

# Attitudes of Italian Group Toward Homosexuality and Same-Sex Parenting

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**Abstract:** The research investigated (a) the connection between attitudes toward homosexuality and same-sex parenting; (b) the socio-demographic and socio-cultural variables linked to such attitudes; and (c) the knowledge behind these attitudes. The 223 participants completed a self-report questionnaire including the Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men Scale (revised version), an attitudes toward same-sex parenting scale, and a personal data form, and answered some questions about their knowledge of homosexuality. The results showed an association between attitudes toward homosexuality and attitudes toward same-sex parenting, and a connection between socio-demographic variables, knowledge about homosexuality and same-sex parenting, and positivity/negativity levels of attitudes.

**Keywords:** Homosexuality, Same-sex parenting, Attitudes towards homosexuality, Attitudes towards same-sex parenting.

## INTRODUCTION

For many years, the study of sexual orientation has focused on the causes of homosexuality. Historically, two perspectives have been proposed: the essentialist perspective and the social perspective. The essentialist perspective considered homosexuality to have a biological origin or to be caused by some hormonal or genetic factors (Bailey & Pillard, 1991; Blanchard, 1997; Blanchard & Klassen, 1996; Hamer, 1999; Hamer & Copeland, 1995; Hamer, Hu, Magnuson, Hu, & Pattatucci 1993; LeVay, 1991). The social perspective described homosexuality in relation to the personal, social, and historical context, with psychoanalytic and learning theories belonging to this approach (Bailey & Zucker, 1995; Cameron & Cameron, 1995; Churchill, 1967; Eckes & Trautner, 2000; Freud, 1905; Money & Ehrhardt, 1972; Money, Hampson, & Hampson, 1957; Taylor, 1992; Nicolosi, 2002; Rieger, Linsenmeier, Gygax, & Bailey, 2008; Tomeo, Templer, Anderson, & Kotler, 2001). However, none of the studies belonging to these two perspectives give adequate evidence to explain the reason why some people are homosexual and others are not (Anderssen, Amlie, & Ytterøy, 2002; Bailey *et al.*, 1999; Brannock & Chapman, 1990; Byne *et al.*, 2001; Colapinto, 2000; Diamond & Sigmundson, 1997; Gavrillets & Rice, 2006; Parker, 2014; Reiner & Gearhart, 2004; Rice, Anderson, Risch, & Ebers, 1999;

Wellings, Field, Johnson, Wadsworth, & Bradshaw, 1994; Zietsch *et al.*, 2008). Homophobic prejudice concern an higher numbers of gay and lesbians and is possible to find it in many aspects of social life, including political asylum research, access to health care, and the context of sports and education. To what we know only a small number of homophobic aggressions is denounced due to the prejudice and to the stigmatization (Rollè, Brustia, & Caldarera, 2014; Amodeo *et al.* 2018). The attempt to study the homophobic prejudice gives the opportunity to increase the social knowledge on this field and, consequently, increasing the global well-being reducing the minority stress – of lesbian and gay people – and self-perceived stigma.

## Same-Sex Parenting and Same-Sex Couples

Same-sex parenting refers to gay, lesbian or bisexual people raising their children as parents or as foster-care parents (Gross, 2003) and the studies on this field have considered since the origin the parental skills of homosexuals (Bigner & Jacobsen, 1989; Flaks, Ficher, Masterpasqua, & Joseph, 1995; Harris & Turner, 1986; Kirkpatrick, Smith, & Roy, 1981; Miller, Jacobsen, & Bigner, 1981; Mucklow & Phelan, 1979; Siegenthaler & Bigner, 2000), the developmental outcomes of children raised with homosexual parents (Massey, Merriwheter, & Garcia, 2013), and the attitudes towards same sex couples/families and their intimate relations (Rollè, Giardina, Caldarera, Gerino, & Brustia, 2018). Several reviews and meta-analyses concerning the latter have been performed to analyze

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the outcomes of the development of children in various dimensions (Allen & Burrell, 1997; Anderssen *et al.*, 2002; Baiocco *et al.*, 2015; Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Fedewa, Black, & Ahn, 2015; Gartrell, Bos, & Goldberg, 2011; Patterson, 2009; Tasker, 2005; Tasker & Patterson, 2008; Van Gelderen, Bos, Gartrell, Hermanns, & Perrin, 2012), including (a) the cognitive dimension (Flaks *et al.*, 1995; Gartrell & Bos, 2010; Gartrell, Deck, Rodas, Peyser, & Banks, 2005; Patterson, 2006; Puryear, 1983; Speranza, 2015; Steckel, 1985); (b) the affective dimension (Brewaeys, Ponjaert, Van Hall, & Golombok, 1997; Golombok, Perry, Burston, Murray, Mooney-Somers, Stevens, & Golding, 2003; MacCallum & Golombok, 2004; Speranza, 2015; Steckel, 1985; Vanfraussen, Ponjaert Kristoffersen, & Brewaeys, 2003); (c) the social dimension (Brewaeys *et al.*, 1997; Chan, Raboy, & Patterson, 1998; Farr, Forssell, & Patterson, 2010; Gartrell & Bos, 2010; Golombok *et al.*, 2003; Green, Mandel, Hotvedt, Gray, & Smith, 1986; Gartrell *et al.*, 2005; MacCallum & Golombok, 2004; Patterson, 2006; Speranza, 2015; Steckel, 1985); (d) the gender identity dimension (Brewaeys *et al.*, 1997; Green, 1978; Hoeffler, 1981; Kveskin & Cook, 1982; Speranza, 2015); and (e) the sexual development dimension (Chan *et al.*, 1998; Golombok & Tasker, 1996; Green, 1978; Green, 1982; Green *et al.*, 1986; Speranza, 2015; Vanfraussen *et al.*, 2003). These studies reported that there were not significant differences in the development of children raised with either homosexual or heterosexual parents in each of the dimensions examined.

### **Attitudes and Knowledge Towards Homosexuality and Same-Sex Parenting**

Attitude is a psychological tendency, expressed by an evaluation of an entity in a favorable or unfavorable way. In each attitude, cognitive, affective, and behavioral components are identifiable (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Relying on literature related to attitudes toward homosexuality, Adolfsen and colleagues (2010) identified three distinct categories of attitudes. The first category is that proposed by Kite and Whitley (1996), Yang (1997) and Lewis (2003), characterized by three key concepts: (a) marriage and adoption rights for homosexuals, (b) homosexual people in general, and (c) homosexual behaviors. The second category analyzes attitudes toward homosexuality by subdividing them into two components: cognitive and affective (Herek, 1984; Herek, 2002; Hudson & Ricketts, 1980; Van de Ven,

Bomholt, & Bailey, 1996). The third category identifies the existence of two types of attitudes: traditional and modern (Morrison & Morrison, 2002). Traditional attitudes focus on religious objections, morals condemnations, and pathological connotations of homosexuality, and extend to a pure and explicit condemnation of homosexuality, while modern attitudes exist in hidden and less impactful ways, such as in the denial of the existence of homosexual discrimination (Morrison & Morrison 2002). In light of these studies and of other literature, there are several instruments to detect attitudes toward same-sex parenting in the European context, but most of them do not go very deep: some focus only on children's adjustment in homosexual families (Frias-Navarro & Monderde-i-Bort, 2012; Gato, Freitas, & Fontaine, 2013), while others detect attitudes to homosexuality in general or homosexual marriage (Lannutti & Lachlan, 2007). Vecho and Schneider developed a questionnaire to study attitudes toward same-sex parenting (Vecho & Schneider 2012; Rollè, Dell'Oca, Sechi, Brustia, & Gerino, 2018) as a central factor that also considers children's development and legislative opinions about marriage, adoption, and methods of access to parenthood. Despite the growth in literature and research on attitudes toward same-sex parenting, the beliefs rooted in negative attitudes remain present and widespread in society (Camilleri & Ryan, 2006).

Clarke (2001) and Lingardi (2013) focus their studies on different key concepts that recur in the attitudes toward same-sex parenting, dividing them into two main groups. In the first group, negative attitudes originate from the same issues presented above in the attitudes toward homosexuality, whereby religious and moral condemnation of same-sex parenting considers it a pathological union that influences the development of children. The second group focuses on the negative outcomes of children's development in relation to sexual identity, gender identity, and relational problems.

### **Aims**

The present study focused on: (a) socio-demographic and socio-cultural variables connected to attitudes, (b) the connection between attitudes toward homosexuality and same-sex parenting, and (c) the correlation between knowledge about homosexuality and attitudes toward homosexuality and same-sex parenting. The following research hypotheses have been formulated:

H1: Socio-demographic and socio-cultural variables associated with positive or negative attitudes toward homosexuality also have an association with attitudes toward same-sex parenting: men, older people, people with a lower level of education, conservative people, and those who are religious have more negative attitudes toward homosexuality and same-sex parenting than women, younger people, people with a higher level of education, liberal people, and those who are not religious;

H2: Attitudes toward homosexuality and attitudes toward same-sex parenting are correlated;

H3: Levels of knowledge about homosexuality and lesbian–gay issues correlate with scores on attitudes toward homosexuality and same-sex parenting.

## METHOD

### Participants and Procedure

A total of 223 participants over the age of 18 took part in the study. The mean age of the participants was 33 years ( $SD = 15.37$ ), and 34% were male while 66% were female. Participants responded to a questionnaire designed for the study and approved by the Bioethics University Committee. Participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous and recruited by a snowball sampling method. The informed consent and information sheets were added to the questionnaire in first page and collected before the administration of the questionnaire.

### Methods

Several types of demographic data were collected, including age (in years), gender of participants (male, female, other), level of education, and political orientation. Regarding religion, five questions were proposed. The first question asked participants if they would profess a religion (yes/no), and the remaining four questions were rated on a five-point Likert scale: “Which level of religious education have you received?” (from “not at all” to “very much”); “How often do you usually go to church or other places of worship?” (from “not at all” to “very much”); “How important is religion in your life?” (from “not at all” to “very much”). The way in which participants define their current relation with religion was also explored by means of a categorical scale (*i.e.* “believer and practicing” or “not believer, not practicing”).

**Table 1: Description of Participants (N=223)**

		%	M(DS)
<b>Geographical origin</b>	Northern Italy	61.6%	
	Centre of Italy	12%	
	Southern Italy	22.7%	
	Islands (Sicily and Sardinia)	3.7%	
<b>Sex</b>	Male	34%	
	Female	66%	
<b>Age</b>			33(15.37) years
<b>Marital status</b>	Single	65.3%	
	Married	22.8%	
	Cohabitants	8.7%	
	Divorced	1.4%	
	Widower	0.9%	
<b>Education level</b>	High school	39.9%	
	Bachelor degree	30%	
	Master degree	9.4%	
	Post-graduate	9.8%	
	Other (Primary school-Secondary school)	10.8%	
<b>Political orientation</b>	Right	5.6%	
	Center-right	4.7%	
	Center	5.6%	
	Center-left	25.2%	
	Left	28%	
	Apolitical	30.8%	
<b>Employment situation</b>	Students	49.5%	
	Unemployed	4.1%	
	Stay-at-home	0.9%	
	Employees	34.1%	
	Freelancer	5%	
	Retirees	4.1%	
	Other	2.3%	
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	Exclusively heterosexual	82.4%	
	Predominantly heterosexual, only incidentally homosexual	10.4%	
	Predominantly heterosexual, but more than incidentally homosexual	1.4%	

	Equally heterosexual and homosexual	1.8%	
	Predominantly homosexual, but more than incidentally heterosexual	0.9%	
	Predominantly homosexual, only incidentally heterosexual	2.3%	
	Exclusively homosexual	0.9%	
<b>Religion</b>	Religious people	41.9%	
	Non-religious people	58.1%	
<b>Current relation with religion</b>	Believer/practicing	15.8%	
	Believer/lapsed	38%	
	Non-believer/lapsed	45.2%	
	Non-believer/practicing	0.9%	
<b>Importance of religion in participants' life</b>	Very important	8.1%	
	Important enough	30.8%	
	Unimportant	25.3%	
	Not at all important	28.5%	
	I don't know	7.2%	

### Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men

The Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men Scale, revised version (ATLG-R) (Herek, 1998), is a self-report instrument that measures attitudes toward gay and lesbian people. ATLG-R consists of 10 items, five of which measure attitudes toward gays (ATG), while the other five measure attitudes toward lesbians (ATL). All items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale (from "totally agree" [1] to "totally disagree" [5]). A low rating on the ATLG-R scale connotes a low prevalence of negative attitudes. An example of item from the scale is: "I think male homosexuals are disgusting". In the present study, ATLG-R was translated into Italian, and the internal consistency coefficient was  $\alpha=.78$  for the ATG subscale,  $\alpha=.70$  for the ATL subscale, and  $\alpha=.83$  for the ATLG-R scale.

### Attitudes Toward Same-Sex Parenting

A self-report instrument validated in France by Vecho and Shneider (2012), translated and adapted for the Italian language (Rollè *et al.*, 2018), was used to measure attitudes toward same-sex parenting. The instrument consisted of 15 items. All items were rated on a five-point scale (from "totally agree" [5] to "totally

disagree" [1]). The score of each subscale consisted of child development with homosexual parents (DE, items 1–6), legislative issues (LAP, items 7–10) and parenting skills of homosexual couples (AP, items 11–15). A low rating in the attitudes toward same-sex parenting scale connotes a low prevalence of positive attitudes. An example of item is: "Homosexual parents are not as good as heterosexual". In this study, the internal consistency coefficient was  $\alpha=.96$  for the DE subscale,  $\alpha=.90$  for the LAP subscale, and  $\alpha=.79$  for the AP subscale.

### Knowledge about Homosexuality

Participants were asked to respond to eight items, specifically designed for this study, concerning their knowledge about homosexuality and lesbian–gay issues (e.g. "Homosexuality is a normal variant of human sexuality" or "Is there a valid theory on the origin of homosexuality?") Participants could answer "yes," "no," or "I don't know." The score was calculated by awarding one point for correct answers and zero points for wrong and "I don't know" answers according to the scientific literature.

### Data Analyses

Analyses were performed using the IBM SPSS Statistics software (version 22). The data were included in a matrix for a screening procedure. Descriptive statistics (e.g. frequencies, means, and standard deviations) were calculated for demographic variables. One-way analysis of variation (ANOVA) examined differences between groups (e.g. current relation with religion and attitudes). In order to measure the effect sizes we calculated the Omega Squared ( $\omega^2$ ) (Kirk, 1996). Pearson's correlation was used to assess the associations between variables (e.g. age and attitudes). Differences between the mean scores of two independent groups (e.g. gender and attitudes) were analyzed using *t* tests. The scales' internal consistency coefficient was assessed through Cronbach's alpha.

## RESULTS

### Preliminary Analyses

Descriptive statistics for ATLG-R scores and for scores on the attitudes toward same-sex parenting scale are presented in Table 2.

### ATLG-R and Attitudes Toward Same-Sex Parenting

Results showed a significant correlation between attitudes toward homosexuality and attitudes toward

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics ATGL-R and Attitudes Toward Same-Sex Parenting Scale**

	N	Min	Max	Mean	DS
ATL	207	5.00	18.00	8.13	3.03
ATG	217	5.00	23.00	9.28	3.79
ATGL	204	10.00	41.00	17.19	6.06
DE	165	6.00	30.00	22.56	6.10
LAP	219	4.00	20.00	13.22	4.75
AP	165	12.00	25.00	21.15	3.34

same-sex parenting (see Table 3). A significant correlation ( $p < .001$ ) was found between the subscales of ATGL-R and the subscales of the attitudes toward same-sex parenting scale. There was a negative correlation between ATGL-R and the DE ( $r = -.538$ ;  $p < .001$ ), LAP ( $r = -.538$ ;  $p < .001$ ), and AP ( $r = -.621$ ;  $p < .001$ ) subscales. There was a negative correlation between the ATL and DE ( $r = -.501$ ;  $p < .001$ ), LAP ( $r = -.531$ ;  $p < .001$ ), AP ( $r = -.535$ ;  $p < .001$ ) subscales. There was a negative correlation between the ATG and DE ( $r = -.491$ ;  $p < .001$ ), LAP ( $r = -.557$ ;  $p < .001$ ), AP ( $r = -.591$ ;  $p < .001$ ) subscales.

#### Socio-Demographic Data and Attitudes Toward Homosexuality and Same-Sex Parenting

The performed analyses referred to the socio-demographic and socio-cultural variables measured in the association between attitudes toward homosexuality and same-sex parenting.

#### Gender

Results indicated that males had more negative attitudes than females toward lesbians and gay men ( $t$

$= 2.570$ ;  $p < .05$ ) and toward same-sex parenting legislative issues ( $t = -2.018$ ;  $p < .05$ ).

#### Age

Results showed a significant correlation between age and attitudes toward homosexuality and same-sex parenting (see Table 4). A significant correlation ( $p < .001$ ) was found between age and the subscales of ATGL-R and the subscales of the attitudes toward the same-sex parenting scale. In the first analysis, age showed a positive correlation with attitudes toward lesbians ( $r = .459$ ;  $p < .001$ ), attitudes toward gay men ( $r = .437$ ;  $p < .001$ ), and attitudes toward homosexuality in general ( $r = .463$ ;  $p < .001$ ). In the second analysis, age presented a negative correlation with the DE ( $r = -.291$ ;  $p < .001$ ), LAP ( $r = -.324$ ;  $p < .001$ ), and AP subscales ( $r = -.401$ ;  $p < .001$ ).

#### Level of Education and Political Orientation

One-way ANOVAs with Least Significance Difference (LSD) post-hoc tests revealed statistically significant differences ( $p < .05$ ) between the means of groups with different levels of education and political

**Table 3: Pearson Correlations for ATGL-R and Attitudes Toward Same-Sex Parenting Scale**

	DE	LAP	AP
ATGL	-.538*	-.538*	-.621*
ATG	-.491*	-.557*	-.591*
ATL	-.501*	-.531*	-.535*

\*.  $p < .001$

**Table 4: Pearson Correlations for Age and the Attitudes Toward Homosexuals and Same-Sex Parenting**

	ATL	ATG	ATGL	DE	LAP	AP
Age	.459*	.437*	.463*	-.291*	-.324*	-.401*

\*.  $p < .001$

orientations (see Table 5). Regarding the level of education, differences arose in each subscale except the DE subscale: ATLG-R ( $F_{4,199} = 9.443$ ;  $p < .001$ ), ATL ( $F_{4,202} = 7.409$ ;  $p < .001$ ), ATG ( $F_{4,212} = 10.579$ ;  $p < .001$ ), LAP ( $F_{4,214} = 8.322$ ;  $p < .001$ ), AP ( $F_{4,160} = 3.979$ ;  $p < .05$ ). Concerning political orientation (see Table 6) results rely to a significant difference between each group: ATLG-R ( $F_{5,190} = 5.069$ ;  $p < .001$ ), ATL ( $F_{5,193} = 4.434$ ;  $p < .05$ ), ATG ( $F_{5,202} = 4.127$ ;  $p < .05$ ), DE ( $F_{5,153} = 8.216$ ;  $p < .001$ ), LAP ( $F_{5,204} = 11.905$ ;  $p < .001$ ), and AP ( $F_{5,153} = 3.563$ ;  $p < .05$ ). The values of the Omega Squared varied from a minimum of .060 to a maximum

of .206 indicating medium or large effects.

### Religion

The performed analyses investigated religious belief, current relation with religion, involvement in religious activities, and importance of religion in participants' lives. The difference between the means of believer and non-believer attitudes revealed statistically significant differences ( $ps < .05$ ) in all subscales. Believers had more negative attitudes toward homosexuality in general ( $t = 3.314$ ;  $p < .05$ ), toward lesbians ( $t = 2.924$ ;  $p < .05$ ), toward gay men ( $t$

**Table 5: ANOVA Analyses: Level of Education and Attitudes Toward Homosexuals and Same-Sex Parenting**

		M	DS	F	p	$\omega^2$
	<i>Level of education</i>					
<b>ATGL</b>				9.443	.001	.142
	Other	21.900	7.490			
	High school	18.193	6.495			
	Bachelor degree	14.000	3.078			
	Master graduation	18.192	6.007			
	Post-graduate	16.692	4.571			
<b>ATL</b>				7.409	.001	.110
	Other	10,300	3.715			
	High school	8.595	3.219			
	Bachelor degree	6.714	1.887			
	Master graduation	8.481	2.708			
	Post-graduate	7.923	3.148			
<b>ATG</b>				10.579	.001	.150
	Other	12.625	4.642			
	High school	9.690	3.838			
	Bachelor degree	7.415	2.256			
	Master graduation	9.704	4.112			
	Post-graduate	8.786	2.225			
<b>LAP</b>				8.322	.001	.118
	Other	10.458	4.727			
	High school	12.770	4.776			
	Bachelor degree	15.615	3.454			
	Master graduation	11.483	5.200			
	Post-graduate	13.286	4.428			
<b>AP</b>				3.979	.05	.060
	Other	18.956	3.612			
	High school	21.309	3.450			
	Bachelor degree	22.409	2.364			
	Master graduation	20.917	3.020			
	Post-graduate	22.333	2.425			

**Table 6: ANOVA Analyses: Political Orientation and Attitudes Toward Homosexuals and Same-Sex Parenting**

		M	DS	F	p	$\omega^2$
	<i>Political orientation</i>					
<b>ATGL</b>				5.096	.001	.095
	Liberal	15.000	3.923			
	Centre-liberal	17.939	6.777			
	Centre	21.545	6.684			
	Centre-conservative	18.111	8.922			
	Conservative	22.454	6.532			
	Apolitical	16.576	5.437			
<b>ATL</b>				4.434	.05	.079
	Liberal	6.897	2.125			
	Centre-liberal	8.551	3.096			
	Centre	9.545	3.560			
	Centre-conservative	9.222	4.265			
	Conservative	10.454	3.142			
	Apolitical	8.164	3.051			
<b>ATG</b>				4.127	.05	.070
	Liberal	8,220	2.847			
	Centre-liberal	9.741	4.296			
	Centre	12.000	3.950			
	Centre-conservative	8.889	5.110			
	Conservative	12.167	3.973			
	Apolitical	8.794	3.375			
<b>DE</b>				8.216	.001	.185
	Liberal	26.149	4.787			
	Centre-liberal	21.737	5.750			
	Centre	18.625	4.897			
	Centre-conservative	17.500	8.018			
	Conservative	17.100	4.581			
	Apolitical	22.375	5.848			
<b>LAP</b>				11.905	.001	.206
	Liberal	15.915	3.789			
	Centre-liberal	11.926	4.111			
	Centre	10.417	4.144			
	Centre-conservative	10.100	5.043			
	Conservative	7.917	3.260			
	Apolitical	13.714	4.719			
<b>AP</b>				3.563	.05	.074
	Liberal	22.458	2.673			
	Centre-liberal	20.553	3.318			
	Centre	19.714	2.690			
	Centre-conservative	20.125	3.399			
	Conservative	18.700	4.191			
	Apolitical	21.271	3.305			

= 3.316;  $p < .05$ ), and toward same-sex parenting in the DE ( $t = -3.797$ ;  $p < .001$ ), LAP ( $t = -5.467$ ;  $p < .001$ ),

and AP ( $t = -3.730$ ;  $p < .001$ ) subscales than non-believers.

**Table 7: T-Test: Religion Belief and Attitudes Toward Homosexuals and Same-Sex Parenting**

		N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t	p
<b>ATL</b>	Yes	82	8.878	3.221	2.924	.004
	Not	125	7.640	2.809		
<b>ATG</b>	Yes	89	10.337	4.356	3.316	.001
	Not	127	8.543	3.174		
<b>ATGL</b>	Yes	81	18.876	6.592	3.314	.001
	Not	123	16.073	5.418		
<b>DE</b>	Yes	73	20.616	6.068	-3.797	.000
	Not	92	24.108	5.704		
<b>LAP</b>	Yes	91	11.274	4.659	-5.467	.000
	Not	127	14.629	4.327		
<b>AP</b>	Yes	72	20.083	3.253	-3.730	.000
	Not	93	21.967	3.191		

Regarding the current relation of participants with religion (see Table 8) and the attribution of importance of religion in participant's life (see Table 9), One-way ANOVAs with LSD post-hoc tests revealed statistically significant differences ( $ps < .001$ ) between the means of the groups. In the first analysis (current relation of participants with religion), differences emerged among each group: ATLG-R ( $F_{3,198} = 16.854$ ;  $p < .001$ ), ATL ( $F_{3,201} = 16.010$ ;  $p < .001$ ), ATG ( $F_{3,211} = 14.777$ ;  $p < .001$ ), DE ( $F_{3,161} = 10.795$ ;  $p < .001$ ), LAP ( $F_{3,214} = 19.031$ ;  $p < .001$ ) and AP ( $F_{3,161} = 10.644$ ;  $p < .001$ ). In the second analysis (the attribution of importance of religion in participant's life), similarly, significant differences were found: ATLG-R ( $F_{4,197} = 8.140$ ;  $p < .001$ ), ATL ( $F_{4,200} = 6.347$ ;  $p < .001$ ), ATG ( $F_{4,210} = 9.040$ ;  $p < .001$ ), DE ( $F_{4,159} = 8.796$ ;  $p < .001$ ), LAP ( $F_{4,212} = 14.477$ ;  $p < .001$ ), AP ( $F_{4,159} = 7.825$ ;  $p < .001$ ). The values of the Omega Squared varied from a minimum of .094 to a maximum of .199 indicating medium or large effects.

**Table 8: ANOVA Analyses: Current Relation with Religion and Attitudes Toward Homosexuals and Same-Sex Parenting**

		M	DS	F	p	$\omega^2$
	<i>Current relation with religion</i>					
<b>ATGL</b>				16.854	.000	.190
	Believer/practicing	21.750	7.331			

	Believer/lapsed	18.355	6.026			
	Non-believer/practicing	28.000	0.000			
	Non-believer/lapsed	14.708	4.279			
<b>ATL</b>				16.010	.000	.180
	Believer/practicing	10.179	3.518			
	Believer/lapsed	8.805	3.031			
	Non-believer/practicing	13.500	0.707			
	Non-believer/lapsed	6.878	2.249			
<b>ATG</b>				14.777	.000	.161
	Believer/practicing	12.151	4.797			
	Believer/lapsed	9.719	3.814			
	Non-believer/practicing	14.500	0.707			
	Non-believer/lapsed	7.867	2.579			
<b>DE</b>				10.795	.000	.151
	Believer/practicing	19.621	7.143			
	Believer/lapsed	20.867	5.697			
	Non-believer/practicing	22.000	11.314			
	Non-believer/lapsed	25.485	4.602			
<b>LAP</b>				19.031	.000	.199
	Believer/practicing	9.771	4.420			
	Believer/lapsed	12.096	4.501			
	Non-believer/practicing	12.000	5.657			
	Non-believer/lapsed	15.490	3.930			
<b>AP</b>				10.644	.000	.149
	Believer/practicing	19.143	3.147			
	Believer/lapsed	20.424	3.277			
	Non-believer/practicing	21.000	0.000			
	Non-believer/lapsed	22.652	2.879			

**Table 9: ANOVA Analyses: The Attribution of Importance of Religion in Participants' Life and Attitudes Toward Homosexuals and Same-Sex Parenting**

		M	DS	F	p	$\omega^2$
	<i>The attribution of importance of religion in participants' life</i>					
<b>ATGL</b>				8.140	.000	.124
	Very important	23.800	8.562			
	Important enough	18.649	6.578			
	Unimportant	16.333	4.421			
	Nothing important	15.350	5.336			
	I don't know	15.812	3.525			
<b>ATL</b>				6.347	.000	.094
	Very important	10.867	4.068			



	Important enough	8.862	3.046			
	Unimportant	7.907	2.672			
	Nothing important	7.177	2.725			
	I don't know	7.375	2.217			
<b>ATG</b>				9.040	.000	.130
	Very important	13.222	5.094			
	Important enough	10.185	4.210			
	Unimportant	8.436	2.699			
	Nothing important	8.197	3.021			
	I don't know	8.437	2.898			
<b>DE</b>				8.796	.000	.160
	Very important	15,857	4.204			
	Important enough	21,096	6.521			
	Unimportant	23,537	5.201			
	Nothing important	24,422	5.311			
	I don't know	26,333	5.033			
<b>LAP</b>				14.477	.000	.199
	Very important	8.000	3.725			
	Important enough	11.382	4.529			
	Unimportant	14.593	4.196			
	Nothing important	15.129	4.202			
	I don't know	14.500	3.882			
<b>AP</b>				7.825	.000	.143
	Very important	17.571	3.368			
	Important enough	20.392	2.926			
	Unimportant	21.902	3.056			
	Nothing important	21.935	3.263			
	I don't know	23.000	3.045			

The results concerning the correlation between different involvement in religious activities and the attitudes against lesbian, gay and same-sex parenting showed a significant correlation ( $ps < .05$ ) in all the analyses performed between the level of involvement in religious activities and the subscales of ATLG-R and the subscales of the attitudes toward the same-sex parenting scale (see Table 10). In the first analysis, the involvement in religious activities showed a positive correlation with attitudes toward lesbians ( $r = .176$ ;  $p < .05$ ), toward gay men ( $r = .258$ ;  $p < .001$ ) and toward homosexuality in general ( $r = .236$ ;  $p < .05$ ). In the second analysis, the involvement in religious activities showed a negative correlation with DE ( $r = -.234$ ;  $p < .05$ ), LAP ( $r = -.260$ ;  $p < .001$ ) and AP subscales ( $r = -.269$ ;  $p < .05$ ).

**Table 10: Pearson Correlations for the Involvement in Religious Activities and Attitudes Toward Homosexuals and Same-Sex Parenting**

	ATL	ATG	ATGL	DE	LAP	AP
<i>Involvement in religious activities</i>	.176*	.258***	.236***	-.234**	-.260***	-.269***

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

### **Knowledge about Homosexuality and Attitudes Toward Homosexuality and Same-Sex Parenting**

Significant correlations were found ( $ps < .001$ ) between knowledge about homosexuality and the subscales of ATLG-R and the subscales of the attitudes toward same-sex parenting scale (see Table 11). In the first analysis, the level of knowledge showed a negative correlation with attitudes toward lesbians ( $r = -.395$ ;  $p < .001$ ), toward gay men ( $r = -.414$ ;  $p < .001$ ), and toward homosexuality in general ( $r = -.434$ ;  $p < .001$ ). In the second analysis, the level of knowledge presented a positive correlation with the DE ( $r = .391$ ;  $p < .001$ ), LAP ( $r = .324$ ;  $p < .001$ ), and AP subscales ( $r = .357$ ;  $p < .001$ ).

**Table 11: Pearson Correlations for Knowledges and Attitudes Toward Homosexuals and Same-Sex Parenting**

		ATL	ATG	ATGL	DE	LAP	AP
Knowledges	Pearson Index	-.395*	-.414*	-.434*	.391*	.324*	.357*

\*.  $p < .001$

### **Post-Hoc Analyses**

#### **Level of Education and ATLG-R, ATL, ATG, LAP, and AP Scores**

**ATLG-R.** Post-hoc analysis showed significant differences between the means of "bachelor degree" and the means of "high school" ( $p < .001$ ) and "master degree" ( $p < .05$ ); and between the means of "other" and the means of "high school" ( $p < .05$ ), "bachelor degree" ( $p < .001$ ), "master degree" ( $p < .05$ ), and "post-graduate" ( $p < .05$ ).

**ATL.** Post-hoc analysis showed significant differences between the means of "bachelor degree" and the means of "high school" ( $p < .001$ ) and "master degree" ( $p < .05$ ); and between the means of "other" and the means of "high school" ( $p < .05$ ), "bachelor degree" ( $p < .001$ ), "master degree" ( $p < .05$ ), and "post-graduate" ( $p < .05$ ).

**ATG.** Post-hoc analysis showed significant differences between the means of “bachelor degree” and the means of “high school” ( $p < .001$ ) and “master degree” ( $p < .05$ ); and between the means of “other” and the means of “high school” ( $p < .001$ ), “bachelor degree” ( $p < .001$ ), “master degree” ( $p < .05$ ), and “post-graduate” ( $p < .05$ ).

**LAP.** Post-hoc analysis showed significant differences among the means of “bachelor degree”, the means of “high school” ( $p < .001$ ) and “master degree” ( $p < .05$ ); between the means of “other” and the means of “high school” ( $p < .05$ ) and “bachelor degree” ( $p < .001$ ).

**AP.** Post-hoc analysis showed significant differences among the means of “other” and the means of “high school” ( $p < .05$ ), “bachelor degree” ( $p < .001$ ), “master degree” ( $p < .05$ ) and “post-graduate” ( $p < .05$ ).

#### **Political Orientation and ATLG-R, ATL, ATG, DE, LAP, and AP Scores**

**ATLG-R.** Post-hoc analysis showed significant differences between the means of “right” and the means of “center-left” ( $p < .05$ ), “left” ( $p < .001$ ), and “apolitical” ( $p < .05$ ); between the means of “left” and the means of “center” ( $p < .05$ ) and “center-left” ( $p < .05$ ); and between the means of “apolitical” and the means of “center” ( $p < .05$ ).

**ATL.** Post-hoc analysis showed significant differences between the means of “right” and the means of “apolitical” ( $p < .05$ ); and between the means of “left” and the means of “right” ( $p < .001$ ), “center-right” ( $p < .05$ ), “center” ( $p < .05$ ), “center-left” ( $p < .05$ ), and “apolitical” ( $p < .05$ ).

**ATG.** Post-hoc analysis showed significant differences between the means of “right” and the means of “center-right” ( $p < .05$ ), “center-left” ( $p < .05$ ), “left” ( $p < .05$ ), and “apolitical” ( $p < .05$ ); between the means of “left” and the means of “center” ( $p < .05$ ) and “center-left” ( $p < .05$ ); and between the means of “apolitical” and the means of “center” ( $p < .05$ ).

**DE.** Post-hoc analysis showed significant differences between the means of “right” and the means of “center-left” ( $p < .05$ ); between the means of “left” and the means of “right” ( $p < .001$ ), “center-right” ( $p < .001$ ), “center” ( $p < .05$ ), “center-left” ( $p < .001$ ), and “apolitical” ( $p < .05$ ); and between the means of “apolitical” and the means of “right” ( $p < .05$ ) and “center-right” ( $p < .05$ ).

**LAP.** Post-hoc analysis showed significant differences between the means of “right” and the means of “center-left” ( $p < .05$ ), “left” ( $p < .001$ ) and “apolitical” ( $p < .001$ ); between the means of “left” and the means of “center-right” ( $p < .001$ ), “center” ( $p < .001$ ), and “center-left” ( $p < .001$ ); and between the means of “apolitical” and the means of “center-right” ( $p < .05$ ), “center” ( $p < .05$ ), “center-left” ( $p < .05$ ), and “left” ( $p < .05$ ).

**AP.** Post-hoc analysis showed significant differences between the means of “left” and the means of “right” ( $p < .05$ ), “center” ( $p < .05$ ), and “center-left” ( $p < .05$ ); and between the means of “apolitical” and the means of “left” ( $p < .05$ ).

#### **Current Relation of Participants with Religion and ATLG-R, ATL, ATG, DE, LAP, and AP Scores**

**ATLG-R.** Post-hoc analysis showed significant differences between the means of “believer/lapsed” and the means of “believer/practicing” ( $p < .05$ ), “non-believer/lapsed” ( $p < .001$ ), and “practicing/non-believer” ( $p < .05$ ); and between the means of “non-believer/lapsed” and the means of “believer/practicing” ( $p < .001$ ) and “practicing/non-believer” ( $p < .05$ ).

**ATL.** Post-hoc analysis showed significant differences between the means of “believer/lapsed” and the means of “believer/practicing” ( $p < .05$ ), “non-believer/lapsed” ( $p < .001$ ), and “practicing/non-believer” ( $p < .05$ ); and between the means of “non-believer/lapsed” and the means of “believer/practicing” ( $p < .001$ ) and “practicing/non-believer” ( $p < .05$ ).

**ATG.** Post-hoc analysis showed significant differences between the means of “believer/lapsed” and the means of “believer/practicing” ( $p < .05$ ) and “non-believer/lapsed” ( $p < .05$ ); and between the means of “non-believer/lapsed” and the means of “believer/practicing” ( $p < .001$ ) and “practicing/non-believer” ( $p < .05$ ).

**DE.** Post-hoc analysis showed significant differences between the means of “non-believer/lapsed” and the mean of “believer/practicing” ( $p < .001$ ) and “believer/lapsed” ( $p < .001$ ).

**LAP.** Post-hoc analysis showed significant differences between the means of “believer/lapsed” and the means of “believer/practicing” ( $p < .05$ ) and “non-believer/lapsed” ( $p < .001$ ); and between the mean of “non-believer/lapsed” and the mean of “believer/practicing” ( $p < .001$ ).

*AP.* Post-hoc analysis showed significant differences between the means of “non-believer/lapsed” and the means of “believer/practicing” ( $p < .001$ ) and “believer/lapsed” ( $p < .05$ ).

***The Attribution of Importance of Religion in Participant’s life and ATLG-R, ATL, ATG, DE, LAP, and AP Scores***

*ATLG-R.* Post-hoc analysis showed significant differences between the means of “very important” and the means of “important enough” ( $p < .05$ ), “unimportant” ( $p < .001$ ), “not at all important” ( $p < .001$ ), and “I don’t know” ( $p < .001$ ); and between the means of “important enough” and the means of “unimportant” ( $p < .05$ ) and “not at all important” ( $p < .05$ ).

*ATL.* Post-hoc analysis showed significant differences between the means of “very important” and the means of “important enough” ( $p < .05$ ), “unimportant” ( $p < .05$ ), “not at all important” ( $p < .001$ ), and “I don’t know” ( $p < .05$ ); and between the mean of “important enough” and the mean of “not at all important” ( $p < .05$ ).

*ATG.* Post-hoc analysis showed significant differences between the means of “very important” and the means of “important enough” ( $p < .05$ ), “unimportant” ( $p < .001$ ), “not at all important” ( $p < .001$ ), and “I don’t know” ( $p < .001$ ); and between the means of “important enough” and the means of “unimportant” ( $p < .05$ ) and “not at all important” ( $p < .05$ ).

*DE.* Post-hoc analysis showed significant differences between the means of “very important” and the means of “important enough” ( $p < .05$ ), “unimportant” ( $p < .001$ ), “not at all important” ( $p < .001$ ), and “I don’t know” ( $p < .001$ ); and between the mean of “important enough” and the mean of “not at all important” ( $p < .05$ ).

*LAP.* Post-hoc analysis showed significant differences between the means of “very important” and the means of “important enough” ( $p < .05$ ), “unimportant” ( $p < .001$ ), “not at all important” ( $p < .001$ ), and “I don’t know” ( $p < .001$ ); and between the means of “important enough” and the means of “unimportant” ( $p < .001$ ), “not at all important” ( $p < .001$ ), and “I don’t know” ( $p < .05$ ).

*AP.* Post-hoc analysis showed significant differences between the means of “very important” and the means of “important enough” ( $p < .05$ ),

“unimportant” ( $p < .001$ ), “not at all important” ( $p < .001$ ), and “I don’t know” ( $p < .001$ ); and between the means of “important enough” and the means of “unimportant” ( $p < .05$ ), “not at all important” ( $p < .05$ ), and “I don’t know” ( $p < .05$ ).

**DISCUSSION**

In recent decades, many studies have focused on attitudes toward homosexuality and same-sex parenting, but few have studied these constructs in the Italian population (Aversa, Tripodi, Nimbi, Baiocco, & Simonelli, 2016; La Barbera & Cariota, 2009; Petrillo, La Barbera, & Falasconi, 2003; Petruccelli, Baiocco, Ioverno, Pistella, & D’urso, 2015). In line with previous research, the findings of this study confirm, even in the group of Italian participants, that (a) there is a connection between attitudes toward homosexuality and attitudes toward same-sex parenting; (b) socio-demographic and socio-cultural variables associated with positive or negative attitudes toward homosexuality also have an association with attitudes toward same-sex parenting (men, older people, people with a lower level of education, conservative people and those who define themselves as religious have more negative attitudes toward homosexuality and same-sex parenting than women, younger people, people with a higher level of education, liberal people, and those who are not religious); and (c) a low level of knowledge about homosexuality and lesbian–gay issues correlates with negative attitudes toward homosexuality and same-sex parenting. This research has also demonstrated how the connection between the two types of attitudes to lesbian, gay and same-sex parenting could be explained through the allocation of the negative connotation of homosexuals to the homosexual couples and then to same-sex parenting (Massey, 2007; Massey et al., 2013; Morse, McLaren, & McLachlan, 2008).

Regarding the second hypothesis, the findings have highlighted, as previously identified in the literature, how men have more negative attitudes than women. This data could be explained if you consider that men are stricter due to their gender belief and therefore they will be more sensitive to the violation of gender stereotypes (Kite & Deaux, 1987; Lloyd et al., 2017; Mohipp & Morry, 2004; Moreno, Herazo, Oviedo, & Campo-Airas, 2015; Moskowitz, Rieger, & Roloff, 2010; Sherkat, Vries, & Crekk, 2010; Steffens, 2005). Despite previous research having shown a gender difference in attitudes toward homosexuality (Herek & Gonzales-Rivera, 2006; Lingardi, Falanga, & D’Augelli, 2005;

Loftus, 2001; Ratcliff, Lassiter, Markman, & Snyder, 2006), in the present research this result was found not to be significant. Furthermore, Louderback and Whitley (1997) described how the huge erotic component that men experienced toward lesbians could explain the absence of negative attitudes toward female homosexuals. Regarding to same-sex parenting, the only significant subscale was the one measuring attitudes toward legislative issues.

Regarding age, and in line with previous studies (Baiocco, Nardelli, Pezzuti, & Ligiardi, 2013; Brumbaugh, Sanchez, Nock, & Wright, 2008; Herek, 2002; Steffens & Wagner, 2004), this study's findings confirmed that as age increases, so do the negative attitudes toward homosexuality and same-sex parenting. Other research (Baiocco, Nardelli, Pezzuti, & Ligiardi, 2013; Brumbaugh, Sanchez, Nock, & Wright, 2008; Hollekim, Slaatten, & Anderssen, 2012) has explained this result as the influence of sexual stigma in people's lives: the longer they live, the more they are influenced in their thought and consequently the more their negative attitudes increase.

The results concerning education level revealed, in line with previous research, that a higher level of education was associated with more positive attitudes. Several studies have presented data that describe the association of higher levels of education with freer moral values (Jackson, 2006; Lubbers, Jaspers, Ultee, 2009), and such data have been interpreted as being due to those with higher levels of education being more receptive to new ideas (Strand, 1998), having more opportunities to develop cognitive abilities (Ohlander, Batalova, & Treas, 2005), and consequently having more opportunities to share principles (and meanings) of equality (Van de Meerendonk & Scheepers, 2004).

With respect to political orientation, negative attitudes were more associated with conservative people compared to liberal ones (Baiocco, Nardelli, Pezzutti, & Ligiardi, 2013; Jackson, 2006; McVeigh & Diaz, 2009). Adams (2005) explained that conservative people were more oriented to traditional family values and, on account of this, they had more negative attitudes toward homosexuality since they believed it could destroy the tradition of family.

The results concerning religion demonstrated that believers, who were more involved in religious activities, who considered religion very important in their life, and had a strong relation with religion, shared more negative attitudes toward homosexuality and same-sex parenting than those who were not religious.

This is in line with findings of previous research (Finlay & Walther, 2003; Schulte & Battle, 2004; Olson, Cadge, & Harrison, 2006; Cardenas & Barrientos, 2008; Brown & Henriquez, 2008; Adolfsen, Iedema, & Keuzenkamp, 2010; Vincent, Parrott, & Peterson, 2011; Ellison, Acevedo, & Ramos Wada, 2011; Brinson, Denby, Crowther, & Brunton, 2011).

Finally, the results relating to the third hypothesis (that those who had incorrect ideas about homosexuality and same-sex parenting would have more negative attitudes toward these issues) showed how knowledge about homosexuality could influence people's opinions on the subject, as has been demonstrated in other research (Alderson, Orzeck, & McEwen, 2009; Eliason & Huges, 2004; Waterman Reid, Garfield, & Hoy, 2001). This occurs because an argument that is based on poor knowledge will anchor itself to the cultural stereotypes to which it refers and, in this context, the cultural stereotypes concern sexual minorities (Devine, 1989; Gordijn, Koomen, & Stapel, 2001).

In summary and as a conclusion of the present study, we wish to underline the importance of studying which aspects are connected to discriminatory attitudes with respect to LG people and their characteristics as parents. This focus would be useful not only for lesbian and gay people *per se* but also for those who grow up in same-sex family contexts. The attention that professionals and researchers dedicate to information, training, support and prevention contributes extensively to the improvement of life conditions not only of LG people but increases also the wellbeing of entire community.

## LIMITATION AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVE

The results of the present study should be considered in the context of its limitations. First, the use of only a self-report method, and second, the limited numbers of participants. Future studies should deepen the impact of the variables studied by considering the causal links between them. It would be interesting to examine the changes in the attitudes against same-sex parenting after the approval of the Same-Sex Union law in Italy in May 2016.

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