

Original Article

Homophobia predictors – A case study in Greece: heterosexual physical education student attitudes towards male and female homosexuality

YANNIS S. GEORGIU^[1], NIKOLAOS PATSANTARAS^[2], IRENE KAMBERIDOU^[3]

^[1]School of Physical Education & Sport Science, National & Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece
Doctoral Student of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, the School of Physical Education and Sport Science, GREECE

^[2] Associate Professor of Sport Sociology, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, School of Physical Education and Sport Science, GREECE

^[3] Associate Professor of Sociology – Gender Issues & Sports, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, School of Physical Education and Sport Science, GREECE

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Abstract

This study examines the attitudes of 552 undergraduate heterosexual students—of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, the School of Physical Education and Sport Science—towards male and female homosexuality. The authors begin with an overview of the hegemonic gender order in sports, subsequently examining the factors/variables that determine homophobic attitudes in male and female heterosexual students. Initially, 577 physical education students were asked to participate: 25 declared they were non-heterosexual (homosexual and bisexual). The 552 students that agreed to continue completed a demographic questionnaire and Herek's (1994) *Attitudes Towards Lesbian and Gay Men Scale* (ATLG), specifically the Greek version (Grigoropoulos, Papacharitou, & Moraitou, 2010). The findings show that sport participation/engagement is not a factor that influences attitudes. The four factors that predict attitudes towards homosexuals are gender, religiosity, political leaning and socializing with a non-heterosexual. The results indicate that anti-homophobia strategies are required. Accordingly, the article concludes with recommendations and proposals for future research, arguing for the integration of a gender perspective—including unconscious bias training—diversity policies and monitoring processes in organisational and institutional structures to change attitudes, and eventually eliminate systemic discrimination directed at individuals or groups due to sexual orientation and gender identity.

Keywords: Gender, hegemonic masculinity, non-heterosexuals, sports, respect for diversity

Introduction and Background

Seeing the invisible, speaking about the unspoken (Lofstrom, 2009). Homophobic discourse, predominantly in western societies today, focuses on social discrimination with regard to gender identity and sexual orientation, including social perceptions and expectations of masculinity and femininity, and particularly in the social space of sport, which reinforces and reproduces homophobic attitudes (Patsantaras, 2015a; Kamberidou, 2012; Kamberidou, Tsopani, Dallas & Patsantaras, 2009). Beginning with this hypothesis, the present study explores student attitudes towards male and female homosexuality at the School of Physical Education and Sport Science of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. Homophobia is an obstacle to participation in certain sports (i.e. rhythmic gymnastics, synchronized swimming, and wrestling) for both homosexual and heterosexual men and women. Many girls and women, boys and men shy away from certain sports to avoid social stigmatization, viz. out of fear of being perceived as lesbians or gay. Sport institutions, sport sociologists and social scientists have been debating this issue in recent years (Lofstrom, 2009; Kamberidou, 2012; CAAWS, 2012; Patsantaras 2015a).

In addressing homophobia and the value of diversity in sport, Karin Lofstrom (2009), the Executive Director of the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity (CAAWS)—during her presentation at the 16th IAPESGW World Congress in South Africa—argued that the time has come to speak out and address homophobia in sports, to see the *invisible* and speak about the unspoken! Since then, quoting Lofstrom (2009), the CAAWS (2012) position paper "*Seeing the Invisible – Speaking about the Unspoken*" has developed an initiative to address homophobia while Canadian sport leaders have been pursuing national policy strategies to tackle homophobia, along with harassment, bullying and violence in sport. The CAAWS position paper on homophobia in sport argues that many gays and lesbians choose not to be involved in sports because heterosexuality is the presumed norm. Athletes and coaches usually conform to this norm to maintain team and coach relationships, ensure sponsorships, financial support, and so forth.

Competitive sports—traditionally viewed as a domain where men and boys are encouraged to pursue a *masculine* gender role identity—convey strong messages regarding the historically specific and socially constructed gender order, associated with gender stereotypes, attitudes and norms concerning masculinity and femininity (Kamberidou, 2012; Kamberidou et al., 2009). In this study, gender is understood as a product of culture and socialization. It refers to the degree to which a person adopts socially *appropriate* behaviors and attitudes ascribed by his/her culture. The social space of sport in general— and competitive and professional sports in particular— is perceived as an institutional structure organized and operated by hegemonic masculinity which reproduces and rewards specific forms of masculinity (heterosexual norms), preserving the established *gender order* (Kamberidou, 2011, Patsantaras, 2015a). An abundance of literature, since the 1980's, has been theorizing and *rethinking* the concept of hegemonic masculinity: i.e. hierarchy and gender; agency; patriarchal structures and gender norms; embodiment and corporeality associated with privilege and power; geography of masculinities (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005; Kimmel & Mahler, 2003; Kimmel, 1994; Plummer, 1999). Researchers argue that hegemonic masculinity enables the development of homophobia, while preserving male dominance and power through socially acceptable behaviors prescribed for both genders (Anderson, 2002, 2010; Cunningham & Sagas 2008; Krane 2001) which clearly apply to the social space of sport.

Reproducing homophobia in the *sport male preserve* are patriarchal gendered structures, social behaviors and attitudes which are clearly linked to concepts of masculinity and male identity or the masculinity of male athletes (Kamberidou, 2009; Ensign, Yiamouyiannis, White & Ridpath, 2011; Roper & Halloran, 2007; Patsantaras 2013, 2015). Studies repeatedly argue that "mannish" social behavior,^[4] the aggressive and domineering expression of masculinity and male attitudes (Anderson, 2002; Hemphill & Symons, 2009; Patsantaras, 2015), are part of the value system of sports which is defined as hegemonic masculinity (Hemphill & Symons, 2009; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Anderson, 2002). In other words, the values and roles that boys and men have to adopt in the context of competitive sports include dominance, aggressiveness, competitiveness, athletic ability, patience, risk taking, strength, individual confidence and control, consequently confirming they belong to "the male side" and not to the diametrically opposite, associated with homosexuality or effeminacy, the latter traditionally associated with women and girls, that is to say socially accepted female traits, behaviors or mannerisms (Cheng, 1999; Wellard, 2006; Hartill, 2008; Kamberidou, 2012; Patsantaras, 2014).

Homophobia is not confined to male athletes. Antipathy, negative attitudes or intolerance towards non-heterosexual athletes or LGBTQ— acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning/unsure (CAAWS, 2012)—is also directed towards female athletes, and in particular those who excel in their fields and do not meet the socially accepted standards of femininity. For example, the social stigmatization of girls and women as lesbians—whether they are or not—has resulted in a low participation rate, deliberate underperformance, and even withdrawing from sport events (Shakib 2003; CAAWS, 2012). Additionally, despite the comparative underreporting or *invisibility* of women's sports in the media, when individual female athletes receive coverage— instead of being portrayed for their sport achievements—they are usually presented as sex-symbols, super-feminine fashion models, or the complete opposite, as macho-mannish lesbians, women who have lost their biological gender, femininity and *femaleness*. Sports journalism is one of the biggest offenders (Kamberidou & Chroni 2016).

Studies repeatedly show that competitive sports, the professional and organized sport sector, presents high levels of homophobia, that is to say social discrimination towards homosexuals, who as a result experience great levels of stress (Elling & Janssens, 2009; Hemphill & Symons, 2009; Symons, Sbaraglia, Hillier, & Mitchell, 2010). Non-heterosexuals, throughout their careers and engagement in sport and physical education, have been experiencing many forms of social exclusion or discrimination: i.e. hostility, homophobic bullying and victimization (Kokkonen, 2012; Toivala, 2011; Anderson, 2005). As a result, they are usually afraid to *come out*, viz. self-disclose their sexual orientation and gender identity. Homophobic attitudes towards homosexuals, along with the hostile sport environment inevitably destroys athlete relationships, which are vital in sports, especially regarding team unity, collaboration, the spirit of the game and winning (Griffin, Perrotti, Priest & Muska, 2002; Ensign, Yiamouyiannis, White & Ridpath, 2011).

However, the issue of homophobia that may be detected or manifested in the field of sports is also related to other wider socio-cultural factors. Studies argue that the factors that determine attitudes towards homosexuality include gender, age, education level, residency/demographic factors, political leaning and religiosity. More analytically: (1) Gender (Duyan & Duyan 2005), (2) Age (Steffens & Wagner, 2004; Van de Akker, Van der Ploeg, & Scheepers, 2013), (3) Education level (Jaspers, 2008; Grabovac et al., 2014), (4) Residential area (Feng, Lou, Gao, Tu, Cheng, Emerson, & Zabin, 2012; Van den Akker et al., 2013), (5) Socializing with a non-heterosexual person (Gelbal & Duyan, 2006; Tee & Hegarty, 2006), (6) Political leaning (Pacilli, Taurino, Jost, & van der Toorn, 2011; Rowatt, LaBouff, Johnson, Froese, & Tsang, 2009), and (7) Religiosity (Jaspers, 2008; Siker, 2007).

Material & methods

This study is designed to explore the attitudes of heterosexual physical education students of the School of Physical Education and Sport Science in Athens, towards male and female homosexuality. The proposal and structure of the research was initially presented to the Head of the Sociology Lab, being a complex and potentially sensitive topic that posed ethical considerations and methodological challenges, and/or could evoke negative emotional reactions and distress to those participating in the study. It was subsequently submitted, along with the questionnaire, to the Ethics Committee of the School of Physical Education and Sport Science of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. The proposal submitted to the Ethics Committee included an in-depth description of the study and the intended questionnaire and was approved.

Herek's (1994) *Attitudes Toward Lesbian and Gay Men* scale (ATLG), a paper and pencil questionnaire which measures heterosexual attitudes towards male and female homosexuality, was used for this study. The questionnaire consists of 20 statements split in two subscales-factors: one of ten statements for male homosexuality and one of ten for female homosexuality. Accordingly, the Greek version (Grigoropoulos, Papacharitou and Moraitou, 2010) was used in the study. The first factor's reliability Cronbach is a = .92, while the second presents a reliability Cronbach a = .85. Statistical analysis performed based on the mean of the sums of each factor. Each question is scored from 1 = totally disagree to 5 = totally agree.

A list of students was provided by the School's Secretariat, facilitating the distribution of 580 questionnaires. The students were briefed on the purpose of the study and informed that they were not obligated to participate. Only three students refused to fill out the questionnaire. 577 Physical Education (P.E.) students (300 male (52%), 277 female (48%)) were asked to take part in the study. Age groups: 27.7% (81 male-79 female) were 20 years old; 22.9% (90 men and 42 women) were 22-26 years old; 18.2% (42 men and 63 women) 19 years old; 18% (51 men and 53 women) 21 years old and 13.2% (36 men and 40 women) 18 years old (Table 1). Twenty five (25) declared they were non-heterosexual and were excluded from the study. Specifically, 11 students (1.9%) declared they were homosexuals and 14 students (2.4%) declared they were bisexual

Table 1.

Age	Male		Female		Total	
	<i>F</i>	%	<i>F</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
18	36	12	40	14.4	76	13.2
19	42	14	63	22.7	105	18.2
20	81	27	79	28.5	160	27.7
21	51	17	53	19.1	104	18
22-26	90	30	42	15.2	132	22.9
Total	300	52	227	48	577	100

note: Frequencies calculated for the gender factor.

The demographic questionnaire consisted of 12 questions, which referred to the participant's gender, age, academic year (freshman, junior, sophomore, senior), sexual orientation, religiosity, political leaning or affiliation, socializing with a non-heterosexual person, participation in a sport, type of sport (individual or team), and competition level.

Statistical Analysis

The objective of the statistical analysis was to determine/predict the attitudes of the 552 self-declared heterosexual students towards male and female homosexuality and their relation to independent variables such as gender, year of study, socializing with non-heterosexuals, religiosity, political leaning and sport engagement/participation, which are five prediction factors/variables associated significantly with the two attitude dimensions. Specifically, the model used was that of the hierarchical multiple regression analysis (stepwise multiple regression) with the enter method.

The model includes seven steps. The first step = gender, the second step = year of study, the third step = place of residence, the fourth step = gender and residence interaction, the fifth step = socializing with homosexual, the sixth step = religiosity and the seventh step = political leaning. The analysis was split in two, a first predictive analysis with dependent variable the attitudes towards male homosexuality and a second analysis with dependent variable the attitudes towards female homosexuality.

Results

As shown in Table 2, **gender** $b = -0.41$, $t = -3.78$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 14.1\%$, **socializing with a homosexual** $b = 0.24$, $t = 6.49$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 7.6\%$ **religiosity** $b = 0.23$, $t = 6.39$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 8.1\%$, and **political leaning** $b = 0.24$, $t = 6.49$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 7.6\%$ are the four factors that contribute significantly to the prediction of attitudes against male homosexuality. Specifically, the findings indicate that the male students who *do not socialize* with a homosexual (non-heterosexual) and had *high levels of religiosity* as well as a *right political leaning* showed negative attitudes towards homosexuals.

According to the results, socializing with a non-heterosexual/homosexual reduces negativity, predicting positive attitudes. The findings also indicate that a greater degree of religiosity and a right-wing affiliation (political leaning) increases negative attitudes towards non-heterosexuals, especially for men (negative attitudes in heterosexual males were greater than those of heterosexual females).

Similar were the results concerning attitudes towards female homosexuality (non-heterosexuals). Specifically, **gender** $b = -0.27$, $t = -2.26$, $p < 0.05$, $R^2 = 3.8\%$, **socializing with a homosexual** $b = 0.19$, $t = 4.66$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 5\%$, **religiosity** $b = 0.27$, $t = 6.65$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 10\%$, and **political leaning** $b = 0.22$, $t = 5.48$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 4.4\%$ are the four variables/factors that contribute significantly to the prediction of negative attitudes towards female homosexuals. Negative attitudes towards female homosexuals were observed in the male heterosexual students who *never socialized* with a homosexual, had a *high level or degree of religiosity* and *right-wing political leaning*.

With regard to the four statistically significant variables, three of them (gender, socializing and political leaning) contribute more in determining attitudes towards male homosexuality, while religiosity contributes more in determining attitudes towards female homosexuality.

Table 2. Stepwise multiple regression analysis

Predictor Variables	Dependent Variables			
	Male		Female	
	Homosexuality		Homosexuality	
	β	T	β	T
1. Gender	-0.41	-3.78***	-0.27	2.26**
2. Year of Study	.02	.42	-0.04	-0.97
3. Place of Residence	-0.14	-1.24	-0.19	-1.59
4. Interaction Gender x Residence	.12	.81	.17	1.05
5. Socializing with a Homosexual	.24	6.49***	.19	4.66***
6. Religiosity	.23	6.39***	.27	6.65***
7. Political Leaning	.21	5.70***	.22	5.48***

note: * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to highlight the predictive factors/variables of heterosexual undergraduate physical education student attitudes towards male and female homosexuality. Among the predictive variables examined were gender, age, socializing with a non-heterosexual person, religiosity and sport involvement/engagement. According to the statistical results, heterosexual males are less homophobic towards lesbians and more towards gay men while heterosexual females are more tolerant and understanding of both gays and lesbians. Moreover, political leaning and religiosity play a significant role in predicting antipathy or negative attitudes towards homosexuality.

Summarizing the results, we need reiterate that the analysis conducted identified the predictors that best categorize student attitudes towards homosexuality, specifically the degree or levels of homophobia. The strongest predictors of homophobia—with higher impact and statistical significance—were religiosity, political leaning (right-wing affiliation) and gender. The findings confirm that the factors that are of high importance were gender, socializing with a non-heterosexual, political leaning and religiosity. With regard to our department at the School of Physical Education and Sport Science in Athens, the findings suggest that a heterosexual student's daily sport program and routine could cultivate homophobic behaviors and attitudes, something not yet observed in this study, but being investigated in our ongoing research.

More analytically, the findings indicate two dimensions: factors with statistical significance appear, while some of the independent variables do not seem to have a statistically significant contribution in determining attitudes towards homosexuality. Specifically, with regard to the gender factor, the findings are consistent with the results of previous studies (Duyan & Duyan, 2005), where heterosexual men seem to have more negative attitudes towards male and female homosexuality than heterosexual women. Regarding the interaction/relationship factor, namely socializing with a homosexual or a non-heterosexual, the results show that this independent variable predicts positive attitudes towards homosexuality. Similar research results are consistent with those of the present study, as interactions/relations with LGBT individuals seems to lead to more positive attitudes, greater tolerance and alleviation of negative attitudes possibly created by other factors (Gelbal & Duyan, 2006; Tee & Hegarty, 2006).

Political leaning shows a particular statistical significance in predicting attitudes towards homosexuality, and especially stronger negative reactions and attitudes are apparent/predicted in the more conservative political affiliations and right-wing tendencies. Similar findings have been reported in a number of studies which confirm that the most conservative political leanings/positions and beliefs are consistent with more negative attitudes towards homosexuals (Pacilli, Taurino, Jost, & van der Toorn, 2011; Rowatt, LaBouff, Johnson, Froese, & Tsang, 2009).

Religiosity appears to have a particular statistical significance and is a predictor of attitudes. As religiosity rises, negative attitudes seem to increase. This particular factor (religiosity) is a variable of significant interest since it confirms the results of previous studies, that show that as religious orientation and church dogmatism is stronger, there is an increase in negative attitudes (Jaspers, 2008; Siker, 2007). Conversely, the results of this study do not agree with those of other studies with regard to independent variables such as age, education level and residency (demographic factors). While age does not seem to be a statistically significant predictor of attitudes in this study, as opposed to older studies which seem to follow a linear relationship as the younger the age of the participants the more positive are their attitudes towards homosexuals, whereas the older they are the more negative are their attitudes (Steffens & Wagner, 2004). The noncompliance of the results may be due to the fact that in the present study, the subjects belong to the same generation, namely there is no generation gap that would result in a distinctive difference in attitudes.

Another independent variable that was examined, and is not a factor that predicts attitudes, is the educational level. The non-statistical significance of the effect of the education factor appears to be in contrast to the results of other studies where the higher the education level, the higher the emergence of positive attitudes towards homosexuality (Grabovac, Abramović, Komlenović, Milošević, & Mustajbegović, 2014). A possible interpretation of this difference in results could be that the participants of our study were ranked according to their academic year, the majority being undergraduate students.

As regards the demographic factor (urban or rural residency), this study considers the participants place of residence until the age of 18 and up to his/her admission to the university in Athens. No statistical significance is observed here, as opposed to other studies which indicate that urban residents tend to show more positive attitudes towards homosexuality, as opposed to those living in rural areas (Van den Akker et al., 2013). This could be interpreted by the fact that the majority of the students are mainly from the Attica region or Athens, the capital of Greece, and not from rural areas.

Concluding remarks and Recommendations

Integrating the gender dimension

The case study in Greece indicates the need for further research on the gender dimension; especially if we consider that the right-wing affiliated female students, (5.48%) show less negative attitudes towards homosexuals than their male counterparts (5.70%). This is not the case for the female heterosexual students when the religious variable is introduced, namely they are less tolerant (6.65%) or show more negative attitudes towards homosexuals than their male counterparts (6.39%). Positive attitudes are observed in the male (6.49%) and female (4.66%) students who socialize with a non-heterosexual. (Table 2). Future research need focus on the gender dimension, since studies on attitude differences from a gender perspective (Kamberidou 2011, 2012) are limited: i.e. predictors of homophobia in females; why are heterosexual males less homophobic towards lesbians and more towards gay men; why are heterosexual females more tolerant and understanding?

As traditional social categories diversify, sport identity also diversifies and is challenged. Reassessing changing identities and gender relations means integrating the gender dimension into the equation, so as to transform exclusionary and unequal institutional structures into equal and just ones for both women and men. Integrating a gender perspective or respect for diversity is part of a more fundamental equation that not only entails ensuring a gender balance, but also enabling everyone to realize their full potential (Kamberidou, 2009, 2012; Kamberidou & Chroni, 2016).

One need point out here that gender issues in sports do not only concern women, as men also have a gender and are subject to gender stereotyping, distinctive social expectations and exclusions (Kamberidou, 2011). Gender integration refers to the process of assessing and reassessing the implications for both women and men of any legislation, policy, program and action plan at all levels: social, economic and political. The main goal of integrating the gender dimension is that of social equality and equity, which requires gender-specific interventions, policies and practices that may target exclusively women or interventions that target men only, or even men and women together (Kamberidou & Fabry, 2012).

In the near future gender-specific interventions and policies that target exclusively men will be addressing the question of men's participation in traditionally female-dominated sports. For example, men and boys today are participating in synchronized swimming and rhythmic gymnastics, often associated with homosexuality, and with no actual grounds for this association. Most of the synchronized swimming championships held in Europe allow male swimmers to compete i.e. France has *male only* synchronized swimming events (Kamberidou, 2012). In the last three decades men have been demanding equal participation in competitive rhythmic gymnastics, and specifically that FIG (Fédération Internationale de Gymnastique) takes the necessary steps towards making men's rhythmic gymnastics an official sport and that it becomes a competing category in the Olympics (Kamberidou, 2012). A growing number of male rhythmic gymnasts have been participating in competitions—solo, individual, team and even mixed pair— on a non-competitive (unofficial) level, since FIG recognizes only women's rhythmic gymnastics. However, rhythmic gymnastics for men and

boys is growing and how far it will go remains to be seen. Men's rhythmic gymnastics teams have been active in Japan, Australia, Canada, the United States, Russia, Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, Greece, Spain and Italy.^[5]

It is important to point out here— with regard to the gender dimension— that women athletes have been welcoming and supporting men's participation in *women's sports*, something that did not occur when women were demanding participation in *men's sports* (i.e. marathon, hockey, football). The results of a case study (with 299 participants) conducted by Kamberidou, Tsopani, Dallas and Patsantaras (2009), shows that female athletes (rhythmic gymnasts), coaches/trainers, judges and members of the technical committee of rhythmic gymnastics supported the official recognition of men's rhythmic gymnastics as an Olympic sport. Moreover, they were also in favour of the official recognition of mixed group and mixed pair competitions.^[6]

Rhythmic gymnastics for men may sound atypical or peculiar to many, as did hockey, wrestling, football and bodybuilding for women in the past, but it has become a reality. In 2015 Russia proposed to add men's rhythmic gymnastics in the Olympics and Irina Viner-Uzmanova, the head of the country's rhythmic gymnastics federation, announced to the media that she is "absolutely behind (men) taking part" in her sport, especially now that "there are women in boxing, football and weightlifting."^[7] If FIG officially recognizes men's rhythmic gymnastics, and subsequently mixed groups and mixed pairs, will this signal the beginning of a process that will eventually break down the structurally secured hegemonic gender order in sports and subsequently the wastage of talent?

It is very likely that a number of sports have missed out or been robbed of talent, i.e. young players not participating or continuing their sport out of fear of *coming out*. How can we eliminate this wastage of talent? Could sport do more to tackle homophobia and homophobic abuse? Shouldn't sport officials and sporting authorities have a clear duty to report, document and punish any kind of social exclusion? Since silence and inactivity sustains prejudices and systemic discrimination, sport organizations and sport leadership have a legal, social and ethical duty to make sport safe and accessible to all through immediate and pragmatic steps which include:

- a) A call to action: Applying effective diversity policies and monitoring processes to identify and eliminate systemic discrimination in sport structures, sport-governing bodies (SGBs) and educational institutions.
- b) Appointing diversity officers: ensuring an ethical code of conduct; developing policies and practices for dealing with complaints.
- c) Setting up an Anti-Homophobia Advisory Committee: collaboration with SGBs, sport commissions, human rights organizations, gay and bisexual communities, etc. to develop and promote anti-homophobia strategies.
- d) Preparing a Handbook on the value of diversity, including steps to eliminate homophobia, bullying, and violence in sport to be incorporated into school intervention programs.
- e) Unconscious bias training - integrating a gender perspective to promote awareness: reassessing identities and gender relations, educating and training the trainers.
- f) Gender specific interventions, policies and practices making the sport experience and sport environment, safe and welcoming to all, including LGBTQ athletes.
- g) Along with the gender dimension, studies need also focus on other variables that influence levels of homophobia: cultural diversity, race, socioeconomic status, and marital status. Ability to integrate means considering the cultural dimension or suffering the consequences.

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- ^[4] According to masculinity theory (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005) —in reference to sociologist Raewyn Connell's original theory on masculinity, the most influential theory in the field of men and masculinities first published in 1995.
- ^[5] For example, the Third Men's Cup of Synchronized Swimming (Men's Cup 3) was held in Milan, April 11, 2009 with participants from 12 countries: Germany, France, Belgium, Spain, Sweden, the Netherlands, Japan, Italy, the Ukraine and the Czech Republic. This global biannual Men's Cup synchronized swimming championship— established in Prague in 2005—has been steadily growing over the past years. It is a global [synchro](#) competition for male competitors. The first Men's Cup of Synchronized Swimming (Men's Cup 1) was held in Prague in 2005, the second in Stockholm in 2007, the third (Men's Cup 3) in Milan in 2009 and the fourth (Men's Cup 4 Synchro Tournament) in Amsterdam, etc. Additionally, most of the synchronized swimming championships held in Europe allow male swimmers to compete i.e. France has a male only synchronized swimming events.
- ^[6] In February 2009 the President of the Spanish Gymnastics Federation, Antonio Esteban Cerdán, announced the organization of the 1st National Championship of Men's Rhythmic Gymnastics, an initiative supported by the Spanish government. This is a ground-breaking venture since it is the first federation that recognizes men's rhythmic gymnastics (Kamberidou, 2009).
- ^[7] CTV (2015). "Russia pushes to add men to rhythmic gymnastics". *CTV News Toronto*, Associated Press, Wednesday, Aug. 19, 2015 9:43AM EDT (last access 2/2/2018) <https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/more/toronto-sports-news/russia-pushes-to-add-men-to-rhythmic-gymnastics-1.2523638>