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Exploring Homophobia in Tbilisi, Georgia

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine statistical predictors of homophobic attitudes among the residents of Tbilisi, Georgia. We analyze 2013 survey data from a representative sample of the Tbilisi adult population. Residents were asked about their attitudes, beliefs, and political and social values in the context of the May 17, 2013 attack on LGBT activists on the International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT). Findings show that homophobia is significantly predicted by male gender, lower levels of education, acceptance of social

inequality, non-liberal attitudes, and by perceiving homosexuals as a “threat to national security”. However, psychological perceptions and personal experiences also indirectly influence homophobic attitudes: the findings suggest that males report homophobic attitudes more often than females do, and tend to be even more homophobic when they believe that homosexuality is inborn rather than acquired. The study also found that people without liberal attitudes tend to be more homophobic when they have personal contacts with homosexuals. This paper highlights the need for a more comprehensive approach to education and the promotion of liberal values as well as legal equality for LGBTQ individuals in order to decrease the level of homophobia in Georgian society and, specifically, in Tbilisi.

Keywords: homophobia, gender, tolerance, education, minority rights, Georgia, Tbilisi.

Highlights:

- We examine survey data to find predictors of homophobic attitudes among the adult population in Tbilisi.
- Lower levels of education, less liberal values, and being male predict homophobic attitudes of Tbilisi population.
- Men are more homophobic when they believe that homosexuality is innate rather than acquired.
- Personal contacts with homosexuals enhance the negative relationship between liberalism and homophobia.
- Religiosity, measured by church attendance, does not predict homophobia.

1. Introduction

Intolerance of various sorts is among the problems Georgia is struggling with on its way to democratization. Not surprisingly, homophobia is one kind of such intolerance. In a society where traditional values are dominant, LGBT rights are hardly considered important. According to CRRC's annual *Caucasus Barometer* surveys, when asked about the most important issues facing the country, people focus on economic problems, while the issues related to protection of human rights never make it among the top ten issues named.¹

According to the 2011 *Caucasus Barometer* survey, 88% of Georgia's population thought that homosexuality could never be justified.² In general, the population of the capital of Georgia, Tbilisi, tends to report more liberal attitudes. In this particular case, however, there is an overwhelming majority of the rural population³ reporting negative attitudes towards homosexuals. No significant differences can be observed specifically for various settlement types – intolerance towards homosexuality is very similar in the population of the capital, Tbilisi, in other urban settlements, and in rural settlements.³ Similar attitudes were recorded in

¹ Caucasus Barometer provide comparative data on dynamics of public opinion in the South Caucasus countries for the period between 2008 and 2013:

<http://www.caucasusbarometer.org/en/cb2013ge/IMPISS1/>

²<http://caucasusbarometer.org/en/cb2011ge/JUSHOMO>

³ <http://caucasusbarometer.org/en/cb2011ge/JUSHOMO-by-SETTYPE/>

neighboring Azerbaijan in the same survey, while the attitudes were even more radical in Armenia,⁴ where 97% reported that homosexuality can never be justified.⁵

Several organizations have been working on protection of LGBT rights in Georgia during the past few years, but the issue of homophobia in Georgia remained without significant political or public attention until May 17, 2013. On this day, a peaceful demonstration of about fifty LGBT activists marking the International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT) were violently attacked in Tbilisi by thousands of people led by Georgian Orthodox Church leaders. The purpose of this study is to examine social and cultural values that are linked with homophobic attitudes among Tbilisi residents. Also, the study aims to address the limitations of the existing government interventions, which are only directed at improving the legal framework, ignoring the role of civic education, and the development of liberal values.

Our study expands knowledge about homophobic attitudes in Georgian society in two ways. First, in contrast to previous empirical studies conducted in different countries, which were largely based on a convenience sample, we use data that comes from a representative sample of the population of Tbilisi, where approximately 1/3 of the population of Georgia lives. Second, we test different clusters of variables such as socio-demographic factors, liberal values and religious attitudes, psychological variables like personal perceptions and beliefs as a potential predictors/mediators of homophobia.

⁴ <http://www.caucasusbarometer.org/en/cb2011am/JUSHOMO/>

⁵ <http://www.caucasusbarometer.org/en/cb2011az/JUSHOMO/>

Understanding the factors that can predict homophobic attitudes in the Georgian context is necessary for both theoretical and practical reasons. From a theoretical perspective, defining predictors of homophobia will contribute to the field of social prejudice studies and help to explain how homophobic attitudes emerge. On a practical level, exploring predictors of homophobia is a crucial starting point in order to plan policy intervention(s) to combat aggression (including physical insult), stigmatization, and discrimination against sexual minorities in Georgia.

The report below analyzes survey data collected by CRRC-Georgia two weeks after the May 17th events in 2013. A representative sample of the Tbilisi adult (18+) population was interviewed face-to-face. The respondents were asked about their attitudes, beliefs, and political and social values in the context of the May 17th events. Based on the collected data, we explore four clusters of potential predictors of homophobia: (1) basic socio-demographic characteristics (gender, age, level of education), (2) liberal attitudes and religious attendance, (3) perception of justice and equality, and (4) psychological perceptions/reasoning and personal experience. First, we present theoretical and empirical findings that evidence a role of predictor variables on homophobic attitudes. Then, we describe local socio-political factors that effect homophobic attitudes in Georgia. In the following sections, empirical study and data analysis are presented to estimate the predictive power of each cluster of variables and moderation analysis. Finally, we introduce basic findings and relevant policy recommendations. Since the survey asked about attitudes towards homosexuals, this paper focuses specifically on homosexuality, rather than the LGBTQ spectrum.

1.1 Theoretical Knowledge about Homophobia

In the last two decades, a large amount of studies have focused on homophobia. Homophobia has been explained as a strong fear of homosexual individuals that results in cognitive, affective and behavioral attitudes (Wright, Adams, & Bernat, 1999). Emotional reactions such as fear, disgust, and anger are the most common and prevalent markers of homophobia (O'Donohue & Caselles, 1993; Rozin, Haidt, & McCauley, 2008). The research of Haidt, Rozin, McCauley, and Imada showed that people often name gay sexual activities when asked about things they disgust (Haidt, Rozin, McCauley, & Imada, 1997). Several theories try to explain how strong negative emotions toward homosexuals have evolved and have persisted in certain societies. Major theories about homophobia that are relevant for the Georgian context are presented below.

Structural theories explain homophobic attitudes through basic paradigms, with a focus on more or less stable social constructions of gender and sexuality. The South Caucasus region, including Georgia, historically has been considered as a patriarchal society where gender roles are rigidly defined and gender stereotypes influence everyday life. Feminist approaches primarily explain homophobia based on patriarchal social relations; in this context, homosexuality is seen as opposition and resistance to the established, patriarchal order, homosexuality is regarded as irrational and thus, unacceptable since it does not lead to reproduction and thus does not contribute to the strength and enlargement of the family (Adam, 1998).

Patriarchy is a key issue in comparative theories as well. According to these theories, societies can be divided into those with weak fraternal interests and those with strong fraternal interests. The former is associated with a lack of material goods, but respect for female reproductive potential, as well as a preference for fertility over virginity (Paige 1982). The latter, to the contrary, is concerned with female virginity and patriarchal control over the reproductive power of women. This is characteristic of settled agrarian patriarchal societies. Homophobia is more characteristic to this latter type of society and may take a hierarchical form of control over females as well as young males.

Studies show that gender non-conformity causes negative attitudes regardless of one's sexual orientation, however gender non-conforming homosexuals are evaluated more negatively than gender non-conforming heterosexuals (Blashill & Powlishta 2009; Lehavot & Lambert 2007). According to gender panic theory, homophobia is brought about by a sense of superiority over females, and the fear of losing male privileges. Adam argues that males use homophobia as proof of masculinity, yet at the same time, homophobia largely results from fear of losing male status and advantages (Adam, 1998). The same argument is used by queer theory, according to which homosexuals are considered discredited males who arouse fear and anxiety in heterosexual males—the latter of whom feel insecure about their male status, but are not capable to present their masculinity in a rational way (Sedgwick 1990). Social identity theory also stresses the importance of fear perceptions in forming homophobic attitudes; homophobia is formed when homosexuals are perceived as dangerous to society (Tajfel 1974).

Patriarchal norms are deeply rooted in Georgian society: men are viewed as the main decision makers, heads of family, and mostly they are also the only breadwinners in the family. Women are underrepresented in decision making bodies and economically disempowered. According to the UNPD gender inequality index, Georgia is ranked as number 79 of the 131 countries surveyed.⁶ However, it is important to note that Georgia is undergoing a shift of gender roles, as well as a decrease in the importance of male status (Sumbadze & Tarkhan-Mouravi 2005), but still homophobia is presented in severe forms in Georgian society. Socio-historical theories explain this controversy by referring to the Frankfurt School of philosophers, which claimed that modernism has achieved enlightenment alongside more efficient systems of control and domination.

To summarize, manifestations of homophobia are culturally and historically specific and are furthermore shaped by social and political institutions. On the one hand, internalization of traditional gender roles increase homophobia (Fyfe, 1983). On the other hand, social structures, institutions, and ideological views define norms and roles that can foster homophobic attitudes in a given society (Adam, 1998).

1.2. Empirical Findings about Homophobia

Over the last two decades, homophobic attitudes have been extensively studied empirically as well. Homophobia is considered to be a result of interactions between an attitudinal triad of emotions, cognition, and behavior and the specific environment of a given individual (O'Donohue & Caselles 1993). Many studies have sought to understand the sources, dynamics,

⁶ <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/GEO>

and power of homophobia. Liberal attitudes, religion, gender, and socioeconomic status are among variables hypothesized to predict homophobia; however, specific cultural, social, and political contexts also determine the power of existing relationships. Lack of liberal values, including its very basic demonstrations (such as intolerance towards a person's personal choices in terms of appearance, e.g. a man having long hair or wearing earrings,) and economic prosperity are often found to be statistically significant predictors of homophobia in different cultures. For example, Adamczyk and Pitt (2009) found more tolerance towards homosexuality in societies that have undergone modernization and industrialization, and that have shifted from survival to self-expression.

Economic prosperity has an independent influence on the development of modern values. Yuchtman-Yaar and Alkalay (2007) conducted a multi-level analysis of World Value Survey data from 2004 on nineteen highly self-expressive and fourteen less self-expressive countries to determine the role of country-level cultural and economic variables, such as cultural-religious zones; and individual variables (age, gender, level of education and religiousness) or liberal values. While most variance in terms of liberal values comes from individual-level differences, the author finds that dominant religion and level of economic development have both independent and collective effects on these values. The study found liberal values to be stronger in Protestant zones, and weaker in Islamic zones. In other studies, traditional attitudes were found to be one of the best predictors of homophobia (Altemeyer 1996; Basow& Johnson 2000). A study done by Stulhofer and Rimac analyses macro determinants of homophobic attitudes in thirty-one European countries and demonstrates that economic development and modernization tend to reduce negative attitudes towards homosexuals, however Eastern

Orthodox Religion and rapid international immigration accelerate homophobic attitudes

(Stulhofer & Rimac, 2009).

Several studies have found religiosity to be a strong predictor of negative attitudes toward homosexuals and their rights (Johnson, Brems, & Alford-Keating, 1997). In those European countries where the influence of the Orthodox church is strong, negative attitudes towards homosexuals are also reported much more frequently, but the study evidenced that attitudes towards homosexuals are not linked exclusively to Christian orthodoxy or to Islam (or Catholicism, or Judaism, or Buddhism, or any other established faith – they all have historically intolerant attitudes towards anything but heterosexual behavior), but also to how it is practiced in everyday life (Stulhofer & Rimac, 2009). This is logical considering that conservative religious principles socially transmit the notion that homosexuality is sinful (Merino, S. M., 2013). For individuals with more ties to religious conservatives (regardless of whether or not they are personally religiously conservative), a change in attitudes toward homosexuality or gay rights would likely represent a deviation from group norms and attitudes. Adamczyk and Pitt have argued that active religious involvement and regular exposure to religious discourse encourages homophobic attitudes, especially in Muslims and conservative Protestants (Adamczyk & Pitt, 2009). According to the existing literature, a strong connection between religion and homophobia can be explained by religious fundamentalism, implying that there is only one way of true thinking, only one right way to follow it, and that this teaching needs to be protected from “evil” forces (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992). However, it is worth noting that religious practice, and not religious denomination, is a key issue explaining association between religiosity and homophobia in many cultures.

Some studies have found that homophobia is related to gender and is more characteristic for males than for females. Some studies suggest that homophobia is related to men's exaggerated sense of masculinity, and that men in their early twenties are the main perpetrators of anti-gay aggression (Harry, 1990). In other words, homophobia is viewed as an ultimate part of heterosexual masculinity (Herek, 1986). Therefore, homophobia is a "masculinity trait" that has been incorporated into a "macho personality constellation" and once masculinity is threatened, negative attitudes and aggressive behavior are activated (Bernat et al., 2001). The authors also hypothesize that homophobia is linked with supercilious attitudes, including adversarial sexual beliefs, which implies that men's interaction with women is perceived as antagonistic. Consequently, hostility driven from the superiority belief raises aggressive behavior. According to Herek (1986), gender differences in homophobic attitudes were observed regularly, with heterosexual males having more negative attitudes towards gay men. A study by Heaven and Oxman (1999) also suggests that there is a gender effect on negative stereotypes of gays and lesbians and so called "order values" (i.e. national strength and order). The link between both sets of values, which are related to security as well as stereotypes of gay men, has been mediated by conservatism. The authors suggest that a possible explanation of the gender effect on homophobic attitudes is that the perceived threat from homosexuals is experienced more strongly by males than by females. Males view homosexuality as a threat to their "maleness" and male sex roles and, therefore, are more antagonistic toward gay men than females are (Heaven & Oxman, 1999). Numerous other studies also confirm that males demonstrate more homophobia than females do (Baker & Fishbein, 1998; Horn, 2006; Poteat, Mereish, Digiovanni, & Koenig, 2011; Price, 1982; Van de Ven, 1994), and those with more traditional

male role attitudes (Marsiglio, 1993) or sex-role stereotyping (Hoover & Fishbein, 1999, Takács & Szalma, 2013) are more likely to manifest symptoms of homophobia than those with less traditional view of gender roles (Collier, Bos, & Sandfort, 2012).

Apart from gender, some studies demonstrate that socioeconomic status is an important predictor of intolerance and negative attitudes toward homosexuals. Data from the World Values Survey of 35 countries show that higher income inequality is related to more negative attitudes toward homosexuals, supporting the argument that economic prosperity leads to more liberal attitudes and decreases the level of homophobia in society (Andersen & Fetner, 2008). Another study found strong evidence concerning the impact of a country's economic affluence on the political as well as social liberal values (Yuchtman-Yaar & Alkalay, 2007).

The power and influence of the legislative system is quite apparent in the context of sexual minority discrimination: the level of homophobia is the lowest in those countries where gay marriage is legal (Akker, Ploeg, & Scheepers, 2012). However, the possibility of partnership registration for gay couples has a low impact on homophobic attitudes that means that legalization of same-sex marriage (and not possibility of partnership registration) should be considered as by policymakers as a key factor that eliminate homophobia (Hooghe & Meeusen, 2013).

We can conclude that homophobia is largely caused by macro level variables, but there are apparently individual level variables as well, which are able to shape personal attitudes. Some of those factors stemming from personal experiences, cognitive appraisals, and feelings and

emotions have personal meanings and therefore could be considered from a psychosocial perspective. For example, personal acquaintance with a homosexual may effect attitudes toward homosexuals in much higher degree than other macro level variables, such as level of education or religious beliefs. Moreover, homosexuality might be perceived as controllable or uncontrollable and, therefore, this belief is capable to change the angle of people's view of homosexuals (Hegarty and Pratto 2001; Whitley 1990). Also, beliefs about the cause of homosexuality (whether it is deliberately chosen or genetically determined) influence peoples' views and behavior (Major & O'Brien, 2005).

Some studies empirically investigate those influences. For example some studies show that personal contacts with homosexuals decrease the level of hostility and thus, reduce homophobic tendencies. Survey responses from Dutch adolescents show that contact with lesbian/gay persons was associated with positive attitudes toward lesbians and gays (Collier, Bos &, Sandfort 2012). Another study demonstrates that levels of homophobia among social workers were negatively correlated with amount of contact with homosexuals (Berkman & Zinberg, 1997). A study conducted by Merino (2013) shows that interpersonal contact did not always correlate to a reduction of homophobia. In certain cases, contact with representatives of highly salient group that is discriminated against in a given society is more likely to be characterized by intergroup anxiety, which undermines potentially positive effects of contact. Individuals who experience intergroup contact may not undergo an attitude change when they are embedded in relatively homogeneous networks that provide counteracting information and norms (Merino, 2013).

1.3. Trends and Contexts of Homophobia in Tbilisi

Homophobia has been a problematic issue in Georgia for many years. Intolerance of homosexuals and the violation of their rights remain a politically charged issue and a big concern for civil society. In recent years, the Georgian population has shown itself to be homophobic in many ways. Compared to neighboring countries, Georgia takes third place based on the strength of negative attitudes towards homosexuals (see Figure 1). Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia show very high levels of homophobia according to World Value Survey: 94.4% of Azerbaijanis, 92.7% of Armenians and 86.6% of Georgians named homosexuals as undesirable neighbors.

Based on the World Values Survey currently (in 2014? 2016?) for almost 87 % of Georgian population homosexuals are people who they do not wish to have as neighbors and nearly the same percentage of people think that homosexuality is never justifiable. If we look at the dynamics of negative attitudes towards homosexuals, it becomes clear that in the 1990's, homosexuals were not evaluated as negatively as they are now, but around the turn of the millennium (early 2000s), negative attitudes began to rise. Over the next ten years, these homophobic attitudes have again somewhat decreased. To explain this trend we should look at political and social changes over time. In November 2003, the 'Rose Revolution' in Georgia brought new, pro-Western oriented leaders who were trying to promote principles of liberal democracy, free economy, freedom of speech, and human rights. These changes were quite rapid and comprehensive, but value changes were harder to achieve than institutional and

political changes. Consequently, the rise of homophobic attitudes during this period can be a reflection of uncertainty and fear of Western values, liberal reforms, and democratization.

In this study we are going to explore current homophobic attitudes in Georgia more in detail.

Firstly, we focus on those people who stated that they would not want homosexuals for neighbors. In contrast to the WVS data which shows the proportion of people with homophobic attitudes in different countries, the CRRC data provides a much detailed picture. CRRC survey data shows that 29.2 % of the Tbilisi population name homosexuals as the most undesirable neighbors. For those people, homosexuals are more undesirable as neighbors than criminals, people of other races, people practicing a different religion, and people with different political beliefs. Among the political and social factors that currently determine people's opinion on homosexuals we could point out several factors.

First, the issue of sexual minorities is politically charged in Georgia: while pro-Western politicians are combating homophobia openly, most pro-Russian political forces try to take advantage of the current situation and declare that Georgia is under the threat of a Western civilization that seeks to 'legalize immorality' by forcing Georgia to sign antidiscrimination legislation.⁷

Undoubtedly, this political discourse is convincing to the segment of people who fear change, believe that Western political forces aim to destabilize the region, and who are against the European integration. These forces are spreading these ideas through media: EU is sometimes presented as an actor that pushes propaganda for homosexuality, and in extreme cases

⁷<https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/2339687>

homosexuals are equaled with pedophiles.⁸ Considering this context, generating fear and disgust towards homosexuals is easy. Hence, in post-Soviet countries, where democracy is just emerging, the issue of sexual minorities remains the subject of political bargaining: for certain political forces it is useful to present homosexuals as models of a ‘perverted West,’ while for others defending the rights of minorities is the main value of ‘civilized West.’

The second particularity of homophobia in the Georgian context is the increased power of Orthodox Church. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, religion replaced state-atheism and the Orthodox Church became a significant ideological actor in Georgia. The Church built up its power by forging a strong connection between religious faith and national self-determination. Georgian Orthodoxy became directly associated with Georgian nationality and cultural identity; indeed, the two have been cast as synonymous by the Georgian Orthodox Church (Ladaria 2012). In this context, whatever is unacceptable for the Church should by implication also automatically be unacceptable for anyone who defines himself/herself as a Georgian. Thus, the influence of the Georgian Orthodox Church has spread not only among the members of the Orthodox Church but among all people who define themselves as Georgians. Since the Orthodox Church harshly condemns homosexuality, not only Orthodox Christians, but the population at large is likely to share this position. It is worth noting that an absolute majority of Georgians (84%) identify themselves as Orthodox Christians.⁹ Moreover, the share of

⁸<http://identoba.com/tag/homophobia/>

⁹ <http://caucasusbarometer.org/en/cb2013ge>

Georgians (82%) that trust their religious institutions is much higher than the one expressing trust in the EU (33%).¹⁰

To sum up, there are two main forces accelerating homophobic attitudes in Georgian society: political anti-democratic forces that are against Georgia's EU integration, and the Georgian Orthodox Church, the most trusted institution in Georgia, which strongly condemns homosexuality.

2. Current Study

Homophobia has never been studied empirically in Georgia, and reliable information about the spread of homophobic attitudes (and analyses of their determinants/predictors) is lacking. Existing knowledge is episodic and largely superficial, or lacks impartiality. In order to fill the existing gaps, we draw an empirical picture of the major factors that accelerate and foster homophobic attitudes in Tbilisi. Additionally, our goal is to test the moderating effects of psychological variables to better understand the relation between homophobia and socio-cultural and attitudinal factors.

Although the above-mentioned studies show that social and political attitudes, religiosity and gender, as well as personal contact influence levels of homophobic attitudes, there is no single study which covers all the variables - socio-demographic characteristics, values and

¹⁰<http://crrc-caucasus.blogspot.com/search/label/Georgian%20Orthodox%20Church>

psychological factors (such as perceived cause of homosexuality, perceived controllability of homosexuality, threat perception, and personal contacts with homosexuals) to determine the power of each potential predictor of homophobia. Mostly, studies try to link homophobic attitudes to social, political, and cultural values, while the psychological determinants are either studied apart from them or neglected.

We designed our study to expand knowledge about homophobic attitudes in Georgian society in two ways. First, in contrast to previous empirical studies conducted in different countries, which mainly are based on a convenience sample, we use data that comes from a representative sample of the population of Tbilisi, where approximately 1/3 of the population of Georgia lives.

Second, we test new direct and indirect relationships, including psychological variables as potential predictors/mediators of homophobia.

2.1 Study Design

We explore four major categories of variables as potential predictors of homophobic attitudes in the Tbilisi population¹¹: socio-demographic; liberalism and religious attendance; justice and equality; psychological perceptions/reasoning and personal experience.

We expect that all of these variables will contribute to predicting homophobia, but that each variable will have a different level of influence. Overall, we expect that, among the residents of Tbilisi, homophobia can be predicted with a high degree of confidence. We expect gender and age, as well as the level of education, personal contacts with homosexuals, and especially,

¹¹For comprehensive information about the variables used, see Table 1.

religiosity as measured by religious attendance, to be particularly salient predictors of homophobia. Additionally, we hypothesize that psychological perception/reasoning and personal experience might have a moderating role in the relationship between homophobic attitudes and relevant predictors. It means that strength and direction of the associations between homophobia and predictor variables might be influenced by psychological perceptions/reasoning such as personal experiences, threat perception and attribution of cause of homosexuality.

We use quantitative data from CRRC-Georgia's survey on public attitudes toward the May 17th events.¹² This survey was conducted soon after these events, between May 30 and June 18, 2013, among a representative sample of Georgian-speaking adult (18+) residents of Tbilisi. The timing of fieldwork is a significant advantage of our data since the respondents were surveyed in a naturally priming condition, when impressions were still fresh and well-remembered, and when the public debate and mass media coverage of these events was still very active, ensuring a high level of data accuracy. Respondents were asked several questions specifically regarding the May 17th events, as well as questions about their general political, social, and religious attitudes. Computer-assisted face-to-face interviews were conducted and overall 542 respondents (366 females and 176 males) were interviewed. Female respondents are often over-represented in CRRC samples because of two major reasons: first, there are more female than male adults living in the country, and second, the non-response rate tends to be much lower for

¹² For more information about CRRC-Georgia, visit <http://crrc.ge/>

females.¹³ The non-response rate was 49.2% and the average margin of error of the results was 4.7%. The data was not weighted for the analysis performed here. Respondents' ages varied from 18 to 88 (mean = 46.3; SD = 18.23). 116 respondents had completed secondary or lower level of education, 106 had secondary technical education, and 320 had higher education.¹⁴

The dependent variable – homophobia – was measured by the question: “Whom would you most dislike to be your neighbor?” Respondents were to choose their answer from a list of devaluated social groups: drug addicts; black people; people practicing a different religion; people with different political beliefs; homosexuals; and criminals. During the analysis, the answers were recoded into dummy categories: 1=“homosexuals” and 0=“[all] others”.¹⁵

The questionnaire was designed by CRRC experts and was tested thoroughly during the pilot, in order to make sure the questions were clear and were measuring the concepts they were intended to measure. Some of the questions used during this survey were adapted from CRRC's Caucasus Barometer questionnaires;¹⁶ several questions were adapted from influential international surveys (e.g., the World Value Survey), while some questions, aiming to measure

¹³ In most of the CRRC datasets, the data is weighted and, as a result, female vs. male response rates get quite similar.

¹⁴ The latter group comprises 22 respondents who reported “incomplete higher education,” most probably current students.

¹⁵ Options “Do not know” and “Refuse to answer” (total of 16 cases) were coded as missing values.

¹⁶ <http://www.crrccenters.org/20122/Documentation>

attitudes and opinions specifically regarding the May 17 events, have been developed for this particular survey. Detailed description of the variables that were clustered in four categories and used during the analysis is given in Table 1:

Statistical techniques employed for data analysis include chi-square test, independent sample t-test, correlation, logistic regression and mediation. The findings are presented in the next section.

2.2 Study Results

2.2.1. Descriptive Statistics and Correlation

26% percent of women and 39% of men report that homosexuals are the most unwanted neighbors. Chi-square tests show a significant relationship between gender and homophobia: $\chi^2(1, n=526)=8,65; p=.003$. Men are more likely to display homophobic attitudes than women. An independent sample t-test was run to understand whether the respondents' age, education, and religious attendance were related to homophobia. Results show that age and religious attendance have no effect on homophobia, but education does: with higher levels of education, less homophobia is reported: $t (526)= 2.19, p=.03$. As expected, people with non-homophobic attitudes scored higher on the liberalism scale ($M= 0.14, SD=1.09$,) than those with homophobic attitudes ($M= -0.29, SD=0.72, t(526)= 5.09, p=.001$).

A chi-square test indicated that support for justice is associated with more positive attitudes toward homosexuals: 85% of supporters of legal equality for sexual minorities do not report homophobic attitudes, while only 15% do: $\chi^2 (1, n=526)=27,40; p=.001$. Among those supporting selective justice for whom?, the proportions of homophobic and non-homophobic individuals are almost the same. Perceived national threat is also associated with homophobia; a majority (88%) of those who did not perceive that homosexuals were threatening national values are non-homophobic, while 43% of people who agree that homosexuality endangers Georgia are homophobic: $\chi^2 (1, n=526)=36,60; p=.001$. Personal contact with homosexuals, perceived controllability of homosexuality, and “nature” versus “nurture” homosexuality are not associated with homophobia ($p>.05$) (Table 2).

We also used Point biserial correlation to explore how respondents' gender, age, level of education, and economic conditions were related to homophobic attitudes.¹⁷ The results indicate that homophobia is significantly associated with the respondents' gender and education. This test also confirms that males tend to be more homophobic than females: $r_{pb}(526) = -.13, p = .001$. Also, the higher the level of education, the less homophobic respondents are: $r_{pb}(526) = -.10, p = .02$. Neither respondent age nor economic conditions are significantly correlated with homophobia (Table 3).

We also examined associations between homophobia and predictor variables: religious attendance, liberal attitudes, justice and equality variables (equality for sexual minorities,

¹⁷ Results of this variable are not shown.

equality for the clergy, selective justice), and the group of social perceptions and personal experience variables (perceived national threat, personal contact, “nature” vs. “nurture” homosexuality, perceived controllability of homosexuality) (Table 4).

As expected, liberal attitudes are negatively associated with homophobia ($r_s(214) = -.19, p = .01$), evidencing that tolerance, acceptance of others, openness to change, and orientation towards achieving progress discourages homophobic attitudes. Equality for clergy is also negatively associated with homophobia: $r_s(214) = -.26, p = .001$. Those who think that the clergy should have privileges and not have to face trial if violating the law tend to hold more homophobic attitudes. Homophobia is negatively associated with the acknowledgment and acceptance of rights for the representatives of sexual minorities: the less people agree that sexual minorities should have the same rights as the rest of the population, the more they tend to be homophobic: $r_s(214) = -.22, p = .001$. The results also show that the perception of homosexuals as a national threat is positively correlated with homophobia ($r_s(214) = .29, p = .001$), meaning that, if people perceive homosexuals and their defenders as a threat to their country, they are much more likely to evaluate homosexuals as the most undesirable neighbors. Finally, our analysis revealed that the respondents’ personal contacts with homosexuals are positively associated with acceptance of equal rights for homosexuals ($r_s(214) = .20, p = .001$). That is, if people personally know homosexuals, they tend to believe that homosexuals have the same rights as others. Religious attendance, as well as perceived controllability of homosexuality, is not statistical significant with homophobia.

2.2.2. Logistic Regression

Logistic regression was employed in order to find out what predicts homophobic attitudes among the Tbilisi adult population.

Only socio-demographic variables were included in Model 1. The test of Model 1 against the constant only model was significant, indicating that the predictors reliably distinguished between homophobic and non-homophobic people ($\chi^2 = 13.745, p = .003$ with $df=3$). *The model predicts 70% of the variation in homophobia.* The Wald criteria demonstrated that gender and education significantly predict homophobia, but age does not. The coefficient for the gender variable has a Wald statistic equal to 4.62 which is significant at $p = .03$ level. The Ex. (B) value indicates that when education is raised by one unit, the odds ratio is 0.78 times smaller, and therefore, a person is 0.78 times less likely to be homophobic. Gender is also a significant predictor, with males almost twice as likely as females to be homophobic ($e^B = 1.81, p = .003$) (-2 LL = 629.22, Cox and Snell R square = .026 and Nagelkerke R square = .037).

Model 2 includes two additional variables: religious attendance and liberal values. Overall, the model was significant ($\chi^2 = 33.446, p = .001$ with $df=5$), predicting 71.5% of the variation. In this model, gender still remains a significant predictor, and the liberal attitudes scale emerged as a significant negative predictor of homophobia. Each additional point on the liberal attitudes scale decreases the risk of homophobia by more than half ($e^B = .61, p = .001$). The model revealed that religious attendance did not make a significant contribution in predicting homophobia (-2 LL = 609.52, Cox and Snell R square = .062 and Nagelkerke R square = .087).

Model 3 includes three additional variables: selective justice, equality for sexual minorities, and equality for the clergy. Overall, this model was also significant ($\chi^2 = 52.137, p = .001$ with $df=8$) predicting 69.5% of the variation. This model indicates that gender remains a significant predictor of homophobia; additionally, selective justice and equality for sexual minorities are both significant predictors of homophobia. The Ex. (B) value for selective justice indicates that the chances of being homophobic decrease by 0.33% if people agree that the clergy should face trial when they break a law ($e^B = .33, p = .001$). Disagreement with the opinion that sexual minorities should have the same rights as the rest of the population is associated with homophobia and nearly doubles the risk of being homophobic ($e^B = 1.83, p = .02$) (-2 LL = 390.42, Cox and Snell R square = .136 and Nagelkerke R square = .191).

Four individual-level psychological variables are added to the last model: perceived national threat, personal contact with homosexuals, perceived controllability of homosexuality and “nature” vs. “nurture.” Overall, the model predicted 73.4% of the variation and was significant at $p = .001$ level ($\chi^2 = 52.137, df=8$). Controlling for the remaining variables, legal equality is still a significant negative predictor of homophobia. In the new block of variables, perceived threat is the most significant predictor of homophobia: people who perceived homosexuals as threatening to their country are 2.5% more likely to be homophobic (-2 LL = 228.32, Cox and Snell R square = .162 and Nagelkerke R square = .227) (Table 5).

2.2.3 Moderation Analysis

In order to explore possible moderator effects of psychological factors, we conducted multiple moderation analyses. First, we tested whether homophobia is a function of multiple factors, and

specifically, whether personal contact moderates the relationship between liberal attitudes and homophobia. For this, moderation analysis using bootstrap was conducted. The interaction effect was highly significant ($b = -.811$, 95% CI (-1.504, -0.119), $z = -2.297$, $p = .02$), indicating that the relationship between liberal attitudes and homophobia is moderated by personal contact with homosexuals.

Examination of the interaction plot shows that when a person has experience of interpersonal contact with homosexuals, there is a significant negative relationship between liberal attitudes and homophobia ($b = -1.179$, 95%CI (-1.8191, -.5404), $z = -3.6165$, $p = .01$); when a person does not have such experience, liberal attitudes are still negatively related to homophobia, but this effect significantly decreases ($b = -.368$, 95%CI (-1.8191, -.5404), $z = -3.616$, $p = .00$).

Personal contact has an enhancing effect on the relationship between homophobia and liberal attitudes. A low score on liberal attitudes increases the chance of homophobia much more when a person has personal contact with homosexuals. In contrast with the case when a person does not know homosexual(s) personally, liberal attitudes have less influence on homophobic attitudes. The results suggest that interaction with representatives of sexual minorities does not always eliminate negative attitudes toward homosexuals; people who personally know homosexuals and score low on the liberal attitudes scale are more homophobic than those who have not had personal contact with homosexuals.

We also examined whether there was an effect of other variables from the psychological cluster (social perceptions and personal experience) on the relationship between liberal attitudes and homophobia. However, none of the variables appeared to be a moderator in the relationship

between liberal attitudes and homophobia. The fact that personal contacts are the only moderator from this cluster of variables stresses the particular importance of having personal contact versus no contact with homosexuals in developing homophobic attitudes.

We also tested to what extent the notion of whether the cause of homosexuality is “nature” or “nurture” moderates relationships between gender and homophobia. There was an interaction effect ($b = 1.078$, 95%CI (0.149, 2.007), $z = 2.275$, $p = .02$), indicating that the relationship between gender and homophobia is moderated by people’s perception about the cause of homosexuality. Examination of the interaction plot showed that among people who believe that homosexuality is inborn, males demonstrate much higher homophobic attitudes than females, ($b = 1.021$, 95% CI (0.475, 1.566), $z = 3.666$, $p = .00$), but when it is believed that homosexuality is caused by environmental causes, gender is no longer significantly related to homophobia ($b = -.057$, $p > 0.05$).

3. Discussion

3.1. Religiosity

Religiosity, measured by church attendance, was expected to be one of the strongest predictors of homophobic attitudes in Tbilisi for two reasons. First, existing studies show that religious practice can foster homophobia (Johnson, Brems & Alford-Keating 1997; Adamczyk & Pitt 2009; Merino 2013). Second, since representatives of the Georgian Orthodox Church emerged as the main antagonists of the LGBT community on May 17, 2013, and anti-IDAHOT

demonstrators seemed to follow them obediently, it was expected that those who go to church often would be more homophobic than those who are not exposed to religious activities very often.¹⁸ However, the results of our study do not prove this hypothesis. The independent t-test, correlation, and logistic regression showed that church attendance was not related to homophobic attitudes.

With regard to this finding, the nature of religiosity in Georgia should be considered. According to the CRRC 2013 Caucasus Barometer survey, most Georgians (81%) consider themselves to belong to the Orthodox Church of Georgia, while 10% of the population is Muslim.¹⁹ Trust in religious institutions and the reported importance of religion in one's daily life is high; 43% of Georgians think that religion is "very important" in their daily lives and 50% think that it is "rather important."²⁰ Moreover, 44% and 38% respectively, report trusting fully or partly the religious institutions to which they belong.

Irrespective of high trust in religious institutions and the perceived importance of religion in their daily lives, religious practices such as service attendance, fasting, and prayer are low throughout Georgia (Charles 2010). These patterns indicate that one aspect of religiosity – attending religious services – which is what is captured in our study, might not be the most accurate measure for investigating the relationship between religiosity and homophobia.

¹⁸<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-22571216>

¹⁹<http://caucasusbarometer.org/en/cb2013ge>

²⁰<http://caucasusbarometer.org/en/cb2013ge/RELIMP/>

Unfortunately, in the survey about the May 17 events, CRRC-Georgia did not ask respondents about other aspects of religiosity such as trust toward religious institutions and/or the importance of religion in one's daily life. Hence, we did not have opportunity to conduct a more sophisticated analysis of the relationship between religiosity and homophobia. Although our analysis shows that religious service attendance is not related to homophobic attitudes among the Tbilisi population, the relationship between homophobia and other measures of religiosity may be fruitful areas for future research.

3.2. Education and Liberalism

Level of education emerged as one of the strongest correlates and predictors of homophobia among Tbilisi adults. Both independent sample t-test and Spearman's rank order correlation analysis showed that the higher the level of education, the less likely respondents were homophobic. The Wald criteria in logistic regression Model 1 also demonstrated that education significantly predicts homophobia, while age does not.

There has not been much research on the development of liberal values in the process of formal education in Georgia, but one recent study of eight public schools in Tbilisi revealed tendencies of intolerance and a refusal to accept the 'others'.²¹ Generally, education is considered as an important tool for eliminating or, at least, decreasing homophobia, because educated people are

²¹ <http://emc.org.ge/2014/03/31/religion-in-public-schools/>

often believed to be exposed to liberal values to a greater extent compared with non-educated individuals (Herek 1984). This, however, is not always the case.

As such, the question of whether a higher level of education is related to more liberal values is not answered here. Even though our data confirms that a low level of education can predict homophobic attitudes better than age, the predictive role of education disappears when liberal values are brought into the model. This indicates that liberal values can better predict homophobia than the level of education. In other words, people with a higher level of education are less homophobic, but people who share liberal values acquired through formal educational or other sources are even less likely to exhibit homophobic attitudes. This is in line with the results of existing studies that indicate that traditional attitudes and survival values can predict homophobia (Adamczyk& Pitt, 2009; Altemeyer, 1996; Basow, 2000). Even though the six questions used for measuring liberal attitudes in this study are not the same as the ones used in other studies, they still capture liberal, self-expressive values.

In this study, the positive relationship between conservative values and homophobic attitudes was confirmed by three different statistical tests. A chi-square test showed that Tbilisi adults with non-homophobic attitudes score higher on the liberalism scale. Kendall correlation revealed a negative association between liberalism and homophobia. Finally, logistic regression (Model 2) confirmed the predictive function of liberal attitudes for homophobia. These results show that fostering liberal values will eventually eliminate the homophobia in general.

3.3. Interpersonal Contact as a Moderator between Liberal and Homophobic Attitudes

Personal contact with homosexuals was found to be positively associated with acceptance of equal rights for homosexuals. If people personally know someone who is homosexual, they tend to believe that sexual minorities should have the same rights as others. Other than this, the study did not find any direct relationship between personal contact with homosexuals and homophobia. However, personally knowing a representative of a sexual minority turned out to be a moderator between liberal and homophobic attitudes. Moderation analysis shows that personal contact with sexual minorities can enhance the relationship between liberal and homophobic attitudes. Namely, people with non-liberal values who also personally know a homosexual are much more likely to exhibit homophobic attitudes than people with non-liberal values but with no personal contact with sexual minorities.

This finding challenges Merino's (2013) idea that contact with a negative reference group may not cause attitude change when people face counteracting information and norms in their community. Even though Georgia is a relatively homogenous community, in which 87% of people think that homosexuality can never be justified (CRRC Caucasus Barometer 2011), and thus intrudes on its citizens' homophobic norms, personal contact with sexual minorities still has a positive effect on reducing homophobic attitudes in those individuals who already share liberal values.

3.4. Gender

Gender was expected to be related to homophobia in Georgia not only because of the existing studies which show that males have more homophobic attitudes than females worldwide (Baker & Fishbein, 1998; Hoover & Fishbein, 1990; Horn, 2006; Potreat, Espelage & Koenig, 2009; Price, 1982; Van de Ven, 1994), but also because Georgian society is patriarchal with traditional male and female role attitudes where males are primary authority figures. According to Marsiglio (1993) and Hoover & Fishbein (1999), societies with more traditional male role attitudes or sex-role stereotypes are at higher risk of being homophobic societies.

The hypothesis that men in Tbilisi are more homophobic than women was confirmed by our study. Chi-square tests confirmed that men were more likely to display homophobic attitudes than women. Correlation analysis also indicated that homophobia is significantly associated with gender, with males showing more homophobic attitudes than females. Gender emerged as a significant predictor in the logistic regression (Model 1), with males being almost twice as likely as females to be homophobic ($e^B = 1.81$, $p = .003$) ($-2 \text{ LL} = 629.22$, Cox and Snell R square = .026 and Nagelkerke R square = .037). Gender remains a predictor of homophobia even when liberal values are added to the model.

This finding is not very surprising given Georgia's conservative traditions. What is more surprising, however, is that males tend to be more homophobic when they believe that homosexuality is inborn rather than acquired. The same trend is not true for women; their belief regarding the source of homosexuality does not affect their homophobic attitudes. This finding

contradicts stigma theory, according to which, when a negative mark is innate, people tend to be more tolerant toward the stigmatized object. This logic seems not to be at work among Georgian males, who tend to be more homophobic when they believe that homosexuals have no control over their sexual orientation.

Why are men more homophobic when they believe that homosexuality is innate rather than acquired? This is a question for future investigation, but, as a starting point, we can provide the following explanation. Many argue that homophobia is related to fear (Wright, Adams & Bernat 1999; O'Donohue & Caselles 1993, Haidt, Rozin, McCauley & Imada 1997). According to gender panic and queer theories, this fear is related to losing male status and privilege. This fear can be greater when homosexuality is perceived as innate, something that is beyond our control and thus hardly changeable, than when people think that they have control over the threatening subject. Consequently, greater fear can lead toward greater disgust, aggression, and aversion toward homosexuals. Additionally, the situation may be worsened by the belief that if homosexuality is innate, the homosexuals from the start are “wrong,” deeply spoiled people, and only deserve hatred (Douglas, 2002).

4. Conclusions

4.1. Scientific Contribution

Homophobia is a serious problem in Georgia. Politicians, civil society, as well as representatives of international organizations have condemned violence, and the Orthodox Church, no? but investigation of cases of violence has been slow. Our findings make it possible to identify factors that are associated with homophobic attitudes in the adult population of the capital of Georgia. Not surprisingly, one of the most salient predictors of homophobic attitudes is the level of general education. Over and over again, we find proof that, overall, the more educated a person is, the more tolerant and open minded s/he is likely to be.

The predictive role of education, however, disappeared when a variable measuring liberal values was added to our statistical model. Such values may or may not be developed in the process of formal education, and the type of society (traditional vs. liberal) in which an individual lives influences them to a large extent. In many respects, Georgian society is characterized by traditional values. However, as recent longitudinal data from the Survey of Knowledge and Attitudes toward the European Union in Georgia show, an impressive increase in what can be called liberal values has been documented in Georgian public opinion since 2009.²² A very important direction for further studies would be an in-depth investigation of how this change is different for males and females. So far, existing research suggests that men are

²²http://www.epfound.ge/files/eu_survey_report_2013_final_eng_.pdf)

less susceptible to shifts from conservative to liberal values than women. This is also reflected in males being more homophobic than females.

An important finding of the moderation analysis performed in terms of this study is that it showed that the respondents' personal contact with homosexuals further enhances the existing relationship between liberal attitudes and homophobia. If a person personally knows homosexuals, the negative relationship between liberal attitudes and homophobia becomes stronger. In the opposite case, liberal attitudes are still negatively related to homophobia, but this effect significantly decreases. However, the results suggest that having personal contact with representatives of sexual minorities does not completely eliminate negative attitudes toward homosexuals; people who know homosexuals personally and score low on the liberal attitudes scale tend to be more homophobic.

It is important to highlight that, contrary to what we hypothesized, religious attendance did not appear to be among the factors predicting homophobic attitudes. We believe it would be important to learn more about the relationship between homophobic attitudes and religiosity, employing more indicators and measures of the latter; the very nature of religiosity in Georgia, and the role of religion for the population of the country, although beyond the scope of this paper, also deserves a close look.

Overall, this study provides evidence that micro-level variables such as liberal attitudes, level of education, gender, and attitudes toward equality and justice have a unique role in predicting homophobia. However, personal beliefs and experiences determine the nature of these

relationships. Personal contact decreases homophobic attitudes when there is a high level of liberalism and personal belief about the inherent nature of homosexuality fosters homophobia among males.

4.2. Policy Implications

Political context

While the study stresses homophobia as one of the most serious challenges that Georgia is facing nowadays, on a larger scale of social and political context it is closely interconnected with accepting liberal values and protection of human rights. As numerous reports show, protection of human rights is still a problematic issue for Georgia^{23 24 25 26}. In this light, the negative attitudes and violent acts towards sexual minorities highlight that, on a deeper level, the problem lies in understanding and accepting human rights and liberal values. Such attitudes might pose additional challenges for Georgia in the process of democratization and European integration.

²³

<http://humanrights.ge/admin/editor/uploads/pdf/angarishebi/hridc/ANNUAL%20REPORT%202016%20-ENG.pdf>

²⁴ <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm#wrapper>

²⁵ <https://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Georgia/GEO-CbC-V-2016-002-ENG.pdf>

²⁶ <http://www.ombudsman.ge/uploads/other/3/3652.pdf>

One recent study²⁷ on EU attitudes and liberal values in 2009-2015 confirms a number of challenging observations in this regard. Firstly, as for political and liberal values, the share of those who perceive the government as a “parent” still exceeds those perceiving the government as an institution hired by and accountable to the people. The Georgian society has least trust towards social institutions having direct impact on democratic development (NGOs, parliament, political parties, mass media, local self-government) and shows bigger support to religious institutions and law-enforcement bodies. Furthermore, attitudes about sexual liberty are very conservative, especially about women. 69% report it is never justified for a woman to have pre-marital sex and 57% are of the same opinion about a woman giving birth without being married. At the same time, over the last few years, the fear has increased in Georgian society that the EU will harm Georgian traditions and culture. This is a considerable challenge in a society where 71% believes that to be a good citizen, one must protect traditions²⁸.

Importantly, the perception that EU might endanger family traditions is strengthened by Orthodox Church,²⁹ which has warned Georgian society about the attack coming from the Europe against traditional Georgian views, and how family has become “the major target of attack.” Such statements are especially dangerous considering traditionally high levels of trust in Georgian society expresses towards religious authorities.

²⁷ http://www.epfound.ge/files/eu_attitudes_survey_eng_nov_24_1.pdf

²⁸ <http://caucasusbarometer.org/en/eu2015ge/ICITTRAD/>

²⁹ <http://civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=26846>

A Further layer of analyzing lack of liberal values and attitudes in Georgian society is Russian soft power³⁰. Among various anti-western myths used by pro-Russian forces in their propaganda, one of the most emotional is that the Western world demands from Georgia to legalize same-sex marriage³¹. In this light Russia tries to position itself as an alternative to Western world by emphasizing that it is “Georgia’s only ally with a common identity, [religious] faith, history and culture”. Importantly, such perceptions have led the European Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy to publicly declare that EU does not demand legalization of same-sex marriage.³²

Policy Shortcomings and Implications

In the light of the abovementioned appropriate policy response from the state becomes of critical importance. Generally speaking, although there are many governmental as well as non-governmental attempts on raising social awareness on active citizenship, and developing liberal values, when it comes to LGBT issues the state officials lack consistent approach.

Three years after the attack the social cleavage around the issue of sexual minorities seems more apparent. Although LGBT activists managed to organize an event marking IDAHOT on

³⁰ <http://crrc-caucasus.blogspot.com/2016/02/playing-on-traditions-has-russias.html>

³¹ <http://www.ei-lat.ge/images/doc/policy%20document.pdf>

³² <http://www.interpressnews.ge/en/politicss/55302-stefan-fule--eu-doesnt-demand-legalization-of-same-sex-marriage-from-georgia.html?ar=A>

May 17th 2016, it happened at the same time that the World Congress of Families organized on the same day to support “Day of Family” introduced by Georgian Orthodox Church in 2013.³³

The recent debate of Members of Parliament on Constitutional amendment to define marriage as a union of a man and a woman³⁴ (first proposed by previous Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili and later supported by current Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili),³⁵ also does not help the policy-level approach against homophobia.

Considering that after IDAHOT day in 2016 ten activists were arrested for vandalism and/or trespassing,³⁶ and the representative of the church as well as others involved in attack of LGBT activists on May 17th 2013 have been found not guilty two years later³⁷, the state is often criticized for lack of effective policies in response to homophobic attitudes.

The study also confirms limitations of existing interventions from the government, which are only aimed at improving the legal framework. For instance, the Georgian National Strategy also highlights this for Human Rights Protection (2014-2020) and subsequent Governmental Action Plan for 2014-2015, which, among other things, address the issue of fighting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. The Action Plan is limited to two aims in this

³³ <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/78771>

³⁴ <http://civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=29181>

³⁵ <http://civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=29143>

³⁶ <http://dayagainsthomophobia.org/idahot-report-2016-georgia/>

³⁷ http://www.mdfgeorgia.ge/eng/view_statements/243

regard – to ensure legal guarantees for protection against discrimination and to implement legal proceedings in cases of hate crime.

Legal framework is by no means essential, and adoption of the Law on the “Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination” in May 2014 was a step forward in this direction, as fighting discrimination was recognized as a state-level priority.³⁸ However, as the given paper suggests, there is also need for more policy-level involvement in civic education and development of liberal values, besides legal intervention. Namely, sexual education is not addressed by the formal education system; education at schools does not directly address anti-discrimination issues; and teachers have insufficient training in legal issues, human rights, economy, and governance.

In this light, the given study can have important policy implications, as it highlights statistical predictors of homophobia in Tbilisi. Understanding the factors that influence and predict discriminative attitudes can be of great help for policymakers when it comes to approaching the problem of homophobia with evidence-based policy solutions. Knowing that the most relevant predictors are male gender; low level of education; intolerance and belief that homosexuals are endangering “national values” is advantageous for the government in its work on drawing up anti-discrimination measures and formulating policies for increased tolerance, which is the cornerstone for democratic development and European integration of Georgia.

³⁸ P. 84, <http://www.ombudsman.ge/uploads/other/3/3652.pdf>

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Table 1. Variable Descriptions

Variables	Description
Dependent	
Homophobia	<p>Q: "Whom would you most dislike to be your neighbor?"</p> <p>Original coding:</p> <p>1 = Drug addicts 2 = Black people 3 = People practicing a different religion 4 = People with different political beliefs 5 = Homosexuals 6 = Criminals</p> <p>Recoded dummy variable: 0 = Others, 1 = Homosexuals</p>
Independent	
<i>Socio-demographic variables</i>	
Gender	<p>0 = Female 1 = Male</p>
Age	Respondent's age in years
Education	<p>Level of education:</p> <p>1 = Secondary or lower³⁹ 2 = Secondary technical 3 = Higher</p>
<i>Liberalism and Religious Attendance</i>	
Religious attendance	<p>Q: "Besides special occasions like weddings or funerals, how often do you attend religious services?"</p> <p>1 = At least once a week 2 = At least once a month 3 = Rarely or never</p>
Liberal attitudes	<p>Original questions:</p> <p>1) "How acceptable is it for you if a man has long hair?"</p>

³⁹Through the rest of the paper, for the sake of simplicity, this group is referred to as a group of respondents with secondary education (there were only 11 respondents (9.5% of the group) with lower than secondary education).

- 2) **“How acceptable is it for you if a man wears earring(s)?”**
- 3) **“How acceptable is it for you if a woman has an eyebrow piercing?”**
- 4) **“How acceptable is it for you if a woman drinks strong spirits?”**
- 5) **“How acceptable is it for you if a woman has premarital sex?”**
- 6) **“How acceptable is it for you if a man has premarital sex?”**

Original coding for each: 0 = Never, 1 = Sometimes, 2 = Always.

Factor score (number of items: 6, Cronbach's Alpha = .80)

Justice and Equality

Equality for sexual minorities

Q: **“Should sexual minorities have the same rights as the rest of the population, or not?”**

0 = No; 1 = Yes

Equality for the clergy

Q: **“Should everyone be equal before the law, including the clergy, or not?”**

0 = No; 1 = Yes

Selective justice

Q: **“Should the clergy who took part in the IDAHOT demonstration face trial, or not?”**

0 = No; 1 = Yes

Social Perceptions and Personal Experience

Perceived national threat

Q: **“Would holding a IDAHOT demonstration on May 17 endanger Georgia, or not?”**

0 = No; 1 = Yes

Personal contact

Q: **“Do you personally know representative(s) of a sexual minority?”**

0 = No; 1 = Yes

“Nature” vs. “nurture”

Q: **“Which of these statements do you agree with?**

0 = A person becomes homosexual due to the environment (“Nurture”).

1 = A person is born homosexual (“Nature”).

Perceived

Q: **“Is it possible for a homosexual to change his/her orientation, or not?”**

controllability of homosexuality

0 = No; 1 = Yes

Table 2. Mean Values and Frequencies for Predictor Variables for Homophobia

Variable	Homophobic attitudes (n=158), %	Non-homophobic attitudes (n=368), %	$\chi^2 (1)$ or t (526)	p
Gender			8.658**	.003
Female	25.8	74.2		
Male	38.7	61.3		
Age (mean)	45.4	46.5	.637	.524
Education	2.27	2.43	2.19*	.03
Religious attendance	2.26	2.31	.669	.504
Liberal attitudes	-.29	.14	5.09	.00
Equality for sexual minorities			17.76***	.00
Yes	23	77		
No	42	58		
Equality for the clergy			2.16	.07
Yes	30	70		
No	44	56		
Selective justice			27.40***	.00
Yes	15	85		
No	41	59		
Perceived national threat			36.60***	.00
Yes	43	57		
No	14	86		
Personal contact			.06	.71
Yes	31	69		
No	29	71		
“Nature” vs. “nurture” homosexuality			3.27	.07
“Nature”	36	64		
“Nurture”	27	73		
Perceived controllability of homosexuality			1.16	.28
Yes	27	73		

No	34	66
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Note: *t*-tests were used for age, education, liberal attitudes, and religious attendance; chi-square tests were used for all other variables.

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Table 3. Point Bi-serial Correlation between Homophobia and Socio-Demographic Variables

(N = 526)

Variables	1	2	3
1. Homophobia	-		
2. Age	-.03	-	
3. Gender ^a	-.13**	-.11*	-
4. Education ^b	-.10*	-.03	-.02

Note. ^a gender: 1 = male, 0 = female. ^b education: 1 = secondary, 2 = technical, 3 = higher.

^cincome sufficient: 1 = not sufficient, 2 = barely sufficient, 3 = sufficient. Homophobia: 0 = no, 1 = yes

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Table 4. Spearman's Rank Order Correlations between Homophobia and Independent Variables (N = 200)

Variables	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1) Homophobia	-.1	-.19**	-.26**	-.07	-.22**	.29**	-.09	.11	.12
2) Religious attendance	—	-.01	.07	-.03	.09	-.06	.07	.03	-.07
3) Liberal attitudes	—		.24**	-.03	.32**	-.26**	.33**	-.09	-.09
4) Selective justice		—		.13	.23**	-.39**	.01	-.13	-.05
5) Equality for the clergy			—		.16*	-.07	-.11	-.05	.00
6) Equality for sexual minorities				—		-.20**	-.20**	-.03	-.05
7) Perceived national threat					—		-.05	-.01	.08
8) Personal contact						—		.02	-.04
9) "Nature" vs. "nurture" homosexuality							—		.26**
10) Perceived controllability of homosexuality								—	

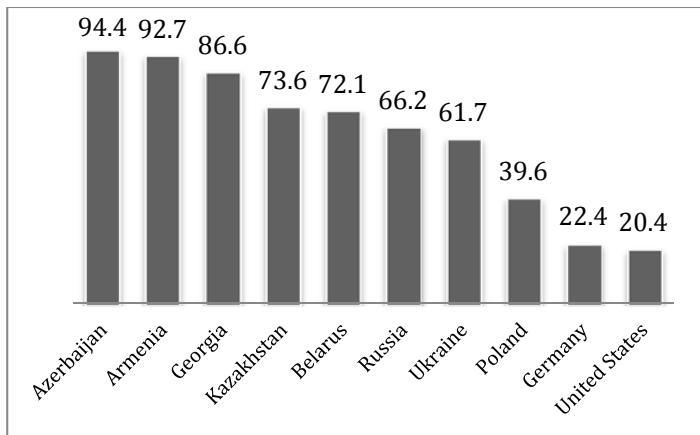
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

Table 5. Binary Logistic Estimates for Homophobia ($N = 526$)

Predictors	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	B	SE	e^B	B	SE	e^B	B	SE	e^B	B	SE	e^B
Constant	-	.38	.66	-	.46	.93	.12	.73	1.13	-	1.72	.54
Age	-	-.01	.99	-	-.01	.99	-.00	.01	0.1	-.00	.01	1.00
Gender	.60	.20	1.81**	.62	.21	1.87**	.56	.26	1.76**	.36	.35	1.43
Education	-	.12	.78*	-	.12	.84	-.30	.15	.74	-	.22	.79
Religious attendance	-	-	-	-	.12	.90	.03	.15	1.03	-	.20	.82
Liberal attitudes	-	-	-	-	.13	.61***	-.23	.15	.80	-	.20	.92
Selective justice	-	-	-	-	-	-	.30	.33***	-	-.41	.44*	
Equality for the clergy	-	-	-	-	-.33	.46	.71	-	.68	.68	.68	
Equality for sexual	-	-	-	-	.61	.27	1.83*	.55	.36	.36	.36	1.73
Perceived national threat	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.901	.39	.901	.39	2.46*
Personal contact	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-.50	.77	-.50	.77	
“Nature” vs. “nurture”	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.26	.35	.26	.35	1.30
Perceived controllability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.38	.37	.38	.37	1.46
of homosexuality	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Model χ^2	13.745 **		33.446***			52.137***			37.697***			
Df	3		5			8			12			
% Correct Predictions	70		71.5			69.5			73.4			

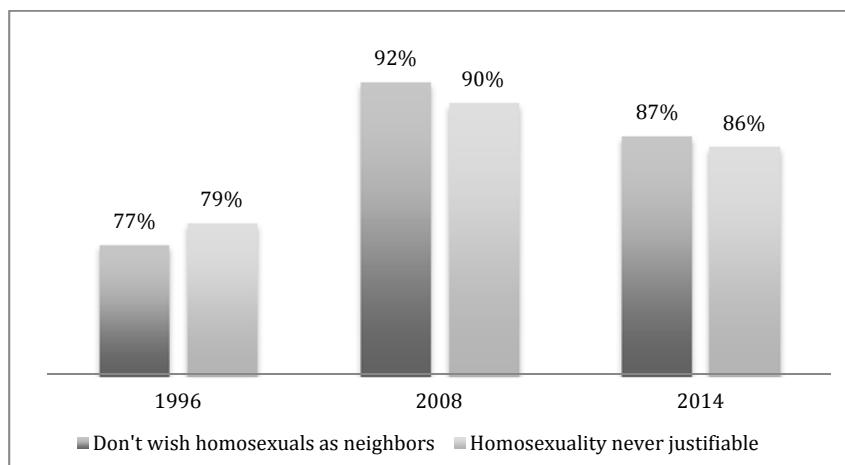
Figure 1. Non-Preference of Homosexual Neighbors in Different Countries

(Percentage of those who have indicated that they wouldn't like to have a neighbor who was...)



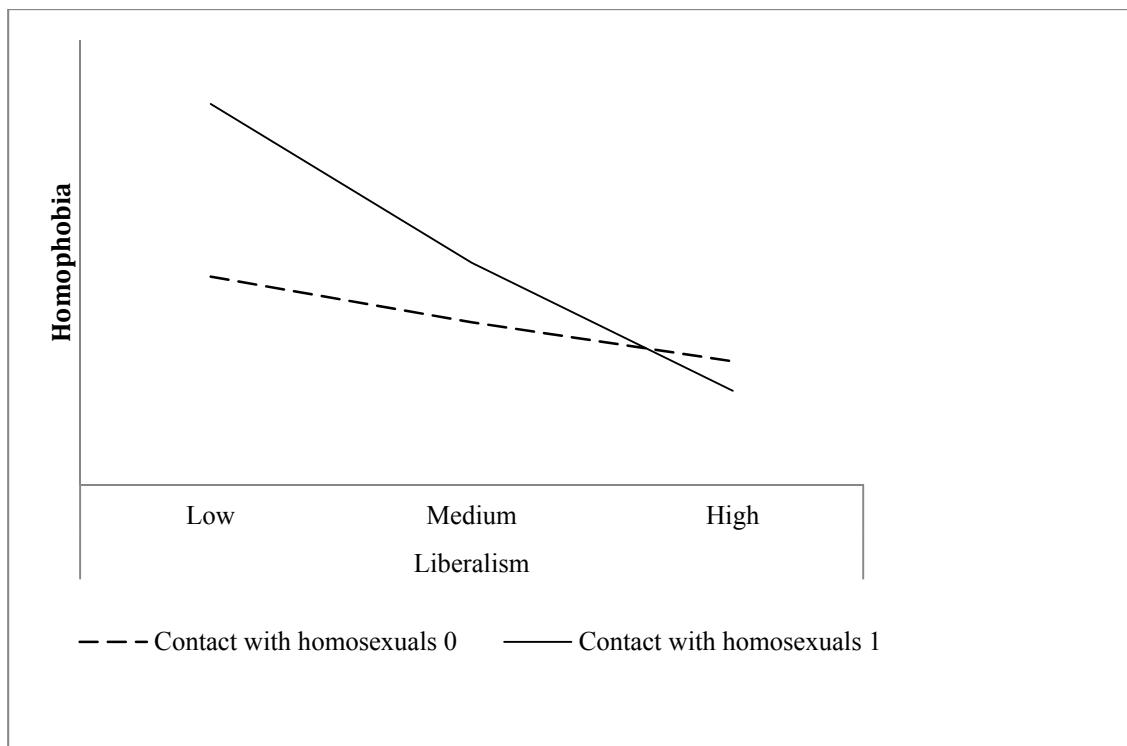
Source: WVS, Wave 6, 2010-2014

Figure 2. Attitudes towards Homosexuals in Georgia



Source: WVS, Wave 3, Wave 4, Wave 6

Figure 3. Moderating Effect of Interpersonal Contact on Homophobia and Liberalism



*Figure 4. Moderating Effect of Gender on Homophobia and Perceived Cause of Homosexuality
(Nature vs. Nurture)*

