Heterosexual Masculinity and Homophobia: A Reaction to the Self?

Peter S. Theodore, BS

Lafayette College

Susan A. Basow, PhD

Lafayette College

ABSTRACT. Heterosexual masculinity is the cultural pressure exerted on males to be masculine in traits and heterosexual in orientation or else be viewed as feminine and socially unacceptable. The current study investigated the link between heterosexual masculinity and homophobia in 74 college males. Specifically, gender self-discrepancy (how well males think they fit cultural expectations of how they should act as a man), attribute importance (perceived importance of possessing masculine attributes), and self-esteem were examined as predictors of homophobia. Attribute importance, self-discrepancy along masculine traits, and their interaction significantly predicted degree of homophobia in this sample. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-342-9678. E-mail address: <getinfo@haworthpressinc.com> Website: <http://www.HaworthPress.com>]*

KEYWORDS. Heterosexual masculinity, gender conformity, homophobia

---

Peter S. Theodore, at the writing of this paper, was a research associate at the Center for HIV/AIDS Educational Studies and Training at New Jersey City University, Jersey City. Susan A. Basow is Charles A. Dana Professor and Head of Psychology, Lafayette College, Easton, PA 18042. The authors wish to thank April W. Gresham, PhD, for her assistance in conceptualizing the project. Correspondence may be addressed to Peter S. Theodore, Department of Psychology, Clinical Health, University of Miami, Coral Gables, FL 33124.

Heterosexual masculinity (Herek, 1986) is the cultural ideology which extends the belief that masculinity and femininity consist of two bipolar sets of behaviors, traits, and social roles. Gender identity researchers have found that the polarization of masculinity and femininity begins at birth and continues throughout the life-span (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Katz, 1986; Shively & De Cecco, 1993; Spence & Helmreich, 1978). With gender marking an important cue for both self-definition and societal reaction, boys and girls learn to value masculine attributes over feminine attributes as more socially effective and rewarding. For example, while independence, success, and achievement are part of society's construct of masculinity, these culturally valued qualities remain absent from the construct of femininity.

In addition to measuring masculinity through gender attributes, Herek (1986) asserts that contemporary society deems heterosexuality an essential condition of masculinity. Through its insistence that "true" men are heterosexual, heterosexual masculinity has been linked to homophobia. Due to the common belief that homosexuality is an aberrant "life style" which deviates from the bipolar view of masculinity and femininity, Herek argues that many individuals have come to view homosexuals as a threat to their self-identities as men or women. He proposes that the ideological belief in heterosexual masculinity causes heterosexuals, especially males, to internalize society's gender expectations and consequently develop anxiety over not fulfilling those expectations. This anxiety leads many males to reject gay men as a means to reaffirming their sense of masculinity (Harry, 1990; Herek, 1987; 1988). Herek (1987) termed this the "defensive function" of homophobia. While the rejection can range anywhere from covert expressions of disgust and disapproval to overt forms of physical and verbal abuse, each form of homophobia "defines who one is by identifying gay people as a symbol of what one is not" (Herek, 1993, p. 98).

Empirical research investigating homophobia lends support to Herek's (1986) assertion that heterosexual masculinity engenders anti-gay prejudice (Black & Stevenson, 1984; Herek, 1987; 1988; Holzten & Agresti, 1990; Sinn, 1997; Wells, 1991). Black and Stevenson (1984) and Herek (1988) both assessed the relationship between sex-role ideology and homophobia among college students. They found that males, especially those who view homosexuals as predominantly gay men (and not lesbians), rejected homosexuality significantly more than females. The most homophobic males had the strongest beliefs in traditional gender roles. Despite administering different measures of homophobia and gender ideology on separate samples, both sets of researchers suggest that the variance in homophobia among males may be due to differences in men's anxiety regarding their ability to behave within a perceptually stringent set of gender role expectations. This suggestion has not been fully tested. The goal of the present study, therefore, is to identify

whether self-esteem, self-discrepancy regarding gender attributes, and gender attribute importance comprise a set of factors predictive of homophobia among male college students.

SELF-ESTEEM

Wills (1981) defines self-esteem as the self-evaluation of one's abilities and personal attributes in relation to those that are valued by the general population. The basic premise of Wills's (1981) downward comparison theory is that self-esteem can be enhanced and protected through direct comparison of oneself with a less-fortunate other. The theory additionally posits that downward comparison will most likely occur when a person's self-esteem is low and his or her subjective well-being is threatened (Wills, 1991). Luhtanen and Crocker (1991) add that low self-esteem (LSE) individuals tend to compare downward by actively derogating threatening others, especially if the threatening other is a "safe target, . . . lower in status . . . whom the dominant culture considers relatively acceptable to derogate" (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1991, p. 213). According to this definition, homosexuals should comprise a "safe" population vulnerable to downward comparison by heterosexuals with LSE. Indeed, researchers have identified a significant correlation between low self-esteem and high levels of homophobia (Holzten & Agresti, 1990; Wells, 1991).

Research with LSE individuals suggests that they have inconsistent and unstable self-concepts which underlie their greater dependence upon and susceptibility to external, self-relevant information (Campell, 1990). Such dependence may catalyze intergroup prejudice. As such, it appears theoretically consistent to predict that perceived risk of association with homosexuality may correlate with a less defined, uncertain heterosexual identity in LSE individuals.

SELF-DISCREPANCY

It is unlikely that all heterosexuals with LSE lack structurally defined heterosexual self-concepts. Thus, the present study addresses the possibility that ill-defined heterosexual self-concepts may stem from self-discrepant views of one's actual versus expected gender-identity. Higgins's (1987) research on self-discrepancy theory has demonstrated the existence of six possible self-states. Each person has three domains of the self: the "actual," "ideal," and the "ought" selves. The actual self is the self that a person believes himself or herself to be, while the ideal self is the person that he or

she would like to become, and the ought self is the person the individual believes he or she should be. Furthermore, two standpoints exist within each self-domain, the other and the own. While each of the preceding domains reflects one's "own" standpoint, an example of an "other" standpoint (in this case, the ought/other standpoint) would be "the person an individual believes others expect him or her to be." Discrepant, incompatible self-views may occur between any two of the six possible self-states (e.g., actual/own versus ought/other).

Higgins, Klein, and Strauman (1985) found that the various types of self-discrepancies induce different types of psychological discomfort. The actual/own versus ought/other discrepancy, in particular, contributed uniquely and significantly to reactions of fear, agitation, panic, and threat. While Higgins's research has demonstrated that actual-ought discrepancies elicit anxiety and threat, the present research sought to extend Higgins's findings by assessing whether actual-ought gender role discrepancies elicit homophobic anxiety and threat.

GENDER ATTRIBUTE IMPORTANCE

Another facet of the self-discrepancy theory relates to the importance of various attributes to overall self-concept and the degree to which one possesses an actual-ideal discrepancy along those attributes. Pelham and Swann (1989) found that self-esteem was significantly correlated with the importance and certainty ratings of each attribute as well as the obtained self-ideal discrepancy score. Attribute importance was significantly related to self-esteem, especially among individuals with negative self-views. Due to the significance of both attribute importance and self-discrepancy in determining one's overall self-concept, the present study measures both gender-role discrepancy and attribute importance in assessing the relationship between self-views and homophobia.

HYPOTHESES AND PREDICTIONS

Based on Herek's (1986) theory of heterosexual masculinity, Wills's (1981) downward comparison theory of self-esteem, and Higgins's (1987) self-discrepancy theory, the present study examines whether level of self-esteem, degree of self-discrepancy along gender attributes, and level of importance associated with these attributes contribute to the variance in homophobia among male college students. It was hypothesized that each of the three predictor variables would contribute significantly and uniquely to the vari-

ance in homophobia, with attribute importance accounting for most of the variance, followed by self-discrepancy, followed by self-esteem. With regard to attribute importance and self-discrepancy, it was predicted that the masculine-feminine bipolar attributes would account for most of the variance, followed by the masculine attributes and then the feminine attributes. Additionally, it was predicted that most variance would be accounted for along the Personal Anxiety subscale of the Attitudes Toward Homosexuality Scale (Black & Stevenson, 1984). It was also hypothesized that interactions among the predictor variables would account for a significant portion of variance above and beyond that of the unique predictors. In particular, it was predicted that the interaction between high attribute importance and high self-discrepancy would account for more variance than either of the two-way interactions with low self-esteem, while the three-way interaction would account for the least variance.

METHOD

Participants

Eighty-five male undergraduates participated in this study, 85% of whom received extra credit in their psychology or statistics courses while 15% volunteered as pledges or brothers of various fraternities. Eleven participants were eliminated from analyses due to incomplete questionnaires. Of the final sample of men, 32% were Protestant, 28% were Catholic, 13% were Jewish, 13% considered themselves to belong to "other" religions, and 14% considered themselves to have no religion. Ethnically, 87% of the participants were Caucasian, 8% African-American, Asian-American, or Hispanic, and 5% were comprised of "other" ethnicities.

Materials

Personal self-esteem measure. The measure of personal self-esteem was Helmreich and Stapp's (1974) Texas Social Behavior Inventory (TSBI), Short Form A. Participants responded to 16 items along a five-point Likert scale ranging from (1) "not at all characteristic of me" to (5) "very much characteristic of me." The scale responses proved to be internally consistent (Cronbach of .82).

Self-discrepancy measure. To measure the actual/own versus ought/other self-discrepancy scores, a modified version of the Self-Attribute Questionnaire (Pelham & Swann, 1989) was used (see Appendix A). This modified version, called the Ought Self Questionnaire (OSQ), was formed by replacing the 10 attributes from Pelham and Swann's original questionnaire with all of

the attributes contained within the 24-Item Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ), which measures perceived levels of masculinity and femininity (Spence & Helmreich, 1978). Some modification of PAQ items was needed. The PAQ items which contained a different attribute at each end of the scale were split into two separate OSQ items (e.g., the single PAQ item ranging from "very submissive" to "very dominant" was split into two OSQ Likert scales: one scale for "submissive" and one scale for "dominant"). Some minor rewording of two attributes was also needed.

On the Ought Self Questionnaire, respondents assessed themselves relative to their ought selves, defined as "the person you would be if you were exactly as you think your peers expect you, as a male, ought to or should be." Respondents rated themselves along a 9-point Likert scale ranging from (1) "very different from how I think my peers expect I ought to or should be" to (9) "very much like how I think my peers expect I ought to or should be." Reverse scoring was used when entering the self-discrepancy data for analysis such that higher scores indicate greater self-discrepancies. Since the original PAQ has three subscales (masculine, feminine, and a bipolar masculine-feminine scale), the OSQ was similarly divided. The eight masculine attributes had a Cronbach of .75, the eight feminine attributes of .79, and the 10 masculine-feminine bipolar attributes of .56. Since a value of .56 reflects inconsistent responses along the bipolar attributes, the bipolar discrepancy scores were not used in the statistical analyses.

Attribute importance measure. The Attribute Importance Questionnaire (see Appendix B) was based on the Pelham and Swann (1989) study. Each of the attributes used on the OSQ was randomly reordered and mixed with seven filler attributes so as to minimize respondents' abilities to selectively rate the importance of attributes based on how they previously measured themselves along the attributes.

To complete the AIQ, each respondent was instructed to rate, on a 9-point Likert scale, the personal importance of each attribute to his own self-identity as a male. In doing so, a rating of 1 indicated "not at all important to my masculinity," whereas a rating of 9 indicated "extremely important to my masculinity." The same subscales used with the OSQ were examined, with the Cronbach values measuring .69 for the eight masculine attributes, .91 for the eight feminine attributes, and .59 for the 10 masculine-feminine bipolar attributes. Given the questionable reliability of the bipolar attributes subscale, it was dropped from further analyses.

Homophobia measure. The present study measured homophobia through The Political Ideology Survey, a disguised version of the Attitudes Toward Homosexuality Scale (ATH) created by Millham, San Miguel, and Kellogg (1976). The twenty ATH statements used in this scale were taken directly from Black and Stevenson (1984), who adapted the original ATH by using

the term homosexuals in place of lesbians and/or gay men and by changing the response format from agree/disagree to agree/uncertain/disagree. Black and Stevenson's adapted version minimized the risk of response bias as they rephrased the ATH statements to yield an equal number of positive and negative statements regarding homosexuals. The only additional adaptation in the present scale occurred in ATH statement number three. In the current study, the phrase "Homosexuals are sick" was replaced with "Homosexuality is sick." This altered statement fit better with the political context of the new scale.

The ATH scale yields a total score as well as three subscores: personal anxiety in the presence of homosexuals (HPA), ideas of moral reprobation (HMR), and the belief that homosexual behavior is dangerous and needs to be repressed (HRD). In the present study, the total scale and each subscale response proved to be internally consistent: the Cronbach values for the overall ATH, and the three homophobia subscales (HPA, HMR, and HRD) were .92, .88, .94, and .70 respectively.

The first page of the Political Ideology Survey, entitled Demographics, assessed participants' ethnic backgrounds, religious affiliations, and political affiliations. Participants were also asked to identify their political attitude as liberal, moderate, or conservative and to rate their level of political awareness (i.e., very informed, somewhat informed, not at all informed).

Procedure

A male experimenter introduced the investigation as a study assessing the influence of males' perceptions of themselves on their political beliefs. Within individual cubicles, participants completed the four questionnaires in the following sequence: the self-esteem questionnaire, the self-discrepancy questionnaire (OSQ), the attribute importance questionnaire (AIQ), and the Attitudes toward Homosexuality Scale (disguised as the Political Ideology Survey and assessing participant demographics). The study was structured such that each participant only had possession of one questionnaire at a time; every time a participant finished one questionnaire, the experimenter collected that questionnaire and handed out the next one.

A debriefing summary clarifying the true purpose of the investigation was distributed to each participant via campus mail once all the data had been collected and analyzed.

RESULTS

Correlations Among Measures

Table 1 displays the descriptive statistics of each predictor and criterion variable measured in this study. Deviations from normality (skewness) are

TABLE 1. Distribution of Scores Among 74 Participants

Variable	Mean	St. Dev.	Minimum	Maximum	Kurtosis	Skewness
AIFEM	6.28	1.49	2.00	8.88	−0.11	−0.50
AIMASC	7.10	0.93	4.75	9.00	−0.34	−0.14
ATH	35.24	10.10	20.00	60.00	−0.96	0.24
HMR	15.13	5.86	8.00	24.00	−1.54	0.08
HPA	15.20	5.00	8.00	24.00	−1.27	0.01
HRD	12.70	3.39	8.00	24.00	0.38	0.73
SDFEM	4.50	1.55	1.25	8.00	−0.46	−0.10
SDMASC	3.87	1.33	1.88	7.25	−0.31	0.60
SE	60.20	7.98	36.00	74.00	0.25	−0.69

Note. AIFEM and AIMASC, attribute importance for feminine and masculine traits respectively, could range from 1 to 9; ATH, the entire Attitudes Toward Homosexuality scale, could range from 20 to 60; HMR (the homophobia subscale based on moral reprobation), HPA (the homophobia subscale based on personal anxiety), and HRD (the homophobia subscale based on the belief in a need for repression due to danger) could each range from 8 to 24; SDFEM and SDMASC, self-discrepancy along feminine and masculine traits respectively, could both range from 1 to 9; and SE, self-esteem, could range from 16 to 80.

most marked for HRD, the repression subscale (positive skew) and self-esteem (negative skew).

As shown in Table 2, homophobia scores measured by the entire ATH as well as by the moral reprobation (HMR), personal anxiety (HPA), and repression (HRD) subscales, correlated positively with masculine attribute importance (AIMASC), while the HPA and HMR subscales correlated negatively with feminine attribute importance (AIFEM). This indicates that the greater the importance of masculine traits, the greater all forms of homophobia; whereas, the less importance given to feminine traits, the greater one's score for homophobic anxiety and for the moral reprobation of homosexuality.

There also was a significant negative relationship between masculine attribute importance (AIMASC) and self-discrepancy along masculine traits (SDMASC) ($r = -0.33$). Similarly, a significant negative relationship was found between feminine attribute importance (AIFEM) and self-discrepancy along feminine traits (SDFEM) ($r = -0.57$). Higher attribute importance values were associated with lower discrepancy scores along those attributes.

Self-esteem scores did not have a significant relationship with the overall ATH scale nor with any of the three subscales, despite correlating with masculine attribute importance, AIMASC ($r = 0.32$) and self-discrepancy along the masculine attributes, SDMASC ($r = -0.47$). High self-esteem is

TABLE 2. Correlations Among the Homophobia Scales and the Predictor Variables

	ATH Subscales						
Predictors	ATH	HMR	HPA	HRD	SE	AIFEM	AIMASC
AIFEM	−0.20	−0.22*	−0.22*	−0.04	0.05	---	0.11
AIMASC	0.29**	0.26*	0.25*	0.28*	0.32**	0.11	---
SDFEM	0.13	0.17	0.16	−0.02	−0.02	−0.57***	−0.07
SDMASC	0.14	0.15	0.09	0.13	−0.47***	−0.06	−0.33**
SE	0.03	0.04	−0.00	0.06	---	0.05	0.32**

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

associated with high importance of masculine traits and low self-discrepancy along those traits.

Multiple Hierarchical Regressions

The null correlational findings between self-esteem and homophobia, coupled with the non-normal distribution of self-esteem scores, led to the omission of self-esteem from the multiple regression analyses. With each of the remaining predictor variables, four stepwise multiple regression equations were computed. Each of these four equations predicted one of the four criterion variables: ATH, HMR, HPA, and HRD.

Unique predictors of homophobia. With respect to the first hypothesis, the first set of predictor variables entered into the stepwise regression were attribute importance along masculine traits, attribute importance along feminine traits, and self-discrepancy along masculine traits. For the entire ATH scale, attribute importance across both masculine and feminine traits and self-discrepancy along the masculine attributes accounted for a significant portion (22%) of the population variance (see Table 3). As predicted, masculine attribute importance scores entered the regression equation during step one, self-discrepancy scores during step two, followed by the feminine attribute importance scores on step three. Men for whom masculine traits were important yet who had high self-discrepancy regarding those traits and who viewed feminine traits as unimportant had the highest scores on the global homophobia measure. Overall, attribute importance accounted for a significantly greater portion of the statistical variance than self-discrepancy.

In running the second, third, and fourth hierarchical regression equations using the three subscales of the ATH as criterion variables, similar results were obtained (see Table 3). While masculine attribute importance was the

TABLE 3. Summary of Unique Predictors of Homophobia as Identified Through the Multiple Hierarchical Regression (N = 74)

	ATH Subscales							
	ATH		*HMR*		*HPA*		*HRD*	
Variable	*B*	*β*	*B*	*β*	*B*	*β*	*B*	*β*
Entered								
Step 1								
AIMASC	4.80	0.44***	2.60	0.41***	1.73	0.33**	1.36	0.38**
Step 2								
SDMASC	2.13	0.28*	1.18	0.27*			0.66	0.26*
AIFEM					-0.91	-0.27*		
Step 3								
AIFEM	−1.74	−0.25*	−0.98	−0.25*				
	R^2	*F*	R^2	*F*	R^2	*F*	R^2	*F*
	0.22	6.86***	0.20	6.35***	0.15	6.39**	0.14	6.24**

Note. Variables are listed in decreasing order of their unique contribution to the corresponding homophobia scale/subscale. AIMASC stands for masculine attribute importance, AIFEM stands for feminine attribute importance, and SDMASC stands for self-discrepancy along masculine traits. For all βs and *F*s, *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$.

strongest predictor for all three subscales, low feminine attribute importance predicted HMR and HPA but did not significantly predict HRD. Self-discrepancy along masculine traits significantly predicted HMR and HRD but not HPA.

Interactive predictors of homophobia. For the second set of four hierarchical regression equations, the predictor variables were: AIMASC, AIFEM, SDMASC, AIMASC × AIFEM, AIMASC × SDMASC, AIFEM × SDMASC, and AIMASC × AIFEM × SDMASC. The three-way interaction among masculine attribute importance, feminine attribute importance, and self-discrepancy along masculine attributes did not contribute to the variance in homophobia scores (see Table 4). However, the two-way interactions between masculine attribute importance and self-discrepancy along masculine traits (AIMASC × SDMASC) and between feminine attribute importance and self-discrepancy along masculine traits (AIFEM × SDMASC) did account for significant portions of homophobic variance above and beyond the unique predictors. While AIFEM × SDMASC contributed to the variance along the ATH, it did not affect the variance along any of the three subscales. On the

TABLE 4. Summary of Interaction Effects Between Predictors of Homophobia as Identified Through the Multiple Hierarchical Regression (N = 74)

	ATH subscales							
	ATH		*HMR*		*HPA*		*HRD*	
Variable	*B*	β	*B*	β	*B*	β	*B*	β
Entered								
Step 1								
AIMASC	Removed in step 4		1.94	0.31**	1.73	0.33**	1.37	0.38**
Step 2								
AIMASC × SDMASC	0.73	0.67***	0.16	0.25*				
AIFEM					−0.91	−0.27*		
SDMASC							0.67	0.26*
Step 3								
AIFEM × SDMASC	−0.53	−0.51**						
AIFEM			−0.96	−0.25*				
Step 4	AIMASC removed							
	R^2	*F*	R^2	*F*	R^2	*F*	R^2	*F*
	0.19	8.78***	0.20	6.38**	0.15	6.39**	0.14	6.24**

Note. Variables are listed in decreasing order of their unique contribution to the corresponding homophobia scale/subscale. AIMASC and AIFEM stand for masculine and feminine attribute importance, SDMASC stands for self-discrepancy along masculine traits, AIMASC × SDMASC stands for the interaction between high masculine attribute importance and high self-discrepancy along those traits, and AIFEM × SDMASC stands for the interaction between low feminine attribute importance and high self-discrepancy along masculine traits. For all βs and *F*'s, *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$

other hand, AIMASC × SDMASC contributed to the variance along the HMR subscale in addition to the overall ATH. It did not, however, contribute toward the variance along the HPA and HRD subscales.

The interaction effects show that both low feminine and high masculine attribute importance are particularly predictive of homophobia among men who had greater self-discrepancies along masculine attributes, as measured by the entire ATH scale and the HMR (moral reprobation) subscale.

Other Variables

Four one-way ANOVAs were performed on the categorical variables of religion, political attitudes (conservative versus moderate versus liberal),

political awareness (very informed versus somewhat informed versus not informed at all), and political affiliation (Democrat versus Republican versus neither), using each homophobia measure. No significant differences were found among the religious groups or the differing degrees of political awareness. However, with regard to political attitudes, liberals scored significantly less homophobic on the entire ATH ($F(2) = 6.48$; $p < .01$), the HPA ($F(2) = 4.71$; $p < .05$), and the HMR ($F(2) = 7.01$; $p < .01$) than moderates and conservatives. On the HRD, the liberals scored significantly less homophobic than only the conservatives ($F(2) = 3.78$; $p < .05$). For political affiliation, Republicans scored significantly more homophobic than both Democrats and the politically non-affiliated on the total ATH ($F(2) = 5.40$; $p < .01$) and HMR ($F(2) = 6.79$; $p < .01$), while on the HPA ($F(2) = 3.48$; $p < .05$), Republicans scored significantly more homophobic than only those who were non-affiliated. No significant differences were identified along the HRD subscale.

DISCUSSION

The statistical results partially supported the first hypothesis and set of predictions: masculine attribute importance was the best and strongest predictor of homophobia, followed by self-discrepancy along masculine attributes, followed by feminine attribute importance. These results suggest that college-aged males who not only are highly sensitive to gender stereotypes, but who also evaluate themselves negatively based on a belief that they don't fulfill the masculine stereotypes are most likely to hold homophobic attitudes and beliefs.

The fact that attribute importance and self-discrepancy both significantly predicted homophobia supports Higgins's (1987) and Pelham and Swann's (1989) research on self-discrepancy. Possessing a discrepancy regarding one's own masculine qualities significantly predicted participants' overall levels of homophobia as well as homophobia specifically due to moral reprobation and due to the belief that homosexuality is dangerous and should, therefore, be repressed. The finding that highly discrepant males are more likely to fear that homosexuality is dangerous supports Higgins' research that ought-other discrepancies elicit fear, hostility, and threat. Furthermore, Strauman and Higgins (1987) found that persons with high ought-other discrepancies scored very high on several social anxiety scales, including the Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale. College-aged males who believe they do not adequately match society's definition of masculinity may, therefore, feel increased distress about receiving negative evaluations from others, explaining why they would be more likely to fear and avoid circumstances which and people (i.e., homosexuals) who may lead others to question their masculinity.

These results also support Pelham and Swann's (1989) conclusion that the importance of people's beliefs about themselves should influence whether or not they evaluate others' judgments when making their own decisions. Males who believe strongly in the importance of possessing high levels of masculine attributes and low levels of feminine traits should be more easily persuaded by the cultural gender-role expectations inherent in heterosexual masculinity to make harsh judgments regarding homosexuals and homosexuality in general (Herek, 1986, 1993). The present study also found that the influence of one's perceived discrepancy along a specific attribute depends on how important that attribute is in defining the person's identity, supporting Pelham and Swann's (1989) finding of an interaction between attribute importance and self-discrepancy. Specifically, males who believed that the possession of stereotypically masculine attributes was important to their identities as men were significantly more homophobic only when they believed themselves to inadequately measure up to others' expectations regarding appropriate masculine behavior. These same males also tended to devalue the importance of feminine attributes to their identities as "men." As these findings demonstrate, gender is an extremely prominent cue for self-identification during late adolescence and early adulthood; it is during this period of development that adolescents learn to distinguish appropriate from inappropriate heterosexual behavior (Katz, 1986).

Despite general support for the first hypothesis, some anomalies arose regarding the specific predictions. Contrary to prediction, self-discrepancy along the masculine traits did not significantly predict variance in homophobia due to personal anxiety. This prediction was based on Strauman and Higgins' (1987) finding that ought-other discrepancies elicit anxiety as well as Black and Stevenson's (1984) finding that participants rejected homosexuals significantly more when they focused on their own personal anxiety. The conflict presented by the present study, however, may simply be due to the manner in which the ATH was scored. Homophobia is typically measured along the ATH by identifying two separate sets of scores, one indicating acceptance of homosexuality and one indicating a rejection of homosexuality (Black & Stevenson, 1984). The present study measured responses to ATH items along Likert scales, thereby achieving one as opposed to two measures of homophobia. Another reason why the prediction regarding homophobic anxiety may not have been supported relates to the present study's self-discrepancy measure, the Ought Self Questionnaire (OSQ). In accordance with Spence and Helmreich (1978), the masculine-feminine (MF) bipolar attributes (socially desirable in one gender while undesirable in the other) were expected to elicit high anxiety among participants who perceived themselves as highly discrepant on them. However, the bipolar OSQ scales had low reliability and could not be used. In the absence of a reliable measure of

participants' reactions regarding self-perceived discrepancies along the most highly gendered attributes, the current results may not reflect a strong test of the relationship between self-discrepancy and homophobic anxiety.

Also contrary to prediction was the lack of predictive ability for the self-esteem measure. This may be due to a ceiling effect created by the negatively skewed self-esteem scores of this sample. The overwhelming majority of male participants reported comparatively high self-esteem (average score of 60.2 compared to Spence and Helmreich's 1978 average TSBI score of 37.9 among college-aged males). On the other hand, although self-esteem was not significantly predictive of homophobia, it was significantly related, in the expected direction, to masculine attribute importance and self-discrepancy along masculine attributes. That is, males with high self-esteem also tended to have a strong belief in the importance of possessing masculine attributes and tended to have small discrepancies regarding their possession of such traits. Since both masculine attribute importance and self-discrepancy are predictors of homophobia, the present study suggests that, with greater variability, self-esteem may have influenced college-aged males' levels of homophobia, especially as an interaction term. Previous research has demonstrated that homophobia and low self-esteem are related (Holzten & Agresti, 1990; Wells, 1991).

Limitations and Future Directions

Generalization from the current results should be made cautiously. The student body in question was very homogenous in terms of age (predominantly 17-23), economic status (predominantly middle and upper-middle class), and political ideology (moderate to conservative). Furthermore, demand characteristics may have impacted responses on the homophobia scale and subscales.

Another limitation of the study relates to the fact that only about 20 percent of the variance in homophobia scores was accounted for by the self-variables utilized. Although this amount is significant, it is likely that other predictors of homophobia may be equally or more important than self-variables. Some of these variables include religiosity, political beliefs, belief in traditional family values, and belief in traditional gender roles (Herek, 1987; 1988; Holtzen & Agresti, 1990; Sinn, 1997). A study including all these major variables in one prediction equation would shed more light as to the relative importance of self-variables in predicting homophobia. Since this study also throws no light on negative attitudes towards lesbians, it would be interesting to examine if homophobia among females partly represents a reaction to self-variables as well.

In spite of its limitations, the present study provides evidence that self-discrepancy and gender attribute importance help to explain homophobia among

college-aged men. Perhaps the most interesting extension future researchers could make to the present study lies in assessing how the ''undesired self,'' in addition to the ''ought/other'' self, relates to heterosexual masculinity and homophobia (Olgilvie, 1987). If homophobia does fulfill the role of a defense mechanism against objectionable gender characteristics in males who feel inadequate regarding their masculinity, research regarding the ''undesired self'' should pick this up.

In summary, the present study suggests that college-aged men in their late adolescence and early adult years who define themselves and their masculinity according to societal standards are likely to hold homophobic attitudes towards gay men as a means toward reconciling their own feelings of gender inadequacy. These findings have implications for our understanding of anti-gay violence and victimization, since it is primarily males in their late adolescence and early adulthood with feelings of gender inadequacy who perpetrate gay-bashing and verbal assaults (Harry, 1990; Herek, 1993). Only by further exploring the interplay between gender identity, homophobia, and self-perception will society fully understand that homophobia may represent as much a reaction to the self as it does to gays, lesbians, and bisexuals.

REFERENCES

Black, K. N., & Stevenson, M. R. (1984). The relationship of self reported sex-role characteristics and attitudes toward homosexuality. *Journal of Homosexuality*, *10*, 83-93.

Campell, J. D. (1990). Self-esteem and clarity of the self-concept. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *59*, 538-549.

Greenwald, A. G., & Banaji, M. R. (1995). Implicit social cognition: Attitudes, self-esteem, and stereotypes. *Psychological Review*, *102*, 4-27.

Harry, J. (1990). Conceptualizing anti-gay violence. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *5*(3), 350-358.

Helmreich, R., & Stapp, J. (1974). Short forms of the Texas Social Behavior Inventory (TSBI), an objective measure of self-esteem. *Bulletin of Psychonomic Society*, *4*, 473-475.

Herek, G. M. (1986). On heterosexual masculinity. *American Behavioral Scientist*, *29*, 563-577.

Herek, G. M. (1987). Can functions be measured? A new perspective on the functional approach to attitudes and females. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, *50*, 285-303.

Herek, G. M. (1988). Heterosexuals' attitudes toward lesbians and gay men: Correlates and gender differences. *The Journal of Sex Research*, *25*, 451-477.

Herek, G. M. (1993). The context of antigay violence: Notes on cultural psychological heterosexism. In L. D. Garnets & D. C. Kimmel (Eds.), *Psychological perspectives on lesbian and gay male experiences* (pp. 89-107). New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Higgins, E. T. (1987). Self-discrepancy: A theory relating self and affect. *Psychological Review*, *94*, 319-340.

Higgins, E. T., Klein, R., & Strauman, T. (1985). Self-concept discrepancy theory: A psychological model for distinguishing among different aspects of depression and anxiety. *Social Cognition*, *3*, 51-76.

Holtzen, D. W., & Agresti, A. A. (1990). Parental responses to gay and lesbian children: Differences in homophobia, self-esteem, and sex-role stereotyping. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, *9*, 390-399.

Katz, P. A. (1986). Gender identity: Development and consequences. In R. D. Ashmore & F. K. Del Boca (Eds.), *The social psychology of female-male relations* (pp. 21-67). Orlando, FL: Academic Press Inc.

Luhtanen, R., & Crocker, J. (1991). Self-esteem and intergroup comparisons: Toward a theory of collective self-esteem. In J. Suls & T. A. Wills (Eds.), *Social comparison: Contemporary theory and research* (pp. 211-234). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Millham, J., San Miguel, C., & Kellogg, R. A. (1976). Factor analytic conceptualization of attitudes toward male and female homosexuals. *Journal of Homosexuality*, *2*, 3-10.

Ogilvie, D. M. (1987). The undesired self: A neglected variable in personality research. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *52*, 379-385.

Pelham, B. W., & Swann, W. B., Jr. (1989). From self-conceptions to self-worth: On the sources and structure of global self-esteem. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *57*, 672-680.

Shively, M. G. & De Cecco, J. P. (1993). Components of sexual identity. In L. D. Garnets & D. C. Kimmel (Eds.), *Psychological perspectives on lesbian and gay male experiences* (pp. 80-88). New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Sinn, J. S., (1997). The predictive and discriminant validity of masculinity ideology. *Journal of Research in Personality*, *31*(1), 117-135.

Spence, J. T., & Helmreich, R. L. (1978). *Masculinity and femininity: Their psychological dimensions, correlates, and antecedents*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Strauman, T. J., & Higgins, E. T. (1987). Vulnerability to specific kinds of chronic emotional problems as a function of self-discrepancies. Unpublished manuscript, New York University.

Wells, J. W. (1991). What makes a difference? Various teaching strategies to reduce homophobia in university students. *Annals of Sex Research*, *4*, 229-238.

Wills, T. A. (1991). Similarity and self esteem in downward comparison. In J. Suls & T. A. Wills (Eds.), *Social comparison: Contemporary theory and research* (pp. 51-78). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Wills, T. A. (1981). Downward comparison principles in social psychology. *Psychological Bulletin*, *90*, 245-271.

APPENDIX A
Ought Self Questionnaire

The items below inquire about what kind of person you think you are versus what type of person you think your peers expect you should or ought to be. In other words, after thinking about how each item relates to you, you are then to consider how your rating of yourself on each specific item compares to your *ought self,* or how you think your peers expect you, *as a male*, *should* or *ought* to measure along each item.

As an example, consider the item–*artistic*:

Rate yourself relative to your *ought self*–the person you would be if you were exactly as artistic as you think your peers expect you, *as a male, ought to* or *should* be.

A . . . B . . . C . . D . . . E . . . F . . . G . . . H . . I

very different from how ___ I think my peers expect I *ought to* or *should* be.	somewhat like and unlike how ___ I think my peers expect I *ought to* or *should* be.	very much like how ___ I think my peers expect I *ought to* or *should* be

If you believed you had no artistic ability but think that your peers believe you should, as a male, be extremely artistic, then you would circle a letter close to A. If instead, you believed that you had no artistic ability and think that your peers believe you should, as a male, be somewhat artistic, then you would circle E. On the other hand, if you believed you had no artistic ability and thought that, according to your peers, you as a male, should not be very artistic anyway, you would circle a letter close to I.

Now, for the following 29 items follow the same procedure described in the example. Rate yourself relative to your *ought self*–the person you would be if you were exactly as you think your peers expect you, *as a male, ought to* or *should* be.

Attributes

1. aggressive
2. independent
3. emotional
4. dominant
5. excitable in a MAJOR crisis
6. active
7. able to devote myself completely to others
8. gentle
9. helpful to others
10. competitive
11. worldly
12. kind
13. needful of others' approval
14. easily hurt (emotionally)
15. aware of others' feelings
16. decisive
17. persistent
18. likely to cry
19. self-confident

20. superior
21. understanding of others
22. warm (in relations with others)
23. needful of security
24. strong under pressure
25. submissive
26. passive
27. rough
28. home oriented
29. inferior

APPENDIX B
Attribute Importance Scale

Please take a couple of minutes to indicate how important each of the following attributes is to your masculine identity. In other words, rate how important each of the following attribute domains is to determining your self–identity as male. There is no limit as to how many attribute domains you can rate with the same degree of importance. Thus, as an extreme example, you can circle E for every single attribute if they are each somewhat important to you.

1. sense of humor

A . . . B . . . C . . D . . . E . . . F . . . G . . . H . . I

not at all important to my masculinity	moderately important to my masculinity	extremely important to my masculinity

2. submissiveness
3. emotionality
4. gentleness
5. likelihood to cry
6. cleanliness
7. aggressiveness
8. helpfulness
9. intellect
10. degree of activism
11. excitability in a MAJOR crisis
12. self-confidence
13. worldliness
14. competitiveness
15. artistic ability
16. degree of passivity
17. independence
18. kindness
19. degree of courage
20. ease with which your feelings become hurt
21. awareness of others feelings
22. warmth in relations to others
23. decisiveness
24. persistence
25. sense of adventure
26. understanding of others
27. feelings of superiority
28. ability to devote myself completely to others
29. self-security
30. neatness
31. strength under pressure
32. dominance
33. roughness
34. feelings of inferiority
35. degree to which you are home-oriented
36. degree of need for others' approval