church attendance and religious change in Italy, 1968–2010: a multilevel analysis of pooled datasets. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 54(1), 100–118. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jssr.1217>.
- Vincent, W., Parrott, D. J., & Peterson, J. L. (2011). Effects of traditional gender role norms and religious fundamentalism on self-identified heterosexual men's attitudes, anger, and aggression toward gay men and lesbians. *Psychology of men & masculinity*, 12(4), 383–400. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0023807>.
- Warringer, K., Nagoshi, C. T., & Nagoshi, J. L. (2013). Correlates of homophobia, transphobia, and internalized homophobia in gay or lesbian and heterosexual samples. *Journal of homosexuality*, 60(9), 1297–1314. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2013.806177>.
- Watson, D., & Pennebaker, J. W. (1989). Health complaints, stress, and distress: exploring the central role of negative affectivity. *Psychological Review*, 96(2), 234–254. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.96.2.234>.
- Watson, D., Clark, L. A., & Tellegen, A. (1988). Development and validation of brief measures of positive and negative affect: the PANAS scales. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 54(6), 1063–1070. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.54.6.1063>.
- Whitley, B. E. (1987). The relationship of sex-role orientation to heterosexuals' attitudes toward homosexuals. *Sex Roles*, 17(1), 103–113. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00287903>.
- Whitley, B. E., Jr. (2001). Gender-role variables and attitudes toward homosexuality. *Sex Roles*, 45(11–12), 691–721. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1015640318045>.
- Wilkinson, W. W. (2008). Threatening the patriarchy: testing an explanatory paradigm of anti-lesbian attitudes. *Sex Roles*, 59(7–8), 512–520. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-008-9432-4>.
- Wittig, M. (1992). *The straight mind and other essay*. Brighton: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Yerkes, M. A., Dotti Sani, G. M., & Solera, C. (2018). Attitudes toward parenthood, partnership, and social rights for diverse families: evidence from a pilot study in five countries. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 65(1), 80–99. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369>.

Publisher's Note Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.