

MEN AGGRESSING AGAINST MEN: EFFECTS OF SEXUAL PREJUDICE AND GENDER
ROLE CONFORMITY

by

COLLEEN ALLISON SLOAN

(Under the direction of Amos Zeichner)

ABSTRACT

Bias-motivated aggression continues to have deleterious effects on society. Past research has identified perpetrator prejudice and victim nonconformity as risk factors for aggressive behavior. The current study sought to investigate effects of perpetrator sexual prejudice and masculine gender conformity on aggression toward men based on sexual orientation and gender expression. One hundred two undergraduate men participated in a competitive reaction-time task, during which they had an opportunity to shock an ostensible opponent as a measure of aggression. Participants were assigned to one of four opponent conditions (masculine, gay man; feminine, gay man; masculine, heterosexual man; feminine heterosexual). Analyses revealed perpetrator masculinity as a consistent predictor of aggressive behavior. Results also indicated that heterosexual men's femininity increased risk of victimization. Findings are discussed in terms of heterosexual men's nonconformity and in-group/out-group dynamics.

INDEX WORDS: Sexual prejudice; anti-gay aggression; gender role conformity; men

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COLLEEN ALLISON SLOAN

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COLLEEN ALLISON SLOAN

Major Professor: Amos Zeichner

Committee: W. Keith Campbell
Sarah Fischer

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Violence continues to emerge as a grave societal problem. The United States Department of Justice reported that the rate of violent crimes has decreased since 2006, which followed a steady increase from 2004 to 2006 (U.S. Department of Justice, 2009). Despite the recent decrease, the occurrence of violent crimes during 2009 was at an alarming rate of over one million incidents (U.S. Department of Justice, 2009), which necessitates empirical investigation. As such, research has attempted to uncover variables that relate to, and specifically contribute to, this type of behavior. One variable that has received much attention is prejudice, which has been identified as a risk factor for perpetration of violence. Prejudice has been defined as “a positive or negative attitude directed toward people simply because they are members of a certain group” (Jones, 2002). Jones argued that negative attitudes are directed toward members of an out-group, while positive attitudes are directed to one’s in-group (Jones, 2002). Nevertheless, these biased sentiments often contribute to discriminatory behavior toward out-group members. In fact, the U.S. Department of Justice reported an overwhelming rate of almost 7,000 hate crime incidents during 2009 alone, which suggests that prejudice plays a pertinent role in discriminatory behavior, particularly aggression. Of these crimes, roughly one third was perpetrated toward individuals because of their sexual orientation, which demonstrates that anti-gay prejudice is a current and very serious societal problem.

Anti-gay prejudice has been a longstanding problem, which has manifested as discrimination on both macro and micro level. For example, federal legislation has demonstrated

much bias against non-heterosexual persons. Specifically, current federal employment non-discrimination policies exist to prevent discrimination due to biases against race, gender, religion, national origin and disability. However, these policies do not include sexual orientation or gender identity and gender expression. While some states have passed legislation that includes sexual orientation as a protected component of identity, others continue to utilize the federal policy, thus making it legal to terminate non-heterosexual employees in over half of the 50 states. Moreover, the Defense of Marriage Act (1996) allows states the right to refuse recognition of valid civil marriages of same-sex couples, which, in this country, is only allowed in small minority of states. Additionally, research has consistently shown that gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth are at risk for experiencing peer victimization including physical and verbal abuse (e.g., D'Augelli, Pilkington, & Hershberger, 2002). Recently, this has become more apparent in news media reports on anti-gay bullying, one of which discussed the devastating suicide of three gay teens (Katz, 2010). Last, the Federal Bureau of Investigation reported almost 1,500 hate crime incidents occurred in 2009 alone due to sexual orientation bias, the majority of which was committed against gay men (Department of Justice, 2009).

Definitions of Aggression

Historically, definitions of aggression have been proposed and debated, the first of which was offered nearly 70 years ago. This definition was posited by Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, and Sears (1939) and suggested that aggression is any behavior directed toward another individual with the intent to cause the person harm or injury. However, this definition was limited in that it only included aspects of physical aggression. In order to nuance the definition, Bandura (1973) defined an aggressive act as one that causes physical or psychological harm, such as degradation or manipulation. However, Bandura's conceptualization was also

incomplete because it failed to recognize the aggressor's motives. For example, situations in which a person accidentally harms another would be considered aggressive under this definition. In order to settle the disparity, Berkowitz (1993) proposed a definition that characterized aggression as a behavior that serves to intentionally harm another physically or psychologically. Again, this definition is limited in that it fails to capture motivation of the victim or target. For example, under Berkowitz' definition, a surgical procedure would be considered an aggressive act because the perpetrator (e.g., surgeon) is intentionally harming the target (i.e., patient). Therefore, this definition has since been expanded by Anderson and Bushman (2002) and includes previous proposals (Baron & Richardson, 1994; Berkowitz, 1993; Bushman & Anderson, 2001; Geen, 2001). Anderson and Bushman (2002) define aggression as "any behavior directed toward another individual that is carried out with the proximate (immediate) intent to cause harm [and] the target is motivated to avoid the behavior (p. 28)." This accurately portrays an aggressive act and excludes accidental injury because the perpetrator does not believe the target is motivated to avoid the harm.

The term *violence* has been used to capture extreme forms of aggression, characterized by the intent to cause severe harm to the victim, such as death (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). These authors stated that not all aggressive acts are necessarily violent, but all violent acts are aggressive. In an attempt to deconstruct the multi-faceted nature of aggression, distinctions have been made between hostile and instrumental aggression (Bushman & Anderson, 2001). Hostile aggression has typically been considered to involve careless, impulsive acts motivated by feelings of rage and anger with a proximate and ultimate goal to harm a target. Hostile aggressive acts generally occur in response to some type of provocation. In contrast, instrumental aggression involves planned and deliberate actions directed toward another

individual with a proximate goal to harm but an ultimate goal to obtain any type of gain.

Similarly, Dodge and Coie (1987) conceptualized aggression into types based on the function of the behavior. They argued that reactive aggression, much like hostile aggression, is often in response to provocation, is retaliatory, and functions to remove a threat. In contrast, the authors suggest that proactive aggression parallels instrumental aggression and functions to gain some internally-generated goal. Anderson and Bushman (2002) discussed hostile and instrumental aggression subtypes, specifically arguing that the distinction is not always easily recognizable, in that aggressive behavior can have mixed motives. This paper will attempt to support this argument, such that, for instance, an individual may act aggressively toward a member of a sexual minority (e.g., gay man) in response to internal negative affect (hostile intent), as well as to reaffirm that the perpetrator does not belong to that minority (instrumental intent).

Theories of Aggression

Several theories of aggression which seek to describe the mechanism by which it occurs have been proposed. *Social Learning Theory* (Bandura 1983, 2001) suggests that individuals learn aggressive behavior, much like any other social behavior, through observation or personal experience. By this process, individuals gain an understanding of appropriate social conduct, and use such knowledge to interpret their world and direct future behavior. For example, a young child who witnesses spousal abuse between parents may learn to accept the behavior as appropriate and engage in such behavior in response to interpersonal conflict.

In an effort to provide a more detailed description of the aforementioned learning process, Huesmann formulated a *Script Theory* (1986, 1998), which takes a developmental approach to social learning by suggesting that children learn aggressive scripts through observation of violence in the media. As scripts are behavioral representations of certain

situations, they function as sets of well-rehearsed schemas in memory that typically involve causal relationships and goal-directed behavior (Abelson, 1981; Schank & Abelson, 1977). A script is formed when a particular sequence of events or items become strongly linked so as to form a semantic association in memory (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). When an individual learns a script for a particular situation, s/he gains understanding of potential antecedents and consequences of a particular behavior, and thus encodes strict rules for her/his behavior. Moreover, the behavior-situation link grows stronger after multiple rehearsals. For example, a child who views several vicious acts on television may be more likely to encode this script for violence than a child who views such acts few times or not at all. Once a script is acquired, individuals may retrieve it at a later time and use it as a blueprint for behavior.

Another theory of aggression that has been proposed is *Excitation Transfer Theory* (Zillmann, 1983), which conceptualizes aggressive behavior through a mechanism that involves physiological arousal. This theory posited that an individual may become aroused during an interaction, particularly if it is anger-provoking, and may not be able to relieve the arousal immediately following the event. In this case, the individual may enter into a new interaction, maintaining physiological arousal from the preceding one, which, as Zillmann argued, may be even stronger when the two events are not separated by an extended period of time. The theory states that the existing arousal may be misattributed to a second event, and thus contribute to increased intensity of arousal relative to the intensity that would have hypothetically occurred in response to a subsequent interaction alone. Therefore, the excitation from the first event is transferred to the second, which in turn, initiates engagement in aggressive behavior. The theory also suggested that this excitation can last for extended periods of time if the individual has

labeled her/his arousal as anger. Zillmann proposed that labeling the physiological sensation increases propensity for future aggressive behavior.

Having recognized that previous theories of aggression lack an interactive component between an individual's internal states and environmental influences (e.g., aversive provocation), Berkowitz proposed a *Cognitive Neoassociation Theory* (1989, 1990, 1993), which contends that aggressive behavior is triggered by effects of aversive stimuli on an individual's internal state. An aversive stimulus can be anything an individual perceives as unpleasant such as extreme temperatures, particularly heat, noxious odors, or a goal blocked (e.g., not receiving a monetary reward). Such stimuli contribute to the experience of negative affect (e.g., frustration, irritability, anger), which in turn increases an individual's level of physiological arousal. Accordingly, negative affect may trigger embedded emotions and cognitions associated with physiological fight or flight response, inclusive of aggressive scripts, which, in turn, may result in aggressive responding. For example, a typically docile individual can become aroused after being assaulted by another individual, and thus "fight" back by responding in an aggressive manner.

Another model of aggression that has arguably combined components of Berkowitz's Cognitive Neoassociation Theory (1989, 1990, 1993) and Zillmann's Excitation Transfer Theory (1983), is known as the *Triggered Displaced Aggression* model (Miller, Pederson, Earleywine, & Pollock, 2003). It posits that aggression occurs through a three-component process. As with Zillmann's model (1983), Miller and colleagues (2003) have argued for a time-based conceptualization, in that aggression, specifically displaced aggression, occurs within a sequence of events. Displaced aggression occurs when an individual experiences provocation during an event and then exhibits retaliatory aggressive behavior toward an innocent other during a

subsequent unrelated event. For example, a father who is verbally reprimanded by his supervisor at work may become angry and act in a hostile manner toward his children when he comes home, thus displaying displaced aggression. Triggered displaced aggression differs from displaced aggression in that the aggressive response occurs during the second event after a minor provocation, and is disproportional relative to the provoking stimulus. Referencing the previous example, the father may come home to his children who are whining and begging for money, which elicits an aggressive response that is harsh relative to the minor request. Miller and colleagues' (2003) model contends that triggered displaced aggression depends on the particular features of the initial provocation (component 1) and cognitive processes and personality of the perpetrator, but more importantly, on the interval between the initial and subsequent provocation (component 2) and the characteristics and actions of the target that influence the extent of the (triggered) displaced aggression.

Theoretical models of aggressive behavior notwithstanding, researchers have examined pertinent individual characteristics that are associated with physical aggression. For example, Bettencourt, Talley, Benjamin, and Valentine (2006) performed a meta-analysis that explored the relationship between personality variables and traits on direct aggression under varied provocation conditions (neutral, provoking). The authors found that characteristics such as trait anger, Type A personality, dissipation-rumination tendencies, emotional susceptibility, narcissism, and impulsivity are positively associated with aggressive behavior under provoking circumstances. Moreover, they reported that trait aggressiveness and trait irritability are associated with aggressive behavior even when no provocation is present. These results suggest that personality characteristics influence aggressive responding as part of a larger context.

As a considerable overlap exists among the aforementioned theories and proposals, Anderson and Bushman (2002) sought to integrate existing theories into one model known as the *General Aggression Model* (GAM). The authors suggested that this model has improved upon previous “mini-theories” of aggression in four ways: “it is more parsimonious; it better explains aggressive acts based on multiple motives; it will aid in the development of more comprehensive interventions; and it provides broader insights about child rearing and development issues (Anderson & Bushman, 2002, p. 33).” The authors contended that aggressive behavior is an *outcome* of an interconnected system of *inputs* and *routes*. Inputs include *person* (e.g., traits) and *situational factors* (e.g., provocation) and are conceived as “causal” factors, which inevitably contribute to a propensity to engage in aggressive responding. These factors, consequently, foster internal states, or *routes*, which include cognitive, affective, and arousal conditions, and which function in concert. For example, exposure to violent cues may generate a state of negative affect, thus contributing to increased ability to retrieve hostile thoughts. This particular circumstance (interaction of cognition and affect) is likely to facilitate aggressive reaction.

Gender Differences in Aggression

Examination of gender differences has been of particular interest to researchers studying human aggression. Historically speaking, men have been viewed as generally more physically aggressive than women. Although evolutionary and biological explanations for aggressive behavior have been offered, environmental explanations, particularly with respect to socialization, have received much attention in the literature. This perspective suggests that gender differences in aggression may be explained, in part, by adherence to traditional gender role norms. Researchers have demonstrated their interest in examining such perpetrator differences in a plethora of studies using various methodologies. As a whole, results of these

studies have repeatedly evidenced that men are more likely than women to engage in direct physical aggression, which has been found in self-report data (Burton, Hafetz, and Henninger, 2007; Gladue, 1991; Gregoski, Malone, & Richardson, 2005), behavioral experiments (Gussler-Burkhardt & Giancola, 2005; Verona, Reed II, Curtin, & Pole, 2007; Zeichner, Parrott, & Frey, 2003), and developmental research (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Salmivalli & Kaukiainen, 2004), as well as having been shown in comprehensive meta-analyses (see Bettencourt & Miller, 1996; Eagley & Steffen, 1986; Frodi, Macaulay, & Thorne, 1977).

However, comprehensive examinations of effects of gender on aggressive behavior have suggested that underlying variables may partially account for such effects. For example, Bettencourt and Miller (1996) found that perpetrator gender differences diminish under conditions of increased provocation, which suggests that contextual variables may influence, specifically minimizing, gender differences in aggressive behavior. Controlling for dispositional variables such as empathy, Frodi et al. (1977) found that, across studies, gender differences disappear, which suggests that individual traits account for gender differences in aggressive behavior. Therefore, gender differences in aggression may be explained, in part, by the extent to which an individual exhibits traits in accordance with socially sanctioned norms of appropriate gender-role behavior. As such, the degree to which men and women differentially aggress may, in fact, be related to gender-role differences (Richardson & Hammock, 2007). Accordingly, the extent to which an individual adheres to gender-role norms impacts that individual's propensity to engage in aggressive behavior.

Gender role refers to behavior that indicates one's gender, specifically the representation by which a person identifies her/his femaleness or maleness. Therefore, a person's gender role orientation indicates the extent to which s/he is masculine or feminine, as well as the extent to

which s/he conforms to masculine and feminine norms associated with the respective genders and within a particular culture. Several studies have investigated the unique effect of gender-role orientation on aggression. For example, Hammock and Richardson (1992) examined the separate effects of gender and gender-role orientation as predictors of aggressive behavior. Although both gender and gender role, particularly masculinity, predicted aggression, masculinity accounted for more variance in aggression than gender, suggesting that gender role has a greater impact on aggressive behavior than gender alone. Kogut, Langley, and O'Neal (1992) controlled for gender by using a sample of women and showed that women who were high in masculinity were more aggressive than women who were low in masculinity. This finding was confirmed in a recent study, which suggested that masculinity in women was positively related to behavioral and self-reported aggression (Reidy, Sloan, & Zeichner, 2009).

Bias-Motivated Aggression

As previously mentioned, many variables may contribute to physical aggression. However, far less research has focused on pertinent variables that uniquely relate to bias-motivated aggression. As its name suggests, this type of aggression is motivated by a bias on the part of perpetrator, such as racial or sexual prejudice. The purest example of bias-motivated aggression is a hate crime defined as “a crime against a person or property motivated by bias toward race, religion, ethnicity/national origin, disability, or sexual orientation” (U.S. Department of Justice, 1996). As Craig (2002) argued, hate crimes differ from non-biased aggression in that the victims are selected by a perpetrator because of their group affiliation. These groups are generally minority groups, to whom negative characteristics are attributed. Therefore, individuals belonging to these minority groups are also viewed negatively and are labeled stereotypically.

The distinctive quality of hate crimes informs the reasoning behind this particular type of aggression. *Social Identity Theory* (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) provides a useful and effective explanation of bias-motivated aggression, specifically hate crimes (Herek & Berrill, 1992; Craig, 2002). The theory posits that individuals strive to achieve and maintain a positive self-view, particularly self-esteem, which depends largely on promoting one's in-group. Promotion of in-group status is often associated with complementary discrimination of an out-group, which serves to enhance self-esteem (Lemrye & Smith, 1985). Furthermore, Social Identity Theory suggests that both promotion of one's in-group and discrimination against the out-group serve as means to symbolically differentiate an individual from the respective out-group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

Tajfel and Turner (1986) argue that group differentiation often accompanies group conflict, which may arise during economic, social, and political shifts. For example, changes in economic conditions in the United States in the 1940's were associated with an increase in racially-motivated aggression (Hovland & Sears, 1940). Social and political shifts, however, may have contributed, in part, to current instances of bias-motivated aggression. Pertinently, Green and Strolovitch (1998) investigated hate crime incidence in New York between 1987 and 1995 and found that it was related to economic strife. They concluded that social shifts, particularly movement of ethnic minority members into neighborhoods of ethnic majorities may have generated group conflict, which fostered hate-motivated aggression.

Recently, members of sexual minorities, such as lesbians and gay men, have become more socially visible as the concern for equality and civil rights becomes more pressing in the United States. Regrettably, the Federal Bureau of Investigation historically has had jurisdiction to investigate and prosecute offenders of all possible hate crimes, except for offenses motivated

by sexual orientation. Only recently has sexual orientation been included in this group of offenses. Such minimal interest demonstrated in pertinent legislation, echoed by poor enforcement of such crimes, likely has contributed to the increase in anti-gay and anti-lesbian offenses, as perpetrators likely expect to receive little if any punishment, and that many of their crimes go unreported or unprosecuted. This begs the question, why have these crimes received less attention than that afforded to others? One possible explanation is the continued and widely-held negative attitudes and stereotypes regarding lesbians and gay men.

Attitudes Toward Gay Men and Lesbians

Researchers have investigated attitudes towards homosexuality, specifically examining opinions of heterosexual men and women regarding gay men and lesbians. Findings have consistently elucidated gender differences in negative attitudes toward various sexual minorities (for a review, see Kite, 1984; Kite & Whitley, 2003; Whitley & Kite, 1995). While some research has demonstrated that men and women hold similar attitudes toward lesbians (Herek, 1988; Kite, 1984; Kite & Whitley, 1996), other research has suggested that compared to heterosexual men, women report more negative attitudes toward lesbians (Gentry, 1987; Whitley, 1987; 1990). Studies have also shown that heterosexual men endorse higher levels of sexual prejudice than do heterosexual women toward gay men, and that heterosexual men endorse more negativity toward gay men than toward lesbians (Gentry, 1987; Herek, 1988; Kite, 1994; Lim, 2002; Whitley, 1987). Additionally, findings from studies in collegiate samples have indicated that heterosexual men's attitudes toward gay men tend to be more negative than heterosexual women's attitudes toward lesbians (Herek, 2002; Kite & Whitley, 1996). This pattern has also been shown in national adult samples (Herek & Capitanio, 1995; 1996). Taken

as a whole, the research seems to suggest that the most negative attitudes are held by heterosexual men and are in response to gay men.

Additionally, research has investigated correlates of such negative attitudes, which has suggested religiosity and adherence to traditional gender role norms as being particularly prevalent. Not surprisingly, religiosity has been found as positively related to anti-gay and anti-lesbian prejudice (Fisher, Derison, Polley, & Cadman, 1994; Herek, 1987). According to an American Religious Identity Survey of almost 55,000 Americans in 2008, over 75% of the population in the United States report religious affiliation (Kosmin & Kaysar, 2008). As such, it is reasonable to assume that the majority of Americans hold anti-gay and anti-lesbian sentiments, especially because homosexuality is often viewed as sinful. In fact, results of a recent study suggested that certain facets of religiosity were associated with anti-gay and anti-lesbian aggression (Vincent, Parrott, & Peterson, 2011). With respect to Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), one's religious identity may serve as one's in-group, and correspondingly identifies gay men and lesbians as members of the out-group.

As mentioned previously, another identified risk factor for anti-gay and anti-lesbian sentiment has been adherence and advocacy of traditional gender role norms. As Ehrlich (1990) has discussed, heterosexism, which promotes strict sex-role dichotomization and places men superior to women, serves as a fundamental source of anti-gay and anti-lesbian prejudice. Moreover, Herek (1988) found that adherence to traditional family and gender ideologies positively related to anti-gay and anti-lesbian prejudice for men, as well as women. As such, Ehrlich (1990) argued that individuals, specifically men, may engage in anti-gay or anti-lesbian aggression to reaffirm adherence to gender role norms and status as heterosexuals. Therefore, aggression serves an instrumental function to not only reaffirm one's identity, but also to express

disdain for gender role violations, which are particularly prevalent in groups of individuals with same-sex orientations. In fact, individuals who violate gender role norms by having atypical gender expressions may also become victims of anti-gay or anti-lesbian aggression. The concept of gender expression represents how one communicates her/his gender through behavioral and other visible and overt cues, such as attire, hair style, body posture, mannerisms, language, and voice. Findings from previous studies have suggested that violation of role norms, particularly in women, predicted increased risk of victimization (Reidy, Shirk, Sloan & Zeichner, 2009; Reidy, Sloan, & Zeichner, 2009). In these studies, gender role violations were demonstrated via self-reported ideals that were inconsistent with femininity. Certainly, violations can occur beyond self-report/verbal behavior and usually involve an overt expression, particularly physical appearance.

Sexual Prejudice and Aggression

Sexual prejudice has been found to be a pertinent risk factor for anti-gay aggression. As proposed by Herek (2000), the term *sexual prejudice* denotes a negative attitude toward an individual owing to his/her sexual orientation. During the past decade, this term has been considered preferable to *homophobia* (Logan, 1996) because the latter is suggestive of a phobic or fearful reaction to people with same-sex orientations, which does not adequately capture hostility toward same-sex-oriented individuals. Because much of the pertinent literature has not made this distinction, studies assessing homophobia and sexual prejudice are reviewed below. In a study investigating the effects of homophobia on anti-gay aggression (Bernat, Calhoun, Adams, & Zeichner, 2001), the authors found that homophobic men reported more negative reactions to gay erotica than nonhomophobic men and exhibited higher levels of physical aggression toward a gay target. The homophobic and nonhomophobic groups did not differ,

however, in levels of aggressive behavior toward a heterosexual target. In a continued effort to examine this dispositional variable and expand upon previous findings, Parrott and Zeichner (2005) studied the effects of sexual prejudice on anger and anti-gay aggression immediately following erotic cues. They found that sexual prejudice was positively related to anger following exposure to gay erotica. Furthermore, for individuals who viewed this stimulus, anger and sexual prejudice were positively associated with physical anti-gay aggression. In fact, high levels of sexual prejudice in men have been found to be associated with increases in anger following erotic and non-erotic behavior between two men (Hudepohl, Parrott, & Zeichner, 2010). Moreover, sexual prejudice has been found to explain effects of multiple variables, such as masculinity and gender role stress on anti-gay aggression in men (Parrott, 2009; Parrott, Peterson, Vincent, & Bakeman, 2008). Additionally, men's anger has been found to mediate the relationship between sexual prejudice and aggression toward gay men (Parrott & Peterson, 2008). The collective findings of the reviewed studies indicate a strong influence of men's sexual prejudice on aggressive behavior toward gay men.

Purpose and Hypotheses

Aggressive behavior toward gay men and lesbians has proven to be a grave concern for society at large. The reviewed studies have examined the role of sexual prejudice in men and have determined it to be a pertinent risk factor for anti-gay aggression. In these studies, the perpetrators were heterosexual men, and the victims were predominantly gay men. To date, no study has examined effects of men's gender expression on victimization of physical aggression perpetrated by men. Specifically, the impact of sexual prejudice and gender role conformity on direct physical aggression toward heterosexual men who exhibit traditionally feminine traits, or toward gay men who exhibit traditionally masculine traits awaits examination.

The purpose of the present study was to replicate and expand upon previous research by investigating effects of sexual prejudice and gender role conformity on aggression toward men, particularly examining the influence of men's sexual orientation and gender expression using the experimental paradigm as that used by Bernat and colleagues (2001), Zeichner and colleagues, (2003), and Parrott and Zeichner (2005). In these studies, all participants competed against an ostensible opponent and had the opportunity to administer shocks as a form of punishment, which was used to measure direct physical aggression in the Response Choice Aggression Paradigm (Zeichner, Frey, Parrott, & Butryn, 1999). For the present study, several hypotheses were put forth.

A main effect for opponent sexual orientation (SO) was hypothesized: participants were expected to be significantly more physically aggressive toward a gay male opponent than toward a heterosexual male opponent. Moreover, a main effect for opponent gender expression (GE) was also hypothesized: participants were expected to be significantly more physically aggressive toward a feminine male opponent than toward a masculine male opponent. It was also hypothesized that there would be a significant interaction effect between opponent sexual orientation and opponent gender expression: Participants were expected to be significantly more aggressive toward a feminine gay man than toward a masculine gay man or a feminine heterosexual man, and be significantly less aggressive toward a masculine heterosexual man than toward a feminine heterosexual man or a masculine gay man.

It was expected that sexual prejudice would moderate the relationship between opponent sexual orientation and physical aggression: high levels of sexual prejudice would be positively associated with physical aggression against a gay man whereas low sexual prejudice would not be related. Likewise, it was expected that gender role conformity would moderate the

relationship between opponent gender expression and physical aggression: high gender role conformity of the participant would be positively associated with physical aggression against a feminine man whereas low gender role conformity would not be related.

CHAPTER 2

METHOD

Participants

One-hundred nine undergraduate men were recruited from the University of Georgia research participation pool to participate in a study entitled “Effects of Personality on Competitive Behavior.” Participants were informed that the study comprised both a questionnaire session and a laboratory session, which would take place on two separate occasions. All participants received partial academic credit for their participation. Five participants were excluded due to failed deception or technical problems, one participant was excluded due endorsement of a bisexual identity, and one was excluded for invalid questionnaire completion. The final sample consisted of 102 undergraduates. The mean age for the sample was 19.82 ($SD = 1.26$). The sample was comprised of 76.5% White ($n=78$), 10.8% Black or African American (11), 7.8% Asian (8), 3.9% Hispanic or Latino (4), and 1% American Indian or Alaska Native (1). Ninety-five percent of the sample reported a relationship status of “single” and the rest endorsed involvement in a relationship. No participants indicated that they had been divorced. The majority of the sample reported having completed some college education ($n = 79$). All demographic data can be found in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Percentages for Gender, Age, Race/Ethnicity, Relationship Status, and Level of Education.

Measure	Means and Percentages
Age	19.82(1.26)
Race/Ethnicity	
Caucasian	76.5
Black/African American	10.8
Asian	7.8
Hispanic Latino	3.9
American Indian/Alaska Native	1.0
Relationship Status	
Single	93.1
Committed/Long-term partnership	2.9
Cohabitated/Not married	2.9
Married	1.0
Education	
High School	4.9
Some college	77.5
College	17.6

Experimental Design

This study comprised a 2x2 factorial design. The two independent variables were opponent sexual orientation (SO; gay or heterosexual man), and opponent gender expression (GE; masculine or feminine man). Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions (Masculine Gay [$n=27$]; Feminine Gay [$n=26$]; Masculine Heterosexual [$n=26$]; Feminine Heterosexual [$n=23$]). Two additional variables were treated as moderator variables for analyses: Level of sexual prejudice and gender role conformity.

Measures

Demographic Form. Participants completed a brief demographic form that assesses, age, race, sexual orientation, marital status, education level, and average annual household income.

Attitudes toward Gay Men scale (ATG; Herek, 1984). This 10-item Likert-type subscale from the Attitudes toward Lesbians and Gay Men (ATLG) scale measures sexual prejudice, specifically toward gay men and contains items that assess attitudes toward gay men and male homosexual behavior. Participants were asked to indicate agreement or disagreement with statements (e.g., “Homosexual behavior between two men is just plain wrong”) on a nine-point scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Scores can range from 10 (extremely positive view) to 90 (extremely negative view), and an alpha coefficient of $r = .77$ has been reported. For the current study an alpha of .92 was obtained.

Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory (CMNI; Mahalik et al., 2003). This 94-item scale comprises statements that involve different aspects of masculinity (e.g., “I love it when men are in charge of women”) which are represented in 11 different subscales (Winning, Emotional Control, Risk-Taking, Violence, Power Over Women, Dominance, Playboy, Self-Reliance, Primacy of Work, Disdain for Homosexuals, and Pursuit of Status). Participants were

asked to read statements and indicate agreement on a 4-point Likert-type scale that ranges from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. The authors reported a coefficient alpha of $r = .94$ for the total scale, and a range from $r = .72$ to $r = .91$ for the subscales. The total score was utilized in analyses for the current and yielded an alpha of .93.

Demographic Audio Responses. Participants were asked to verbally report several demographic variables to be ostensibly viewed by an opponent (outlined below). The variables include first name, age, relationship status, year in school, major, and involvement in campus organizations, as well as organizations outside of school.

Response-Choice Aggression Paradigm (RCAP; Zeichner, Frey, Parrott, & Butryn, 1999). This paradigm was used to measure physical aggression. It involves a bogus reaction time (RT) task, where participants compete in 30 trials and have the opportunity to ostensibly administer shocks as a form of punishment to a fictitious opponent following each trial. This paradigm differs from the Taylor Aggression Paradigm (Taylor, 1967) in that participants in the RCAP may completely refrain from administering a shock following a “win” or “loss” outcome, whereas participants in the Taylor Aggression Paradigm are required to administer a shock after a “win” outcome. The added “choice” component of the RCAP places the paradigm in a more real-world context without sacrificing internal validity of its laboratory procedures.

Participants are seated at a table in a sound-attenuated chamber. The aggression console, which rests facing them, is a white metal box. This box is integrated with electrical wiring and light-emitting diodes, ten shock push buttons labeled “1” through “10,” and a reaction time key. Shocks are administered through two electrodes, which are placed on the index and middle fingers of the participant’s non-dominant hand. The experiment is controlled by a computer

system in a separate room, and shocks are produced by a Precision Regulated Animal Shocker (Coulbourn Instruments, Allentown, PA).

The reaction time task is presented to participants as a competition against an opponent who is ostensibly seated in an adjacent chamber. Participants are instructed to press the RT key when the yellow *press* light illuminates. Participants are to hold down this key until the green *release* light illuminates, at which time they are to release the RT button as quickly as possible. After a brief results-determination period, either the green *win* light or red *lose* light illuminates, notifying participants of the outcome of that particular trial. After this outcome feedback portion, three lights (red, yellow, and green) illuminate for a 6-s period, during which time participants have the opportunity to administer a shock to the opponent as a form of “punishment.” Participants are free to choose from the 10 shock intensities and to press a shock button for as long as they desire during the 6-s period. Participants are also informed that their opponent has the same opportunity. Visual feedback regarding the level of shock administered to participants is provided.

Physical aggression is measured through seven different aggression indices: 1) *Mean Shock Intensity* (MSI) is the mean shock intensity for trials in which the participant administers a shock; 2) *Mean Shock Duration* (MSD) is the mean shock duration for trials which the participants administer a shock; 3) *Proportion of Highest Shock* (P10) is the number of times participants use the highest shock available for trials in which a shock is administered relative to all shock trials; 4) *Flashpoint Latency* (FP) defines the number of trials elapsed before the participants administer the first shock; 5) *Flashpoint Intensity* (FPI) defines the intensity of the first shock administered; 6) *Flashpoint duration* (FPD) is the shock duration of the first shock administered; and 7) *Shock Frequency* (SF), which is the number of trials that a shock is

administered. For the current study, standardized aggression composites were utilized to reduce Type I error. The first composite was a “general aggression” (GA) composite, which was the standardized average of MSI and MSD. The second composite was “nature of initial aggression” (IA) composite, which was the standardized average of FPI and FPD. Additionally, P10 was utilized as an index for “extreme aggression” (EA) and FP was utilized to measure latency of aggression (lower scores are indicative of engagement in aggression sooner).

Deception and Opponent Sexual Orientation/Gender Expression Manipulation.

All participants viewed a brief demographic video of an ostensible opponent “Joe” who reported his relationship status as well as his sexual orientation. The video presentation (described in more detail in the procedures) presented to participants the sexual orientation and gender expression of their opponent and served to deceive them that they would be competing against another individual.

Procedure

For the questionnaire session, participants were met in a classroom separate from the laboratory. After informed consent was obtained, participants completed a questionnaire battery that included a demographic questionnaire, the ATG, and CMNI. Participants were informed that the laboratory session would take place approximately one week after the questionnaire session.

For the experimental session, participants were met outside a room separate from the aggression chamber and were randomly assigned to one of four conditions (outlined above). After initial greeting, participants were asked to report their names and were informed that another person would be coming to the session. Participants then were escorted to the designated chamber and were seated facing the aggression console, where informed consent, specific to the

experimental session, was obtained. To disguise the RCAP as a measure of aggression, participants were informed that the purpose of the study was to measure effects of attitudes and interpersonal impressions on reaction time. Next, the experimenter instructed the participants that they would be asked to report verbally several demographic details that ostensibly would be viewed by their opponent. The participants were informed that they would also view their opponent reporting the same demographics on a television facing participants to, ostensibly, form impressions of their opponent before participating in the competition.

After this brief introduction, participants were asked to wait while the experimenter greeted the “opponent” and explained the task to him. After a 5-min waiting period, the experimenter communicated with participants via intercom from a separate control room. The participants were led to believe that they would be viewing their opponent “live” during a demographic interview session. However, they were actually shown a videotape of a fictitious opponent who presented as either a heterosexual man or a gay man and who had either a masculine or a feminine gender expression. The video depicted the ostensible opponent answering several questions (mentioned above) that highlighted his sexual orientation and relationship status. In conditions in which the ostensible opponent’s sexual orientation was gay, the opponent “Joe” reported having “been in a relationship with his boyfriend Chris for about two years.” In conditions in which the ostensible opponent’s sexual orientation was heterosexual, the opponent “Joe” reported having “been in a relationship with his girlfriend Chris for about two years.” The ostensible opponent disclosed his sexual orientation by identifying the gender of his partner. However, he did not directly state his sexual orientation, as that was not a requested demographic detail. Therefore, participants were not required to disclose their sexual orientation either. This manipulation served to enhance the salience of participants’ identities

pertaining to sexuality and gender. In conditions in which the ostensible opponent had a masculine gender expression, the opponent was wearing masculine clothing, had a muscular body type, and spoke in an assertive manner. In conditions in which the ostensible opponent had a feminine gender expression, the opponent was wearing feminine clothing, had a slender body type, and spoke in a soft and somewhat unassertive manner. In all conditions, the opponent reported being a “second year student,” majoring in anthropology, and no involvement in student organizations. After participants viewed their opponent, the experimenter asked them to report the same set of demographics to their opponent.

Next, the experimenter explained the RT task to the participants. The experimenter returned to the chamber, attached the electrodes to the participants’ fingers, and explained that the pain tolerance assessment and RT task were to follow. The experimenter then returned to the control room from where pain levels were ostensibly assessed. This assessment served to limit the intensity of the shocks the participants received during the task. The tolerance assessment was achieved by first, playing an audio recording of the confederate reading predetermined responses regarding his pain tolerance. Then, the participants’ pain tolerance was assessed by first asking them to report detection of a shock stimulus and then to report when the shocks became “painful,” which served as the participants’ tolerance level.

After the pain tolerance was determined, participants were reminded that they could terminate the experiment at any time without penalty should they feel uncomfortable. The RT task was commenced next. The RT competition comprised 30 trials, of which the participants “won” 15 and “lost” 15. The win-loss sequence, identical for all participants, was predetermined by a computer program. Participants were randomly administered shocks on 12 of the trials, which were pre-set to be 75%, 80%, 85%, 90%, 95%, and 100% of their reported “painful” level.

Light-emitting diodes (LEDs) located on the aggression console informed participants of the level of shock they were receiving. Following the task, participants were thanked for their participation, debriefed, and given partial academic credit.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

Manipulation Check

Assessment for the validity of aggression data involved demonstration that the participants believed they were competing against another individual of a particular sexual orientation and with a particular gender expression, and that they did not believe the task was a measure of aggression. This was achieved by conducting a brief interview comprising questions about the confederate, the RT task, and participants' motivation, prior to the debriefing. First, participants were asked whether they recognized the opponent as a friend or classmate. Next, participants were requested to report their impression of their opponent and his sexual orientation and gender expression, and then were asked whether they believed that their opponent was fair during the task. Last, they were asked whether they believed the task was a good measure of reaction time. Participants' data were excluded if the participants indicated that they thought their opponent was fictitious, that the task was bogus, or if they indicated that they did not fully participate in the task (e.g., "I wasn't really trying). Data of participants who failed to identify correctly the sexual orientation and/or gender expression of their opponent were excluded.

Preliminary Analyses

Excluded participants. Five participants were excluded from final analyses due to failed deception. Of note, three of these participants failed to correctly identify the sexual orientation of their opponent in the feminine, heterosexual condition. In order to measure behavior based on theoretical in-group/out-group behavior (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), only participants who identified

as exclusively heterosexual were included in analyses. Therefore, one participant was excluded due to endorsement of a bisexual sexual orientation. Last, one participant was excluded for invalid questionnaire completion. Due to limited number of excluded cases, the power to detect differences between excluded and non-excluded participants would not have been sufficient to yield meaningful findings. Therefore, assessment of differences between these two groups was not conducted.

Demographic Data. A series of one-way ANOVAs were performed to assess for potential differences amongst experimental groups on pertinent demographic variables. No significant differences were found for race/ethnicity, education, income, or age. However, a significant difference was found for relationship status $F(3, 98) = 3.07, p < .05$. Descriptive statistics amongst the four experimental groups revealed that only participants endorsing a “single” relationship status were assigned to conditions in which the opponent was either masculine heterosexual or masculine gay, whereas this was not the case in conditions in which the opponent was feminine heterosexual or feminine gay.

Additionally, Pearson product-moment correlations computed between demographic variables and standardized aggression indices used in the regression analyses, revealed a significant relationship between race/ethnicity and GA ($r = .25, p < .05$), as well as between relationship status and IA, $r = .21, p < .05$. Therefore, in analyses where GA was used as the dependent variables, race/ethnicity was entered as a control variable. Likewise, in analyses where IA was used as the dependent variable, relationship status was entered as a control variable. Due to the low number of non-White participants in the sample, analyses could not be conducted to test for differences amongst racial groups. Therefore, in order to test for racial differences, the sample was split into White and non-White groups. An independent samples t-

test was conducted to test for significant differences between these groups on GA. Results of the independent samples t-test were significant $t(100) = -2.61, p < .05$, indicating that non-White participants engaged in significantly higher levels of general aggression. Again, low number of non-single participants did not permit testing for differences amongst all relationship types. Therefore, the sample was split into single and non-single groups. An independent samples t-test was conducted to test for differences between the groups on IA. The results yielded a significant difference, $t(100) = -2.13, p < .05$, which indicated that non-single participants engaged in significantly higher levels of initial aggression.

Group Characteristics. Although participants were randomly assigned to opponent conditions, confirmation was needed to ensure that the groups did not differ significantly on pertinent dispositional variables before undergoing experimental manipulation. Therefore, four 2 (opponent GE) \times 2 (opponent SO) ANOVAs were performed on gender role conformity and sexual prejudice as the dependent variables. These analyses revealed a significant difference for gender role conformity, $F(3, 98) = 4.47, p < .01$. Therefore, gender role conformity, as measured by the CMNI, was entered in all regression analyses as a control variable. Means and standard deviations for aggression indices based on opponent condition can be found in Table 3.1.

Principal Analyses

Main Effects of Sexual Orientation and Gender Expression of Opponent on Aggression.

In order to examine opponent SO and GE as dichotomous variables within regression analyses, dummy coded variables were created for each of these factors. As such, for opponent SO, a variable was created with a designated value of “0” for cases where participants competed against a gay opponent and a value of “1” for cases in which participants competed against a

heterosexual opponent. Likewise, for opponent GE, a variable was created with a designated value of “0” for cases in which participants competed against a feminine opponent and a value of “1” for cases in which participants competed against a masculine opponent. To test main effects of opponent SO and GE on aggression indices as the dependent variables, the dummy coded variables for each of these factors were entered simultaneously into a separate regression analysis for each aggression index. For GA, opponent SO did not account for a significant amount of variance ($\beta = .13, ns$). Opponent GE emerged as a significant predictor ($\beta = -.26, p < .01$) indicating elevated levels of aggression toward feminine opponents. Additionally, masculinity (CMNI) accounted for a significant amount of variance ($\beta = .19, p < .05$), as did race/ethnicity ($\beta = .22, p < .05$). These results indicated that higher levels of masculinity and non-white identity were associated with higher levels of aggression. For Flashpoint latency (FP), neither opponent SO ($\beta = .06, ns$) nor opponent GE ($\beta = -.05, ns$) accounted for a significant amount of variance. Additionally, masculinity was not a significant predictor ($\beta = .05, ns$). For IA, opponent GE accounted for a significant amount of variance ($\beta = -.25, p < .05$) indicating higher levels of initial aggression toward feminine opponents. Opponent SO ($\beta = .16, ns$), masculinity ($\beta = .18, ns$), and relationship status ($\beta = .14, ns$) did not emerge as significant predictors of IA. For EA, opponent GE accounted for a significant amount of variance ($\beta = -.27, p < .01$) indicating elevated levels of extreme aggression toward feminine opponents. Additionally, masculinity was a significant predictor ($\beta = .28, p < .01$). Opponent SO ($\beta = .15, ns$) did not account for a significant amount of variance in EA.

To test interaction effects of opponent factors, a variable was created which multiplied the dummy coded variables for opponent SO and GE. Separate hierarchical regression analyses were performed for each aggression index as the dependent variable. In the first step of these

analyses, all possible main effects were entered (i.e., opponent SO, opponent, GE and relevant control variables). The interaction term was entered in the second step, which measured the variance accounted for by the interaction of opponent factors over and above any main effects. For GA, the interaction model (second step) was significant, $F(4, 97) = 7.37, p < .001$ and accounted for significant variance over and above the main effects model (first step) ($F_{change} = 7.22, p < .001$). Within this model, opponent SO ($\beta = .38, p < .01$), race/ethnicity ($\beta = .22, p < .05$) and the interaction term ($\beta = -.41, p < .01$) all emerged as significant predictors. The significant amount of variance accounted for by opponent SO indicated elevated levels of aggression toward heterosexual opponents. However, the significance of the interaction term revealed this effect to depend on opponent GE indicating highest levels of aggression toward a feminine, heterosexual opponent. Regarding FP as the dependent variable, the interaction model (second step) did not account for a significant amount of variance, $F(4, 97) = 1.77, ns$. For IA, the interaction model (second step) was significant, $F(5, 96) = 5.30, p < .001$, and accounted for variance over and above the main effects model (first step) at the trend level, $F_{change}(1, 96) = 3.33, p < .08$. Within this model, opponent SO emerged as a significant predictor ($\beta = .33, p < .05$) and the interaction term yielded a trend effect ($\beta = -.29, p < .08$). These results suggest that the highest initial aggression occurred toward a feminine, heterosexual opponent. For EA, the interaction model (second step) was significant ($F(4, 97) = 6.52, p < .001$) but did not account for significant of variance over and above the main effects model (first step), $F_{change}(1, 97) = .53, ns$. A summary of regression analyses for opponent factors can be found in Table 3.2.

Moderation Analyses. In order to test for moderation effects, variables hypothesized as moderators (i.e., sexual prejudice and gender role conformity) first were standardized by computing z-scores. Next, interaction terms were created with these z-scores and their

respective opponent factor. For sexual prejudice, its z-score was multiplied by opponent SO. Likewise, for gender role conformity, its z-score was multiplied by opponent GE. Correlations between hypothesized moderators and aggression indices can be found in Table 3.3. To test whether sexual prejudice moderated the relationship between opponent SO and aggression, separate hierarchical regression analyses were performed for each aggression index. In each of these, opponent SO and sexual prejudice were entered in the first step, as well as any relevant control variables. The two-way interaction (opponent SO X prejudice) was entered in the second step. For GA, the main effects model (first step) was significant, $F(4, 97) = 4.62, p < .01$ and the interaction model (second step) was significant, $F(5, 96) = 3.76, p < .01$ but did not add significant variance over and above the main effects model, $F_{change}(1, 96) = .45, ns$. In the main effects model, masculinity ($\beta = .27, p < .01$) and race/ethnicity ($\beta = .22, p < .05$) accounted for a significant amount of variance in general aggression, indicating higher levels of aggression was associated with higher masculinity and non-white identity. For FP, the main effects model (first step) was not significant, $F(3, 98) = .74, ns$, but the interaction model (second step) was significant at the trend level, $F(4, 97) = 2.32, p < .07$. In this model, sexual prejudice ($\beta = -.39, p < .01$) and the interaction term ($\beta = .37, p < .05$) emerged as significant predictors. These results indicated that, in general, sexual prejudice was associated with decreased latency of aggression and as level of sexual prejudice increases, aggression occurs sooner toward gay but not heterosexual opponents (see Figure 1). Regarding the nature of initial aggression (IA), both the main effects model (first step), $F(4, 97) = 3.93, p < .01$ and the interaction model (second step), $F(5, 96) = 3.15, p < .05$ were significant. However, the interaction model did not account for significant variance over and above the main effects model, $F_{change}(1, 96) = .16, ns$. In the main effects model, gender role conformity ($\beta = .26, p < .05$) and relationship status ($\beta = .21, p < .05$)

emerged as significant predictors. These results revealed both higher masculinity and non-single relationship status accounting for significant amount of variance in initial aggression. For EA, the main effects model (first step) was significant, $F(3, 98) = 5.62, p < .01$, and the interaction model (second step) was significant, $F(4, 97) = 4.93, p < .01$. However, the interaction model did not account for significant variance over and above the main effects model, $F_{change}(1, 97) = 2.60, ns$. In the main effects model, only gender role conformity emerged as significant predictor ($\beta = .34, p < .01$), which again indicated higher levels of conformity predicting increased extreme aggression.

To test whether gender role conformity moderated the relationship between opponent GE and aggression, separate hierarchical regression analyses were performed for each aggression index. In each of these, opponent GE and gender role conformity was entered in the first step (and all relevant control variables), while the interaction term (opponent GE x gender role conformity) was entered in the second step. For GA, the main effects model was significant, $F(3, 98) = 8.50, p < .001$, and the interaction model was significant, $F(4, 97) = 6.31, p < .001$; however, the interaction model did not account for significant variance over and above the main effects model, $F_{change}(1, 97) = .00, ns$. In the main effects model, opponent GE ($\beta = -.25, p < .01$), gender role conformity ($\beta = .22, p < .05$), and race/ethnicity ($\beta = .21, p < .05$) emerged as significant predictors indicating that increased aggression toward feminine opponents, and masculinity and non-White identity predicted increased aggression. For FP, neither the main effects model, $F(2, 99) = .36, ns$ nor the interaction model, $F(3, 98) = .86, ns$ was significant. Regarding IA as the dependent variable, the main effects model was significant, $F(3, 98) = 6.50, p < .001$, and the interaction model was significant, $F(4, 97) = 5.15, p < .01$, but did not account for significant variance over and above the main effects model, $F_{change}(1, 97) = 1.03, ns$. In the

main effects model, opponent GE ($\beta = -.23, p < .05$) and gender role conformity ($\beta = .21, p < .05$) were significant predictors indicating that aggression was elevated toward feminine opponents and masculinity predicted increased initial aggression. For EA, both the main effects model, $F(2, 99) = 12.48, p < .001$ and the interaction model, $F(3, 98) = 8.24, p < .001$ were significant. However, the interaction model did not account for significant variance over and above the main effects model, $F_{change}(1, 98) = .00, ns$. In the main effects model, opponent GE was a significant predictor ($\beta = -.26, p < .01$) indicating increased extreme aggression toward a feminine opponent. Additionally, gender role conformity was significant predictor ($\beta = .30, p < .01$) indicating increased masculinity associated with increased extreme aggression.

Table 3.1.

Means and Standard Deviations for Standardized Aggression Indices Separate by Opponent Condition.

	Opponent Condition			
	Feminine Gay	Feminine Heterosexual	Masculine Gay	Masculine Heterosexual
GA	-.02 (.98)	.64 (.51)	-.21 (.78)	-.33 (.75)
FP	-.23 (.92)	.40 (1.03)	.10 (1.17)	-.23 (.75)
IA	-.01 (.90)	.63 (.85)	-.29 (.60)	-.25 (.73)
EA	.16 (1.23)	.59 (1.12)	-.39 (.57)	-.27 (.70)

Note. GA = General Aggression; FP = Flashpoint; IA = Initial Aggression; EA = Extreme Aggression.

Table 3.2

Summary of Regression Analyses for Main Effects and Interaction Effects of Opponent Factors

Aggression Index	Significant Step	Test Variable	β	t	p
GA	Second	SO	.38	2.97	<.01
		GE	-.04	-.37	<i>ns</i>
		SO x GE	-.41	-2.69	<.01
IA	Second	SO	.33	2.48	<.05
		GE	-.09	-.71	<i>ns</i>
		SO x GE	-.29	-1.83	<.08
FP	None	SO	.31	2.16	<.05
		GE	.17	1.26	<i>ns</i>
		SO x GE	--	--	--
EA	First	SO	.15	.89	<i>ns</i>
		GE	.28	-2.82	<.01
		SO x GE	--	--	--

Note. SO = Opponent Sexual Orientation; GE = Opponent Gender Expression; GA = General Aggression; IA = Initial Aggression; FP = Flashpoint (Latency); EA = Extreme Aggression;

Table 3.3

Pearson Correlations Between Hypothesized Moderators and Dependent Variables

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. MGRC	--	.31**	.32**	.07	.27**	.37**
2. ATG		--	.06	.10	.07	.16
3. GA			--	.14	.71**	.62**
4. FP				--	.44**	.26**
5. IA					--	.61**
6. EA						--

Note. MGRC = Masculine Gender Role Conformity; ATG = Attitudes Toward Gay Men; GA = General Aggression; FP = Flashpoint (Latency); IA = Initial Aggression; EA = Extreme Aggression; ** $p < .01$

Table 3.4

Summary of Regression Analyses for Moderating Effects

Aggression Index	Significant Step	Test Variable	β	t	p
GA	First	SO	.11	1.18	<i>ns</i>
		SP	-.01	-.06	<i>ns</i>
		SO x SP	--	--	--
	First	GE	-.25	-2.70	<.01
		MGRC	-.22	2.33	<.05
		GE x MGRC	--	--	--
IA	First	SO	.13	1.37	<i>ns</i>
		SP	.00	-.00	<i>ns</i>
		SO x SP	--	--	--
	First	GE	-.23	-2.26	<.05
		GRC	.21	2.19	<.05
		GE x MGRC	--	--	--
FP	Second	SO	.04	.43	<i>ns</i>
		SP	-.39	-2.72	<.01
		SO x SP	.37*	2.63	<.05
	None	GE	-.05	-.46	<i>ns</i>
		MGRC	.06	.54	<i>ns</i>
		GE x MGRC	--	--	--
EA	First	SO	.07	.71	<i>ns</i>
		SP	.06	.63	<i>ns</i>
		SO x SP	--	--	--
	First	GE	-.26	-2.77	<.01
		MGRC	.30	3.19	<.01
		GE x MGRC	--	--	--

Note. SO = Opponent Sexual Orientation; SP = Sexual Prejudice; GE = Opponent Gender Expression; MGRC = Masculine Gender Role Conformity; GA = General Aggression; IA = Initial Aggression; FP = Flashpoint (Latency); EA = Extreme Aggression

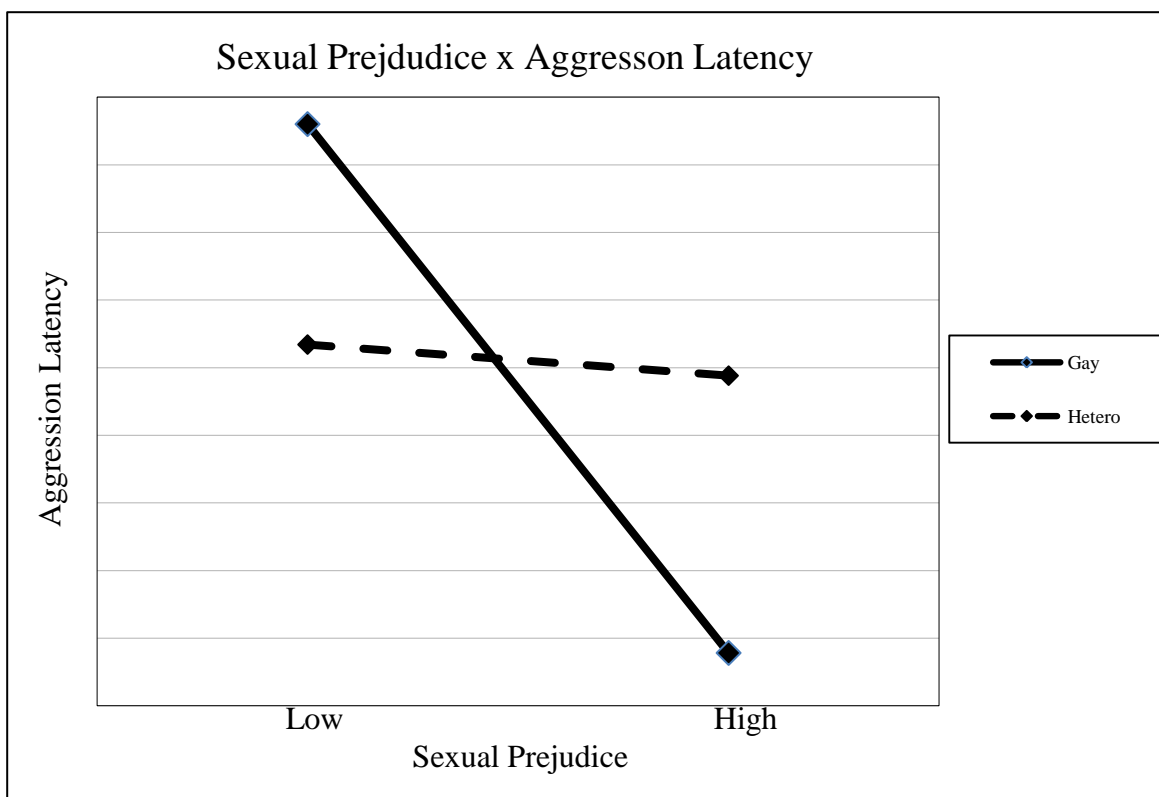


Figure 3.1 Moderating effects of sexual prejudice on the relationship between opponent sexual orientation and aggression latency (flashpoint).

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

The current study sought to replicate previous findings regarding effects of prejudice on bias-motivated aggression. Moreover, it intended to expand upon previous research by examining other dispositional characteristics, such as gender role conformity as a risk factor for both perpetration and victimization of aggression. The study was the first to examine both sexual orientation and gender expression using men as targets. It was expected that findings would emerge that are similar to those of previous studies examining the role of sexual prejudice on anti-gay aggression, as well as elucidating gender role violations in men as increasing risk for victimization. Although some hypotheses were supported, results of the current study revealed patterns in aggressive behavior that are different than those found in previous research, specifically highlighting the unique role of gender role nonconformity as a pertinent risk factor. Additionally, effects of both opponent and perpetrator characteristics seemed to differentially impact aggressiveness with respect to various aggression indices; this suggests that these factors elicit different expressions of physically aggressive behavior.

First, contrary to hypotheses, a main effect for sexual orientation was not found for any aggression index. In other words, a gay identity alone was not related to increased aggression, and thus did not increase risk for victimization. However, a main effect for gender expression was found, which indicated a positive relationship between a feminine expression and increased victimization. These findings emerged for all aggression indices except for aggression latency. Moreover, a significant interaction emerged between sexual orientation and gender expression

for the target, which indicated increased aggression toward a feminine, heterosexual opponent, which warrants further discussion. These findings held for both general and initial aggression. Surprisingly, a gay sexual orientation did not emerge as a significant interactive opponent factor for any aggression index. However, a significant moderation effect was found for sexual prejudice and sexual orientation for aggression latency. Last, gender role conformity (masculinity) accounted for a significant amount of variance for all aggression indices except latency. However, it did not emerge as a moderator for opponent gender expression in any analyses.

As previously mentioned, a gay sexual orientation did not emerge as a factor that increased victimization. Moreover, sexual prejudice did not relate to aggression and did not moderate opponent factors for many of the aggression indices, which is inconsistent with previous research (e.g., Parrott & Zeichner, 2005). However, a moderating effect was found for aggression latency. Specifically, results showed that men who endorsed high levels of sexual prejudice aggressed significantly sooner when their opponent was gay, whereas for men who endorsed low levels of sexual prejudice this was not the case. No differences in latency were found for men who competed against a heterosexual opponent, regardless of sexual prejudice. Much of previous literature has conceptualized anti-gay aggression as a means to reinforce traditional gender roles and/or to prove masculinity (e.g., Franklin, 2000; Hamner, 1992; Kite & Whitley, 1998; Kimmel, 2000; Parrott, 2009). Additionally, Stotzer and Shih (2011) found that men endorsing high levels of sexual prejudice view themselves as less masculine in the context of threat, whereas men endorsing low levels of sexual prejudice view themselves as more masculine following threat. As such, it is reasonable to assume that highly prejudiced men in the current study perceived themselves as less masculine during a competition with gay man, and

consequently aggressed for the reasons stated above. The results of the current study regarding latency suggest that proof of masculinity and reinforcement of roles can be achieved immediately following an aggressive act, and that, perhaps, such reinforcement thereafter is unnecessary.

Regarding the main effect for gender expression, results suggested that men's feminine gender expression increased risk of being victimized. Indeed, this finding is consistent with those of previous studies examining the role of nonconformity in women (Reidy, Shirk, Sloan, & Zeichner, 2009; Reidy, Sloan, & Zeichner, 2009), and provides evidence that expands upon previous literature by highlighting the unique role of gender role nonconformity as risk factor for victimization in men. Much of the previous literature investigating anti-gay aggression has discussed the inherent gender nonconformity associated with a gay sexual orientation. It would be reasonable to assume that the aforementioned functions (e.g., role enforcement) could account for aggression toward gay men, regardless of gender expression, as well toward nonconforming heterosexual men. However, contrary to hypotheses, examination of interaction effects in the current study revealed a significant effect indicating increased aggression toward a feminine, heterosexual opponent, whereas this was not the case for feminine, gay opponents or masculine, gay opponents. This begs the question: why does more aggression occur toward nonconforming heterosexual men relative to gay men?

Consideration of theoretical foundation, specifically the General Aggression Model (GAM; Anderson & Bushman, 2002) and Social Identity Theory (SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) provides an effective framework within which these results may be interpreted. Indeed, past research on anti-gay aggression has highlighted in-group/out-group dynamics that are inherently relevant when examining heterosexual men's aggression toward gay men. As such, anti-gay

aggression is best understood as discriminatory behavior toward members of an out-group. It was assumed that when heterosexual men interacted with gay men, they would perceive these men as members of an out-group and subsequently would have engaged in aggression. Moreover, the SIT lens would suggest that group membership is determined and based solely upon sexual orientation. Both the experimental paradigm and results of the current study challenge and extend this notion. Specifically, group membership was manipulated by self-disclosure of sexual orientation and combined with behavioral illustrations (i.e., gender expression) that were either consistent or inconsistent with group membership. Moreover, the findings indicated elevated aggression toward nonconforming individuals who were otherwise assumed to be members of the in-group based on their self-reported sexual orientation. In other words, these nonconforming in-group members evidenced behavior that was more consistent with that of out-group members.

As such, it appears that appraisal and assignment of group membership employs a process of greater complexity than mere self-reported identification. It seems that gender expression plays a key role, as well as whether this expression is consistent with perceiver expectations of that expression based on sexual orientation. Therefore, feminine gender expression increases risk of victimization, particularly if it is inconsistent with what would typically be expected for an in-group member (i.e., heterosexual man). As such, femininity does not appear to increase risk for gay men, as this expression is likely assumed to be consistent with that particular out-group identification. At the same time, masculine expression for a gay-identified man, although inconsistent, does not elicit aggression from the perceiver likely because masculine behavior, an assumed positive quality, supersedes out-group identification. Indeed this argument is consistent with previous research examining specific components of

masculine gender role conformity and their relationships to anti-gay aggression. Specifically, anti-femininity has shown to relate to aggression toward sexual minorities (Parrott, 2009; Parrott, Peterson, & Bakeman, 2011; Vincent, Parrott, & Peterson, 2011). With respect to results from the current study, it seems likely that anti-feminine sentiments may underlie men's aggression toward effeminate heterosexual men.

Although the findings here do not support the existence of increased aggression toward a sexual minority person (i.e., gay man), they do indicate enhanced aggression toward in-group members who behave like out-group members. As such, it is reasonable to assume and conceptualize such behavior as a threat to in-group status and perhaps as an insult to those who adhere to in-group norms. It is argued here that aggression functions, at least in part, to punish these individuals who have apparently threatened the in-group. Indeed, past research examining narcissism, insult, and aggression supports this notion (Baumeister, Bushman, & Campbell, 2000; Baumeister & Campbell, 1999). Although, the current study did not measure narcissism, the proposed argument is consistent with those posed by Baumeister and colleagues and suggests that aggression functions to attack “insulters.” In the current study, these insulters are heterosexual men who behave effeminately. Therefore, they were most at risk for victimization.

Characteristics of the opponent, notwithstanding, perpetrator traits also emerged as pertinent risk factors. Contrary to hypotheses, masculinity was not a significant moderating factor. However, consistent with previous research (e.g., Kogut, Langley, & O'Neal, 1992; Reidy, Sloan, & Zeichner, 2009; Richardson & Hammock, 1992), it did emerge as a significant predictor of multiple aggression indices. As such, consideration of the masculinity-aggression link is warranted. As previously discussed, aggression may function to reinforce roles and/or to prove masculinity (e.g., Parrott, 2009). As such, one assumes that reaffirming masculinity and

reinforcing gender roles are, in fact, preferred consequences for masculine men. Therefore, it makes reasonable sense to question why these are desirable outcomes for masculine men, as well as why they are achieved through aggressive behavior.

Researchers examining masculinity have explored this construct, particularly how it is viewed both historically and currently, and have described masculinity and manhood as tenuous (Bosson & Vandello, 2011; Vandello, Bosson, Cohen, Burnaford, & Weaver, 2008; Weaver, Vandello, Bosson, & Burnaford, 2010). These researchers have suggested that masculinity in men must be achieved and maintained, and, as such, can consequently be lost at any point in time. Moreover, this achievement and maintenance has been proposed to occur via men's social behavior, particularly aggression (Vandello, Bosson, Cohen, Burnaford, & Weaver, 2008; Weaver, Vandello, Bosson & Burnaford, 2010). Furthermore, findings from these studies have also revealed that threats to masculinity elicit aggression-related cognitions in men and that men use situational cues to justify their aggressive behavior. Collectively, these findings uncover key variables with respect to the General Aggression Model (Bushman & Anderson, 2002), specifically identifying components of cognitive appraisal that further elucidate the mechanisms by which aggressive behavior occurs.

The relationships between demographics and aggression warrant some discussion. As previously mentioned, race/ethnicity was significantly related to aggression. Specifically, non-White participants engaged in significantly elevated levels of general aggression relative to White participants. However, White and non-White participants did not significantly differ with respect to other aggression indices. Nevertheless, the race demographic was significantly related to aggression and remained a significant predictor when combined with other variables, which suggests factors associated with racial/ethnic identity play a key role in behavioral outcomes.

Past research has suggested that non-White individuals are more likely to endorse engagement in physical aggression (Harris, 1992) and to express more accepting attitudes toward retaliatory aggression than White individuals (Haff, Floyd, and Shinn, 2006). Therefore, the significant relationships between race and aggression in the current study are not surprising. At the same time, this finding should be interpreted with caution. Race alone does not necessarily indicate increased aggressive behavior, particularly because several factors comprise one's racial identity. Cultural, social, and environmental factors likely interact with both dispositional variables and target characteristics, and thus play a pertinent role in behavior, such as aggression. Although the current study did not examine interactive effects of race and opponent factors, it is possible that racial/ethnic identity could have influenced bias-motivated aggression. However, race/ethnicity is highly influenced by socialization, thus the implications of the findings here are limited. Future research should seek to investigate differences based on race/ethnicity, and other cultural characteristics, as they relate to aggressive behavior. Additionally, relationship status significantly related to initial aggression and held in significance when combined with other variables. Specifically, results indicated that a non-single status was related to increased aggression. One possible explanation relates to in-group out-group differences. Opponents in all conditions endorsed a partnered relationship status. Perhaps this contributed to increased victimization, as this is apparently dissimilar from non-partnered participants. However, this explanation is speculative. Future research may seek to investigate further this suggestion.

Several limitations of the current study deserve mention. First, the recruited sample was rather homogenous, as it comprised all undergraduate men, the majority of whom were Caucasian and single. Inclusion of non-university participants with more variable racial/ethnic identities would have increased external validity of the findings, as well as allowed for between-

group comparisons. Second, the methodology of the current study did not include a condition to allow evaluation of effects of group dynamics. Given that extant literature has identified group dynamic as a factor in increasing the propensity to engage in bias-motivated aggression (e.g., Franklin, 2000), this variable should be included in future studies. Last, the current study did not include a measure of collective (i.e., group) self-esteem, which is a pertinent factor of Social Identity Theory. Inclusion of such a measure would have allowed for assessment of possible disruptions to self-esteem, as well as mechanisms (i.e., aggression) by which self-esteem is maintained. In a similar vein, the current study did not measure all components of the GAM (e.g., cognitive factors). It will be important to consider ways to measure these variables in future studies.

Despite these limitations, results of the current study expand upon previous research by highlighting pertinence of both perpetrator and target characteristics, as well as how components of identity interact to increase risk of victimization. Specifically, this study is the first to examine the interaction of gender expression and sexual orientation in men, and its findings highlight the specific risk of feminine expression in men, particularly in those who are heterosexual. As such, these findings further deconstruct the complexity of in-group/out-group dynamics and add to previous conceptualizations regarding the function that aggressive behavior serves. Furthermore, results of the current study stimulate areas for future research, particularly regarding questions surrounding sexual orientation and gender role conformity, as well as behavioral expressions associated with identity and perceivers' expectations.

CHAPTER 5

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