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Internalized Homophobia In Relation To Attitudes and Perceptions of Gay Men toward Gay Men

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INTERNALIZED HOMOPHOBIA IN RELATION TO ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS OF GAY MEN TOWARD GAY MEN

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
OF
SCHOOL OF PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGY
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SIMON QUARTLY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
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APPROVED:
Daniel Munoz, Ph.D.
Abstract

The present study aims to examine how gay men view and perceive someone based upon the suggesting of either a gay or straight sexual orientation in relation to internalized homophobia. One-hundred and twenty-four gay men read a vignette alluding to a stimulus individual as either gay or straight and then watched a video of the stimulus individual. The participants then rated the stimulus individual on sociometric and stereotypic scales. Finally, they filled out a measure of internalized homophobia, the Nungesser Homosexuality Attitudes Inventory (NHAI). The data indicate that the suggestion of homosexuality and an individual’s level of internalized homophobia does not have a significant impact on how gay men view other gay men. Limitations for the generality of these findings are discussed.

Keywords: Internalized Homophobia, Gay Men, Perceptions, Attitudes
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Introduction

Heterosexism and internalized homophobia

Heterosexism is an ideological system that denies, denigrates, and stigmatizes any non-heterosexual form of behavior, identity, relationship, or community (Meyer, 1995; Meyer & Dean, 1998). It is a system that assumes individuals are inherently heterosexual. From an early age most children are subject to overt and covert messages that tell them how to act and how they should be: Boys should be domineering, while girls should be passive and submissive (Harry, 1983). Consequently, these messages also translate into sexual norms, such as boys are to be masculine, and to be masculine a man must not show affection for another man (O’Neil, 1981; Hudepohl, Adam, Parrott, Dominic, Zeichner, & Amos, 2010). Because of the persistent and all encompassing heterosexism, many homosexuals from an early age report vague feelings of being weird, that somehow they don’t belong and are different from their peers and society (Gonsiorek, 1995; Hunter & Schaecher, 1987). Although gay men are considered a diverse group of individuals with many racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds, a significant, but unknown, number of gay men begin to develop negative feelings towards themselves (Gonsiorek, 1995, p. 25-34; 37). Their sexuality seems to be ego-dystonic from their ideal self (Cass, 1983, 1979; McWilliams, 2011). Balint (1935) developed the idea of “Primary love,” which is the desire to “be loved always, everywhere, in every way, my whole body, my whole being” (p. 50). Balint viewed neurosis as the result of splitting off the parts of one’s self that are punished or denied by other. Young gay men are often denied this love. They experience this as a severe narcissistic injury, also known as internalized homophobia (Gonsiorek, 1995 p. 37). This injury is hypothesized to have some effect on how gay men perceive and interact with the world, specifically with other gay men (Nungesser, 1983). A
central aspect of internalized homophobia is the avoidance of contact with other gay men (Nungesser, 1983; Weinberg & Williams, 1974). However, little research has been done on how easily negative responses toward gay men are triggered in gay men. This literature review will explore and define internalized homophobia, its correlates, the developmental process of gay men, behaviors associated with internalized homophobia focusing on how gay men relate to each other, and finally how relational aspects of internalized homophobia affect gay men's perceptions of other gay men.

**Defining internalized homophobia**

Allport’s (1954) theory of stigma and prejudice conceptualized reactions to stigma as “traits due to victimization.” These traits can be expressed in either an extroverted and/or introverted way. An extroverted expression may induce obsessive concern with the stigmatizing characteristic and an attempt to act out against it. An introverted expression may induce self-denigration and identification with the aggressor (Allport, 1954). The concept of internalized homophobia can be seen in Allport's theory, particularly in the introverted reactions among stigmatized lesbian gay and bisexual (LGB) individuals who identify with beliefs of the heterosexual majority. Additionally, based upon this theory those individuals who act against homosexuality are also likely to harbor internalized hatred (extroverted expression).

More recent theories of internalized homophobia have extended Allport’s original conceptualization. Meyer (1995) defines internalized homophobia as a homosexual’s internalization of society’s homophobic attitudes. Dean and Meyer (1998) stated internalized homophobia is “the gay person's direction of negative social attitudes toward the self, leading to a devaluation of the self and resultant internal conflicts and poor self-regard” (p. 161). There is
incongruence between an individuals needs and social structures, and because of this many gay
individual internalize societies hatred. They start to devalue themselves because of their
sexuality.

Other theories, such as symbolic interaction and social comparison theory conceptualize
the social environment as giving meaning to people’s world and how they organize their
experiences in it (Pettigrew, 1967; Stryker & Statham, 1985), in such a way that they view
society as the sole cause of internalized hatred. Such views have been expressed by Locke
(1998), who stated, “Self-hatred…occurs as a result of being a socially stigmatized person” (p.
202). They view that negative reactions lead to a negative self-view.

Expanding on this definition, Hudson and Ricketts (1980) propose a concept where
homophobia and internalized homophobia are distinct. They contend that all members of a
homonegative (i.e. homophobic) society incorporate and convey homonegative attitudes. They
do not view internalized homophobia as something to be corrected. Rather, they view Meyer’s
understanding as pathologizing homosexuals, and contend that claiming a homosexual has
internalized homophobia is analogous to homosexual denigration. They view the origins to be
and the cause to be societal homophobia, and that internalized homophobia places the blame on
the homosexual not society. They view conceptualizations, such as Meyer’s, as claiming
internalized homophobia is something the gay individual must fix not society (Hudson &
Ricketts, 1980). Thus, Hudson and Rickett (1980) don’t define internalized homophobia on an
individual basis, but rather on a societal basis. They use the term homonegative not internalized
homophobia in order to emphasize society’s causal effect.
Still, others define internalized homophobia as unconscious internalized hatred resulting from anxieties about being or becoming gay, and acting out against those anxieties as analogous to internalized hatred. In accordance with the American Psychoanalytic Association’s (APsaA; 1997) statement that, “Homosexuality is a normal variant of adult sexuality and… same-gender sexual orientation cannot be assumed to represent a deficit in personality development or the expression of psychopathology,” a psychoanalytic definition of internalized homophobia can be seen in De Kuyper (1993) theory. He claims one’s homophobia is the result of suppressed homosexual urges in the heterosexual resolution of the Oedipal phase. Furthermore, McWilliams (2011) contends that internalized homophobia is the result of unresolved Oedipal joining. Chodorow (1999) expands on this view in terms of early love objects and masculinity. According to Chodorow both sexual orientation and gender are rigidly defined early in a child’s life, mainly in the Oedipal phase. For boys, she claims, there is identification with the father, like in Freud’s theory, out of fear of castration, and masculinity is part of that identification. Chodorow views masculinity to include male domination and heterosexuality. A boy is supposed to identify with (love) his father but not love him. Chodorow claims that this understanding is culturally and socially based and primarily perpetuated by the father’s rigid gender expectations. The homoerotic admiration for one’s father, while denying it, creates a rigid understanding of gender and sexual expression. Chodorow, thus, claims that any internal challenge to the separateness of “heteroerotic and homoerotic fantasies and attachments threatens real disintegration.” Any internal or external threat to a man such as femininity or submissiveness has to be split off and projected outward due to the fear that these threats will meld with the self, meaning that the individual will have some understanding that they are homosexual (McWilliams, 2011). Therefore, these homoerotic feelings must be destroyed both
internally and externally. Research studies have backed up the utility of this theory. Adams, Wright, and Lohr (1996) studied homophobia in relation to homosexual arousal. By measuring penile circumference of both homophobic and non-homophobic heterosexual men whose homophobia was measured by the Index of Homophobia, they found that the homophobic men showed a significant increase in erection when shown homoerotic stimuli. It is clear that even from a psychoanalytic view society’s view of gender norms has an impact on defining internalized hatred, in terms of father and son expectations and masculinity.

Regardless of the various definitions of internalized homophobia it is clear that society’s homophobic and sexist attitudes play a central role in the definition of internalized homophobia. Therefore, internalized homophobia is not just negative attitudes towards one’s self, but also negative global attitudes toward homosexuality, discomfort with disclosure of minority sexual orientation to others, disconnectedness from LGB individuals, and discomfort with same-sex activities (Nungesser, 1983).

**Correlates of internalized homophobia**

A central question is how does an internalized hatred of one’s self develop? Several studies have pointed to society’s negative and heterosexist attitudes towards homosexuals as key aspects in the development of internalized homophobia (Patel, Long, McCammon, & Wunensch, 1995). One such message is gender norms. From a young age, children are exposed to implicit and explicit messages that homosexuality is bad (Gonsiorek, 1995; Harris, 2004, p. 78-80; Malyon, 1981, 1982a, 1982b). Many of these messages are based in television and movies where gay men are portrayed as scoundrels or as marginalized stereotypically gay characters (Ritter, Terndrup, 2002, p. 15-17). Gay men feel a large demand placed upon them to act in
gender prescribed ways (Sánchez, Westefeld, Vilain, & Ming Liu, 2010). Based upon a wide-ranging literature review O’Neil (1981) developed an extensive list of assumptions of masculinity and how men should act and behave. O’Neil’s results reveal that men in general expect other men to dominate and control women, use sex as a means of power, and avoid expressions that are considered feminine, including showing affection for another man. A study by Hudepohl et al. (2010) backed up the utility of O’Neil’s claim. Hudepohl et al. (2010) found that a statistically significant level of anger was reported among men both prejudiced ($d = 2.50$) and nonprejudiced ($d = 1.26$) who were asked to watch male/male erotic videos in comparison to those who watched male/female erotic videos ($d = 0.05$). The overarching suggested finding from this review is the perception that gay men inherently do not control and dominate women because they do not have sex with them, and more importantly they show affection toward other men.

At some level gay men internalize this notion that they violate what it means to be a man. Sánchez et al. (2010) studied how homosexual men feel about and value masculinity. Sánchez et al. (2010) studied the degree to which gay men valued masculinity, and the extent to which gay men were concerned with violating masculine ideals in relation to negative feelings of being gay. They found a positive correlation between the degree to which gay men valued masculine ideals and were concerned with violating masculine ideals and negative feelings of being gay (Cohen’s $f^2 = .67$). Gay men from a young age do not live up to the gender expectations of society (Cass, 1983). The data suggest that this discontinuity causes internal anxieties for gay men. These expectation are seen in a variety of settings, including school, family, work, and religion.

Harassment at school greatly impacts how gay individuals view themselves. In a study conducted by Sears (1991) 97% southern gay individuals surveyed remembered negative
attitudes by classmates towards homosexuality. The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN; 2009) surveyed 7,261 LGBT students between the age of 13 and 21 from all 50 states about their experiences at school. GLSEN found that a majority of students experienced some form of harassment or violence (61%); 40% were physically harassed; 52.9% were harassed or threatened by their peers via electronic mediums; 86.5% reported that they felt distressed to some degree by homophobic language used in school. Finally, 61.1% did not feel safe in their school. In a study, Sears (1991) interviewed 191 potential teachers to test their level of homophobia. The future teachers expressed a high degree of negative attitudes about homosexuality and harbored negative feelings towards lesbians and gay men. Eighty percent held nonaffirmative feelings toward sexual minorities, and of those, 80% scored as “high grade homophobics.” Toomey, Ryan, Diaz, Card, and Russell (2010) studied the impact these negative experiences have on LGBT individuals later in life. They found that victimization due to perceived or actual LGBT status “fully mediates the association between adolescent gender nonconformity and young adult psychosocial adjustment”, such as life satisfaction and depression (Toomey et al., 2010).

Families also play a role in how LGBT individuals feel about themselves. Ryan, Huebner, Diaz, and Sanches (2009) found that higher rates of family rejection when a gay individual comes out to their parent was associated with poorer health outcomes later in life. There study consisted of 204 Latino and Caucasian LGB individuals, ages 21 to 25 recruited from LGB organizations in California. Fifty-one close-ended items were administered to the participants, asking about the “presence and frequency of rejection from parents or caregivers in reaction to participants’ sexual identity and gender expression when they were teenagers” (Ryan et al., 2009). Ryan et al. (2009) then assessed three areas of health outcomes: mental health,
substance use and abuse, and sexual risk behavior. The data suggest that about half the sample showed considerable mental health and substance use problems. Risky sexual behavior was less frequent, however relatively high. In general they found that greater family rejection of a sexuality minority early in life is associated with greater pathology later in life.

Religion also impacts how homosexuals view themselves. Extremely conservative religious beliefs have been correlated with heterosexist attitudes, along with rigid distinctions between masculine and feminine behavior (Ritter & Terndrup, 2002). From Christian fundamentalists to Muslim, Hindu, and Jewish fundamentalists, within each group there is an authoritarian and hostile attitude towards homosexuals (Hunsberger, 1996). Maret (1984) found that the degree of fundamentalism was positively correlated with significantly less acceptance of homosexual relations. Rowen and Malcolm (2003) found that scores of internalized homophobia were significantly higher, among individuals who reported current religious affiliation ($M=3.91$, $SD=.87$) than those who did not ($M=3.41$, $SD=.82$).

One area of stigma that is largely misunderstood by the public is HIV/AIDS in gay men. Generally speaking AIDS stigma is associated with anger and negative feelings towards people with AIDS, and the belief that they deserve their illness (Herek & Capitanio, 1993). The AIDS epidemic during the eighties in the US largely focused on gay men and intravenous drug users as the cause. Many individuals still correlate male homosexuality and AIDS (Herek, 1999; Herek & Capitanio, 1999). Herek, Capitanio, and Widaman (2002) studied the trends of AIDS stigma in the United States from the early to the late 90s. They found that while overt expressions of stigma have declined, there has been an increase in erroneous ideas of transmission, and the beliefs that people with AIDS deserve their illness.
One’s experiences at work also play into one’s internalized homophobia. Many employers do not want to hire, retain, or promote sexual minorities; they want people from the majority culture (Levine, 1989; Terry, 1992). Lee (1987) found that gay men tend to appear to be more affluent and better educated than their same age peers. However, others have contended that these findings are related to sampling methodology. These critics claim that there are an unknown number of gay individuals who do not know or repress their sexuality, which mitigates these individuals from participating in research on working conditions (Harry, 1990).

Regardless, based on Lee’s longitudinal study of gay men over the age 50, his study suggests that life satisfaction is associated with a gay man’s perceived social class and above average standard of living for his age. This might represent a way for gay men to compensate for feeling inferior in a heterosexist society. Accordingly, in a study conducted by Weinberg and Williams (1974) self-employed gay men felt less apprehensive than those who are not self-employed about their sexuality and the need to conceal it. Furthermore, Levine (1989) claims that heterosexism and societal homophobia prevents sexual minorities from obtaining goods jobs, and forces them into either stereotypical jobs (i.e. interior decorating or floral design) or non-prestigious, low-paying jobs. Public opinion supports the claim that gay men do supportive, decorative, or expressive forms of “women’s work.” However, at the same time the public opposes gay men in these roles or traditionally masculine roles (Elliot, 1993; Levitt & Klassen, 1974; Schneider & Lewis, 1984).

According to Waldo (1999) heterosexism was the best predictor of adverse psychological, health, and job-related outcomes among LGB individuals. This leaves many gay men in a wasteland of job opportunities. It is not a lack of education that hinders gay men, but instead a homophobic society that perpetuates heterosexism resulting in job-related stress. Clearly, work related issues around being a sexual minority play an enormous roll in one’s self-concept.
When taken together, nearly every aspect of a gay man’s life has some sort of stigma related to it. Society plays a huge, if not a causing role, in the development of internalized hatred among gay men. As a gay man, developing and navigating a heterosexist society is often a continuously arduous process.

Developmental Process

Not every gay man will grow past the narcissistic injury of being gay, and while most do (Gonsiorek, 1995, p. 38), sexual identity development is often a difficult and turbulent process, especially for gay men. This process often begins early in a gay individual’s life (Isay, 1991; Gonsiorek, 1995, p. 32). In addition to going through puberty and dealing with hormonal and body changes, gay men also have to wrestle with the likely narcissistic injury of being gay. Gay children must contend with the internal conflict of not living up to societies “ideal heterosexual image” (Cass, 1983, p. 145). They must go through extra developmental stages, marked with confusion, despair, low self-acceptance, and low self-esteem (Ross & Rosser, 1996). Several gay identity formation models have been proposed (For a review see: Ritter & Terndrup, 2002 p. 90-108). Taken together, the central theme of these models is broken into a three-part process. First, an individual will block recognition of same-sex feelings through various defense mechanisms, which may then cause the individual considerable psychic pain. Gradually, these defenses weaken and an individual is able to see, however uncomfortable they may be with it, that they do possess same-sex attractions. This is followed by a period of emotional and behavioral experimentation with homosexuality. Finally, it is generally agreed upon that individuals will come to embrace and develop a sense of pride as a homosexual. However, there are several caveats to these theories. First, most are not seen as stages, but rather as life-long processes that can progress or regress for a variety of reasons. Second, environmental aspects
can inhibit the process. For example, the fear of violent repercussion for exploring homosexual behavior can inhibit one’s developmental process. Additionally, the process seems more abrupt for men than it does for women (D’augelli & Patterson, 1995).

Based upon the research and behaviors associated with internalized homophobia, gay men are at high risk for serious developmental problems and as stated before, these problems are correlated with heterosexism, oppression, prejudice, and stigmatization.

*Behaviors associated with internalized homophobia*

Extensive research has been conducted on how internalized homophobia affects gay men. Increases in internalized homophobia are correlated with high levels of depression, high levels of anxiety, low levels of self-esteem, sexual dysfunction, avoidance of relationships, substance abuse, unsafe sex practices, and a potential for suicidal behavior.

A study conducted by Igartua, Gill, and Montoro (2003) showed that internalized homophobia accounts for about 18 percent of the variance in depression scores and 13 percent of anxiety scores in gay men. However, while they found that suicide is correlated with internalized homophobia, they were not able to predict suicide independently from depression. Yet, several other studies have linked suicidal behaviors with minority sexual orientation. LGB, or not sure youth were 3.4 times more likely to report a suicide attempt than their heterosexual peers (Garofalo, Wolf, Wissow, Woods, & Goodman, 1999). Consistent with these findings, D’Augelli, Hershberger, and Pilkington (2001) found that 42 percent of the gay individuals they surveyed had sometimes or often thought of suicide, while 33 percent reported at least one suicide attempt.
The research correlating non-condom usage and internalized homophobia is weak and inconsistent. Shidlo (1994) found no correlation between non-condom usage and internalized homophobia. However, Meyer and Dean (1995) found a six percent correlation between internalized homophobia and high-risk sexual behaviors. While these results suggest little to no correlation with risky sexual behavior, sampling difficulties with a gay male population should be considered. An unknown number of closeted (non-out) gay men are not represented in these studies (Harry, 1990). Thus, making definitive conclusions about internalized homophobia and risky sexual behavior can be difficult.

In a study by Meyer (1995) demoralization, which encompassed helplessness, hopelessness, poor self-esteem, and confused thinking, was correlated with internalized homophobia (r2 .06). Guilt (r2 .10), suicide (r2 .02), AIDS related traumatic stress response (r2 .06), and sex problems, a measure of problems related to inhibited sexual desire, excitement, or orgasm (r2 .01) were also correlated with internalized homophobia. Behaviorally, internalized homophobia is related to sexual dysfunction, avoidance of relationships, intimacy, and substance abuse (Coleman, Rosser, & Strapko, 1992).

Although research seems to be mixed on the behaviors associated with internalized homophobia, it’s clear that high levels of depression, high levels of anxiety, low levels of self-esteem, sexual dysfunction, avoidance of relationships, substance abuse, unsafe sex practices, and suicidal tendencies are associated with internalized homophobia.

Relational consequences of internalized homophobia

Yet, questions of how easily responses of internalized homophobia are expressed or triggered still remain. Can the projection of internalized homophobia be easily activated by the
mere suggestion of another man’s homosexuality? A study conducted by Frost and Meyer (2009) found that internalized homophobia is associated with greater relationship problems. Weinberg and Williams (1974) found that poor psychological adjustment among gay men is associated with avoidance of relations with other gay men. Furthermore, a study conducted by Mohr and Fassinger (2006) found a correlation between a gay man’s own stigma sensitivity and lower ratings of romantic relationship quality. The relation between one’s own stigma sensitivity and ratings of relationship quality was statistically significant for male-male couples only.

Although several studied have been conducted on internal homophobia and romantic and friendship relationship quality, little to no research has been done on how easily gay men project negative views of homosexuals. Studies show that homophobia is easily triggered in men and women in a university sample (Gross, Green, Storck & Vanyur, 1980), but they have neglected to examine how negative views of gay men are triggered in gay men, and specifically in gay men with high levels of internalized homophobia.

Based upon a previous study’s methodology (Gross et al., 1980), which examined how individuals viewed and perceived a stimulus individual upon the mere suggestion of homosexuality, the present study aims to replicate this with homosexual men and in relation to internalized homophobia. Specifically, how does internalized homophobia affect how gay men view other gay men, and how easily is a negative view triggered? Because one of the central concepts of internalized homophobia is not interacting and distancing oneself from gay people (Nungesser, 1983), this researcher hypothesizes that the higher an individual’s internalized homophobia the more stereotypically and negatively the individual will view other gay men, and that this will be activated by the mere suggestion of homosexuality.
Method

Participants

Gay males were recruited to participate in an online survey about perceptions and attitudes of gay men. A total of 144 people participated in the study. Additional demographic data is presented in Table 1.

Procedure

Gay male participants were recruited through the distribution of fliers at various locations, such as university LGBT organizations, community LGBT organization, and gay bars (Appendix F). Furthermore, advertisements were placed on social networking sites such as Facebook.com and Craigslist.com. Participants were asked to visit a survey based website to participate in a research study about the attitudes and perceptions of gay men. Upon entry to the website participants read and acknowledged the study description and informed consent. The study was anonymous in nature. Individuals received two types of information about a male stimulus person: (1) a 50 sec. long video and (2) a half page biography filled out by the stimulus person (Appendix B). Each participant read the vignette, watched the video online, and then was asked to answer questions about the stimulus individual and themselves. Participants were not compensated for completing the survey. Participants were not debriefed after the study due to its transparent nature.

Measures

Participants completed the survey through online survey software SurveyMonkey. The survey consisted of six parts: Demographics questionnaire (Appendix A), 2 possible vignettes of
a male chemistry professor (Appendix B), A video of the chemistry professor teaching, sociometric items (Appendix C), adjective check list (Appendix D), and finally the Nungesser Homosexuality Attitudes Inventory (NHAI; Nungesser, 1983) (Appendix E).

Demographics Questionnaire

A demographic questionnaire was designed to gather basic information in a multiple-choice format.

Vignette

Two vignettes were developed to act as the independent variable in this study. Both vignettes described a male stimulus person’s childhood, geographical background, hobbies, and education. Both vignettes were identical except for one had the verbiage: “While at OSU I enjoyed playing soccer on the local gay league.” The other vignette replaced this with: “While at OSU I enjoyed playing soccer with my wife on the local league.” Fifty four percent of the participants received the vignette implying homosexuality, while 46 percent received the vignette implying heterosexuality.

Video

The video was identical in all conditions. The video is of a chemistry professor giving a lecture for 50 sec. There was 100% interrater reliability among seven graduate students in an LGBT research group on the ambiguity of the professor’s sexuality.

Sociometric Items

Participants were asked to rate the stimulus person on six sociometric items:
1. Does he seem to be a person you would be likely to develop a friendship with if you had the opportunity to interact with each other?

2. Is he a type of person you would like to have as a neighbor?

3. Is he a type of person you would like to work with?

4. If you were an employer, would you hire him?

5. Do you think this person will be successful in his career?

6. Would you like to work for this person?

Participants were instructed to rate each item on a 1 to 9 scale. One equals no, not at all; Nine equals yes, very much. These items were selected based upon a procedure similar to that used by Gross et al. (1980) to measure the participant’s attitudes towards the stimulus person in two domains: work and impressions.

Adjective Check List

Participants were asked to indicate how much each of 16 adjectives applied to the stimulus person. Participants were asked to click a number between 1 and 9. 1 indicates that the trait describes the person not at all, while 9 indicates that the trait describes the person very well. Again, these items were selected based upon a procedure similar to that used by Gross et al. (1980). Tests of reliability by Gross et al. (1980) showed that 78% of 37 pretest participants indicated eight stereotypical traits that were likely possessed by one type of male than the other (i.e. gay and straight). Additionally, pretest screening showed that eight neutral adjectives were shown not related to the gay stereotype (i.e. neutral; Gross et al., 1980).

Nungesser Homosexuality Attitudes Inventory (NHAI)

The NHAI was used to assess participant’s internalized homophobia. The NHAI is a widely used and psychometrically validated questionnaire aimed at assessing internalized
homophobia in gay men (alpha .94). The NHAI is a 34 item self-administered questionnaire, and
is comprised of three content areas: (1) attitudes towards one’s homosexuality (alpha .89), (2)
attitudes towards other homosexuals (alpha .68), and (3) attitudes towards self-disclosure (alpha
.93) (Nungesser, 1983). A lower average score indicates more internalized homophobia, while a
higher average indicates less internalized homophobia.
Results

Of the 144 people who took the survey, only 124 completed the survey beyond the demographics questionnaire. Thus, individuals who did not complete the entire three measures in aggregate beyond the demographic information were identified and their data was excluded (20 individuals). Individual who did not complete in its entirety the sociometric items (1 individual) or the adjective checklist (5 individuals) were identified and their answers on those scales were excluded. Individual’s who left more than two answers blank on the NHAI, their NHAI data was excluded (5 individuals). However, individuals who left one or two blank, their blank scores were filled in with neutral scores (12 individuals). All individual who took the survey identified as male and homosexual. Table 1 summarizes demographic information of respondents. Ages ranged from 18 to 49 with a mean age of 25.48 and a standard deviation of 5.98.

Table 1
Demographic Information (N=124)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th>Frequency and Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age (years) (N=46)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>26 (56.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>17 (37%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>2 (4.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-50</td>
<td>1 (2.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Background</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which/Caucasian</td>
<td>104 (83.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino/Latina American</td>
<td>6 (4.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>14 (11.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Affiliation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>39 (31.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>25 (20.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agnostic</td>
<td>17 (13.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>16 (12.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atheist</td>
<td>11 (8.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>16 (12.8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High School Diploma</td>
<td>53 (42.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor Degree</td>
<td>46 (37.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>13 (10.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>12 (9.97%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annual Income (N=123)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 to $10,000</td>
<td>45 (36.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$10,001 to $20,000</td>
<td>20 (16.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20,001 to $30,000</td>
<td>15 (12.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$30,001 to $40,000</td>
<td>13 (10.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$40,001 to $50,000</td>
<td>13 (10.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,001 to $60,000</td>
<td>6 (4.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$60,001 and Above</td>
<td>11 (8.9%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Status</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>54 (43.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>6 (4.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time Employment</td>
<td>12 (9.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Employed</td>
<td>7 (5.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>45 (36.3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Several independent-samples t-test were conducted to evaluate the hypothesis that gay men given a vignette alluding to a stimulus person as gay would view that person more negatively and stereotypically than they would a vignette alluding to the stimulus person as heterosexual. Furthermore, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was done to see if individuals with high levels of internalized homophobia would view the gay individual more negatively and stereotypically then they would the straight individual. The results indicate that there was not a significant difference between any of the domains of stereotyping, likeability, or internalized homophobia. Nor was there any difference between high and low levels of internalized homophobia and how the participant viewed the stimulus person.

Stereotyping

An independent-samples t-test was conducted comparing mean scores on the Adjective Checklist and whether the participant received the vignette alluding to the stimulus person as gay or straight in three areas: stereotypically gay adjectives, stereotypically straight adjectives, and sexually neutral adjectives. There was not a significant difference between participants who received the vignette in which the stimulus person alluded to their homosexuality (M=18.03, SD=3.24) and the vignette that suggested the stimulus person was straight (M=17.41, SD=2.79) on adjectives that were stereotypically gay; t(177)= 1.46, p = .27. Nor was there a significant difference between the homosexual condition (M=27.06, SD=5.58) and the straight condition (M=26.15, SD=4.85) on adjectives that were stereotypically straight; t(117)= .94, p= .35. Finally, there was not a significant difference between participants who received the homosexual (M=42.78, SD=5.9) vignette and those who received the straight vignette (M=41.72, SD=4.25) on adjectives that were sexually neutral; t(117)= 1.11, p= .27. These results suggest that there are no differences between on any of the three adjective domains and whether a participant
received the vignette alluding to the stimulus person as gay or straight. Results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
*Means and Standard Deviations, Results of Independent Samples t-test Analyses of Stereotypical Adjectives*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gay Vignette</th>
<th></th>
<th>Straight Vignette</th>
<th></th>
<th>t (117)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjectives</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereotypically gay</td>
<td>18.03</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>17.41</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereotypically straight</td>
<td>27.06</td>
<td>5.58</td>
<td>26.15</td>
<td>4.85</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexually neutral</td>
<td>42.78</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>41.72</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05

Sociometric Ratings

On the basis of previous research the Sociometric Items were broken up into two areas: work and impressions (Gross et al., 1980). Another independent-samples t-test was conducted comparing mean scores on the Sociometric Items and whether the participant received the vignette alluding to the stimulus person as gay or straight in two areas: work and impression. There was not a significant difference between participants who received the vignette in which the stimulus person alluded to their homosexuality ($M=12.97$, $SD=2.77$) and the vignette that suggested the stimulus person was straight ($M=12.45$, $SD=3.01$) on interpersonal sociometric questions; $t(121)= 1$, $p = .318$. There was not a significant differences between participants who received the gay vignette ($M=28.49$, $SD=4.61$) and the straight vignette ($M=27.63$, $SD=4.96$) on work sociometric questions; $t(121)= 1$, $p = .318$. Results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3
*Means and Standard Deviations, Results of Independent Samples t-test Analyses of Sociometric Ratings*
Internalized Homophobia

An independent-samples t-test was conducted comparing mean scores on the NHAI and whether the participant received the vignette alluding to the stimulus person as gay or straight in three areas: self, other, reveal. There was not a significant differences between participants who received the vignette in which the stimulus person alluded to their homosexuality ($M=30.16, SD=2.78$) and the vignette that suggested the stimulus person was straight ($M=29.56, SD=2.83$) on self questions; $t(117)= 1.15, p = .25$. Nor was there a significant differences between participants who received the vignette in which the stimulus person alluded to their homosexuality ($M=35.09, SD=4.34$) and the vignette that suggested the stimulus person was straight ($M=35.45, SD=5.15$) on self questions; $t(117)= -.15, p = .68$. Finally, there was not a significant difference between participants who received the homosexual ($M=33.58, SD=4.42$) vignette and those who received the straight vignette ($M=34.51, SD=3.36$) on adjectives that were sexually neutral; $t(117)= -1.28, p=.2$. Results are presented in Table 3.

Table 4
Means and Standard Deviations, Results of Independent Samples t-test Analyses of Internalized Homophobia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gay Vignette</th>
<th></th>
<th>Straight Vignette</th>
<th></th>
<th>t (117)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>$SD$</td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>$SD$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Sociometric</td>
<td>12.97</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>12.45</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Sociometric</td>
<td>28.49</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>27.63</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*p &lt; .05</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine if levels of internalized homophobia and the stimulus person’s sexuality on a vignette reported significantly different scores on measures of sociometric items and adjectives. Gay men were classified into four conditions: Individuals who received the vignette alluding to the stimulus person as gay and scored high on internalized homophobia, individuals who received the vignette alluding to the stimulus person as gay and scored low on internalized homophobia, individuals who received the vignette alluding to the stimulus person as straight and scored high on internalized homophobia, and finally, individuals who received the vignette alluding to the stimulus person as straight and scored low on internalized homophobia.

High and low scores of internalized homophobia were classified by taking the mean of each condition’s (gay or straight vignette) aggregate score of internalized homophobia and placing the scores that fell above the mean into high and those that fell below the mean into low (see Table 5). Individuals in each of the four conditions were then compared to scores on the sociometric scale based on their report of work and impression items and stereotypical adjectives (i.e. gay, straight, neutral).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gay Vignette &amp; High IH</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay Vignette &amp; Low IH</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The hypothesis that individuals assigned the gay vignette with higher levels of internalized homophobia would be related to more stereotypical views of homosexuals was not supported. Results indicated ratings of stereotypically gay adjectives was not significantly different across conditions $F(3) = 2.04, p = .11$. Furthermore, the hypothesis that individuals assigned the gay vignette with higher levels of internalized homophobia would be related to lower scores on sociometric questions related to work and interpersonal environments was not supported. Results indicated ratings of work and interpersonal environments was not significantly different across conditions $F(3) = 1.08, p = .37, F(3) = 1.07, p = .36$, respectively. Further analysis revealed no difference across conditions on adjectives that were stereotypically straight $F(3) = .54, p = .66$. Nor was there any difference across conditions on adjectives that were neutral $F(3) = .87, p = .46$. 

Discussion

There were three hypotheses in this study: (1) Individuals who received the gay vignette would view the target as more stereotypical, (2) individuals who received the gay vignette would be less likely to endorse positive sociometric items, (3) individuals with high levels of internalized homophobia would rate the gay stimulus individual more stereotypically and endorse less favorable sociometric items than individuals with low levels of internalized homophobia. With a power analysis that indicated a 5.5 power level for the independent-sample t-tests, and an ANOVA f-effect of 4.49, one can be reasonable sure that these results were not due to chance (Erdfelder, Faul, & Buchner, 1996). Concerning the first hypothesis, regardless of condition (gay or straight vignette) there was not a significant difference on how gay men view another gay man stereotypically. The results of the second hypothesis also indicated no significant difference between conditions and how much the participant liked and wanted to interact with the stimulus individual. Finally, the third hypothesis that individuals with high levels of homophobia would rate the gay stimulus individual more negatively also resulted in no significant difference.

These data indicate that the mere suggestion of homosexuality does not have a strong impact on how gay men view other gay men. In general, stereotypical adjectives were similar to all conditions. Regardless of condition (gay or straight vignette) it appears that gay men, no matter their level of internalized homophobia, do not view the stimulus individual stereotypically. Nor was there a difference in their expressed desire to be social with the stimulus person.
Contrary to this study's hypothesis, it appears that homosexual men are no more or less likely to stereotype gay or straight men as they are likely to stereotype and view other homosexual men in a negative light by the mere suggestion of homosexuality as is the case with heterosexual men (Gross et al., 1980).
Limitations

Studying internalized homophobia is a difficult endeavor. There are several aspects that limit the generalizability of the construct to gay males. Chief among them is that internalized homophobia limits a person’s ability to even recognize their sexuality, and thus likely limits their ability to participate in studies on internalized homophobia (Harry, 1990; Chodorow, 1999). Furthermore, inherent in Internet survey methodology, only responses of those who responded to the questionnaire (124) are analyzed and therefore cannot be generalized to the entire community (Andrews, Nonnecke, & Preece, 2003).

Of methodological concern there were several limitations. The first methodological limitation concerns the third hypothesis that individuals with high levels of internalized homophobia would view the stimulus individual more negatively than those with low levels of internalized homophobia. Thus far there have not been any published means or standard deviations for the NHAI, meaning that it is difficult to know what constitutes a high level of internalized homophobia and a low level of internalized homophobia on the NHAI. Furthermore, Nungesser’s (1983) only description of what constitutes high and low levels of internalized homophobia was that the higher one’s scores the lower their internalized homophobia and the lower their scores the lower their internalized homophobia is. Thus, there is an inherent limitation in splitting high and low levels of internalized homophobia by simply finding the mean of the sample’s NHAI scores and splitting them into high and low groups.

Furthermore, it is difficult to suggest that the vignette caused higher levels of negative and stereotypical feelings because there was no pretest of participant’s internalized homophobia. Thus, making it difficult to judge what cause if any the vignette had on people’s view. Yet, a
pretest was not included because it would have likely prompted the participant to answer in a prescribed way, thus skewing the results.

Another limitation of the present study is that there was no manipulation check to see if the independent variable had any effect on the participant’s response or if the participant even read the vignette. Specifically, it is unknown as to whether the independent variable, the suggestion of sexuality in the vignette, had any effect on the dependent variables: stereotyping, sociometric ratings, or internalized homophobia. Merely suggesting homosexuality may have not been enough for a gay male participant, as it was for a straight male participant, as demonstrated in Gross et al.’s (1980) study.

Beyond the methodological constraints, there are other limitations to the present study. Oregon, Washington, and California represented 78% of the participants. These areas are historically and popularly know for their liberal thinking of homosexuality as compared to other parts of the country as measured by adoption laws, civil union laws, custody rights, state hate crime laws, and school harassment laws on LGB youth (Human Rights Campaign [HRC], 2010). This represents a limitation because these individuals may have not developed a narcissistic injury or as severe a narcissistic injury as other gay men in the country. This would thus limit or mitigate their internalized homophobia and their negative views of other gay men and the ability of this study to generalize across the United States.
Conclusion

As discussed above there are several limitations to this study’s validity and generalizability. However, the primary implication of this study is the resilience of gay men. Straight men’s anger and likelihood of stereotyping is easily triggered by the mere suggestion of another man’s homosexuality regardless of their level of homophobia (Gross et al., 1980; Adams, Wright, & Lohr, 1996; Hudepohl et al., 2010). The present study shows that the mere suggestion of homosexuality has little to no effect on how gay men view others regardless of their level of internalized homophobia. The results of this study somewhat contradict the literature on internalized homophobia, namely the idea that gay men with high levels of internalized homophobia will react negatively and not want to spend time with other gay men (Nungesser, 1983; Weinberg and Williams, 1974). Although further work is required to gain a more complete understanding of internalized homophobia and attitudes and perceptions of gay men, it appears that gay men are more resilient than previously thought.
References


Appendix A

Demographic Questionnaire

How old are you? (drop down window from 18 to 100)

Ethnic Background (Please check as many as apply to you):
Black/African American
American Indian/Alaska Native
Asian/Asian American
Hispanic/Latino/Latina American
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
White/Caucasian
Other (please write in)

Gender:
Female
Male
Other

What is your sexual orientation?
Heterosexual/Straight
Homosexual/Gay/Lesbian/Transgender/Bisexual
Unsure or questioning

In which state do you currently reside?
What is your religious affiliation?
Protestant Christian
Roman Catholic
Evangelical Christian
Christian
Jewish
Muslim
Hindu
Buddhist
Agnostic
Atheist
Other (Please write in):

What is your highest level of education at this time?
Did not graduate high school
GED
High school diploma
Vocational school
Bachelor degree
Master degree
Doctorate

Rank your income:
0 to $10,000
$10,001 to $20,000
$20,001 to $30,000
$30,001 to $40,000
$40,001 to 50,000
$50,001 to $60,000
$60,001 and above

What is your current job and/or student status?

Employed
Unemployed
Part-time employment
Self-employed
Student
Appendix B

Two Vignettes

First you will read a short bio of a chemistry professor, then a brief video of the professor. You will then be asked to answer some questions about him.

(First Vignette)

My name is Richard L Nafshun. I am chemistry professor at a University in Corvallis, Oregon. I was born and raised in Portland, Oregon. As a kid I enjoyed many things, including soccer, tag, building forts, and helping my mom in the garden. My dad was a history teacher, and my mom taught third graders. I remember going to theme parks and the movies with them.

During high school I had many friends. I was also a member of several clubs, including the yearbook and band. In high school I continued to play soccer. On the weekends I would spend most of my time at the movies with friends. I would also make it up to Mount Hood every once in while.

After high school I received a scholarship from the University of Oregon to continue playing soccer. While at the U of O I majored in biology. However, I ended up getting a degree in history. After college I traveled Europe, and spent a year in the south of France.

When I came back to the states, I applied to Oregon State University’s Ph.D. program in chemistry. While at OSU I enjoyed playing soccer on the local gay league. I also spent a lot of time outdoors. I especially enjoyed skiing and gardening during that time.

After I completed my Ph.D. OSU offered me a teaching job. The best thing about teaching for me is that I get to interact with smart young adults. I like the critical thinking that most of them bring to the classroom.

Click here to continue to the video->

(Second Vignette)

My name is Richard L Nafshun. I am chemistry professor at a University in Corvallis, Oregon. I was born and raised in Portland, Oregon. As a kid I enjoyed many things, including soccer, tag, building forts, and helping my mom in the garden. My dad was a history teacher, and my mom taught third graders. I remember going to theme parks and the movies with them.
During high school I had many friends. I was also a member of several clubs, including the yearbook and band. In high school I continued to play soccer. On the weekends I would spend most of my time at the movies with friends. I would also make it up to Mount Hood every once in while.

After high school I received a scholarship from the University of Oregon to continue playing soccer. While at the U of O I majored in biology. However, I ended up getting a degree in history. After college I traveled Europe, and spent a year in the south of France.

When I came back to the states, I applied to Oregon State University’s Ph.D. program in chemistry. While at OSU I enjoyed playing soccer with my wife on the local league. I also spent a lot of time outdoors. I especially enjoyed skiing and gardening during that time.

After I completed my Ph.D. OSU offered me a teaching job. The best thing about teaching for me is that I get to interact with smart young adults. I like the critical thinking that most of them bring to the classroom.
Appendix C

Sociometric Items

Rate each item on a 1 to 9 scale. One equals no, not at all. Nine equals yes, very much.

1. Does he seem to be a person you would be likely to develop a friendship with if you had the opportunity to interact with each other?
2. Is he a type of person you would like to have as a neighbor?
3. Is he a type of person you would like to work with?
4. If you were an employer, would you hire him?
5. Do you think this person will be successful in his career?
6. Would you like to work for this person?
Appendix D

Adjective Check List

Click a number between 1 and 9.
1 indicates that the trait describes the person not at all.
9 Indicates that the trait describes the person very well.

Forgetful
Stable
Gentle
Aggressive
Independent
Phony
Intelligent
Dominant
Self-sufficient
Competitive
Liberated
Adventurous
Strong
Tactful
Theatrical
Shallow
Appendix E

Nungesser Homosexuality Attitudes Inventory (NHAI)

Please respond to each of the following:

(1) Strongly Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neutral (4) Agree (5) Strongly Agree

-When I am in a conversation with a gay man and he touches me, it does not make me uncomfortable.

-I would not mind if my boss found out that I am gay.

-Whenever I think a lot about being gay, I feel depressed.

-Homosexuality is not as good as heterosexuality.

-When I tell my friends about my homosexuality, I do not worry that they will try to remember things about me that would make me appear to fit the stereotype of a gay man.

-I am glad to be gay.

-Male homosexuality is a natural expression of sexuality in human males.

-When I am sexually attracted to a close male friend, I feel uncomfortable.

-I am proud to be part of the gay community.

-Gay men do no (sic.) dislike women any more than straight men dislike women.

-Marraige (sic.) between gays should be legalized.

-My homosexuality does not make me unhappy.

-Gay men are overly promiscuous.

-When I am sexually attracted to another gay man, I do not mind if someone else knows how I feel.

-Most problems that gays have come from their status as an oppressed minority, not from thier (sic.) homosexuality per se.

-When women know of my homosexuality, I am afraid they will not relate to me as a man.

-Gay lifestyles are not as fulfilling as straight lifestyles.

-I would not mind if my neighbors knew that I am gay.

-It is important for me to conceal the fact that I am gay from most people.

-Whenever I think about being gay, I feel critical about myself.
- Choosing an adult gay lifestyle (sic.) should be an option for children.
- If my straight friends knew I was gay, I would be uncomfortable.
- If men knew I was gay, I am afraid they would begin to avoid me.
- Homosexuality is a sexual perversion.
- If it were made public that I am gay, I would be extremely unhappy.
- If my peers knew I was gay, I am afraid that many would not want to be my friends.
- Adult gay males who have sex with boys under 18 years of age should be punished by law.
- If others knew I am gay, I would not be afraid that they would see me as being effeminate.
- I wish I were straight.
- When I think about coming out to peers, I am afraid they will pay more attention to my body movements and voice inflection.
- I do not think I will be able to have a long-term relationship with another man.
- I am confident that my homosexuality does not make me inferior.
- I am afraid (sic.) that people will harass me if I come out more publicly.
- When I think about coming out to a straight male friend, I do not worry that he might watch me to see if I do things that are stereotypically gay.
Appendix F

Advertising Flier

Gay Male Participants Wanted for 15 Min online Survey

If you are a gay male over the age of 18, and you have access to the Internet I invite you to participate in a research study about the attitudes and perceptions of gay men.

It will take approximately 15-min to complete and is entirely anonymous. Just log on to www.surveymonkey.com/s/quartly to complete the survey.

Your help is greatly appreciated!