

# Challenging Homosexual Masculinity: A Test of the Masculine Overcompensation Hypothesis in Gay Men

Brodie J. Lewis, Cassandra Hesse, Briana Cook, Kaylee Skoda, & Cory L. Pedersen



## Introduction

- Masculine overcompensation is a phenomenon that occurs when a male exhibits hypermasculine characteristics in response to threats to his masculinity (Willer, Rogalin, Conlon, & Wojonowicz, 2013)
- Heterosexual males have been found to respond to gender identity threats with the following:
  - Higher levels of stereotypically masculine characteristics
  - Antisocial behaviour
- Homosexual males tend to exhibit more feminine characteristics:
  - Targets of bullying
  - Maltreatment

## Rationale

- To determine the extent to which gay males exhibit the masculine overcompensation compared to heterosexual males.
- To replicate the results of Willer et al. (2013) with the following changes:
  - A larger, more globally representative sample
  - Additional questions regarding rape myths
  - Additional questions regarding attitudes towards erotica

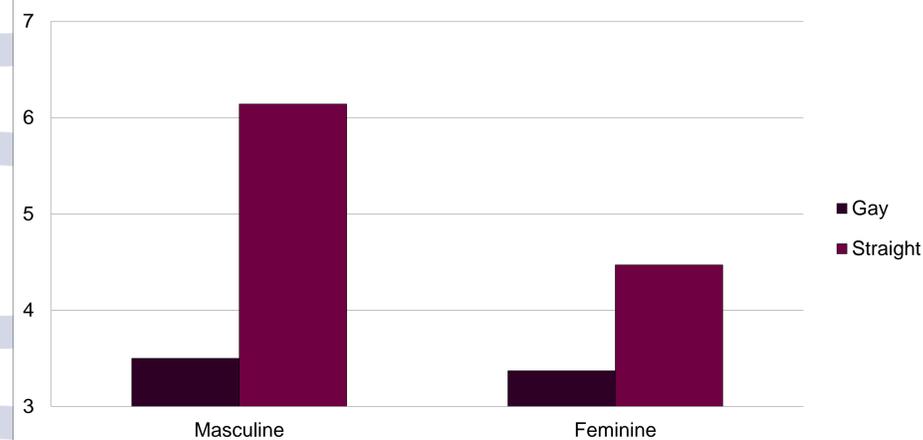
## Methods

- **Participants:**
  - Final sample of 867 participants (661 gay men)
  - Mean age = 25.15 years ( $SD = 7.61$  years)
- **Procedure:**
  - Participants recruitment: research participant pool at a large, Western Canadian university, community posters, online forums (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, Reddit)
  - Participants directed to an online survey site ([www.fluidsurveys.ca](http://www.fluidsurveys.ca)) where an anonymous survey could be accessed.
  - All participants given randomly generated feedback identifying them as either "masculine" or "feminine"
- **Measures:**
  - Demographics
  - Political Views Survey (Willer et al., 2013)
  - Attitudes toward Erotica Questionnaire (ATEQ; Lottes, Weinberg, & Weller, 1993)
  - Rape Supportive Attitudes Scale (RSAS; Lottes, 1991)

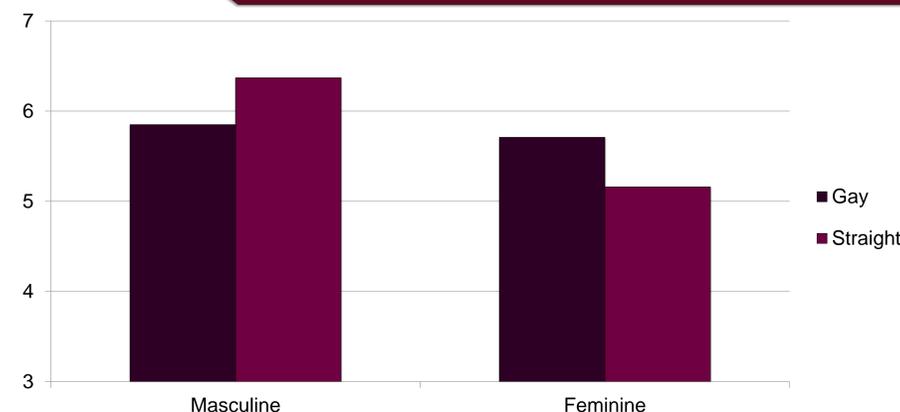
## Results Summary

- Significant main effects of:
  - Gender self-expression and sexual orientation on the ATEQ (harmful effects composite)
  - Sexual orientation on the ATEQ (restriction composite)
  - Gender self-expression and sexual orientation on the RSAS (victim callousness)
- Significant interactions of:
  - Gender self-expression X sexual orientation on the Support for War composite
  - Gender self-expression X sexual orientation interaction on the Negative Attitudes toward Homosexuality composite

## Support for War



## Negative Attitudes Toward Gays



## Discussion

- False gender expression feedback did not influence either gay or straight participants' attitudes toward war, gays, pornography, or rape myth
- Possible explanations for a lack of masculine overcompensation as follows:
  - Threats issued through an online survey may not be seen as valid as those issued in face-to-face interactions
  - Strength of IV in general → perhaps the terms "moderate masculinity" and "moderate femininity" were not strong enough challenges to masculinity
  - A more global sample may not replicate masculine overcompensation → this phenomenon may be unique to Americans
- Further research is needed to understand whether alternative manipulations explain the attitudes of gay/straight participants to controversial topics like pornography, rape, homosexuality, and war.

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